4-1-2017

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TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS OF THEIR PRACTICES RELATED TO IMPLEMENTING A PBIS PLAN IN THE INTERMEDIATE GRADE LEVELS

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Dissertation submitted to the Faculty of the College of Education

in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Education in

Teacher Leadership

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Concordia University Portland

2017

ABSTRACT

The objective of this dissertation is to explore how preservice training impact teachers' perceptions of their practices related to implementing a Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) plan in intermediate grade levels. This was accomplished through qualitative methods of data collection and analysis, namely surveys, interviews, and focus groups. Participants attended two focus group meetings during the study to express their concerns and receive information on the data of the pretest and posttest surveys. Interviews were conducted with three of the ten participants for more in-depth investigation of teachers' perceptions. The findings showed a strong connection between providing a preservice training and teachers' perceptions. The study concluded that proving teachers with training increased their perceptions by providing resources to be effective in implementing their plan. The school community was changed through the study with students receiving more incentives and rewards for making good choices and reduced referral forms. These findings shed light on the topic of providing preservice training for teachers to assist in their effectiveness in the classroom and allow more instructional time for academics.

Keywords: Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports, teacher perception, referral form

DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to the stars that brightened my path with love and support.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank my advisor, Dr. Mark Jimenez, for his guidance, support, and encouragement throughout this process. I would also like to express my gratitude to the members of my committee, Dr. Christopher Maddox and Dr. La'Toya Thomas-Dixon, for their expertise, comments, suggestions, and patience. You pushed me outside the box and helped me reach new levels of understanding.

I wish to express my appreciation for all those who participated in this project as well as Matt Arend. Special thanks to Jennifer Brumfield and Loretta Revely for the constant encouragement and the milestone celebrations; they added fun to the journey. I also want to thank Michael Jensen for the use of the classroom for privacy and video recording.

I want to thank my family members for understanding the laptop on vacations, the missed events, and the unanswered texts and telephone calls. I especially want to thank my two daughters, Tarnisha Penn and Johari Johnson, for allowing me time to step away from my motherly duties to complete assignments. Special thanks to my fiancé, Henry Muhammad, for helping me escape and relax when I felt stressed. I appreciate your understanding the last minute cancellations when I was working to meet a deadline. All of your prayers and support motivated me to accomplish this goal.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Introduction to the Problem

Consistently over the last 20 years, teachers, especially those new to the field, have reported behavior problems as one of their greatest school-related concerns and challenges (Billingsley & Tomchin, 1992; Darling-Hammond, 2003; Pullis, 1992; Veenman, 1984). Teachers need to be equipped with effective practices to face these challenges. The solution to this problem was to implement a Positive Behavioral Intervention and Support (PBIS) plan. Schools implementing PBIS with fidelity reported decreases in problem behavior, increases in academic engaged time, and improved perceptions of school safety (Horner, Sugai, & Anderson, 2010; Loeber, White, & Burke, 2012; Mitchell & Bradshaw, 2013; Sugai & Horner, 2006; Swain-Bradway, Swoszowski, Boden, & Sprague, 2013; Walker, Ramsey, & Gresham, 2004). The fidelity of the plan is connected to teachers' perceptions of their practices related to implementing a PBIS plan. Some teachers viewed a PBIS plan as another teacher responsibility that yielded little to no results. The number of behavior office referrals did not decrease although a school-wide PBIS plan was in place. The behavior disruptions in the classroom took away from academic instruction. Classroom management and discipline training may prove helpful in addressing the problematic areas for teachers who are beginning their careers as well as veteran teachers (Garrahy, Cothan, & Kulinna, 2005; Goyette, Dore, & Dion, 2000; Lewis, 1999; Meister & Melnick, 2003).

I sought to identify how preservice training effected teachers' perceptions of their practices related to implementing a PBIS plan in the intermediate grade levels at a Title I elementary school in Texas. Although previous research focused on the behavior of elementary students (Duchnowski & Kutash, 2011; Moats, 1999; Sadler, 2000; Sugai & Horner, 2002; Sugai

& Horner, 2006), it was limited in the intermediate grade levels. Most research efforts on Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) are implemented as a school-wide program with limited focus on the preservice training of teachers at the intermediate levels and for Title I elementary schools (Walker et al., 2004). Due to the economic disadvantages of the students enrolled in the Title I elementary school in Texas, research is needed to investigate practices for implementing a PBIS plan, which has an impact on teachers' perceptions at the intermediate grade levels. I explored preservice training for ways to implement a PBIS plan that worked to reduce disruptions in the classroom. I sought to identify ways to improve teachers' perceptions and the school climate.

Background, Context, History, and Conceptual Framework for the Problem

Schools implementing PBIS with fidelity report decreases in problem behavior, increases in academic engagement, and improved perceptions of school safety (Horner et al., 2010; Loeber et al., 2012; Mitchell & Bradshaw, 2013; Sugai & Horner, 2006; Swain-Bradway et al., 2013; Walker et al., 2004). Currently, the PBIS framework is implemented in over 18,000 schools in the United States (Swain-Bradway et al., 2013). The study site has implemented a PBIS plan for 6 years as a school-wide initiative. I sought to identify if there was a relationship between effective implementation practices and preservice training. Literature was examined to explore the existence of a complex and reciprocal relationship among teachers' perceptions and teachers' practices (Chang, 2009; Emmer & Stough, 2001; Ross & Horner, 2007; Ross, Romer, & Horner, 2011; Walker, Petrill, & Plomin, 2005).

This study was grounded in social cognitive theory. The theory was used to analyze the interactions among personal, behavioral, and environmental influences as with the preservice training and focus groups for implementing a PBIS plan at the study site. The teachers were

given a chance to voice ways to be effective in implementing a PBIS plan as well as share practices utilized for success or failure from previous years of experience (Burney, 2008; Holland, 2008; Pajares, 2002; Schunk, 1999; Shu-Ling & Lin, 2007).

Statement of the Problem

The study addressed the problem of the impact of how ineffective teacher practices can affect teachers' perceptions related to implementing a PBIS plan at a Title I elementary school. The current preservice plan addressed instructional practices in regards to small grouping, content specialist schedules for servicing students, and resources. Some aspects of the PBIS plan were discussed like incentives and reward events but no in-depth training or discussion on proven effective practices for implementation.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative study was to analyze how preservice training impact teachers' perceptions of their practices related to implementing a Positive Behavioral Intervention and Support (PBIS) plan in the intermediate grade levels at a Title I elementary school in Texas. Preservice training was provided to participants in the study to identify areas of need and best practices for implementing a PBIS plan. Participants were allowed to voice their perceptions of their practices for implementation and work collaboratively to develop practices that were more effective. Data collected, referred literature, and school preservice training was examined for themes and shared characteristics through investigating real-life contemporary bounded system (Creswell, 2013). Data collected were from surveys, interviews, and focus groups. This study benefited intermediate grade level teachers, administrators, students, and parents. The results of this research study were derived from data collected from the Title I

elementary school in Texas to draft a revised preservice training and provide teachers with best practices for implementing a PBIS plan.

Research Questions

The central question of the study is: How are teachers' perceptions of their practice related to the implementation of a PBIS plan? The following sub-questions supported further investigation of the research:

- How will participants be updated on procedures and processes of the PBIS plan?
- Will preservice training change participants' perceptions of their practices with implementing a PBIS plan?
- How will participants be trained on implementing the PBIS plan?
- What motivates participants to implement the PBIS plan?
- Will participants be more prepared in the classroom with handling disruptions compared to their experiences from 2015–2016?

Rationale, Relevance, and Significance of the Study

The study could possibly bring to light the weaknesses of preservice trainings provided to teachers related to implementing a PBIS plan in their school. This study is important to intermediate grade level teachers, administrators, students, and parents because it provided preservice training and effective practices for teachers to utilize when implementing a PBIS plan to reduce disruptions in the classroom, which allowed more instructional time and contributed to academic achievement. Teachers applied knowledge from the preservice training to better manage the classroom and provide effective instruction. Students learned in a safe environment without disruptions that allowed for stimulation of thinking and a chance for academic

achievement. Parents received less workday telephone call interruptions or parent-teacher conferences request to address their child's disruptive behaviors.

Student learning and school climate were improved by evaluating teachers' perceptions about the way they implement a PBIS plan and identifying ways to increase the plan's sustainability (Boxer, Edwards-Leeper, Goldstein, Musher-Eizenman, & Dubow, 2003; Crothers, Kolbert, & Baker, 2006; Sobeck, Abbey, & Agius, 2006; Soza-Vento & Tubman, 2004). Implementing a PBIS plan provided preventive measures that allow children to receive much-needed intervention before a real crisis presents itself (Gottfredson & Gottfredson, 2002; Severson, Walker, Hope-Doolittle, Kratochwill, & Gresham, 2007). The earlier the behavior is addressed the better; according to Prince, Ho, and Hansen (2010), "The elementary school years of a child provide an important context for the development of the social skills and positive character children need to successfully engage with their peers and thrive in an academic setting" (p. 40). Although previous research has been conducted on the behavior of elementary students (Duchnowski & Kutash, 2011; Moats, 1999; Sadler, 2000; Sugai & Horner, 2002; Sugai & Horner, 2006), the focus on the intermediate grade levels were limited. This study will provide teachers of intermediate students with effective practices to implement a PBIS plan more effectively.

Definition of Terms

Intermediate students. Students in third through fifth grades in U.S. schools (Tolar et al., 2012).

Behavior. A student's action (e.g., call outs, talking to other students, out-of-seat, throwing objects, staring around room, tapping pencil) that typically elicit reprimands by a teacher during instruction or independent seatwork (Lannie & McCurdy, 2007).

Students. Are people who are enrolled in a Department of Education school (Department of Education Student Behavior Policy, 2016).

Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS). A framework for applying a continuum of evidence-based practices to improve academic and social outcomes for all students (Sugai et al., 2000).

School-wide Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (SWPBIS). A multi-level prevention program based on the empirical literature of applied behavior analysis and prevention science (Walker et al., 1996; Walker et al., 2004).

Teacher perception. The subjective judgment a teacher makes about student behavior (Condron, 2007; Hughes, Gleason, & Zhang, 2005).

Title I. Federal aid to schools with large numbers or percentages of poor children (Farkas & Hall, 2000).

Delimitations and Limitations

Limitations

Efficacy and effectiveness were limitations of implementing a PBIS plan as a result of teacher training. Teachers were engaged in other non-research preservice training to prepare for the start of the school year. There were variations in the level of implementation of strategies for heightening a sense of belonging by the teachers. The audio recordings and observations did not allow for complete documentation of the non-verbal responses to questions and comments. Limitations may have indirectly or directly reflected threats to internal validity or credibility.

Delimitations

The study was delimited to intermediate grade level teachers and specialized teachers in a Title I elementary school in Texas. The participants were purposefully selected due to direct

contact and knowledge about or experience with intermediate grades level students who were in upper developmental stages (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011; Maxwell, 2013). The participants consisted of 14 teachers with four classroom teachers in third grade, three classroom teachers in fourth grade, three classroom teachers in fifth grade, and four specialization teachers who provided physical education, art, music, and library instruction to the intermediate grade level students. All of the teachers at the study site received an email request to participate and attended an information meeting to discuss the study. The teachers in the intermediate grade levels were asked to complete a pretest and posttest survey and three participants invited for interviews to provide more in-depth views of their perceptions of their practices implementing a PBIS plan. The school was selected as the study site due to the researcher and participants' current employment at the location.

Summary

This chapter provided an introduction of the problem, significance of the study, and definitions for terms that will be used throughout the study. The research question and sub-questions are listed. The questions guided the study to identity how teachers' perceptions of their practices related to implementing a PBIS plan were changed. The teachers and instruments used in the study are described in chapter 2; the procedures for analyzing data and limitations of the research design are also discussed. The research questions that guided the exploration of the study are described. Chapter 3 reveals the methods used to collect data that answer the research questions. As a collaborative group, the teachers attended preservice training and two focus groups to analyze and discuss practices to implement a PBIS plan more effectively. The teachers discussed ways to implement a PBIS plan to change their perceptions and become more effective with classroom management skills at the intermediate grade levels.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Classroom management and discipline are areas that continue to be problematic for some teachers after they begin their careers (Garrahy et al., 2005; Goyette et al., 2000; Lewis, 1999; Meister & Melnick, 2003). The purpose of this qualitative study was to analyze how preservice training effect teachers' perceptions of their practices related to implementing a Positive Behavioral Intervention and Support (PBIS) plan in the intermediate grade levels at a Title I elementary school in Texas. Some examples of teachers' perceptions were belief in the effectiveness of classroom management skills, the reward systems for positive behavior, the modeling of positive social behaviors, and voice when addressing behaviors in the classroom. The PBIS framework is currently implemented in over 18,000 schools in the United States (Swain-Bradway et al., 2013). Prior to PBIS, many schools relied on punitive practices to reduce problem behavior (Crone & Horner, 2003; Skiba & Knesting, 2001; Sugai & Horner, 2002). Schools properly implementing PBIS report decreased problem behavior, increased academic engagement, and improved perceptions of school safety (Horner et al., 2010; Loeber et al., 2012; Mitchell & Bradshaw, 2013; Sugai & Horner, 2006; Swain-Bradway et al., 2013; Walker et al., 2004). I examined the literature on preservice training in elementary schools using the PBIS framework for causality of best practices with implementation and increase teachers' perceptions with effective classroom management skills. A review of referred literature for teachers' perceptions of practices related to implementing the PBIS plan is conducted to prevent repeating the use of ineffective strategies and having a high expectation from implementation without providing training for teachers in a Title I elementary school in Texas. I identified how intermediate grade level teachers at a Title I elementary school in Texas are impacted by preservice training and best practices utilizing a PBIS plan for a diverse population. The

practices implemented by the teachers influenced their perception related to implementing a PBIS plan when the teachers felt they did not receive training targeting their needs. I compared the teachers' perceptions from the 2015–2016 school year for the study site to teachers' perceptions after preservice training, focus groups, and 4 weeks of implementing practices related to the PBIS plan for the start of the 2016–2017 school year.

Study Topic

I examined authors who focused on the teachers' perceptions of intermediate grade level students. In reviewing authors' work on teachers' perceptions related to their practices implementing a PBIS plan, I examined the literature for intentional and visible results by which to gauge ideas for a Title I elementary school in Texas (Horner, Sugai, & Anderson, 2010; Loeber et al., 2012; Mitchell & Bradshaw, 2013; Sugai & Horner, 2006; Swain-Bradway et al., 2013; Walker et al., 2004). I also examined the literature to identify preservice training to improve teachers' perceptions and identify effective practices for implementing a PBIS plan (Chafouleas, Riley-Tillman, & Sassu, 2006; Stahr, Cushing, Lane, & Fox, 2006; Westerlund, Granucci, Gamache, & Clark, 2006).

Context of the Literature Review

In reviewing the literature, my focus was to determine if preservice training affects teachers' perceptions. I also examined the literature to identify if there were causal relationships between teachers' perceptions and effective implementation of a PBIS plan. Over the last few decades, educational researchers have made substantial strides in exploring the complex and reciprocal relation among teachers' perceptions and teachers' practices (Chang, 2009; Emmer & Stough, 2001; Ross & Horner, 2007; Ross et al., 2011; Walker et al., 2005). The school climate may be affected by changing the teachers' perceptions of how they interact with students when

addressing behavior. Inadequate training on behavior management plans may hinder teachers from implementing prevention-focused initiatives like PBIS (Chafouleas et al., 2006; Emmer & Stough, 2001; Levine, 2006; Skiba & Knesting, 2001). The lack of training not only affects the school environment but also leads to negative outcomes for students (Hawken, MacLeod, & Rawlings, 2007; Hutchings et al., 2007; Murray & Malmgren, 2005; Pianta, La Paro, Payne, Cox, & Bradley, 2002; Pianta & Stuhlman, 2004; Scott, Knapp, Henderson, & Maughan, 2001; Thomas, 2010).

Significance

Literature written by or including work by Sugai (2000; 20002; 2006; 2010; & 2012) was selected due to the longevity of research on PBIS, which started in the 1980s. Sugai published a collaboration of work with multiple authors such as Horner (2000; 2002; 2006; & 2010), Anderson (2010), Lewis (2010), Clover (2010), and Gresham (2002); topics discussed cover identifying characteristics, history, impact, and misconceptions of PBIS. Sugai continues to update the literature with changes to and implementations of PBIS. Research by Duchnowski & Kutash (2011) and Moats (1999) were selected because of the correlation between the interventions provided to schools in the literature and the similar interventions provided at the Title I school in Texas. Although previous research was conducted on teachers' perceptions (Hieneman, Dunlap, & Kincaid, 2005; Severson et al., 2007; Walker et al., 2005), the focus on intermediate grade levels was limited. The importance of the study was to provide teachers with effective strategies through a preservice training to help establish and maintain a safe environment for all students to learn. The effectiveness of the strategies also reduced disruptions and allowed more time for instruction to focus on academics achievements and content mastery. The goal of the preservice training was to identify effective classroom management skills that

reduce the need to involve school administrators and parents in addressing student behavior. Assessing the perceptions of teachers was important for school climate and the sustainability of PBIS plans (Boxer, Edwards-Leeper, Goldstein, Musher-Eizenman, & Dubow, 2003; Crothers et al., 2006; Sobeck et al., 2006; Soza-Vento & Tubman, 2004). Understanding teachers' perceptions about practice related to implementing a PBIS plan was an essential element to the preventive initiatives to manage behavior. An effective PBIS plan provides students with emotional, social, and problem-solving skills to help them in and outside of the classroom when a crisis presents itself (Gottfredson & Gottfredson, 2002; Severson et al., 2007). Students in elementary schools need a safe and effective learning environment to aid in the development of social skills that will help them engage effectively with peers and thrive in an academic setting (Anderson, Christenson, & Sinclair, 2004; Bradshaw & Pas, 2011; Prince et al., 2010; Sugai, Horner, & Gresham, 2002). According to Sugai and Horner (2002), the adoption of PBIS and increased implementation of the Response to Intervention (RTI) program created a huge demand for cost-efficient screening and progress-monitoring tools for classroom application; these authors later discussed how proactive PBIS practices reduce the onset of behavior concerns at the start of the school year (2002). If the behavior is not addressed, there is a chance it will increase in intensity and frequency throughout the year and challenge the teacher's ability to maintain an effective learning environment. Preservice training provided teachers with practices to address behaviors. If students do not have a clear understanding of the classroom rules, they could spend countless minutes finding a distraction, which takes time away classroom instruction (Conroy, Sutherland, Snyder, & Marsh, 2008; Hardman & Smith, 1999; Smith & Misra, 1992). When teachers implement classroom management strategies effectively, administrative chores such as taking attendance and lunch counts can be handled without disruptions.

I analyzed practices related to implementing PBIS in schools across the United States that involved intermediate grade level students at Title I elementary schools. The study could possibly bring to the forefront the ineffectiveness or lack of preservice training to provide teachers with strategies related to implementing a PBIS plan in their school. In reviewing the research on PBIS plans, I compared the demographics of the schools researchers studied to that of a Title I elementary school in Texas.

Problem Statement

This study addressed the problem of how preservice training of teachers and their practices related to implementing a PBIS plan at a Title I elementary school in Texas effect teachers' perceptions. Most research on preservice training leaves a disconnection between theory and practice resulting in teachers having insufficient practical experience (Levine, 2006; Wilson, Floden, & Ferrini-Mundy, 2001). PBIS is implemented as a school-wide program with limited research focusing on the training for teachers in implementing a PBIS plan in the intermediate levels at a Title I elementary schools. Due to the economic disadvantages of the climate in the Title I elementary school in Texas, research was needed to investigate creating a preservice training that addresses teacher needs for effective practices related to implementing a PBIS plan successfully.

Organization

This study explored effective preservice training and teacher practices for implementing a PBIS plan to identify the process for school-wide implementation (Johnson, 2014; Parker, 2016; PBIS, 2011; Sabari-Lancaster, 2011; Walker et al., 2004). In analyzing the literature, I sought to identify if and how teacher training and teachers' perceptions impacts implementation of a PBIS plan.

Conceptual Framework

This study is grounded in social cognitive theory that postulates that behavior change is influenced by a complex interaction that occurs between personal factors, environmental factors, and attributes of one's behavior itself (Baranowski, Perry, & Parcel, 2002). These factors are visible in the school setting and the teachers' perspectives relating to their practices with implementing a PBIS plan. Michie, Hardeman, Fanshawe, Prevost, Taylor, and Kinmounth (2008) suggest that Social Cognitive Theory is more effective in changing behavior than non-theoretical approaches. People create social systems and the practices of social systems, in turn, influence personal development and functioning. Theorist Bandura (1986) suggest that social cognitive theory broaden the scope of modeling influences and the functions it serves in addition to cultivating cognitive and behavioral competencies, and alter motivation. The preservice training, surveys, interviews, and focus groups will be used during the study to change teachers' perceptions. The preservice training and focus groups allowed teachers to interact with one another in their school environment to develop behaviors that can assist with the implementation of a PBIS plan at the study site (Burney, 2008; Holland, 2008; Pajares, 2002; Schunk, 1999; Shu-Ling & Lin, 2007).

In the study, I explored how preservice training effects teachers' perceptions as they acquired knowledge on practices for implementing a PBIS plan (Bandura, 1997; Bouffard & Couture, 2003; Dai, Moon, & Feldhusen, 1998; Eccles & Wigfield, 2002; Pintrich, 2003; Valentine, DuBois, & Cooper, 2004). This study benefited from research on the four main components for the successful implementation and sustainability of a PBIS plan; knowledge of the behavior management plan, preservice training for implementing the plan, the school environment, and communication. Knowledge of effective strategies and successful practices

comes from preservice training and professional development throughout the year. Teachers shared their perceptions as part of the planning process of the preservice training to aid in effectively implementing the PBIS plan. The mission and vision of the school remained the focus of the study for both teachers and staff. The flow of communication using emails, morning announcements, school events, and text blast between administrators, teachers, students, and parents assisted in reducing the low areas of concern identified through the pretest survey related to teachers' practices with implementing a PBIS plan; all participants worked in collaboration and received weekly updates on the effectiveness of the practices implemented.

The preservice training for teachers was designed to begin prior to the start of the 2016–2017 school year to provide practices for implementing a PBIS plan and be better prepared for an effective year of teaching (Emmer & Stough, 2001; Fairbanks, Sugai, Guardino, & Lathrop, 2007; Kratochwill & Shernoff, 2004; Duchnowski & Kutash, 2011; Merrell & Buchanan, 2006; Smith, 2004; Walker et al., 2004; Wong & Wong, 2005). The framework for the preservice training consisted of a combination of classroom management strategies from Wong and Wong (2005), Sugai and Horner (2002), and Smith (2004) which included the following areas: managing the classroom, having the classroom ready, seating arrangements, procedures, rules, consequences, and rewards.

Review of Research and Methodological Literature

In order to synthesize the literature, I categorized the authors' work based on their research of teachers' perceptions and preservice training related to implementing a PBIS plan. The PBIS three-tiered model is based on the principle that academic and behavioral supports must be provided at a school-wide level to address the needs of all students in a school effectively. Tier 1 is for core, universal instruction, and supports to all students. Tier 2 is for

students who did not respond to Tier 1 and require supplemental or targeted instruction and intervention. Tier 3 is for students who require more intensive and individualized behavioral treatment and academic support (Barrett, Bradshaw, & Lewis-Palmer, 2008; Carr, Dunlap, Horner, Koegel, Turnbull, & Sailor, 2002; Howell, 2013; Safran & Oswald, 2003; Sugai et al, 2000; Utley & Sailor, 2002). In my review, I searched for indicators of similarities to the elementary school in Texas. This search method provided data needed to construct a preservice training that would best serve the teacher and student demographics of the study site.

Once all the information was collected, the preservice training agenda was drafted, revised, and implemented. Teachers received preservice training on the study site's PBIS plan and strategies for implementation in the classrooms. The training helped to provide teachers with practices to address challenges students face in social environments to prepare for the life in the world today (Cohen, Cohen & Deborah, 2001; Haskett, 2003; Palomera, Fernandez-Berrocal, & Brackett, 2008). The changes made to the 2016–2017 preservice training for implementing a PBIS plan was influenced by teachers' voice. The current preservice training was designed as a one size fits all for grades kindergarten through fifth and was designed by administration. The preservice training needed revisions to address the needs of intermediate grade level teachers with encountering disruptive student behaviors.

Training of Teachers

According to Anderson and Kincaid (2005), Westling (2010), Oliver and Reschly (2010), Smith and Misra (1992), and Richardson and Shupe (2003), managing students' disruptive classroom behavior is a major challenge and concern for many classroom teachers. In fact, both general and special education teachers reported that they did not believe they were adequately trained to deal with disruptive, defiant, and aggressive behaviors observed increasingly in

younger children (Fairbanks et al., 2007; Fox et al., 2000; Stormont, Lewis, & Beckner, 2005). In New York City (Kalke, Glanten, & Cristalli, 2007) and California (Cregor & Hewitt, 2011), teacher training was identified as a leading factor for the sustainability of PBIS. On the *Tools for Teaching Aligns with PBIS* website, Idaho Falls Professional Development Coordinator, Shelly Smede, credited the district's PBIS success to the training of staff with strategies by the classroom management expert, Fred Jones (2007). In New York City, the training was provided to 13 school principals who recognized how PBIS could improve their schools' culture. Therefore, they provided professional development training to their staff for implementation in their schools. In California, trained school teams that collaborated to customize and implement the PBIS framework, improved school discipline shown to reduce disciplinary incidents, support gains in academic achievement, and improve staff morale and perceptions of school safety (Cregor & Hewitt, 2011). The success of PBIS was associated with explicit teaching expectations for all students and consistent monitoring by all staff members. Teachers, as crucial factors in early intervention, typically display disorientation and unwillingness to engage with the pupils exhibiting behavioral problems (Reinke, Herman, & Stormont, 2013), which is often accompanied by a lack of organized and planned program of support for these pupils (Niesyn, 2009). I found within the literature that teachers spend an enormous amount of instructional time correcting the disruptive behaviors of students. With the importance of students' achievement in school, it is essential that teachers manage and change challenging classroom and school behaviors so that more time can be allotted to academic instruction (Flower, McKenna, Bunuan, Muething, & Vega, 2014; Smith, 2004; Sugai, Horner, & Gresham, 2002; Wong & Wong, 2005). The preservice training might provide teachers with the tools to establish a consistent beginning and ending of class routines for students. Teachers leave training with resources to implement

the plan on the first day of school. The training tools that teachers learn to implement with students should enhance students' thinking before the start of instruction.

Wong and Wong (2005) and Smith (2004) shared in the belief that teachers can be effective in classroom management. Both researchers agreed that it takes effort to manage a classroom well and teachers should start with effective lesson plans that have a beginning and a closure. Jones (2007) and Baker (2008) support the belief that children have difficulty dealing with wait time and a preventive measure would be to provide students with activities like journaling a response to a writing prompt or practicing math facts to engage them in learning while the teachers handle administrative tasks. Wong and Wong (2005) expanded more on a well-managed classroom where students are working and the teacher has the ability to bring the class to attention for instruction.

Wong and Wong (2005), Evertson and Harris (2003), and Smith (2004) discussed getting the classroom ready before the first day of school. These researchers showed that having the work ready, the room ready, and the teachers ready would prevent problems at the beginning of the school year. The seating of students was part of teachers' training for the first day of school planning. Seating students in the correct areas and with the correct grouping increased on-task behavior and provided uninterrupted time for teachers to deliver differentiated reinforcements and tangible rewards (Bicard, Ervin, Bicard, & Baylot-Casey, 2012; Dunlap et al., 2009; Wannarka & Ruhl, 2008). Wong and Wong (2005) and Smith (2004) identified the task of seat arrangements as fitting the activity or classroom task; therefore, teachers need to group or pair seats to accommodate the lessons prior to designating seat assignments. Jones (2007) also mapped out and critiqued a variety of useful seating arrangements.

Wong and Wong (2005) discussed teachers having general and specific rules, which they introduce during the first week of school. Smith (2004) suggested that rules be specific and clearly stated. Both suggested five for the number of rules, which students can readily remember. Smith (2004), Sugai and Horner (2002), and Colvin, Kame'enui, and Sugai (1993) believed consequences lead students to react in the right way to avoid suffering the consequences. Smith (2004) stated that when teachers assume the best about their students, consequences would accelerate student growth. Wong and Wong (2005) and Anderson and Kincaid (2005) did not think consequences should be used as punishments but provided examples of effective strategies, which used differentiated reinforcements of appropriate behaviors in the educational environment in which the students' behavior is prevented and lessened the distractions from classroom instruction. When students constantly disrupt class, praise and reward students when they are on task.

Language barriers also contribute to disruptive behaviors, which require teachers to receive linguistic training (Bell, Greenfield, Bulotsky-Shearer, & Carter, 2016). Because of the English Language Learners at the elementary school in Texas, time must be allotted for teacher training during preservice to provide multicultural training through which teachers can acquire knowledge and skills in the organization of the learning environment to communicate with students from different cultures (Salgur & Gursoy, 2015). According to Banks (1995) and Karabenick and Noda (2004), research-based professional multicultural training prepares teachers to provide an equal opportunity to learn in school, regardless of students' ethnic groups. Teachers face the challenges of providing a quality education for increasingly diverse student populations.

I compared Miller, Kraus, and Veltkamp's (2005) view of PBIS as a key component in addressing disruptive behavior and Mathur and Nelson's (2013) view of PBIS as a viable framework for successfully transforming punitive environments into positive cultures that are conducive to producing positive youth outcomes. The comparison showed the positive effects of timely recognition of behavior problems. When these were followed up by appropriate classroom management strategies, this led to reduction in long-term behavioral problems (Cheung & Lee, 2009; Conley, Marchant & Caldarella, 2014; Miller et al., 2005; Shields, Ryan, & Cicchetti, 2001; Wood, Emerson, & Cowan, 2004). There is a need for consistency across the school campus in the number of rules for each classroom and the consequences of violating rules under behavior the management plan. Therefore, teachers need preservice training to provide instruction on reinforcements for desired social behaviors (Gottfredson & Gottfredson, 2002; Hawkins, Guo, Hill, Battin-Pearson, & Abbott, 2001; Sugai, Horner, & Gresham, 2002).

Teacher Perception

The need to draft an effective preservice training was linked to teachers' perceptions of the school reforms and PBIS plans that were discussed by Lochman and Salekin (2003), Van Veen and Lasky (2005), and Roorda et al. (2011). Johnson (2014) stated that PBIS implementation success is connected to teachers' consent of the behavior management plan; when initially implemented in North Carolina, teachers did not consent because they were not a part of the decision making team. The design was top heavy and the teachers did not support the implementation. When the change was made to include the teachers' input, the PBIS plan was a success. When teachers were surveyed at a Title I, elementary school in Delaware, 50 percent of the teachers responded positively about the PBIS framework at the school (Parker, 2016). Teachers are the agents of change (Lochman & Salekin, 2003) and the affective quality of the

teacher–student relationship is an important factor in their school engagement, wellbeing, and academic success (Roorda et al., 2011; Van Veen & Lasky, 2005). Crone and Horner (2003), O'Connor, Dearing, and Collins (2011), Dunlap et al. (2009), and Song and Liu (2007) discussed the time invested in training a PBIS coach to conduct a preservice training for teachers to address the behavior that impacts their ability to provide instruction and gather key stakeholders (e.g., parents, other teachers, and coaches) as part of the development of an action plan related to implementing a PBIS plan. The practice of learned skills with support from a consultant or trainer as a part of the training can further enhance long-lasting changes in teachers' perceptions (Clarke & Hollingsworth, 2002).

Teachers play an important part in the lives of students; evidence supports the belief that teachers' well-being, at least indirectly, has significant effects on students' socio-emotional adjustment and academic performance (Daly, Moolenaar, Bolivar, & Burke, 2010; Hamre & Pianta, 2001; Malmberg & Hagger, 2009; Roth, Munsch, Meyer, Isler, & Schneider, 2008). The perception of the school and teaching profession is impacted by students' disruptive behaviors. According to Split, Koomen, and Thijs (2011) and Clunies-Ross, Little, and Kienhuis (2008), students' disruptive behaviors are more likely to be appraised as challenging and threatening when the teacher has internalized negative feelings and holds unfavorable schemas of the relationship with students. Furthermore, teachers believe their unpreparedness or lack of support from administration in addressing the behavior in the classroom demonstrates the need for effective and proactive strategies. Spilt and Koomen (2009) and Pianta and Stuhlman (2004) discussed that internalized negative effects from disruptive behaviors affects daily interactions with disruptive children. Without an effective preservice plan to help build effective practices related to implementing a PBIS plan, teachers will not have time to teach lessons required to

provide excellent instruction for academic success (Cameron, Connor, Morrison, & Jewkes, 2008; Pianta, La Paro, & Hamre, 2008). The distracting behaviors must be reduced so that effective instruction can take place.

Review of Methodological Issues

Search Method

The literature search was conducted using the following Concordia University's databases: ProQuest, Sage, Gale, EBSCOhost, JSTOR, Literature Resource Center, Oxford English Dictionary, SpringerLink, and interlibrary loan services. In the initial search, the database EBSCOHOST produced 11 searchers for the keyword of teacher perceptions. The database ProQuest produced 91,505 and was refined using the keywords behavior plans. The articles were refined by full-text and publication date; abstracts were read to identify literature that related to the research topic and subtopics.

Data Collection

I analyzed the literature using a causal-comparison lens for preservice training and practices for implementation of the PBIS plan. The drafted preservice training was dissected to identify if the success or failure of the implementation practices were related to the trainings and teachers' perceptions. In broadening the study, schools around the United States were reviewed for determining the similarities and differences in the implementation process toward improving the school environment and teachers' perceptions. I also explored the reference lists to identify relationship between authors used in repeated studies. This helped to identify trends across literature.

In reviewing the literature of Jones (2007), Smith (2004), and Wong and Wong (2005), a preservice training was designed to align with practices to implement the PBIS plan. The data

from the study at the Title I elementary school in Texas was kept in a locked cabinet and on a secure computer in a locked cabinet until needed for data analysis.

Synthesis of Research Findings

In completing the review of literature, systems of PBIS have garnered significant attention from state and federal departments of education, and in schools across the nation (Barrett et al., 2008; Sugai & Horner, 2006; Sugai et al., 2010). More than 7,000 schools across the United States are currently in varying stages of adopting PBIS (Bradley, Doolittle, Lopez, Smith, & Sugai, 2007). Despite the large number of states, districts, and schools adopting PBIS approaches and the documented effectiveness of such efforts, researchers and practitioners remain concerned about the implementation of PBIS, particularly as it relates to fidelity of implementation and scalability (McIntosh et al., 2013; McIntosh, Filter, Bennett, Ryan, & Sugai, 2010; Sugai & Horner, 2006). There are potential barriers relating to fidelity when implementing school-based programs such as teacher buy-in and the perceptions of those implementing the PBIS plan (Bruhn, Hirsch, & Lloyd, 2015; Domitrovich et al., 2008; Han & Weiss, 2005; Wandersman et al., 2008).

Although the Duchnowski & Kutash (2011) research focused more on behavior management and little on universal preventive strategies, the view of proactive classroom management practices was that it does provide opportunities for more specialized and intensive interventions for individual students. Betts, Hill, and Surface's (2014) research revealed that educators could become effective in managing classrooms after receiving training on how the behavior management plan will reduce disruptive behaviors. Research studies demonstrated that teachers with improved classroom management skills had a more structured classroom that resulted in fewer students misbehaving (Baker, 2008; Black, & Fernando, 2014; Desidero &

Mullennix, 2005; Monroe, 2005; Noguera, 2003; Sterling, 2009). Teachers with no structured classroom management skills contributed to negative student outcomes (Geiger, 2000; Smith, 2004; Tidwell, Flannery, & Lewis-Palmer, 2003; Wong & Wong, 2005).

Research studies have supported teachers' contention that students' disruptive behaviors contributed to academic problems (Bradshaw, Koth, Thornton, & Leaf, 2009; Graham & Prigmore, 2009; Sloat, Beswick, & Williams, 2007; Swain-Bradway et al., 2013). Literature revealed that behavior management plans designed with the PBIS framework appears to be related to increased time and engagement in instructions, which, in turn, are known to relate to improved achievement (Daly, Moolenaar, Bolivar, & Burke, 2010; Hamre & Pianta, 2001; Malmberg & Hagger, 2009; McIntosh, Horner, Chard, Boland, & Horner, 2006; Roth et al., 2008). Quality teacher-child relationship have been found to predict a number of academic outcomes (Hamre & Pianta, 2001; Pianta, La Paro, Payne, Cox, & Bradley, 2002; Reyes, 2006) and asserts that teachers' expectations affect the academic performance of disruptive students when students miss academic information and fall behind because of removal from the classroom. The viewpoint of Alviderez and Weinstein (1999) and Jussim and Eccles (1992) was teachers' expectations shape how students follow instructions, participate in class, stay motivated, and comply with behavior expectations. According to Bryan (2005) and Epstein and Van Voorhis (2010), the success of students does not solely rely on the teachers, but counselors, as well as other staff members, can provide support for students with academic and behavioral needs.

Critique of Previous Research

Efficacy and effectiveness are limitations of implementing a PBIS as a result of teacher training. The timeframes for training was not consistent across the literature. Some studies

provided two-day trainings while others provided up to six days (Horner et al., 2009; Prince et al., 2010). Some schools hired a behavior management coach, or coordinator, to monitor and continue the training of teachers throughout the year while others trained teachers once during the school year (Bradshaw & Pas, 2011; Cavanaugh & Swan, 2015).

Future research is needed on preservice training to address neutral behavior exhibited by typical developing students and not specifically those students with problem behaviors or identified disabilities (Epstein, Pierce, & Reid, 2004; Johnson & Fullwood, 2006; Kokkinos, Panayiotou, & Davazoglou, 2005; Little, 2005; Lohrmann & Bambara, 2006; Lopes, Monteiro, Sil, Rutherford, & Quinn, 2004). Some sample sizes were obtained from one school district, which prevents the generalization of student population in classrooms in other districts (Plath, Croce, Crofts, & Stuart, 2016). Other research used at least 200 PBIS programs (Bradshaw & Pas, 2011; Bradshaw, Schaeffer, Petras, & Ialongo, 2010; Horner et al., 2009; Muscott, Mann, & LeBrun, 2008; Nakasato, 2000; Prince et al., 2010).

Methodology

There was a disparity between the sample size and grade levels in the research (Bulotsky-Shearer & Fantuzzo, 2011; Ingram, Lewis-Palmer, & Sugai, 2005; Kaiser & Qi, 2003; Newcomers & Lewis, 2004). The training provided to teachers varied annually, from 2 to 4 years, and some were continuous with coaches and trainers for monitoring (Bradshaw, Reinke, Brown, Bevans, & Leaf, 2008; Tillery, Varjas, Meyers, & Collins, 2010; Oakes, Lane, Jenkins, & Booker, 2013; Scheuermann et al., 2013). Some researchers only worked with elementary students, while one study implemented the behavior management plans at different levels across the state (Bradshaw & Pas, 2011; Oakes et al., 2013; Waschbusch, Graziano, Willoughby, & Pelham, 2015). Another concern was the lack of diversity in school demographics. Two of the

researchers identified the population as predominantly Latino and Caucasian (Tillery et al., 2010; Prince et al., 2010). In reviewing the author's work on PBIS, the studies ranged in observation times from 90 days up to 2 years. The participants surveyed for the study consisted of four teachers in third grade, three teachers in fourth grade, three teachers in fifth grade, and four specialized teachers; the linguistic breakdown was six monolingual and three bilingual teachers (one per grade level).

Findings

The work by Alberto and Troutman (2003), Cooper, Heron, and Heward (1987), Desidero and Mullennix (2005), Kratochwill and Shernoff (2004), Merrell and Buchanan (2006), and Sterling (2009) revealed that teachers with improved classroom management skills had a more structured classroom that resulted in increased teachers' perceptions. Implementation fidelity was higher in schools where teachers were trained (Bradshaw & Pas, 2011; Bradshaw, Reinke, Brown, Bevans, & Leaf, 2008; Scheuermann et al., 2013). Teacher training might provide ways to establish a relationship with all students, monolingual and bilingual, with supportive relationships that are built on mutual respect.

The best approach to intervention is early identification; this might help to reduce the negative outcomes and provide students with the support they need to develop their social and academic skills. Dishion and Patterson (2006), Bradshaw and Pas (2011), Trentacosta and Shaw (2009) found an increased understanding of early childhood behaviors associated with later social functioning. These behaviors are important for future study as an aspect of school age functioning such as deviant peer affiliation and rejection, with at-risk students at an increasingly ensnared trajectory of problem behavior, including antisocial behavior and substance use. The study showed that students become more problematic as they lagged behind other students

relative to academic achievement (Algozzine & Algozzine, 2007; Colvin, 2007; Homer et al., 2009; Sugai & Horner, 2006). These authors showed a body of evidence that supported the relationship between the implementation of high-quality behavior management and increased student engagement and prosocial behaviors; the literature revealed the need for more behavior intervention studies with larger sampling (Bulotsky-Shearer & Fantuzzo, 2011; Ingram et al., 2005; Kaiser & Qi, 2003; Newcomers & Lewis, 2004). PBIS has developed in over 44 states and over 18,000 schools in the United States (Bradshaw & Pas, 2011; Bradshaw, Schaeffer, Petras, & Ialongo, 2010; Muscott et al., 2008; PBIS, 2011; Prince et al., 2010; Swain-Bradway et al., 2013).

Researchers revealed that when teachers play an active role in the social environments of intermediate grade level students the teacher-student relationships are improved and disruptive behaviors are minimized (Furrer & Skinner, 2003; Gest, Madill, Zadzora, Miller & Rodkin, 2014; Maddox & Prinz, 2003). Teachers should be trained continuously through professional development or other means of training on effective practices related to implementing a PBIS plan.

Summary

Based on my review of referred literature, the four main components for the successful implementation and sustainability of a PBIS plan are knowledge of the PBIS plan, preservice training, the school environment, and communication to understand teachers' perceptions, specifically for teachers in the intermediate grade levels. Data I collected provided important information for assessing the study site's current preservice training. Bradshaw and Pas (2011), Bradshaw, Reinke, Brown, Bevans, and Leaf (2008), and Scheuermann et al. (2013) identified ways to improve teachers' perceptions of their practices related to implementing a PBIS plan

with preservice training. The training was based on classroom management skills to help teachers be prepared for the first day of school and implement successful strategies in the classroom for year long success and reduced behavior concerns (Jones, 2007; Smith, 2004; Wong & Wong, 2005). The effectiveness of PBIS programs in Maryland (Barrett et al., 2008), North Carolina (Johnson, 2014), California (Cegor & Hewitt, 2011), Texas (Menendez, Payne, & Mayton, 2008), New York (Kalke, Glanten, & Cristalli, 2007), Delaware (Parker, 2016), and Idaho Falls (Jones, 2014) are well documented in the literature and implementation is widespread (Sugai & Simonsen, 2012).

When teachers are trained to manage classrooms, there are fewer referrals and behavior concerns (Desidero & Mullennix, 2005; Sterling, 2009). Teacher training should include interventions and programs to address cultural concerns as well as behaviors. Training must be provided throughout the year through professional development, in-service, and preservice training to provide strategies, which teachers can effectively implement in the classroom and provide a structured environment conducive to learning. Review of the literature examined the significance of the research studied to identify and adopt a preservice training design to improve teachers' perceptions of their practices related to implementing a PBIS plan. The areas in need of growth were also identified through the data collected following the preservice training for the elementary school in Texas.

Reviewing the different training of PBIS implementations supported the need for this study. The limitations of the studies reviewed showed the need for future research on teachers' perceptions and practices for addressing natural developmental behaviors of intermediate students to further that study. Research is needed to better identify ways to make connections with students of different cultures and economic backgrounds to equip them with social skills

lasting into adulthood. The literature review revealed the importance of the purpose of this study and the impact of teachers' perceptions in the classroom and throughout the school environment. Wong and Wong (2005) reveal the number one problem in the classroom is not discipline but the lack of effective procedures and routines. The starting point for providing effective help is training teachers on how to be strategic when encountering behaviors in the classroom, effective in behavior reporting, and how PBIS plans are available to assist them in reducing the behavior and loss of instructional time.

Teacher collaboration during focus group and preservice training could reduce the numbers of students that disconnect from learning and those who fail to make connections to the school by providing teachers with effective practices to use in the classroom. Success of a PBIS plan rests on the shoulders of teachers who implement the plan (Porath-Waller, Beasley, & Beirness, 2010; Rohrbach, Grana, Sussman, & Valente, 2006; Tobler et al., 2000). The data uncovered through this study can promote practices for implementing a PBIS plan as well as its sustainability. This study can identify specific perceptions about the school climate and attributes of the PBIS plan that may promote or hinder the effectives of practices utilized in implementation at the Title I elementary school in Texas.

Chapter 3: Methodology

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative study was to analyze teachers' perceptions of their practices related to implementing a Positive Behavioral Intervention and Support (PBIS) plan in the intermediate grade levels at a Title I elementary school in Texas. Within this chapter, I described the study participants, instruments used, procedures for analyzing data, and limitations of the research design. I concluded the chapter with a description of ethical issues. I analyzed the three-tier model of PBIS that guided the preservice training and helped improve the school climate as well as teachers' practices with implementing a PBIS plan. I described the research questions that guided my exploration in the study.

Through the study site location, I sought to understand the impact of teachers' perceptions of their practices related to implementing a PBIS plan of intermediate students at a Title I elementary school in Texas. Data collected, referred literature, and school procedures were analyzed for themes and shared characteristics through investigating real-life contemporary bounded system (Creswell, 2013). Data was collected from surveys, interviews, and focus groups. The benefits of this research provided the Title I elementary school study site with a preservice teacher training design and best teachers' practices for implementing a PBIS plan to improve the school climate as a school-wide initiative.

The benefit of this study's designed preservice training provided effective changes to the study site participants for practices related to implementation of a PBIS plan in the 2016–2017 school year (Fixsen, Naoom, Blase, Friedman, & Wallace, 2005; Pianta & Stuhlman, 2004; Spilt & Koomen, 2009). The teachers' perceptions were also changed (Pianta & Stuhlman, 2004; Spilt & Koomen, 2009), and the development of effective practices for implementing a PBIS

plan (Cavanaugh & Swan, 2015; Reglin, Akpo-Sanni, & Losike-Sedimo, 2012).

The measurement tools that were used are sample size and grade levels. The results of this research study were derived from data collected from the Title I elementary school in Texas. I analyzed the limitations of other implemented PBIS plans in similar schools to improve the chance of increasing teachers' perceptions of their practices related to implementing a PBIS plan in the Title I elementary school in Texas.

Research Questions

- How are teachers' perceptions of their practices related to the implementation of a PBIS plan in the Title I elementary school in Texas?
    - How will the participants be updated on procedures and processes of the behavior management plan?
    - Will preservice training change participants' perceptions of their practices with implementing a PBIS plan?
    - How will participants be trained on implementing the PBIS plan?
    - What motivates participants to implement the PBIS plan?
    - Will participants be more prepared in the classroom with handling disruptions compared to their experiences from the 2015–2016?

Role of the Researcher

As a classroom teacher at the study site, I used cross-checking measures to ensure I remained unbiased. Cross-checking is a strategy to check data from various angles or sources to determine validity or accuracy (Cross–check, n.d.). In a study by Perren, Conte, De Bitonti, Limoni, and Merlani (2008), nurses were invited to cross-check the transfer reports for accuracy. I had each participant cross-check my comprised summary of their interviews.

Initially a student-assistant from the University of North Texas was interviewed to assist with transcribing interviews, but due to family issues, the student-assistant could not participate after the interview process was complete. Because of time constraints, I completed all transcriptions for the data collection. I ensured the confidentiality of the participants and all data collected and identified audio interviewee with pseudonyms and used blind surveys which was emailed to participants with an anonymous link for assess to open and complete surveys. Precautions were taken when creating survey questions to ensure fairness and neutrality. Questions were not included unless the data was directly of use in the research design; questions were kept as simple as possible and did not use ambiguous words (Bresciani, Zelna, & Anderson, 2004). Questions were phrased carefully to avoid suggesting that certain answers were more acceptable than others (Moser & Kalton, 1989). Although I support PBIS implementation and accept that each teacher has their own perception of how to implement, I did not allow my beliefs to influence my research and analysis of the data. My viewpoint of my practices for implementing a PBIS plan was not shared with the participants. The preservice design and effective practices identified through the study were discussed with the administration with no disclosure of information naming specific participants and their comments.

My relationship with the participants remained professional and ethical to prevent defaulting data collection based on relationships and non-factual interviewed and surveyed data. I set a designated time for the preservice training to take place. An administrator was not present to ensure confidentiality of participants. I sent emails to teachers regarding location, time, and date. The training took place in a closed-door classroom with windows blacked out. The preservice training was as follows:

- Day 1:
    - The participants attended a focus group that provided an introduction to the study and an opportunity to discuss their perceptions of implementing the current PBIS plan. After the discussion, an anonymous link was emailed to participants to complete a blind Likert pretest survey (Appendix A). T he participants responded to a series of statements with always (5), almost always (4), about half the time (3), rarely (2), and never (1). This was a blind survey. No names or identifying information was provided on the survey. The participants completed the survey electronically.
- Day 2:
    - The researcher interviewed three volunteer participants for fifteen-minutes (Appendix B). The interviews were audio recorded for use in field notes that were entered on a secure computer spreadsheet. The audio recordings were also stored on the secure computer.
- Day 3:
    - The participants attended a preservice training to discuss the Likert survey and interview results.
- End of the study:
    - The participants completed a final Likert posttest survey electronically two days prior to the last day of the study. No names or identifying information was provided on the survey (Appendix A). The participants attended the second focus group on the last day of the four-week study for a summary of post-test survey data with a comparison to the pretest survey. Participants

also shared the effective practices implemented in the classroom related to implementing a PBIS plan.

Participants and Purposeful Sampling Method

The principal gave permission to conduct the study at the school site see Appendix D. After receiving permission from the Institutional Review Board (IRB), I sent staff members an email with notification of the principal's approval to participate and requested volunteers to participant. The participants were selected using purposeful selection because they had direct contact with the intermediate students and the feasibility of access for data collection that best supported the study (Maxwell, 2013). This purposeful sampling involved identifying and selecting teachers who were especially knowledgeable about or experienced with disruptive student behaviors (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011).

The 14 participants consisted of four classroom teachers in third grade, three classroom teachers in fourth grade, three classroom teachers in fifth grade, and four specialization teachers who provided physical education, art, music, and library instruction to the intermediate grade level students. All of the participants received an email request to attend an information meeting to discuss the study and complete a 5-point Likert pretest survey.

Pilot Sampling

The participants were surveyed to determine their perception of the effectiveness of the PBIS plan. A 5-point Likert scale was used to rate statements. The surveys (Appendix A) were calculated to determine the highest and lowest area of need in teachers' perceptions of their practices related to implementing the PBIS plan; interviews were scheduled with volunteer participants for a more in-depth understanding of their perceptions. All teachers were invited to participate in the preservice training and the 4-week trial of the study.

Design of the Study

I explored how teachers' perceptions of their practices in implementing a Positive Behavioral Interventions and Support (PBIS) plan in intermediate grade levels at a Title I elementary school in Texas was affected by preservice training. I sought to describe the characteristics of an effective preservice teacher training approach. With my research, I hoped to identify the best practices related to implementing a PBIS plan in the intermediate grade levels. Participants first completed a Likert pretest survey regarding their perceptions of how they were going to implement a PBIS plan based on experiences from the 2015–2016 school year. The surveys were analyzed to prepare an effective preservice training to meet the needs of the participants as well as the information on best practices for implementing the PBIS plan. After the preservice training and 4 weeks of school, the participants completed a Likert posttest survey (Appendix A) created from a predesigned satisfaction survey on the PBIS website (OSEP, 2013).

Instrumentation

Instrumentation refers to the measurement procedures used when gathering data for research (Posavac, 2015). There are guidelines that go along with each unit of measurement. Surveying and interviewing are key instruments in qualitative studies of participants (Creswell, 2013). Two focus group sessions were also used to gather data. Qualitative approaches allow more flexibility and are appropriate in disciplines where a complex, dynamic situation is being examined as with the implementation of a PBIS plan (Eastwood, 1988). I used Likert scales in the surveys to prompt the participants to think about issues they may never have considered on their own about the behavior management plan (Posavac, 2015). Likert scales are used by researchers because they are relatively easy to construct, produce highly internally consistent data, and can be adapted to measure many types of affective characteristics (Nunnally &

Bernstein, 1994); are used to measure the participants' perceptions by using a numerical scale of always (5), almost always (4), about half the time (3), rarely (2), and never (1) (Gay, Mills, & Airasian, 2011). All interview data collected had participants' names redacted and replaced with a pseudonyms using numbers. I created an Excel spreadsheet to maintain the participants associated with each number assignment. The spreadsheet was maintained on a password protected MAC computer in an encrypted file. I was the sole holder of the password and code to computer and files. The computer was locked when the researcher was not present. The computer had a backup sleep feature set for 1 minute of no activity. No identifying information was listed in any email communication. All paper files and notes were stored in an envelope and placed in a locked cabinet. When the computer and files were taken to my residence, they were placed in a locked office cabinet of which I had the only key. The data collected will be destroyed three years after the completion of the study.

Denzin and Lincoln (2005) stated the purpose for interviewing is to provide an opportunity for participants to expand on written responses from the survey; structured interviews (Appendix B) were conducted for the study using open-ended and Socratic questions in order to learn detailed information about participants' perceptions of the behavior management plan. I utilized reflective listening and non-directive probing to encourage participants to communicate their full thinking regarding each topic (Creswell, 2013). In using the reflective listening, I heard, understood, and responded to what the participants were communicating through words, tone of voice, body posture, and gestures to grasp the meaning of the message (Rautalinko, Lisper, & Ekehammar, 2007). The non-directive probing in response to the reflective listening led to questions not originally on the structured interview list. The

three interview participants were allowed 15 minutes to share their perceptions on their practices for implementing a PBIS plan.

Focus groups were used to allow open forum for teachers to discuss their perceptions openly with peers. The main purpose of focus group was to draw upon participants' attitudes, feelings, beliefs, experiences and reactions with implementing the PBIS plan. Kitzinger (1995) argues that interaction is the crucial feature of focus groups because the interaction between participants highlights their view of the world, the language they use about an issue and their values and beliefs about a situation. Interaction also enables participants to ask questions of each other, as well as to reevaluate and reconsider their own understandings of their specific experiences. Focus groups were added for triangulation with the survey and interview instruments (Morgan, 1988).

Data Collection

The pretest surveys collected data on teachers' perceptions of the previous years' practices used when implementing the PBIS plan. The survey was administered electronically using the Qualtrics software following the research introduction meeting. No names or identifying information was provided on the survey. I collected the data to aid in identifying the areas of need for the design of the preservice training.

During the interviews, I restated or summarized information and then questioned the participant to determine accuracy (Appendix E). The participants either agreed or disagreed that the summaries reflected their views, feelings, and experiences. If accuracy and completeness was affirmed, then the study is said to have credibility (Creswell, 2007; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The interviews were audio recorded for use in field notes that were entered on a secure computer. The audio recordings were also stored on the secure computer.

Identification of Variables

The variable of the study was the preservice training. The design of the training was influenced by the data collected through the pretest survey and interviews. A predesigned preservice training could have been outlined prior to the data collection as a framework to build on but the influence for the design to address the specific needs of the teachers could only be gathered through the data collected from the pretest survey and interviewing the three volunteer participants for more in-depth questioning on implementing the 2015–2016 school year PBIS plan. Only the data most likely to be impacted by teachers' concerns were explored, specifically the concerns of using effective practices and how to implement the practices in the classroom. Surveys, interviews, focus groups, and posttest surveys were specified and measured.

Data Analysis Procedures

I examined how preservice training affected teachers' perceptions of their practices related to implementing a PBIS plan for students in the intermediate grade level. The preservice training and focus groups provided teachers with alternative practices that were more effective with implementing the PBIS plan. The first step in the analysis process was to collect data. Surveys were used to collect data using a Likert scale survey and descriptive statistics. The scores were calculated for participants and entered into an Excel spreadsheet. No identifying information was listed on the spreadsheet. There was a spreadsheet of the overall data collected; I examined the data to identify the highest and lowest numerical scores to identify the areas of need for preservice training. I analyzed the results to identify similarities of the participants' perceptions and scheduled participants for interviews. The next step was to transcribe field notes from the interviews and focus groups using open, axial, and selective coding. Following the qualitative model of Strauss and Corbin (1998), open coding exposes the concepts identified in

the data, axial coding reassembles data that may have been fractured during open coding, and selective coding integrated and refined the categories that evolved during open and axial coding to reveal the specific areas of need for practices related to implementing a PBIS plan. Open coding was used to identify the categories discovered when reading through the question stems. The categories were identified as confidence, action, and voice. Through open coding, I read through the survey data that was collected using the Qualtrics Survey Software and grouped the question stems into three groups. The groups were labeled as confidence, action, and voice. Confidence was selected because the question stems of Q1 - Q3 from the survey asked about confidence. The next label was action because it surveyed the participant doing a specific task. The question stems were Q4, Q6, Q7, Q10, Q13, and Q15. The third label was voice because the participant had to voice a response to parents or students. The question stems were Q5, Q8, Q9, Q11, Q12, and Q14. The core category revealed through the open coding was confidence. Confidence is closely related to perceptions of how participants implement their practices (Chang, 2009; Emmer & Stough, 2001; Ross & Horner, 2007; Ross et al., 2011; Walker et al., 2005).

Through axial coding, I took the information from open coding and identified the events that led to the occurrences of each category that were the lack of training, disruptions in the classroom, and low state assessments (Strauss and Corbin, 1998). Using axial coding, the causal condition of preservice training was analyzed along with participants' actions and voice in implementing the PBIS plan. The data collected revealed a lack of strategies and effective communication for dealing with disruptions in the classroom.

Selective coding related other categories to the core using conditions, strategies, and consequences. The related condition was training, the strategies were classroom management

practices, and the consequences were reflection form and incentives. The preservice training provided teachers with practices from daily procedures, incentives for appropriate behavior, to reflection forms to allow students time to think about the inappropriate action taken. Participants were also trained on effective communication with saying "No" and not over-explaining. The data was analyzed and placed in the appropriate category for pretest and posttest comparison of the means. The mean for each question for the surveys can be located in Table 4 (see Appendix L). The mean for confidence of the pretest survey was 4.1 and the posttest survey was 4.2. The mean for action of the pretest was 3.48 and the posttest was 3.22. For voice, the pretest mean was 3.37 and the posttest mean was 2.98.

After 4 weeks of school following the preservice training, the participants completed a Likert posttest survey. The scores were calculated and entered into the Excel spreadsheet. The scores were identified for similarities and changes in participants' perceptions. Presentations of findings were made to the participants and school principal for a decision on whether or not to use the preservice design and best practices identified on a school-wide imitative.

Issues of Trustworthiness

In order to achieve confirmability, I took steps to demonstrate that findings emerged from the data and not my own predispositions (Shenton, 2004). Cross-checking of the interviews was a way to ensure trustworthiness. Audio recordings of focus groups and interviews provided opportunities to check field notes to reflect what the participants actually stated in regards to their perceptions. Once the notes were transcribed from the audio recordings, the interviewees cross-checked their summaries and one member from each focus group session cross-checked the notes for accuracy. This was done to ensure I had not left out important details or misquoted during the transcription.

Internal Validity

Internal validity is the value of truth from the findings of the study (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Internal validity is the approximate truth about inferences regarding cause-effect or causal relationship (Trochim, 2000). The strategies I used to form internal validity within this study included: (a) data triangulation, an examination of experiences from surveys, interviews, and focus groups with member checking, (b) engagement, the interviews occurred face-to-face in private environments, and (c) current referred literature, which guided the study data.

External Validity

External validity refers to the approximate truth of conclusions that involve generalizations. External validity is the degree to which the conclusions in the study will hold for other persons in other places and at other times (Trochim, 2000). The external validity testing conducted for the pretest survey and posttest results are meaningful and useful.

Dependability

Dependability establishes if a true depiction of a phenomenon is being presented (Miles & Huberman, 1994), Patton, 2002). Dependability emphasizes the need to account for ever-changing context that may occur during the study. I describe any changes that occurred and how they affected the study (Trochim & Donnelly, 2006).

Confirmability

Confirmability assures that the conclusions of the study are the opinions of the participants and not the researcher's beliefs (Shenton, 2004; Patton, 2002). The results can be confirmed by using strategies for enhancing confirmability such as the procedures for checking and rechecking the data throughout the study (Trochim & Donnelly, 2006). Whenever data was gathered, I had a participant cross-check for accuracy. Different participants where used each

time I needed data to be checked as to not add another task to specific participants to accompany the other responsibilities of starting a new school year. I did not want more participants to feel overwhelmed and withdraw from the study.

Expected Findings

Data was collected for the pretest and posttest survey to identify best practices for implementing a PBIS plan at a Title I elementary school in Texas. The pretest survey was collected prior to preservice training based on participants' perceptions of practices related to implementing a PBIS plan for the intermediate grade levels during the 2015–2016. The data was compared to participants' perceptions after preservice training and 4 weeks of school for the 2016–2017 school year.

Ethical Issues

Participants were provided a consent form to participate voluntarily. The consent form was provided without threat or inducement. Contact with the participants was kept confidential. Communication between the researcher and participant was initiated through email and not through the study site administration. Personal perceptions were not disclosed during focus groups or preservice training.

Conflict of Interest Assessment

Conflict of interest was reduced through audio recordings of interviews, and electronic pretest and posttest surveys. Cross-checking of interviews after the audio recordings were transcribed which reduced the conflict of interest. The purpose was to highlight the teachers' perceptions and understanding of implementation practices.

Ethical Issues in the Study

I sought to encourage participants to explore their own common experiences and communicate their understanding through focus groups. The preservice training identified the norms and beliefs from the data collected through the surveys and interviews. Participants were encouraged to participate in open discussions during focus groups to express how their perceptions impact their practices related to implementing a PBIS plan (Kitzinger, 1995).

Summary

The study sought to explore how teachers' perceptions related to practices implementing a PBIS plan of intermediate grade levels at a Title I elementary school in Texas are affected by preservice training. This chapter provided the data that was collected to provide evidence for answering the research questions for the study. The population of the study shared their perceptions to help guide the study. I was mindful of the ethical issues, which could detract from the study. The study took 4 weeks to collect data, analyze, and present to administration for implementation of the preservice design and best practices throughout the school year. At the end of the study, a meeting was scheduled with administration to share how the preservice training increased teachers' perceptions of the practices used in their classrooms as well as the improved school climate. The administration was provided with a copy of the survey used to assess teachers' perceptions and the agenda of the preservice training. PBIS consistent of proven strategies of effectiveness that have been implemented in schools or in another elementary school; I sought to find commonalities to design an effective preservice training for the Title I elementary school in Texas (Bradshaw & Pas, 2011; Colvin, 2007; PBIS, 2011; Prince et al., 2010; Sugai et al., 2010). In 2016–2017, the participants in the intermediate grade levels used

effective practices related to implementing a PBIS plan that were identified through surveys, interviews, and focus group participations during preservice training.

Chapter 4: Results

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to determine how teachers' perceptions of their practices related to the implementation of a Positive Behavioral Intervention and Support (PBIS) plan in a Title I elementary school. The data for this study was collected through surveys, interviews, and focus groups over a 4-week period. The study was conducted in August 2016 after receiving IRB approval. Participants consisted of 14 intermediate grade level teachers who submitted responses to an emailed, blind pretest and posttest Likert survey by responding to the 15 questions with always (5), almost always (4), about half the time (3), rarely (2), and never (1). The pretest survey was sent in August and the posttest survey was emailed in September. Of the 14 surveys distributed, 71% (10) of the participants completed the survey. Reminder emails were sent to participants to encourage 100% participation but only 10 of the 14 completed the pretest survey. The 4 participants who enrolled but did not complete the survey stated they were overwhelmed with the start of the school year responsibilities and withdrew from the study. The data collected from the teachers actively involved in the study provided results for answering the following questions:

1. How will the participants be updated on procedures and processes of the behavior management plan?
2. Will preservice training change participants' perceptions of their practices with implementing a PBIS plan?
3. How will participants be trained on implementing the PBIS plan?
4. What motivates participants to implement the PBIS plan?

5. Will participants be more prepared in the classroom with handling disruptions compared to their experiences from the 2015–2016?

In my role of researcher at the study site, I used cross-checked measures of the interview and focus group notes for removing bias. I provided no personal responses to questions posed through the survey or interview. After I transcribed the interviews, each interviewee was allowed to read the transcript to confirm its accuracy. Two other participants read over the focus group transcripts to confirm their accuracy. Although I support PBIS implementation and have my perception of practices related to implementation, I did not allow my beliefs to influence the study or data analysis.

When attending the focus group meetings, I did not input any information. My role was as an observer and recorder. The agenda was prepared by the leadership team at the end of the previous school year of things to discussion prior to the start of the new school year. No individual was identified as the facilitator but the meeting functioned more as a discussion group with a list of topics to address. I did not complete any of the surveys. My viewpoints of practices for implementing a PBIS plan were not shared with the participants. When asked my thoughts or opinions on comments made or questions posed, I reminded the participants that I was only present in the role of researcher and not a teacher. I could see the unease from some participants with my not sharing during discussions. They are used to hearing me share or provide resources on concerns. One participant asked that I at least share some of the ways that I have been successful with low behavior issues in my classroom to provide strategies that can be used in the upcoming year. I explained again that I was present only in the role of observer and recorder and therefore wanted to hear more about what they have found successful, but that I would share my strategies after the study.

Description of the Sample

The participants for this study consisted of teachers from the intermediate grade levels. Purposeful selection was used because the teachers have direct contact on a daily basis with the intermediate students and the feasibility of access to data collected that will best support the study (Maxwell, 2013). The sample size of the study included 10 teachers who responded to the surveys; three classroom teachers in third-grade self-contained classrooms, two fifth-grade teachers, two self-contained classroom teachers for fourth-grade, and two specials teachers who provided physical education and art instruction to the intermediate grade level students. Table 1 reflects the frequency and percent of the participants' gender, ethnicity, and years of experience.

Table 1

Frequency and Percentage of Participants

	Frequency	%
Gender		
Male	1	10
Female	9	90
Ethnicity		
Caucasian	6	60
African American	1	10
Hispanic	3	30
Years of Experience		
1–4	1	10
5–10	1	10
11–15	3	30
16–20	4	40
≥20	1	10

Notes. A total of 10 teachers participated in the study.

Female participants were 90% of the majority in this study. Over half of the participants were Caucasian 60% (6) with African American being the lowest with 10% (1). The least amount of teaching years was 4 years while 23 years was the maximum. The majority of the

participants in the study have been teaching for over a decade; 80% (8) have at least 10 years of experience in the classroom. The mean score for the years of teaching experience at this study site was 14.2.

Research Methodology and Analysis

Permission was granted to use the predesigned surveys, interview checklist, and probing questions (Appendix C). The first focus group agenda was created at the end of 2014–2015 by the study site's leadership team. The second focus group was self-designed. The participants completed a 5-point Likert scale pretest and posttest survey. Three participants volunteered for interviews and all 10 participants attended two focus groups. The first focus group was held in August after the pretest survey and the interview data was collected and analyzed. The second focus group met at the end of the four-week study in September.

Surveys

Surveying was selected to gather data and calculate the descriptive means for analysis (Creswell, 2013). A 5-point Likert scale was used to rate statements through a pretest and posttest survey. The survey (see Appendix A) was emailed to participants using the anonymous link distribution method with the Qualtrics Survey Software. The online survey was specifically used for the flexibility of completing results online instead of using a paper or face-to-face method. The participants' information was kept confidential.

Open, axial, and selective coding was utilized to summarize the data, identify relationships from those summaries, and identify the core variable for practices related to implementing a PBIS plan.

Interviews

Participants volunteered to be interviewed during their lunch break or after employment hours as to not infringe on instructional time. Interviews were scheduled after I had received 5 surveys. This happened after the second day of emailing out the survey request. The interviews allowed participants time to provide more in-depth information on their perceptions. Open coding was used to conceptualize and categorize the data by reading through the interview transcript line by line. The three categories of confidence, action, and voice emerged as with the surveys. Using axial coding, I coded the transcripts to identify the events that led to the occurrence of confidence, action, and voice. The participants had confidence in their abilities to persuade others on new ideas or face challenges but needed assistance with taking action and using their voice when encountering student behavior. One interview stated, " I gave too many chances to the student and would send him to the office if it got too bad." The disruptions in the classroom caused the participants to cease instruction and take action and use their voice for correcting the behavior and writing referrals. This loss of instructional time led to students not passing state assessments. This was noted by one interviewee's response, "I was disappointed with last year's state assessments scores." Finally, I used selective coding to interrelate the coding categories using condition, strategies, and consequence. I was able to identify the conditions of the school environment as in need of an effective PBIS plan. Teachers needed effective practices to apply in the classroom to be more effective in classroom management; students needed consequences that would deter them from disrupting the classroom and incentives to make better decisions. One interviewee who reflected on her first year of teaching and dealing with a student's behavior stated, "If I had the behavior plan we have now to help students reflect on his choices, thing would have been better." Interviewing the participants

provided more in-depth reflection on the practices used to implement the PBIS plan (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). The interviews allowed participants time for further reflection and expansion on responses from the pretest survey. During the interviews, participants shared how their confidence allowed them to face challenges of working with students such as different language learners. One participant stated, "I have to find a small group setup that works best at meeting the needs and differentiate instruction for each content." One also stated a time when she used her persuasive measures, "I persuaded three of my team members to work two Saturdays a month for four hours to provide reading and math rotations for 25 students." This action led to cohesiveness within the grade level teams and provide better opportunities for students to increase learning. The Saturday School program was discussed because one participant spent so much time addressing behavior concerns that near the end of the year, she believed students needed more instruction to pass the state assessments. The concern she had was not being in the same situation this year and the chance of the option not being available due to funding and staffing. The need for effective behavior management was mentioned when the interviewees were asked about generating new ideas. One interview stated, "I knew my students struggled with vocabulary and therefore selected to work on word wall and have an interactive notebook." She needed time to add more vocabulary to the instructional time as well as decrease behavior disruptions. The data gathered from the interviews aided in the preservice training design by focusing on reflection forms, consequences, daily procedures, and effective communication.

Focus Groups

Two focus groups were held during the study. The first focus group was an introduction to the study and held on the first day of the study, in a locked door room at the study site with the windows blacked out. The session lasted about 45 minutes. In addition to the introduction, there

was open floor time for discussions on the current PBIS plan. There were 10 participants present. The participants discussed their perceptions of implementing the previous school year's PBIS plan and offer suggestions of ways to improve the PBIS plan for the current year. I audio-recorded, transcribed, and used cross-checking of the meeting (Appendix F and G). A second focus group met at the end of the study in a locked door room at the study site with the windows blacked out for the 10 participants to discuss the outcome of the revised PBIS plan and complete the blind Likert posttest survey. The second focus group lasted about 30 minutes. The participants attended a preservice training (see Appendix I) in August 2016 after receiving the IRB approval, at the start of the school year, to discuss the results of the pretest survey and interviews.

The pretest allowed participants to reflect on their perspectives of implementing the PBIS plan during the 2015–2016 school year. Interviewees stated they had not thought of how they implemented the PBIS plan until taking the pretest survey. One participant wanted a copy of the questions from the pretest survey to monitor her practices. I provided the participant with a copy after the study was completed. The 5 highest and 5 lowest mean scores for the question stems related to the behavior management plan were analyzed to prepare an effective preservice training to meet the needs of the participants. The question stems refer to the questions asked on the pretest and posttest surveys.

The means for highest and lowest responses to pretest survey question stems are shown in Table 2 (Appendix J). The data revealed that participants had mean score of 4.1 (almost always) for confidence (Q1 - Q3) in their abilities with behavior management. The low mean scores related to actions taken by participants for enforcing behavior management (Q8 - Q11, and Q13). The mean score of the lowest five question stems of 2.72 reflected participants spent almost half

of their time of taking action to discipline students. These identified low means identified the area of need for the preservice training as providing participants with effective ways to decrease disruptive student behaviors.

Table 3 depicts the means for highest and lowest responses to posttest survey question stems (Appendix K). The posttest survey was conducted after the focus group meeting and new implementations to the 2016–2017 school year's PBIS plan. Participants received the same reminders for completing the posttest survey that resulted in 100% responses. The confidence level (Q1 - Q3) was still among the highest mean with an increase from the pretest 4.1 to a 4.23. The change in the mean average for confidence showed the participants did not lose confidence in their abilities with the changes to the behavior management plan but increased slightly. Four question stems from the lowest five means of the pretest were still in the lowest mean averages for the posttest (Q9 - Q11, and Q13). However, the decrease of the pretest mean of 2.72 decreased to 2.12 moving down from participants spending half the time correcting behavior to rarely having to correct student behavior.

For confidence, the participants responded to questions related to the perception of how they learned something new, generated new ideas, and worked with diverse students. The participants expressed feeling challenged when having to teach a new content, work in a new leadership position, or work with new students. They also displayed their confidence in their teaching abilities by making suggestions to better serve students academically and socially with interactive notebooking, behavior incentives, and reduce transition time delays. For voice, the participants responded on speaking out at the team meeting to work on managing planning time more effectively, additional tutoring time on Saturdays to help improve student academics, and displaying team unity. Most of the question stems fell into the category of action to identify the

practices teachers used to be effective in implementing academic instruction and behavior. The participants shared how they used small grouping to help students at risk and cooperative groups for student learning. These measures were important to help increase test scores and improve from last year's results. The one consistent factor for all three participants addressing student disruptive behavior was to have a one to one conversation with the student. Teamwork was vital in the flow of daily instructions and if teachers were not present, students were quickly relocated and still provided instruction.

Behavior Theory

This study systematically applied interventions learned from the preservice training and teacher continuous collaboration to improve socially significant behaviors of the students as well as increase teacher perception of their practices to a meaningful degree in which the data depicted through the decrease in participants stopping instruction to take action and voice directives for correcting disruptive behaviors. In this study, I demonstrated that the interventions employed are responsible for the improvement in behavior in accordance with the principles of Applied Behavior Analysis (Baer, Wolf, & Risley, 1968). Horner and Sugai (2008) suggested that PBIS is infused with the basic tenants of applied behavior analysis, in that it is applied, behavioral, analytic, technological, conceptual, effective, and capable of appropriately generalized outcomes.

Process

The category of confidence relates to processing in that participants know and believe in their practices. If the process is followed effectively, participants can apply their intervention measures to improve student behavior. The preservice training provided resources for classroom procedures for the beginning of class, during class, special situations, and end of class (Wong &

Wong, 2004). The participants' pretest mean average was 4.1 and posttest mean average was 4.2, which depicted the presence of confidence and even showed a slight increase from the beginning to end of the study.

Action

The action category identified through open coding provided data on the measures used by participants to enforce consequences for inappropriate behavior. Participants were provided with training on two types of consequences being positive rewards and penalties (Smith, 2004); consequences were identified through selective coding in the use of the reflection forms for penalty and incentives like Starbucks, prize box, and "Good Note Thursday" for positive rewards. The mean average for action of the pretest was 3.48 and the posttest was 3.22. This depicts that the need for consequences was reduced from the start of the year. Participants were provided with a reflection form (Appendix I) to give to students who chose inappropriate behaviors. The reflection form allowed students time to reflect on the incident and teach the students to have the power of choice with their behavior (Smith, 2004). Specific interventions are required to aid students in learning appropriate behavior to improve their behavior.

Interaction

The voice category identified through open coding provided data that measured the interaction between the participants and students when addressing the inappropriate behavior. For voice, the pretest mean average was 3.37 and the posttest mean average was 2.98. Participants had to use effective communication skills to interact with the students. This was taught in the preservice training by discussing firm and soft paradox, saying "No," and not over-explaining (Smith, 2004). Participants worked on posture, volume, and tone during the preservice training and the decrease in the mean average from the pretest to the posttest depicts

the effectiveness of the applied intervention. These learned measures help students learn ways to improve socially significant behaviors to a meaningful degree (Baer, Wolf, & Risley, 1968).

Summary of the Findings

Schools implementing PBIS with fidelity report decreases in problem behavior, increases in academic engaged time, and improved perceptions of school safety (Horner et al., 2010; Loeber et al., 2012; Mitchell & Bradshaw, 2013; Sugai & Horner, 2006; Swain-Bradway et al., 2013; Walker et al., 2004). The means of each category for pretest and posttest survey were analyzed to identify if the study site implementation plan was effective. The changes in the means data reflected the impact of the preservice training on the teachers' confidence, actions, and voice. The increase in the confidence mean average from of the pretest survey 4.1 to the posttest survey 4.2 depicts the growth in participants' perception of their practices for implementing the study site's behavior management plan. The goal of PBIS is to reduce the occurrence of disruptive behavior and this is visible in the decrease of participants' actions average mean of the pretest to the posttest. The preservice training provided teachers with effective practices and interventions to reduce the need to use their voice for correcting behavior. The data reflected a decrease in average mean from the pretest of 3.37 down to the posttest mean of 2.98. The descriptive data was compared to the coding results of the interviews to provide responses for the sub-questions that guided the research. For example, the axial coding of identifying events that led to the occurrence of the category identified through opening coding of action of the surveys compared to the interviews depicted a need for and a decrease of the mean average for the actions questions from the pretest of 3.48 to the posttest of 3.22. The need was identified in an interviewee's response of needing more instructional time to improve state assessment scores. The interviewee stated, "I persuaded three state members on my team to

work two Saturdays a month for 4 hours to provide reading and math rotations for 25 students." The survey and interview data was chunked using the same three categories of confidence, action, and voice. Another interviewee's response was that the reflection form currently in place could have been beneficial during her first year of teaching. She stated, "I had an emotionally disturbed student during my first year of teaching. If I had the behavior plan we have now to help the student reflect on his choices, things would have been better." The similarities of the interview data with the survey data solidified the increase in teachers' perceptions of their practices related to implementing the PBIS plan in the intermediate grade levels. Both methods expressed a concern for decreased behavior disruptions to allow more time for instruction and incentives that were effective in decreasing behavior occurrences. The pretest mean for writing office referrals was a 3. This showed participants spent half of their instructional time writing students up for disruptions to the class.

Presentation of Data and Results

Through the data analysis, I sought to answer the five sub-questions that guided the study to identify the impact of preservice training on changing teachers' perceptions as it relates to implementing PBIS in the intermediate grade level classrooms. Participants completed a pretest survey regarding their perceptions of the practices related to implementing a PBIS plan during the 2015–2016 school year and a posttest survey at the end of the research period of their practices for the 2016–2017 school year. The data was important to identify the areas of need in improving teachers' perceptions implementing the PBIS plan effectively in the classroom and identify potential trends to aid the study in understanding teachers' perceptions in the intermediate grade levels.

Sub-question 1. How will participants be updated on procedures and processes of the PBIS plan? I met weekly with each of the intermediate grade level team leaders. The leaders provided an update on the number of behavior reflection forms completed for the grade level, students in the practice academy program, incentives being used, a summary of the grade level student behavior, what was working, what was not, and the number of incentive reward Starbucks given out. At the end of the week, a comprised summary on the progress of the procedures and process of the PBIS plan was emailed to the intermediate grade level staff.

During the first week, the administrator directed teachers to not write any office referrals unless the behaviors fell under the non-negotiable behaviors. The directive was to spend the first week of school getting to know the students, procedures, and expectations. Fifth-grade implemented a prize bucket system as well as free seating to motivate the students to follow expectations. Some grade levels were not finding success with free seating like the fifth-grade team and interested parties met to discuss how it was effective and ways to implement in it other grade levels. The grade levels reported handing out 180 Starbucks during the first week for students making the right choices.

During second week, teachers wrote 19 behavior referrals and 3 students were entered into the practice program. Successes for the week were with the third-grade line-up method, sharing recess time with other grade levels, and fifth-grade "Good Note Thursday". The "Good Notes" are handwritten notes given to 4 students each week at the grade level student meeting. The incentives went down from the previous week with teachers only handing out 163 Starbucks.

During the third week, teachers wrote 49 behavior referrals and 12 students were entered into the practice program. Teachers expressed the causal condition for the increase was the

change in the curriculum from review of the previous grade level material to new concepts for the current grade level. There were 246 Starbucks given out to students who still made the right choice.

During the final week, teachers wrote 12 behavior referrals and 3 students were entered into the practice program. This was a decrease in both from the previous week. Teachers stated students were reminding peers of the expectations and holding each other accountable. Teachers also met in content meeting to discuss ways to provide instruction in a more productive manner. There were 302 Starbucks handed out. The weekly updates helped teachers to collaborate on areas of weaknesses and provided continued ideas for ways to motivate appropriate behavior. The information on how many reflections were given out along with students entering the practice program opened up discussion on ways to make a change in the upcoming week. The increase in Starbucks distribution after week two showed the impact of teachers sharing ideas and students taking ownership by reminding their peers of the rules and expectations.

Sub-question 2. Will preservice training change participants' perceptions of their practices with implementing a PBIS plan? The information I gathered from the participants identified the area of need for participants in implementing the PBIS plan was in action and voice. Participants had confidence in their ability to implement the PBIS plan which was evident with at 4.1 mean average on the pretest survey for the confidence question stems and an increase to 4.2 mean average on the posttest survey. The scoring of 4.1 and 4.2 average means meant that participants almost always felt confident with implementing the PBIS plan. Participants were enforcing consequences between almost always and half the time that took away from instruction; depicted by a 3.48 mean average on the action question stems for the pretest. At the end of the study, the mean average was down to 3.22 that were close to half the time. Although

the data still shows a lot of class instructional time being lost, the decrease can be larger over time. The preservice training provided teachers with effective practices and interventions to reduce the need to use their voice for correcting behavior. The data is evidentially supported by the decrease in average mean from the pretest of 3.37 down to the posttest mean of 2.98. During the training, teachers were provided with training on communication with ways to use firm and soft paradox, say *No*, and not over explain (Smith, 2004).

During the interview, one participant stated, "If I had the reflection forms we are currently using during my first year of teaching, I could have been more successful with an *emotionally disturbed* student assigned to my classroom." In the second focus group, teachers shared they only needed to show the reflection form to the students to get compliance. One teacher added, "I believe that because I spent the first week modeling behavior and not teaching any content, the students were more aware of the expectations and consequences."

The less time spent on correcting behavior concerns allows more time for instruction. This was a concern identified during interviewing when a teacher with over 10 years of experience added, "Last year I felt the students were so close to understanding the math and reading concepts. I feel many of the students could have passed the state assessment, but I did not have enough classroom time for reteaching." With the decrease in the mean average for action and voice, and the increase in confidence, the preservice training has allowed more time for classroom instruction.

Sub-question 3. How will participants be trained on implementing the PBIS plan? I designed the preservice training based on needs identified through the pretest survey and interviews. The data collected revealed participants' concerns were with action and voice for implementing the behavior plan. The participants were provided with a summary of the pretest

data and focus group meeting. I shared the newly created student reflection form with the focus group first. The form was passed around and each part of the form was explained. Across the top of the form are the character traits for the school. The teacher circles the character trait that the student's inappropriate behavior related to along with what the student needs to reflect. For example, if a student left their designated pick up location during dismissal without informing the teacher, then the student would have to reflect on ruling dismissal rules. The character trait would be responsibility. The rest of the form is for the students to reflect on what they were thinking when they did not follow the rule, who was impacted, how have they made amends, and what will they do differently. The reflection form stays with the student through the day even during lunch, recess, and specials. The teacher who wrote the incident had to sign off at the end of the day after reading the student's reflection thoughts. The homeroom teacher keeps a copy for file and the other copy goes home for parent signature. The homeroom teacher tracks the reflection in the grade level tracking system, which tells what day the students received the reflection, by which staff member, and what trait did the students have to work on. Once the students received three reflections, they were entered into the practice academy with the school social worker to work more on the trait they were not performing appropriately. The only change to the current practice academy for ten days for students needing in-depth social skills modeling during lunch and recess was the number of reflections required to enter the academy. The previous PBIS plan required a teacher to submit 6 reflections before entering the academy. This number was agreed upon and reduced to 3. Students were still required to earn an 80% pass rate over the ten days to be exited from the academy.

Next, the discussion moved to the self-manager badges. The teachers had to record the number of Starbucks the students received prior to the students using them at the school store

that was open on Tuesdays during recess. The teachers used the tracking system to identify level changes for students following the school character traits and making good choices. Every student started the year with a white self-manager badge. The levels after that were changed from a leveled color badge to a leveled spirit stick to attach to the self-manager badge clip. Once a student reached a new level, the teacher had to email the name to the principal and the spirit sticks were placed in the teacher's mailbox. The spirit sticks were the entry passes for the 6 weeks activity with the principal.

Two questions from the surveys related to promoting students emotional, social, and problem-solving skills, with a pretest mean average of 3.9 and the use of problem-solving strategies, with a mean average of 3.8. Practices were discussed to help improve classroom management. The topics of discussion under the PBIS plan were daily procedures, consequences, and communication. For the daily procedures, I provided teachers with suggestions from research for how to begin class, what to do during the class, how to handle special situations like fire drills and field trips, as well as how to end a class (Wong & Wong, 2005). Other participants also shared what they had success with in their classrooms. Suggestions were provided as to how to enter the classroom, where to put things, where to sit, what students should have, and what should students do. Suggestions were provided on having a daily warm-up or journal reflection time. Two teachers shared how they used warm-ups and one participant shared how she used journaling. During student independent time, teachers needed to take attendance and prepare to start the lesson. Once the class started, teachers needed to have a plan of passing out materials and have them ready. There also needed to be a clear turn in procedure and activity for what students should do if they finish early. One participant shared she has a section in her classroom of activity sheets students can work on if they finish early and

another participant shared that students read their library books when they finished early. Other situations were discussed on how students asked for help, asked to go to the restroom, class discussion procedures, and sharpening pencils.

Teachers reviewed the drill maps and each grade level identified a day they would practice each drill to ensure students knew the locations and procedures ahead of time. In addition, dismissal locations for all grade levels were identified and discussed. Grade level leaders identified a teacher for each dismissal responsibility. The end of class was similar for all grade levels because of the school's planners each student receives. Teachers had to post the homework for students to write in their planners and have parents sign off once they completed the work. The school procedure is for students to highlight with a yellow marker when the assignment is complete. Topics on cleaning up, computer shut down procedures, lining up, and leaving the classroom were also discussed as part of the end of class procedures.

After identifying the procedures for the day, the discussion moved to addressing student behavior that did not comply with the rules. The teachers had to have five clearly stated classroom rules posted in their rooms. The rules needed to be discussed and modeled for the students at the start of the school year. Students had to have a clear understanding of the expectations and the consequences for non-compliance. The new reflection form was to be discussed with the students with a walk through of each part. Teachers also brainstormed classroom incentive ideas to go along with the school-wide incentives to motivate students to make good choices. One suggestion was to pass out tickets for behavior throughout the week and place them in a container. On Fridays, one ticket per class rotation would be selected for a prize box drawing. Another teacher suggested giving tickets out for outstanding behavior and selecting five names for lunch in her classroom on Wednesdays. Other suggestions were ways to

select preferred seating, classroom helpers, and line leaders. Part of the weekly grade level meeting was to discuss the behavior management plan progress.

Teachers had to work toward making connections with the students. This required effective communication. The training provided examples on using firm and soft paradox, how and when to say *No*, and not over-explaining. For example, if a student is off task the teacher should invite the student to make a different choice rather than challenge the student. This is done through the teacher's posture, volume, and tone. Telling a student *No* may be followed by the student questioning the teacher's response. An example of how to say no without over explaining would be to say, *No*. I understand, and the answer is *No.*

The final part of the training was a scenario activity to allow teachers a chance to interact and share situations they were concerned about but was not mentioned in the training. The teachers were split into groups with varying grade levels in each group. Each group was provided a scenario card and allowed five minutes to discuss how they would present the scenario. Each group stood and acted out the scenario. After each group's presentation, there was a question and answer time. Some teachers volunteered to show their classrooms to provide ideas for classroom rules, seating arrangements, and share warm-up resources.

Sub-question 4. What motivates participants to implement the PBIS plan? The goal of PBIS is to decrease problem behavior, increase academic engaged time, and improve perceptions of school safety (Horner et al., 2010; Loeber et al., 2012; Mitchell & Bradshaw, 2013; Sugai & Horner, 2006; Swain-Bradway et al., 2013; Walker et al., 2004). Becoming equipped, with resources to reach the PBIS goals, motivated them to participate. The preservice training and focus group meeting showed teachers they were not in it alone. It provided scenario practice for teachers to feel more equipped with addressing behavior and provided helpful classroom

incentive ideas that others found helpful in their classroom. Collaborating through the focus group and preservice training provided a direct resource for areas of concern with implementing the PBIS plan. Teachers could see who was doing what effectively, what grade level procedures were being implemented with success, and who had warm-up resources to share. Teachers were motivated by other teachers with opportunities to visit their classrooms to see what they had in place. Some teachers even volunteered to help personalize a classroom reward system or classroom practice to help the less motivated teacher buy-in to the PBIS plan.

A suggestion was presented at the first focus group meeting to change the teacher's responsibility for writing a student reflection. Teachers believed this added to their responsibilities when a coworker gave them a summary of what happened and expected the homeroom teacher to write the reflection. The revised plan would require the teacher who witnessed the behavior to write the reflection and have it turned into the homeroom teacher at the end of the day. The students would have to return to the teacher who provided the reflection for a sign off signature before the end of the day. As continued discussions about the behavior management plan progressed at the weekly grade level meetings, they remained motivated with implementing the behavior plan.

Sub-question 5. Will participants be more prepared in the classroom with handling disruptions compared to their experiences from 2015–2016? After attending the preservice training and focus group meeting, participants seemed prepared to handle disruptions more during the 2016–2017 school year compared to 2015–2016. The training provided scenarios for how to address behavior and open the floor for discussions of behavior concerns not initially addressed in the preservice training or focus group. The results revealed a decrease in participants enforcing the PBIS plan and providing students with consequences. The action

mean decreased from the start of the study of a 3.48 to a mean score on the posttest of a 3.22. The data showed a decrease in the verbal redirections and warnings down to 2.98 from a pretest mean score of 3.37. Teachers shared ideas that added to the resources available for implementing the PBIS plan.

Summary

In conducting the study, the sub-questions that guided the study provided data to answer each question and answer the overall question of how teachers' perceptions related to their practices when implementing a PBIS plan in the intermediate grade level. Throughout the study, participants received updates on the number of incentives, reflections, and students entered into the practice program on a weekly basis to see if there was a change in perceptions and practices put into place after attending the preservice training. The updates also provided information on what was being implemented effectively in different grade levels to provide a resource for collaboration to continuously improve on classroom management practices. The preservice training provided teachers with a starting point of effective practices that other teachers and research have found to be effective in reducing disruptions. Participants left the training with a framework of how to move through daily procedures, a new reflection form for students to reflect on actions instead of teacher writing up the behavior, and ways to use effective communication skills to voice directives and redirections.

The collaboration of teachers during and after the preservice training motivated participants to apply the learned practices knowing that others had found them effective in their classroom. Participants also knew who to connect with for a more in-depth conversation of how to implement the practice in their own classrooms. By providing participants with weekly updates of who had success with implementing practices in their classrooms, teachers could be

more prepared when managing the behaviors in their own classrooms.

The descriptive data analysis of the pretest and posttest survey provided information on how participants changed their perceptions of the study. The results of an increase in the confidence mean average with a decrease of the action and voice mean average depicted how less time was spent enforcing consequences for student behavior. The preservice training provided teachers with resources and practices to implement in their classroom to reduce behavior and provide incentives for students making the right choices. The third through fifth grade had three out of four weeks of increase in student rewards presented which is identified by the increase in Starbucks distributed to the students as well as a three out of four weeks decrease in the number of reflection forms completed.

Chapter 5: Discussion and Conclusion

The PBIS framework is currently implemented in over 18,000 schools in the United States (Swain-Bradway et al., 2013) in an effort to decrease problem behavior, increase academic engaged time, and improve perceptions of school safety (Horner et al., 2010; Loeber et al., 2012; Mitchell & Bradshaw, 2013; Sugai & Horner, 2006; Swain-Bradway et al., 2013; Walker et al., 2004). Through analyzing the results of the surveys, interviews, and the two focus groups, I was able to determine how teachers' perceptions of their practices related to the implementation of a PBIS plan in the intermediate grade levels. Participants completed a pretest survey at the start of the study and prior to preservice training. The posttest survey was completed and analyzed after preservice training; time was also provided for implementing the practices acquired for the preservice. After the preservice training, classroom behaviors decreased and incentive rewards increased. The results of the study can aid in the educational professional development training design of an effective preservice training for staff that provides teachers with effective classroom management skills.

Summary of the Results

The purpose of this descriptive study was to determine how teachers' perceptions of their practices related to the implementation of a Positive Behavioral Interventions and Support (PBIS) plan in a Title I elementary school. I examined the relationship between teachers' perceptions and effective implementation of a PBIS plan after receiving preservice training (Chang, 2009; Emmer & Stough, 2001; Ross & Horner, 2007; Ross et al., 2011; Walker et al., 2005). The goal of having a PBIS plan with fidelity guided the design of the preservice training. The data showed the change in the fidelity of the design with a decreased number of office referral mean of 3 down to a 1.9 on the posttest survey to increased used of teachers using

problem solving strategies to address disruptions with an increase mean score from 3.8 to 4.2. Other areas of increase were visible through the data collection on teachers modeling positive social behaviors for the students. Teachers' confidence levels continued to increase as well as modeling social behaviors for students. After the preservice training on how to use their voice appropriately, teachers had to warn students less and had fewer parent calls. The role-play activity from the preservice training and continued collaboration on effective practices throughout the study increased the problem strategies for addressing disruptions. Areas of need and best practices for implementing a PBIS plan were identified during the pretest survey and focus group meeting that led to the design of the preservice training. The preservice training was created from a combination of classroom management strategies from Wong and Wong (2005), Sugai and Horner (2002), and Smith (2004) which included the following areas: managing the classroom, having the classroom ready, seating arrangements, procedures, rules, consequences, and rewards.

The data for this study was collected from 10 participants through surveys, interviews, and focus groups; the data collected provided results for answering the following questions of this study:

1. How will the participants be updated on procedures and processes of the behavior management plan?
2. Will preservice training change participants' perceptions of their practices with implementing a PBIS plan?
3. How will participants be trained on implementing the PBIS plan?
4. What motivates participants to implement the PBIS plan?

5. Will participants be more prepared in the classroom with handling disruptions compared to their experiences from the 2015–2016?

The participants received weekly updates on the number of reflection forms written for students as well as the number of students who had received the maximum of three reflections and entered the practice program for more in-depth practice on selecting an alternative and appropriate behavior in a given situation. The updates also shared information on what practices were being implemented successfully and in which grade levels. This allowed those desiring to implement the same practice a contact person to collaborate with on how to have success. The descriptive data provided information on how teacher's perceptions were changed. Although the participants' confidence levels in their abilities to implement a PBIS plan were high at the start of the study, the levels increased even higher by the end. The areas of need identified through the methodology were in participants' action of enforcing behavior management strategies. The data revealed participants spent half of their time addressing behavior concerns. The preservice training impacted participant's ability to use action to address behavior. It provided resources and practices to implement in the classroom and incentives for students making the right choices.

The preservice training was designed based on the collected data from the first focus group, pretest surveys, and interviews. The focus was on addressing the areas of concern identified through the data, as to what practices will be effective and how to implement with success. Teachers shared what they did to have success and practiced scenarios to see the application of the practice in action. Communication skills were also a priority of the training to help connect with students and use appropriate volume and tone to correct and redirect behavior. A new reflection form was introduced and explained along with a reduction in the number of write-ups before entering the practice program. The intermediate grade levels had a decrease

from 6 write-ups to 3 reflection forms to enter the practice program. Teacher shared ideas for incentives to focus more on those students making the right choice as a measure to motivate other students to make better choices. Teachers felt motivated to implement the practice knowing they had training on how to implement the practices related to the PBIS plan and had identified resources of who to connect with on specific practices for further questioning and conversation. Another motivator was seeing students who were rewarded for making the right choice holding other students accountable for their behavior.

Discussion of the Results

Although I did not share my views of the PBIS plan with the participants of the study, my observations while walking through the halls and talking with other teachers in the building, led to my desire to research PBIS and find a way to improve the behavior in the school. I knew it had to start with the teachers first. The teachers had a perception of the PBIS plan that was previously in place as another teacher responsibility but was not effective in reducing student behavior. My desire to help those around me motivated me in my study. The main objective was to identify how teachers' perceptions of their practices related to the implementation of a Positive Behavioral Intervention and Support (PBIS) plan in a Title I elementary school.

I did not believe the teachers doubted their capability of having success with behavior but lacked the training and resources to expand what they have already tried and found as an effective practice. The pretest confidence average mean of 4.1 and posttest survey average mean of 4.2 revealed that teachers had confidence in their ability to manage the classroom but lacked the effective practices that would reduce the occurrence of behavior issues. I needed to provide a setting for the teachers to discuss their concerns among their peers. This is how the surveys, interviews, and focus group were developed for the study as instruments to collect data. The

area of concern identified through these instruments were using appropriate voice with providing warning and redirections that could be implemented effectively to reduce the behavior distractions and allow more time for instruction. Over the course of the study, the average mean for taking action to enforce behavior management decreased from the pretest score of 3.48 to a 3.22. In addition, teachers having to redirect student with voice decreased from 3.37 to 2.98. The decrease is associated with the results of the sub-question findings.

I believed that if teachers felt informed, this would increase their motivation to continue in their efforts. Teachers were provided with weekly updates, provided preservice training, provided with practices to implement in the classrooms, motivated to participate, and equipped with resources to be more prepared with handling disruptions. I associate the positive outcome of the study with the collaboration of teachers. Teachers shared what was working and voiced their opinion of what was not working in an effort to improve the school environment. Because of the weekly summaries, teachers could receive immediate feedback to help address concerns without having to wait for a staff meeting or professional development. When the behavior spiked in Week 3, teachers were able to identify the link as the change in the level of instruction. Knowing the problem helped the teachers to differentiate instruction to address the social and academic concerns. The adjustment aligned with the theory of Applied Behavior Analysis by applying interventions to improve socially significant behaviors to a meaningful degree and demonstrated with the decrease in behavior concerns in Week 4 that the interventions employed were responsible for the improvement in behavior (Baer, Wolf, & Risley, 1968).

In 2015–2016, teachers not only spent instructional time addressing disruptive behavior using their voices but also the action of having to fill out an office referral. The previous referral forms required the teacher to stop instruction, address the student and the behavior, complete a

section of a form with six sections, then take action based on which write up number this student was violating. It took six incidents with written documentation and parent contact before a student could be sent to the office. The teacher had to maintain the running record form for students' behavior and complete incidents on one form. It took time to contact the parent about the incident that took away from instruction. Many times, teachers stayed after school to make the calls to parents; sometimes this did not happen due to after school meetings and professional development. If a teacher did not contact the parent, the referral had to be removed. This year the teachers had the reflection resource that only required the teacher to fill out the opening portion. The students had to complete the rest of the form over the entire school day. Teachers were able to reduce the time of correcting the behavior and could continue to instructional time. The notice was sent home and the student had to return with the parent signature. Teachers only had to call if the parent did not sign the form or the student had received 3 reflections. With the reduction of 6 reflections to 3 reflections from the previous year, students had a faster response to correct behavior that was constantly disrupting classrooms.

The study was a contributing factor to the school environment's improved behavior and the increase of students being rewarded for making the right choices. The students also changed their perceptions by holding each other accountable for making better choices. Teachers collaborated more on their success and voiced their concerns with what was not working in their classroom. If teachers were unsuccessful, they knew who to go to for help for specific practices of the PBIS plan they still had difficulty implementing. There is an awareness of effective practices and training others now. The administration was grateful for the study and realized that it was developed and designed to improve the school and the positive changes seen throughout the school.

Discussion of the Results in Relations to the Literature

Some schools are implementing PBIS plans as a school-wide incentive but are not providing teachers with preservice training, which provide in-depth knowledge of the PBIS plan or provide training for effective practices for implementing a PBIS plan. The current preservice plan for the study site addressed more of the start of the year housekeeping practices, district and state required safety training, the students' self-management program, and incentives of the PBIS plan without providing PBIS training. There is a complex and reciprocal relationship between teachers' perceptions and practices (Chang, 2009; Emmer & Stough, 2001; Ross & Horner, 2007; Ross et al., 2011; Walker et al., 2005). Preservice training was provided to change teachers' perceptions and provide resources to help teachers be effective in their practices with implementing the PBIS plan. The focus groups and interviews also provided insight on classroom management strategies and the application of intervention strategies in the classroom. According to Creswell (2013), researchers need to investigate real-life contemporary bounded systems to collect data that can be analyzed for themes and shared characteristics. The systems used in this research were preservice training and focus groups. The literature states that inadequate training of behavior management plans may hinder teachers from implementing preventive-focused initiatives (Chafouleas et al., 2006; Emmer & Stough, 2001; Levine, 2006; Skiba & Knesting, 2001). When a school provides no training, the school environment is affected as well as a chance for negative outcomes for students (Hawken et al., 2007; Hutchings et al., 2007; Murray & Malmgren, 2005; Pianta et al., 2002; Pianta & Stuhlman, 2004; Scott et al., 2001; Thomas, 2010).

From 2000 to 2010, educational researchers have made substantial strides in exploring the complex and reciprocal relation among teachers' perceptions and teachers' practices (Chang,

2009; Emmer & Stough, 2001; Ross & Horner, 2007; Ross et al., 2011; Walker et al., 2005). I was motivated in my efforts to provide teachers with preservice training to better support their need to manage classrooms after being provided effective practices to implement a PBIS plan and increase the amount of instructional time in the classroom. My efforts to provide the preservice training can reduce behavior disruptions and focus on addressing academic concerns. Within the study, I used surveys, focus group, and interviews to help guide the design of an effective preservice training and showed the importance of ongoing communication with teachers on the progress of the PBIS plan in the school across grade levels. The updates shined light on concerns as they arose and allowed teachers to collaborate in order to correct or adjust practices with immediate changes.

Limitations

The study was conducted at the start of the school year. This limited the full participation of all 14 intermediate grade level teachers due to other non-research preservice training requirements for preparation of the start of the school year. However, 10 teachers did participate throughout the study. The study was important because there is limited research on the intermediate grade level teachers' perceptions with implementing a PBIS plan. The results were as expected; by providing effective preservice training, teachers' perceptions changed. The time constraints of providing training and meeting with teachers for interviews were adjusted with teachers volunteering to meet after duty hours. With more weeks in the study, the mean averages in action and voice for the participants may have depicted a larger gap of decreased usage.

Implication of the Results for Practice, Policy, and Theory

The value and presence of preservice training were confirmed through research. The research stated that student learning and school climate can be improved with evaluating

teachers' perceptions about the way they implement a PBIS plan and identify ways to increase the plan's sustainability (Boxer, Edwards-Leeper, Goldstein, Musher-Eizenman, & Dubow, 2003; Crothers et al., 2006; Sobeck et al., 2006; Soza-Vento & Tubman, 2004). In the study, I evaluated teachers' perceptions to identify areas of need. This data guided the preservice design to provide resources that increased the effectiveness of practices, which in turn increased the PBIS plan's sustainability. The changes in teachers' perceptions were visible through the data analysis of the pretest and posttest surveys. The study added new knowledge on the implementation of a PBIS plan related to teachers' perceptions for intermediate grade levels and Title I schools. Implementing a PBIS plan provides preventive measure that can allow children to receive the much-needed intervention before a real crisis presents itself (Gottfredson & Gottfredson, 2002; Severson et al., 2007). The population dynamic for a Title I schools differs from non-Title I school and thus a generalized PBIS implementation plan without specialized preservice training will not result in fidelity. According to Sugai and Horner (2002), the proactive PBIS practices will reduce the onset of behavior concerns at the start of the school year (2002). If the behavior is not addressed, there is a chance it will increase in intensity and frequency throughout the year and challenge the teacher's ability to maintain an effective learning environment. The preservice training provided teachers with practices to address behavior. When a student does not have a clear understanding of the classroom rules early on, they may spend countless minutes finding things to occupy their interest, which takes away from minutes that should be spent on classroom instruction (Conroy et al., 2008; Hardman & Smith, 1999; Smith & Misra, 1992).

The research from the study provided data to support the involvement of teachers through focus groups and collaboration, improves their perception of their practices related to

implementing a PBIS plan effectively in their school. Other schools that fall under the Title I umbrella apply the procedures from the study to their school's behavior management plan. Having an effective PBIS plan allows teachers to spend more time on instruction and less on distractions. Academic intervention cannot be accomplished successfully without first having an effective behavior intervention. Teachers will apply the knowledge learned from the preservice training to better manage the classroom and provide effective instruction. For schools to see a change in academics, they must first address the behavior concerns and provide teachers with resources that will allow them to be successful. Thus, allowing students to learn in a safe environment that stimulates thinking which leads to academic achievement.

Recommendations for Future Research

The PBIS framework is currently implemented in over 18,000 schools in the United States (Swain-Bradway et al., 2013). However, there are a small number of schools that are Title I or focus on the intermediate grade levels. The intermediate grade level is the transitional time for students moving from elementary school to middle school. Teachers need to be well equipped to help students build social skills that help prepare them for life changes (Anderson et al., 2004; Bradshaw & Pas, 2011; Prince et al., 2010; Sugai, Horner, & Gresham, 2002;). This study can provide a guide to implementing the PBIS framework to be more age appropriate in developing effective practices and preservice training of teachers to reduce student behaviors as well as provide suggestions for effective practices when working with a diverse population.

Research by Duchnowski & Kutash (2011) focused more on behavior management and little on universal preventive strategies. Following the procedures from my study toward a proactive approach to classroom management practices provides teachers opportunities for more specialized and intensive interventions for individual students. The specialized and intense

interventions came from the weekly updates on progress and teacher continuous self-reflection and collaboration of effective practices. The study aligns with the work by Betts et al. (2014) that believes educators can become effective in managing classrooms after receiving training on how to implement a PBIS plan and therefore reduce disruptive behaviors. There are potential barriers relating to fidelity when implementing school-based programs such as teacher buy-in and the perceptions of those implementing the PBIS plan (Bruhn, Hirsch, & Lloyd, 2015; Domitrovich et al., 2008; Han & Weiss, 2005; Wandersman et al., 2008). A focus group prior to the start of the school year provides an opportunity for teachers to assess the previous year's PBIS plan.

Conclusion

This study sought to answer the question of how preservice training affects teachers' perceptions of their practices related to implementing a PBIS plan in the intermediate grade levels at a Title I elementary school in Texas. The preservice training increased their perceptions by providing them with resources to be effective in implementing their practices. Teachers had a voice in the design of the preservice training by allowing analysis of their concerns from interviews, the pretest survey, and listening during the first focus group. The diversity of a Title I school requires a different level of student-teacher relationship to be successful. The teachers were motivated and committed to providing a safe learning environment for the school that they were constantly sharing ideas across the grade levels on what was working. Through observations, I was able to record the drive for excellence of teachers with creating more incentives for students making the right choice and offering students a chance to reflect when they did not make the right choice. I was so inspired by the participants' level of enthusiasm during the study that I improved my own classroom management practices and incentives. I saw

a change in the students at the study site and felt appreciative to the administration for allowing me to conduct the study with the fast pace start of the new school year.

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Appendix A

Teacher Classroom Management Strategies Questionnaire

Place an X in the box under the answer that most closely fits your opinion	**Rarely/Never**	**Sometimes**	**Half the time**	**Often**	**Very often**
Confident in managing current behavior problems in your classroom					
Confident in managing current behavior future behavior problems in the classroom					
Confident in your ability to promote students emotional, social, and problem solving skills					
Model positive social behaviors					
Describe or comment on bad behavior					
Reward targeted positive behaviors with incentives					
Use time away to calm down for students					
Single out a child or a group of children for misbehavior					
Reprimand with loud voice					
In-school suspension					
Warning to send out of the classroom if behavior does not improve					
Call parents to report bad behaviors					
Write student office referral					
Use verbal redirection					
Use problem solving strategy					

Webster-Stratton, 2012.
(Permission granted for use in dissertation. See Appendix C)

Appendix B

Interview Checklist

- ❑ Describe the biggest challenge you've had in a job or student teaching placement and how you handled it.
- ❑ Give me an example of a time when you had to persuade someone to accept an idea or proposal.
- ❑ Tell me about a situation when you had to learn something new in a short time. How did you do this?
- ❑
- ❑ Summarize a situation where you had to generate a new idea or suggestion at work or school and tell me about how you got this idea implemented.
- ❑ How have you most constructively dealt with disappointment and turned it into a learning experience?
- ❑ Describe a situation where you had to "think on your feet" to handle an emerging unexpected situation.
- ❑ What specific approaches or ideas have you used in dealing with at-risk students?
- ❑ Describe the process you have used in dealing with a student who was disrupting the class.
- ❑ What provisions do you make for meeting the range of skills and needs commonly present in a classroom?
- ❑ What steps have you taken prior to a parent-teacher conference to ensure its success?
- ❑ Describe your experiences working with a diverse student body.
- ❑ Explain a difficult situation, how you handled it, what you learned from it and what would you do differently now.

Permission granted for use in dissertation. See Appendix C

Appendix C

Permission for Use

Your request was forwarded to me for response. The questions are adopted from the Career Development Center at Buffalo State College handout on Interviewing. For a dissertation I would recommend you use The American Association for Employment in Education, Inc.'s Job Search Handbook for Educators, 2016. Many years ago we modeled our questions from theirs. They have changed throughout the years. But you do have permission to use ours.

[redacted]

[redacted]

Incredible Years <IncredibleYears@incredibleyears.com>

re: permission to use

June 13, 2016 3:09 PM

Hi Tonnett,

Thank you for the email. Our measures and forms are available on our website for your use.

We ask that you site the materials appropriately as Carolyn Webster-Stratton's work.

[redacted]

Appendix D

Informed Consent From For Faculty Participation in Survey, Interviews, and Preservice Training

Due to the fact that "Name Redacted" Elementary School faculty names will not be included in the research data, this form is for administrative purposes. I, "Name Redacted", give permission for Tonnett Davis to involve "Name Redacted" Elementary teachers in her Action Research Study entitled: Effectiveness of PBIS on Disruptive Behaviors of Intermediate Students. I understand that Tonnett's research is to be done as a part of her Doctorate of Education program at Concordia University, and will involve the surveying, interviewing, and preservice training of current third, fourth, fifth grade, and specials teachers. I understand that Tonnett's ultimate research goal is to answer the questions: How will the PBIS based behavior management plan impact the behaviors of intermediate students? How will the behavior management plan change student behaviors? How will the behavior management plan change the school environment? Will preservice training change teachers' perceptions of the behavior management plan?

I understand that the results of the study may or may not directly benefit "Name Redacted" Elementary School, though the objective is that they will. I understand that at no time during the research will my name or the names of faculty be used in connection with the results. All personal data and outcomes will be kept confidential. I understand that "Name Redacted" participation in the study is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw our involvement in it at any time. Tonnett will keep us up-to-date on her research, show us potential surveys, and work with administration in scheduling interviews and preservice training. I have read the above information and agree for my faculty to take part in Tonnett Davis' Action Research Study.

"Name Redacted" 6/22/16
Signature Date

Appendix E

Probing Questions

1. Could you please tell me more about…

2. I'm not quite sure I understood …Could you tell me about that some more?

3. I'm not certain what you mean by… Could you give me some examples?

4. Could you tell me more about your thinking on that?

5. You mentioned….Could you tell me more about that What stands out in your mind about that?

6. This is what I thought I heard…Did I understand you correctly?

7. So what I hear you saying is…"

8. Can you give me an example of…

9. What makes you feel that way?

10. What are some of your reasons for liking it?

11. You just told me about…. I'd also like to know about….

Camino, Zeldin, and Payne-Jackson (1995).

Appendix F

Focus Meeting #1

The strategy we used to share ideas could be effective in the classroom.

Behavior

Shared what we felt were advantages and/or disadvantages of our current program. Other positive ideas included:

1. Let Seniors/Ambassadors hand out the daily Starbucks.
2. Let students write down three incentives that they would like to earn when they reach a leadership level. When they reach that level, let them choose one of the items from their cards.
3. Adapt current school system, but adapt to meet the needs of the students. Ex: Students earn Starbucks as a group/table and then use them to spend at a classroom store.
4. Have students work as a groups to earn Starbucks for a common goal (line up early, etc.)

Things to consider that will make our program work better:

1. The teacher who sees the behavior is the one to write the reflection. This helps parents and staff to target when and where the behavior occurs. The teacher should return the form to the homeroom teacher.
2. Some incentives should have a limited number of certificates (example principal of the day).
3. Intervention teachers could use DoJo as their reward system. Other ideas include "smelly smiley" and having your own list of rewards.
4. Remember: for every reflection given 5 Starbucks should be given out to those students with the appropriate behavior

5. By the end of the first nine weeks = best of the best should be Juniors; after Christmas = best of the best should be Seniors; etc.
6. If a child moves in during the year, you may choose to give him or her the amount of Starbucks based on when they come (example: a student coming at semester might need to earn only 50 Starbucks to become a junior).

Looking ahead:

1. Students complete a reflective sheet when a behavior occurs. A suggestion is to have this as a carbon so one copy would go home and one stays with the teacher.
2. The K–2 form requires the student to draw what happened.
3. The 3–5 form requires the student to answer questions. A showed a form that the team decided would be appropriate to use. B suggested adding a section where the student monitors their behavior at various times throughout the day to see if the behavior improves (or does not improve) to help the child learn to monitor their choices.
2. Instead of 6 reflections, suggest 3 reflections prompt action.
3. Give students a chance to "ease" into their morning by completing a sheet (circle something that indicates their feelings for their morning). This could be part of their morning attendance routine. This would help the teacher gauge how a student's day may be going. C suggested having boxes/buckets denoting how the morning is going (happy, sad...or...Having a good day/Not so great. Students will drop a card with their name on it in one of the buckets. Teachers will check the "negative" box first and touch base with those students.

4. D talked about Ron Clark's plan of having students belong to a "house". Students would report to their "house" (cone) in the gym. These would be mixed-age groups. Students would be able to talk within their "house" - possibly given a prompt for discussion. Then, each teacher would be assigned a group and would meet with them once a month.
5. If a student receives more than one reflection in a day, the parent should be called.
6. If a student earns a reflection, they will have a chance to correct their behavior. Even if the behavior "fixes" their problem, it will still count towards the practice program.
7. For the younger students, 3 reflections prompts a discussion to decide if the practice program is appropriate.
8. Grades 3–5, after three reflections student will enter the practice program.
9. Practice Program: During lunch/recess block, the newly hired school social worker will monitor the practice program and help students work on specific behaviors. The current form will be used. Goal is 80% success on any given day for 8 out of 10 days. If they do not reach their goal, one day in-school suspension. If they do not pass it the second time around, they will receive 2 days in-school suspension. If they are not successful during those two times, they will be referred to our Social Worker to work with students based on their needs.
10. Physical education teachers will check in with students in the practice program and give them one form at the beginning/end of the day. Coaches will identify the best way to manage the afternoon "check-out" meeting.

11. If a student has a junior/senior/ambassador badge and receives 3 reflections, they will lose their leadership badge one level *with teacher/principal discretion* (ex: if behavior accelerates, the decision may be made to go to the practice program with a discussion with the school principal.)

12. Reflections may be given out after the first week of school when students are taught the school/classroom expectations.

13. Starbucks may NOT be taken away for behavior, but students may not receive as many depending on the quality of the job.

14. If a student loses his or her "spirit" stick, that will not be replaced. If they lose their self manager badge, it will cost 5 Starbucks to be replaced. Teachers should track which students are at various leadership levels.

What Does the Research Say…

Behavior : https://www.pbis.org/research Looked at the website and discussed the evidence of effectiveness and the Tiers

Restorative Discipline What the videos on how to conduct the circles

Check In Circles in Classroom - How are you doing today? (Plastic Bag)

Rating Scale 1–5 or w/ visuals - What will teachers do with it?

Proactive Circles – ways to prevent or reduce behavior issues

Responsive Circle – what will student ownership look like

Student suggestive reflection 5 Questions

What happened?
What were you thinking at the time?
What have you thought about since?
Who has been impacted by this and how have they been impacted?
What ideas do you have to make things right?

Reflections for K–2 and 3–5 were drafted and approved and sent off to copy center for implementation the second week of school.

Appendix G

Focus Meeting #2

Reflecting over the implementation of the revised behavior management plan.

Student Behavior

Shared advantages and/or disadvantages of the revised behavior program.

1. Teachers expressed that the social and emotional training for the first week of school allowed more time to model appropriate behavior and have students discuss scenarios.
2. The student reflections for what they did inappropriately have changed the regular "I'm sorry" to more genuine and thought out apologies.
3. Many students are concerned about receiving a reflection and those who have received the first one correct the behavior quicker with a warning to avoid getting the second reflection.
4. Teacher shared that if they raise the clipboard when the class is off track, they quickly correct themselves.
5. Visually see less green folders being carried throughout the school.
6. The lunch/recess reporting to a specific location is much better than the reporting to the office last year.
7. There is still that small percentage that is not affected by the reflection form.
8. Fifth grade reports no situations like such in their grade level. This could be related to the Thursday Good Note presented at the weekly grade level meeting with the students. The notes are personal messages to a student for doing something that stood out. Each teacher on the team selects a student. Also, the Friday prized bucket has been effective for the fifth graders.

Did the preservice training help?

1. Many stated the incentive sharing helped them think of ways to add to the school-wide incentive in their classrooms/grade levels.
2. Listening to what others had to share helped to identify resourceful teachers to go to for ideas.
3. The collaboration from the first meeting spilled over into the weekly grade level meetings.
4. One group stated leaving the meeting and going to shop for prize box items to provide variety across the grade level.

Appendix H

PBIS Preservice Training

Meeting Agenda

August 26, 2016

Type of Meeting: Training Meeting
Meeting Facilitator: Researcher Tonnett Davis
Invitees: Study Participants

I. Call to order

II. Introduction

III. Results of Pretest Survey Data and Interviews

IV. Summary of Focus Group Meeting

a) Reflection Form

b) Number of forms before enrollment into Practice Program

c) Self-Management Badge

V. PBIS plan

a) Daily procedures

b) Consequences

c) Communication

d) Scenario activity

VI. Question and Answer time

VII. Adjournment

Appendix I

Reflection Form

Student Name: _____ Date: _____ Time: _____

The Six Pillars of Character℠

(Please select which of the Six Pillars of Character needs to be reflected upon)

Please Reflect On: _____

_____

_____

In Your Own Words (Student's Reflection):

What Happened? _____

_____

_____

What Were You Thinking At the Time? _____

_____

_____

What Have You Thought About Since? _____

_____

_____

Who Has Been Impacted By This & How Have They Been Impacted?

_____

_____

_____

What Ideas Do You Have to Make Things Right? _____

_____

_____

How Has Your Day Improved?

At Recess: _____

_____

End of the Day: _____

_____

Teacher Signature: _____ Parent Signature: _____

(Permission granted for use in dissertation by study site. Created by participants in Focus Group Session 1)

Appendix J

Table 2

Means for Highest and Lowest Responses to Pretest Survey Question Stems

Highest Mean		*M*
Q5	Describe or comment on bad behavior	4.5
Q1	Confident in managing current behavior problems in your classroom	4.2
Q2	Confident in managing current behavior future behavior problems in the classroom	4.2
Q3	Confident in your ability to promote students emotional, social, and problem solving skills	3.9
Q6	Reward targeted positive behaviors with incentives	3.9
Lowest Means		*M*
Q10	In-school suspension	2.3
Q9	Reprimand with loud voice	2.5
Q8	Single out a child or a group of children for misbehavior	2.6
Q13	Write student office referral	3
Q11	Warning to send out of the classroom if behavior does not improve	3.2

Notes. Scale 1 = Never, 5 = Always

Appendix K

Table 3

Means for Highest and Lowest Responses to Posttest Survey Question Stems

Highest Mean		*M*
Q1	Confident in managing current behavior problems in your classroom	4.4
Q4	Model positive social behavior	4.3
Q3	Confident in your ability to promote students emotional, social, and problem solving skills	4.2
Q15	Use problem solving strategy	4.2
Q2	Confident in managing current behavior future behavior problems in the classroom	4.1
Lowest Means		*M*
Q10	In-school suspension	1.5
Q13	Write student office referral	1.9
Q9	Reprimand with loud voice	2.1
Q12	Call parents to report bad behaviors	2.5
Q11	Warning to send out of the classroom if behavior does not improve	2.6

Notes. Scale 1 = Never, 5 = Always

Appendix L

Table 4

Pretest and Posttest Survey Means

Classroom Management Practices Items		Pretest *M*	Posttest *M*
Q1	Confident in managing current behavior problems in your classroom	4.2	4.4
Q2	Confident in managing current behavior future behavior problems in the classroom	4.2	4.1
Q3	Confident in your ability to promote students emotional, social, and problem solving skills	3.9	4.2
Q4	Model positive social behavior	4.1	4.3
Q5	Describe or comment on bad behavior	4.5	3.8
Q6	Reward targeted positive behaviors with incentives	3.9	3.8
Q7	Use time away to calm down for students	3.8	3.6
Q8	Single out a child or a group of children for misbehavior	2.6	2.8
Q9	Reprimand with loud voice	2.5	2.1
Q10	In-school suspension	2.3	1.5
Q11	Warning to send out of the classroom if behavior does not improve	3.2	2.6
Q12	Call parents to report bad behaviors	3.7	2.5
Q13	Write student office referral	3	1.9
Q14	Use verbal redirection	3.7	4.1
Q15	Use problem solving strategy	3.8	4.2

Notes. Scale 1 = Never, 5 = Always

APPENDIX M: Statement of Original Work

I attest that:

1. I have read, understood, and complied with all aspects of the Concordia University-Portland Academic Integrity Policy during the development and writing of this dissertation.
2. Where information and/or materials from outside sources has been used in the production of this dissertation, all information and/or materials from outside sources has been properly referenced and all permissions required for use of the information and/or materials have been obtained, in accordance with research standards outlined in the *Publication Manual of The American Psychological Association*

Tonnett Lashone Davis

Digital Signature

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Name (Typed)

April 17, 2017

Date