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A Document Analysis: In What Ways Do Elementary Schools Display Positive Behavioral
Interventions and Supports (PBIS) as an Educational Evidence-Based Practice?

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Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirement

for the degree of Doctor of Education

Department of Education Leadership, Management and Policy

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COLLEGE OF HUMAN DEVELOPMENT,
CULTURE, AND MEDIA

SETON HALL UNIVERSITY

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION LEADERSHIP MANAGEMENT & POLICY

APPROVAL FOR SUCCESSFUL DEFENSE

Catherine Chidiac has successfully defended and made the required modifications to the text of the doctoral dissertation for the **Ed.D** during this **Fall** Semester.

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Dedication

More important than anything, this work is dedicated to my mother, Marlene Ruth Chidiac, who has been my guiding angel throughout this process, smiling down at me, right beside me. It is due to your strength, support, positivity, patience, perseverance, and unfailing belief in me that I was able to complete this final chapter in my educational career. Thank you for being with me through all of it. I am forever grateful to you and my greatest honor and blessing in life is to be your daughter. You are my very best friend. This is all for you and because of you. As Abraham Lincoln said, "All that I am, or hope to be, I owe to my angel mother." I did it Mom. God bless you. I love you with all my heart and soul.

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Abstract

Research indicates that positive reinforcement can improve student achievement and increase positive student behavior. The purpose of this study was to explore the ways public schools in New Jersey communicate the Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) practice to their staff and students. This document analysis reviewed the themes and practices presented in each school's Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) implementation manuals. This qualitative research examined 17 Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) Implementation Manuals, seeking to better understand how New Jersey public schools communicate Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) and how the information aligns with the national Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) Tier 1 themes and evidence-based practices. The data displayed compliance with the core content themes of Tier 1 Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS). Overall, the implementation manuals aligned with the measures of evidence-based practices for Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS). However, the information included within individual manuals varied. Implications for policy and practice are discussed.

Keywords: Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS), Tier 1, Evidence-Based Practices, Implementation, Positive Reinforcement, PBSIS, Behavior, Expectations

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Chapter 1

Introduction

For many years there have been policies put into place to determine and define correct student behavior in schools. Handbooks, codes of conduct, classroom rules posters and schoolwide systems have been implemented to ensure and uphold positive, acceptable, and safe student behavior. One particular system that has become more widely used in the United States is Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports or PBIS. PBIS is an “evidence-based, tiered framework for supporting students’ behavioral, academic, social, emotional, and mental health” (“What is PBIS?” 2023, para. 1). This particular practice recognizes students for following the desired expectations, such as being kind, safe, and responsible in the classroom and around the school, which encourages others to also follow expectations knowing they will receive positive recognition.

Although PBIS has been identified as a promising approach to support student behavior, most schools receive limited guidance on how to effectively implement PBIS.

Background

Historically, school has been a place where children come to learn not just academics, but social skills and how to grow as a well-rounded, well-educated, well-behaved person as “the success of schools as effective learning environments rests in part on establishing a social context that promotes and supports successful academic engagement” (Sugai & Horner, 2008, p. 67). When children first begin school, it may be their first time interacting with other children. This is where social skills and behavior is just as important as academics to teach. In fact:

Peer relationships may be particularly influential during the middle elementary school years

when a child devotes a large portion of school and play time to interactions with similar-age

others. In fact, researchers have found that acceptance from peers during the elementary school years is a strong predictor of later emotional adjustment. (La Greca & Santogrossi, 1980, p. 220)

Since school is a place where children of all ages can learn academic skills, it is also a place where they can learn how to behave in a safe, respectful way.

“Recent efforts at the federal level to improve school climate and reduce violence have focused on emphasizing a proactive disciplinary approach, establishing clear expectations for students, and supporting appropriate behavior” (Lassen et al., 2006, p. 701) because in order for students to have desired positive behavior, it is important for them to be shown positive behavior firsthand, which is why it is beneficial to model, promote, recognize, and praise positive behavior. If you punish negative behavior, maybe the student will never see or understand what the positive behavior is. Instead, if the student can know and see what the positive behavior is, then the student can make sure he or she does it and will instead get rewarded, not punished. This behavioral intervention that focuses on prevention, rather than punishment is something that has been tested. As Lassen et. al (2006) explain:

Traditionally, schools have addressed challenging behavior by increasing the number and intensity of punitive disciplinary procedures. These include adopting zero tolerance policies, hiring security officers, using metal detectors, expelling and suspending students, and placing students in alternative educational facilities. Unfortunately, the effectiveness of such strategies has not been sufficiently examined, and some researchers

have even suggested that reactive and punitive procedures can increase problem behavior.
(p. 701)

Meanwhile, “school-based interventions used to reduce problem behavior have also found behavioral monitoring and reinforcement of appropriate behavior to be effective in improving school behavior” (Lassen et. al, 2006, p. 702).

Sugai and Horner (2008) explain that “schools that do not establish a constructive social culture will have difficulty achieving the academic gains that define the purpose of educational systems in the United States” (p. 67). Furthermore, according to Bradshaw et al. (2012), “An onset of disruptive and aggressive behavior problems in elementary school is associated with an increased risk for academic problems, placement in special education programs, school dropout, substance abuse problems, and antisocial behavior” (p. 2). Due to the potential risks that can arise from behavior problems, there is “growing interest in school-wide prevention models, such as School-Wide Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (SWPBIS), as an approach for preventing an early-onset of behavior problems and promoting positive adjustment” (Bradshaw et al., 2012, p. 2). In order for students to be able to focus on schoolwork and succeed academically, they need to feel safe in school. As Horner & Macaya (2018) explain, students also need to have a “consistent and supportive social climate. Problem behaviors such as aggression, non-compliance, threats, taunts, theft, social withdrawal, disengagement, and property destruction are barriers to an effective learning community” (p. 664).

In the past, schools have turned to punishing students for problem behaviors or suspending or expelling students, all of which have proven ineffective and expensive (Belfield et al., 2015; Rumberger & Losen, 2017 as cited in Horner & Macaya, 2018, p. 664). PBIS is an alternative method to address problem behaviors, as it establishes, emphasizes, and encourages

various positive approaches such as setting expectations and providing rewards for positive behaviors, focusing on the positives rather than the negatives.

Throughout the 1980s, “a need was identified for improved selection, implementation, and documentation of effective behavioral interventions for students with behavior disorders (BD)” (Gresham et al., 1991, as cited in Sugai & Simonsen, 2012, p. 1). Efforts of researchers at the University of Oregon indicated that there should be more focus on “prevention, research-based practices, data based decision-making, school-wide systems, explicit social skills instruction, team based implementation and professional development, and student outcomes” (Biglan et al., 1995, as cited in Sugai & Simonsen, 2012, p. 1).

Problem Statement

As of October 2023 the Center on PBIS launched a new five-year funding cycle for more than 26,000 schools across all 50 states and “by securing this round of funding, the Center builds on the momentum of the last five years to continue to sustain and scale up their PBIS implementation efforts” (“About the Center”, 2024, para. 1).

While there are surveys and data that schools have to submit to show their work with PBIS, it is beneficial to review the information schools provide on their PBIS implementation manuals and websites for teachers, parents, and students as this material is what guides the understanding and implementation of the practice. If the goal for the Center on PBIS is to continue to reach as many schools as possible across all 50 states, then the schools already implementing it should provide not only their own school community, but other schools as well, with a glimpse as to how they implement PBIS in their schools, so other schools can learn and adopt the practice as well. PBIS is an evidence-based practice and a deeper review of the presentation and promotion of PBIS by recognized schools can lead to better understanding of

how to begin implementation of PBIS.

Purpose of the Study

PBIS has been studied since the reauthorization of IDEA 1997. More than 26,000 schools across the United States have adopted the universal components of PBIS. The purpose of this study was to explore the ways public elementary schools in New Jersey promote, present, and implement PBIS to their own school community and other schools. PBIS is “an evidence-based multi-tiered framework for implementing evidence-based practices to support improved social, emotional, behavioral (SEB), and academic outcomes for all student groups through systems and data-based decision making” (Center on Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports, 2023, p. 65). PBIS is most effectively implemented through “the development of a ‘blueprint’ for PBIS adoption that lays out the core features of each tier of support” (Horner & Macaya, 2018, p. 675). In this case the blueprint is the PBIS implementation manual. This investigation brings awareness to the importance of NJ PBSIS and the benefits for students, as well as staff and the schools and districts on a whole to promote and maintain a positive school climate. Overall, PBIS provides students and staff with a better sense of their accomplishments and abilities and improves their mental, social, and emotional wellbeing. Currently, there is no research focused specifically on the PBIS implementation manuals and websites of the NJ public elementary schools to determine the implementation of the evidence-based practice.

For this study, document analysis was well-suited for this research. This document analysis is necessary to determine if each school that has been recognized by NJ PBSIS 2023-2024 has an implementation manual that provides information about the Universal Tier 1 for others to understand and see the implementation of PBIS. The documents being analyzed were retrieved from each school’s district or school homepage as well as asked for through

principals, school counselors or PBIS coaches from each school. This document analysis reviewed the descriptive language presented in each school's PBIS Implementation Manual. This document analysis examined 54 elementary schools seeking how each 2023-2024 recognized school presents Tier 1 of PBIS and how the information aligns with the Center on PBIS and Horner's six measurements for evidence-based practices:

1. What they look like
2. Where they can be used
3. Who should benefit from them
4. How to implement them well
5. What outcomes to expect
6. Why they should expect them to work

(Horner et al., 2010, pp. 2-3)

We must identify if these recognized schools use information that aligns with the Center on PBIS concerning Tier 1 through the use of Horner's six measurements for evidence-based practices. It is essential to make sure PBIS is promoted and presented correctly in order to maintain and uphold this evidence-based practice's goal of a positive school culture and climate and extend this practice to other schools in the state. The purpose of this research is to explore the ways public school districts in New Jersey communicate Tier 1 PBSIS practices to the school staff and students through their PBSIS implementation manuals and how this information can help encourage and guide more schools in their own implementation.

Significance of Study

A fundamental of behavior that Skinner derived from his many years of research, a concept so basic that it may be a law of behavior, is that people (and animals) do what they are

rewarded for doing (Gallos, 2006). This directly correlates to the PBSIS approach since students are rewarded with a ticket or prize for doing a desired behavior. The first phase of learned behavior is called shaping. For example, when children are learning to walk, they are reinforced by their parents' encouraging comments or physical stroking, but this reinforcement typically follows only the behaviors that lead to effective walking. Programmed learning, invented by Skinner, is based on this principle. To maintain the behavior, a schedule of reinforcement is applied and, generally, the more variable the schedule is, the longer the behavior will last. Skinner therefore advocates positive reinforcement for shaping and controlling behavior (Gallos, 2006). Skinner's belief of positive reinforcement is what guides the PBSIS practice as it focuses on rewarding students when they do the desired positive behavior, such as raising their hand, helping a friend, or walking quietly. As Skinner's phase says, it is shaping and then programmed learning. The students become familiar with the expectations which will be positively reinforced through rewards.

The way to control behavior according to Skinnerian theory and research is to reinforce the desirable behavior positively and, after the shaping process, to reinforce the behavior only occasionally which is considered intermittent reinforcement where reinforced responses can be spaced (Skinner, 1957). An attempt should be made to ignore undesirable behavior and not to punish, but rather, to spend time positively shaping the desired behavior. Once again, this directly correlates to PBSIS practices since PBSIS focuses on the positive behaviors to discourage negative behaviors. For example, if a student is talking in line, the quiet student will receive praise and a ticket for being quiet and the student who is talking will notice the quiet student being rewarded and then become quiet also in hopes of also receiving a reward. The implications of Skinner's work for organizations is that a focus is on establishing incentive

systems, reducing or eliminating many of the control systems that contain inherent threats and punishments, providing feedback to all levels of employees regarding their performance, and developing programmed-learning techniques for training employees (Gallos, 2006). It is so important for PBSIS to be implemented effectively and taught to the students correctly in the beginning of the year so they understand the expectations and then once PBSIS is established it reduces negative behaviors or consequences and focuses on only positives. Bolman and Deal highlight the human resource framework in their research which reminds that schools must deal with the complexity of human nature by facilitating relationships that motivate and foster high levels of both satisfaction and productivity (Gallos, 2006). The human resource framework is at the heart of PBSIS because it deals with forming positive relationships with students and encouraging positive behaviors and understanding students and their needs.

B.F. Skinner devised operant conditioning which is a form of learning in which the motivation for a behavior happens after the behavior is demonstrated (Skinner, 1957). For example, an animal or a human receives a consequence after performing a specific behavior. The consequence is either a reinforcer or a punisher. Any consequence of behavior which is rewarding or, more technically, reinforcing, increases the probability of further responding (Skinner, 1957). Operant conditioning is found in PBSIS since the consequence for a positive behavior is receiving a ticket or reward. The student is aware that he or she will receive a positive reinforcer or reward when demonstrating the correct, desired, positive behavior.

The Center on PBIS intends on funding schools and growing to reach more schools. As a result, it is necessary to see how schools are implementing the practice already. A way to see this implementation is to review implementation manuals and websites as they guide the schools, staff and students on how to effectively and successfully implement PBIS and provide schools,

staff, students, and families with information to better understand PBIS. With more knowledge, PBIS can be promoted, implemented, and maintained throughout the United States.

Brief Overview of Research Design

The research design for this study was document analysis. Document analysis is a “systematic procedure for reviewing or evaluating documents both printed and electronic material” (Bowen, 2009, p. 27). “It is a process of evaluating documents in such a way that empirical knowledge is produced and understanding is developed” (Bowen, 2009, p. 34). As explained by Strauss and Corbin (1990), “A grounded theory is one that is inductively derived from the study of the phenomenon it represents. That is, it is discovered, developed, and provisionally verified through systematic data collection and analysis of data pertaining to that phenomenon” (Bowen, 2009, p. 34).

The study was conducted where the researcher independently reviewed and examined the PBIS implementation manuals and websites of 54 elementary schools in NJ that were recognized by NJ PBSIS in 2023-2024.

Research Questions

The purpose of this document analysis was to find the answers to the following research questions:

1. What content themes and practices appear on institutional NJ PBIS implementation manuals that align to Tier 1 of the PBIS framework?
2. How are Horner’s six measures of evidence-based practices communicated through the PBIS implementation manuals?

Glossary of Terms

“Common Language: The terminology, phrases, and concepts that describe the organization’s vision, actions, and operations so that communications are understood, informative, efficient, effective, and relevant to members of the organization” (“Center on Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports,” 2023, p. 62)

“Common Vision/Values: A mission, purpose, or goal that is embraced by majority of members of the organization, reflects shared needs, and serves as the basis for decision-making and action planning” (“Center on Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports,” 2023, p. 62)

“Districtwide: Extending support to a group of schools or agencies defined by a common geographic, political, and/or fiscal structure (e.g., local education agency or LEA, charter management organization, diocese, intermediate units such as ISD, BOCES, including ESC and RESA depending on the fiscal structure). A districtwide approach is referred to as implementation guided by a district leadership team, with effective coordination and support provided in all schools within the respective school district or organization” (e.g., agency). (“Center on Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports,” 2023, p. 64)

“Evidence-Based Practices (EBPs): Interventions, strategies, and techniques supported by empirical evidence of their effectiveness, efficiency, relevance, and durability. See the What Works Clearinghouse to assist in selecting EBPs” (“Center on Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports,” 2023, p. 64)

“Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS): The practice of providing high-quality instruction and interventions matched to student need, monitoring progress frequently to make decisions about changes in instruction or goals and applying child response data to important educational decisions” (“Center on Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports,” 2023, p. 65)

“Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS or PBSIS): An evidence-based multi-tiered framework for implementing evidence-based practices to support improved social, emotional, behavioral (SEB), and academic outcomes for all student groups through systems and data-based decision making” (“Center on Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports,” 2023, p. 65)

“Practices: Interventions and strategies that are evidence-based in achieving indicated outcomes” (“Center on Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports,” 2023, p. 65)

“Response to Intervention RtI (1997): initially developed and used in special education to refer to a framework for improving identification and delivery of educational supports for students with significant learning disabilities, and later became a framework for supporting academic needs of all students” (“Center on Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports,” 2023, p. 66)

“Schoolwide: Refers to extending support to all students and adults in all settings in a school or organization (e.g., agency). A schoolwide approach is also referred to as providing a full continuum of support (Tiers 1, 2, 3)” (“Center on Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports,” 2023, p. 66)

“Tier 1 (Universal or Primary): Preventing the development of new cases (incidence) of unwanted behaviors by establishing a core foundation of high-quality learning environments for all students and staff and across all settings (i.e., schoolwide, classroom, and non-classroom)” (“Center on Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports,” 2023, p. 67)

“Whole School: Refers to addressing the behavior support needs of all members (e.g., students, staff, family members, classified staff) and all settings of a school community” (“Center on Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports,” 2023, p. 68)

Key Terms

“Acknowledgment - recognition and reinforcement of desired behavior” (“Glossary of PBIS Terms, Acronyms, and Abbreviations,” 2023, para. 1)

“Assessment - evaluation used to measure the success of PBIS implementation” (“Glossary of PBIS Terms, Acronyms, and Abbreviations,” 2023, para. 1)

“Behavior – what a student does, in measurable and observable terms” (“Glossary of PBIS Terms, Acronyms, and Abbreviations,” 2023, para. 2)

“Expectations – positively stated school-wide rules on behavior” (“Glossary of PBIS Terms, Acronyms, and Abbreviations,” 2023, para. 5)

Organization of Dissertation Chapters

The dissertation is divided into five chapters. The first chapter introduces the topic including the problem statement and purpose and significance of the study. It also includes a brief discussion of the theories and research design that were used to guide the study as well as research questions and key terms. The second chapter will include a review of relevant literature regarding PBIS origin, history and connection to national laws, as well as its effectiveness in schools among staff and students. The third chapter will outline the research design and methodology, including data collection, sampling, analysis, validity/credibility, and limitations. The fourth chapter will present the findings of the study. The fifth chapter will discuss the conclusion of the study, including implications and recommendations for future research.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

Introduction

The literature review examines several areas regarding the connection between positive behavioral intervention supports (PBIS) and improving student social, academic, and behavioral outcomes. This review examines the literature surrounding the characteristics of effective behavior management by means of intervention supports and practices implemented that promote positive student behavior and success. This chapter explores the current drive to incorporate positive behavioral interventions and supports throughout the school day to encourage and maintain positive student behavior. There is a growing emphasis on implementing schoolwide systematic approaches to improve student behavior. These accountability measures require evaluations to understand and support the effective practices, while dismissing the ineffective ones. The literature review focuses primarily on the relationship between the specific positive behavioral interventions and supports, school implementation, and effectiveness. Review of the literature revealed findings that viewed PBIS through the lens of teachers implementing it in the classroom as well as perceptions on how certain events in school can help or hinder PBIS implementation, effectiveness, and success. The literature was extracted from academic journals and review articles, including some from the *Journal of Positive Behavior Interventions* and ProQuest, as well as from websites dedicated to PBIS work. Most of the literature was empirical in nature. This chapter reviews the result of studies concerning the use of PBIS to improve student behavior and success. The current behavior plans and systems require a critical review of their effect on student behavior and overall school wide success.

The History of Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports in the U.S.

The term “positive behavioral interventions and supports” (PBIS) was first used in the 1997 reauthorization of Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), with PBIS directly included in IDEA sections 601(c)(5)(F), 611(e)(2)(C)(iii), 614(d)(3)(B)(i), 662(b)(2)(A)(v), and 665 (Center on Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports, 2023, p. 14). The 2004 reauthorization of IDEA and the corresponding 2006 regulations retained language on PBIS, and the 2015 Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA; PL 114-95) also referenced PBIS on multiple occasions. Local Education Agencies (LEAs) may also use Title 1 funding under part B of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), as amended by the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) “[t]o assist LEAs in providing positive behavioral interventions and supports and mental health services for children with disabilities” (Authorization, 2023 (Center on Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports, 2023, p. 14).

The U.S. Department of Education has provided further clarification that:

1. PBIS does not “mean any specific program or curriculum” (Applications, 2013, p. 40459) but is a “framework or approach for assisting school personnel in adopting and organizing evidence based behavioral interventions and supports into an integrated continuum that enhances academic and social behavior outcomes for all students” (U.S. Department of Education, 2018, p. 35257).

2. PBIS is a system approach centered on a “multi tiered behavioral framework to improve the integration and implementation of behavioral practices, data-driven decision-making systems, professional development opportunities, school leadership, supportive SEA and LEA policies, and evidence-based instructional strategies” (U.S. Department of Education, 2013, p. 40459).

3. Using a PBIS framework leads to better behavioral and academic outcomes (U.S. Department of Education, 2013, 2015). This includes “improving school climate, preventing problem behavior, increasing learning time, promoting positive social skills, and delivering effective behavioral interventions and supports” (U.S. Department of Education, 2013, p. 40459-40460).

(Center on Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports, 2023, p. 15).

PBIS is a framework that is centered on a continuous process that is evidence-based through research and practices that are organized within a multi-tiered system of support, also called response-to-intervention (Sugai & Horner, 2009, as cited in Sugai & Simonsen, 2012). A tiered intervention system is a framework that helps school personnel to create a cohesive plan of action. The reason for implementing a tiered system of support, such as PBIS, is that there is National Policy through Every Student Succeeds Act and US DOE messaging on finding alternatives to suspension, eliminating disproportionality and promoting evidence-based practices.

“When implemented with fidelity, PBIS improves social emotional competence, academic success, and school climate. It also improves teacher health and wellbeing. It is a way to create positive, predictable, equitable and safe learning environments where everyone thrives”

(“What is PBIS?” 2023, para. 1). Schools implementing PBIS:

- Use a continuum of evidence-based practices to support student needs
- Engage students, families, and community members to co-create culturally responsive practices
- Regularly check the effectiveness of their practices
- Rely on teams to guide implementation

- Use data to identify strengths, uncover needs, and monitor student progress
- Implement universal screening
- Develop content expertise through coaching and on-going professional development

(“What is PBIS?” 2023, para. 2)

When implemented well, PBIS can improve the school climate so social and behavioral support for students is provided during lessons and activities (“What is PBIS?” 2023).

Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports in the 21st Century

Begun in urban and suburban schools on the West Coast of the United States and now in over 26,000 schools in the United States, (Horner & Macaya, 2018) Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) is defined as “a frame-work or approach comprised of intervention practices and organizational systems for establishing the social culture, learning and teaching environment, and individual behavior supports needed to achieve academic and social success for all students” (Horner & Sugai, 2010, p. 13 as cited in Ryoo et al., 2018, pp. 629-630).

PBIS has three tiers. The schoolwide, universal tier, Tier 1, has core practices that include:

- (a) defining and teaching positively stated behavior expectations
- (b) providing feedback and acknowledgment for students who follow the behavior expectations
- (c) establishing instructional responses to problem behavior
- (d) establishing efficient procedures for requesting assistance and professional development (Horner & Sugai, 2015 as cited in Bastable et al., 2021, p. 220).

The schoolwide implementation of PBIS uses data collection and systems to improve the social competency of students, develop positive behaviors and decrease challenging ones. (Sugai, 2007, Welsh, Parke, Widaman, & O'Neil, 2001 as cited in Ryoo et al., 2018). Schoolwide PBIS

applies behavioral, social learning, and organizational principles to an entire student body consistently across all school contexts (Bradshaw et al., 2012). Staff and students are aware of established schoolwide expectations and refer to them throughout the year to maintain positive behavior and promote desired behavior through rewards and recognition. “Nearly 20 years of research suggest that the implementation of schoolwide PBIS positively impacts students across behavioral and academic domains and improves the organizational health and climate of schools” (Lee & Gage, 2020 as cited in Lloyd et al., 2023, p. 131).

Characteristics of Positive Behavior Intervention and Supports

Collaboration is necessary in knowing how to best implement PBIS. Educators learn about strategies to improve equity in school discipline in practice (Bastable et. al, 2021). As Ryoo et al. (2018) explain, “they work together to identify and support students at risk in a preventive continuum of behavioral intervention support. All students are taught school expectations and positive behaviors that are clearly defined” (p. 630). According to Horner & Macaya (2018), the key assumptions guiding PBIS are that

- (a) students learn how to behave (both how to behave well and how to behave poorly), and this means we need to teach positive behaviors and minimize the learning of problem behaviors
- (b) effective schools not only teach positive behaviors, but regularly monitor and acknowledge those behaviors
- (c) investing in prevention of problems will be more effective and efficient than waiting for problems to arise, and trying to then focus on remediation
- (d) effective behavior support needs to occur at differing levels of support intensity (all students receive general support, some students receive more structured, and intensive

teaching and feedback, and a few students will need highly individualized and focused assistance to succeed)

(e) the organization of behavior support needs to occur across the whole school

(f) effective behavior support “practices” will be used with fidelity and sustainability when linked to supportive organizational systems. Individual students, and individual classrooms will always be important, but a central key to behavior support is to consider the whole school as a learning community. (p. 665)

Horner understands that PBIS is an evidence-based practice and his model and measurements directly align to the main points of Tier 1 PBIS. Using Horner’s measurements as a guideline for the PBIS practices shows its true ability to be an effective evidence-based practice. Overall, PBIS seeks to provide a school climate that improves the interactions among students, as well as with the staff. The schoolwide focus of PBIS is on positive, proactive approaches to target undesirable behavior in students and encourage positive behavior.

Challenges Faced in the Implementation of PBIS

PBIS can be a successful tool when implemented and maintained effectively. The authors, Bastable et al., from The Hammill Institute on Disabilities, conducted a qualitative study on understanding educators’ implementation of PBIS. Findings showed that educators wanted and appreciated being provided with time to collaborate and discuss PBIS strategies for their classrooms and they also wanted coaching in PBIS (Bastable et al., 2021). Furthermore, “a recent evaluation of a district’s implementation of restorative practices found limited time for staff training, unclear expectations communicated from school leaders and competing district initiatives negatively impacted staff adoption of this disciplinary approach” (Augustine et al., 2018 as cited in Bastable et al., 2021, p. 220). The teachers are the ones presenting PBIS to the

students. If the teachers do not understand PBIS or are not well-trained in it, then the students will not understand or appreciate its purpose, value, and components. Coaching and collaboration is needed in order to implement PBIS successfully and make it effective with students.

In a qualitative study by Feuerborn et al. (2016), it was determined that:

Teachers expressed a need for more resources such as training, time, staffing, and funding. Teachers expressed the need for resources that facilitate sufficient preparation. Time was particularly prevalent within this theme. Staff consensus and support, resources, and philosophical concerns were the most prevalent concerns regardless of implementation level. (p. 225)

According to Debnam et al. (2013), as cited by McIntosh (2016), “An absence of principal support for PBIS may be related to other barriers, such as low conceptual understanding of PBIS among staff, shortage of planning time, difficulty balancing competing initiatives, and greater dependence on technical assistance” (p. 101). Just like teacher understanding and support is needed for student understanding, principal and leadership support is needed for teachers to understand PBIS significance.

According to the findings of McIntosh & Turri (2014), as cited in Horner & Macaya (2018), “among the most consequential lessons we have learned is that effective practices (core features) are less likely to be adopted with precision, and unlikely to be sustained over time, unless they are paired with adoption of supporting organizational systems” (pp. 675-676). PBIS cannot be expected to be maintained throughout the years if it is not supported through constant training and encouragement starting with administrators.

Effectiveness of Positive Behavioral Intervention and Supports on Student Behavior

Since PBIS focuses on student behavior and success, it is essential that students feel that they are part of the PBIS process. For example, they can choose the rewards they would like to earn and they can make suggestions that they know will benefit and motivate them to uphold positive behaviors. If students feel they are part of the planning, then they will better understand PBIS and want to participate in it more. A study conducted by Bradshaw et al. (2012) in 37 elementary schools with 12,344 elementary school students indicated that, positive results of schoolwide PBIS were strongest among students who have had PBIS since kindergarten and these students “in SWPBIS schools also were 33% less likely to receive an office discipline referral than those in the comparison schools” (p. 1). Furthermore, schools with schoolwide PBIS displayed less disruptive behavior and concentration problems and better emotion regulation and more prosocial behavior. There were also less odds of receiving an office discipline referral (Bradshaw et al., 2012).

As presented by Sugai, Horner, & Lewis (2015), as cited in Horner & Macaya (2018), PBIS is most effectively implemented through:

- (a) development of a “blueprint” for PBIS adoption that lays out the core features of each tier of support
- (b) providing examples of schools adopting these core features in different ways in different contexts
- (c) monitoring the impact of implementation on student outcomes
- (d) specifying a formal process by which local leadership teams shape the path of adoption to fit the local values and culture. (p. 675)

Teacher Perceptions of Positive Behavioral Intervention and Supports

Teachers’ perceptions of PBIS can significantly affect their decisions about implementing

it in the classroom. In reviewing the literature, it was found that teachers believed benefits to implementing PBIS were more training and access to resources. Teachers also identified that if it is a schoolwide initiative, all staff and administration should be on board and there needs to be support from everyone.

A qualitative study by Tyre et al. (2019) explored middle school teachers' concerns of PBIS. They found that teachers felt it is difficult to ensure that students understand PBIS if the teachers themselves don't truly understand how to implement it. Additionally, PBIS can be introduced as an effective system, but it needs to be carried through and followed up on over the years to ensure success and some teachers believe that while it is set up nicely, the components of PBIS are not always maintained. Teachers also described challenges regarding colleague support of PBIS. If some teachers are alone in implementing PBIS they feel discouraged to continue and if there are only a few enforcing the consequences, they feel it can hinder their relationships with the students (Tyre et al., 2019) . Lastly, it was suggested that teachers with 35 + years experience will not care about new systems like PBIS and rather stick with the behavior plans they know and have used since the beginning of their career.

In similar studies:

Teachers across all schools expressed concern that their colleagues did not buy into SWPBS and would not implement the plan consistently. Even though fellow staff may have voiced support for SWPBS publically, teachers were skeptical that their colleagues would follow through with implementation once out of the sight of others. (Feuerborn et al., 2016, p. 225)

In order for PBIS to be implemented from the top down, the program and practices need to be explained well to teachers and well-received by them so they can in turn convey the

positive aspects of it to the students and there is a better chance for fidelity of implementation.

Student Perceptions of Positive Behavioral Intervention and Supports

As the implementation of PBIS continues in schools throughout the United States, the goal for integrating the system is to increase student understanding and buy-in. PBIS should be appropriately integrated to have an effective impact on student behavior and social success. It is crucial to gain students' perceptions regarding the effectiveness of PBIS in their daily school life to provide insight to schools as they focus on implementing PBIS.

PBIS is meant for the students, so the students' perceptions are what matter and it's through their opinions that the program can be improved and maintained. However, the students are not always the ones that are listened to when planning elements of PBIS. In fact, there is not much literature on students' perceptions of PBIS. Mainly, research is on how teachers feel the students respond to PBIS.

In a study conducted at a middle school, student understanding and ownership were common themes and it was determined that “providing meaningful opportunities for students to participate in and shape schoolwide PBIS may promote the relevance and impact of these systems” (Martinez et al., 2019 as cited in Lloyd, B. P. et al., 2023, p. 132). Incorporating student voice into decision making about PBIS is a way to allow students to feel as if they are truly part of it and when they feel they are part of it, then they will be more interested in it. This is the same with the rewards. Students felt that PBIS rewards were motivation for their peers to maintain appropriate behavior.

Across all six focus groups determined by the study of Lloyd, B. P. et al., (2023) middle school students expressed favorable perceptions of PBIS, acknowledging that it improves behavior, makes students feel good about themselves and their school, and allows the “good

kids” to be noticed. However, there were also many recommendations for PBIS from the students shown in Figure 1 below (Lloyd, B. P. et al., 2023):

Table 2. Summary of Student Recommendations on Improving PBIS at Their School.

Area	Recommendations
Making system-wide changes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Making system more accessible • Making system more equitable • Creating a customized system to match interest <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Altering the plan yearly • Including an observable discipline component <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Incorporating technology • Including more rewards • Keeping it the same
Adjusting ground rules for points and rewards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allowing students to award tickets • Allowing all staff to award points • Sharing points with friends • Allowing points to carry over • Removing daily point cap <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Including bonus points • Aligning points with behavior • Allowing the removal of points • Allowing students to buy way out of trouble <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Providing a way to store tickets
Increasing communication between staff and students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explaining the plan to students • Explaining it takes time to change behavior • Explaining it takes time to earn rewards <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Building relationships with students • Advertising rewards and events
Increasing student involvement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Polling students • Selectively gathering student input • Inviting students to be on PBIS sub-committees <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Planning more events • Including opportunities for mentoring

Note. PBIS = Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports.

Note: This table shows a summary of student recommendations on improving PBIS at their school. From “Student Perspectives on Implementation and Impact of Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) in Their Middle Schools” by B.P. Lloyd et al., 2023, *Journal of Positive Behavior Interventions*, 25(2), p. 139. Copyright 2022 Hammill Institute on Disabilities. Reprinted with permission.

The recommendations from students in the study by Lloyd, B. P. et al. (2023) indicate that overall, students have minimal knowledge of PBIS. One aspect of PBIS which students are familiar with and often refer to are tickets and rewards. While some students are motivated by the incentives they will earn when showing positive behavior, other students do not really care about the rewards and are not as enthusiastic about it. Aside from the recognition of PBIS rewards, students did not seem to mention “its focus on prevention, social and emotional learning, proactive discipline, and data-based decision-making” (Lloyd, B. P. et al., 2023, p.

141). As a group, middle school students showed they are more knowledgeable about what they will receive (for example, the tickets or prizes), rather than why they are receiving it. They are less aware of the purpose of PBIS and why it is being implemented in their school (Lloyd, B. P. et al., 2023).

State Implementations of PBIS

A middle school in Oregon uses The High Five Program that incorporates strategies associated with positive behavioral interventions and supports(PBIS). This program was developed and implemented by the staff of Fern Ridge Middle School in September of the 1994-1995 school year. Since then all staff and students continue to adhere to the High Fives:

1. Be Respectful
2. Be Responsible
3. Follow Directions
4. Keep Hands and Feet to Self
5. Be There-Be Ready

The program incorporates the use of a token economy-the High Fivecoupon. Coupons are redeemed throughout the school year for products and entry into various activities. These student expectations were introduced into the school culture in response to over 5,000 discipline referrals written during the 1993-1994 school year. Today, there are consistent expectations for students and the first 2 days of each school year are devoted to High Five training in which the students are actually taught the behavioral expectations (Taylor-Greene et. al, 2000).

Another school in Oregon, Clear Lake Elementary School, has learned that the components of an effective behavior support system need to be implemented sequentially. That is, the school-wide systems need to be established before the school can effectively target the

behavior support needs of classrooms or individual students. Consequently, the leadership team and staff have had to make concerted efforts to stay focused on implementing the targeted component before other components are addressed (Colvin & Fernandez, 2000).

Effective Behavioral Support (EBS) is a systems approach to enhancing the capacity of schools to adopt and sustain the use of effective practices for all students. The EBS approach is founded on establishment of a proactive school wide system of behavior support. This first level of implementation has a common approach to discipline that emphasizes teaching all students key behavioral expectations and routines and establishing a proactive means of communication for students and staff. Students are taught specifically what they should and should not do to be successful in school. In addition, this positive, prevention based emphasis teaches behavioral expectations within real school settings or contexts where the behaviors are required. The schoolwide EBS effort has six essential elements:

1. Statement of purpose
2. School wide expectations
3. Procedure for teaching school wide expectations
4. Continuum of procedures for encouraging school wide expectations
5. Continuum of procedures for discouraging problem behaviors
6. Procedures for monitoring the impact of the school-wide EBS implementation

(Lewis & Sugai, 2017, p. 5).

Teaching an expectation is necessary but not sufficient for success in learning social skills.

Schools also must provide incentives to encourage students to use prosocial skills. Most school teams have operationalized this component into some form of a paper token or coupon (e.g., "Gotcha" coupons, "Chance" tickets, "High Fives") (Lewis & Sugai, 2017).

An example of PBIS implementation comes from Parkade Elementary in Columbia, Missouri. This school developed "Pride tickets" to support the larger school mission of increasing school pride. All teachers are given a stack of pride tickets for distribution to any student whom they observe following a school wide expectation. Then:

When a student earns a ticket, half of it is placed in a classroom container and they bring the other half home. At monthly school assemblies, students are given updates on improvements in their behavior, and a drawing is held. When an individual student's pride ticket is drawn, he or she receives a school-related item. (Lewis & Sugai, 2017, p. 6)

More student-based reinforcement maintains the desired behavior. "If teachers are consistent in their positive reinforcement of expected behavior and enforcement of classroom rules, students will recognize what behavior is expected based on critical classroom and teacher cues, signals, and prompts (Lewis & Sugai, 2017, p. 12).

PBIS in New Jersey and NJTSS

The National School Climate Center defines school climate as the "quality and character of school life" (New Jersey tiered system of supports (NJTSS) implementation guidelines, 2019) and explains that a positive school culture and climate emphasizes positive, proactive, and preventive practices that result in a sense of physical and emotional safety for all students and foster optimal conditions for learning. A best practice for this positive school culture and climate is the implementation of PBSIS (New Jersey tiered system of supports (NJTSS) implementation guidelines, 2019). An enduring positive school climate and culture are essential conditions for fostering learning and positive youth development that results in productive and fulfilling lives. The NJDOE supports school efforts to assess, develop and maintain positive school climates and

cultures and other conditions that affect student learning and growth. (School climate and culture, 2023).

The multi-tiered system of supports (MTSS) model, on which NJTSS is based, provides a framework for addressing all students' needs through regular use of data to guide high quality implementation of instruction at varying levels of intensity (e.g., universal instruction provided to all students, targeted small-group instruction provided to students with moderate needs, and intensive individualized instruction) (New Jersey tiered system of supports (NJTSS) implementation guidelines, 2019). A foundational component of NJTSS is positive school culture and climate. A positive school climate is essential for facilitating effective NJTSS implementation. This involves clear specification of expectations at the school, classroom and student levels and activities designed to promote positive student and staff relationships and an environment conducive to learning. Instruction and school activities are provided as part of a comprehensive approach to promoting positive social norms and relationship building. Students and school staff are afforded opportunities to provide regular feedback regarding the effectiveness of programs and interventions, needs to improve the system, and actions to promote and maintain a positive climate (New Jersey tiered system of supports (NJTSS) implementation guidelines, 2019).

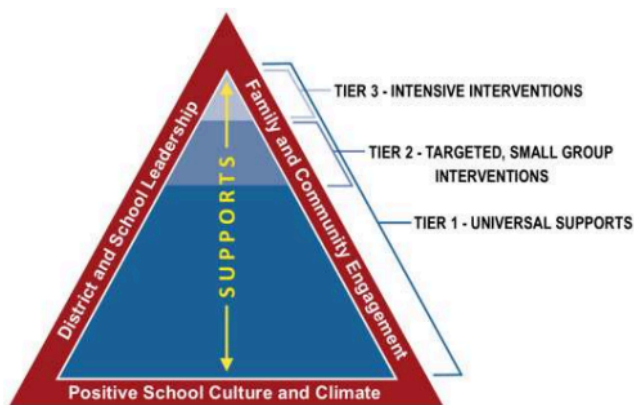


Figure 2: This is a model of a Graphic Representation of the Nine Essential Components of NJTSS. From “New Jersey Tiered System of Supports (NJTSS) Implementation Guidelines” by New Jersey Department of Education, Division of Student Services, 2019, *State of New Jersey Department of Education*, p. 5. Copyright 2019 State of New Jersey Department of Education.

Tier 1, the Universal Supports Tier, is represented by the dark blue section at the bottom of the triangle. One component of the NJTSS Universal Tier is that it represents practices conducted, such as PBIS, to establish school-wide behavioral expectations and the communication of these expectations to all students and their families and all school staff (New Jersey tiered system of supports (NJTSS) implementation guidelines, 2019).

New Jersey PBSIS

“New Jersey Positive Behavior Support in Schools (NJ PBSIS) is a collaboration between the New Jersey Department of Education Office of Special Education and The Boggs Center, Rutgers Robert Wood Johnson Medical School and funded by I.D.E.A Part B” (Description of NJ PBSIS, 2023, para. 1).

The mission of the NJ PBSIS initiative is: “to build capacity among New Jersey school personnel to implement a multi-tiered system of support that results in equitable access to interventions for behavior, conduct, and social-emotional wellness (Description of NJ PBSIS, 2023, para. 3).

Tier 1 systems, data, and practices support everyone across all school settings and establish a foundation for positive and proactive support. Tier 1 practices include:

- Collaborating with students, families, and educators to define positive school/program-wide expectations and prioritize appropriate social, emotional, and behavioral skills
- Aligning classroom expectations with school/program-wide expectations
- Explicitly teaching expectations and skills to set all students up for success

- Encouraging and acknowledging expected behavior
- Preventing and responding to unwanted behavior in a respectful, instructional manner
- Fostering school/program-family partnerships (Tier 1, 2023).

Gaps in the Literature

Schools must provide teachers with the knowledge, confidence and tools necessary to be able to support and encourage PBIS among staff and students. The existing literature lacks depth because while it has looked at teacher and student perceptions of PBIS and fidelity of PBIS, it has not looked at a beginning implementation stage which is done through the manuals. In order to effectively use PBIS to promote positive student behavior, there needs to be a clear format, procedure and understanding of the practice which the implementation manual provides.

Most of the literature has focused on teacher and student perceptions of PBIS and fidelity of PBIS, but there has been no literature done on the PBIS implementation manuals schools are recommended to have. As PBIS continues to be an integral part of promoting positive behavior in schools, there is a need to examine further if teachers, students, and parents understand and appreciate the elements of PBIS. In the present study, I reviewed 54 schools' PBIS implementation manuals and/or websites to learn how they define and describe PBIS so it is implemented effectively. The present study can provide a unique perspective to understand the phenomenon of PBIS through how PBIS is implemented from the beginning stages.

Summary

Positive Behavioral Intervention and Supports (PBIS) has been implemented in more schools throughout the years. The goal of PBIS is to encourage appropriate behavior among students. There is a need to see if this system is actually beneficial and effective in schools. Leaders can provide a PBIS system to staff so then they can use it with students. However, for it

to be truly effective it needs to be implemented well. Studies have been conducted around the importance of PBIS in the classroom, its effectiveness on student behavior, and teacher and student perceptions of PBIS. This study was aimed at exploring the proper implementation of PBIS elements. It will also make recommendations on how to better implement PBIS schoolwide to ensure effectiveness and understanding of the main PBIS components.

Chapter 3

Methodology

The purpose of this study was to explore the ways public schools in New Jersey implement Positive Behavioral Supports and Interventions into their schools. This document analysis reviewed the themes presented in each school's PBIS implementation manual. A document analysis of the manual is only one measure of what schools are doing in regards to PBIS. This study did not focus on the actual implementation part of PBIS but rather reviewed the document that supports implementation. Even if a school has a strong manual, it doesn't mean they are implementing it well and vice-versa, a school with a poor manual or no manual) may be doing something great.

This research examined 17 NJ elementary school PBIS implementation manuals, seeking how public schools communicate the practice and how the information aligns with Horner's six measures of evidence-based practices and the PBIS Universal Tier 1 framework.

Problem Statement and Research Questions

"PBIS is an evidence-based practice that is currently implemented in schools across all 50 states. However, relatively little is known about how schools that use PBIS are communicating their implementation practices. The goal of this study, therefore, was to better understand how PBIS practices are communicated in NJ public elementary schools. Specifically, two research questions guided this study:

1. What content themes and practices appear on institutional NJ PBIS implementation manuals that align to Tier 1 of the PBIS framework?
2. How are Horner's six measures of evidence-based practices communicated through the PBIS implementation manuals?

Overview of Research Design

This study utilized a concept-driven coding scheme aligned with Horner’s six measures of evidence-based practices through the qualitative document analysis process (Horner et al., 2010). Document analysis is a “systematic procedure for reviewing or evaluating documents both printed and electronic material. It is a process of evaluating documents in such a way that empirical knowledge is produced and understanding is developed” (Bowen, 2009, p. 27). The researcher chose to analyze 54 schools’ websites and/or implementation manuals. By utilizing the implementation manuals and websites, this study’s researcher compared written language and trends among the documents to better understand communication patterns between schools.

Conducting a document analysis was best for the study because implementation manuals and websites highlight and describe in writing how schools communicate the PBIS process, including relevant themes, and document analysis allows you to examine what does (and does not) exist. Each school has a PBIS team composed of administration and staff who volunteer to be on the team. The team works together along with district PBIS coaches to create the manuals and websites. The manuals and websites are reviewed, edited, and approved at the start of each year and are allowed to be viewed by the public if requested, which provides access to this research method. As a result, this method allowed for the proposed questions of the study to be answered.

Sampling and Data Collection

The researcher selected schools from the NJ PBSIS recognition list for the 2023-2024 school year because implementation is the focus and the recognized schools achieved implementation fidelity, meaning they delivered the system correctly, as intended. More specifically, the researcher focused on the 54 schools on the list that were specifically public,

elementary K-5 schools. The analysis consisted of these schools' manuals and/or websites from the recognized elementary schools. This selection allowed for a document analysis among elementary schools. The documents ranged from the 2019-2020 school year through the 2023-2024 school year. These documents were the only data resources used throughout this data analysis.

This study focused on select New Jersey public elementary schools grades K-5. The rationale for selecting these schools was because they were recognized by NJ PBSIS for the 2023-2024 school year as achieving implementation fidelity. Schools that achieved this recognition had 4 or more people complete the Benchmarks of Quality assessment and achieved an overall score of 70% or higher. Since the recognized schools are from all across New Jersey, it allowed for the assessment of written language from all different areas. The rationale for assessing elementary schools rather than middle schools or high schools is because it would be beneficial if schools began implementation in elementary schools so students become aware of it and used to it by the upper grades.

Rationale

This research design allowed for the assessment of implementation manuals from public elementary schools who were recognized on the NJ PBSIS 2023-2024 School Recognition List to find evidence-based practices and trends of the written language used within the manuals. Tier 1 schools were chosen from the list of schools because Tier 1 is the Universal Tier and the first tier that is implemented into a school when a school first adopts the PBIS practice. Tier 1 involves schoolwide implementation of the PBIS which is also what the implementation manuals focus on so the entire school staff and students can better understand and use PBIS. The documents also supported the determination of written alignment with Horner's six measures of

evidence-based practices. This method provided examples of the types of evidence-based activities described within manuals and websites. The manuals were available to the public upon request, which offered access to these documents and the websites were accessible to the public which offered access without interference. The background knowledge gained as a current PBIS committee member offered the expertise needed to conduct and analyze the research.

This study's interest stemmed from the researcher's background and involvement in PBIS in multiple schools across the researcher's district and the passion for seeing the benefits of PBIS when implemented successfully through posters, prizes, etc. The researcher chose a document analysis because it was best suited for this study due to the written language in PBIS manuals and websites that describe what the school is intended to do to promote, implement, and maintain PBIS in school. Throughout the research, this researcher's role was guided by the pre-established criteria that allowed for clear guidelines for interpreting the documents.

Data Analysis

The researcher used Horner's six measurements for evidence-based practices as the standard to assess the plans to analyze the data since PBIS is an evidence-based practice. The researcher pulled initial data from the schools' websites via links found on the schools' website. Of the 54 possible elementary schools, only 21 had PBIS on their website and only 17 had implementation manuals. The schools that had PBIS manuals or information readily available online highlighted the main components of PBIS. The schools' selection was not random but based on the mission of PBIS. The selected manuals and websites did not include any charter or private schools.

The researcher downloaded documents for each school or emailed principals, school counselors, or school PBIS coaches from each school for the document. The documents were

then labeled according to their actual school name, and then provided a numerical pseudonym to ensure school confidentiality. Because less than half of the elementary schools' implementation manuals were available, this study's results showed influences in various ways. For example, the simple fact that these 31 schools have a PBIS webpage on their website and 19 schools have an implementation manual to share indicated a belief about how those schools felt about PBIS.

Coding Scheme

The study's researcher implemented a concept-driven coding scheme aligned with Horner's six measurements for evidence-based practices. This implementation allowed for initial guidance for the document analysis of the PBIS implementation manuals and websites. This study's researcher followed the delineated coding processes:

1. The researcher obtained a list of 2023-2024 NJ PBSIS Recognized Schools
2. The study's researcher selected the schools based on which public, elementary K-5 schools were on the recognition list
3. The researcher created a spreadsheet for assessment. This spreadsheet was the researcher's method of recording and coding data and included the following information:
 - a. Public school district's name
 - b. Yes or no to having a PBIS manual or website
 - c. The information on the website or in the manual such as:
 - i. Universal Team members listed
 - ii. PBSIS Defined
 - iii. Mission Statement
 - iv. Introduction to Tiered Systems
 - v. Schoolwide Expectations Defined

- vi. Reward System through tickets, bucks, etc.
- vii. Procedures for distributing rewards
- viii. Results
- ix. P³ & E - Core Prevention Practices
- x. Redirection Practices
- xi. Effectiveness
- xii. Sample Lesson Plans

Validity and Credibility

The researcher utilized Horner's six measurements for evidence-based practices to validate the document analysis. Horner is a leading researcher in the field of evidence-based practices, including PBIS. From the study, the researcher assessed the data for its alignment to the six components of evidence-based practices delineated by Horner: (a) what they look like, (b) where they can be used, (c) who should benefit from them, (d) how to implement them well, (e) what outcomes to expect, (f) why they should expect them to work. Also, the researcher conducted a second round of coding, separating the data into individual sections. In these sections, the research led consistency checks to make sure that data corresponded to the designated question and the identified school.

Limitations

The researcher found a few limitations to the document analysis approach that the researcher anticipated. First, the researcher found some implementation manuals or websites did not provide sufficient detail to answer a research question. Secondly, some schools did not have a manual or website. Third, was researcher bias due to affiliation with one of the districts in the study. Lastly, the documents outline the intent of the schools regarding PBIS. These documents

only detailed the schools' implementation, not an assurance on accountability or sustainability.

Chapter 4

Research Findings

PBIS is grounded in a continuum of evidence-based interventions that are used consistently throughout the school to prevent problematic behavior, to teach prosocial skills, and to reinforce new skills. The framework includes a set of clear practices that are embedded in a three-tiered support system for students. The framework includes the following eight key features:

1. PBIS Leadership Team that guides the implementation
2. Statement of vision or purpose
3. Three to five schoolwide positive behavioral expectations
4. A continuum of procedures for encouraging the expected behaviors, including a behavioral matrix explaining how those expectations will look in the school
5. Lesson plans that teach the expected behaviors across all classroom and nonclassroom settings
6. Acknowledgment system that recognizes students using expected behavior—both within and outside of the classroom
7. Flowchart of detailed procedures showing how to handle student misbehaviors schoolwide— across all classroom and nonclassroom settings
8. Data-based system for monitoring implementation, fidelity, and outcomes

(Ryan & Baker, 2019, p. 11)

Taking into consideration the eight key features of the PBIS framework and examining 17 PBSIS implementation manuals there are 13 sections that correlate with the PBIS framework and Horner's 6 measurements. The researcher decided to focus on each component to give a

detailed analysis of PBSIS implementation. The 13 sections focus on: universal team members, PBSIS definition, PBSIS mission statement, introduction to tiered systems, schoolwide expectations throughout the school, reward system through tickets and distributing the tickets, reward distribution, results, P³ & E, redirection, effectiveness, and sample lesson plans. Some of the sections were in each manual, while other sections were only in a few manuals. Regardless, each PBSIS implementation manual aligns with the research because in order for schools to implement and sustain PBSIS effectively, it is essential for the schools to communicate with staff and students to know the main procedures and policies. The researcher used the PBSIS implementation manuals as a reference to the themes the schools should have regarding PBSIS and how these themes compare to the themes of the Universal Tier 1 of PBSIS.

Analysis of PBSIS Implementation Manual

The first section of the PBSIS Implementation Manual lists the members of the Universal Team in the school. Each school has its own PBSIS team and coaches. Administrators invite any staff to be part of the PBSIS team and one benefit of having team members from across your school setting is that it increases the buy-in from all areas of the building and ensures that voices from all disciplines will be heard. This is important because you are building a schoolwide system that affects all staff and students (Ryan & Baker, 2019). These specific members are educated and trained in PBSIS so they can then turnkey it to the rest of the school staff. In order for the entire school staff to understand and implement PBSIS, it is important to be able to know who they can contact with questions or guidance.

The second section of the PBSIS Implementation Manual is where PBSIS is defined. While the exact wording can be a bit different in each manual, the overall definition and explanation of PBSIS is explained and contains the overall idea of how “PBIS is an organizing

framework for schools to determine how they want to operate as a community” (Ryan & Baker, 2019, p. 10). The definition of PBSIS allows for further clarification of what the evidence-based practice is.

The third section of the PBSIS Implementation Manual is the PBSIS mission statement which explains the purpose of PBSIS implementation. In order for schools to buy into the practice, the purpose should be clearly defined so staff understand its significance. For the schools that did include a mission statement, some of the words included in the statement were schoolwide, social-emotional wellness, expectations, positive behaviors, and academic achievement.

The fourth section of the PBSIS Implementation Manual is the Introduction of Tiered Systems which are “based on a model of prevention from public health. The model says that 80 percent of people will respond to general guidance or correction, about 15 percent will need a bit more treatment, and maybe the top 5 percent will need specialized treatment. PBSIS replicates that model. The model recognizes that not all problem behavior is the same, nor do all students respond to the same types of interventions” (Ryan & Baker, 2019, p. 13). PBSIS is a tiered-system and the procedures for schoolwide implementation are based on Tier 1 which is why an explanation of Tier 1 guidelines is important to guide successful and effective training and implementation.

To explain Tier 1, the fifth section of the PBSIS Implementation Manual is schoolwide expectations throughout the school. The Universal Tier 1 of PBSIS focuses on schoolwide implementation of PBSIS. Expectations are the key component in the implementation of PBSIS because expectations outline what behaviors staff should expect from students if PBSIS is implemented correctly.

The sixth section of the PBSIS Implementation Manual is the ticket reward system. The PBSIS approach is centered around positive reinforcement and many schools design a ticket program where teachers hand out tickets when students demonstrate use of a new skill. Sometimes these can be traded in for something the students find valuable—a free homework pass, time with a favorite teacher, small trinkets, or maybe even a pair of tickets to a school dance or sporting event (Ryan & Baker, 2019). When a student shows a desired behavior, then they are rewarded and praised which encourages them to continue to do the desired behavior or task. Being rewarded with a ticket allows the student to have a physical reminder that he or she behaved correctly and was recognized for it.

The seventh section of the PBSIS Implementation Manual focuses on ticket distribution. School staff is told to hand out tickets to students and students are aware that they can receive tickets for good behavior. However, staff cannot just hand out tickets without reason. There are ticket distribution guidelines based on schoolwide expectations so both staff and students know what behaviors are desired. For example, some suggestions for ticket distribution that were in most implementation manuals were: using materials appropriately, holding the door for others, raising your hand, walking quietly through the hallways, and playing safely.

The eighth section of the PBSIS Implementation Manual focuses on reward distribution once students have earned enough tickets to get a prize. Just like ticket distribution, there are guidelines on how and when students can get their prizes. They need to earn a certain amount of tickets or wait until a certain day to get their prize.

The ninth section of the PBSIS Implementation Manual focuses on results. The intended results of implementing PBIS in schools are important for staff to know so they understand why it is important to have PBSIS in their school. When introducing a new practice into a school, it is

necessary to explain the intended success and effectiveness it will have so the staff can buy into it and are encouraged to implement it. When staff sees it is worth it, then they will be more likely to use it, so it is important to highlight that “schools that use the PBIS framework see a decrease in office discipline referrals (ODRs) and suspensions and an increase in academic achievement. Teachers have more time to teach, students have more time to learn, and administrators have more time to run the school rather than spending their days dealing with behaviors. All of this improves favorability with parents and families, stakeholders, and the surrounding community” (Ryan & Baker, 2019, p. 18).

The tenth section of the PBSIS Implementation Manual discusses P³ & E which stands for predictable, positive, present, and engaging. These are core prevention practices that include establishing consistency in routines and expectations, using positive framing to communicate expectations, using active supervision and providing affirmative and corrective feedback.

The eleventh section of the PBSIS Implementation Manual is redirection which applies the principles of T-L-C to maximize the likelihood that redirection will be effective. T-L-C stands for tone, language, and caring disposition. Using a quiet, neutral, and attentive tone, supportive language, and displaying empathy and concern allows for redirection to be successful and for students to stop the unwanted behavior and instead re-engage students into the desired routine quickly and quietly.

The twelfth section of the PBSIS Implementation Manual is effectiveness. There is only so much time in the day and in order for staff to implement PBIS into their daily routines they need to know it will be effective. It is important to stress that “having good behavioral systems and disciplinary practices in place and using data to confirm or deny your hunches will create outcomes that every school wants to see: improved social and behavioral competence and

improved academic achievement” (Ryan & Baker, 2019, p. 18). The PBSIS Implementation Manual highlights and reminds the effectiveness of the PBIS practice in that if it is consistently implemented implicit biases will be neutralized, good habits will be built, and undesired behaviors will be redirected or prevented. With consistency, comes effectiveness and success.

The thirteenth section of the PBSIS Implementation Manual contains sample lesson plans. While it is important for teachers to understand the procedures and expectations of schoolwide PBSIS, it is just as important for teachers to know how to teach PBSIS schoolwide expectations to the students. Sample lesson plans can help teachers explain the procedures and expectations to the students through various activities.

Summary of New Jersey’s PBSIS Guidance

In conclusion, the state of New Jersey’s PBSIS website offers numerous examples and forms of guidance for schools forming and implementing PBSIS. Guidance is available to all school districts in New Jersey and by looking at other districts’ implementation manuals and websites, schools can learn about PBSIS and how to effectively implement it. Positive Behavioral Intervention Supports (PBIS) is an evidence-based practice. In the following sections the researcher compares Horner’s six measurements for evidence-based practices to what 19 schools in New Jersey are actually doing in terms of PBSIS. Using the schools’ PBSIS implementation manuals as a foundation point, the researcher analyzed 19 schools to see how they were communicating the PBSIS procedures with staff and if they use PBSIS correctly as an evidence-based practice.

Results of PBSIS Implementation Manuals and the 17 Schools

The researcher examined the ways public schools in New Jersey communicate to staff about Positive Behavioral Intervention Supports (PBIS) and how this information aligns with the

themes of Universal Tier 1 PBSIS. The researcher studied a total of 17 schools: 1 school district in Cumberland County, 1 school district in Gloucester County, 1 school district in Morris County, 1 school district in Passaic County, and 1 school district in Somerset County. All schools vary in terms of the contents of their PBSIS implementation manuals. For example, the school districts in Cumberland County and Somerset County did not have as much information in the implementation manual as the school districts in Gloucester County and Passaic County.

The results for the research questions are as follows:

RQ (1): What content themes and practices appear on institutional NJ PBSIS implementation manuals that align to Tier 1 key of the PBIS framework?

RQ (2): How are Horner's six measures of evidence-based practices communicated through the PBIS implementation manuals?

There are 13 sections that schools can have in their PBSIS implementation manuals that highlight the 8 key features of the PBIS framework. First, each school has a PBSIS universal team consisting of staff members which allows for staff to be able to turnkey the PBSIS practice to the rest of the staff. Second and third, respectively, the implementation manual contains a PBSIS definition and a PBSIS mission statement. It is important for the goals and purpose of PBSIS to be stated so staff understand the objective and importance. Additionally, the fourth section, introduction of tiered systems, is crucial to get a better understanding of New Jersey's definition of Universal Tier 1 practices and procedures which guide schoolwide implementation. Fifth, the understanding and discussion of schoolwide expectations are necessary for PBSIS to be implemented successfully and effectively. Following that, when the schoolwide expectations are upheld by students, they can receive ticket rewards and therefore, ticket distribution and reward distribution guidelines are needed. There are times when students will need to be redirected or

when core prevention practices, such as P³ & E are needed to promote positive behavior. Lesson plans that focus on a schoolwide expectation can further help reinforce the desired behavior and outcome. Lastly, since PBIS is an evidence-based practice, it is necessary to focus on results and the effectiveness of the practice.

Upon analysis, the researcher found 16 of the 17 school implementation manuals included in the study included a list of Universal PBSIS team members. Universal PBSIS team members included principals, classroom teachers, counselors, and specialists. This finding reveals the majority of schools in the sample clearly identify who is a member of their respective Universal PBSIS Team. This is important because a PBIS Leadership Team is a key feature of PBIS framework and having members clearly identified helps the other staff know who to turn to for questions or guidance. When implementing any new practice in a school, there needs to be a group or committee that fully understands the goals and procedures to be able to explain to everyone else so the program is initiated effectively and continues successfully. This is why having a Universal team with members clearly listed and known to the entire school is extremely important and useful.

Only 5 out of 17 schools included a clear definition of PBIS. Before explaining, encouraging, or implementing PBIS in schools, the staff needs to know what PBIS stands for and the schools that define PBIS allow for an introduction to the practice before getting into the procedure. For example, MacAfee Road School in Somerset, NJ explains that PBIS stands for Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports and “is associated with increases in positive student outcomes (e.g., increase in instructional time) and decreases conduct infractions as measured by office conduct referral and suspension data” (MacAfee Road Manual to Reach High, 2023-2024). School 17 in Clifton, NJ has the same description which shows PBIS can be a

universal practice not only among schools in the same school district, but also in schools across the state of New Jersey. To understand a concept, a definition is beneficial, so the fact that only 5 out of 17 schools included a definition may suggest a lack of quality communication on part of the schools that did not include the definition of PBIS. If the PBIS implementation manuals are meant to inform staff or serve as a guide for schools wanting to implement PBIS in the near future, then each manual should include a clear definition of PBIS. A clear definition of PBIS helps explain what PBIS is and could influence or encourage schools to implement it or understand it and support it better.

Similar to the definition of PBIS, only 5 out of 17 schools included a mission statement in their implementation manuals. It was not the same 5 schools that had a PBIS definition. A clear mission statement is important because it delineates the purpose of PBIS in schools. PBIS's mission and values are based on what's important to the staff, students and overall school community to improve school climate and enhance social skills and academic progress. Most of the language utilized in the mission statements were very similar to one another. Most of the schools focused on fostering positive and meaningful relationships between students, staff, and the school community. In addition, school districts explored the need to promote a safe, positive, and enjoyable learning environment centered on respect, responsibility and kindness.

As an example, the PBIS Mission Statement for School 14 in Clifton, NJ states:

“At School Fourteen, PBSIS is committed to fostering and providing our diverse population of students a multi-tiered foundation for behavior, and social-emotional wellness that promotes academic achievement, and lifelong community building skills rooted in respect, kindness, acceptance, and safety for all students” (Clifton School Fourteen Implementation Manual, 2023)

This example shows that safety and respect are important when explaining PBIS. The goal of PBIS is to create a school environment that allows students and teachers to achieve academically and advance socially. When PBIS is presented as a way to promote and uphold kindness, acceptance, and an overall positive learning community, it will be welcomed better in the schools. Just like defining PBIS, explaining the mission of PBIS is an essential factor to promote implementation, so the fact that only 5 out of 17 schools included it may suggest a lack of quality communication on part of the schools that did not include the purpose of PBIS.

One of Horner's measurements for evidence-based practices is what they look like (Horner et al., 2010, pp. 2-3). In this case it means a description of what PBIS practices are. The definition of PBIS and the mission statement of PBIS communicate the description of PBIS and connect to Horner's measurement of what the practice looks like. The statement of vision or purpose is also a key feature of the PBIS framework (Ryan & Baker, 2019). Due to all this, more than 5 out of 17 schools or 29% of schools should include definitions and mission statements of PBIS in their implementation manuals.

Upon analysis, 7 out of 17 schools included an introduction to tiered system planning. All 7 schools were in the Clifton Public School District, yet not all Clifton schools had a section explaining the 3 tiers. While the focus is on Universal Tier 1, it can be helpful to understand the other 2 tiers to plan for a continuum of intervention that begins with the core prevention strategies on Tier 1 and increases in intensity to comprehensive individual plans in Tiers 2 and 3. The fact that only 7 schools include the tiered system diagram shows that it should be something to be included in the future as the other tiers are being used in schools. Right now, most schools are focused on Tier 1, but soon enough schools will also be implementing Tiers 2 and 3 so the tiered system diagram would help staff to understand the continuum. Once again, if the goal is to

have PBSIS not only implemented, but sustained over the years, then a projection of where PBSIS is meant to go and how it can continue through the tiers would be an excellent way to plan which is why introducing staff to the tiered system is crucial.

School	Universal Team	PBSIS Defined	Mission Statement	Introduction to Tiered Systems
Herma S. Simmons	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
MacAfee Road	Yes	Yes	No	No
R.M. Bacon	No	No	No	No
School 1	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
School 2	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
School 3	Yes	No	No	Yes
School 4	Yes	No	No	No
School 5	Yes	No	No	No
School 8	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
School 9	Yes	No	No	Yes
School 11	Yes	Yes	No	No
School 12	Yes	No	No	No
School 13	Yes	No	No	No
School 14	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
School 16	Yes	No	No	No
School 17	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
School Street School	Yes	Yes	No	No

Table 1. *Schools - Universal Team, PBSIS Defined, Mission Statement, Introduction to Tiers*

Upon analysis, all 17 schools defined and explained schoolwide expectations. Across the board, no matter what school, district, or county, all schools have expectations for the classroom, cafeteria, hallway, playground, and bathroom. This once again shows that PBIS is not only a universal practice among schools in the same district, but can be a universal practice among schools all across the state of New Jersey. The fact that all schools had the same clear list of expectations for certain areas in the school building shows how important this aspect is and how it is truly the core component of implementing the PBIS Universal Tier. Essentially, the entire PBIS practice centers on setting student expectations. The research shows that when students are aware of what is expected of them and know they will be positively reinforced for it, then they will follow through with the expectations.

The second measurement of Horner’s evidence-based practices is where they can be used (Horner et al., 2010) and the section in the implementation manuals that discusses where the practices can be used is when the schoolwide expectations by location are listed and described. As aforementioned, the implementation manuals explain that PBIS can be used in the classroom, cafeteria, hallway, playground, and bathroom. The explanation of where to use schoolwide expectations, also goes along with a key feature of the PBIS framework that wants “three to five schoolwide positive behavioral expectations” (Ryan & Baker, 2019, p. 7).

The next three sections all go together and 16 out of 17 schools had all 3 sections. The 3 sections are: reward system through tickets, procedures for distributing tickets, and procedures for distributing rewards. School 12 in Clifton, NJ, is the only school that does not have any of the 3 sections. While their implementation manual still states the basic guidelines needed for successful implementation, the school may want to include the aforementioned 3 sections in the manual in the future for a more complete and comprehensive description of PBIS procedures. If a student meets a schoolwide expectation, he or she is typically handed some type of ticket as a reward. While all schools have a ticket reward, the tickets are called different things, usually named after the school’s mascot. For example, School Street School in Boonton, NJ, calls the tickets Bomber Bucks, while School 3 in Clifton, NJ calls them Star Bucks and Herma S. Simmons School in Clayton, NJ calls them Clipper Coupons. The tickets provide an immediate, tangible form of reinforcement for the students and when they have collected a certain amount of tickets, they are able to redeem rewards or prizes with the tickets. School 4 in Clifton, NJ, describes the procedures for their tickets which are called Roar Bucks explaining:

“When you see students demonstrating ROAR Behavior you will give the student a ROAR Buck and provide the student with behavior specific praise for why they are

receiving the ticket....students may choose to save their ROAR Bucks to cash in at our prize cabinet” (Clifton School Four Implementation Manual, 2023).

The idea of giving students tickets when they are demonstrating a desired behavior is a common theme throughout all 16 implementation manuals. There was also a common idea of weekly prize raffles and days during which students can cash in their tickets for prizes. Again, this shows that no matter what the school or county, the PBIS practice and procedure generally remains the same and can be implemented by other schools that are not already using PBIS.

The 3 sections of: reward system through tickets, procedures for distributing tickets, and procedures for distributing rewards align to both Horner’s six measurements for evidence-based practices and the eight key features of the PBIS framework. First, “who should benefit from them” and “how to implement them well” (Horner et al., 2010, p. 3) are two of Horner’s measurements that are seen when discussing the tickets and rewards procedures for PBIS. The students clearly benefit from PBIS and are the main focus, but overall, the entire school community benefits from PBIS because it promotes and sustains a positive, safe, respectful learning environment. The aforementioned ticket distribution shows how to effectively implement PBIS practices to encourage students and staff to continue meeting the desired expectations. Similarly, two features of the PBIS framework are a “continuum of procedures for encouraging the expected behaviors, including a behavioral matrix explaining how those expectations will look in the school” and an “acknowledgment system that recognizes students using expected behavior—both within and outside of the classroom” (Ryan & Baker, 2019, p. 11). Both of these key features are shown when discussing the ticket and reward distribution system. As these sections align with Horner’s measurements and the key features of the PBIS framework, it is only logical that 16 out of 17 schools have all 3 sections in their implementation

manuals.

As aforementioned, the PBIS practice centers on student expectations and those student expectations are achieved through the students knowing they will be positively reinforced through tickets and rewards. Since the practice centers on the smoothness and success of the ticket and reward distribution, it is crucial to have a clear procedure in place so staff and students are aware of how tickets are earned and received and how rewards are given. When the procedures are stated clearly, then everyone is on the same page and there can be no confusion, only effectiveness.

School	Schoolwide Expectations	Reward System	Procedure for Distributing Tickets	Procedure for Distributing Rewards
Herma S. Simmons	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
MacAfee Road	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
R.M. Bacon	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
School 1	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
School 2	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
School 3	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
School 4	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
School 5	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
School 8	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
School 9	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
School 11	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
School 12	Yes	No	No	No
School 13	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
School 14	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
School 16	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
School 17	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
School Street School	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

Table 2. *Schools - Schoolwide Expectations, Systems and Procedures for Tickets and Rewards*

Upon analysis, all 17 schools list the results or outcomes that are expected if students meet the schoolwide expectations. The language and themes are also the same across all 17 schools when it comes to expected results. For example, the results of following PBIS expectations include entering the classroom quietly, using an inside voice, stopping and listening when needed and washing your hands to name a few. It is the hope that all schools across the state of New Jersey have the same expectations and rules for students and the fact that the language and expectations in the implementation manuals are similar, reinforce the universal

understanding of PBIS. Horner’s measurement of “what outcomes to expect” (Horner et al., 2010) aligns with this section of the implementation manual in schools and is why all 17 schools list outcomes, as it is a vital piece to evidence based-practices. The intended results or outcomes of the PBIS practice goes along with the mission and vision of PBIS. For a program to be well-received, staff needs to understand its importance and envision the success of it. When the intended results and outcomes are clearly explained, it helps encourage the use of PBIS.

Upon analysis, 12 out of 17 schools explain the P³ & E core prevention practices. As School 8 in Clifton, NJ, explains it, “to create proactive learning environments we will implement P³ & E, which includes an array of evidence-based practices that minimize problem behavior and promote positive behavior.” While it is not necessarily a key feature of the PBIS framework, delineating P³ & E in the implementation manual can help staff better and more effectively implement PBIS practices which will lead to expectations being met better by the students.

Similarly, redirection is another section in the manual that can help staff better implement PBIS with the students who are struggling to meet the schoolwide expectations. Out of 17 schools, 15 schools have redirection suggestions in the manuals. Herma S. Simmons Elementary School in Clayton, NJ and R.M. Bacon School in Millville, NJ are the only 2 schools that do not have a redirection section. With the majority of schools having this section, it shows that if the intent is to use PBIS practices to promote positive behavior, then there needs to be a system in place for effective redirection. As School 16 in Clifton, NJ, explains, how applying “the principles of T-L-C to maximize the likelihood of redirection will be effective. T-L-C stands for Tone, Language, and Caring Disposition respectively. The language and term T-L-C is written across all manuals that contain redirection, regardless of the school’s county. A key feature of the

PBIS framework explains there should be a “flowchart of detailed procedures showing how to handle student misbehaviors schoolwide— across all classroom and nonclassroom settings (Ryan & Baker, 2019, p. 11) and the redirection section filled with suggestions is an example of how to effectively handle student misbehaviors and it is no wonder that the majority of schools 15 out of 17 have it included in their implementation manuals. Of course there will be students that still do not follow expectations and it is important for staff to know what to do in those situations. Having a redirection section is important because it helps the staff handle misbehavior in an effective way while still focusing on positive reinforcement.

Upon analysis, 10 out of 17 schools, discuss how to ensure effectiveness of PBIS in some way. Consistent is the word that appears throughout the manuals that do discuss PBIS effectiveness. For example, the manual for School 1 in Clifton, NJ, explains that PBIS universal practices should “consistently implement discipline systems that have produces to neutralize implicit biases” and all staff should “consistently use prevention practices” In order for PBIS to be effective and successful and uphold throughout the years, consistency is key and it is important for staff to understand that. The sixth measurement of Horner’s evidence-based practices is “why they should expect them to work” (Horner et al., 2010, p. 3) which translates to the potential of effectiveness of PBIS in schools which 59% of schools have in their implementation manuals. None of the implementation manuals include specific data as that is through tests and surveys each year. The data collected each year helps with further proof of effectiveness and is a key feature of the PBIS framework.

Upon analysis only 2 schools included sample lesson plans in their PBIS Implementation Manuals. The two schools are Herma S. Simmons Elementary School in Clayton, NJ and R.M. Bacon School in Millville, NJ. Lesson plans are a key feature of the PBIS framework, so more

schools should include sample lesson plans in the manual especially as it provides guidance on how to implement the practices and behavior expectations into daily routines and activities. R.M. Bacon School provides lesson plans that go over schoolwide rules, cafeteria rules, bathroom rules and hallway rules. These areas are areas that each school has desired expectations for, so lesson plans are beneficial for teachers to be able to easily implement PBIS and are a key feature of the PBIS framework so more schools should include lesson plans in their manuals.

School	Results	P3 and E	Redirection	Effectiveness	Sample Lesson Plans
Herma S. Simmons	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes
MacAfee Road	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No
R.M. Bacon	Yes	No	No	No	Yes
School 1	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
School 2	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
School 3	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
School 4	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No
School 5	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No
School 8	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
School 9	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
School 11	Yes	No	Yes	No	No
School 12	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No
School 13	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No
School 14	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
School 16	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
School 17	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No
School Street School	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No

Table 3. *Schools - Results, P3 and E, Redirection, Effectiveness, Sample Lesson Plans*

“NJ PBSIS provides comprehensive professional development to support the implementation of tiered interventions that provide equitable access to a range of school intervention needs including conduct, behavior and social and emotional wellness” (“Description of NJ PBSIS,” 2023, para. 2). NJ PBSIS suggests that each school that has PBSIS uses an implementation manual and NJ PBSIS is available for support and guidance in creating one. It is necessary for each school to align with what is the framework of PBIS and an implementation

manual helps list and lay out the key features of the framework. However, the researcher noticed that many schools throughout the state do not have a PBIS Implementation Manual. For example Freehold Township in NJ has not developed their own manual yet. In order for the staff to fully understand, buy into and implement PBIS it is important for guidelines and expectations to be explained. As seen from the 17 school implementation manuals, they provide details about the framework and serve as a reference guide so all staff is on the same page and the practice is effective and successful.

Chapter 5

Summary, Conclusion, Recommendations

In this chapter, the researcher addresses the discussion, implications for practice, limitations, recommendations for further research, and conclusion. This chapter assists the readers in drawing their own conclusions from the data presented in this study. The data encourages the reader to look at PBSIS and the ways schools communicate about PBSIS from a different perspective of implementation manuals.

Discussion

This study's researcher conducted a document analysis of PBSIS with 17 New Jersey public elementary schools' PBSIS implementation manuals. The purpose of this study was to explore the ways public school districts in New Jersey communicate Tier 1 PBSIS practices to the school staff and students and better understand the themes included in the PBSIS implementation manuals. The study was designed to identify if schools use information that aligns with the PBIS framework that implements a multi-tiered system of support that results in equitable access to interventions for behavior, conduct, and social-emotional wellness (Description of NJ PBSIS, 2023).

Bradshaw et al. (2012) explain that, due to the potential risks that can arise from behavior problems, there is “growing interest in school-wide prevention models, such as School-Wide Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (SWPBIS), as an approach for preventing an early-onset of behavior problems and promoting positive adjustment” (p. 2). In order for students and staff to have a successful, positive learning environment, it is necessary for a practice such as PBIS to be implemented into the school day in order to promote safety, respect, and responsibility. PBIS is “an evidence-based multi-tiered framework for implementing

evidence-based practices to support improved social, emotional, behavioral (SEB), and academic outcomes for all student groups through systems and data-based decision making” (Center on Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports, 2023, p. 65). It is through analysis of this framework through the lens of implementation manuals that the introduction of PBIS into a school can be reviewed.

PBIS is an “evidence-based, tiered framework for supporting students’ behavioral, academic, social, emotional, and mental health” (“What is PBIS?” 2023, para. 1). The document analysis supports the written alignment of Horner’s six measures of evidence-based practices with the PBIS framework and key features. As noted in Chapter 2, “Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) is defined as ‘a frame-work or approach comprised of intervention practices and organizational systems for establishing the social culture, learning and teaching environment, and individual behavior supports needed to achieve academic and social success for all students’” (Horner & Sugai, 2010, p. 13 as cited in Ryoo et al., 2018, p. 630). In terms of evidence-based practices, Horner’s measurements discuss what the practice looks like, where it can be used, who should benefit from it, how it should be implemented, what outcomes to expect and why they should expect the practice to work (Horner et al., 2010). These areas are outlined in each school’s PBIS implementation manuals.

The first research question in this study was about what content themes and practices appear on institutional NJ PBIS implementation manuals/websites that align to Tier 1 of the PBIS framework. This study revealed the majority of schools in the researcher’s sample clearly identify who is a member of his or her school’s Universal PBSIS Team. While only 29% of schools defined PBIS or had mission statements, most of the language utilized in the mission statements were very similar to one another. All schools defined schoolwide expectations

through listing expectations at various locations in the school and all but 1 school explained the ticket reward system, ticket distribution procedures, and reward distribution procedures. Most schools included information about P³ & E - Core Prevention Practices and redirection practices. However, on the other hand only 59% of schools conveyed the expected effectiveness of PBIS. More, if not all schools, should include anticipated success of PBIS and the consistent actions needed to be effective because then it shows the value of implementing PBIS.

Upon analysis, the researcher noticed that only 7 schools included an introduction to the tiered systems of PBIS and only 2 schools' implementations manuals contained sample lesson plans. For PBIS not only be implemented correctly and effectively, but remain consistent, successful, and maintained for many years to come, all aspects of PBIS should be laid out for staff to understand and have guidance on. Having sample lesson plans gives staff one more resource to use in the classroom to explain PBIS expectations to students.

Communication is always a key component when introducing a new practice. In order for staff to understand and buy into the PBIS practice, the purpose and implementation procedures need to be fully explained and the implementation manual is a great place for the explanation to be written and communicated to others. The common language utilized in the implementation manuals across the schools, no matter the county, highlight expectations with positive reinforcement approaches and rewards so safety, respect, responsibility and good behavior are promoted, encouraged and upheld.

The second research question in this study was how Horner's six measures of evidence-based practices are communicated through the PBIS implementation manuals. Each school's manual aligned to Horner's measurements which include: "what they look like, where they can be used, who should benefit from them, how to implement them well, what outcomes to

expect, and why they should expect them to work” (Horner et al., 2010, pp. 2-3). PBIS is defined as an evidence-based practice and the implementation manuals help prove through Hornerr’s measurements that it is not just an evidence-based practice, but an effective one. It is essential for schools to implement PBIS well so it is successful among the staff and students. A thorough implementation manual that aligns with the measures and contains key features sets up schools for success.

If schools have implementation manuals then they can serve as a guide to better understand the practices needed to ensure positive and effective PBIS implementation. Understanding the importance of an implementation manual for school staff to learn PBIS will help teachers and administrators alike when promoting and using PBIS. Moreso, school leaders and other district personnel can use the manual research to show how their schools in the district have a plan and procedure for implementing PBIS practices. Similarly, when PBIS is implemented well in schools, then student behaviors and academics will be better and be more positive and parents will see this positive behavior and good academics at home. When students go home to tell their parents about PBIS or how they earned a ticket or reward, it is beneficial for a well-constructed manual to be available for the parents to look at so they know what PBIS entails. Overall, effective implementation manuals cover all necessary aspects of the evidence-based practice of PBIS and PBIS can be communicated to parents, students, teachers, administrators, and district personnel alike through manuals that thoroughly explain, promote, and encourage PBIS implementation.

The present study succeeded in providing better knowledge on how public schools in New Jersey implement PBIS in their schools. Most schools do a tremendous job at including team members, schoolwide expectations, and ticket and reward distribution systems in their

implementation manuals. However, many schools fail to define PBIS or include a mission statement, lesson plans, or an introduction to the tiered systems. The results from this study provided insight for schools to improve their current PBIS implementation manuals to better explain PBIS practices and procedures to school staff. The study demonstrates the importance of effective PBIS implementation so staff and then students can fully understand expectations. With complete understanding and effective implementation, PBIS can be upheld throughout the years.

Limitations

The limitations of this study arise from several different areas. Document analysis is a form of qualitative research in which documents are interpreted by the researcher to give voice and meaning around an assessment topic (Bowen, 2009). The researcher is the one who interpreted the document analysis; as a result, no one else validated or invalidated the coded information. Second, is the inability to survey or interview the key members in charge of creating the PBIS Implementation Manuals. A survey or interview can provide an opportunity for the readers to have a deeper understanding of the implementation of PBIS. In addition, the opinions of the school staff that participate in making an effective PBIS Implementation Manual can expand the research. Finally, the public document was limited as some schools did not have a PBIS Implementation Manual or did not respond back to the researchers after multiple attempts through multiple paths and people. The researcher had to exclude these aforementioned schools from the research. A document analysis of the manual is only one measure of what schools are doing in regards to PBIS. This study did not focus on the actual implementation part of PBIS but rather reviewed the document that supports implementation. Even if a school has a strong manual, it doesn't mean they are implementing it well and vice-versa, a school with a poor manual or no manual) may be doing something great.

Future Research

Several recommendations emerged from the study's implications and limitations. The study's discussion on how schools implement PBIS through the use of an implementation manual will contribute to promoting effective PBIS implementation throughout schools and serve as a guide to those schools who would like to begin implementing PBIS or create a PBIS implementation manual. The future research in this area will significantly improve how schools can effectively and successfully implement PBIS. Six studies can result from the findings in this research:

1. Research on the quantitative data of: implementation progress data, program fidelity data, and student outcome data and the tools that measure them such as the Tiered Fidelity Inventory (TFI), the Team Implementation Checklist (TIC), the Self-Assessment Survey (SAS), the School-Wide Evaluation Tool (SET), and the Benchmarks of Quality (BoQ) (Ryan & Baker, 2019).
2. Qualitative research could emerge from this line of inquiry, including school staff members' perceptions of how their schools implement PBIS.
3. Qualitative research interviewing school staff about what is beneficial or not to include in a PBIS implementation manual
4. Qualitative research interviewing school staff who are not on the PBIS universal team what they know and understand and what they don't know or understand about PBIS.
5. Look at those schools who are implementing Tier 2 of PBIS because that shows what schools have been using PBIS effectively enough to move on to Tier 2 so the way they implement and maintain PBIS to reach Tier 2 can be of interest.

6. Implementation manuals vary by context level. Some manuals may be bilingual due to the population, some may leave out parts to make room for bilingual sections, some may assume some sections are not truly necessary for implementation, so they only include distribution and reward procedures. The differing context levels of the manuals can be researched as to why some schools feel it is necessary to include some sections, while others do not.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this research affirmed the importance of schools communicating the practices and procedures of PBIS to the school staff through an implementation manual. In order for school staff to fully understand PBIS and how to use it, there needs to be guidance and clear expectations which is what the implementation manual provides. In order for teachers to be able to teach PBIS to the students, the teachers first need to understand PBIS and appreciate its benefits and effectiveness. The better the introduction and implementation of PBIS among the staff, the better understanding and success of PBIS among the students. The better understanding and success of PBIS leads to the sustainability of PBIS. The sustainability of PBIS is due to ongoing commitment of implementation that is supported by administrators and professional development. Consistent implementation is needed for PBIS sustainability and well-constructed manuals help with this because they are the blueprint and guide for staff to implement PBIS to the school and students. If staff and students understand PBIS and how to effectively implement it, then they will be likely to continually and consistently use it throughout the years.

In today's times, positive reinforcement is a common practice in schools. PBIS promotes positive reinforcement of desired behaviors in a safe learning environment which leads to successful social skills and academic achievement. The overall aim of PBIS implementation

manuals is to ensure that the mission, practices, procedures and key features of PBIS are upheld and understood when using them in school. At the end of the day, the purpose of PBIS is to have a successful school day for staff and students.

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