

Using Student and Staff Perceptions to Guide Training and Practice

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Abstract

Despite the notable positive outcomes SWPBIS has for students, schools sometimes struggle with effective and successful implementation. SWPBIS is a complex systems change effort which may prove to be overwhelming for some schools to effectively implement without the necessary preliminary supports in place. System change efforts provide an avenue to approach the work of implementing SWPBIS. The present case study examined use of staff and student perceptions of behavior and discipline to design and provide targeted staff training through PLCs. Findings demonstrate some improvements in Tier I SWPBIS implementation. However several barriers were also identified in the course of this work. Using perceptions and beliefs of staff and students to implement positive behavior practices is a complex process and can be influenced by administrator support, district supports, and the priorities and collaboration of a school staff.

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Using Student and Staff Perceptions of Behavior and Discipline to Facilitate Positive Behavior Practices

School-Wide Positive Behavior Intervention and Supports (SWPBIS) is an evidence-based, systems approach for reducing problem behaviors and increasing prosocial behavior and instructional time (Algozzine, Wang, & Violette, 2011; Bradshaw, Koth, Thornton, & Leaf, 2009; Lassen, Steele, & Sailor, 2006; Sugai & Horner, 2009). Effective implementation of SWPBIS reduces student disciplinary referrals, detentions and suspensions (Bradshaw, Reinke, Brown, Bevans, & Leaf, 2008) and increases academic outcomes (Nocera, Whitbread, & Nocera, 2014). Further, implementation of SWPBIS has been associated with decreased teacher perception of stress (Ross & Horner, 2007; Ross, Romer, & Horner, 2012), and improvements in classroom management (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009).

Although SWPBIS results in many positive outcomes, it is difficult to effectively implement. Challenges to effective implementation include the development of a SWPBIS leadership team, full staff participation, administrator support, and effective SWPBIS coaching (Handler et al, 2007). Handler and colleagues (2007) also reported that successful implementation can be hindered by ineffective training of staff, poor communication between the leadership team and staff, lack of staff buy-in and general resistance to the practices of SWPBIS.

Full adoption of SWPBIS can be even more difficult to attain in secondary schools (Flannery & Sugai, 2010). The unique factors that contribute to the difficulty of implementing SWPBIS at the secondary level include a school size, school organization and culture, and student developmental considerations (Flannery, Frank, Kato, Doren, & Fenning, 2013). The increased number of students served in most secondary settings is challenging for SWPBIS

implementation due to the increased effort and coordination necessary for data collection and implementation of targeted interventions. Secondary schools tend to be organized around content area departments that can impact effective implementation of SWPBIS. The organization of independent departments may focus on specific content and staff may believe that teaching school-wide behavior expectations is not in their purview. In addition, the structure of many secondary schools is not conducive to coordination and communication with other departments allowing for full staff collaboration and involvement. Further, secondary schools tend to place more emphasis on student outcomes, such as high stakes testing, placing pressure on staff to make academics the priority to the exclusion of behavioral supports. Finally, secondary school staff tend to emphasize higher expectations for student self-management (Flannery et al., 2013).

Staff perceptions are important to SWPBIS implementation and they can act as a barrier to SWPBIS, such as when staff hold beliefs that may be in conflict with the principles of SWPBIS. For example, many school staff believe that reactive disciplinary approaches are the best method to address challenging student behaviors despite evidence to the contrary (Kincaid, Childs, Blase, & Wallace, 2007). In their study on staff perceptions and needs, Feuerborn and Chinn (2012) found many teachers perceived student misbehavior as innate and fixed rather than preventable or responsive to adult influence. SWPBIS practices depend on the belief that student behavior can be responsive to intervention, and if staff do not believe that behavior can change, or that it is a fixed trait in students, staff may be unlikely to implement SWPBIS practices.

Secondary staff tend to place more reliance on punitive consequences and belief that punishment is more effective than reinforcement. These staff perceptions may impact effective implementation of SWPBIS. Secondary staff may have an expectation that older students should

have learned prosocial behaviors prior to arriving at the middle or high school. Believing students already know the behavioral skills and are choosing not to use them would lend itself to a punitive response rather than reteaching the expectation (Flannery et al., 2013; Kincaid, et al., 2007; Lohrmann, Martin, & Palmieri, 2008). Thus one significant challenge to overcome in implementing SWPBIS in secondary schools is a change in the mind-set of staff that may be focused on a punitive system in the classroom to one that is more proactive and positive, as is encouraged in SWPBIS (Kincaid et al., 2007).

In addition to staff perceptions that may act as a barrier to effective SWPBIS, perceptions of students may also impact staff implementation of SWPBIS. A study conducted by Kok and colleagues (2014) revealed secondary students attending schools implementing SWPBIS were asked to report strengths and weaknesses of the program. Students reported strengths of SWPBIS as rewards and improved behavior amongst their fellow students. Students' perceptions of weaknesses of SWPBIS were teachers not being consistent in utilizing the reward system, not all student misbehaviors decreased, and the overreliance on external motivation (Kok, McKeivitt, Kelly-Vance, & Nordess, 2014). The results of a study by Feuerborn, Wallace, and Tyre (2016) revealed that middle and high school teachers were concerned that their students' failed to buy into their schools' SWPBIS reinforcement system. These teachers commented that their students outright refused the rewards the teachers offered them, stating that the rewards were not meaningful to them. Teachers worried that implementing the SWPBIS practices in their classroom might negatively impact their relationships and overall credibility with their students.

Barriers to full implementation of SWPBIS at the secondary level may be related to leadership teams' poor understanding of the perceptions, needs, and concerns of staff and their

failure to meet needs and concerns in a proactive manner. However, the field of SWPBIS does not offer much guidance or evidence-based approaches to reaching an understanding of staff needs and concerns as they pertain to SWPBIS, particularly within the secondary level. Further, there is a dearth of research on what to do with those concerns and needs once they are identified. Only within the last decade have researchers in the field of SWPBIS began to explicitly study the perceptions, needs, and concerns of the very stakeholders asked to implement the practices on a daily basis. Although this research is developing in the field of SWPBIS, the literature in the field of systems change is more established and does provide recommendations for the effective adoption of change efforts across an organization. Notably, researchers in this field advocate for the use of stakeholder needs assessments to target support based on the perceptions, needs, and concerns identified (Roach, Kratochwill, & Frank, 2009; Hall & Hord, 2015).

Theoretical Framework

This project draws upon both the frameworks of systems change and SWPBIS. SWPBIS utilizes an evidence-based intervention model to address behavior needs in a school while system change addresses the salient features for managing an organization undergoing change process. Both of these frameworks are necessary to effectively support schools undertaking the complex process of systemic change in disciplinary practices.

Systems Change

Hall and Hord (2015) outlined six strategies essential for the implementation of change in an organization. These include: (a) creating a shared vision of the change; (b) planning and identifying the resources necessary for change; (c) investing in professional development; (d) persistent monitoring and assessing progress; (e) providing assistance when needed; and (f)

creating a culture conducive and ready to change. Hall and Hord developed the Concerns-Based Adoption Model (CBAM), an approach to view the perspectives of individuals involved in change adoption (Hall & Hord, 2015). The CBAM framework uses the questions and concerns of stakeholders (teachers, administrators and students) to target support necessary to address the individual's need (Hall & Hord, 2015; Roach, Kratochwill, & Frank, 2009).

Adelman and Taylor (2007) outlined four phases of an overlapping organizational change process. The first phase fosters readiness, which involves creating a climate and motivation for change. Second is the initial implementation phase, which involves providing guidance and support for the change initiative. The third phase is institutionalization, which requires ensuring there is the infrastructure that can maintain and support the change effort. The fourth and final phase is one that embraces dynamic evolution and creative renewal of the educational environment, which welcomes improvements to the quality of the innovation and continuous, dynamic support. Adelman and Taylor (2007) indicate that most school-change implementation failures occur because change agents do not provide the appropriate time and attention to the efforts needed in the initial stages of change.

Thus, applying these frameworks to establish readiness and initial implementation of SWPBIS involves establishing a shared vision, planning for and providing the resources and supports necessary for change, gaining an understanding the perspectives, needs, and concerns of individuals involved in change adoption, and providing effective professional development to support the needs and concerns of stakeholders. The use of data to guide decisions throughout this process is common to both systems change and SWPBIS frameworks

School-Wide Positive Behavior Support

SWPBIS is grounded in applied behavior analysis. SWPBIS consists of defining, teaching, modeling and reinforcing desirable behaviors and consistently responding to undesired behaviors among students (Sugai & Horner, 2009). SWPBIS utilizes a three-tiered prevention model in which universal or Tier I prevention strategies are applied to all students; targeted or Tier II interventions are applied to students who are not responsive to primary interventions and who are at-risk for behavioral challenges; and Tier III strategies are applied to students who are not responsive to primary and secondary tier interventions and require more intensive interventions (Horner, Sugai, Todd, & Lewis-Palmer, 2005). Tier I interventions and supports include (a) explicitly defining and teaching expected school-wide behavioral expectations to all students across all settings, (b) acknowledging and providing frequent positive feedback to students who are demonstrating expected behaviors, (c) implementing effective classroom management strategies, (d) establishing consistent and fair classroom and office-managed disciplinary procedures for responding to students who violate the behavioral expectations, and (e) using data to evaluate the impact of school-wide efforts (Horner, Sugai, & Anderson, 2010). Essential in effective implementation of SWPBIS is the use of universal screening, evidence based instructional practices, timely team-based data-driven decision making, evidenced-based interventions, assessment of intervention integrity and assessment of student performance (Sugai & Horner, 2009).

There are various stages of implementation of SWPBIS. These stages are not dependent on time invested in the practices, rather which practices are in effect schoolwide. Stages of implementation include pre-implementation or creating readiness, installation or establishing necessary resources for implementation, initial implementation, elaboration or expanding the practice, and finally continuous improvement stage of implementation (Fixsen, Blasé, Horner, &

Sugai, 2009; Lewis, Barrett, Sugai, & Horner, 2010). SWPBIS stages of implementation are consistent with system change theory which states that change occurs over time and not all at once (Hall & Hord, 2015).

Momentum for the launch of SWPBIS thus requires a variety of actions. Hall and Hord (2015) state, “An entire organization does not change until each member has changed” (p.12). For the school to implement a system such as SWPBIS effectively, each staff member must be prepared to participate similarly and with a shared knowledge about the goals and practices of the system. Without proper preparation, schools will fail to create or sustain systemic positive change. Valenti and Kerr (2015) recommend assessing staff perceptions before implementation of SWPBIS in order to incorporate the feedback from staff into every step. Allowing staff to participate early in the process fosters a greater involvement and buy-in, knowledge about how to act and sense of ownership in the outcome (Feuerborn, Wallace, & Tyre, 2013).

Perceptions of students and staff are important to understand, and we can use them to tailor supports to meet their needs and address their concerns—needs assessments can help us identify and address barriers and lead to more meaningful and lasting change (Adelman & Taylor, 2007; Hall & Hord, 2015).

Purpose

Although it is well understood that staff perceptions can create barriers to effective implementation of SWPBIS, those in the field of SWPBIS have not yet systemically used stakeholder perceptions to inform targeted professional development. Thus, the purpose of this exploratory case study is threefold: (a) to gain an understanding of the staff and student perceptions of discipline and behavior in an area middle school, (b) to use this understanding of their perceptions to target staff training and supports, and (c) to investigate whether this targeted

training and supports effectively addressed stakeholder needs and facilitated positive behavior and discipline practices.

Research Questions

1. What are the perceptions, needs and concerns of the staff and students as they pertain to behavior and discipline in the study school?
2. How can work as professional learning communities at the study school be targeted to address these identified perception, needs, and concerns?
3. Does targeted professional learning community work address staff needs and concerns and facilitate positive perceptions of behavior and discipline practices in the participating school?
4. Is targeted professional learning community work associated with higher levels of school-wide implementation of SWPBIS?
5. Do staff perceive the targeted professional learning community work to be helpful to support their needs and concerns?

Literature Review

Student and staff perceptions of behavior, discipline and SWPBIS implementation vary. Staff perceptions primarily center on behavioral expectations, systems to support student needs, implementation integrity, philosophical views and openness to change. Students' perceptions primarily center on safety, relationships, behavior, and discipline (Lagana-Rigordan, et al., 2011; Montuoro & Lewis, 2015; Way, 2011).

Staff Related Facilitators and Barriers of SWPBIS Implementation

Successful implementation of SWPBIS can be enhanced or thwarted by a variety of staff-related factors. The perception of strong school administrator support aids in successful

implementation of SWPBIS (Kincaid, Childs, Blasé, & Wallace, 2007; Pinkelman et al., 2015) as does the full support or buy-in of staff (DeRousie & Bierman, 2012; Pinkelman et al., 2015). Research shows that consistency among staff regarding the implementation, a common language, and working toward a common goal are critical components of SWPBIS (Payne & Eckert, 2010; Pinkelman et al., 2015). A third essential feature to successful implementation includes training and professional development on the underlying principles of SWPBIS (Bradshaw & Pas, 2011; Pinkelman et al., 2015).

Staff perceptions of behavior and discipline may negatively impact successful implementation of SWPBIS (Feuerborn, Tyre, & King, 2015). When teams do not have staff commitment to the change, they report lower levels of SWPBIS implementation (Flannery, Sugai, & Anderson, 2009). Staff-related barriers to effective implementation largely stem from lack of staff buy-in (Kincaid, Childs, & Blasé, 2007), which is often a result of perceived weak leadership, skepticism that SWPBIS is needed, feelings of hopelessness related to change, philosophical differences with SWPBIS, and overall low morale and negative school climate (Lohrmann, Forman, & Martin, 2008). Other staff perceptions affecting implementation included limited knowledge of principles of positive behavior support and limited participation in collaboration and problem solving (Bambura, Nonnemacher, & Kern, 2009). Lohrmann and colleagues (2013) found awareness of staff perceptions of SWPBIS might help address staff concerns prior to providing trainings.

Feuerborn and colleagues (2016) queried secondary teachers regarding their concerns and needs, and nearly half the participating teachers expressed concerns that their colleagues did not buy into SWPBIS and would not implement the program as described. Also, more than one quarter of the teachers expressed concerns about the underlying philosophy of SWPBIS. In these

cases, staff expressed concerns about the appropriateness of providing a secondary student with extrinsic reinforcement. Further, teachers reported a need for collaboration in nearly half of all responses as well as a desire to develop a unified vision in their school. Some of the respondents also expressed a need to establish meaningful relationships between teachers and students and expressed concerns that students were resistant or didn't buy-into the practices of SWPBIS (Feuerborn et al., 2016).

Flannery and colleagues (2013) indicate that the effective implementation of SWPBIS requires strategies to build consensus among staff and students; however, there is little research in the field of SWPBIS to guide teams in achieving the level of support that is recommended to launch and sustain SWPBIS (Sugai & Horner, 2006; Coffey & Horner, 2012). To assist in staff buy-in, it is generally recommended that there is strong communication, consensus-building and collaboration among all staff, students and administrative team members (Flannery, Frank, Kato, Doren & Fenning, 2013).

Student Perceptions of Discipline

Student's perceptions of climate and discipline in the school can impact school wide program efforts (Koth, Bradshaw, & Leaf, 2008). Koth and colleagues (2008) indicate that school-level factors such as student mobility and teacher turnover in addition to classroom level factors such as size of class and concentration of students with behavior problems, were significant predictors of student perceptions of school climate. Way (2011) found that students who perceived teacher-student relationships as positive were less disruptive in school. Further, students who feel less supported by adults in the school may be more likely to misbehave (Shirley & Cornell, 2012).

Student's perceptions of behavior and discipline may be oriented from a classroom level or from a school-wide level. McNeely and colleagues (2002) found that students have less school connectedness when placed with teachers with poor classroom management. When teachers demonstrate consistency and encourage self-management, as in SWPBIS schools, the classroom and overall school climate improves (McNeely, Nonnemaker, & Blum, 2002). In a study by Lewis, Montuoro, and McCann (2013), students predicted their behavior would become worse if punishments and rewards were eliminated. In schools implementing SWPBIS students demonstrated increased perceptions of safety and decreases in their perceptions of bullying (Kelm, McIntosh & Cooley, 2014). Further, in schools implementing SWPBIS students also report increased perceptions of adults treating them fairly, listening to them and caring about them (Youngblood, Filter, Bertsch, Campana, & Panahon, 2014; Coyle, Crowell, Carey, & Kushner, 2013). It is also important to note that staff perceptions may be affected by student perceptions of SWPBIS. Staff may perceive students to be excited about SWPBIS and therefore staff are excited about the implementation or staff may perceive students to be unsupportive of the discipline and reward system so staff are unsupportive of SWPBIS practices. Students often report desire for attention, (Cothran & Kulinna, 2007; Cothran, Kulinna, & Garrahy, 2009), feelings of disconnection in their teacher-student relationships (Decker, Dona, & Christenson, 2007; Montuoro & Lewis, 2015), boredom (Cothran & Kulinna, 2007; Cothran, Kulinna, & Garrahy, 2009; Montuoro & Lewis, 2015), and a negative attitude toward school (Montuoro & Lewis, 2015). Students are the primary stakeholders in the school. As such, it is important to incorporate their perceptions, concerns, and needs regarding behavior and discipline in order to implement meaningful change (Kotter, 1995).

Staff Training

School leadership teams, coaches, and SWPBIS facilitators have identified lack of training as a barrier to effective implementation of SWPBIS (e.g., Bambara, Nonnemacher, & Kern, 2009, Coffey & Horner, 2012; Pinkelman et al., 2015). Some teachers enter the field of education without any training in behavior management (Evertson & Weinstein, 2006). Many teachers report managing behavior in the classroom to be their biggest challenge (Reinke, Stormont, Herman, Puri & Goel, 2011). Flannery and colleagues (2013) report that middle and high school teachers receive less training in social, emotional and behavioral supports than elementary teachers. Further, when evaluating barriers to effective implementation of SWPBIS, teachers report lack of knowledge about positive behavior interventions and supports as well as lack of understanding about the principles of behavior to impact SWPBIS implementation (Kincaid, Childs, Blasé & Wallace, 2007). In his writings on double loop learning Argyris (1977) states, “Organizational learning is a process of detecting and correcting error” (p. 116). Double loop learning involves taking a new learner through new experiences with support. Knowles, Holton, and Swanson (2014) describe embedded learning and reflection in action as essential to professional development for staff. One of the most effective strategies for improving student and staff performance is the engagement of Professional Learning Communities (Dufour & Eaker, 1998). Professional Learning Communities offer an avenue to walk educators through new learning with support, allow for reflection on their actions and time to make corrections to any errors that may have occurred.

Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) are educator groups that meet on a frequent basis to discuss student data and changes to instruction necessary for student success. This model of learning allows for frequent reflection, analysis and revision for improvements to be sustained and refined and embraces the double loop learning model in action. One of the critical

components to PLCs is giving the teacher a voice in decision making based on demonstrated student need (Dufour & Eaker, 1998). Any effective effort to change an organization or system must be supported by ongoing professional development involving all stakeholders.

Implementation of a new school practice increases when continuous support is provided and the concerns and needs of the staff are considered (Hall & Hord, 2015). Researchers recommend schools considering adoption of new programs should assess their readiness for change and stakeholder buy-in prior to embarking on implementation of a new practice (Fixsen & Blasé, 2009). Hall and Hord (2015) suggest that assessing staff concerns prior to implementation of a new practice may enhance buy-in during the delicate initial implementation phase. In their five step guide for SWPBIS teams, Feuerborn, Wallace and Tyre (2013) indicate the first step in gaining staff support is to develop a clear understanding of staff perceptions.

Professional Learning Communities are a way in which school staff can learn about a school change in a continuous supportive manner using student and staff data. School staff demonstrate increased competence with innovations and change as they move through the PLC process (Tobia & Hord, 2012). The core components of PLCs are (a) a focus on student learning (b) a culture of collaboration, (c) examining best practice and current reality, or identifying the evidence based strategies and the current level of student performance (d) action orientation— learning by doing (e) commitment to continuous improvement, and (f) focus on results (Dufour, Dufour, Eaker, & Many, 2006). Staff must be able to identify what they want students to be able to do, how they will know when the students have learned it and how staff will respond when they show difficulty in learning it. Staff are often well trained in applying these principles to student academic performance but not as fluid at applying these concepts to behavioral expectations.

PLCs can use double loop learning as a means to address staff perceptions about behavior. Staff come to the classroom with previous knowledge and perceptions about student behavior. These perceptions can be acknowledged along side analysis of student data and reflection of teacher actions in an effort to correct any errors that arise. The continuous nature of PLC work offers a means for the continual review and reflection that occurs in double loop learning.

Method

This exploratory case study occurred in four phases. During the first phase, staff and students were asked to complete surveys related to their perceptions of behavior and discipline, and the school leadership team collected baseline data on the current level of SWPBIS implementation. The second and third phase involved analysis of the surveys and implementation of targeted planning and professional development through PLCs based on those results. The final phase consisted of re-administering the staff and student surveys of behavior and discipline, reassessing levels of SWPBIS implementation, and obtaining staff evaluations of the professional development provided through professional learning communities.

This study incorporated both qualitative and quantitative frameworks to establish a more comprehensive understanding of staff and student perceptions of behavior and discipline in a school (Tashakkori & Creswell, 2007). Quantitative methodologies allowed for a better understanding of trends across a larger data set. Quantitative analysis included comparing winter and spring differences of survey ratings, the Tiered Fidelity Inventory (TFI) and overall staff evaluation of the targeted PLC trainings. The qualitative methodologies allowed for a richer and more contextual understanding of these trends related to behavior and discipline.

Setting

A middle school in a mid-sized suburban district in the Pacific Northwest region of the United States was selected as a sample of convenience to participate in this study. The study school was at an initial-implementation stage for SWPBIS. The initial implementation stage is defined as the beginning adoption of SWPBIS, a change in practice occurring at the school level, attention to implementation with fidelity occurs with visibility and demonstration of SWPBIS practices (Lewis, Barrett, Sugai, & Horner, 2010). This middle school had consistent principal leadership for the past seven years, although the vice principal and dean of students were both new to the school and new to administration. This middle school rests within a district with a superintendent who is new to the position as well as new to the district. The district does not currently have a district wide approach for implementation of positive behavior supports in schools, though a small number of elementary schools in the district are in various stages of implementation.

History. Mountain Middle School (pseudonym) determined SWPBIS as a focus for the school through their building school improvement plan last year. The building school improvement plan (SIP) team included representative members of each grade team as well as the leadership team. The Vice Principal at Mountain Middle School for the 2014-15 school year was an active member of the district behavior leadership team and the primary supporter of Mountain's adoption of SWPBIS. As an initial step in implementing SWPBIS in 2014-15 the district behavior leadership team provided an overview to the staff on SWPBIS, and Mountain's building SIP team developed five, positively stated behavioral expectations and posted these throughout the school during the 2014-15 school year. The behavioral expectations were Pride, Respect, Integrity, Determination and Excellence (P.R.I.D.E.). The building leadership team developed and disseminated a behavior matrix describing expected behaviors in each area of the

building. They had also developed a discipline protocol so staff were familiar with behaviors that were to be addressed in the classroom and those that needed to be addressed in the office. They had not established a system for tracking discipline.

The staff were implementing Think Time as a strategy to address student disruption in the classroom. Think Time is a strategy used to respond to disruptive behavior. This strategy is intended to deliver systematic consequences early for disruptive behavior by all staff, reduce the number of warnings provided to students, provide the students with feedback, eliminate the negative social exchanges between the teacher and student thereby reducing the potential of providing reinforcement or attention to the student (Nelson & Carr, 1999). The three steps of a Think Time strategy are as follows: 1. Provide the student an early warning with a prompt to adjust his/her behavior, 2. Direct the student to a designated classroom to complete a debriefing form in which the student identifies their inappropriate behavior, identify what they need to do to correct their behavior, and indicate if they can do the new actions, 3. The teacher debriefs with the student, and 4. The student rejoins the class (Nelson & Carr, 1999). This practice is used by staff at Mountain Middle School and is the primary response staff uses to respond to misbehavior. Think Time is not part of SWPBIS, rather it is an effort used to respond to student misbehavior. Think Time uses a strategy in which students are removed from the learning environment whereas SWPBIS employs practices to increase student instructional time.

The building had not yet established a SWPBIS team that met regularly and had not yet established a behavior data system. They had started the practice of providing PRIDE awards for students demonstrating expected behaviors, though there was no ticket system. The PRIDE awards were provided to a student and were later exchanged for an ice cream treat. Teachers were expected to give one PRIDE award per week. Teachers taught PRIDE the first week of

school and had not revisited it since that time. None of the six essential features, of effective SWPBIS outlined by Sugai and Horner (2009), universal screening, evidence-based behavior instructional practices, timely data driven decision making, continuum of behavioral interventions, assessment of intervention integrity and assessment of student performance, was in place at Mountain Middle School at the start of the 2015-16 school year. According to the definitions for levels of implementation outlined by Lewis et al, 2010, Mountain Middle School was moving from an exploration phase in the 2014-15 school year to an installation phase and initial implementation phase during the 2015-16 school year. It is recommended that in the early phases of implementation, a school put primary focus on Tier I supports to allow a school to begin implementation on a manageable scale (Lewis, Barrett, Sugai, & Horner, 2010).

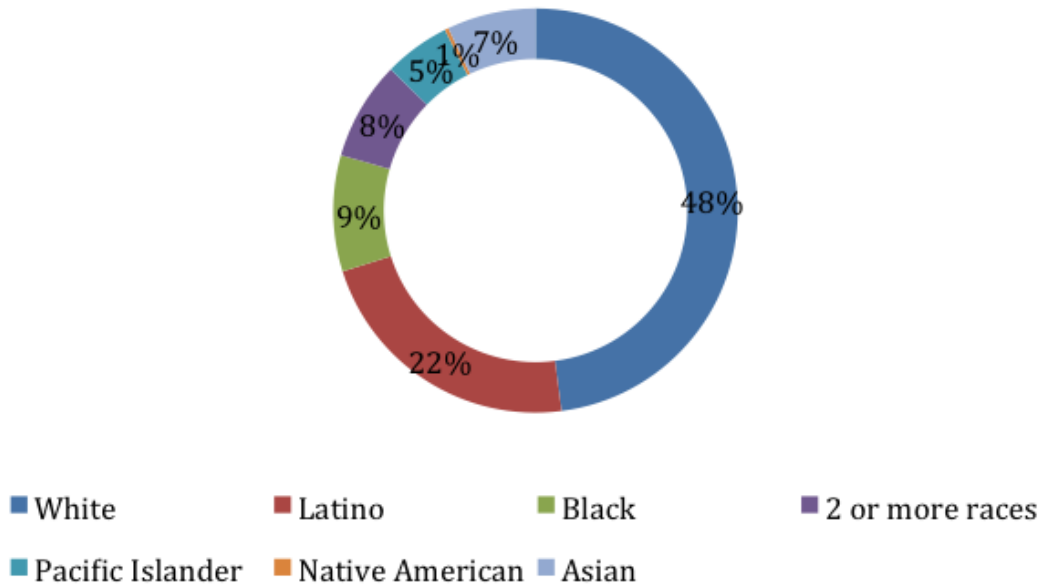
The school had a large number of out of school suspensions, 302, during the 2014-15 academic year. In addition, teachers noted more difficulty with classroom management during the year. Teachers attributed this challenge as an outcome of a higher transitory student population with more challenging behaviors, according to the dean, vice principal and principal. The principal attributed this challenge as a reflection of weaknesses of brand new teachers, newly hired or teachers nearing retirement with poor ability to adjust to the demands of the high need student population. As a new school-wide improvement effort, the vice principal requested assistance in readiness and moving toward initial implementation of SWPBIS. The vice principal had initiated adoption efforts. She and the principal had created a shared vision for the school and identified the resources necessary for SWPBIS implementation as recommended by Hall and Hord (2015). The principal had committed to investing the time and resources for professional development for SWPBIS for the 2015-16 school year. The vice principal spearheading this effort resigned her position at the end of the 2014-15 school year. The new vice principal

assumed this charge when she entered at the beginning of the 2015-16 school year, though she had limited experience with SWPBIS.

Participants. Classified staff, certified teachers, school administrators and certified support personnel in Mountain middle school were requested to voluntarily participate in an anonymous survey assessment, the Staff Perceptions of Behavior and Discipline (SPBD, discussed in the measures section). There are 44 certificated teachers employed in the building, 6 certified support personnel, and 22 classified staff that work directly with students. School administrators include one principal, one vice principal and one dean of students. School support personnel include two school counselors, a school psychologist, and three other non-teacher personnel who provide direct support to students.

Mountain Middle School students were also requested to voluntarily participate in an anonymous survey about their perceptions of the school climate, teacher-student relationships, discipline and behavior, the Student Perceptions of Behavior and Discipline (StPBD, discussed in the measures section). This middle school has approximately 750 students and served an ethnically diverse student population (See Figure 1). Sixty-two percent of the student body qualifies for free or reduced meals and fourteen percent of the students qualify for special education.

Figure 1. Ethnic make-up of Mountain Middle School.



Measures

Student Perceptions of Behavior and Discipline (StPBD). The Student Perceptions of Behavior and Discipline (StPBD) survey is an online measure of student perceptions and beliefs about school discipline and behavior. This tool is newly developed and has not yet been used in existing research. This 37-item survey is aligned with the practices associated with SWPBIS implementation and school climate literature (Hamre & Pianta, 2001; Lagana-Rigordan, et al., 2011; Pinkelman et al, 2015; Ross, Romer, & Horner, 2012). This survey was developed to assess student perceptions of disciplinary practices in the school, their perceptions of connectedness or engagement with the school, as well as school climate. The StPBD assess student perceptions of disciplinary practices, school climate, and their connectedness to adults in school. Further, items related to student perceptions of staff stress are included as this is a component of school climate and teacher efficacy. Five of the items are categorical markers

(sex, race, grade and number of years at the school). The StPBD includes twenty-three Likert scale items and three open-ended responses related to needs and concerns which are essential to guide change (Hall & Hord, 2015). The open-ended items for students used in order to gain an understanding of existing capacities, strengths and needs within the school included: “What would make this school better?” and “What do you like about this school?”

A factor analysis was conducted on the current data set in order to investigate internal consistency of this new measurement tool. The 25 questions from the StPBD that were consistent between the January and June ratings were subjected to principal components analysis (PCA) using R version 3. The analysis revealed strong internal consistency for the StPBD, with an overall Cronbach’s alpha coefficient of 0.87 in January and 0.89 in June. Inspection of the correlation matrix revealed several coefficients .3 and above. The Kaiser-Meyer-Okin (KMO) value was 0.9 for the January analysis and 0.91 for the June analysis, both exceeding the recommended value of 0.6 (Kaiser, 1970, 1974) and Bartlett’s (1954) Test of Sphericity exceeded statistical significance, supporting the factorability of the correlation matrix.

PCA was performed utilizing an orthogonal varimax rotation and revealed the presence of five components with eigenvalues exceeding 1, explaining 14%, 11%, 10%, 8% and 7% of the variance, respectively, and 50% cumulatively for the January results and 15%, 14%, 11%, 8% and 7% of the variance and 54% of the cumulative variance for the June results. An inspection of the screeplot revealed a clear break after the fifth component in both the January and June results. Review of the five factors revealed a theoretical fit with the SWPBIS literature and systemic change. See Table 1 for the 5 factors and corresponding items and coefficients for the June PCA and See Appendix A for the factor items and coefficients for the January PCA. The five factors identified as part of the StPBD are as follows: Factor I. Positive adult connections in

the school, Factor II. Negative climate and stress, Factor III. Positive school climate, Factor IV. Behavior expectations, Factor V. Acknowledgements.

Table 1. Five Factor Solution and Psychometric Properties of the June StPBD (n=494)

Item	Factor loadings						
	M	SD	PC1	PC2	PC3	PC4	PC5
Q13 Teachers seem happy.	2.46	1.16	0.65				
Q18 My teachers care about me.	2.61	1.09	0.74				
Q23 If I need something adults at this school will help me.	2.65	1.12	0.63				
Q24 There's an adult at this school that cares about me.	2.33	1.04	0.71				
Q25 My teachers listen to what I have to say.	2.7	1.15	0.67				
Q19 My teachers know me	2.38	1.23	0.48*				
Q11 Students around here are treated fairly when they break a rule.	2.93	1.2			0.63		
Q12 This school is a positive place to be.	3.17	1.17			0.76		
Q16 Students around here are kind to each other.	3.7	1.09			0.71		
Q20 I am proud of my school.	3.27	1.23			0.77		
Q1 Someone reviewed the school rules with me this year.	2.09	1.03				0.69	
Q3 SW expectations are posted in my classroom.	2.03	1.13				0.7	
Q4 Someone taught me the SW expectations this year.	2.14	1.1				0.7	
Q21 My parent/guardian cares how I behave at school.	1.62	0.88				0.49	
Q6 I have received an award at school in the last year.	2.61	1.35					0.5*
Q7 I like being noticed for following the rules.	2.45	1.1					0.84
Q8 I like being told I'm doing a good job.	2.17	1.02					0.77
Q9 I like getting SW reward tickets.	2.61	1.12					0.53
Q2 I get confused because my teachers have different rules.	2.94	1.22		0.52			
Q14 Teachers seem stressed out.	2.34	1.04		0.64			
Q17 Teachers at this school yell a lot.	2.66	1.14		0.56			

*Based on SWPBIS theory and the January PCA results these items were added to this factor/domain.

The Staff Perceptions of Behavior and Discipline (SPBD). The Staff Perceptions of Behavior and Discipline Survey (Feuerborn, Tyre, & King, 2015) is a tool designed to measure certificated and classified staff perceptions of behavior, discipline, school needs, concerns and strengths. In addition to the overall rating, the Staff Perceptions of Behavior and Discipline survey (SPBD), reports five distinct factor components or domains. These include (a) teaching and acknowledging expectations, (b) systems: resources, supports and climate, (c) implementation integrity, (d) philosophical views of behavior and discipline, and (e) systems: cohesiveness and openness to change.

The design of SPBD is grounded in both SWPBIS and systemic change literature. The SPBD assesses barriers of effective implementation of SWPBIS (e.g., Kincaid et al., 2007; Lohrmann et al., 2008). Further, the SPBD also assesses staff perceptions of facilitating characteristics conducive to effective implementation of SWPBIS such as school climate, administrative supports, training and shared vision (e.g., Bambara, Nonnemacher & Kern, 2009; Coffey & Horner, 2012). The SPBD also includes the open-ended statement of concern: “When I think about Schoolwide Positive Behavior Support, I have the following concerns” adopted from the CBAM (Hall & Hord, 2015, Roach et al., 2009). The SPBD also includes an open-ended statement of need: “What is needed to make it better?” The SPBD has established content and construct validity and strong internal consistency reliability with a Cronbach’s alpha coefficient of .80 (Feuerborn et al., 2015).

The Tiered Fidelity Inventory. The Tiered Fidelity Inventory (Algozzine et al., 2014) is a measure to determine the extent to which staff are applying core features of SWPBIS. The inventory measures implementation of Tier 1, Tier II, and Tier III features. The TFI yields scores indicating the extent to which core features of each tier are being implemented. Criterion for

each item of the inventory reflects degree of implementation (0=not implemented, 1= partially implemented, 2= fully implemented) for each of the three tiers. The TFI produces three scale scores, one for each level of intervention (Tier I, II and III). Tier I has 15 items with a possible total 30 points related to teams, implementation and evaluation. Tier II has 13 items totaling a possible 26 points related to teams, interventions and evaluation. Tier III has 17 items totaling a possible 34 points related to teams, resources, support plans and evaluation. The TFI procedures include a review of the school handbook and policy, documentation of the reward system, intervention tracking, identification and teaching of behavioral expectations, implementation of classroom and school-wide procedures, discipline policies and brief interviews with staff and students. The criterion for implementation is 80% or higher. The TFI has an inter-rater reliability, Pearson correlation of .95 and an overall test-retest reliability, Pearson correlation of .99 (Algozzine et al., 2014).

Procedure

The study was implemented during the 2015-16 school year. The University of Washington (UW) Institutional Review Board (IRB) reviewed the project and provided exempt status approval. Students, parents and staff were informed of the voluntary and anonymous nature of the survey. Parents and guardians were provided an opportunity to opt their student out of participating in both the baseline survey and the final survey. All participants were informed that they were able to complete as much or as little of the surveys as they would like.

This case study involved collaboration with the school and district through the initial design, data collection and analysis to inform teacher and school actions. The principal, vice principal and dean of students partnered with the researcher and district Behavior Leadership Team (BLT) in presenting information to staff and students about school-wide positive behavior

supports. This study was initiated after an administrator expressed interest in implementing SWPBIS as a means to reduce disciplinary actions for students in the school.

There is evidence that student perceptions of SWPBIS can influence staffs' willingness to implement the practices of SWPBIS (Feuerborn et al., 2016), both the student and staff perception data were used to guide both planning decisions and professional development. The implementation plan for Mountain Middle School included first identifying the needs and concerns of staff and students and later addressing those needs and concerns through a PLC model. This process offered multiple opportunities for staff to be involved and invested in the process, as SWPBIS practices are most effective when school staff are actively involved, informed, and invested (Sugai & Horner, 2009). This process also allowed for staff to engage in continual error detection and correction or double loop learning through this continual professional learning process (Agryris, 1977).

First, students and staff were asked to voluntarily complete the StPBD and the SPBD, respectively. Students were requested to complete their surveys online while at school. Both certificated staff and classified staff who work directly with students were asked to complete the SPBD. Following survey administration, the Tiered Fidelity Inventory (Algozzine et al., 2014) was completed with the school leadership team to determine current level of SWPBIS implementation. During the winter evaluation of the TFI, the school administration team along with a school counselor, a teacher and a classified staff member were invited to establish themselves as the SWPBIS team as a school-wide team had yet to be established. After these baseline data were collected, they were analyzed, shared with staff, and used to target both planning decisions and training. Professional development was provided to the staff in five staff meetings and through PLC groups with assistance from the district BLT.

Professional development occurred during whole staff PLCs. I guided the Behavior Leadership Team in the development of the trainings by drawing from the recommendations found in the systemic change literature and the critical elements of SWPBIS (as measured by the TFI) and data gathered from the staff and students through the StPBD and SPBD. The targeted professional development through PLCs followed the process outlined in Hall and Hord (2015) in order to create a context supportive of change. This process included creating a shared vision, planning and providing resources, supporting professional learning, checking on progress and providing continuous assistance.

The positive behavior practices PLC groups met five times over the course of three months. Although all staff were invited to join these PLCs, the groups consisted of certificated staff only. Two of the PLC meetings were voluntary and consisted of approximately one-half of the certificated staff. The PLCs were conducted in one-hour sessions with the exception of first and fourth PLC, which were both two-hour sessions. The first positive behavior practices PLC and fourth PLC were longer because they occurred on a state waiver day. Waiver days are granted by the state board of education as waiver from the 180-day student attendance requirement. Teachers are granted the opportunity to work on individual or collaborative work. Participation in waiver day activities are at the discretion of the certificated teacher or classified staff member so cannot be mandated by the school administrator. The PLC participation was mandatory for teachers with the exception of first and fourth, which were both optional. The first PLC had 28 participants and the fourth PLC has 21 participants. The second PLC has 46 participants, the third PLC has 45 participants and the last PLC has 46 participants. Although all staff, certificated and classified, were invited to join each PLC training and discussion, classified staff did not participate despite being invited. At the end of this process classified staff confided that they

did not feel that the training pertained to them, did not feel they were encouraged to attend despite being invited, and felt they had more pressing job activities to attend to at the time of the trainings such as answering phones, addressing student and parent concerns and preparing for the school day.

Training content was based on the outcome of staff, student, and implementation baseline data as well as feedback obtained from staff throughout the process. Some feedback from staff occurred during the PLC meetings, some occurred in written feedback provided through the formative evaluations following each PLC and some feedback occurred during individual conversations with this researcher outside of PLC meeting times through one-legged interviews (Hall & Hord, 2015). One-legged interviews are brief interventions that could occur while standing on one leg and are used to identify emerging needs, clarify questions and solve small problems (Hall & Hord, 2015).

The positive behavior PLCs focused on needs and concerns identified in the surveys and the essential features identified by Hall and Hord (2015) were used as a guideline to share recommendations (i.e., creating a shared vision, identifying necessary resources, providing professional development, monitoring progress, providing assistance when needed).

Toward the end of the year, the StPBD, SPBD, and TFI were re-administered and pre and posttest data were analyzed. Finally, staff were asked to evaluate the effectiveness and helpfulness of the trainings offered in both a formative manner throughout the trainings as well as in a summative manner, at the end of the trainings.

Process

Develop a Clear Understanding of Staff and Student Perceptions

Prior to the implementation of an innovation such as SWPBIS it is important to understand the concerns and needs of the stakeholders (Fuerborn, Wallace & Tyre, 2013; Hall & Hord, 2013). The first step in this process was to assess the perceptions of staff and students pertaining to behavior and discipline at this school. The StPBD and SPBD were used for this purpose.

Thematic analysis was used to examine the need and concern prompts from the StPBD and the SPBD. Thematic analysis is a well-established method in the field of qualitative research (Corbin & Strauss, 1990). Themes were established from the short responses provided from the need and concern survey prompts using open coding procedure, informed by Grounded Theory (Corbin & Strauss, 1990). Thematic analysis allows for better understanding and exploration of an experience when the needs and concerns are not yet understood. A direct application of Hall and Hord's (2015) CBAM approach, which would apply stages of concern for the participants, was not used. Student and staff responses were highlighted during the initial reading.

Highlighted text included single words, phrases and whole paragraphs. First I developed 44 loose classifications such as student concerns about the cleanliness of the bathrooms, desire for cell phone usage or staff preferences for alternate space for misbehaving students according to the data. These classifications were written in the margins along-side highlighted text. These 44 loose classifications were reduced to 33 classifications or themes and were defined according to the data. For example, autonomy theme included students mention of need for freedom, free time, free time with friends, freedom to choose where to sit or what electives to take, freedom to use their phones or freedom to talk or read during a the day. Another example includes staff concerns regarding philosophy included mention of SWPBIS or "this program" doesn't work or the need to get tougher or employ more punishments and/or removal of students. Some of the

classifications included *in vivo* terms such as *Discipline*, which are taken directly from the text, while others were developed through *open coding* which described the concept being captured by the text such as *Autonomy*. Next I created definitions to attach to the themes. Finally, I created a data summary table for both the staff and students and sorted each comment according to the identified needs and concerns themes for each group. I identified 18 themes for staff and 15 themes for students.

Accuracy and credibility of these findings was established through an audit by the chair of this project. The chair is both familiar with SWPBIS and qualitative research techniques in order to examine the survey responses and themes I developed.

In June of 2016 forty staff members completed the staff survey, 28 teachers, 4 classified staff, 1 certificated support staff, 2 administrators, 2 identified as other and 2 people did not identify his/her position. Although staff were invited to participate in the surveys as well as the training, no classified staff participated in the trainings and very few participated in the surveys. In order to determine change based on the PLC trainings, I am reporting certificated responses only in the results. When conducting the one-legged interviews (Hall & Hord, 2015) toward the end of the PLC trainings, two classified staff members reported that there had been previous incidents in which the classified staff were directed that *all staff* communication is equivalent to *teachers only*, though this was not known to this researcher prior to sending communication to *all staff* to participate in the training and the surveys. The total staff response rate was 53% for the winter and spring surveys. This compares to the 52.3% average response rate noted in the field of organizational science (Anseel, Lievens, Schollaert, & Choragwicka, 2010). See Table 2 for staff response rate.

Table 2. Response rate, staff

	Total	Completed January SPBD	Response rate January	Completed June SPBD	Response rate June
Total Staff	75	40	53%	40	53%
Number of Certificated Staff	53	35	66%	33	62%
Number of Classified Staff	22	4	18%	6	27%
Completion of Open Ended Questions		32	43%	21	28%

Table 3. Response rate, students

		Completed January StPBD	Response rate January	Completed June StPBD	Response Rate June
Total Students	750	559	74%	495	66%
Completion of Open Ended Questions		520	69%	444	59%

In January of 2016, 750 students were given the opportunity to complete the StPBD. Of the 559 students who completed the survey, there was nearly equal participation from students in each grade level (36% sixth grade, 31% seventh grade and 33% eighth grade).

In June of 2016, 495 students completed the student survey with similar grade level participation from the January survey (30% sixth grade, 36% seventh grade and 34% eighth grade). See Table 3 for student response rate.

Winter staff survey results. The January SPBD revealed staff believe teaching expectations is an important priority and within their job responsibilities (See *Figure 2*). In the area of Systemic Resources, Supports and Climate, staff report a negative school climate and are skeptical of the administrations’ ability to allocate resources and prioritize SWPBIS or lead them through change (See *Figure 3*). In the area of Implementation Integrity, 80% of staff reported teaching the

schoolwide expectations, though less than 80% of staff reported acknowledging/rewarding students or applying the schoolwide disciplinary consequences (See *Figure 4*). In the area of Philosophical Views of Behavior and Discipline, the majority of staff reported views that would support harsher punishment or consequences (See *Figure 5*). In the area of Systemic Cohesiveness and Openness to Change, staff responses reveal concerns about their willingness to work together for the greater good of the overall school community (See *Figure 6*).

Figure 2. Domain 1. Teaching and acknowledging expectations, January SPBD.

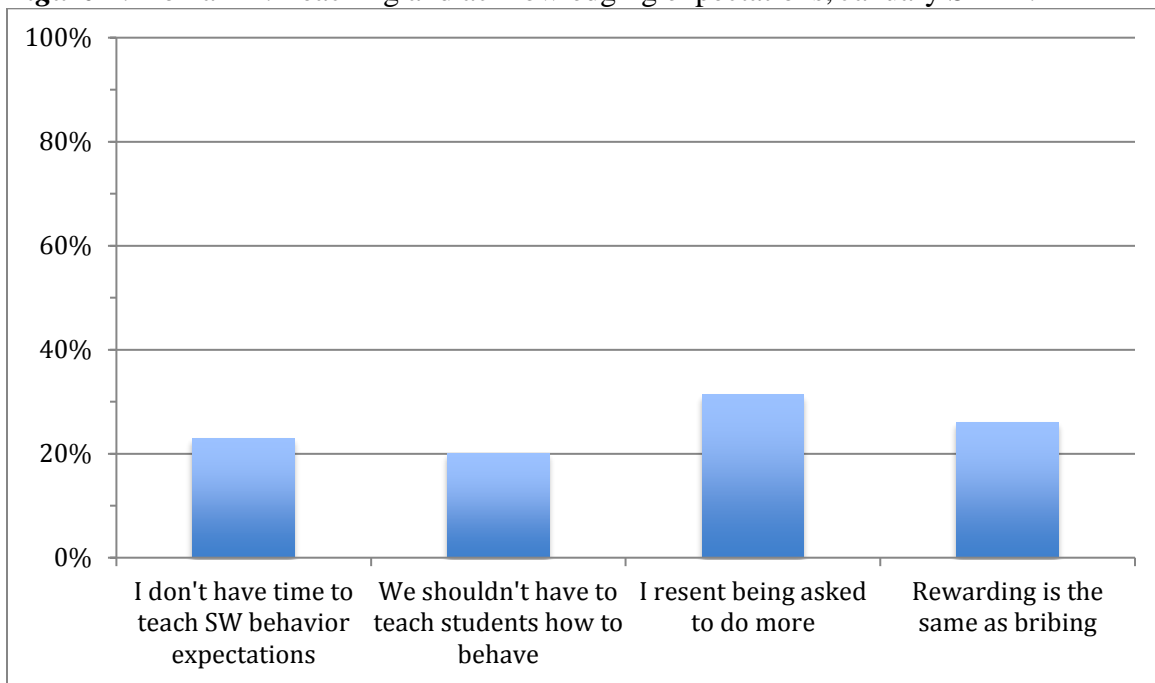


Figure 3. Domain 2. Systemic resources, supports and climate. January SPBD.

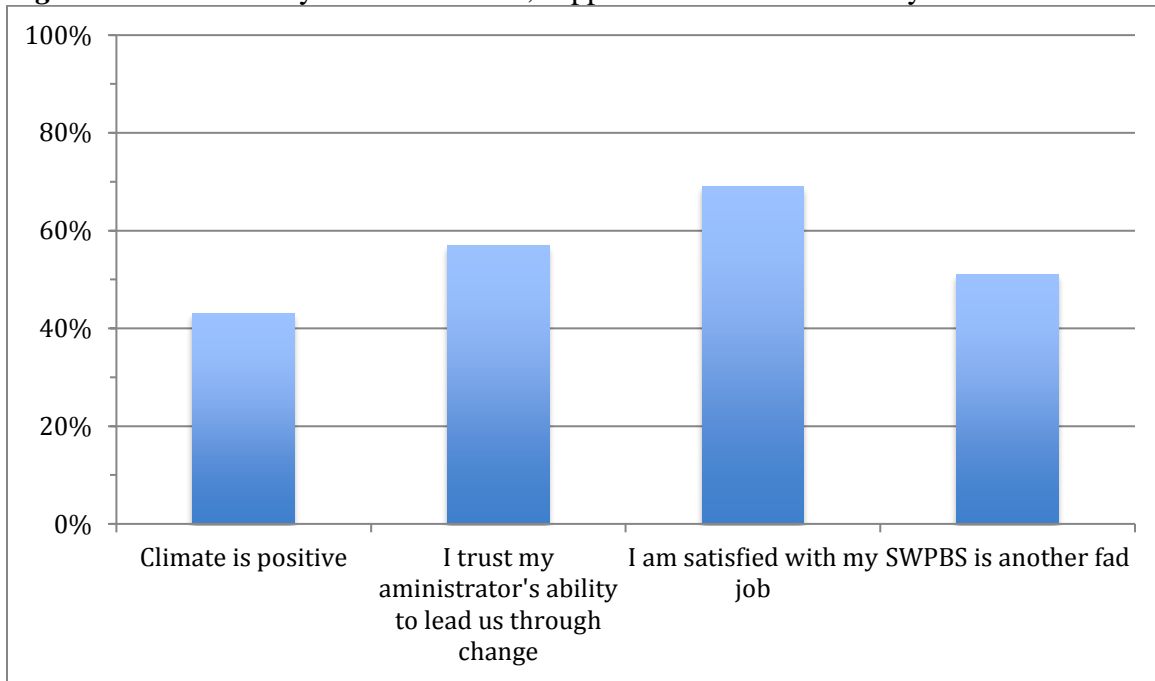


Figure 4. Domain 3. Implementation integrity. January SPBD.

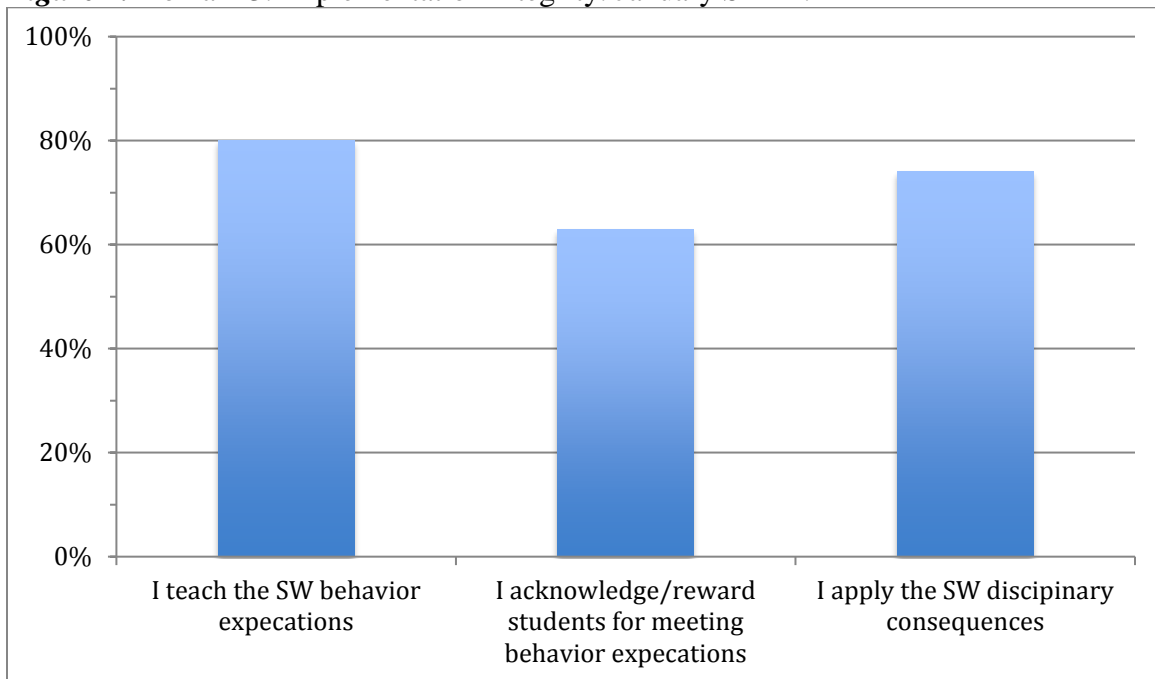


Figure 5. Domain 4. Philosophical views of behavior and discipline, January SPBD.

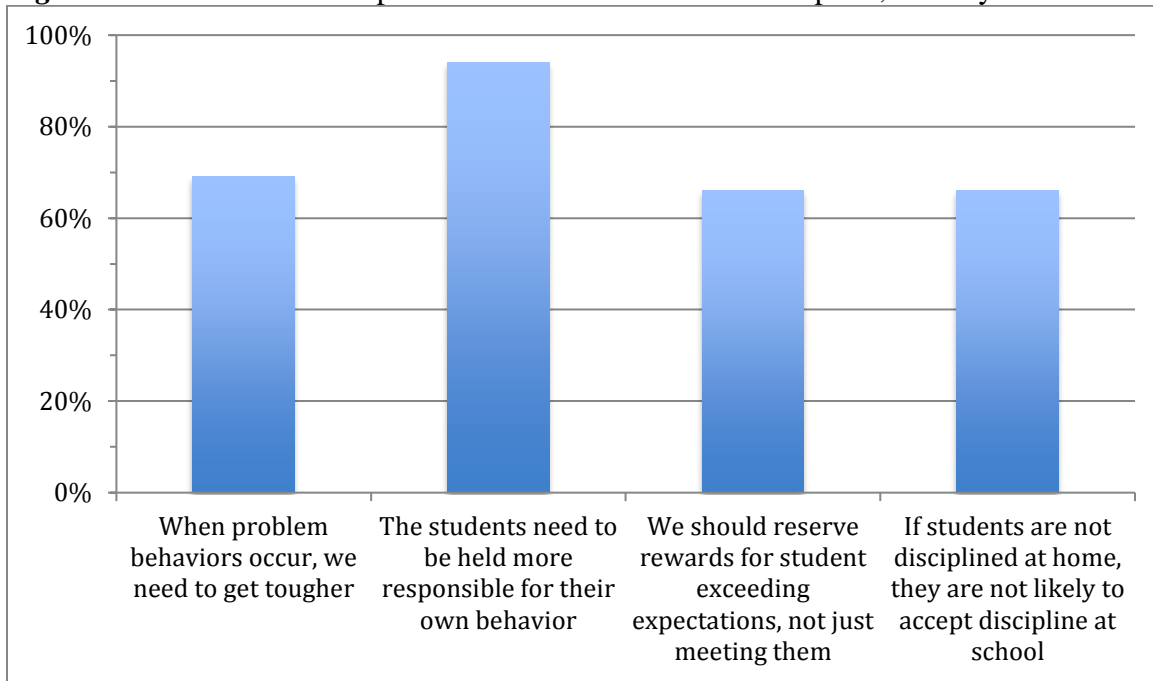
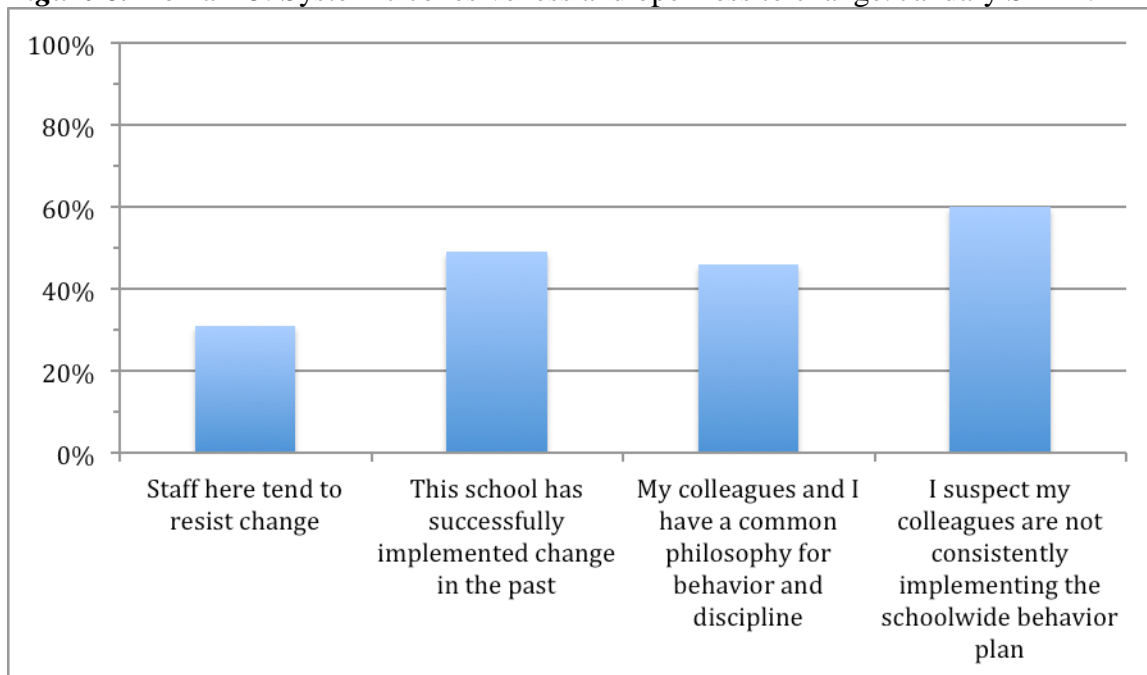


Figure 6. Domain 5. Systemic cohesiveness and openness to change. January SPBD.



The results of the open-ended responses from the staff survey revealed nine concern themes and nine need themes. They are presented below in order of prevalence (See Table 4).

However, it is noted that frequency of occurrence in the qualitative data review is not necessarily an indicator of significance (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2016).

Table 4. Staff and student concerns and needs, January SPBD and StPBD.

Staff Concerns	Staff Needs	Student Concerns	Student Needs
Discipline System	Administrative Support/Leadership	Student Behavior	Environment
Consistency and Support	Discipline System	Staff Behavior	Peer Connection
Student Behavior	Consistency	Safety	Specific Class Content/Engagement
Climate/ stress	Specific Procedures/diversity awareness	Discipline System	Teacher-Student Relationships
Philosophy	Resources	Teacher Support	Autonomy
Resources and training	Acknowledgement System	Discrimination	Food
Administrative Support	Parent Support		Rewards
Parent Involvement	Collaboration		Teacher Support
Diversity	Student-Teacher Relationships		Extracurricular Activities

Staff Concerns.

Discipline system. The majority of the staff comments reflected concerns about the current discipline system. These comments included classroom managed discipline as well as schoolwide discipline system. One staff member reported, “The current discipline plan is a poorly conceived and complicated process that most staff are not using.” Another staff member reported:

Currently we have a discipline plan. It is clunky and time consuming. The logistics of carrying it out on a daily basis correctly (to me this means sending out 2-3 students each period each day) would utilize a minimum of 2 hours of my time every day interacting

with the student with a formal warning and then removing them from the classroom for think time, their return to the classroom is most often disruptive once again interrupting the flow of teaching and learning...

Consistency and support. Many staff comments revealed concerns with consistency and support. One staff member stated,

I feel that if we did a schoolwide positive behavior plan, we will all need to be consistent with using it from all the staff classified, certified and administrative. My concern now is that the certified staff try to enforce positive behavior, but are not always followed up by the administration.

Student behavior. Several staff comments revealed concerns with student behavior. One staff member stated,

...the same students do not respond to an adult directive with any degree of respect or need to follow the directive regardless of how simple. The same students arrive late to class, do not get their materials ready, throw pens, pencils, crayons spit wads around the classroom and at each other, break our class supplies, continue talking when I am talking, argue with me when I address their behavior.

Climate/stress. Many staff remarks revealed concerns with the school climate and overall stress of the job. One staff member reported, "And with the problem with coverage and subs staff members are worn down and when classroom behaviors escalate the energy to successfully implement any new strategy goes out the window."

Philosophy. Some staff comments demonstrated concerns with the positive behavior philosophy. One staff member stated,

PBIS should be pitched, in my opinion. Intentional nonlearners are unlikely to get “fixed” in middle school with rewards that don’t matter to them and time after time of being allowed to disrupt. Instead, they need to be reprimanded firmly and quickly—but with calm dignity—and removed from the learning environment.... I spend a lot of time thinking about protecting middle school “baby criminals” from a lifetime of being labeled as such vs. the responsibility we have to the great majority of students, now sitting there for almost a decade, waiting to be educated while teachers deal with the same disruptive kids year in and year out. I tend to fall on the side of the kids who will be able to function well in society in the long run.

Resources and training. Some of the staff remarks revealed concerns with resources and training for implementation of SWPBIS.

Administrative Support. Some staff comments included concerns about administrative support. One staff member reported, “Even when teachers implement PBIS within the classroom there does not seem to be adequate support/staffing at the admin level when help is needed.”

Parent Involvement. Some staff comments included concerns related to parent involvement. One staff member stated, “PBIS only seems to work if there are supportive parents involved.” These concerns were echoed in the quantitative data from staff about the need for parent involvement.

Diversity. Staff comments also revealed concerns about diversity. One staff member reported the following,

Those teacher and district leaders seem limited in their knowledge of what’s best for students of color, struggling students, and they are so caught up in a few band aide

solutions that they are missing the breadth of tools needed to tackle such a diverse level of need.

Staff Needs

Administrative support/leadership. Several staff commented on the need for support from each other, by administration to the staff and by district to the school. Staff also remarked about the need for stronger leadership in the building and communication between the administration and the teachers. One staff member made the following comment, “Maybe the administrators should poke their heads into the rooms more.” Another staff member reported, “Administrators need more support from the district administrators and the school board.” Another staff member stated, “Better communication. An open door policy so all employees can freely express their concerns without having to make the first move.” Another staff member stated, “We need leadership. We need administrators who understand PBIS because neither of them do....We need a district that would actually support us instead of doing nothing.”

Discipline system. Many staff comments included the need for a different or harsher discipline system. One staff members reported, “Suspend the students that keep causing the problems. Every time they do something the [sic] get suspended until they can learn to behave at school.”

Consistency. Several staff comments were related to the need for consistency. Staff commented on lack of consistency among staff members, between teachers and administrators and among administrators. Staff comments included, “Consistency would help if all are handled the same and expediently.” Another staff member stated, “Every teacher needs to be implementing the same plan consistently school wide, 100%.” One staff member reported,

“Different students are managed differently by [the principal and vice principal]. I don’t see consistency.”

Specific procedures/ diversity awareness. Some staff identified the need for specific procedures to be implemented at the school. A few of the comments were as follows:

“Create/revise a no-pass list of students and identify what students can do to get off the list.”;

“Create an advisory curriculum.” And “...but more volunteers (un-paid or paid) should be recruited to help offer more choices to encourage participation for example Minecraft Club...”

Other comments included the need for diversity awareness to occur such as, “Courageous conversations may be a starting place for this staff to develop cultural awareness, understanding of privilege, and building relationships with students. A more diverse group of teacher leaders needs to be formed...”

Resources. Several staff comments included the need for a special class for disruptive students. Staff reported the need for an in school suspension room. One staff commented, “We need an alternative learning environment for those students that are repeatedly disruptive in the classroom. Learning is not optional, but the environment should be.” Another staff member stated, “Having a specific room staffed with a teacher (maybe volunteer) so we were able to remove disorderly students from our classrooms would be very effective.”

Acknowledgement system. Staff members comments also revealed the need for an acknowledgement system. One staff member reported, “More rewards for those students that always do the right thing are needed. Perhaps, that might inspire or influence other students to change negative behavior to positive behavior.” Another staff commented, “Recognition for positive behavior such as students of the month such [*sic*] also be considered. Maybe students of the month should be acknowledge [*sic*] at the pep assemblies.”

Parent support. Some staff comments were related to the need for parent support. One staff member reported, “Parents should know that there will be consequences and need to be supportive where their students attend school.”

Collaboration. Staff members also focused some of their comments on the need for staff collaboration. One comment related to support was, “TEAM effort! Continue pushing that we are a team and that we are working together to correct behavior.”

Teacher-student relationships. Some comments from staff were related to the need for stronger teacher-student relationships. One staff member reported, “We need teachers who are going to be willing to get to know kids and build relationships with them instead of just kick[sic] them out of their class.”

Winter student survey results. The January student survey as measured by the StPBD, revealed staff had taught and reviewed the behavior expectations with students (See *Figure 7*). The majority of students also reported to like receiving rewards though less than half of the students reported that adults notice when you do the right thing (see *Figure 8*). Many students reported they are not treated fairly (see *Figure 9*) and that the school is not a positive place to be (see *Figure 10*). More than half of the students reported that an adult at school cares about them (see *Figure 11*). More than half of the students had been sent to the office (see *Figure 12*). An overwhelming majority (90%) of students reported their parent cares how they behave at school.

Figure 7. Student perception of behavior expectations. January StPBD

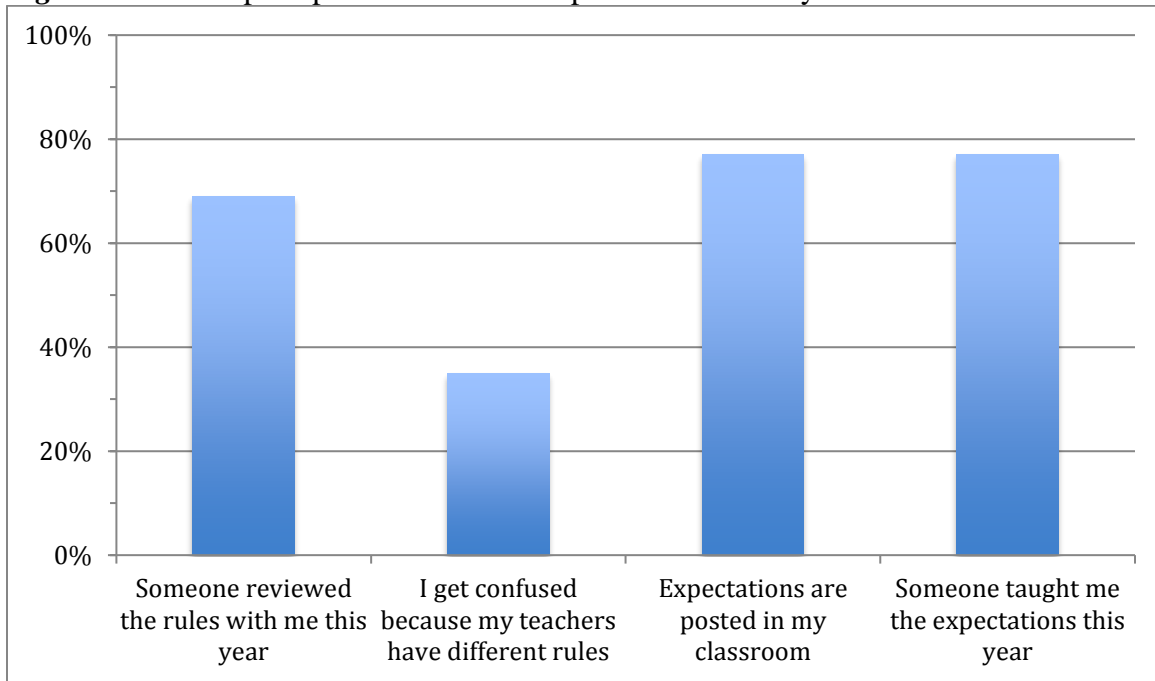


Figure 8. Student perception of acknowledgement system. January StPBD.

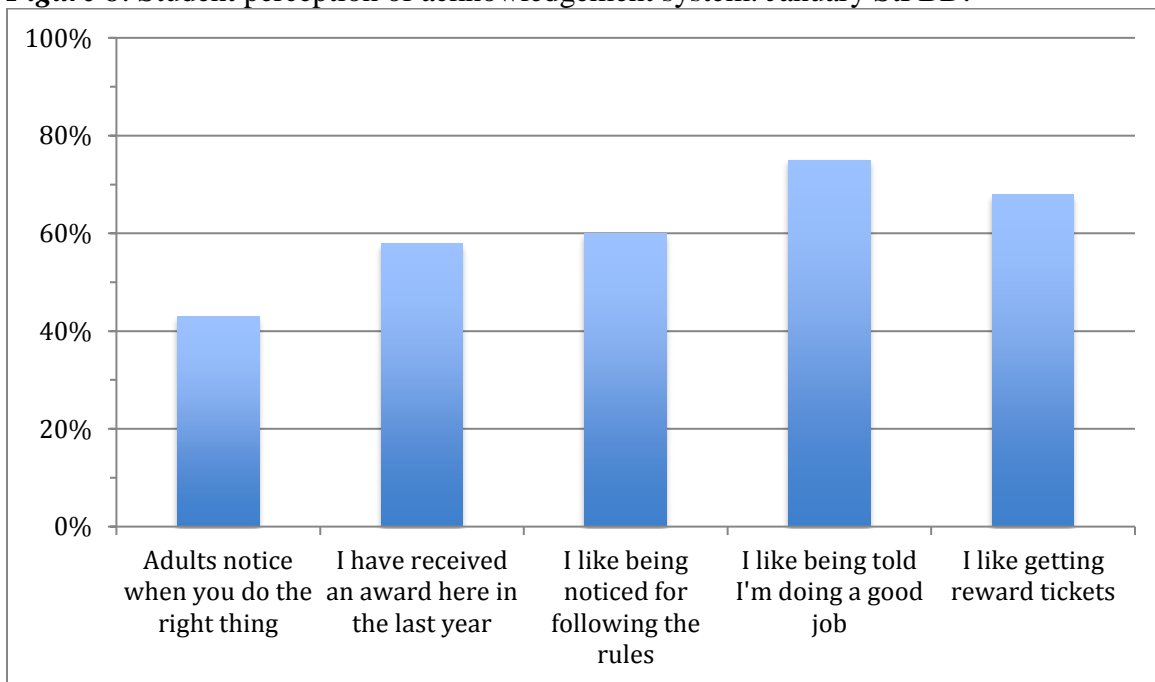


Figure 9. Student perception of consistency. January StPBD.

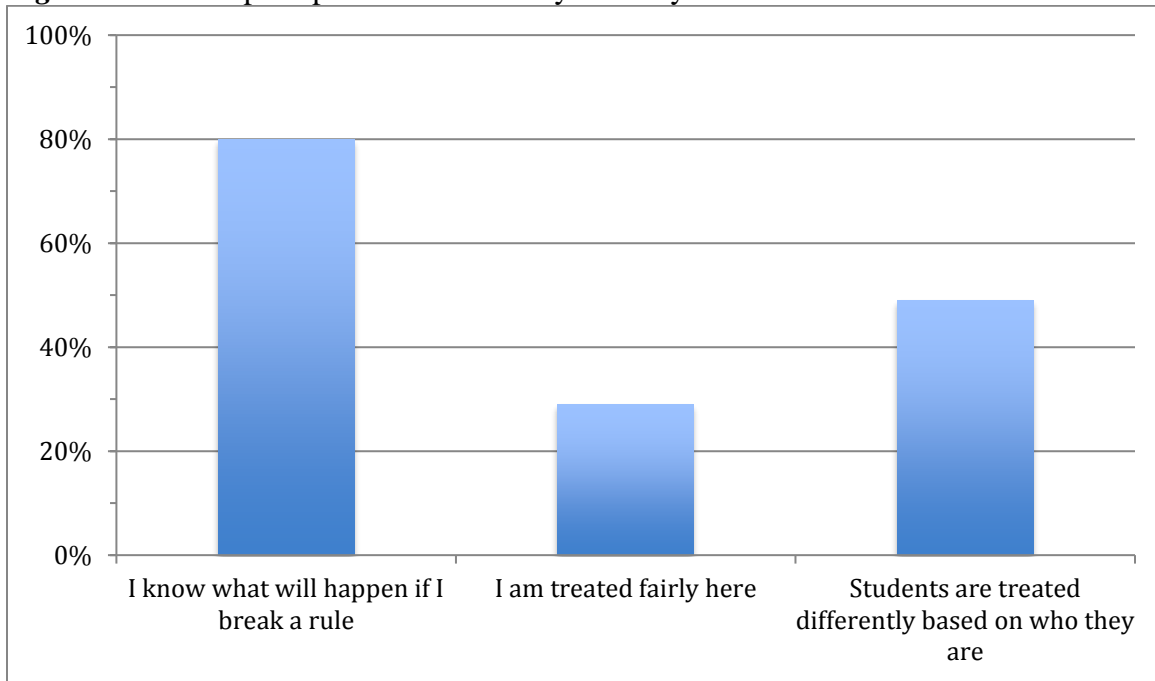


Figure 10. Student perception of school climate. January StPBD.

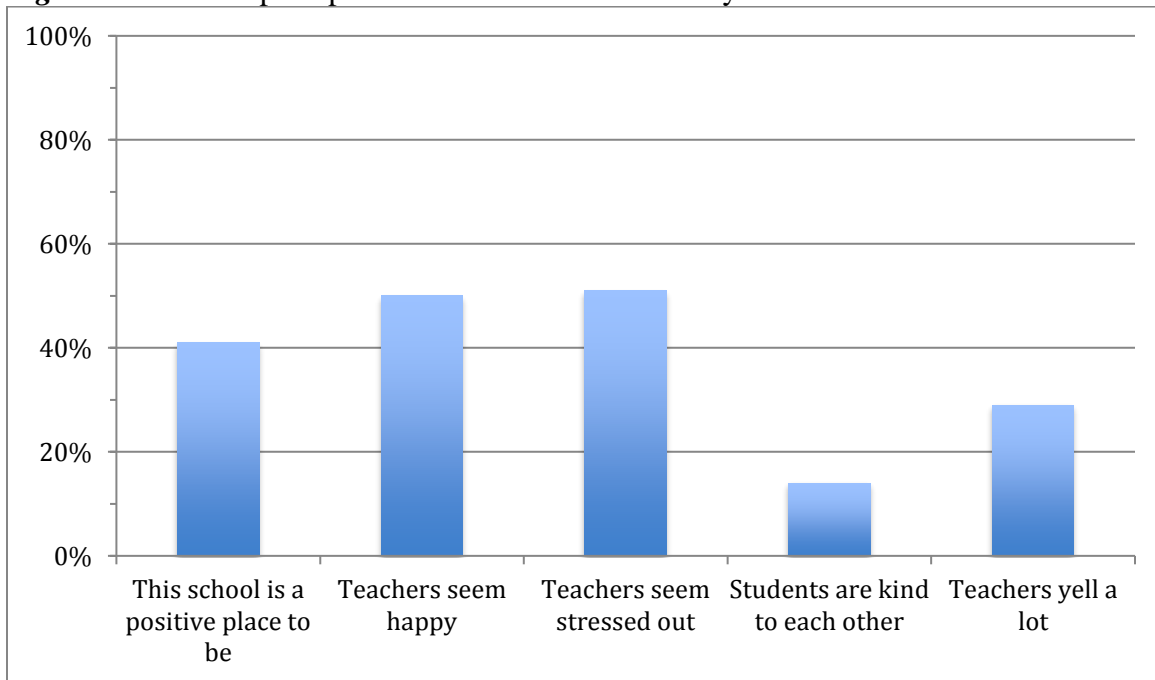


Figure 11. Student perception of staff-student relationships. January StPBD

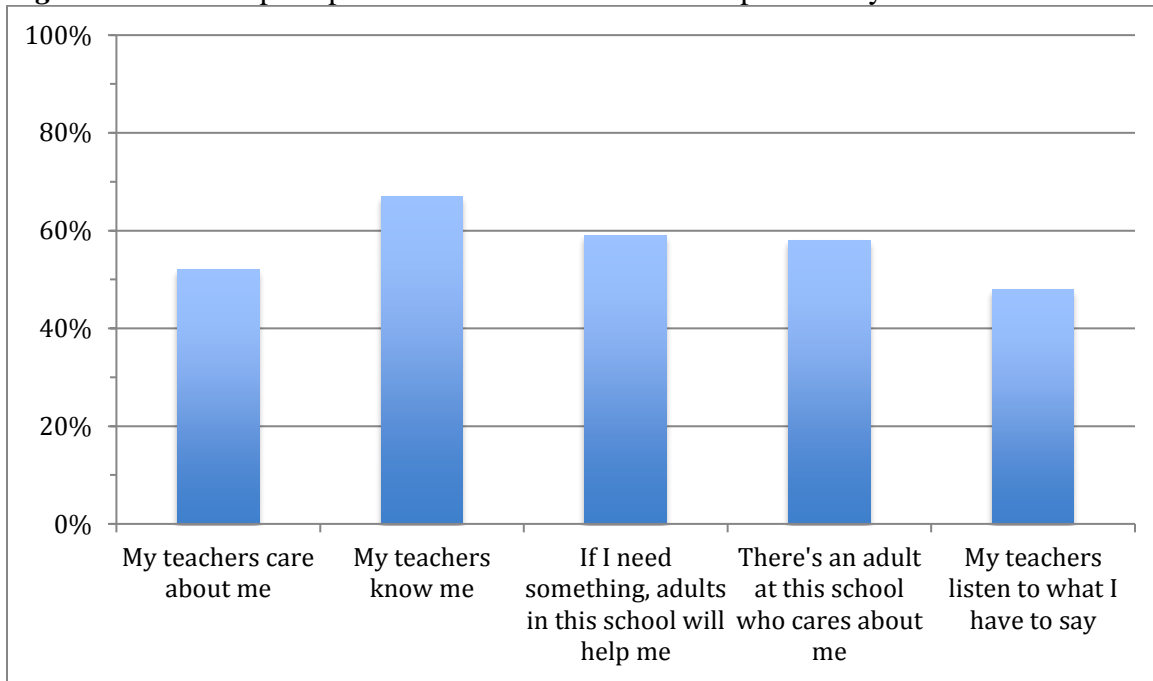
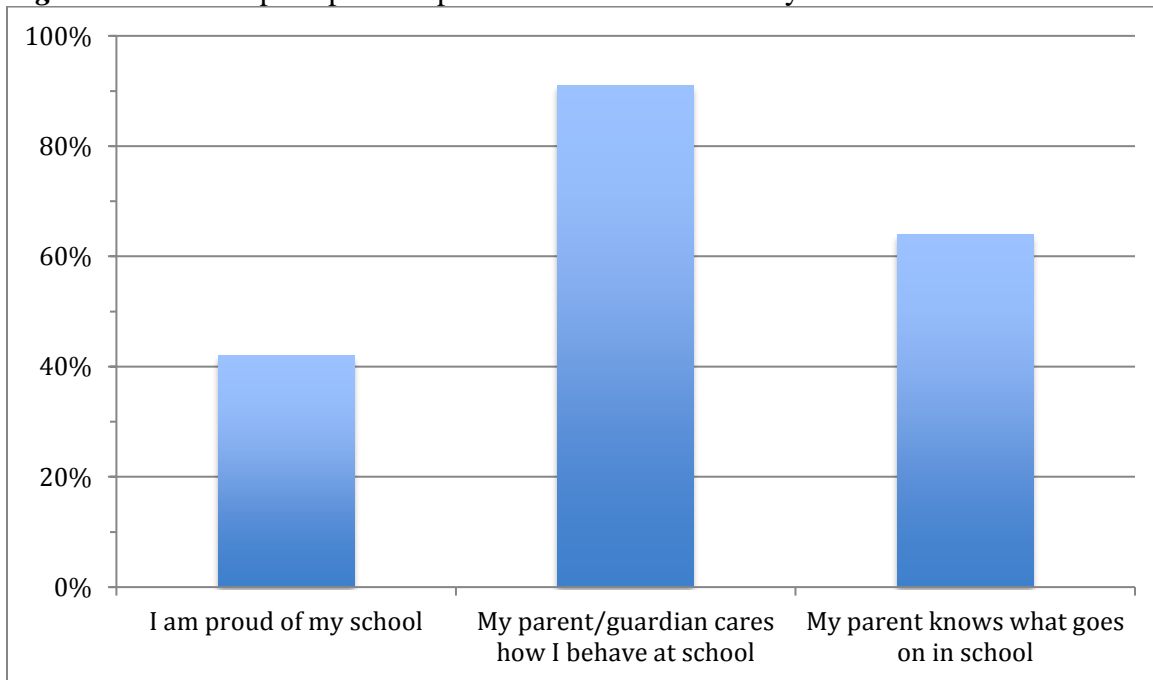


Figure 12. Student perception of parent involvement. January StPBD.



The results of the open-ended responses from the January student survey revealed six concern themes and nine need themes. They are presented below in order of prevalence.

Student Concerns.

Student behavior. The most frequent student concern comment was related to student behavior. This included comments related to students interactions with their teachers such as, “if kids would listen right away and not ignore the teacher” as well as student interactions with other students such as, “not bullying people” or “If students would respect and support each other more than they do”. These comments also included comments related to overall student behavior such as “less sware[sic] words”, “if some more kids fallowed [sic] the rules” or “if the bad kids left this school forever”.

Staff behavior. Some of the student comments were related to staff behavior. These included comments such as, “If they ...used better tactics to get students to engage in learning and working hard...hire people who are more capable of working with children and understanding them” and “...teachers yell at kids so much when teachers ask questions nobody answers because their [sic] worried the teachers are going to yell or call them stupid” and “if the teachers were nice”. One student reported the following:

What I would change about this school is the way teachers yell at students sending them out of class. My opinion is that teachers should talk to the misbehaved student. The teachers should actually care for the children, talk to them, get to know why they're acting up because they can only make it worse.

Safety. Some of the student comments were about their safety. These included both physical safety as well as emotional safety such as, “not as many fights” and “If there was less bullying in the school” and “...less fights more respect for teachers and students and property” and “more school guards” and “less teasing” as well as the perception of threats such as, “...if there weren't as many lock downs” and “[teachers] being more aware of what's going on”.

Discipline system. Student comments included noted concerns about the current discipline system. These included comments such as, “stronger discipline”, “better rules”, “...send the bad kids out more”, and “a little rule changes here and there to tweak it for the betterment of the school.”

Teacher support. Some students noted concerns related to teacher support. Some of the comments included the following: “...a lot of teachers don’t even care all they want is for us to pass the class” and “If there are extra classes for those whom don’t understand without saying something in front of the class and making that student feel stupid.”

Discrimination. Student comments regarding discrimination were also noted in the responses. One student stated the following:

[This school] simply has a problem with discrimination. It makes me physically sick to think about what so many students endure at this school. Homophobia is a growing problem at this school, with the most common insult being "GAY". I suppose that this will be found everywhere you go, but I hope one day someone’s gender, sexual orientation, or beliefs will not prevent them from having the life that they deserve. Basic human rights need to be addressed at this school.

Student Needs.

Environment. Student comments about the environment included the location of the school in the community such as “different neighborhood” or “less ghetto neighborhood”, the physical building such as, “The colors and how big it is” or a specific location in the building such as, “the gym”, or “The classrooms are nice”, the need to “remodel the bathrooms” or for updated materials such as, “better furniture”, “I like the rock climbing wall”, “Chromebooks” or “better equipment” as well as the structure of the day such as, “I like the early release time...” or

“having longer classes to get more education” and “more time between periods because 3 minutes is not enough time to go to the bathroom.” Also included in the environment theme were comments related to the schedule of the day and the overall school environment such as, “It’s a cool school” or “ Less crowds in the hallways.”

Peer connection. Several student comments reflected the need for peer connection. These comments included the following: “...friends in classes with me”, “being able to have at least one friend sit near me in class...”, “time to go outside and play with friends.”, “having a friend to talk to.” And “I work harder when I have my friends because I feel better asking them questions on what we might be working on.”

Specific class content and engagement. Some of the student comments were related to the class content, type of classes offered, grading system, amount or type of work in a class or engagement with the material. Some of the desired classes students listed included: drama, honors classes, foreign language, sewing, study period and fashion design. One student reported the following:

Probably less test after test and more fun activities making it where I want to do good on tests to earn those fun and interesting things to do like projects where we make a map, build a small model of what we are working on...

Teacher-student relationships. Some of the student comments related to the need for teacher-student relationships. One student stated, “The staff are amazing” And another reported, “how nice and caring the staff is to all of the students”. One student indicated, “...I have teachers I can trust to help me if needed.” Several students named specific staff members to whom they felt connected.

Autonomy. Remarks related to freedom, free time or students having the control over personal devices, where to sit or more choice in classes encompassed many of the student comments.

Food. Several of the student comments included the need for more or different types of food as well as the need for food to be less expensive at the school. Comments also included the need for vending machines as well as a microwave to ease access to food.

Rewards. Some of the student reports included the need for more or different types of rewards such as time on computers, food, time with friends, no homework, or time to read a book. Several of these comments related to earning rewards for increased behavior or achievement.

Teacher support. Some of the student comments related to the need for teacher support. These comments included recognition and praise such as, “What would make me work harder is if I was told I am doing well or not and tell me what I need to do.” and “Being recognized for academic achievement.” Other comments related to teacher support were related to assistance provided when needed such as, “helping me out” and

It would motivate me if I knew the teachers were emailing me and my parents and telling them and me that they believe in me and think I am doing a great job, what they like about my work or what they think I could use a little more time on so I can be aware.”

Extracurricular activities. Some comments from students were related to the need for extracurricular activities. Students reported the desire for more sport opportunities, school dances, after school activities and clubs.

Targeted PLCs

Preparing for the targeted PLCs. Initially the results of the TFI were shared with the administrative team at Mountain Middle School. The TFI revealed Tier I implementation was only at 17%. This would need to be the primary focus of the targeted PLC meetings and team work. One of the pieces of evidence shared with the administrative team was the number of staff and students who were able to state the school expectations (60% of randomly chosen staff were able to state the P.R.I.D.E. expectations and only 15% of students knew all of the expectations). This researcher also shared the results of the SPBD, StPBD and the previous year out of school suspension data with the administrative team, highlighting staff and student concerns regarding the poor climate of the school, staff concerns with lack of consistency implementing the agreed upon plan and student discipline, students rating of teachers as seeming stressed out, only approximately half of the students believe a teacher cares about them, and student perception of safety concerns at school. Data from the surveys regarding staff's overwhelming agreement with SWPBIS practices was also shared. The survey results revealing that students like getting rewards and acknowledgement was shared with the team as was a reminder that the students are familiar with SWPBIS practices, as the majority of students are moving into the middle school from an elementary school in the district who is implementing SWPBIS.

The administrative team reported they had a recent all school assembly that they referred to as the "Reboot". The team reported the initiation of a "30-60-90" day competition by grade level to decrease tardys for students. Rewards for the winning grade level will be given to students at the end of 30 days, 60 days and 90 days. As the first PLC meeting was close to the end of the first 30 days, the team reported interest in reporting progress on this goal at the first PLC which showed a large decrease in student tardys as well as an increase in student attendance. The team discussed the need to focus on successes in the first PLC and to dive deeper into discipline, both

suspension data and staff and student perception data at later PLCs. These data were used to develop a sense of urgency as well as a need to create short-term wins for the staff (Kotter, 1995).

Communicating a shared vision and ownership. Hall and Hord (2015) report it is important not only to identify the vision of the school but where the school is in relationship to realizing it. Hord and Roussin (2013) state effective leaders use every opportunity to refer to the vision of the school in all meetings. Feuerborn (2013) and her colleagues state, “Ultimately, the decision to incorporate the SWPBIS plan into one’s job role is individual, and each individual will go through a process that includes seeking information, forming an opinion...and deciding whether to adopt SWPBIS” (p. 30). Feuerborn (2013) also stresses the importance of ownership throughout all phases of an implementation. Ownership can be elicited by allowing staff to give voice and insights regarding actions and preferences (Feuerborn, Wallace, & Tyre, 2013).

PLC 1. The vision for the school had been developed prior to the start of this school year. This vision included an overarching statement of addressing the learning needs of all students with goals to enhance relationships, be relentless with teaching and learning and to be responsive to the needs of all students. Data from the surveys showed that the school had work to do to get to their stated vision. Data related to school climate, student attendance/tardys, student perception of teacher-student relationships, student perception of lack of safety, staff perception of lack of consistency and student interest in rewards/ acknowledgement was shared with staff. Staff were asked to work in small groups to discuss the following questions in order to highlight their vision for this targeted PLC work: What can we build on?, What needs greater emphasis?, What are possible obstacles?, What are our priorities? and Identify small steps we can take toward one priority. The staff was asked to create groups or committees for each

identified priority. Staff members were asked to self-select a committee to join based on their area of interest. Staff input was used regarding team priorities, goals and actions toward those goals.

PLC 2, PLC 3, PLC 4 and PLC 5. In each subsequent PLC reminding staff of their vision was discussed immediately following the agenda for the PLC. In addition, a leader from each staff committee group was asked to share progress toward their goal to the entire staff immediately following the reminder of the vision. Student and staff perception data as well as the school discipline information was shared with staff at each PLC as a continual reminder of their current reality versus their stated vision and goals in order to create and maintain a sense of urgency for making the change. Collectively, these data were used to highlight their shared vision and goal for the implementation of SWPBIS by identifying practices that did not align with their stated intended outcome. For example, the number of student absences, student discipline removals, staff perception of lack of consistency with their colleagues, number of staff who reported to believe in SWPBIS, and the number of students who reported feeling unsafe in areas of the school were reported to staff.

Planning and providing resources. Feuerborn and her colleagues (2013) recommend that staff are informed of the ongoing resources that exist for the implementation of SWPBIS. Further, they recommend administrators be a part of the data dissemination, knowledge, trainings and staff discussions (Feuerborn, et al., 2013).

PLC 1, PLC 2, PLC 3, PLC 4 and PLC 5. The principal had identified dates and times for each of the positive behavior PLCs to meet. Staff were informed and subsequently reminded of each positive behavior PLC date and time both during the PLC and in all staff emails. The building principal was a joint presenter at each PLC and took part in team discussions in most of

the PLCs, though not all. Staff were reminded that SWPBIS is a long term effort and will take 3 to 5 years to implement effectively. The principal voiced his commitment to SWPBIS as a priority of the school both for this school year and the next. The principal provided tangible resources and rewards for the student acknowledgement team and the staff connections team.

During the initial PLC numerous staff, including the principal, expressed the desire to create an in school suspension (ISS) room as a place to send misbehaving students from the classrooms. This data was also reported in the SPBD. Staff expressed frustration that this was not a resource the district had provided, as they perceived this as a barrier to student success at their school. Staff were told this could be a resource they solicited from the district or allocated from their resources for the following year. Staff indicated, both during PLCs and during one-legged interviews, that each teacher had 5-8 students who were disruptive during each class. The numbers of misbehaving students staff wished to include in the ISS room were counted (150-240 students per period) and staff were told that in order to create a successful ISS room, the numbers of misbehaving students would have to be reduced. Strategies to respond to and reduce in student misbehavior were an area of focus for PLC 2 and PLC 4.

Investing in professional learning. Hall and Hord (2015) state, “Change means developing new understanding and doing things in new ways” (p. 33). Each PLC was purposefully planned and guided by staff and student data (Feurborn, Wallace, & Tyre, 2013). It is recommended that trainings are continually evaluated and responsive to staff and student needs and concerns (Feurborn, et al., 2013; Hall & Hord, 2015).

PLC 1. During the initial PLC the six essential features of SWPBIS were described (Sugai & Horner, 2009). Positive outcomes associated with SWPBIS were provided to staff. In addition, harmful effects of inappropriate use of rewards or punishments were also discussed.

The student and staff perceptual data were used to inform staff that students reported an interest in receiving acknowledgements and rewards yet also reported the majority of students had not received a reward or acknowledgment yet this school year. During the PLC, staff created a student acknowledgement team to increase staff acknowledgement and rewards for students demonstrating expected behaviors. Staff noted student interest in more food options so included these in their reward options. Following the PLC, staff were asked to complete an “exit ticket” evaluating the PLC and requesting their input related to what went well and what changes they would like to see implemented.

PLC 2. Continued use of data from the StPBD and SPBD informed this PLC. In addition, written and verbal feedback was obtained from staff during and immediately following the PLC 1 and was used to create the focus of this PLC. There appeared to be some staff misconceptions about punishment being a primary deterrent for misbehavior. In addition, the data showed that staff were continuing to remove students in high numbers from instruction for misbehavior. Informed by this data, the main focus of this PLC was misbehavior and discipline. Staff were reminded of the essential features of SWPBIS.

Staff reported a large number of disruptive students in their classrooms both at the previous PLC as well as in individual one-legged interviews (Hall & Hord, 2015). Staff were provided research about punishment and functions of student misbehavior as well as the need for frequent and immediate praise for expected behaviors. Staff were provided their student suspension data and compared their data to other middle schools in the district. Staff generated a list of most common misbehaviors of students and created a list of possible staff responses. Specific adult responses to student misbehavior were shared with all staff to implement.

Based on the information presented, staff reported needing a higher number of adults in the hallways. The principal shared a plan with the teachers in which all the hallways would have additional supervision at passing times. Student perception of not feeling safe in certain areas of the school was presented to staff. Staff reviewed the vision and priorities and was asked if student safety was a school priority. Staff were asked to choose the top three priorities in order to condense their efforts to three groups. The staff identified priorities in their order of importance included teaching and preventing disrespect, responding to student behavior violations, school climate, student safety, student attendance/tardys, classroom management, student acknowledgements, parent involvement, staff connection and advisory curriculum. Staff rated student safety as number four in their list of school priorities, after teaching respect/preventing disrespect, responding to student behavior violations, and school climate. The list of priorities was increased to four in order to include student safety as an area to be addressed. A group was created to address safety needs of students.

PLC 3. The essential features of SWPBIS were again presented to staff. Feedback from staff and data from the surveys revealed staff concerns regarding lack of transparency in discipline for students. This information was used to form the PLC discussion. Further, continued discussion occurred regarding the need for team participation, consistency and support. The PLC discussion included steps for developing actions plans and setting goals for each staff group. Each small group was provided a packet containing student and/or staff data from which to work. For example, the attendance/tardy committee had data of the days of the week students were most often absent, times of the day students were most often tardy, and days throughout the year with the highest absences. The discipline group was provided Think Time data and out of school suspension data to date. The student safety group used data from the

student surveys indicating areas of the school in which they felt unsafe. Committee action plans were shared with the whole group in order to create common commitments.

The administration team revised the forms and the school-wide discipline policy and practices in order to align policies, practices and paperwork. This was an outcome of a SWPBIS leadership team meeting in which this problem of practice was identified. However, neither SWPBIS leadership team, nor members of the staff had input into the changes in discipline policy. Office managed versus teacher managed behaviors were highlighted to the staff. The new forms and procedures were shared with staff.

PLC 4. Based on survey data, PLC evaluation feedback, and one-legged interview information, this PLC was focused on specific strategies to employ in order to increase student engagement and decrease student misbehavior. The specific strategies targeted included “Positive Greetings at the Door” (Allday & Pakurar, 2007), techniques used to establish and maintain teacher-student relationships, “The Good Behavior Game” (Embry, 2002). In addition to an explanation of the strategy, modeling of the strategy, and opportunities to practice the strategy, staff were provided a two page summary of the strategy, what it looks like and what it does not look like in addition to resources for more information about the strategy. A staff member also presented the findings from Carol Dweck’s (2006) growth mindset work and provided examples of what this looks like in the classroom.

PLC 5. Feedback from staff noted concerns regarding possible staff turn-over for next year and a long-term commitment from the building leadership team to this work. Based on those concerns staff were asked to identify leads and supporting staff for each subgroup as well as possible mentors for each grade level to support new staff coming into the school next year.

Checking progress, responding to needs and providing assistance. Change is an ongoing process so must be monitored (Hall & Hord, 2015). It is important to keep informed about the emerging needs, clarify questions and solve small problems as a change is implemented (Hall & Hord, 2015). Feuerborn and friends (2013) state, “Professional development should be viewed as a process whereby trainings are continually evaluated and next steps are responsive to staff and student needs” (p.31). Assistance is provided along side checking progress in a seamless manner (Hord & Roussin, 2013).

PLC 1. In order to keep a pulse on the concerns and needs of the staff, individuals were asked to complete evaluations of each PLC at the conclusion of the meeting. At the conclusion of this PLC staff returned very few feedback forms. An email was sent immediately following the PLC in order to elicit more feedback, though very few staff responded.

PLC 2. The student acknowledgement team reported the increased number of student awards distributed. Staff commented on the excitement of students with the new acknowledgement and reward system. The team shared the next level of rewards to be distributed. The staff connection team was asked to report to the staff progress on their action plan, though they reported they had taken no action since the first meeting. It was revealed at this PLC that no other staff committee had met or completed any action steps.

Following this PLC the school PBIS team met to discuss next steps. They identified the difference of language and practice among the office discipline referral forms and procedures. The school PBIS team discussed the need to change the forms to align all forms with expected practice. The team identified discipline as an ongoing area of concern by staff per the PLC conversations. The team discussed the need to review the discipline data and analyze the essential questions regarding the incidents in order to take preventative measures in response to

the data. The team also discussed the need to meet more frequently to review student data as well as consider an alternate approach to responding to misbehavior other than Think Time. The principal reported the staff need more strategies for classroom management.

A one-legged interview with a member of the student acknowledgement team revealed the staff member to be overwhelmed. No other members of the acknowledgement team were participating so all the work fell on an individual staff member. Another one-legged interview revealed staff concerns regarding lack of transparency in discipline for students.

PLC 3. Staff had reported no progress on the priorities of student attendance/tardys, student safety, and discipline. Based on this feedback, as well as staff reporting a desire to work on these priorities, the focus of this PLC was on creating action plans for the school priorities. Staff were provided data from the student and staff surveys, student attendance, Think Time tallies, and student awards given to date. Staff were asked to self select a priority group to work with and to identify the problem (what, when, where, who, why and how often), what possible solution actions staff can employ, who will conduct the action steps and to identify the goal timeline. The majority of the PLC was spent in small groups with the final few minutes spent sharing out action plans with the whole group.

PLC 4. Responding to concerns and needs expressed, the PLC group discuss student-staff connections and supervision in common areas of the school (hallways) reported by students as being problematic.

Staff reported the students are responding to the new acknowledgement system and appear to be excited about the additional rewards being added. Additional staff have joined the student acknowledgement team are supportive to other members of the team.

During a one-legged interview a staff member reported although there is a staff connections team, some staff members have felt left out of the staff celebration. Plans are made by the staff member to address these concerns and include all staff in a celebration.

Several staff members reported concerns about the lack of staff involvement in the current PLC as it was voluntary. Approximately 20 staff members participated in PLC 4.

PLC 5. Staff reported lack of staff connection and feelings of isolation during and immediately following the PLC 1. Although very slow progress toward their goals and noted staff concerns about including all staff, the staff connections committee met set-up a staff potluck as well as staff ‘shout out’ forms and treats based on the staff input. Staff reported this as a strength and expressed desire to continue this work next year.

Creating a context supportive of change. In order to create a climate supportive of change, Feuerborn (2013) states, “...teams can facilitate a sense of unity by encouraging active participation and honor the input and contribution of everyone” (p.31). Hall and Hord (2015) state, “A supportive context decreases the isolation of staff; provides for continuing increase of its capabilities; nurtures positive relationships among all staff, students, and parents/community members; and urges the increasing quest for increased effectiveness so that students benefit” (p. 35). This is also the means in which sustainability of the implementation occurs and new actions will become routinized (Hord & Roussin, 2013).

PLC 1, PLC 2, PLC 3, PLC 4, PLC 5. During each PLC staff were encouraged to share their thoughts, concerns, frustrations and successes. All input was valued and continuous sharing of the input was provided. Some of this input was shared in small groups, large groups, individually, or through anonymous written feedback.

Unexpected events in the PLC process. Although planning for each PLC occurred as a team prior to each meeting, there were some events that were unplanned and unexpected during the process. During PLC1 the principal announced that because the TFI showed that students did not know the behavior expectations (P.R.I.D.E.) he had identified three new expectations. These were: be respectful, be responsible and be safe. The SWPBIS research supports increased teaching and modeling of the expectations rather than eliminating and starting with new expectations in the middle of the year. The purpose of assessing student and staff knowledge of the expectations is to determine if additional instruction and emphasis is needed in order for students to learn the behavioral expectations. SWPBIS also supports the creation of school wide expectations as a team activity, rather than by one individual. Staff was informed the PRIDE expectations were no longer used as a primary set of expectations but they would be considered an overarching approach for students to follow. Staff were directed to reinforce the responsible, respectful and safe expectations.

At the conclusion of PLC 2 a district administrator announced to the staff that the Vice Principal would not be returning to the school for undisclosed reasons. A temporary retired administrator was placed in the school for a short time as acting Vice Principal. Shortly after that, the Dean of Students was placed as acting Vice Principal and a special education teacher was placed as Dean of Students. At the conclusion of this PLC no staff feedback forms were completed by staff due to the new information being processed about the sudden change in leadership.

At the end of PLC 3 the administrative team presented new discipline procedures with no opportunity for feedback from the staff. Staff were provided a matrix containing 55 squares, each square equating with an expected response from staff (e.g. call the parent or send the

student to Think Time). One staff member expressed dismay that a student would not be removed until 55 incidents of misbehavior occurred. Although this was not accurate, several staff members expressed frustration at the new policy making it “almost impossible” to send a student to the office for discipline. When staff members expressed concerns the principal stated, “This is SWPBIS.” Consequently, despite redirection to the six essential features of SWPBIS, several staff equated SWPBIS with this discipline matrix.

During PLC 2, 3,4 and 5, the staff committees were asked to share their progress. Some of the committees had members identified during the PLC who later reported they were not able to work on a committee. Other committees, such as the student safety committee, had no members, despite being identified as a priority. Staff members met during PLC and created an action plan but there were no individuals identified to carry out the action steps. Several ideas were generated by staff during the PLCs for each of the priority groups, however, once the PLC was over there was no continuance of the work.

Spring Survey Results. Results from the SPBD from January to June reveal a significant difference in the domain areas of implementation integrity and system cohesiveness and openness to change (See Table 5). In the area of implementation integrity each of the sub scores that make up the domain reveal increases in staff’s perception of the extent to which they are implementing the schoolwide disciplinary plan and acknowledgement system (see Figure 13). In the area of systemic cohesiveness and openness to change each sub score that makes up the domain reveal an increase in staff’s perception of their resistance to change as well as their suspicion that their colleagues will not consistently implement the schoolwide plan (see Figure 14). These sub domain scores also revealed decreases in staff’s perception that they have been

successful in change implementation or that the staff share a common philosophy regarding behavior and discipline.

Table 5. SPBD Domain Score

Domain	January M	January SD	June M	June SD	T test*
Teaching and acknowledging behavioral expectations	10.38	3.59	9.95	3.52	0.26
Systemic resources, supports and climate	12.23	4.47	12.34	4.38	0.82
Implementation integrity	8.86	1.46	9.15	1.33	0.02*
Philosophical views of behavior and discipline	14.89	3.65	14.39	3.84	0.24
Systemic cohesiveness and openness to change	12.47	3.69	13.26	3.72	0.01**

*P<0.05, **P <0.01, N=40

Figure 13. Implementation integrity. January and June SPBD.

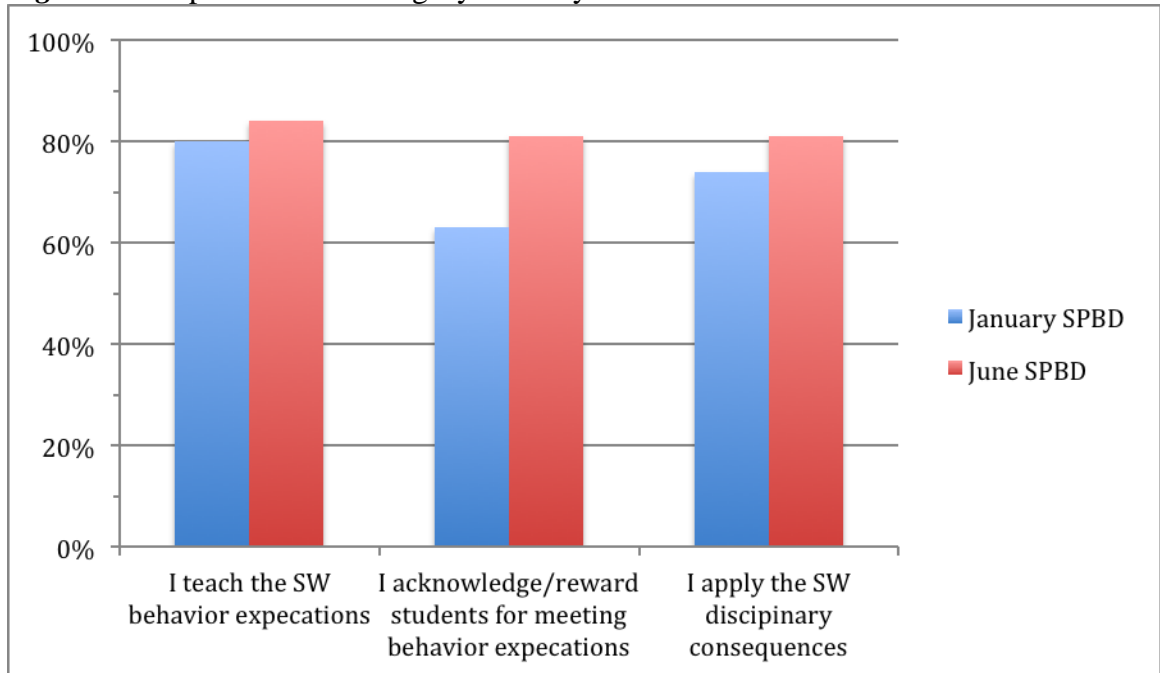
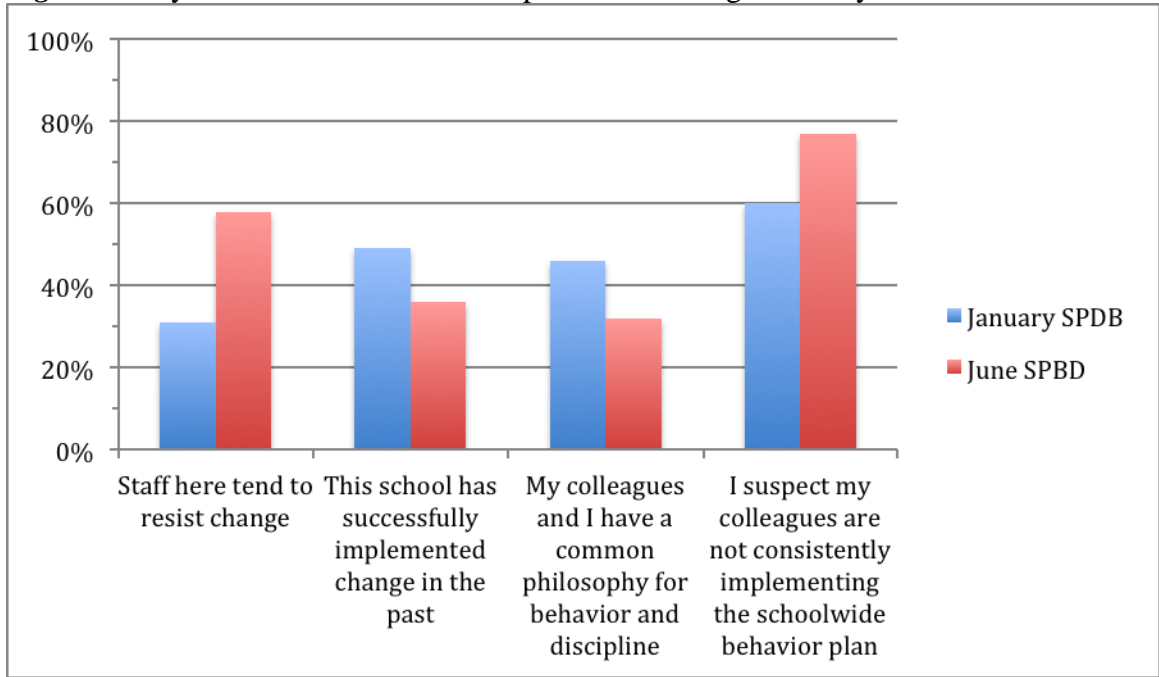


Figure 14. Systemic cohesiveness and openness to change. January and June SPBD.



Staff Concerns

Discipline system. The discipline system was the most prevalent staff concern.

This is similar to the January survey response prevalence. Staff comments continue to highlight concerns about the discipline system and lack of significant consequences for students as noted by the following staff comment, “I feel like student have no consequences other than a reminder of the rule. Why should they follow rules?”

Student behavior. Many staff reported student behavior as a concern. This was noted to be the second highest concern listed in the June responses, though in January this was noted slightly below concerns regarding consistency. One staff member reported, “[My] biggest concern [is] the *high flyers* or the kids that this will not work for. They have already figured out there are no real consequences for themselves and just walk around the school ignoring all authority.” Another staff member commented, “In each classroom period of 24-28 students I

have 4-6 students...that need behavior support at a high constant level. This is every period every day. Inappropriate behavior is not the exception, it is the rule.”

Consistency and support. Several staff responses noted concerns regarding consistency and support. One staff member reported, “If our administrators are not following through with our school rules the majority of the time it makes it more difficult for me to follow through with our school rules the majority of the time.” Another staff member reported, “...there [sic] are so many different versions and no consistency between the staff and administration.”

Administrative support. In addition to the current leadership, staff noted concerns about the turnover of the vice principal and dean and the impact that has had on staff and students. One staff member stated,

[This school] desperately needs a new principal and new counselors who are positive, respectful, and professional with both students and staff. [This school’s] situation is not derived from poor teaching. Rather, there is disorganization from the top (Principal, Vice Principals and Deans that come and go, and counselors) and it filters down to the lower ranks.

The January survey revealed several staff responses reflecting concerns regarding administrative support, somewhat higher than parent involvement and diversity.

Resources and training. Staff concern comments regarding resources and training reflected many staff responses. Staff continue to note concerns about lack of resources, particularly a lack of a place to send students who are continually misbehaving.

Climate and stress. Some staff comments reflected concerns about climate and stress. One staff member reported,

I am unfortunately pretty disheartened by this school year to answer this question.

I do now that I enjoy working at this school and with our students but at this moment I am pretty much numb to the successes at our school because the problems overshadow them.

Philosophy. Staff comments regarding concerns about philosophy were much lower than the previous survey. The June survey revealed less than one-quarter of the comments highlighting concerns about philosophy while the January responses reflected just under one-half of the comments noting concerns about philosophy. Comments regarding philosophy included concerns about rewards for demonstrating expected behaviors as well as the need for more punishments.

Parent involvement. Some staff comments reflected concerns about parent involvement. This is similar to the previous survey results.

Diversity. None of the staff concerns reported in the June survey mentioned diversity.

Staff Needs

Consistency. This was the most frequent need listed by staff in the June survey. This is a change from the original administration that listed this need theme in less than a third of the responses. One staff member reported, “We can’t do this if only some teachers are doing it and some are doing it *modified*. We need to be ALL IN and stick with it.”

Discipline system. This was a very frequently mentioned need by staff members in the June administration of the survey. This is similar to the January administration. One staff member stated, “There needs to be clear and consistent consequences for misbehavior.”

Resources. The need for resources was listed as a need in many of the staff responses. In January, staff listed the need for resources in a few of the responses. In the January comments many staff members reported the need for an in-school suspension room. These same comments were noted in the June staff survey. Staff members comments included the need for a place to send misbehaving students. Some staff members called this an in-school suspension room, some called it a discipline room or behavior modification room and some called it a time out or a quiet room. In addition to removal, some staff members noted the need to provide additional assistance for the students who are removed such as assistance for homework or social skills. Other resources staff reported needing included additional staff to supervise students such as security officer, resources for student rewards, leadership classes for students and classes for parents.

Administrative support/ leadership. The need for administrative support as well as concerns about the current leadership was noted in several staff comments. In January half of staff comments noted this to be an area of need. However, in January this was the most prevalent need noted by staff where as the June rating showed the need for consistency, discipline and resources to be more prevalent. The need for administrative support and follow-through was reported by several staff. In addition, staff reported the need for district support as well as school administrative support. One staff member stated, “We need our administrators and the DISTRICT to get the intentional non-learners out of the classroom. This is not the teachers’ problem to fix.” These comments are similar to those expressed by staff throughout the trainings and during one-legged interviews with staff.

Specific procedures/training. In June some staff comments revealed a need for specific procedures to be in place or the need for a specific training. This need was noted in less

than a quarter of staff comments in the January survey. Specific procedural needs noted by staff included schoolwide hall pass, new data system, procedures to teach a weekly PBIS lesson, student videos demonstrating the expected behaviors, a smoother system for discipline. Staff also reported the need for a better PBIS training for the staff.

Staff support and collaboration. Some of the staff comments included the need for staff support and collaboration. Staff reported the need for more support from office and administrative staff throughout the day. One staff member stated, “We need to get back to a learning community where adults are making decisions in the best interest of kids.”

Parent involvement and support. Most staff did not report parent involvement and support to be a high need, though it was noted in some of the staff comments in June. This is similar to the January survey results.

Acknowledgement system. Most staff members did not note a need for changes in the acknowledgement system. This similar to the January survey.

Teacher-student relationships. Similar to the January survey results, teacher-student relationships were mentioned least as an area of need. Staff comments reflect the perception that currently this is a strong area of performance for staff in the school.

Comparisons of the student responses from the January and June StPBD results are shown (See Figure 15, 16, 17, 18 and 19). Results from these comparisons reveal students to perceive teachers to be somewhat happier and listen to what students have to say more though fewer students believe an adult in the school will help them out. All of the student ratings on items making up the negative climate and stress in the school showed an increase in the June ratings. Students perceive students to be more fairly treated in June than in January, though many fewer students perceive the school to be a positive place or are proud of their school.

More students noted that the school rules were reviewed with them in June but fewer students noted being taught the schoolwide expectations. All of the items reflected in the Acknowledgement Domain decreased from January to June. These changes may have been impacted by the time of year the final surveys were administrated. Students are often ready to have the school year over in June and perceptions may reflect that desire.

Student concerns and needs shifted somewhat from January to June. The list below is the June student responses to the open-ended survey questions in order of prevalence.

Figure 15. Positive adult connections in the school domain. StPBD January and June.

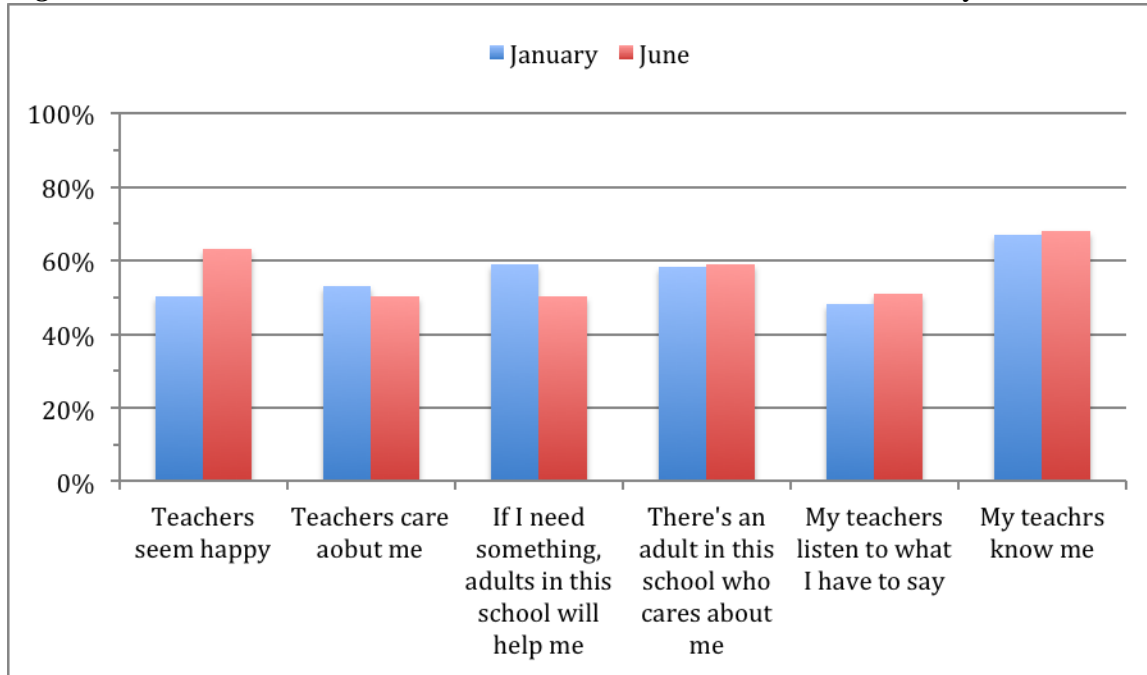


Figure 16. Negative climate and stress domain. StPBD January and June.

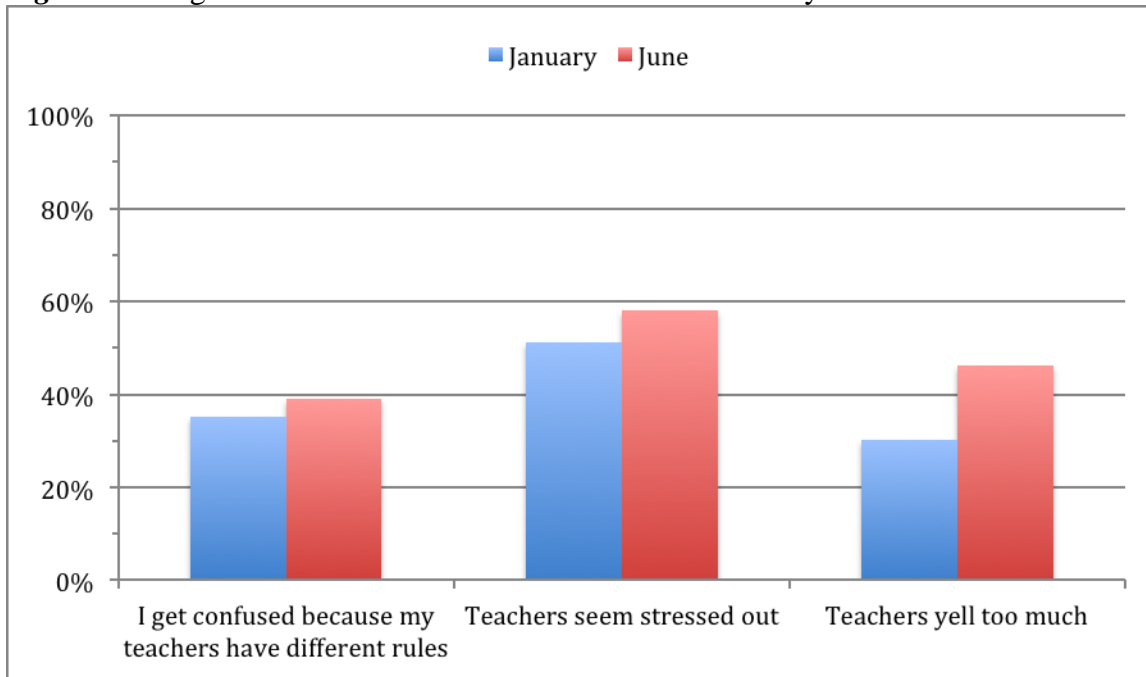


Figure 17. Positive school climate domain. StPBD January and June.

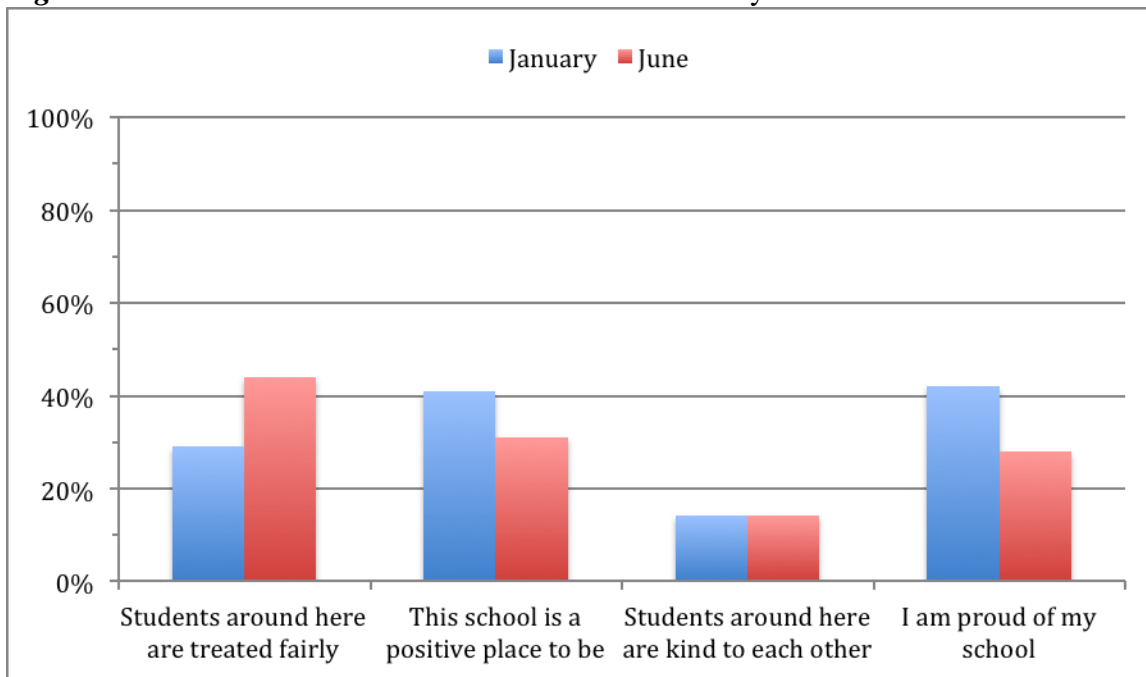


Figure 18. Behavior expectations domain. StPBD January and June.

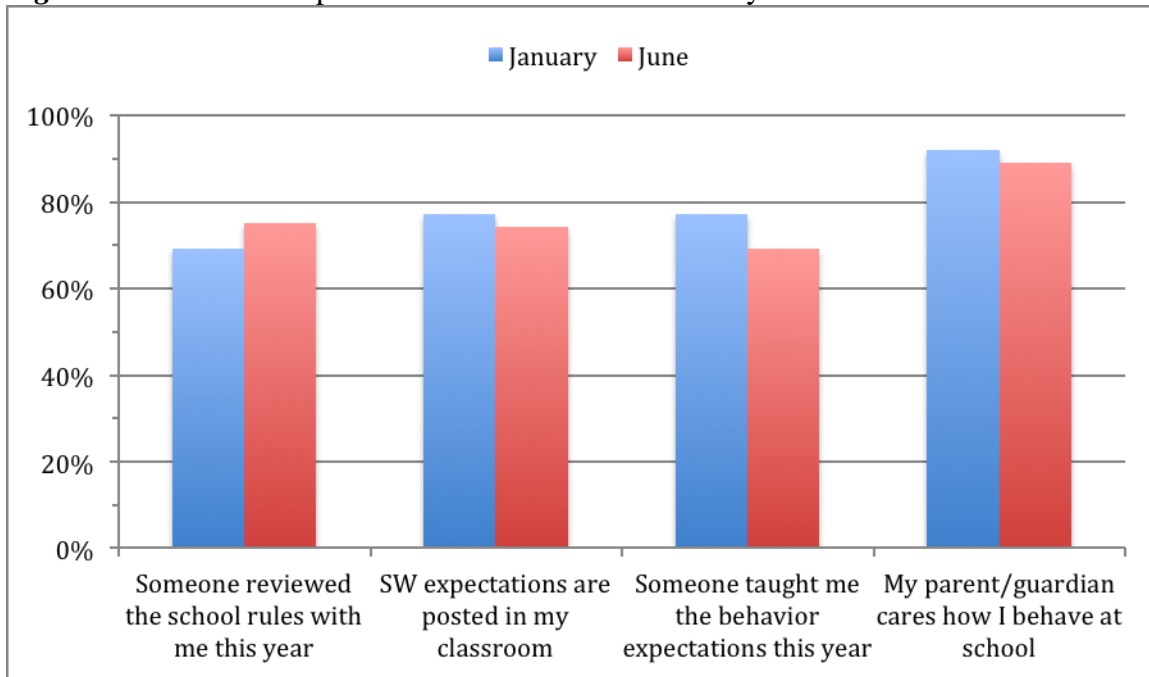
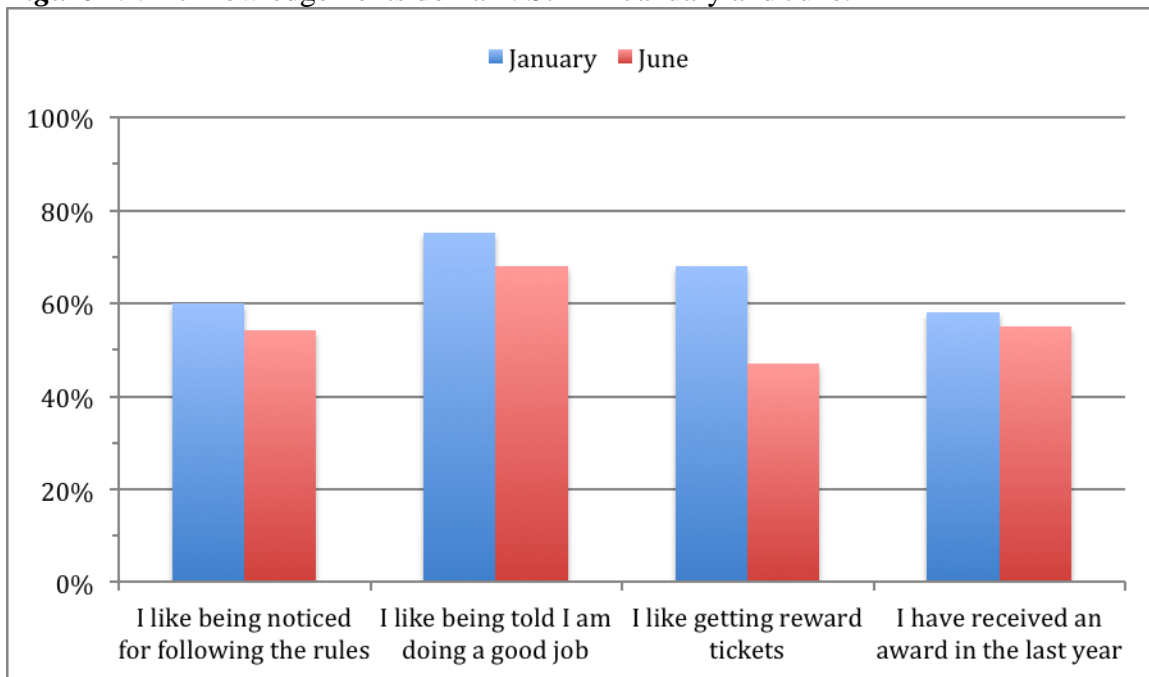


Figure 19. Acknowledgements domain. StPBD January and June.



The qualitative data revealed staff concerns and needs shifted somewhat from January to June. The list below is student responses to the open-ended survey questions in order of prevalence.

Student Concerns

Student behavior. As in January, the June survey revealed student behavior to be the most common student response theme. Students reported their peers did not show respectful and responsible behavior. They noted concerns about fighting, bullying, teasing, and inappropriate touching behavior. Some students reported concerns about student self harming and demonstrating signs of depression or risk of suicide.

Discipline system. The second most frequent concern listed by students in the June rating related to the discipline system. The previous reporting by students revealed this to be fourth most common concern. Students reported concerns about the “bad kids” needing to be removed from school and needing more discipline, “enforcement” or “punishment.” Student comments also revealed concerns related to students “getting away with…” misbehavior.

Safety. Students reported safety in some of their June comments. This was listed as the third highest concern in both the January and June ratings. Bullies were mentioned as a safety concerns as was student fighting. A student commented, “Kids are scared to come to school because they don’t know that their bully is going to be here.” One student stated, “...stop the perverted boys from harassing girls”. Another student commented, “The school gives children depression and makes them commit suicide.” Another student reported, “...there’s druggies, gangs and psycho’s...” Several students also mentioned concerns about the neighborhood in which the school is housed and noted frequent “lock downs” as evidence of this threat. Students

reported the need for more safety measures such as cameras, student law enforcement or security guards.

Staff behavior. Some of the students noted concerns in the area of staff behavior. This was mentioned less by students in June than in January. Students mentioned concerns about staff not responding to problematic student behavior, not listening to them and not wanting to be there. They also mentioned teachers needing to be less stressed, be happier, yell less and just needing to “chill out”.

Teacher support. Few students mentioned teacher support as a concern in the June rating. This rating is similar to the January rating. Some students mentioned concerns about teachers who don’t care, are unfair, don’t notice when the material is not at their level and do not teach at a pace that helps them understand the material.

Discrimination. As with the January rating, some students mentioned concerns regarding discrimination in the June rating. The discrimination comments noted the need for all students to be treated fairly and not based on race, sexuality or reputation.

Student Needs

Environment. Students commented most frequently about environmental factors in the June survey. This is similar to the January student survey results. Several student comments noted the need for an updated building, better bathrooms, updated equipment, materials and technology. Students also noted the need for less crowding in the school and quieter spaces in which to work. Some students reported the need to change the schedule of the day or the need for a different dress code. These comments are similar to the January student comments.

Teacher-student relationships. Students made frequent remarks about teacher-student relationships. Teacher-student relationships was the second most reported need by students. In

the January survey this was the fourth most mentioned need by students. Several students mentioned specific staff members by name. Students reported liking, trusting and caring about their teachers. Some administrators and were called out favorably by students as well.

Peer connection. Students in the June survey frequently mentioned the need for peer connection. This is similar to the January results. Students reported the need for friendships, socializing and interacting with their friends.

Food. Food was mentioned several times in both the June and the January ratings. Students reported the need for better food, healthier food, greater variety of food as well as longer duration to eat and the need for more frequent food breaks. Some students mentioned the need for food to be more readily available at a reduced price.

Specific class content. The June student survey revealed somewhat fewer students commenting about the need for specific class content than the January report . Student comments expressed the need for greater variety of classes, changes to the grading system, increases in engaging activities and materials as well as the desire for teachers to “make learning more fun.”

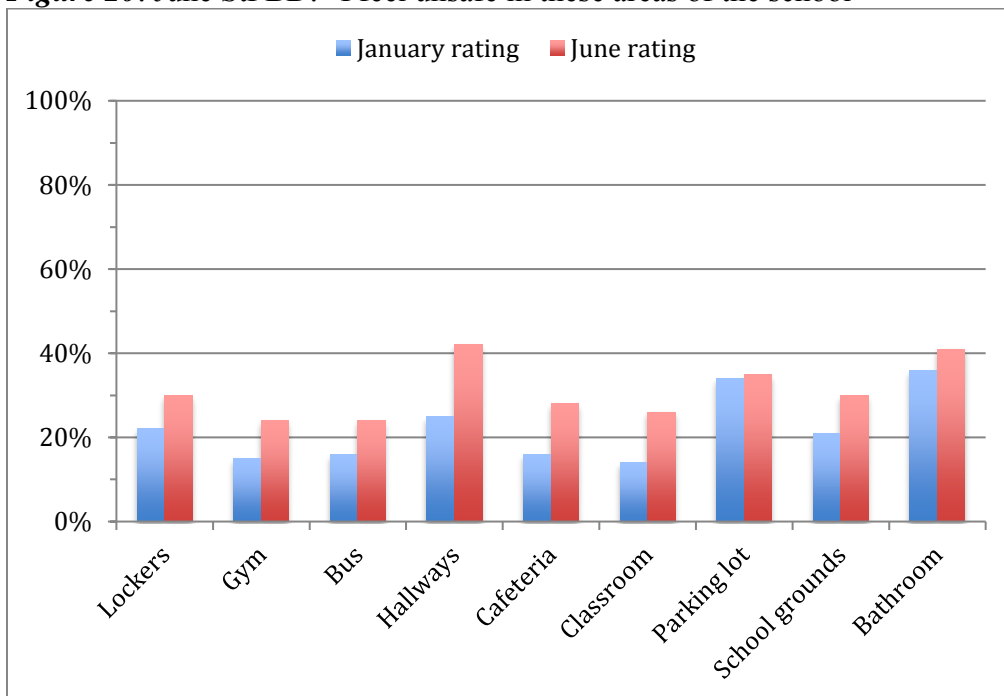
Extracurricular activities. Student reported the need for extracurricular activities in some of the June responses. This is a similar rate to the January responses. Student comments included the need for more sports, dances, field trips, clubs and assembly opportunities. Student also indicated the need for more or longer intermural activities during the school day.

Autonomy. Students report about the need for freedom and autonomy was greatly reduced from the January rating, A few of the students reported this need in June compared to approximately one-third of student comments noting this need in January.

Teacher support. The need for teacher support was listed in some of the June responses. Students listed the need for teachers to help with schoolwork, “help us to do our best”, and help students do well on tests. Students also reported needing encouragement and teachers to provide “recognition for good behavior” and hard work.

Rewards. Very few students indicated a need for rewards in the June survey results. Students listed several types of rewards such as pizza, doughnut parties or waffle eating contests as earned rewards in addition to food or candy and computer or phone time rewards. Student responses included thirty-four notations of bullying or being bullied in the June survey results. The January student responses included the mention of bullying, bullies or being bullied only eleven times. In addition, the StPBD demonstrated quantitative results revealed increases in students reporting feeling unsafe in areas of the school (See Figure 20). In the January StPBD results 40 students checked other and indicated they feel safe in the school. In June, 14 students checked other and indicated they feel safe at school.

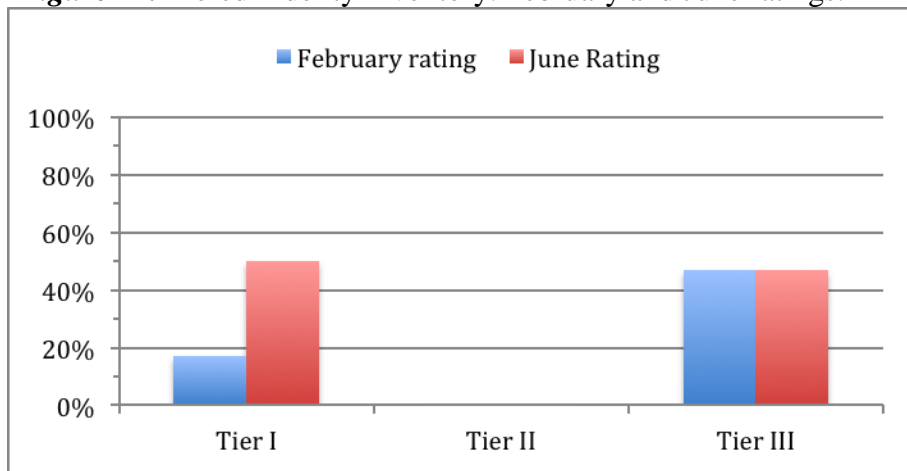
Figure 20. June StPBD: “I feel unsafe in these areas of the school”



Tiered Fidelity Implementation. The Tiered Fidelity Inventory was used to measure implementation pre and post targeted staff training through PLCs. As noted in Figure 21 prior to the first positive behavior targeted PLC the school was at 17% implementation at a Tier I level, 0% at a Tier II level and 47% at a Tier III level. Following the final targeted positive behavior PLC training the school was rated at 50% implementation at a Tier I level, while implementation at a Tier II and Tier III remained the same as pre targeted PLC levels.

A score of 80% for each Tier is considered acceptable implementation that results in improved student outcomes. The focus of the PLC work was on Tier 1 rather than either Tier II or Tier III. The specific areas of improvement in Tier I included team operating procedures, behavioral expectations, problem behavior definitions, professional development, classroom procedures, faculty involvement, discipline data, data-based decision making and fidelity data.

Figure 21. Tiered Fidelity Inventory. February and June ratings.



It was noted that this case study was initiated at the behest of one of the school administrators for the purposes of reducing out of school disciplinary removals. The 2014-15 suspension data reveals 302 removals of special and general education students. The average middle school discipline removal rate for the district was 216 during the 2014-15 school year. The 2015-16 school year reveals 253 out of school discipline removals, a slight decrease. The

average middle school discipline removal rate for the district was 157.75 for the 2015-16 school year. Mountain Middle School had a much higher discipline removal rate than all other schools in the district for the 2015-16 school year.

Staff evaluation of Targeted PLC. Evaluation of professional development, or the targeted positive behavior PLCs, was conducted in several ways. First, there was formative evaluation provided through written feedback following most of the PLCs. Feedback was also provided during the PLC work as well as individual one-legged interviews conducted in-between PLC meetings. Second there was a summative evaluation conducted online that included ratings of the PLCs as well as open ended questions about suggestions for improvement and concerns from the trainings that were provided. Finally, some of the items from the SPBD ask about level of understanding of SWPBIS, number of hours and quality of training for SWPBIS as well as commitment to SWPBIS. In addition, some of the open-ended responses from staff suggest concerns or needs from the professional development provided. All of the responses, except the open ended responses from the surveys, are listed as certificated staff only rather than all staff. As only certificated staff members participated in the PLC work and very few classified staff completed the surveys, those responses were not included in the graphs that follow.

Overall, staff reported understanding of SWPBIS shows improvement from January to June (See *Figure 22*) as has the number of hours spent on training (See *Figure 23*). The majority of staff report they found the trainings to be helpful and of interest to them (see *Figure 24* and *25a*). Further, more than 80% of certificated staff indicated interest in continuing the positive behavior PLC work into the next school year (See *Figure 25b*.) Increases were also shown in staff member's strong agreement and commitment to the adoption of SWPBIS, however there was also an increase in the number of staff who reported to agree with SWPBIS practices but not

actively participate in it (See *Figure 26*). Certificated staff also noted improvements in communication from January to June (*Figure 27*).

Figure 22. Certificated Responses January and June SPBD.

“When it comes to the concepts and procedures of positive behavior supports my level of understanding is:”

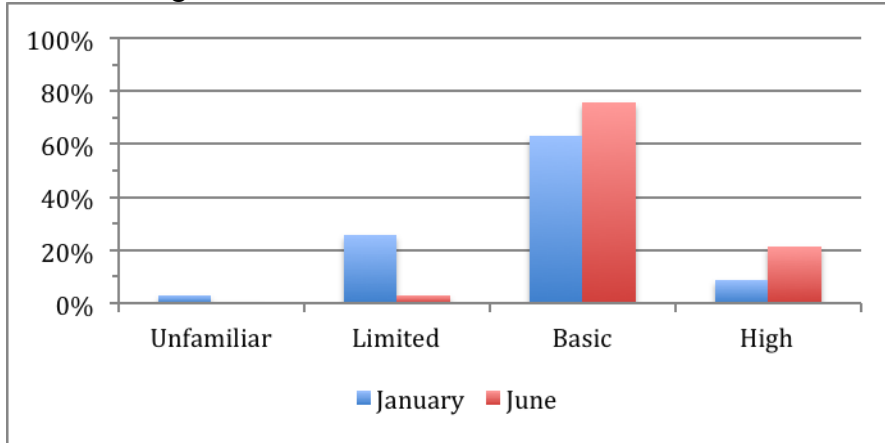


Figure 23. Certificated Responses January and June SPBD.

“Over the past year how many hours of PD have you received?”

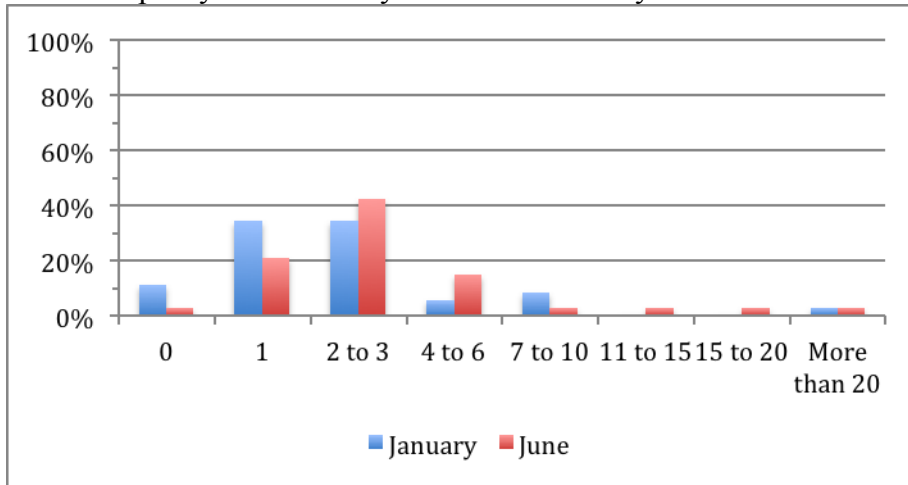


Figure 24. Certificated Responses January and June SPBD.
 “If you have received PD in behavior supports, did you find it to be helpful?”

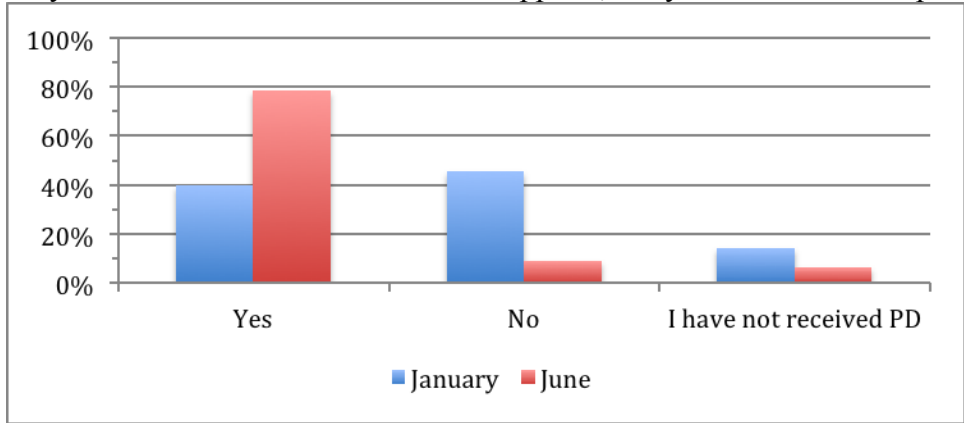


Figure 25a. Summative evaluation of positive behavior PLC series. N=38

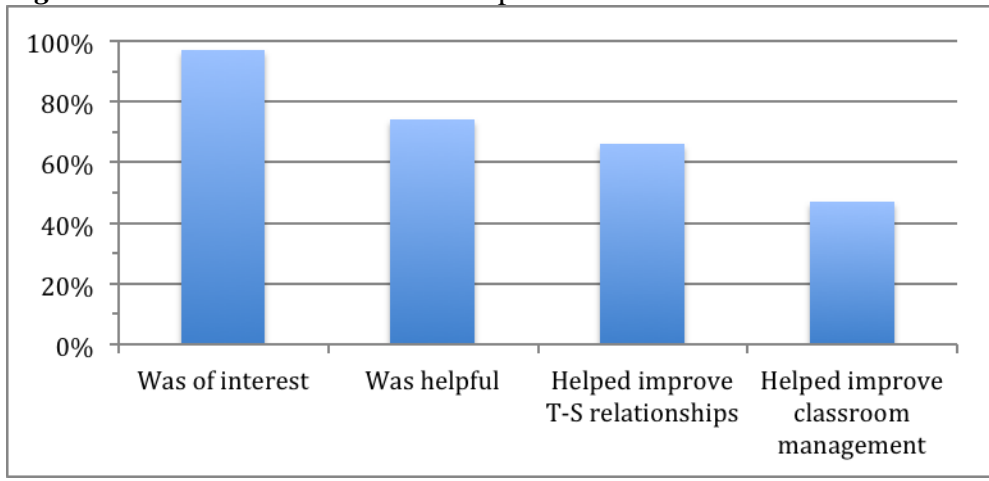


Figure 25b. Summative evaluation of positive behavior PLC series. N=38

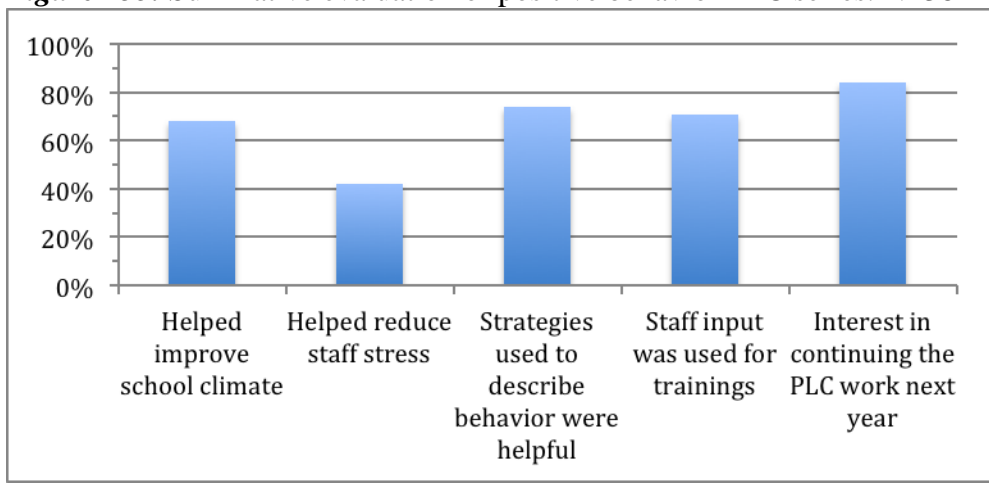


Figure 26. Certificated Responses January and June SPBD.
 “If you are familiar with SWPBIS, please indicate your level of commitment”

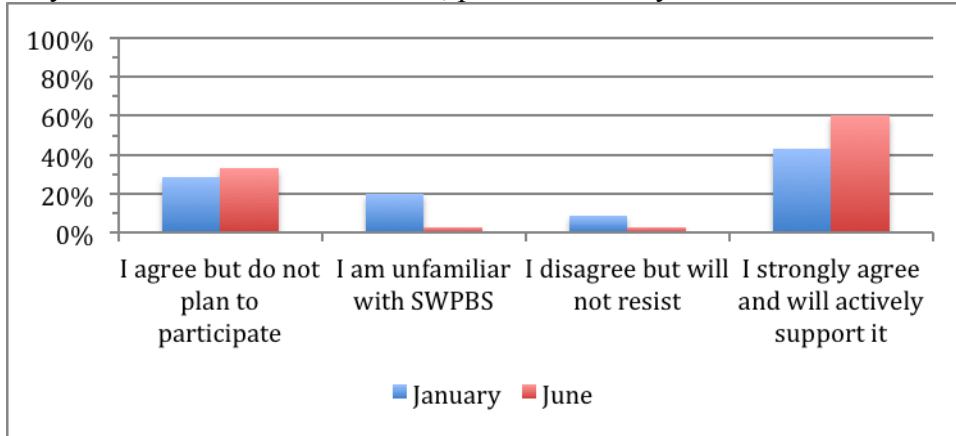
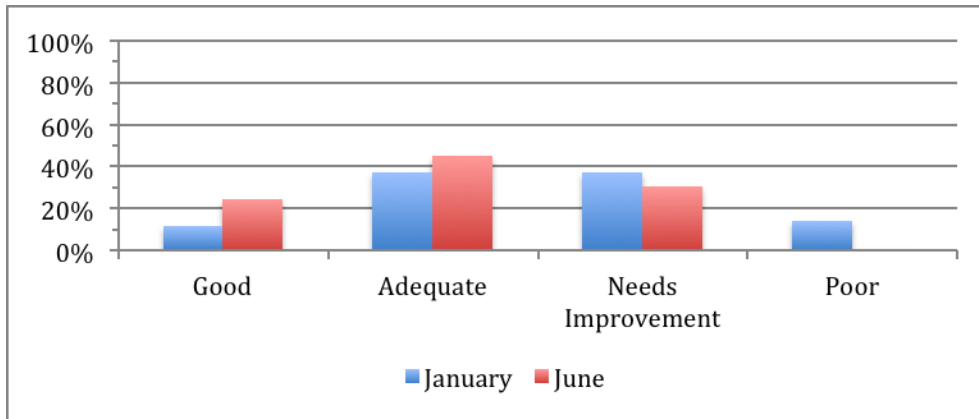


Figure 27. Certificated Responses January and June SPBD.
 “Please rate the level of communication at this school”



Staff comments about suggestions for the training included the need for staff follow through and accountability such as:

Follow through needs to be discussed. We have some great plans in place, but how do we make sure all staff members are following through with them? How do we help those that aren't doing it yet and how do we recognize those that already are?
 and “Not all staff members are contributing or following guidelines.”

Many comments revealed the desire for the school to have additional discipline options such as an in school suspension room. Staff comments were as follows: “There needs to be an in-

school suspension room in order to avoid suspension since most of those students would like to be doing what they please.” “An in-house suspension space with a para to monitor students during independent study.” Another staff member reported

Until we get 100% buy-in from staff, even the best program won't work. And we will not get 100% buy-in from the staff until we are able to offer an alternative learning setting such as ISS room. That is a non-negotiable for almost all the staff.

Some of the staff comments revealed concerns with positive behavior philosophy.

Comments included the following: “One concern I have that we will be giving students incentives for modifying their behavior that they will begin to EXPECT something for doing virtually nothing.” Another staff member comments were as follows:

The kids get inundated with our ... awards or whatever, and they become common place (Chinese currency). By the 8th grade they don't care anymore-direct quote from multiple students. The [awards] are new and exciting, but we can't keep the same thing over and over.

Some of the staff comments revealed a tension between the administrative staff and the teaching staff. “Teachers' time should be spent on planning engaging and relevant lessons not dealing with misbehavior time after time without administrative support.” Another staff member reported:

“[This school] is overwhelmed with behavior issues. The staff is exhausted and frustrated and don't seem to trust each other or the administration to make meaningful decisions. The problems here go much deeper than implementing a PBIS program in once a month meetings and brief discussions.

One staff member expressed displeasure with the current administration as follows:

[This school] desperately needs a completely new and more organized administration that will set clear and high expectations for all students while speaking to students with dignity and respect. The administration should also adequately support all teachers. Equally important, [the school] needs new counselors that will act objectively and communicate quickly with teachers. Due to oversights and lack of communication the students [here] are not currently safe.

Discussion

Despite the notable positive outcomes SWPBIS has for students, schools sometimes struggle with effective and successful implementation. SWPBIS is a complex system change effort which may prove to be overwhelming for some schools to effectively implement without the necessary preliminary supports in place (Fixen, Naoom, Blasé, Friedman & Wallace, 2005). System change efforts provided an avenue to approach the work of implementing SWPBIS (Adelman & Taylor, 2007; Hall & Hord, 2015).

The purpose of this exploratory case study was to: understand the perceptions of staff and students related to the behavior and discipline at a selected middle school, use staff and student perceptions to target training and support, and finally, determine if this targeted training effectively addressed the needs of staff and students to facilitate implementation of positive behavior and discipline practices. The school showed some improvement in their implementation of Tier I SWPBIS from January until June supporting previous research findings that addressing staff and student perceptions about behavior and discipline can assist in the implementation of SWPBIS (Feuerborn, Tyre & King, 2015).

Investing in professional learning and provide continuous assistance

Targeted PLCs. The building administration team committed time and resources to the implementation of SWPBIS by setting aside time for staff to discuss positive behavior practices in the school. The majority of certificated staff attended and actively participated in most of the PLCs. The staff noted their needs and concerns and these were used to inform the content along with SWPBIS practices for the PLCs. Staff expressed an interest in continuing the positive practices PLCs the following year.

SWPBIS implementation. Although implementation of Tier I SWPBIS was not at a strong level at the end of the year (50%), it was much higher than previous measures (17%). This improvement was attributed to the creation of a SWPBIS leadership team who met more than one time. Improvements were also made in the student acknowledgements area. Previously staff provided student recognition 1 time per week with an immediate reward provided to the student being recognized. The change instituted was every staff member was provided 40 student recognition tickets per week. In addition, a variety of student reward options were provided, based on the interests students reported in the initial survey. However, in the scope of systems necessary for implementation of SWPBIS, these strengths were minimal.

Slight improvements were noted in the staff's rating of their perception of teaching and acknowledging expectations and implementation integrity both measured by the SPBD. They also noted some improvements in their perceptions of philosophical views of behavior and discipline, although staff increased their perceptions that students need to be held more responsible for their own behavior and that they need to get tougher in response to student behavior.

Staff indicated reduction in their cohesiveness and openness to change. Staff reduced their ability to identify a previous successful change at the school and increase their suspicion

that their colleagues are not consistently implementing the schoolwide behavior plan. In addition, staff report to be much more resistant to change. This may have been impacted by lack of deep understanding by the administrative team regarding SWPBIS. Students noted a reduction in safety and climate at the end of the year. This case study illuminates several opportunities for growth.

Investing in Professional Learning and Checking Progress

Misunderstanding about SWPBIS. It is clear from the feedback from staff that there were continued misunderstandings about SWPBIS. There were comments from both staff and students about the acknowledgement system being designed to recognize the “bad kids”. Staff also reported the need to remove or punish the “bad kids”. Staff labeled these students as “intentional nonlearners” and attributed the deficit with the students rather than with the environment or the need for additional instruction in prosocial behavior. These barriers are consistent with findings in the SWPBIS research (Andreou, McIntosh, Ross & Kahn, 2014; Feuerborn, Wallace, & Tyre, 2016; Kincaid, Childs, Blasé, & Wallace, 2007). Clarification of what SWPBIS is and what it isn’t were outlined several times during the course of the PLCs at Mountain Middle School. Staff feedback at the conclusion of this project revealed continued misunderstanding about the salient features of SWPBIS. The need for more or better training despite the provision of professional development has been found in other research (Garrahy, Cothran, & Kulinna, 2005) or that staff continue to demonstrate limited knowledge of SWPBIS after being provided with training (Tillery, Varjas, Meyers, & Collins, 2010).

No elements of SWPBIS were in place with fidelity at the onset of this work. The essential features of SWPBIS missing in this school included a SWPBIS leadership team that met frequently to analyze data, a data collection system that reported the salient features of

misbehavior, a focus on continuous instruction of the schoolwide expectations along with corrective and positive feedback, a continuum of procedures for rewards and acknowledgements, a continuum of procedures for responding to misbehaviors and corrective consequences (Sugai & Horner, 2009). Sugai and Horner state that the two most important requirements of successful implementation of SWPBIS are a system to acknowledge and teach prosocial behaviors and a team to collect, analyze and make decisions based on the school wide student data (2009). The PLCs did not provide explicit instruction to staff on how to teach prosocial behaviors nor did the PLCs highlight explicit instruction on how to identify the function of behavior. Much time was spent in the PLCs on responding to misbehavior and discipline based on the needs and concerns voiced by the staff. It is recommended that explicit prosocial behavior and function based analysis of behavior be highlighted in SWPBIS staff training.

Mountain Middle School had parts of several features of SWPBIS in place but were not implementing any of the elements with fidelity. Staff believed they were a fully implementing school and reported this on their school website. This resulted in staff confusion about changes necessary in order to be a SWPBIS school. For example, staff had identified and defined the schoolwide expectations (P.R.I.D.E.) however, these expectations were taught just one time, at the beginning of the year. In addition, the acknowledgements were not provided frequently, consistently or on a continuum. For example, each PRIDE award equated to one ice cream treat. The awards or tickets were not collected and exchanged for a reward nor were school wide drawings conducted in anticipation of bigger rewards or a range of rewards for students. Further, the schoolwide expectations were changed midyear by the principal when data revealed that students and staff did not know the expectations. A student acknowledgment team was formed during the positive practice PLC. Student acknowledgment practices were encouraged and

reported back to staff at the PLCs. Some staff interpreted this practice as a means to reinforce the “bad kids” rather than punish them. The barrier of lack of fidelity in implementation of SWPBIS has been noted to reduce the likelihood of effective implementation (McIntosh, Horner, & Sugai, 2009).

The school had identified a SWPBIS team after this researcher began this work. There were no expectations that this team would meet on a regular basis and resisted efforts to do so. The inability to create a functional SWPBIS leadership team in the school has been found to be a barrier to effective implementation of SWPBIS (Handler, et al., 2007). In addition, the data collection system in place was not used by all staff, did not have the essential features and did not align with the printed policies provided to staff. Two of the foundational elements of SWPBIS implementation are a SWPBIS leadership team and the collection and analysis of data to inform decisions (Horner & Sugai, 2009). With these two foundational elements missing SWPBIS is not in place.

Response to misbehavior was another area of misunderstanding for staff. Several of the PLCs were devoted to this topic. The staff had developed acceptable responses to misbehavior in their work in the PLCs. Despite this, the primary response by staff to student misbehavior was Think Time. Think Time was a long-standing practice in place at Mountain Middle School prior to the initial implementation steps of instituting SWPBIS. However, when remnants of old systems are in place it can be problematic for the effective implementation of a new system. Think Time at Mountain Middle School had transformed from a practice intended to reduce attention for misbehavior, provide an opportunity to prompt the behavioral expectation and allow for essential debriefing, to one used primarily as punishment. Staff reported that students were so adept at teacher’s use of Think Time that they would plan to meet in the hallways at specified

times by engaging in a minor misbehavior in order to be sent out of class. Think Time had undergone a “lethal mutation” as some of the aspects of the original practice were in place but other relevant features of the practice were no longer in place (McLaughlin & Mitra, 2001). Teacher abundant use of Think Time may be viewed in terms of teacher efficacy. Teacher efficacy is a teachers’ perception of themselves as being able. Morin (2001) indicates that when teachers do not believe they can make a difference with a child’s education they are more likely to refer them to alternate environments to receive their education. Teachers at Mountain Middle School may see little difference in student behavior as a result of their interactions and instruction. Therefore they may be more inclined to send them out of their classroom for Think Time and may explain their desire for an in school suspension room.

In addition to the removal from the classroom, staff continued their overreliance on punishment to fix the problem and the notion that tougher consequences were needed. There were many staff comments hinting that the students at this school were impacted by “inner city problems”. These, along with other comments may reveal undertones of racial bias and deficit views. These beliefs may be seen as staff helplessness as was found in research by Lohrman and colleagues (2008).

Some staff members reported extensive knowledge about SWPBIS. These staff members, with knowledge of the systemic practices not yet in place may have identified lack of resources as a barrier to their daily practice. Some staff members reported taking a hopeless stance in their approach to student misbehavior due to the lack of supports, policies and practices in place. This is a consistent barrier found in SWPBIS research (Lohrmann, Forman, Martin, & Palmieri, 2008).

Providing continuous assistance

Consistency. Many staff noted the need for better and more consistent discipline practices at Mountain Middle School. Discipline practice is often noted as a barrier to effective implementation of SWPBIS as is lack of consistency (Feuerborn, Wallace, & Tyre, 2016). At Mountain Middle School staff reported that when they referred a student to the office for discipline, sometimes the student was sent back to their room in a matter of minutes with staff never receiving an update as to actions taken by administrators. Administrators reported that staff sent students to the office for various reasons, some not warranting administrative responses. In addition, the practice of after school or Saturday detention was not tracked or reported. For example, if a student was sent to the office for misbehavior, the staff member was given no information about the action administration took and if an administrator assigned after school detention, neither the student's attendance at the detention was kept nor was their lack of attendance reprimanded. Due to this lack of follow through, both staff and students knew there was no deterrent to misbehavior. This helped to create lack of trust and perception of lack of support between the staff and the administrators. These perceptions were emphasized in the staff surveys.

The need for alignment of discipline practices and procedures was highlighted at a SWPBIS leadership team. Staff frustration with the lack of consistency was shared with the administrators. The building administrators took immediate action and revised the discipline policies and practices. Immediately following this change, staff reported more consistent response from administration and notification of actions taken when a student was sent to the office.

Planning and providing resources

The role of the administrators. The implementation of SWPBIS at Mountain Middle School was initiated by a previous vice principal. This administrator was familiar with SWPBIS practices and spoke to several implementing elementary schools in the district on action steps toward SWPBIS implementation. When she left the school at the end of the last school year, a new vice principal was placed and expected to continue the work of implementation. The new administrator was not familiar with SWPBIS practices but was expected to be the person in charge of setting this system up at Mountain Middle School. This person abruptly left her position mid-year with various replacements, who did not have the capacity to lead this work at the building. As McIntosh and colleagues (2009) indicate, it is damaging to the implementation of SWPBIS when individuals who have championed the work and who are familiar with the essential components leave their positions. In addition, it is essential that the principal not delegate this role as in doing so gives it lower priority (Handler, et al., 2007).

In order for a SWPBIS effort to be effective, it must be seen as a priority. This means the administrator is knowledgeable about the practice, participates in building SWPBIS leadership team meetings, supports the implementation by modeling and reinforcing SWPBIS practices with staff and students, as well as participating in trainings by taking an active role when data are discussed and action plans are developed (Handler, et. al, 2007). Although the principal was reported to be “all in”, several actions revealed conflicting priorities, such as using the positive practices PLC to advocate that the district needs to support the school in their quest for “A Mountain Academy”, an in school suspension room, or “We are an inner city school in the suburbs with inner city problems. The district needs to support us by giving us our own resource officer”. These statements are not in conflict with SWPBIS practices but when stated in such as manner and time insinuate that the school already knows the solution necessary and that

SWPBIS is just something the school is doing as a means to get what they really believe they need. These statements also do not reflect the spirit of SWPBIS which emphasizes changing adult behavior to reflect a proactive supportive environment. This sentiment regarding the need for an alternate space for students was expressed several times by staff in the surveys, during the PLC meetings and in one-legged interviews with staff.

Although this work was initiated at the behest of the previous vice principal, who was well versed in the practice, it did not appear as well understood or valued by the current administration team. The outcome of reduced suspension and problematic behaviors in the school and SWPBIS as the means to achieve this did not appear to be as valued as the desire to institute an in-school suspension room. As McIntosh, Horner and Sugai (2009) state, “Without outcomes that are valued by school-level personnel, sustainability is unlikely and perhaps undesirable” (p.329).

Some of the staff comments reflected a reluctance to demonstrate the expected positive behavior practices until other staff members and the administration demonstrated the positive practices. One staff member indicated that the administrators did not show respect to staff or students. Shoemaker (2014) found that a strong knowledge of the principles of applied behavior analysis in the administrative team, combined with purposeful planning of activities in the pre implementation phase of SWPBIS in addition to modeling the expected teacher behaviors, significantly influenced staff willingness to implement SWPBIS (Shoemaker, 2014).

Staff reported a lack of ISS room and lack of additional resource officer as a lack of resources and lack of support for their work in the classroom. As staff perceived the new discipline policies as a means to send fewer students to the office, they interpreted this as a lack of support to their work of academic instruction. In addition, staff spent time creating lists of

possible action steps for the group identified priorities (student attendance, staff connections, student acknowledgement, student safety and teacher-student relationships). Many staff did not follow through on their commitments to this work once the PLC was over. Staff expressed an interest in having the school leader provide the resources they needed to implement the action steps outlined rather than require one more thing for them to do. Other staff reported frustration that more was placed as part of their responsibility rather than taken off of their plate. This perception of lack of support by the administration team for the staff created discord between each of these groups. This strife may have been impacted by the turn-over in administration during the year as well. Discord between some teachers and administration may have impacted those teacher's readiness to benefit from new learning throughout this process. Staff's reported lack of input may also be a reaction to the apparent *top down* management style in place by the principal. Mafora (2013) found that teacher resisted changes and returned to their previous way of operating when initiatives were top-down and lacked teacher contribution to the design process. Limited resources and support are frequent barriers found in SWPBIS research (Andreou, McIntosh, Ross & Kahn, 2014; Bambara, Nonnemacher, & Kern, 2009; Feuerborn, Wallace, & Tyre, 2016; Lohrmann, Forman, Martin, & Palmieri, 2008; McIntosh, Predy, Upreti, Hume, Turri, & Mathews, 2014)

Priorities. During the initial PLCs, staff were asked to rate their school priorities in order to target their needs. Staff were provided data showing various needs, including student safety concerns. Despite this being highlighted as a concern and one of the foundational needs for a student to be able to learn, staff did not choose this as a priority of focus. In order to address this need, the number of priorities was increased in order to include student safety. A group was formed to address this need, however, no staff members would commit to work on

this committee or to champion this work. These needs were highlighted in different ways at each PLC, with no change in response from staff. The June student ratings revealed a much higher concern for safety and an increase in the number of comments about bullying made by students. When students and staff note safety concerns, all other actions need to be placed secondary to this work. According to Maslow (1943, 1954) until basic needs such as safety are met, higher order needs such as learning cannot be fulfilled.

Developing and communicating a shared vision

Communication versus consensus building. Some of the feedback from staff revealed that they were frustrated with lack of input into the PLC content despite being provided opportunities anonymously following most PLCs as well as online. Perhaps these comments reflect some of the communication provided during the PLCs. For example, staff noted significant concerns related to student misbehavior and lack of consequences for misbehavior. At the end of one of the PLCs the administrative staff distributed the new discipline policies and practices. Staff were frustrated with their lack of input to this new procedure as well as the timing of the dissemination, immediately prior to the start of class with the expectations of immediate implementation. When staff openly expressed frustration with the policy, administration responses indicated that this new policy is the core feature of SWPBIS. This example shows lack of collaboration and little value given to staff input both of which have been found to be barriers in the implementation of SWPBIS (Feuerborn, Wallace, & Tyre, 2016; Kincaid et al, 2007). Moving from a culture of reactive discipline practices to a culture of positive behavior supports involves a paradigm shift. For a paradigm shift to occur, a culture of staff collaboration must be in place (Bambara et al., 2012).

Us versus Them. Situating the school in an “us versus them” context within the district was not supportive to the work of implementing SWPBIS. When presenting discipline data during the PLCs, the information was shared in a comparison format to show where Mountain Middle School was in the context of the district as a whole. The purpose of this was to show that this practice was not reducing the problematic behaviors as well as create a sense of urgency. When students are out of school or placed in other environments, such as in alternate classrooms as is used in Think Time, they are missing out on instruction often leading to the decreased understanding of the content. This often perpetuates the desire of students to get out of the instruction. Mountain Middle school has had the highest out of school suspension rates in the district. This includes comparisons to high schools that are two times the size, to other middle schools with a larger low income populations as well as to other schools that house the district self-contained programs for student with Emotional and Behavioral Disabilities, a group traditionally with high out of school suspension rates. This comparison was intended to create a sense of urgency as well as an identified need for change. Staff instead perceived this comparison as an “us versus them” being the district versus Mountain Middle School. Further, some staff perceived this divide as proof that their students were, in fact, different than the rest of the district population and needed something unique. This positioning of “us versus them” is not identified as a barrier in SWPBIS research.

Identification of a solution prior to the start of the process. Administration and staff reported they were committed to the installation of a new practice, however, they had previously identified the problem (“Bad students”) in the context of a solution they had previously named and identified (a Mountain Academy used as an in school suspension room and a place to teach these student how to behave). The need for an alternate location to house misbehaving student

came up during the PLCs, in the written feedback as well as in the surveys. This researcher supported this stated need by stating that if the Mountain Academy was to be successful it could not house effectively house 200 to 320 students (this number was obtained by staff reports of 5 to 8 students per teacher needing to be sent out of class). In order to implement a Mountain Academy the staff would need to find a way to reduce the number of students needing to be sent there.

Although time was spent during the PLC on the school vision, time spent digging into the rationale for an ISS room could have provided another opportunity to discuss the importance of prevention. Lack of a common vision was a barrier to this work and is a recommended first step in change systems research (Hall & Hord, 2015).

Commitment from the larger organization. SWPBIS was not embraced as a district wide practice but was a framework individual elementary schools had embraced within the district. Mountain Middle School was the first secondary school in the district to embark on the journey of implementation of SWPBIS. Togneri and Anderson (2003) report it is less advantageous for schools to enact new practice in isolation from each other than for them to connect with other schools implementing SWPBIS. Many comments from staff at Mountain Middle School indicated the concern regarding the perceived lack of support and resources from the district. Lack of support from the larger organization or district is frequently cited as a barrier to implementation of SWPBIS (Bambara, Nonnemacher, & Kern, 2009; Kincaid, Childs, Blasé, & Wallace, 2007). Although not directly attributed as a barrier, McIntosh and colleagues (2015) found high schools that were successful in implementing SWPBIS were able to rely on district wide systems to support these efforts (McIntosh, Kim, Mercer, Strickland-Cohen, & Horner, 2015).

Implications for research and practice

Using staff and student perceptions of behavior and discipline can improve the implementation of SWPBIS and is consistent with system change practices. This case study illuminates areas for additional research and practice.

Practice

This case study focused on Tier I implementation of SWPBIS. The focus of all of the PLCs as well as work with the school PBIS leadership team provided for Tier I implementation. The idea was that in order to move to Tier II implementation, Tier I must be at a solid level or too many students would be referred for Tier II supports to be effective. Many of the staff and student comments pertaining to lack of resources and support point to lack of support for challenging students. Staff and students may have felt more support if time and effort was spent preparing and implementing Tier II supports at the same time as Tier I.

Time spent with an administration team prior to the implementation of SWPBIS for the purpose of providing them a deep understanding of the tenets of applied behavior analysis, SWPBIS, providing for opportunities to model positive behavior practices for their teachers and planning for professional development to occur through a culture of collaboration. Further, administrators must plan for this to be a long process as Bambara and colleagues (2012) point out, not one conducted through 5 PLCs. It would benefit from ongoing continuous dialogue through PLCs throughout the year. Further, effective learning communities cannot be conducted in a top-down manner; rather staff must have control and ownership of their work (Dufour & Eaker, 1998). Although staff comments guided this work, and staff generated ideas for interventions and actions to address the priorities, these ideas were not time bound and were not

lead by a consistent group leader. In addition, this group did not report to the school PBIS leadership team. Therefore there was no accountability for the small group work.

In addition to the administration modeling positive behavior practices, it is important that staff be given opportunities to implement practices in an effective manner. This may be done with in the moment coaching. Elliot (1988) states that teachers who make the transformation from resistance to embrace a change are able to do so only when they have had the experience of implementing an intervention effectively themselves with in the moment feedback. He states that coaching shifts staff responsibility for changing student behavior. Guskey (1999) indicates the critical component is not the professional development about the practice, rather it is the experience of successful implementation that changes beliefs. When staff see they can be effective with these challenging students by using positive behavior practices, they shift their beliefs and resistance about SWPBIS (Morin, 2001).

Implicit bias can be inferred in many of the staff and student comments. It is not uncommon for staff to be predominately white while the student population is much more ethnically and racially diverse, as is the case at Mountain Middle School. Implicit bias and discrimination are often much more difficult to address than overt racism. Devine and colleagues (2012) designed interventions to address implicit bias by creating activities aimed at awareness of bias and concerns about the consequences of their biases. Braiding these practices along with SWPBIS practices would be transformative to the culture of a school.

Research

This case study illuminates the opportunity for future research to investigate how we deal with staff beliefs and reliance on discipline and punishment to solve behavior challenges in secondary schools. Philosophical differences with SWPBIS have been found to be a common

barrier to effective implementation (Bambara et al., 2009; 2012; George et al., 2007; Kincaid et al., 2007; Lohrmann et al., 2008; 2013). Achieving staff buy-in and addressing resistive beliefs about behavior and discipline is an important avenue for continued research.

It is difficult to identify what the impact of a change in the leadership team during the school year had on this middle school. The opportunity to engage in the work of using staff and student perceptions of behavior and discipline for the purposes of targeting staff training in a school not undergoing leadership change would be beneficial to the field of positive behavior supports. Further, addressing perceptions throughout the school year, in a continuous manner may have a greater impact to staff. In addition, implementing a positive behavior support coaching model during the training may allow staff to practice effective elements with feedback in real time. For example, the Good Behavior Game could be modeled by a coach and practiced by a teacher with immediate coaching feedback. Finally, the voice of parents was not heard in this project. Continued research in this area is recommended to include parent perceptions of behavior and discipline for their children at school.

Limitations

Leadership for this work comes from members of the staff who work daily with students. In addition to certificated staff, classified staff can take a pivotal role in the implementation of SWPBIS. The targeted PLCs did not include the classified staff in the building, though they were invited to attend. Circumstances such as daily job tasks that enable staff to meet as a PLC negated classified staff from being included in the PLCs. A limitation of this case study was both evident in the response bias of the staff surveys with very few classified staff responses as well as the lack of certificated staff members present for the PLC work. In addition, the

certificated staff who completed the surveys may not have been the same certificated staff who attended the trainings, as not all staff attended all of the trainings.

There were several changes implemented by the administration during the course of this project. These changes were not reflective of the spirit of SWPBIS and may have contributed to misunderstanding of the what SWPBIS is and is not by the staff.

The removal of a vice principal during the course of the school year may have impacted this work. The administrative team sets the tone of a building and the upheaval of having three different staff fill the position in three months may have impacted climate and consistency of administrative responses. Staff turn-over has been noted as a barrier to effective implementation (Coffey & Horner, 2012; Kincaid, Childs, Blasé, & Wallace, 2007). Mitchell, Bradshaw and Leaf (2010), found that when students and staff were asked to rate perceptions of school climate, teachers ratings were more sensitive to classroom factors while students were more impacted by school-level factors such as principal turnover. Rosenholtz (1989) found that schools with high principal turnover had a negative influence of school success. The June rating of school climate by the students were much lower than the January ratings of climate. This may have been influenced by the change in administration throughout the year, not necessarily due to the challenges attributed to implementing SWPBIS as a new practice at Mountain Middle School. Administration turmoil may also have substantial impact to staff perceptions of support, consistency and leadership in the building.

Conclusion

The present case study examined use of staff and student perceptions of behavior and discipline to design targeted PLCs. Findings demonstrated some improvements in implementation of Tier I SWPBIS. This case study also confirmed previous research on the

barriers stemming from misperceptions of SWPBIS, staff buy-in, administration and district support, and perception of necessary resources to implement of positive behavior practices in a middle school. Using staff and student perceptions about behavior and discipline is a complex process. Shifting from reactive to proactive practices requires administrative knowledge, belief and support, staff priorities of student safety and increased instructional time and a collaborative staff culture within the school. This case study puts researchers in a better position to implement SWPIBS more effectively by using stakeholders concerns, needs and insights to target staff training.

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Appendix A

Five Factor Solution and Psychometric Properties of the January StPBD Scale (n=559)

Item	Factor loadings							
	M	SD	PC1	PC2	PC3	PC4	PC5	
Q5	Adults in this school notice when you do the right thing.	2.88	1.14	0.57				
Q12	This school is a positive place to be.	2.85	1.1	0.73				
Q16	Students around here are kind to each other.	3.6	1.01	0.74				
Q20	I am proud of my school.	2.86	1.16	0.67				
Q23	If I need something adults at this school will help me.	2.45	1.02	0.52				
Q18	My teachers care about me.	2.47	0.96			0.52		
Q19	My teachers know me.	2.27	1.03			0.68		
Q22	My parent/guardian knows what goes on in school.	2.24	1.09			0.51		
Q24	There's an adult at this school that cares about me.	2.31	0.97			0.58		
Q25	My teachers listen to what I have to say.	2.55	0.96			0.61		
Q6	I have received an award at school in the last year.	2.52	1.31		0.5			
Q7	I like being noticed for following the rules.	2.4	1.04		0.71			
Q8	I like being told I'm doing a good job.	2.06	0.96		0.69			
Q9	I like getting SW reward tickets.	2.13	1.04		0.64			
Q1	Someone reviewed the school rules with me this year.	2.18	1.05					0.45
Q3	SW expectations are posted in my classroom.	1.95	1.06					0.55
Q4	Someone taught me the SW expectations this year.	2.02	1.05					0.57
Q10	I know what will happen if I break a rule.	1.94	0.92					0.48
Q2	I get confused because my teachers have different rules.	3.1	1.19				0.67	
Q14	Teachers seem stressed out.	2.48	1.03				0.58	
Q17	Teachers at this school yell a lot.	3.05	1.09				0.66	

