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Staff Perception of PBIS Implementation in Illinois School Districts

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Abstract

Behavioral management is a top priority in the educational setting. Historically, schools have implemented a variety of different methods to manage behaviors in schools. One of these methods is punitive punishment, which has led to the school-to-prison pipeline phenomena. The school-to-prison pipeline is a practice in the U.S. public schools that removes students with behavioral issues from educational institutions often resulting in placement in juvenile and criminal justice systems. Through zero tolerance and other punitive disciplinary policies, many youths find themselves dropping out or being expelled from school and eventually in juvenile detention centers and prisons. Research evidence shows that minority students, students with disabilities, and students who live in urban areas are more at risk of falling victim to the school-to-prison pipeline. To address challenging student behaviors that contribute to the school-to-prison pipeline phenomenon, most schools have adopted Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS), an evidence-based prevention and intervention framework. The main purposes of the current study are to assess school staff perceptions of PBIS implementation for addressing challenging student behaviors, and factors that contribute to PBIS outcomes, such as staff buy-in and training. A total of 439 school personnel from school districts in Illinois participated in the study. Over 60% of participants showed support for PBIS, 72% reported they had received training for PBIS implementation and found it useful, and over 70% indicated their school climate, in terms of resources, support and communication, was adequate to support PBIS. Overall, there was support for PBIS. However, inconsistent data reporting and the COVID-19 pandemic constrained the current study. The implications and limitations of the study and future directions are discussed.

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Table of Contents

Staff Perception of PBIS Implementation in Illinois School Districts

Schools attempt to ensure that students are in an environment that is conducive for learning and safe. To achieve this goal, schools place behavior management as one of their top priorities. Throughout history, many different strategies have been used in schools to manage challenging student behaviors. Punitive disciplinary practices were introduced as a response to fear that youth violence has escalated and made schools unsafe (Castillo, 2013; Nance, 2019; Triplett et al., 2014), despite evidence that school is the safest environment for youth (Mallet, 2016a; Nance, 2019). This resulted in the school-to-prison pipeline: A practice that involves pushing students out of the educational system which in some cases lands them into court systems (Castillo, 2013). Students go through the pipeline by falling victim to punitive disciplinary and zero tolerance policies (Castillo, 2013). Overall, 138 out of 100,000 youth are incarcerated nationally, with rates varying among states (Rovner, 2021). To prevent and address challenging student behaviors, schools started implementing Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS), an evidence-based framework for improving student behavioral outcomes, which should also reduce removal from the educational setting in the form of suspension and expulsion. However, it is unclear if PBIS has reduced the number of students on the path from school-to-prison. The current study is designed to assess school personnel perceptions of PBIS implementation for addressing challenging student behaviors instead of removing students from school, a pathway to school-to-prison. Staff buy-in and staff training are critical components of program success, thus it is important to understand staff perception.

Literature Review

Development of the School-to-Prison Pipeline

Historically, in the 1980s and 1990s, in response to high youth crime, lawmakers and school officials created policies to reduce youth violence, in and out of schools (American Psychological Association Zero Tolerance Task Force, 2008; Nance, 2017). During this era, youth gang violence and drug usage became highly prevalent and spread fear that youth crime was out of control (Castillo, 2013). In the mid-1980s, the Reagan Administration started the war on drugs initiative, which coined the usage of zero-tolerance policies implemented in educational institutions (Mallet, 2016a). In 1986, the Drug Free Schools Act was passed, which resulted in the prohibition of drugs and alcohol possession on school grounds. Any student who violated this policy was expelled, no matter the circumstance (Mallet, 2016a; Triplett et al., 2014). Yet, the fear of youth violence and drug usage did not subside, which led lawmakers and school officials to pass the Guns Free School Act of 1994, which prohibited the possession of guns in public schools (Mallet, 2016a). These initial zero tolerance policies in schools eventually led to the creation of zero tolerance policies for any weapons or fighting, and currently include zero tolerance policies for nonviolent behaviors, such as using foul language, disrespect, and truancy (Mallet, 2016a). School shootings during the 1990s, like Columbine High School in Colorado, also influenced schools to incorporate zero tolerance and harsher disciplinary policies, including high security measures, which resemble a prison setting (Mallet, 2016a; Triplett et al., 2014).

During the early 2000s, school violence began to decrease; yet the media portrayal of school shootings and youth violence during the 1980s and 1990s had already established fear that schools were unsafe (Triplett et al., 2014). Despite the evidence showing that youth violence had

decreased, zero tolerance and punitive disciplinary policies are still intact, pushing students through the school-to-prison pipeline (Dankner, 2019; Triplett et al., 2014).

Presentation of the School-to-Prison Pipeline

A hallmark of the school-to-prison pipeline is extremely harsh discipline and zero tolerance policies aimed at increasing school safety and deterring future misbehavior (American Psychological Association Zero Tolerance Task Force, 2008). However, the implementation of punitive disciplinary policies differs depending on the school. Schools with extreme security measures are likely to have metal detectors, security cameras, clear backpacks, isolation rooms, locked gates around the parameters of the school, security guards, school resource officers (local law enforcement officer), and locker and body searches of student (American Psychological Association Zero Tolerance Task Force, 2008; Castillo, 2013; Mallet, 2016a; Nance, 2017). Punitive policies, in conjunction with these extreme security measures and excessive surveillance, lead schools to have extremely high numbers of students who faced school removal with no regard for the intent, context, and cause for student misbehavior (Castillo, 2013; Nance, 2017; Noguero, 2003). School removal or removal from the educational setting in this study refers to out-of-school suspensions and expulsions. In the 2013-2014 school year, almost 140,000 students received at least one out-of-school suspension and about 2,700 students were expelled from schools in Illinois (National Center for Education Statistics, 2018).

Further, schools spend millions of dollars on contracts with local police departments to hire school resource officers, which appears to have adverse effects on students. With the presence of school resource officers, many students are arrested at school for events as serious as possession of drugs as well as minor disobedience (Castillo, 2013; Mallet, 2016a; Nance, 2017). These harsh disciplinary policies tend to mirror criminal punishment for adults, removing them

from society by imprisonment. Similarly, students who violate these punitive policies are removed from the educational setting and sent to detention centers and prisons (Noguera, 2003). As noted before, schools implement punitive disciplinary policies and extreme security measures with the expectation that it will improve student behavior and make schools safer; however, research shows that these policies have not improved school safety or student behavior. Instead, the practice created distrustful and fearful school climate and threatened the opportunity for many students to learn (American Psychological Association Zero Task Force, 2008; Castillo, 2013; Mallet, 2016b). As discussed next, some students are more at-risk to fall victim to the school-to-prison pipeline.

Populations Most At-Risk

Throughout the nation, "Schools most frequently punish the students who have the greatest academic, social, economic, and emotional needs" (Noguera, 2003). Unfortunately, many of the students who fall victim to harsh disciplinary policies are individuals who come from communities of poverty, violence, inadequate access to health care, and unemployment; all factors that can mold students to be ill-equipped to deal with the structured and sometimes stressful environment of a public school (Schiff, 2018). The punitive discipline practices that contribute to the school-to-prison pipeline appear to disproportionately impact students in urban inner-city schools, students with disabilities, and racial minority students.

Schools in Urban Areas

Youth who attend schools in urban areas are more likely to fall victim to the school-to-prison pipeline, because these schools are more likely to incorporate zero tolerance policies and extra security measures than schools located in suburban or rural areas (Mallet, 2016b; Triplett et al., 2014). Many students who attend urban schools tend to be minority or come from low

socioeconomic status (SES) homes. These two demographics, minority status and low SES, seem to predispose these students to harsh punishment in the school setting in comparison to their middle-class and White counterparts (Mallet, 2016b). In addition, students in urban schools tend to be associated with a wide range of systemic problems, such as poverty related issues, family dysfunction, violence and trauma, academic and learning problems, unstable neighborhoods, and mental health issues (Mallet, 2016b). Schools in inner city neighborhoods have students who face various physical and psychological issues, which contribute to problematic behaviors (Noguera, 2003). However, since these schools lack resources to effectively address the needs of students, the schools implement more security measures and harsh disciplinary policies to control "troubled" or "problematic" students and remove them (Nance, 2017; Noguera, 2003). As a result, students who attend schools in urban areas are more likely to enter the school-to-prison pipeline and end up in juvenile and court systems (Nance, 2017).

Students with disabilities

Another group of individuals who are more likely to fall victim to the school-to-prison pipeline are students with disabilities. Students with disabilities, especially students with emotional or behavioral disorders, are more likely to be removed from school (American Psychological Association Zero Task Force, 2008). The primary reason many students with disabilities face school removal is due to lack of resources to meet the students' educational and learning needs (American Civil Liberties Union, n.d.). In addition, zero tolerance policies do not take behavioral context into consideration (American Psychological Association Zero Task Force, 2008). When students with a disability violate one of the rules, their punishment often includes suspension or expulsion, without consideration of their disability or the context of the behavior. Students with disabilities, identified and unidentified, are more likely to exhibit

challenging behaviors. Thus, these students face punitive punishment, removal from the school setting, and eventual placement in the court system (Mallet, 2016b). According to the U.S. Department of Education (2014), many youths in the juvenile justice system have disabilities, about four times greater than youth with disabilities in the public school system. Emotional disturbance and learning disabilities account for 48% and 39% of the cases, respectively. Unfortunately, these public schools and juvenile justice facilities are ill equipped to provide educational or psychological services to youth with disabilities (Houchins et al., 2010).

Racial Minority Students

Students from racial minority groups are extremely likely to be victimized by the school-to-prison pipeline practice. There is an abundance of research that shows that African American, Hispanic, and Native American students account for many school-enforced punishment and school-related arrests compared to their White counterparts (Castillo, 2013; Ford, 2016; Mallet, 2016b). As discussed earlier, schools began transitioning to zero tolerance and punitive disciplinary policies in response to school shootings. Although over 60% of school shootings occurred in suburban or rural areas and were committed by White shooters, minority students continue to suffer the adverse effects of these policies (Triplett et al., 2014), particularly African American males (Mallet, 2016b; Piquero, 2008). Zero tolerance policies allow schools to apply socially constructed labels such as “violent” or “deviant” to minority students to justify the punitive punishment these students receive (Noguera, 2003; Triplett et al., 2014). Since the 1970s, studies have shown that African American students are 2-3 times more likely to be removed from the educational setting than White students, with other minority groups following close behind with similar statistics (Ford, 2016; Mallet, 2016; Nance, 2017; Piquero, 2008; Tannis 2017). Smith and Harper (2015) reported that in 13 southern states, African American

students made up 27% of school enrollment, but also made up almost 50% of school suspensions and expulsions. However, it is important to note that the database used to retrieve this information had missing data for over 250 southern school districts. Nonetheless, in schools where 50% or more are minority students, principals are more likely to implement zero tolerance policies and high security measures (Nance, 2017; Triplett et al., 2014). Overall, African American youth make up 14% of the general population, but represent 32% of children arrested, 42% of youth detained, and 52% of youth whose cases are waived to criminal court (NAACP, 2020).

It is understood that schools with mostly minority students, specifically African Americans, are less likely to have softer disciplinary methods, such as verbal reprimands or alternative practices, such as restorative justice (Nance, 2019). Furthermore, minority students are more likely to be punished for smaller *subjective crimes*, such as disrespect, excessive noise, and insubordination while their White counterparts are more likely to be punished for *objective crimes*, such as smoking, weapons possession, and use of obscene language (American Psychological Association Zero Task Force, 2008; Ford, 2016; Triplett et al., 2014). There is no evidence that African American students, or any other minority, misbehave at higher rates than White students, pointing to racial disparities in school punishment.

Negative Outcomes of Punitive Disciplinary Policies

Schools remain to be one of the safest environments for most children and adolescents. In a well-structured positive environment, many students can be successful in school (Mallet, 2016a). However, as discussed above, many schools resort to punitive disciplinary policies and extreme security measures hoping to improve school safety, but the opposite is true (Mallet, 2016a). It appears that these methods have failed to improve school safety (Castillo, 2013), tend

to increase recidivism (Triplett et al., 2014), create poor school climates (American Psychological Association Zero Task Force, 2008), and fail to address and enhance academic engagement (Flannery et al., 2013).

The educational and psychological adverse effects of the school-to-prison pipeline phenomenon are well documented. Removal of students from the educational setting leads to academic underperformance, dropout, and unsupervised time that may result in youth engaging in unproductive behaviors (American Psychological Association Zero Task Force, 2008; Castillo, 2013; Nance, 2017; Triplett et al., 2014). Researchers followed a national sample of youth from the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth of 1997 cohort and collected information about their life trajectory, specifically their educational experiences and occupational path (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2020). Thus far, the researchers have collected 18 rounds, and the most recent one was in 2017-2018. Data analysis conducted on the information collected from the first 15 rounds, up to 2013, showed a significant relationship between school suspensions and odds of future incarceration (Hemez et al., 2019). Students who experienced removal from the educational setting are more than 8 times as likely to be incarcerated than those who have not (Castillo, 2013), which changes their educational trajectory.

Punitive punishment has long-term social and emotional consequences for students (Triplett et al., 2014), including increase in substance abuse, delinquency, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), anxiety, and depression (Triplett et al., 2014). These students also tend to be fearful, distrustful, and feel as if they are being treated like criminals (Mallet, 2016; Nance, 2019). Further, punitive school systems tend to produce poor school climates (Mallet, 2016; Nance, 2017). Removal from school, can also adversely affect peer relationships, resulting in peer rejection, alienation, and discontinuity of friendships (Jacobsen, 2020).

Based on the foregoing, punitive disciplinary measures contribute to the school-to-prison pipeline, which negatively affects a wide range of students academically and emotionally. It is also evident that there are students who challenge the school system. What other options do schools have to address challenging behaviors some students present that would result in more positive outcomes for students? Research has shown that there are several evidence-based practices that can be implemented instead, such as Social Emotional Learning, Restorative Justice Practices, or bullying prevention programs. One evidence-based framework that many schools have adopted to prevent behavior problems and improve student behavior outcomes is Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS), which is discussed next.

Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports

Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) was conceptualized in the 1980s (Sugai & Simenson, 2012) and is rooted in behavioral theory (Cooper et al., 2007; Dunlap et al., 2008). At that time, there was a growing need for an effective approach to address the needs of children with behavioral disorders. Researchers at the University of Oregon accepted the challenge and began a series of research projects in partnership with other scholars around the country aided by the passage of the Individuals with Disabilities Act of 1997. The researchers used the Office of Special Education Programs Technical Assistance Center on PBIS to provide technical support to schools about evidence-based practices to improve outcomes for students with behavioral disabilities (Sugai & Simenson, 2012). This center is still thriving; and the goal is to improve behavioral outcomes for all students, not just for students with behavioral disabilities. Currently, PBIS is implemented in over 25,000 schools internationally (Gage et al., 2020).

PBIS, as defined today, is a multi-tiered preventative framework used to promote positive behaviors in the school setting (Gage et al., 2018). The purpose of PBIS is to teach and positively reinforce behavior expectations in all settings of the school (e.g., classroom, hallway, cafeteria, and so on). PBIS stands on conclusive evidence that the teaching and positive reinforcement of behavior expectations are more effective than a reactive approach to discipline, such as punitive punishment (Gage et al., 2018). In short, punishment does not teach alternative behaviors. PBIS has strong support for reducing behavior problems, increasing academic achievement, and improving school climate (Bradshaw et al., 2015; James et al., 2019).

According to Horner, Sugai, and Anderson (2010), PBIS has three tiers: Tier 1 involves implementing universal supports that teach and positively reinforce behavioral expectations (e.g., prosocial skills) to prevent problem behaviors from occurring. Students who continue to exhibit problem behaviors after receiving Tier 1 support receive Tier 2 supports for a more targeted small group behavioral interventions, e.g., social skills instructions. In Tier 3, a more intensive targeted individualized intervention, such as active instruction of adaptive behaviors, is provided to students who have not benefited from interventions in Tier 1 and Tier 2. At all levels of PBIS, data are used to determine the needs of the student population, to inform intervention, to assess student progress, to evaluate outcome, and for overall decision-making for evidence-based practices. To see the effects of this multitiered framework, schools need to implement PBIS for about 3 to 5 years (Coffey & Horner, 2012).

PBIS has been shown to be effective in promoting positive academic and behavioral changes in school; however, there are some challenges associated with PBIS implementation. According to McIntosh et al. (2016), demographic characteristics of a school, external supports (e.g., district level and state level), and speed of initial implementation of school-wide PBIS

influence overall PBIS implementation. It appears that middle and high schools and highly impoverished schools are at a greater risk for poor implementation or abandonment of PBIS after initial implementation. These may be because of more ingrained faulty behavioral patterns, a shift in expectation as children get older, and lack of resources, which additional training and more technical assistance can address. Other factors that influence PBIS implementation and sustainability are discussed next.

Sustainability of PBIS

Sustainability of PBIS can be defined as the ongoing implementation of PBIS in a school with continuous fidelity (McIntosh et al., 2016). There has been a lot of research on facilitators and barriers to PBIS sustainability. Researchers have found the following components to be key facilitators for successful PBIS implementation: staff buy-in, professional development training, ongoing technical assistance, and administrative support (Scaletta & Tejero Hughes, 2021 & Yeung et al., 2016). The lack of facilitators also serves as barriers to PBIS sustainability.

Staff Buy-in. A significant barrier schools may face when implementing PBIS is staff buy-in (Feuerborn et al., 2013). Staff buy-in is the acceptance of a proposed idea and commitment to actively support and participate in the development of this idea (McAllaster, 2004). Therefore, PBIS staff buy-in can be defined as the acceptance and willingness of school staff to support and participate in implementing PBIS to benefit students. A common mistake schools make is not preparing their educational institution for system-level change; this lack of preparation can compromise positive change. According to Pinkelman (2015), staff buy-in was the most frequently identified enabler and most frequently identified barrier to implementation of PBIS in schools, illuminating the importance of staff buy-in for PBIS implementation. Nonetheless, schools rarely assess the needs of the staff who are responsible for implementation

of PBIS (Feuerborn et al., 2013). If staff buy-in plays a critical role in the success of program implementation, it is important to understand the practice of schools to secure staff buy-in for implementing PBIS.

Staff Training for PBIS. Another essential component of PBIS is staff training. Staff training involves professional development, coaching, and technical assistance on evidence-based practices that are tailored to the unique needs of a specific school at each level of support. Staff training and implementation of PBIS with fidelity are necessary for the sustainability of PBIS in schools (Coffey & Horner, 2012; Pinkelman, 2015). Typically, a school forms a leadership team, and the team is charged with ensuring support to students and professional development and support to teachers. However, staff training seems to depend on the needs of each school or level contextual factors. For example, in high school, such contextual factors as organizational culture (solely focused on academics) and the age of students (student input) inform both staff training and PBIS implementation (Swain-Bradway et al., 2015). On the other hand, schools in rural regions have difficulties accessing resources because of distance or lack of funding (Fitzgerald et al., 2014). Thus, there is a need for research that examines the content of staff training to support PBIS.

Ongoing Technical Assistance. One of the major goals of PBIS implementation is to improve behavioral outcomes. For school districts to know if the PBIS framework is effective, they need to continuously collect data regarding behavioral issues. Schools may use Office Discipline Referrals (ODRs) as one method of collecting data regarding behavioral concerns. They also may use the School-Wide Information System (SWIS) to record behavioral data. Staff using SWIS, and other similar platforms, require ongoing online technical assistance to ensure that they are trained to utilize the platform and consistently input data. In addition, a technical

assistance center specifically for PBIS was established to communicate with schools regarding issues of sustainability surrounding PBIS implementation (Yeung et al., 2016). Ongoing technical assistance is one of the essential resources school districts can utilize to sustain PBIS implementation.

Administrative Support. Administrative support is an essential component of PBIS sustainability. Administrators are the "gatekeepers" for sustainability of PBIS because they are responsible for communicating expectations, providing resources, providing staff trainings, and responding to feedback from staff (Coffey & Horner, 2012; Scaletta & Tejero Hughes, 2021). Administrative support also influences staff-buy in. If administrators are not supportive of the PBIS initiative, it can be hard for staff to be supportive. Administrative support is needed for staff to work collaboratively and to make data-based decisions to improve students' outcomes (Yeung et al., 2016). However, administrative support alone is not enough for the sustainability of PBIS implementation. Administrative support in addition to staff buy-in, staff-training, and resources for implementing PBIS are all necessary for the sustainability of PBIS in school districts.

Current Study

The school-to-prison phenomenon appears to be sustained by the failure to understand that some students come to school with well-established patterns of behavioral challenges (Mallet, 2016b); these behaviors have multiple causes; and there is a need for proactive instruction instead of reactive punitive discipline, like expulsion. PBIS, rooted in behavioral theory, attempts to correct for these failures, by taking a proactive approach to managing behavior in the educational setting (Cooper et al., 2007; Gage et al., 2018).

The purpose of this study is to evaluate the perception of school personnel regarding PBIS for addressing challenging student behaviors replacing punitive disciplinary approaches that are related to the school-to-prison pipeline. In addition, the study aimed to collect information regarding school staff perception of behavior and discipline in general, their support for PBIS implementation in their school district, and their training and preparation.

Research questions:

1) What is the perception of school staff regarding implementation of PBIS for addressing challenging student behaviors? It is predicted most staff would have positive views of PBIS, that it is needed and effective. In a study conducted by McDaniel and colleagues (2017), participants indicated that schools need alternatives to exclusionary discipline, they thought PBIS is effective at reducing challenging student behaviors, and it can also improve academic performance.
2) Is there a relationship between PBIS buy-in and staff training for implementing PBIS? It is predicted that school districts that report staff buy-in will also report high staff training. PBIS buy-in and training are critical parts of PBIS implementations and sustainability (Coffey and Horner, 2012).

3) What are staff perceptions of their district's resources, supports, and climate in relation to PBIS implementation? One facilitator of PBIS sustainability is having the necessary resources and technology to support PBIS implementation. It is predicted that school staff will report support for PBIS and will also report that their school district has the necessary tools and resources for PBIS implementation.
4) To what extent do staff report that they contribute to the implementation of PBIS? Participating school districts were recognized for scores on the Tiered Fidelity Inventory, an assessment measure used to look at the extent to which schools are implementing the components of PBIS (McIntosh et al., 2017). A component of the Tiered Fidelity Inventory (TFI) assesses if staff have taught the agreed upon school behavioral expectations. Since the school districts in this study received recognition for PBIS implementation based on their TFI scores, it is predicted that these school districts have staff that show commitment to contribute to the implementation of PBIS in their school district.
5) What are staff perceptions of their district's shared values and acceptance of change in relation to PBIS implementation? Shared values are imperative when trying to foster staff buy-in (Feuerborn et al., 2013). It is predicted that school staff who report shared values and acceptance of change are more likely to support the implementation of PBIS.

Exploratory Questions:

1) What are staff's perceptions of student behavior and discipline at schools and home? No prediction is made.
2) Is there a difference in the perception of PBIS implementation depending on school personnel's years of experience in current role? No prediction is made given the lack of research on the relationship between years of experience and support for PBIS.

Method

Participants and Setting

A total of 439 school personnel from school districts in Illinois participated in the study. Once the Institutional Review Board at Eastern Illinois University approved the study, an email was sent to school administrators asking permission for the staff to participate in the study. Administrators who agreed for their district to participate in the study sent out an email with the survey link to the following school personnel: Certified general education teachers, certified special education teachers, certificated support personnel (e.g., school psychologists, counselors, and social workers), classified staff (e.g., educational aids), and administrators. Fifteen school districts in Illinois consented to participate in this study (See Appendix E). Most participants were White (n = 386, 87.9%) and teachers (n = 303, 69.1%). Of these teachers, 58.8% (n = 258) identified as general education teachers and 10.3% (n = 45) identified as certified special education teachers. Certificated support personnel made up 14.4% (n = 63) of participants.

Of the 439 participants, 61% (n = 268) worked in the elementary school setting and 30.8% (n = 135) in the secondary school setting. There was a good distribution of years of experience in current role. About half, 51.2% (n = 223), had worked 1 to 9 years and 48.8 % (n = 214) reported 10 to 20 or more years of experience (See Table 4).

Measures

Demographics Questionnaire

Participants completed a 13-item demographics questionnaire (See Appendix A) designed to gather information regarding age, race/ethnicity, grade level taught, and years of experience. They also identified their position, e.g., Certified General Education Teacher, Certified Special Education Teacher, Classified Staff (e.g., school psychologist or social worker).

Additional items included participants' training in PBIS implementation, view about the usefulness of PBIS, and perception of their school district's communication. The last two items, the participant's training in PBIS implementation and personal view about the usefulness of PBIS are directly related to PBIS Buy-in and Implementation Training.

Staff Perceptions of Behavior and Discipline Survey

The Staff Perceptions of Behavior and Discipline Survey (See Appendix B) is a survey used to evaluate staff beliefs about discipline and behavioral management in the school setting (Feuerborn et al., 2019). This survey includes 23 items on a 4-point Likert scale that is broken into five domains: Teaching and Acknowledging Expectations; Systemic Resources, Supports, and Climate; Implementation Integrity; Philosophical Views of Behavior and Discipline; and Systemic Cohesiveness and Openness to Change. The authors conducted factor analysis on the SPBD items and reported strong internal consistency (a = .80) for those five domains (Feuerborn et al., 2015). A Hierarchical Linear Modeling Analysis was conducted to assess the relationship between school and staff level variables that can contribute to the perceptions of staff. The results showed a direct relationship between training and understanding of PBIS and positive perceptions of behavior and discipline in the schools (Feuerborn et al., 2015). In addition, there was an inverse relationship between school level and staff perceptions on SPBD, as the school grade level increased, positive responses on the SPBD decreased (Feuerborn et al., 2015). It appears school staff is likely to support the implementation of PBIS if they receive adequate training in PBIS, believe the school administration is committed to the implementation, and the school has the resources and skills for implementation of PBIS (Feuerborn et al., 2015).

Procedures

After securing approval from the Institutional Review Board at Eastern Illinois University, all Illinois school districts from the Midwest PBIS Network Recognized School List (2019-2020) were asked to participate in the study. The Midwest PBIS Network has a list of school districts that have been recognized for successfully implementing PBIS. If school administrators gave consent to participate in the study, they emailed their staff a link to complete the demographics questionnaire and survey for this study. Qualtrics, an online software tool, was utilized for participants to complete both the demographic questionnaire and the SPBD survey. Qualtrics has been successfully used to gather survey responses while maintaining the anonymity of participants. Participants were informed that participation is anonymous and only aggregated data will be reported. Before completing the survey, participants were prompted to read the Informed Consent (See Appendix D), which gave them the option of continuing to complete the survey or exit. After completing the survey, participants were invited to participate in an Amazon gift card drawing. They provided their name and email address on a separate platform (Google Forum) from the survey to assure their responses remain anonymous. Of those who provided information for the drawing, four were given $25 Amazon gift cards.

COVID-19 Pandemic Related Modifications

The proposed study was to examine if student suspension and expulsion rates have changed in schools that were recognized for successful implementation of PBIS using the Office of Civil Rights (OCR) data. Schools are required to submit suspension and expulsion rates annually to OCR. PBIS is expected to prevent and address student challenging behaviors to minimize suspension and expulsion that have negative outcomes. However, due to the COVID-19 pandemic and related school closures, data were not reported. Thus, the current study focused

on the perception of school staff regarding PBIS. The implications of this adjustment are discussed.

Results

To answer the research questions about the perceptions of K-12 school staff regarding PBIS implementation in their respective schools, results from the Demographics Questionnaire and the Staff Perception of Behavior and Discipline (SPBD) Survey were analyzed using descriptive statistics, Pearson *r* correlations, and Analysis of Variance (ANOVA).

Research Question 1: What is the Perception of School Staff Regarding Implementation of PBIS for addressing challenging student behaviors?

The first research question was concerned with the perception of school staff regarding PBIS implementation and its effectiveness and need for addressing challenging student behaviors. Over 60% of participants (n = 267) indicated strong support for PBIS, and an additional 26% (n = 116) said they support PBIS, but do not plan to participate in leadership role. Only 3.2% (n = 14) strongly disagreed with PBIS (see Table 5).

Despite the overwhelming support for PBIS, 12.8% of participants (n = 53) agreed or strongly agreed that they do not have time to teach schoolwide behavioral expectations. A small number, 6.8 % (n = 30) agreed or strongly agreed that PBIS may work in other schools, but they doubt it would work in their school. Further, 17.5% of participants (n = 77) agreed or strongly agreed that rewarding students is the same as bribing them. Finally, 15.5% (n = 68) of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that they resent being asked to do one more thing in their classroom.

Research Question 2: Is There a Relationship Between PBIS Buy-in and Staff training for Implementing PBIS?

Seventy percent (n = 309) of participants reported receiving professional training for PBIS in the form of workshop, seminar/lecture, conference, or multiple formats. About 58% (n = 256) and 11.8% (n = 52) reported receiving 1 to 9 and 10 to 20+ professional development hours, respectively, and 72 % (n = 316) found the training useful. Over 90% of participants (n = 400) indicated their level of understanding of PBIS as basic or high (see Table 5).

No relationship between staff training and level of support for PBIS, $r(439) = -.018$ was indicated. However, there was a moderately inverse relationship between those who reported support for PBIS and PBIS may work in other schools, but they doubt it would work in their school, $r(439) = -.40$, $p < .001$.

Research Question 3: What are Staff Perceptions of Their School District's Resources, Supports, and Climate in Relation to PBIS Implementation?

The third research question was intended to assess the school district's readiness in terms of resources, support, and overall climate for implementing PBIS from the staff's point of view. Regarding communications, 76.5% (n = 336) participants reported their school had adequate and good communication (see Table 5). Results showed communication has a moderate relationship with the following factors: Trust in administrators' ability to lead through change, $r(439) = .51$, $p < .001$, school climate for PBIS implementation, $r(439) = .47$, $p < .001$, *and* necessary school resources to support PBIS, $r(439) = .43$, $p < .001$. In addition, results suggested there was a moderately positive relationship between staff perceptions of their administrations' ability to lead through change and school climate for PBIS implementation, $r(439) = .59$, $p < .001$,

necessary school resources to support PBIS, $r(439) = .46$, $p < .001$; and their level of job satisfaction, $r(439) = .48$, $p < .001$.

A moderate inverse relationship between those who reported PBIS is likely to be another fad and their school has the necessary resources to support PBIS, $r(439) = -.42$, $p < .001$, was observed. School climate was indicated to be moderately related to school resources for supporting PBIS, $r(439) = .45$, $p < .001$, and overall job satisfaction, $r(439) = .49$, $p < .001$. Lastly, a moderately positive relationship was observed between job satisfaction and perception of availability of necessary resources to support PBIS, $r(439) = .412$, $p < .001$ (see Table 1).

Table 1
Systemic Resources, Supports, and Climate Correlation Matrix

Var	Com	Trust Adm	PBIS Fad	Climate	Resources	Job
Comm	-	.508*	-.354	.474*	.426*	.355
Trust Adm	.508*	-	-.298	.590*	.464*	.483*
PBIS Fad	-.354	-.298	-	-.333	-.418*	-.231
Climate	.474*	.590*	-.333	-	.477*	.486*
Resources	.426*	.464*	-.418	.477*	-	.412*
Job	.355	.483*	-.231	.486*	.412*	-

Com(Communication at School), Trust Adm(Trust in Administration to Lead Change), PBIS Fad(PBIS is Likely Another Fad), Climate(Climate is Positive at School), Resources(School Has Resources, Job(Satisfied with Job).

*Denotes significance at p < .01 level

Research Question 4: To What Extent Do Staff Contribute to the Implementation of PBIS?

Responses on the SPBD were used to assess school staff's contribution to the implementation of PBIS. Results showed a large direct relationship between participants who reported teaching the agreed upon schoolwide behavior expectations and those who acknowledge/reward students for meeting the schoolwide behavior expectations, $r(439) = .59$, p

$< .001$. Results did not show a significant relationship between those who reported currently applying schoolwide disciplinary consequences and currently teaching schoolwide behavior expectations, $r(439) = -.21$, $p < .001$. Lastly, results did not show a significant relationship between those who acknowledge/reward students for meeting schoolwide expectations and applying disciplinary consequences, $r(439) = -.22$, $p < .001$.

Research Question 5: What are Staff Perceptions of Their School District's Shared Values and Acceptance of PBIS Implementation?

Over 85% (n = 376) of participants reported that they share common philosophies regarding behavior and discipline with their colleagues. About 90% (n = 396) of participants reported that in the past, their school has successfully implemented change efforts. Only 24% (n = 106) reported concerns regarding staff resisting change at their school. In addition, about 36% (n = 160) reported that they suspect their colleagues will not consistently implement the agreed upon behavioral plans.

Based on the SPBD responses, results showed a significant direct relationship between those who reported that they suspect their colleagues will not consistently implement schoolwide behavior plan and staff tends to resists change, $r(439) = .41$, $p < .001$. There were no other significant relationships found among items in this domain.

Exploratory Question 1: What are Staff's Current Perceptions of Behavior and Discipline in School and at Home?

To answer the first exploratory research question, the SPBD responses were analyzed and several relationships were observed. Results showed there was a moderately positive relationship between participants who reported students need to be held more responsible for their own behavior and parents in the community do not seem to care about how their children behave at

school, $r(439) = .47$, $p < .001$, rewards should be given to students who exceed expectations, $r(439) = .45$, $p < .001$, when problem behaviors occur we need to get tougher, $r=(439) = .46$, $p < .001$, and if students are not disciplined at home, they are not likely to accept discipline at school, $r(439) = .45$, $p < .001$.

Further, there was a moderately positive relationship between participants who reported rewards should be reserved for students exceeding expectations and parents in the community do not seem to care about their children's behavior at school, $r(439) = .45$, $p < .001$ and if students are not disciplined at home, they are not likely to accept discipline at school, $r(439) = .41$, $p < .001$, and when problem behaviors occur, we should get tougher, $r(439) = .46$, $p < .001$. Lastly, a direct relationship was indicated between those who reported that if students are not disciplined at home, they are not likely to accept discipline at school and when problem behaviors occur, we should get tougher, $r(439) = .41$, $p < .001$.

Table 2

Philosophical Views of Behavior and Discipline Correlation Matrix

Var	Student Bx	Parents	Rewards	Discipline	Problem Bxs
Student Bx	-	.467*	.445*	.449*	.461*
Parents	.467*	-	.447*	.451*	.373
Rewards	.445*	.447*	-	.414*	.460*
Discipline	.449*	.451*	.414*	-	.412*
Problem Bxs	.461*	.373	.460	.412	-

Student Bx(Students need to be held responsible for their behavior), Parents(Parents don't seem to care about their children's behavior at school), Rewards(Rewards should be reserved for students exceed expectations), Discipline(No discipline at home results in the lack of acceptance of discipline at school), and Problem Bxs(When problem behaviors occur, we need to get tougher)

*Denotes significance at $p < .01$ level

Exploratory Research Question 2: Is There a Difference in the Perception of PBIS Implementation Depending on School Personnel's Years of Experience in Current Role?

To assess if there are differences in how school professionals view PBIS implementation based on years of experience, a one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted for support of PBIS and current level of PBIS implementation. Results showed no significant difference in level of support for PBIS, teaching behavioral expectations, rewarding students for meeting behavior expectations, applying disciplinary consequences and years of experience.

Table 3

ANOVA Summary Table

Source of Variance	*SS*	*MS*	*F(5,433)*	η^2
DQ Item 12: Support for PBIS				
Between-Groups	5.51	1.10	1.75	.020
Within-Groups	271.99	.63		
SPBD Item 21: Teaching Agreed Upon Expectations				
Between-Groups	2.82	.56	1.37	.016
Within-Groups	178.77	.41		
SPBD Item 22: Rewarding Students				
Between-Groups	4.78	.96	2.16	.024
Within-Groups	191.76	.44		
SPBD Item 23: Applying Agreed Upon Consequences				
Between-Groups	5.03	1.00	2.24	.025
Within-Groups	194.41	.45		

Discussion

This study examined staff perceptions in K-12 educational setting in Illinois regarding PBIS for addressing challenging student behaviors to replace punitive exclusionary discipline approaches that result in suspension and expulsion from school potentially increasing involvement in the school-to-prison pipeline, and their support and training for implementing PBIS. In addition, the study explored the staff's views on student behavior at school and at home.

It was predicted most staff would have positive views of PBIS, that it is needed and effective. This prediction was based on McDaniel and colleagues (2017) who reported that participants in their study said schools need alternatives to exclusionary discipline and PBIS is effective at reducing challenging student behaviors (Gage et al., 2018). This prediction was supported as over 60% of participants showed support for PBIS and another 26% reported support even though they were hesitant to take a leadership role.

Despite the high support, some participants indicated they do not have time to teach behavioral expectations and they resent being asked to do one more thing. It is possible some school personnel feel they have enough responsibilities in their role and should not be responsible for teaching students how to behave. The literature has documented teacher stress and its relationship to absenteeism, burnout, school climate, and teacher behavior management (Embse et al., 2019). A study by Skaalvik and Skaalvik (2017) showed that work overload was a strong indicator to the teacher burnout dimension of emotional exhaustion and student problem behaviors was a strong indicator of teacher depersonalization from students (i.e., talking poorly about students). This coupled with equating rewards with bribery, as almost 20% of respondents (n = 77) did, may undermine PBIS. Behavior management is the foundation of PBIS as PBIS is rooted in behavioral theory (Cooper et al., 2007; Dunlap et al., 2008) to promote positive behaviors by

teaching and positively reinforcing behavior expectation at school. Thus, school staff who reject these evidence-based approaches, despite the need for an alternative approach to punitive disciplinary policies, may put students at risk.

Second, no relationship was found between staff training and staff buy-in for PBIS, which is contrary to the prediction. It is curious that most respondents (i.e., 70%) reported receiving training in PBIS implementation. It is possible this result may reflect the quality of PBIS training. PBIS training includes district-level guidance and coaching at the school-level (Andreou et al., 2015; Bethune, 2017; Vancel et al., 2016), which are unknown in the current study. Rodriguez et al. (2016) found that large group PBIS trainings may not be adequate. In addition, some respondents who supported PBIS also said PBIS would not work in our schools, possibly indicating to some issues. Future studies can investigate this dissonance more closely to identify what barriers staff see for PBIS implementation in their schools.

The third research question probed staff perceptions of their district's resources, supports, and climate in relation to PBIS implementation. As predicted, participants reported good communication, trust in an administrator's ability to lead through change, positive school climate, and availability of resources to support PBIS implementation. Similarly, trust in administrator's ability to lead through change was related to high job satisfaction, positive school climate, and school resources for PBIS implementation. These findings support the idea that administrative support is a key component for PBIS sustainability (Scaletta & Tejero Hughes, 2021), and that good communication is ideal for PBIS sustainability (Lasater, 2016).

The fourth research question gaged school personnel's contribution to PBIS implementation in their schools. As predicted, participants contributed to the implementation of PBIS. They taught the schoolwide behavior expectations, tended to acknowledge/reward students

for meeting the behavior expectations, and apply the schoolwide disciplinary consequences. These finding suggest that school personnel who are more likely to teach the agreed upon schoolwide behavioral expectations are more likely to reward students for meeting behavior expectations and apply necessary disciplinary consequences. This is encouraging because the success of PBIS depends on staff participation (Filter et al., 2016). For students to succeed, behavioral expectations must be taught and reinforced along with clear consequences (Mercer et al., 2017) that teach positive replacement behaviors.

The fifth research question explored staff perceptions of their district's shared values and acceptance of change in relation to PBIS implementation. The prediction that staff who shared values and acceptance of change are more likely to support the implementation of PBIS was not supported. Although participants reported similar values to colleagues, it did not seem to impact their support for PBIS. Shared values and acceptance of change seem more nuanced. Siciliano et al. (2017) examined cognitive perspective on policy implementation (Common Core State Standards) and concluded that teachers do not seek out coworkers with shared values. Instead, they depend on preexisting social relationships and interactions gradually adapting the perspectives held by members of their social network, a purposeful and multidirectional change process. Further, a relationship between inconsistent implementation of behavior expectations and resistance to change was suggested, i.e., staff suspected of not consistently implementing behavioral expectations are likely to resist change, which is not surprising. If there is no buy-in, it is less likely that a program would be implemented with fidelity. Schools are known for approaching program implementation haphazardly, and staff resistance to change may be informed by experience of failure from previous change implementations (Amarantou, et al., 2018). Schools can combat such issues by frequently gathering feedback from the staff about the ongoing

implementation of PBIS, incorporating feedback when feasible, addressing concerns, and regularly communicating.

Lastly, two exploratory questions, staff perception of student behavior and discipline in schools and at home and view of PBIS implementation based on years of experience, were explored. The views on student behaviors on and off the school ground and parents and teachers' role was concerning. Participants suggested students should be held responsible for their own behavior; parents do not care about their children's behavior at school; if students are not disciplined at home, they are less likely to accept discipline at school; schools should get tougher on behavior problems; and reward should be reserved only for students who exceed meeting behavior expectations. Again, these views are antithetical to the core of PBIS. Regardless of school staff's view of parent and community responsibility for child discipline, students must be taught behavioral expectations at school, with clear behavioral expectations, reinforcement, and discipline. These findings also point to the need for professional development, 36% of participants indicated rewards should be reserved for students exceeding expectations, not simply meeting them. Feedback based on behavioral expectations is similar to feedback on academic performance.

Further, no difference was found based on staff years of experience and their view of PBIS. Although PBIS was introduced decades ago (Sugai & Horner, 2002), both training institutions and the school system were slow to adapt it. It is not clear if colleges and universities offer a course in PBIS (at least embedded in other courses); however, it is unlikely because there is sufficient evidence teachers do not receive training in classroom management. According to Stevenson and colleagues (2020, p. 393), "Despite wide agreement from experts about the importance of developing classroom and behavior management skills, many teacher training programs do not require specified coursework or experiences to develop this skill set for teacher licensure or degree

completion." Unfortunately, this contributes to negative outcomes for both teachers and students, teacher stress and punitive discipline that hurts children, respectively. It is no surprise then there were no age-related differences in the staff perceptions of behavior management.

Finally, as noted under Procedure, the COVID-19 Pandemic required adjustment to the proposed study. The proposed study was to examine if student suspension and expulsion rates have changed in schools that were recognized for successful implementation of PBIS using the U. S. Department of Education's Office of Civil Rights (OCR) data that are reported annually. Fifteen schools from the PBIS Midwestern Recognized School List participated in this study. These are schools that were recognized for successful implementation of PBIS. However, due to the COVID-19 pandemic and related school closures, data were not reported. Nonetheless, efforts were made to assess the effect of PBIS on student suspension and expulsion rates using data provided by participating school districts. Unfortunately, participating schools reported conflicting year for PBIS initial implementation. For example, because participants in the same school district reported multiple PBIS initial implementation years, the primary researcher contacted school administrators asking for the exact year. Those who responded provided a different date from staff in their schools. Next, an internet search was conducted, which again produced different initial PBIS implementation year (See Appendix H).

Although it is not clear why the school staff provided different PBIS implementation year for the same school, these inconsistent data may have implications for school districts. First, it is possible that the staff did not have a common definition of PBIS. Secondly, the process of PBIS implementation might have been incremental and lengthy that participants in this study could not recall the exact year of implementation. Nonetheless, it is important that schools assure clear understanding of PBIS and its processes.

Limitations and Future Directions

This study adds to the literature on staff's perception of PBIS, but there are limitations to note. All school districts from the PBIS Midwestern Recognized School List were invited to participate in this study. The PBIS Midwestern Recognized School List from 2019-2020 had 49 school districts, but only 15 school districts agreed to participate in this study. Due to the low response rate, the results from this study cannot be generalized to other school districts in Illinois or elsewhere. If possible, future studies should try to recruit more school districts to get a more generalizable sample.

School districts were selected from the PBIS Midwestern Network Recognized List. These school districts received badges (i.e., bronze, silver, gold, platinum) for implementing PBIS with fidelity based on scores on the Tiered Fidelity Inventory (TFI). The participating school districts had to apply to be recognize and completed the Tiered Fidelity Inventory. Future studies should seek out additional methods for measuring PBIS implementation fidelity, so it does not solely rely on informant data.

In addition, majority of the school personnel who participated in this study were White (87.9%) and classroom teachers (58.8%). The sample used in this study is not representative of various school personnel and future studies should consider a more diverse sample to increase the generalizability for job positions and participant racial/ethnic identities.

Lastly, the researcher initially attempted to review the relationship between PBIS and school removal (i.e., suspensions and expulsions). The U. S. Department of Education's Office of Civil Rights (OCR) requires public school districts across the nation to submit all disciplinary data, which are made available to the public on the OCR website (http://ocrdata.ed.gov). The Civil Rights Data Collection (CRDC) provides information on in-school suspensions, out-of-school

suspensions, expulsions, school-related arrest, referrals to law enforcement, restraints, and corporal punishment usage for each school and the district. The information is broken down by several demographic factors, such as gender, race, or disability status. The researcher intended to identify when PBIS was initially implemented in school districts and compare their school removal rates before PBIS implementation and after PBIS implementation. The Demographics Questionnaire (item 7) asked participants when PBIS was first implemented in their school (See Table 6). Participants' responses were conflicting, not consistent. The researcher attempted to identify PBIS implementation by asking administrators as well as conducting research, but those results were also inconsistent. As a result, expulsion and suspension data before and after PBIS implementation in school districts could not be compared to see if there was an impact on disciplinary outcomes. Future studies should consider ways for identifying initial PBIS year to compare school removal rates in school districts before and after PBIS implementation.

Conclusion and Implication

The aim of the study was to provide evidence that school districts that are recognized for PBIS implementation have indeed succeeded in reducing school suspension and expulsion. However, because of lack of data due to COVID-19 Pandemic and inconsistent data from participants of the study, the impact of PBIS on suspension and expulsion rates of participating schools could not be determined. Future researchers may want to replicate this study with caution given accurate data collection is still challenging for schools. This study adds to the existing literature based on the findings that K-12 school staff are supportive of PBIS and open to training; and there is an urgent need for evidence-based behavior management training.

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Appendices

Appendix A

Demographic Information

Direction. Please tell us about yourself and your place of employment, your school. Please answer each item below and check all options that apply to you.

1: Please write in the name of the school district you are employed by: _____

2: Please indicate your role(s) at this school. Check all that apply.

☐ Certificated general education teacher

☐ Certificated special education teacher

☐ Classified staff (e.g., office staff, kitchen, security)

☐ Certificated support personnel (e.g., counselor, school psychologist, speech & language pathologist)

- ☐ School counselor
- ☐ School social worker
- ☐ School Psychologist
- ☐ Speech & Language Pathologist

☐ Administrator

☐ Other _____

3: What student grade level(s) do you work with? Check all that apply.

☐ Preschool
☐ Kindergarten
☐ 1st grade
☐ 2nd grade
☐ 3rd grade
☐ 4th grade
☐ 5th grade
☐ 6th grade
☐ 7th grade
☐ 8th grade
☐ 9th grade
☐ 10th grade
☐ 11th grade
☐ 12th grade

4: What is your race or ethnicity?

☐ White

☐ Black

☐ Hispanic or Latino/Latinx

☐ Asian

☐ Pacific Islander

☐ Native American

☐ Multiple races

☐ Other _____

☐ I prefer not to say

5: How many years of experience do you have in your current role? _____

Appendix A

Demographic Information (Continued)

6: How many years have you worked in this school? _____

7: In what year did your school first implement Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS)? _____

8: Over the past year, about how many hours of professional development in PBIS have you received?

☐ 0
☐ 1-4 hours
☐ 5-9 hours
☐ 10-14 hours
☐ 15-19 hours
☐ More than 20 hours

9: What kind of professional development training have you received for PBIS?

☐ Workshop
☐ Seminar/Lecture
☐ Overview of a PBIS manual
☐ Conference
☐ Multiple Formats
☐ Other _____

10: If you have received professional development in PBISs did you find it to be helpful?

☐ Yes
☐ No
☐ I have not received professional development in this area.

11: When it comes to the concepts and procedures of PBIS, my level of understanding is:

☐ Unfamiliar, I don't know what it is
☐ Limited; I would need to learn more
☐ Basic; I could implement
☐ High; I could teach others

12: If you are familiar with PBIS please indicate your current level of support or commitment.

☐ I strongly disagree with this effort.
☐ I disagree with this effort, but I will not resist it.
☐ I agree with this effort, but I do not plan to participate in leadership or committee work.
☐ I strongly agree with this effort; I plan to actively support it.
☐ I am unfamiliar with positive behavior supports.

13: Please rate the communication at this school.

☐ Poor: I am unaware of changes that affect staff and students.
☐ Needs improvement: I am sometimes unaware of changes.
☐ Adequate: I tend to be aware of changes before they occur.
☐ Good: Communication is clear and timely.

Appendix B

Staff Perceptions of Behavior and Discipline Survey

Direction: For each question, please select one response that best reflects your opinion on the item. The items are on a Likert Scale with four response options: Strongly Disagree (1), Disagree (2), Agree (3), and Strongly Agree (4). Please try to answer all questions! All responses are anonymous.

Question Items	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1. I have trust in my administrator's ability to lead us through change.	1	2	3	4
2. PBIS is likely to be yet another fad that comes and goes in this school.	1	2	3	4
3. The climate at this school is positive.	1	2	3	4
4. We should not have to teach students how to behave at school.	1	2	3	4
5. I believe our school has (or will have) the necessary resources to support PBIS.	1	2	3	4
6. I suspect that my colleagues will not (or are not) consistently implementing the agreed upon schoolwide behavior plan.	1	2	3	4
7. My colleagues and I share a common philosophy for behavior and discipline.	1	2	3	4
8. Overall, I am satisfied with my job.	1	2	3	4
9. The students at this school need to be held more responsible for their own behavior.	1	2	3	4
10. The staff at this school tends to resist change with concerns such as "We don't do it that way here."	1	2	3	4
11. This school has successfully implemented change efforts in the past.	1	2	3	4
12. I don't have time to teach the schoolwide behavioral expectations.	1	2	3	4
13. PBIS may work in other schools, but I doubt it will work in ours.	1	2	3	4
14. Parents in the community don't seem to care about how their children behave at school.	1	2	3	4
15. I believe we should reserve rewards for students exceeding expectations, not simply for meeting them.	1	2	3	4
16. I feel that rewarding students is the same as bribing them.	1	2	3	4

Appendix B:

Staff Perceptions of Behavior and Discipline (Continued)

Question Items	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
17. I resent being asked to do one more thing in my classroom.	1	2	3	4
18. If students are not disciplined at home, they are not likely to accept any discipline at school.	1	2	3	4
19. When problem behaviors occur, we need to get tougher.	1	2	3	4
20. Behavior plans do not work well in our school.	1	2	3	4

Question 21: Currently, I teach the agreed upon schoolwide behavior expectations to students.

☐ Strongly disagree
☐ Disagree
☐ Agree
☐ Strongly agree
☐ Currently, my school does not have a common set of student expectations.

Question 22: Currently, I acknowledge/reward students for meeting the agreed upon schoolwide behavior expectations.

☐ Strongly disagree
☐ Disagree
☐ Agree
☐ Strongly agree
☐ Currently, my school does not have a common set of student expectations.

Question 23: Currently, I apply the agreed upon schoolwide disciplinary consequences.

☐ Strongly disagree
☐ Disagree
☐ Agree
☐ Strongly agree
☐ Currently, my school does not have a common set of student expectations.

Appendix C

Invitation to Participate in a Study

Administrator's Name
Position
School Name
Address
Date

Dear_____,

My name is Dominique Starling, and I am a graduate student in the Specialist in School Psychology program at Eastern Illinois University. I am writing to request your permission for your school staff to participate in a study I am conducting to fulfill my thesis requirement. The input of your staff will advance knowledge about the benefits of Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS).

The study is designed to assess the usefulness PBIS in schools. If you allow me, I will ask your school staff to complete two brief surveys that will take 10 to 15 minutes total to complete. All school staff members (such as administrators, teachers, support licensed professionals, support staff, and so on) are invited to complete the online survey and their responses will remain anonymous. Upon your approval, I will send the link to the survey to you so that you can share it with your staff.

Staff who complete the survey, will be entered in a drawing to possibly win a $25 Amazon Gift Card. A total of four participants will possibly win a gift card. If interested, results from your school staff's responses to the survey will be made readily available.

I look forward to hearing from you. If you have any questions or concerns, please contact me, Dominique, at dmstarling@eiu.edu; my thesis supervisor, Dr. Assege HaileMariam at ahailemariam@eiu.edu, or the EIU Institutional Review Board at eiuirb@.eiu.edu.

Thank you for your consideration!

Sincerely,
Dominique Starling
Candidate in the Specialist School Psychology Program
Eastern Illinois University
Email: dmstarling@eiu.edu

Appendix D

Consent to Participate in a Study

Thank you for your willingness to participate in this research study conducted by Dominique Starling, a graduate student in the Specialist in School Psychology Program at Eastern Illinois University (EIU). The research aims to understand the use of Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) and behavioral outcomes of students in schools; and it fulfills the thesis requirement of my program. Your participation will advance our understanding of PBIS in action; and I thank you for your support.

Participation in this study involves completing two brief surveys, which will take about 10 to 15 minutes of your time. In addition, Participation is voluntary and confidential. You can stop participation at any point without penalty. To assure confidentiality, no personally identifying information, such as name, will be collected; and only aggregate data will be reported.

By completing the surveys, you are giving consent to participate in this study. If you have any questions or concerns, please contact me, Dominique, at dmstarling@eiu.edu; my thesis supervisor, Dr. Assege HaileMariam at ahailemariam@eiu.edu, or the EIU Institutional Review Board at eiuirb@www.eiu.edu.

Thank you for your participation!

Sincerely,

Dominique Starling

By continuing to complete the surveys, I agree to participate in this study.

◯ Continue
◯ Exit

Appendix E

Participating School Districts

Participating School Districts	*N*	%
1	54	12.3
2	38	8.7
3	18	4.1
4	43	9.8
5	4	.9
6	17	3.9
7	34	7.7
8	22	5.0
9	49	11.2
10	52	11.8
11	27	6.2
12	23	5.2
13	10	2.3
14	10	2.3
15	38	8.7

Note: To maintain anonymity, participating schools were assigned numbers.

Table 4

Demographic Information

Items	*N*	*%*
Race/Ethnicity		
White	386	87.9
Black	3	.7
Hispanic or Latino/Latinx	11	2.5
Asian	9	2.1
Native American	2	.5
Multiple Races	13	3.0
Prefer Not to Say	15	3.4
Type of School Personnel		
Certified General Education Teacher	258	58.8
Certified Special Education Teacher	45	10.3
Classified Staff	14	3.2
Certificated Support Personnel	63	14.4
Administrator	16	3.6
Other	43	9.8
Grade Levels Worked		
Early Childhood (PreK)	18	4.1
Elementary (K-5)	269	61.3
Middle School (6-8)	89	20.3
High School (9-12)	39	8.9
Elementary & Secondary (Pre-K – 12)	24	5.5
Years of Experience in Current Role		
Less than 1 year	12	2.7
1-4 years	111	25.3
5-9 years	102	23.2
10-14 years	71	16.2
15-19 years	49	11.2
20+	94	21.4
Years in Current Building		
Less than 1 year	16	3.6
1-4 years	146	33.3
5-9 years	103	23.5
10-14 years	57	13.0
15-19 years	51	11.6
20+ years	66	15.0

Table 5

Demographic Information: Professional Development in PBIS and School Climate

Items	*N*	*%*
Professional Development Hours for PBIS		
0 hours	131	29.8
1-4 hours	209	47.6
5-9 hours	47	10.7
10-14 hours	25	5.7
15-19 hours	5	1.1
20+ hours	22	5.0
Professional Training for PBIS		
Workshop	59	13.4
Seminar/Lecture	64	14.6
Overview of PBIS Manual	41	9.3
Conference	7	1.6
Multiple Formats	179	40.8
Other (I.e., none, Staff led PD)	89	20.3
Found PD(s) for PBIS Helpful		
Yes	316	72.0
No	33	7.5
I have not received professional development	90	20.5
Level of Understanding of PBIS		
Unfamiliar	3	.7
Limited	36	8.2
Basic	243	55.4
High	157	35.8
Support of PBIS		
Strongly Disagree	14	3.2
Disagree but will not resist	31	7.1
Agree but does not plan to participate in leadership or committee work	116	26.4
Strongly agree	267	60.8
Unfamiliar	11	2.5
Communication at School		
Poor	8	1.8
Needs Improvement	95	21.6
Adequate	167	38.0
Good	169	38.5

Table 6

Demographics Questionnaire: Year for Initial Implementation of PBIS

School District	*Participant Responses*	*Administrator Responses*	*Internet Search*
1	2009, 2010, 2011, 2012, 2015, 2019	2011	2008
2	2010, 2011, 2012, 2014, 2015, 2016	-	2008
3	2009, 2012, 2015, 2016, 2018, 2019	-	-
4	2005, 2006, 2012	-	2008
5	-	2009	-
6	2000, 2010	-	-
7	2005, 2008, 2010, 2011, 2012,2015, 2016	2010	-
8	2008, 2009, 2016	-	2011
9	2000, 2001, 2005, 2010, 2011, 2012, 2014, 2016, 2017, 2018	-	2010
10	2006, 2007, 2008, 2009, 2010, 2011, 2012, 2015	2003	-
11	2008, 2009, 2011, 2016, 2017-2018	-	-
12	2000, 2002, 2014, 2015, 2017, 2018	-	-
13	2010, 2014	2009	-
14	2005, 2010, 2013	-	-
15	2000, 2005, 2008. 2011. 2018, 2019	2006	-

Table 7

Staff Perception of Behavior Discipline Responses by Domain

Domain	Strongly Disagree N (%)	Disagree N (%)	Agree N (%)	Strongly Agree N (%)
Domain 1: Teaching & Acknowledging Expectations (Research Question 1)				
4. We should not have to teach students how to behave at school.	196 (44.6)	187 (42.6)	43 (9.8)	13 (3.0)
12. I don't have time to teach the schoolwide behavioral expectations.	127 (28.9)	259 (59.0)	40 (9.1)	13 (3.0)
13. PBIS may work in other schools, but I doubt it will work in ours.	187 (42.6)	222 (50.6)	21 (4.8)	9 (2.1)
16. I feel that rewarding students is the same as bribing them.	110 (25.1)	252 (57.4)	58 (13.2)	19 (4.3)
17. I resent being asked to do one more thing in my classroom.	122 (27.8)	249 (56.7)	58 (13.2)	10 (2.3)
Domain 2: Systemic Resources, Supports and Climate (Research Question 3)				
1. I have trust in my administrator's ability to lead us through change.	10 (2.3)	30 (6.8)	166 (37.8)	233 (53.1)
2. PBIS is likely to be yet another fad that comes and goes in this school.	115 (26.2)	230 (52.4)	71 (16.2)	23 (5.2)
3. The climate at this school is positive.	12 (2.7)	53 (12.1)	200 (45.6)	174 (39.6)
5. I believe our school has (or will have) the necessary resources to support PBIS.	6 (1.4)	34 (7.7)	211 (48.1)	188 (42.8)
8. Overall, I am satisfied with my job.	9 (2.1)	21 (4.8)	193 (44)	216 (49.2)
Domain 3: Implementation Integrity (Research Question 4)				
21. Currently, I teach the agreed upon schoolwide behavior expectations to students.*	10 (2.3)	4 (.9)	192 (43.7)	231 (52.6)
22. Currently, I acknowledge/reward students for meeting the agreed upon schoolwide*	8 (1.8)	18 (4.1)	200 (45.6)	210 (47.8)
23. I apply the agreed upon schoolwide disciplinary consequences.*	214 (48.7)	195 (44.4)	23 (5.2)	6 (1.4)
Domain 4: Philosophical Views of Behavior and Discipline (Exploratory Question 1)				
9. The students at this school need to be held more responsible for their own behavior.	13 (3.0)	99 (22.6)	187 (42.6)	140 (31.9)
14. Parents in the community don't seem to care about how their children behave at school.	57 (13.0)	223 (50.8)	118 (26.9)	41 (9.3)

Table 7

Continued: Staff Perception of Behavior Discipline Items Responses by Domain

Domain	Strongly Disagree N (%)	Disagree N (%)	Agree N (%)	Strongly Agree N (%)
15. I believe we should reserve rewards for students exceeding expectations, not simply for meeting them.	63 (14.4)	193 (44.0)	122 (27.8)	61 (13.9)
19. When problem behaviors occur, we need to get tougher.	42 (9.6)	192 (43.7)	153 (34.9)	52 (11.8)
Domain 5: Systemic Cohesiveness and Openness to Change (Research Question 5)				
6. I suspect that my colleagues will not (or are not) consistently implementing the agreed upon schoolwide behavior plan.	54 (12.3)	225 (51.3)	121 (27.6)	39 (8.9)
7. My colleagues and I share a common philosophy for behavior and discipline.	4 (.9)	59 (13.9)	256 (58.3)	120 (27.3)
8. Overall, I am satisfied with my job.	9 (2.1)	21 (4.8)	193 (44)	216 (49.2)
10. The staff at this school tends to resist change with concerns such as “We don’t do it that way here.”	66 (15.0)	267 (60.8)	74 (16.9)	32 (7.3)
11. This school has successfully implemented change efforts in the past.	5 (1.1)	38 (8.7)	279 (63.6)	117 (26.7)
20. Behavior plans do not work well in our school.	86 (19.6)	254 (57.9)	82 (18.7)	17 (3.9)

Had a 5th choice=Not Applicable - Response for Items **21**: 2 (.5%); **22**: 3 (.7%) and **23:** 1 (.2%)