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DESCRIBING HIGH SCHOOL READINESS; IMPLEMENTING SCHOOL-WIDE POSITIVE  
BEHAVIOR SUPPORTS

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of  
Philosophy at Virginia Commonwealth University.

by

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November, 2012

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EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP  
VIRGINIA COMMONWEALTH UNIVERSITY

PH. D. IN EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP

This is to certify that the dissertation prepared by Emily S. Snead, entitled:

*DESCRIBING HIGH SCHOOL READINESS; IMPLEMENTING SCHOOL-WIDE POSITIVE  
BEHAVIOR SUPPORTS*

has been approved by her committee as satisfactory completion of the dissertation requirement for the  
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## ABSTRACT

This study sought to measure the current status and priorities of high school staff around effective behavior supports. The school district studied includes nine comprehensive high schools and one alternative education site. The use of effective behavior supports in the areas of school-wide supports, classroom supports, non-instructional supports, and individual student supports are the foundations for school-wide positive behavior supports, SWPBS, a tiered system of interventions designed to address the behavioral needs of all students within a school building. The study was designed as a mixed methods investigation. An online survey was created from the Effective Behavior Supports, Self-Assessment Scale, EBSSAS, which was administered to a random sample of teachers, school administrators and school counselors. Ten high school principals also participated in direct interviews. The study found that school-wide, classroom and non-instructional supports are partially in place across the district, while individual student supports are rated as not in place. School-wide, classroom and non-instructional supports status varied from correlating priorities in statistically significant ways, with the schools systemically reporting these areas as low priority for improvement. However, in the area of individual student supports, there was no statistical difference between the status and priority rating (not in place, and low, respectively), indicating less confidence in those types of behavioral supports district wide. Implications of these findings include a need for systematic address of individual student support structures, and the usefulness of developing a district-wide manner of coordinating of individual school efforts to meet the needs of students with habitual problem behaviors. Through a district wide support structure, each school should use the data gleaned from the survey responses to develop their own tiered system of support for addressing students with more significant behavioral needs, through means other than suspension.

# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION

### Background

School disciplinary statistics and community violence data indicate that a growing number of children are not complying with the laws of the community, and are therefore spending more time outside of the educational setting (Lane et al. 2007; Lewis et al. 2004, & McIntosh et al. 2009). These incidents provide great challenges to the overall atmosphere of the school and community and to the successful completion of high school for these youngsters (Blonigen et al. 2008). Without the completion of a high school program children leave the educational system ill prepared for post-secondary life in the areas of independent living and are disadvantaged in post-secondary educational opportunities and employment. Often times, these young people engage in further criminal activity and are unable to sustain productive adult lives (Biglan, 1995, & Morse et al. 2004).

Schools and communities share concern that children learn pro-social methods for behaving in society (Handler et al., 2007). Historically, educational discipline systems have oscillated between the zero-tolerance policies that deliver specific consequences to all students and more flexible disciplinary procedures that allow school administrators and teachers to use judgment in delivering consequences (Barnhart, Franklin, & Alleman, 2008). While elementary schools are more adept at instructing students in pro-social behavior, middle schools have less success with the direct instruction of these skills (Fairbanks et al 2007; Hawken, MacLeod & Rawlings, 2007). High schools rarely directly teach appropriate behaviors. Most high schools favor celebration of successes in academic and athletic endeavors. Personal achievement is celebrated while group pro-social behaviors are expected (Irvin et al 2004).

School-wide positive behavioral support (SWPBS) rests on the premise that there are fundamental principles that must be in place in order to effectively plan and implement a sustainable program (Horner & Sugai, 2004). Systems that are considered effective in reducing suspensions have been defined by:

- clear expectations throughout the school,
- systematic instruction on behavioral expectations,
- on-going systems of rewarding students for behaving as expected,
- formal systems for responding to violations of behavioral expectations,
- on-going monitoring and analysis of discipline data,
- consistent leadership that encourages and promotes the system, and
- district level support for the program.

Consistency of behavioral expectations and systemic instruction on pro-social behavior is much more difficult to establish on the high school level. Student and teacher populations in high schools are significantly larger than that of a middle school or an elementary school (Lane et al. 2009). Classes are taught by a larger number of more diverse teachers who specialize in their content areas, but not on the fundamentals of behavior support. On-going systems of rewards for positive behavior are rarely well-developed and students don't always choose to participate when the systems are in place (Irwin & Algozzine, 2005).

High schools are generally effective at setting and enforcing disciplinary procedures. Clearly defined "Codes of Student Conduct" are typically used in school districts, with each individual school and administrator tasked with collecting and analyzing student conduct violations (Handler et al. 2007). However, district level support for these programs is not always embraced because of cost, community and school support, other school initiatives and the intensive planning and implementation strategies that must be carried out on a very large scale (Lane et al. 2007; Luiselli et al. 2005).

Research in the areas of planning, implementing and gauging effectiveness of school wide

positive behavioral support systems is limited in the area of high schools. Vast research has been conducted to identify and measure effective behavioral systems for children, specifying critical constructs that must be understood by school staff, students and families but it is limited to elementary and some middle schools (McIntosh et al. 2006; Metzler et al. 2001; Dwyer, Osher & Hoffman 2000; Mayer 1995; Nelson, Martella & Galand 1998; Safran & Oswald 2003 & Mayer 1994 and 1996). However, much of the research that exists focuses on full- scale implementation of school-wide positive behavioral support plans. Currently, there is little research that measures each of the seven key components needed within a high school to support the basis of a school-wide positive behavioral support model.

### Overview of the Study

This study sought to identify the current status of ten high schools in a large school district near the greater Richmond, Virginia area in their use of effective behavior supports. It looked at school staff responses to survey items that addressed two things. First, the current status of effective behavior supports was rated as not in place, partially in place, or in place. Second, the survey asked for prioritization of each of the items by indicating low, medium, or high priority for each.

### Overview of the Literature

The current literature describes the fundamental concepts that support school-wide positive behavioral supports as well as the rationale for using a pro-active method of increasing pro-social behaviors. To date, the literature has focused on elementary and middle school implementation. No empirical research has been conducted to determine high school readiness for implementation of SWPBS. This study will provide a baseline for describing the efforts of a large diverse school district in assessing current behavioral supports that are in place, and the priorities for strengthening them.

Positive Behavior Supports (PBS) has a significant body of research indicating that the use of systematic methods for teaching, acknowledging and rewarding pro-social behaviors leads to a reduction or eradication of non-desired behaviors in students who require intensive intervention. When those systems of support are applied to entire schools, and even entire school systems, many issues arise that can deteriorate the infrastructure surrounding the SWPBS model. In many cases, this is due to lack of readiness within the school to embark on such a full-scale shift of practice.

Implementation of SWPBS depends on the organization's ability to shift the reward-consequence framework to focus more on the positive attributes of student behavior. It requires buy-in from the members of a school, direct instruction of pro-social behaviors, consistent reinforcement of the desired student behaviors, data analysis to determine effectiveness of practices and appropriate consequences for violations of the school created rules for behavior. The only method that can systemically increase buy-in and stakeholder participation is by getting feedback early, often and succinctly. By gauging the readiness of the school, the implementation will be more successful because more members of the system will "own" the results.

Once the system is in place, and the evaluative cycle is beginning, measuring the fidelity of the model is paramount. Many tools exist that can be used to measure the implementation of the model, both at the universal tier and beyond. These tools require communication from all levels of stakeholders to ensure consistent understanding and application. If the system is implemented to fidelity, the school district should see an increase in attendance and graduation rates, and reduction in disciplinary referrals resulting in disproportionate use of disciplinary practices due to consistency among school staff in understanding and application of appropriate behavior supports. Some of the methods for measuring those student outcomes include analysis of student discipline records, graduation rates, anecdotal records and ratings on pro-social behavior scales. However, the model's



implementation to fidelity must be measured prior to any analysis of outcome data. Because of this timeline, research on full scale implementation is sparse.

The particular concerns of secondary schools, specifically high schools, are illustrated in the structure of the organization. For instance, high schools are often departmentalized and have many hands providing inconsistent rules and regulations. The size and complexity of the relationships within a high school often prevent high school principals from embarking on full-scale implementation of SWPBS. The research base is small, on the impact SWPBS can have on the outcomes of students, but growing.

### Rationale for the Study

The purpose of the study was two-fold. First, the study sought to determine the extent to which school staff members believe each of the key effective behavior support levels (classroom, non-classroom, school wide and individual student) were in place within their schools. Next, the priority of each system was determined. These questions aimed at the readiness of the school to embark upon the planning and implementation required for a system of school-wide positive behavioral support. Additionally, they questions gauged their current belief that the current behavioral systems required attention in the coming school year. This information is helpful in describing other school districts that are similar in community make-up and offers some comparison groups for future research. It may give light to the features that should be prioritized in building plans to support effective behavioral programs in high schools. None of these measures have been utilized on a full-scale model that includes a school district with such diversity at the high school level.

### Research Questions

1. To what degree have schools in a school district implemented school-wide positive behavioral supports?
2. How do teachers in a school district prioritize components of school-wide positive behavioral supports?

## CHAPTER 2

### REVIEW OF LITERATURE

#### Statement of the Problem and Guiding Framework

Students across the nation are faced with the challenges of effectively navigating the complex systems that make up our educational system, both academically and behaviorally. Many of those students require more than the standard system of reactive discipline to remain effectively engaged in the learning process. Teaching and learning in many schools are disrupted by problem behavior, like harassment, aggression, social withdrawal and insubordination (Walker et al. 2005). It is estimated that 15% of the student population requires at least one specialized program designed to address specific problem behaviors or characteristics that place them at risk of school failure, while 5% of those students require more intensive supports (Barrett, Bradshaw, & Lewis-Palmer 2008). Fortunately, the literature documents many effective classroom management and school-wide discipline practices for establishing safe and effective classrooms and schools (Dwyer, Osher, & Hoffman, 2000; Mayer, 1995; Metzler, Biglan, Rusby & Sprague, 2001; Nelson, Martella, & Galand, 1998; Safran, & Oswald, 2003; Sulzer-Azaroff, & Mayer, 1994), though there is not a copious amount of evidence that empirically test these.

A number of issues arise when attempting to implement a system that can address the behavioral needs of students such as individual student needs, special population needs, training costs, district buy-in and political commitment to the goal. Therefore, the need to integrate multiple programs over a continuum evolved in order to provide an array of possible solutions to student problem behaviors that lead to synergistic effects. The problem was that no rhyme or reason was necessarily and intentionally employed to determine the most effective use of the practices, including a process by which to determine who needed what level of support. Without a systematic way of

applying the programs, students continued to emerge with problem behaviors leading to increased absences and suspensions from school and decreased student performance (McCord, 1995).

Current national trends in discipline statistics indicate that a growing number of students are not succeeding in schools due to their behavioral patterns (Barnhart, & Franklin, 2008).

Disproportionality among subgroups such as students with disabilities, those of minority status, those with low socio-economic status, and those students with limited English proficiency are all affected in most states. These students receive more than their statistically proportionate share of disciplinary consequences. In addition to school failure, these students typically face social challenges outside of the school that impede their ability to remain engaged in the educational process (Sprague et al., 2001). Often those students with the highest rates of suspension have the lowest rates of graduation and the highest rates of incarceration (Kortering, Braziel, & Tompkins, 2002). Certainly, the behavioral issues impact the students' ability to complete a program, as dictated by *No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB)*. Thus schools have been searching for methods to increase student engagement in general education environments and their own Adequate Yearly Progress towards the cut points designed through *NCLB*. One promising avenue has been developing over the last 20 years in the strategic data-based practices related to School-Wide Positive Behavioral Supports. This structure provides a framework where only the most unsuccessful students are prioritized to receive intensive behavioral supports, therefore increasing the number of students who can be supported in the general education environment.

School-wide Positive Behavior Support (SWPBS) refers to a system of prevention that integrates valued outcomes, behavioral and biomedical science, empirically validated procedures and systems change to enhance quality of life and minimize problem behaviors, on a school-wide scale (Carr et al., 1999; Sugai & Horner, 2006). School-wide Positive Behavior Supports addresses the

varied needs of students in learning pro-social behaviors through a graduated set of supports beginning with primary prevention (Tier I), secondary prevention (Tier II) and tertiary prevention (Tier III). The tiered model of prevention is based upon the idea of a triangle, with the bulk of students existing in the base, requiring minimal support outside of a consistently reinforced school-wide system of behavioral expectations. Each successive tier, moving towards the apex, indicates increasing energy and emphasis on specific interventions that are effective in changing behaviors. Tier II is characterized by the presence of behavior screening tools and specific intervention strategies for students that are considered to be at risk for school failure, while Tier III is specific to individual students based on functional behavior assessment (Sugai et al., 1999). Emphasis is placed on operationally defined behaviors that can be measured to quantify increased positive student behavioral and academic outcomes. This primary tier of prevention is considered to be the most fundamental part of the paradigm shift in leaving reactive disciplinary procedures behind in the adoption of more proactive systems of support (Colvin & Fernandez, 2000).

#### Historical Overview of Positive Behavioral Supports and School-Wide Positive Behavioral Support

The tenants of positive behavior support (PBS) resulted from a societal need to create a more person-centered alternative to the past aversive interventions used with individuals with developmental disabilities who demonstrated severe forms of behavior and aggression. With roots in applied behavior analysis, positive behavior supports for individuals also integrates features of the normalization and inclusion movement and emphasizes self-determination and person centered planning (Warren et al. 2006). With successful implementation of PBS practices, questions began to surface about the efficacy of systemic application of the defining components of PBS to address problem behaviors on a system-wide level in schools.

Historical research that has defined School-wide Positive Behavior Support as a structure for decision making regarding student behavioral support needs, implementation effects, and expansion efforts increased significantly in the 1980s with the advent of Research and Training Centers funded by the federal government. This followed a decade of deinstitutionalization of individuals with disabilities and public recognition of the need for society to understand the support needs for these individuals. Visibility of aversion therapies caused questions in the minds of Americans about the ethical treatment of individuals. Policies and practices began to evolve around human quality of life, with 1988 bringing a definition to these elusive features of care under the terminology of Positive Behavior Supports, or PBS (Sugai, 1988).

Behavioral theories are based upon the premise that behaviors are acquired through a process of conditioning and are impacted by environmental stimuli. Internal mental states, such as thoughts, feelings and emotions, are considered by behaviorists when attempting to understand behavior. Behavioral psychologists and practitioners desiring to change behavior in individuals may utilize methods of conditioning that include schedules of reinforcement to reward desired behaviors (Lucyshyn et al., 2007). Some of the early works of behavioral psychologists include the works of Ivan Pavlov and B.F. Skinner. These works led to the development of two types of conditioning, or behavior modification. The purpose for both operant and classical conditioning is to increase or eradicate certain behaviors. Applied behavioral analysis is a technique developed to teach specific behaviors and increase learning through a process of repetition and reward (March & Horner, 2002). Assessing behavior of individuals to determine the function of the behaviors, and seeking to change that through use of ABA strategies, is often referred to as Functional Behavior Assessment, or FBA.

Functional behavior assessment is a tool that includes: 1) clear definition of problem behaviors; 2) observation of the environment and situations where the behavior occurs; 3) system of

reinforcement is identified / used; 4) systematic data collection and decision-making based on effectiveness of reinforcement to change behavior; 5) instruction of replacement behaviors; and 6) withdrawal of supports / reinforcement. From the late eighties until the mid-nineties, Project Prepare was the first national look at school discipline policies and systems through the context of PBS (Colvin & Sugai 1992).

As systems devised of ABA practices began to positively impact individuals with significant problem behaviors, attention became focused on the features of PBS; teaching behavior directly, implementing school-wide practices directed at prevention, using pre-correction with students, and providing positive reinforcement for the desired behaviors (Colvin, Kameenui & Sugai, 1993). These features helped change teacher's understanding of best practices related to behavior change and positively changed their approach to classroom management. Research indicated that changing teacher behavior is not easy and is often a primary reason why positive behavioral systems fail before they are fully implemented. Additionally, it laid the foundations for teacher self-assessment of instructional practices related to behavioral expectations.

Further investigation and some budding success with practical models of larger scale implementation of PBS led to the use of the popular triangle, which is based upon the public health model, to identify the tiers of support (Walker et. al., 1998). Where behavioral support had previously been considered specifically for children with disabilities, the illustration of the triangle helped to expand the community's thinking about all children within a school. This work also encouraged the use of screening tools to identify students who were considered to be at-risk for school failure due to behavioral difficulties.

The efficacy data of PBS practices for individual students was sufficient in the late 1980's to suggest its effectiveness as an individualized behavioral system. Since then, the SWPBS framework

has grown in significance. Spurred by the need to curtail increases in school violence exemplified by school shootings in several states since 1996, and motivated by the literature indicating successes with positive support systems, school districts across America are recognizing the potential in approaching behavioral issues similarly to their approach to instruction. That is, to level intervention based on demonstrated student need. Along with the SWPBS initiatives, recognition has come to the other triangular model, Response to Intervention, in nearly the same timeframe. Response to Intervention comes from the practices used to give increasing supports to students as they exhibit need, and relies on a structural system designed with data collection and analysis of effective response to make decisions. Currently, 117 preschools, 5669 elementary schools, 1943 middle schools, 931 high schools, and 334 alternative (Department of Juvenile Justice) schools are participating in national data collection around tiered responsiveness to behavior interventions, or SWPBS (Sugai, 2010). A growing research base relating to implementation of SWPBS indicates that effective implementation and systems wide change can be effective in reducing problem behavior (Cohen, Kincaid, & Childs, 2010).

Publications from statewide SWPBS networks in Illinois, Florida and Maryland suggest that implementation of SWPBS programs, implemented with fidelity, decreases office disciplinary referrals significantly within the first year of implementation. The use of office disciplinary referrals, while recognized as non-comprehensive in terms of measurement, is frequently used to document reduction in problematic behaviors (Ervin et al., 2006; Ervin et al., 2007; Horner et al., 2005; Irvin et al., 2004; McIntosh et al., 2006). The use of this data led to the creation of *SWIS*, the *School-wide Information System*, a digital application that is designed for entering, organizing, managing and reporting on office discipline referrals and minimizes the time required to analyze such data. The information reported in many research studies utilizing school-wide disciplinary data comes from



school districts that are using *SWIS*. However, many other school districts utilize their current systems that store student information with more or less success. Typical problems arise, especially in larger school districts, around consistency of data input and effective use of data analysis tools (Irvin et al., 2004).

The main features of SWPBS first tier prevention include: (a) a diverse planning team that contains various school staff, parents, and students, (b) a select set of positively worded school expectations, (c) direct instruction of pro-social behaviors, (d) effective systems for acknowledging appropriate behaviors and discouraging inappropriate behaviors, and (e) continual monitoring of implementation and effectiveness (Warren et al., 2006). Many schools can show evidence of these practices without the vocabulary to describe the features in the framework of SWPBS. However, without the systems-wide support plan in place, the consistency and on-going attention that is required will not maintain momentum. Implementation that is considered to be effective should result in schools scoring a total of 70 points or more on measurement tools such as the *Benchmarks of Quality*, all critical elements of SWPBS are in place, staff is consistent in teaching, rewarding and providing consequences to students, and ongoing teaching of expectations is apparent (Kincaid, 2005). Artifacts from the Tier I interventions, outcome data, survey data, walkthroughs, and observations are indicators of the system's implementation. First tier prevention, or SWPBS, should be effective for about 80% of the students within a school.

Secondary prevention, or tier II interventions, are applied to a relatively smaller group of students but is drawn from the foundation of tier I supports. By assessing student's progress through systemic data analysis, a school team is able to determine the students' level of responsiveness to the tier I interventions. After a period of time, if the student does not respond favorably, the school team will increase the level of support provided to the student by implementing tier II interventions. These

students require more support than those who can successfully navigate the requirements of schooling using the first tier models of prevention (Crone & Horner, 2003; Walker et al., 1996). These systems target specific populations of students and require increased adult intervention, supervision and monitoring to support student successes. Screening tools, such as the Social Skills Improvement System (SSIS) or the Walker-McConnell Scales of Social Competence and School Adjustment (SSCSA) are frequently used to identify students who are at-risk of school failure. This screening is a key feature of tier II intervention, as are data collection methods that are used systematically to measure a student's responsiveness to the intervention on a block-by-block, daily or weekly timeframe.

Tertiary supports, or tier III interventions, are individually planned for students, based upon their own unique needs as related to those in place at tier I and tier II (Crone, Horner, & Hawken, 2004). The skills of adults working with these students are highly specialized in defining problem behaviors, data collection on frequency, intensity and duration of behaviors, and knowledge of creating reinforcement schedules that can support changing specific problem behaviors. Knowledge of behavioral science and interventions that are useful and effective is required to be an effective part of a team that is engaged in tertiary prevention and behavior support. A variety of tools exist to measure implementation efforts, related to SWPBS. These measures will be fully discussed later in this chapter.

## Implementing SWPBS

Implementation of SWPBS is interactive and informing. It includes systems, data, and practice outcomes (Sugai & Horner, 2006), and considers stakeholders at multiple levels including student, class, school, district, and state. Implementation consists of four distinct phases.

The exploration phase identifies the needs, priorities, resources and valued outcomes for a particular population. The demonstration phase includes local adoption with fidelity, positive outcomes for students and schools, and visibility of the initiative to maintain the support base. The elaboration phase is the period of time where practices are adapted, accuracy (or fidelity) is measured and the process is documented (Sanetti & Kratochwill, 2009). The final phase, which continues for the life of the model, is the continuous regeneration phase. This is marked by continual adoption of new practices that are evidence-based, along with systematic review and revision of current practices to adapt to any changes in the community. Policy and practice should inform each other (Fixsen & Blasé, 2007). If the phases have been carefully navigated, the system should maintain its integrity through changing leadership and changing populations.

Sustainability of SWPBS requires valued outcomes increases (such as graduation rates, decreasing disciplinary referrals, and ultimately reduction in community arrests), continuous self-assessment, and scrutiny of effective practices. Implementation success is based on multiple criteria. If the practices are effective, efficient, relevant, sustainable, scalable and defensible, then the model is considered successful. In order to meet all of these criteria, implementation must be based on scalable evidence-based practices (Horner, 2010).

Initial steps that must be taken in the exploration phase include identifying the baseline data that should be collected, taking stock of resources (personnel, training and materials), and gauging stakeholder perspective on the goals of the school district. Identifying key variables that impact each building, societal expectations and desired outcomes, and school climate around the idea of SWPBS is necessary in order to assist the planning teams in making the system personal to the needs of their individual schools. Without the fundamental groundwork of knowing current status, measuring outcomes after implementation will fail to give the full story about the effectiveness of the program.

This flaw could lead to schools going down a path that is not as effective as it could be, or worse yet, traveling down a path that will not lead to increased student outcomes.

### Measuring the Presence of School-wide Positive Behavioral Supports

Implementation of SWPBS can be measured using a variety of tools. At the universal level, or tier I, the School-wide Evaluation Tool (SET) is a validated research measure (Sugai, Lewis-Palmer, Todd & Horner, 2001; Horner et. al., 2004). Annual self-assessment measures like the Self-Assessment Survey (SAS) (Sugai, Horner & Todd, 2000), or the Benchmarks of Quality (BoQ) can be used along with progress monitoring measures such as the Team Implementation Checklist (TIC) (Sugai, Horner & Lewis-Palmer, 2001). Secondary and tertiary interventions can be measured using the empirically validated Individual Student School-wide Evaluation Tool (I-SSET) (Anderson et al., 2010), or the self-assessment tool known as the Benchmarks of Advanced Tiers (BAT) (Anderson et al., 2010). Overall implementation self-assessment tools like the Implementation Phases Inventory (IPI) or Phases of Implementation (POI) surveys can be used as well (Saffran, 2006).

Level of Support	Research Measures	Annual Self-Assessment Measures	Progress Monitoring Measures
Universal	School-wide Evaluation Tool (SET)	Self-Assessment Survey (SAS) Benchmarks of Quality (BOQ)	Team Implementation Checklist (TIC)
Secondary & Tertiary	Individual Student School-wide Evaluation Tool (I-SSET)	Benchmarks of Advanced Tiers (BAT)	Not yet developed
Overall Implementation	Not yet developed	Implementation Phases Inventory (IPI)  Phases of Implementation (POI)	Not yet developed

The use of these tools is limited to elementary and middle schools, with only a handful of high schools included. Currently, very little information on successful high school implementation exists

for a variety of reasons. First, the size of high schools makes it difficult to gain the needed support for a systems change effort. Consistent practice in schools that are designed to replicate small communities is not only difficult to establish but is often outright refused. The layout and design of high school schedules, with students seeing at least seven different teachers in a school day, does not lend itself to teachers having intimate knowledge of each student, and their motivations.

Additionally, many high school administrators and teachers do not agree that adolescents require direct social skills instruction by the time they reach that level. However, there is research to indicate that implementation of SWPBS models at the elementary and middle school levels are effective (Sugai & Horner, 2006).

Behavioral research, specifically in education, often faces much scrutiny over its lack of empirical control. While researchers utilize a variety of research designs that seek to control for variability, those standards aren't quite scientific enough to be considered a valid or reliable way of describing student behavior. Thus, much of the research begs the question: "Is this evidence-based?" Evidence-based practices and procedures were defined in a special section of *Exceptional Children* (Odum et al., 2005). Practices and procedures are considered evidence-based when the following indicators are present: 1) explicit description of the procedure/practice; 2) clear definition of the settings and implementers who use the procedure/practice; 3) identification of the population of individuals who are expected to benefit; and 4) the specific outcomes are clearly defined (George & Kincaid, 2008). Because components of PBS are based in applied experimental analysis of behavior, the evidence for PBS, at this time, is primarily derived from single subject designs. "This research, while not in the traditional empirical mode, is nevertheless rigorous, generalizable, and strong in social validity. Therefore, administrators have a preponderance of evidence to support their exploration of PBS as a viable model for School-based Mental Health programs" (Sugai & Horner,

2002). Also included are evaluation studies examining SWPBS that used research quality measures, but did not employ experimental designs to document both implementation of the core features by typical school personnel, and outcomes data such as improved academic performance, or reduction in office discipline referrals (Sugai, 2009).

Empirical studies to document SWPBS features implemented with fidelity include the development studies and validation procedures used for assessment tools such as the Benchmarks of Quality (Cohen, Kincaid, & Childs, in press), and the School-wide Evaluation Tool (Horner et al., 2004). Additionally, the use of office disciplinary referrals as a measure has been found to be inconsistent (Irvin et al., 2006, & Irvin et al., 2004). Primary prevention tier supports have been documented in one randomized control trial (Bradshaw et al., 2008), with many others in press (Horner et al., in press, Bradshaw et al., in press, Bradshaw, Mitchell & Leaf, in press). These studies are evaluating the effects of primary tier supports in increasing desired student outcomes in elementary schools.

There are a variety of studies that examined the implementation of core features of SWPBS and increased student outcomes measured by academic performance or reduction in office disciplinary referrals (Barrett, Bradshaw, & Lewis-Palmer, 2008; Biglan, 1995, Colvin & Fernandez, 2000; DePry & Sugai, 2002; Duda et al., 2004; Knoff, H., 2000, and Lassen, Steele & Sailor, 2006). All of the research to date has focused primarily on elementary environments, though the middle school implementation efforts are becoming more prevalent. Many of the second tier interventions have been introduced and utilized for specific populations, but no empirical research has been published. Check & Connect is one program designed to prevent student drop-out that shows promise and has been evaluated through a variety of studies (Christenson et al., 2000; Filter et al., 2007, & Sinclair et al., 2002). First Steps to Success is another second tier intervention that has been

studied to improve student behaviors on the elementary level (Golly et al.; 2000, and Walker et al., 1998). In sum, there are many studies that have looked at the impact of certain programs on students, none of which are considered empirical, though they all show great promise.

### Building a System to Support SWPBS in High Schools

Specific attention must be paid to the complex social systems that make up high schools, when considering implementation of a system that requires significant change in thinking. In particular, the role of the school leader should be considered. All school-based decisions and plans are funneled through the lens of the school leader and the administrative team; therefore, belief in the concept of SWPBS and administrator involvement is critical. Creating a school culture that encourages proactive supports instead of reactive decision-making takes into account the current practices and attitudes within a building (Sprague et. al., 2001).

Past research has not taken into account the current atmosphere of the school through stakeholder surveys, existence and effectiveness of current programs and leadership attitudes with an eye towards learning about a school's readiness to take on major structural revisions to current practices. Researcher attempts to gain stakeholder insight after implementation has led to results that indicate implementation that lacks fidelity. The newest revision of the Evaluation Blueprint for School-Wide Positive Behavior Supports explains in great detail the proper usage of readiness tools, but also provides a specific training framework for complete implementation (Algozzine et al., 2010). This blueprint, while comprehensive and directive in scope, appears overwhelming when viewed by a typical high school administrator, therefore making the "cost" of commitment to the framework more than the "benefits" that can come from implementation. Additionally, it takes much of the school leader's expertise out of the picture and does not value the current initiatives in place in a school.

Many facets of a high school must be considered when attempting to introduce SWPBS features (Flannery, Sugai & Anderson 2010).

The first key to understanding school climate resides in consistent application of the district-wide discipline policies and practices. This has been studied extensively, with the main areas of concern related to student anti-social behavior falling into one of six main areas; 1) ineffective instruction; 2) inconsistent and punitive management practices; 3) lack of opportunity to learn and practice pro-social interpersonal and self-management skills; 4) unclear rules and expectations regarding appropriate behavior; 5) failure to enforce rules; and 6) failure to individualize instruction to adapt to individual differences (Colvin, Kameenui & Sugai, 1993; Mayer, 1995; Walker et. al., 1996). With most high schools in the nation housing large groups of students and staff, consistent practices can be very difficult to establish. This can lead to focus on negative outcomes rather than effective identification of pro-social behaviors among students (Sugai & Horner, 2006). With national crime and violence data pointing to the outcomes of anti-social behavior, it is important to continue to study what can be done differently to impact schools and society in a more positive manner.

Representation from all stakeholder groups is a key in planning and creating a SWPBS structure because it facilitates communication of values of all members and determines effective motivators for each of the individual groups to remain committed to the implementation of the program (Gottfriedson & Gottfriedson, 1999). A systematic communication schedule, including meetings where evaluation of procedures and outcomes take place, leads to consistent reinforcement of the system both within the school and the community at large. Additionally, the membership of the team ensures that positive systems of support stay on the highest priority list of initiatives within a school (Lewis & Sugai, 1999). In a high school environment, this is especially important since the



students are much more likely to invest in a system they helped to create. The students are the only members of the high school community that can adequately comment on the reward systems they believe to be motivating and sustainable.

The planning team sets the tone by determining the three to five main behavioral expectations that will be the foundation of the SWPBS structure. These behavioral expectations are stated in a positive and direct manner. They are universal expectations that carry over from individual student expectations to classroom rules, and to the entire school. Typical rules might include, “be respectful of yourself, others and their property”, “be cooperative”, “be safe”, and “be kind” (Colvin, Sugai, & Kameenui, 1994). These school-wide rules must be reflective of the values of the students, staff and community in order to be effective.

The next key feature is definition of behavioral expectations. These expectations should be encouraged in all school activities and are directly taught to students in their classes. Teachers and administrators may use didactic instruction application of the expectations in various school settings by using demonstration and modeling and by providing opportunities for students to practice these skills in role play situations.

Direct analysis and feedback of a student’s mastery of the ideals of the system is given by teachers and administrators and conveyed with members of the leadership team as appropriate. Intentional recognition of students “doing the right thing” happens consistently throughout the school building, therefore reinforcing the expectations and positive interactions among students and staff. Some schools that utilize SWPBS models also pair verbal recognition and praise with token economy systems. Coupons or other tangible rewards are given, which in turn can be used in a barter system for earning more extensive rewards. Tangible systems of reward are frequently a significant feature of elementary and middle school models. This feature is one that high schools struggle with.

Data collection and analysis of the outcomes of implementing a SWPBS model are required on a regular basis to ensure that the team still agrees to the terms of the model, that there is adequate communication within the group, and to gauge the effectiveness of the program. During these discussions and decision making meetings, it is imperative to report information to school district leadership to ensure that the model continues to have support. The support of the district leadership team increases the visibility, funding and political support of the system, all of which are necessary to maintain the energy required to create system wide change (Horner, Sugai, Todd & Lewis-Palmer, 2005; Sugai, 2003). Systematic reporting on progress reinforces outcome-driven decision making, fidelity of implementation, support for training and coaching practices, and foundation building in the area of competent behavior management practices district-wide.

Outcomes such as graduation rate, academic achievement, college attendance and standardized test data are available to assist in measuring valued outcomes. Drawing upon the behavioral sciences, there is an established belief that behavior is learned and can be taught, exists in a predictable manner, can be manipulated, is affected by physiology and can be affected by the environment. Use of research validated practices in combination with systematic reinforcement has been established as effective in creating practices that can change schools from reactive to proactive in a relatively short period of time (Sugai, 2003).

Assessing social validity can be measured using different tools. Social validity is a construct that defines behaviors that are considered to be important to society (Lane et al., 2009). While staff members and administrators may express their opinions about the practice, using a tool such as the Primary Intervention Rating Scale (PIRS) may quantify those opinions so that specific areas of interest or weakness can be targeted. An adaptation of the PIRS, the Intervention Rating Profile-15 (IRP-15), is used to measure the perceived effectiveness of an intervention once it is implemented

(Lane et al., 2009).

The research supporting the effectiveness of functional behavioral assessment, the design of individualized behavioral interventions, and the active use of data in the implementation of behavior support is perhaps the most robust of the findings within SWPBS. The majority of this research has employed single-case designs to examine the effects of specific interventions, but increasingly studies are linking behavioral and academic interventions to reduction in problem behavior. This research has not at this time assessed the interaction effects associated with implementation of elements at all three tiers in the SWPBS prevention framework.

#### Current Research: High Schools

In July 2009, the National Technical Assistance Center on Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS) reported work with 5,359 total schools across the United States. Only 11%, or 579, of those schools are high schools (Flannery et al., 2009). Only a few case studies describing SWPBS in high schools currently exist in the literature and no systematic study has been done to date on SWPBS in high schools. However, in March 2010, the Office of Special Education Programs released a monograph specifically about high school implementation of SWPBS, current practices and future directions. Specific chapters of the monograph speak directly to the intrinsic issues related to high schools including school leadership, maintaining staff participation, connecting SWPBS to academic curriculum, data-based decision making in high schools, and advanced tiers of support (Flannery & Sugai, 2010). Success stories are illustrated through case studies from Addison Trails High School and Mountain View High School to illustrate the importance of the school leadership team in implementing SWPBS and successfully supporting diverse high schools through the process. Specific examples are shown in Fruita Monument High School and Middletown High School around

building staff understanding and commitment to the practices of SWPBS while the case studies of Somersworth High School and Addison Trail High School depict the need to have student support and input during the planning phases of the SWPBS initiative. These case studies are further supported by the work done by Tobin, Lewis, & Sugai (2002), indicating that teacher perceptions about student behaviors is directly and strongly related to a reduction in disciplinary referrals, and more accurate self-assessment of behavior support systems. Addressing the academic curriculum issues related to the intensity of content mastery while balancing a SWPBS program are also outlined specifically through the chapter on academic involvement. Some of the essential features of a continuum of supports are addressed as well, detailing the concepts of school within a school models, overcoming the challenges of large schools, and the importance of freshman transition programs in developing a school culture that values all learners. Again, the research supports the importance of successful freshman transition to minimize disciplinary incidents and increase the chances of successful program completion (Tobin & Sugai, 1999).

Essential understanding related to high schools is necessary around the concepts that make these larger schools different from the middle and elementary models. First, the leader of the school is responsible for academic instructional leadership of a large variety of topics. Both core curriculum and electives are components for a student to complete requirements for a high school diploma. Losing sight of the academic goal has immediate implications for high school students and the schools themselves, where in middle and elementary levels there is still time for correction. Second, student misbehavior at the high school level often takes on a more dangerous tone, as the students are increasingly more active participants in their communities. Some of the community issues spill over into the classrooms and non-instructional spaces and with such large populations existing together within the building, the potential for unsafe situations increases dramatically. Third, data-based

decision making takes on new meaning when the data that is available includes 7 classes and 7 or more teachers involved in each student's schedule. The data that is collected is extensive to say the least and most school administrators have never had formal instruction on how to properly analyze and disaggregate that information. While standards based education has certainly driven the need to learn more about how to collect and analyze data, there is still a need for professional development. Finally, the school leader is responsible for maintaining the staff development schedule that gives meaningful opportunities to teachers of all ability and experience levels. The departmental structure of high schools makes school-wide professional development a challenge. However, despite the large bundle of responsibilities bestowed upon the school leader, he or she still carries the mantle of encouraging and supporting the school to reach all learners, no matter what baggage they bring. Consequently, the role of the school leader is paramount to developing any new practices within a high school.

### Unanswered Questions

The literature guides us in understanding that SWPBS is based in effective practices that engage learners in pro-social behaviors and leads to better outcomes, such as increased graduation rates and reduction in school violence. It also guides us to the importance of implementation to fidelity, and the necessity to measure the effectiveness of our decision making around the structure of SWPBS. Recently, the research has developed most around the idea of scaling up, or building entire school-system wide models of implementation, and the need for system-wide buy-in. However, very little is referenced about building capacity individually within the schools to develop their own plan. This is a significant key to implementation in high schools, where leaders are taking on the big picture topics and doing so without systemic coordinated efforts. Experience tells us that initiatives

don't work. Mostly, training and support fades over time and a new program is adopted in place of the old (Bohanon et al., 2007). SWPBS, like RtI, requires a mind shift. It is about coordination of current activities, data-based decision making, and systematic response to problems related to learning and behaviors. It is not about developing a new program; it's about developing a new process. In order to begin the process of changing minds, it is imperative to first consider the current status of the schools, their specific goals, their individual data sets, and their present strengths.

## CHAPTER 3

### METHODOLOGY

#### Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study was two-fold. First, the study sought to determine the extent to which school staff members believe each of the key effective behavior support levels (classroom, non-classroom, school wide, and individual student) were in place within their schools. This question aimed at the readiness of the school to embark upon the planning and implementation required for a system of school-wide positive behavioral support, and gauged their current status. This information is helpful in describing other school districts that are similar in community make-up and offers some comparison groups for future research. Secondly, the study sought to determine the priority level for each of the key features of effective behavior supports, from the teachers, school counselors and administrators perspectives. It may shed light on the features that should be prioritized in building plans to support effective behavioral programs in high schools.

None of these specific traits have been measured within a school district in a formal manner. This study may lead to a method by which school districts can assess their schools' current capacity and effectiveness in implementing fundamental principles of positive behavioral supports, and which key features should be prioritized in building plans.

McMillan and Schumacher indicate that methodology, or selection of data collection procedures and analysis procedures, must allow for direct investigation of the research questions (2006). In this study, those questions were:

1. To what degree have schools in a system implemented school-wide positive behavioral supports?

2. How do teachers in schools in a system prioritize components of school-wide positive behavioral supports?

### Research Design

In order to answer the research questions, a mixed-methods design was utilized. Data collection from a school district student information system was used in addition to the use of an electronic survey created from a validated research tool administered with the school principals, school counselors, teachers and assistant principals. Lastly, an interview was conducted with each high school principal, to give depth to the information gleaned in the survey.

### Population

The school district surveyed serves a diverse population and has a stable number of residents. The locality is within the central region of Virginia. The district occupies 245 square miles and is home to 296,415 people (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 2009). The county has a mix of rural area to the east, suburban areas throughout, and urban areas both within and surrounding the western, northern and eastern portions of the county. There are approximately 12,000 students at the high school level that represent nine comprehensive high schools and one alternative high school. The population to which the results may be generalized should be similar in size and demographic make-up to those of the trial schools. Demographic data were collected as a part of the study, for students and school staff.

### Sample

Teachers and school staff were randomly sampled from the ten participating high schools. The total population of available staff included 47 school administrators, 36 school counselors, 185



special education teachers and 988 general education teachers. Ten high school principals also participated in the interviews.

### Research Procedures

All surveys were taken on-line, through an embedded e-mail link. Each survey required between 10-20 minutes to complete. Each survey included 18 questions on School-Wide Systems, 9 questions on Non-Classroom Settings, 11 questions on Classroom Systems, and 8 questions on Individual Student Systems. The respondents rated each feature (or question) as “in place, partially in place, or not in place” and prioritized the need for improvement for each feature as “high, medium, or low”. The administration of the survey took place in late May of 2011.

Structured interviews were conducted after each principal was contacted via e-mail and invited to schedule a 30-minute time slot. After consent was obtained, the researcher began recording and the principal was asked questions that were derived from the EBSSAS, Effective Behavior Supports, Self-Assessment Survey. The EBSSAS was used in its entirety. All interviews were transcribed and the data was coded for similar characteristics.

### General Design of Qualitative Component

An interview guide approach was selected as a means of gathering data. This was selected to ensure that all participants were given the same questions and opportunity to elaborate. Interviewees included all ten possible principals in the school district being researched.

The interview questions were crafted from the previously administered survey in order to gain deeper insight into the current status and priority for improvement in the four main sub-areas of school-wide positive behavior supports: school-wide systems, non-instructional supports, classroom

supports and individual student supports. The foreshadowed problems or research questions proposed at the onset of the study were, what is the current status of SWPBS in the school district being studied, what are the priorities in moving forward with SWPBS and are there significant differences between the current reported status and the identified priorities?

Comprehensive sampling was used, as all ten high school principals participated. All interviews were conducted at the school in which each of the principals worked, at their request. At the beginning of each interview the researcher explained the purpose of her research, confidentiality and informed consent. She also verified that the interview candidates were comfortable with the use of electronic recording of the interviews.

Once the interviews were completed, the researcher used an on-line transcription service to have the electronic recordings transcribed. The transcriptions were delivered back to the researcher via secure email. Transcriptions were then comprehensively reviewed and verified to be identical to the original recordings. All references to school and personnel names were removed and a placeholder added to ensure anonymity. One interview was not captured on electronic recording equipment due to an equipment failure. However, the responses from that interview were included in data analysis through use of researcher notes. No direct quotes from that source are offered in the study.

Microsoft Excel was used to sort and prepare data for analysis. All interview data was moved from a Microsoft Word Document into Microsoft Excel. All data was reviewed for completeness and accuracy once the data was moved over. Next, all extraneous chatter (rapport building, interviewer questions and closure) was removed to ensure only participants comments were included in data sorting. Interview data from the interview that was not recorded was also added from the interviewer's notes. Interviews were coded by school and by sub-category to begin. Next,

frequencies were completed on each subcategory, to determine which words were used the most, in search of common themes. Follow up counts were completed for each particular school, as well as the entire district. Next, the interviewer identified common programs referred to by the schools. Finally, verbatim responses were extracted that fit each category, theme and sub theme in order to add richness to the qualitative data gleaned in the survey response analysis.

Several strategies were used to enhance the design validity of the study. First, extensive field notes were taken during the interviews. Electronic recording of the interviews was completed and all recordings were transcribed using an online transcription service. Member checking was used throughout data collection to ensure that the information provided through the interview was sufficiently understood by the researcher. Verbatim participant language was collected in the interviews and is being reported throughout the study, (McMillan and Schumacher, 1997).

### Assessment Tool

The tool utilized for assessing implementation of SWPBS features was based on the *Effective Behavior Support Self-Assessment Survey (EBSSAS), Version 2.0* (Sugai, Horner & Todd, 2003). The *EBSSAS* focuses on the four levels of support; classroom, non-classroom, school-wide and individual student supports are measured as “in place”, “partially in place”, or “not in place”. Additionally, school staff can indicate their priority for improvement for each of the items, which can be utilized for planning purposes for school improvement. The tool has been found to be a reliable measure of SWPBS status within a school. Total scale reliability was documented to be moderate to high ( $\alpha = .85$ ) for current status of effective behavior supports and high ( $\alpha = .94$ ) for improvement priority (Safran, 2006). It is a means by which school staff can report their perceptions of the current status of each feature and their priority for improvement of each feature. Status is defined as the degree to

which the feature is currently functioning in the school building. Priority is defined as the individual's rating of importance for further training.

### Researcher's Role

As a former employee with direct access to all schools within the study, the researcher remained in contact with the schools that participated in the study. Additionally, the researcher:

- 1) Provided a basic literature review to the school administrators.
- 2) Identified the 7 key features of SWPBS and the 4 systems of effective behavior supports within the school as identified by the *EBSSAS* in a basic power point format.
- 3) Conducted both the online survey and structured interviews with principals.

### Implications of Researcher's Role on Data Obtained

Because of the researcher's previous role in the school district, she was considered a trusted person to talk with regarding school systems and priorities. The researcher's role in the district was not directly related to school-wide systems but more to a specialized population within the schools. Additionally, the researcher was not a member of the district-wide leadership team that assessed the school administrators, so the role was not considered a power differential. Positive implications of the researcher's role included collegial working relationships with each school administrator which potentially led to a more systemic application of the features of SWPBS, with a support structure in place. Some of the issues related to subjectivity, ethics and trustworthiness were controlled for due to the researcher's role in the study and the school district.

### Data Management

Electronic data was kept on a secure, separate database with password encrypted protection. No information is identifiable by school, administrators, staff or student data on the survey. The informed consent documents used for the interviews included the subjects' names, and therefore the documents were kept separate from all coded data to ensure anonymity. Any references made to schools during the interviews were replaced with a placeholder to ensure that content from the interviews could not be linked to individual staff members or their individual schools. Coding was used to identify schools, administrators, staff and students for the purposes of comparing populations.

### Statistical Analysis

Descriptive statistics were calculated for each school for number of respondents, position of respondents, and mean score on each question (status and priority) within each of the four sub-areas being measured. The mean scores calculated for the four sub-areas, school-wide, non-instructional spaces, classroom and individual systems, were compared using a paired samples t-test to determine any significant difference in status and priority. Interview data was then considered as a means of qualifying the data gleaned in the survey, and to give context to the quantitative findings.

For operational purposes, use of the term "status" indicates the respondent's view on the existence of features of SWPBS in their school. The term "priority" refers to the respondent's view of the importance of prioritizing any one feature over another. If status is rated as "partially in place" or "fully in place", an assumption could be made that the respondent recognizes the specific support being described and is able to identify its existence and practical features evident within the school. Conversely, if the status rating is "not in place", the respondent would be indicating that they are not aware of, or cannot identify the specific support within the school. If priority is rated as "medium" or "high", it can be assumed that the respondent should be requesting some type of training on the

features of that support in the next year. Conversely, if the priority rating is “low”, the respondent may not be expecting training in the near future. Ratings on status that indicate at least minimal implementation of a feature, and a rating on priority that is better than “low”, would indicate readiness to receive information and training on that feature or topic.

### Research Purpose

At the end of the study, the desired outcome is to allow other high schools in similar school districts based on size and demographic make-up to be able to consider the findings of the study for their purposes. The sample includes ten schools with significant diversity. The population of licensed professionals, from whom the sample was randomly drawn, contained 1256 possible subjects. These teachers, school counselors and administrators serve more than 12,000 high school aged students.

## CHAPTER 4

### FINDINGS/RESULTS

The findings for the study will be discussed in a manner that will lead the reader from the broadest view of the entire school district down to the detailed view of schools' readiness to implement school-wide positive behavior supports. First, an overview of the random sample drawn from all licensed professional high school staff members will be described. District level means for school-wide effective behavior supports, non-instructional behavior supports, classroom behavioral supports and finally individual behavior supports current status and priority for improvement will be discussed, followed by school based data in the same categories. The following research questions will be answered:

1. To what degree have schools in a system implemented school-wide positive behavioral supports?
2. How do staff members in schools in a system prioritize components of school-wide positive behavioral supports?

The survey was launched in an on-line format the last week of May 2011, with respondents able to participate up through the beginning of July 2011. The total population of available professionals included 47 school administrators, 36 school counselors, 185 special education teachers, and 988 general education teachers. The survey link was sent to a randomly sampled group of the previously mentioned population, including 738 individuals. The response rate for the survey was 19%. 139 participants of the 738 possible participants started the survey.

Table 1

*Frequency of Respondents by School, Survey*

School	Frequency	%
A	14	10.15
B	17	12.32
C	6	4.35
D	10	7.25
E	20	14.49
F	13	9.42
G	17	12.32
H	16	11.59
I	19	13.77
J	6	4.35

Seventy-eight of the 138 participants completed the entire survey, bringing the practical survey response rate to 11%, which is considered low. One hundred and seven respondents completed the questions on school-wide supports; 86 completed the questions on non-instructional supports, 79 completed questions on classroom supports and 78 completed questions on individual student systems. However, those who responded were a near representative sample. The reduction in participation from the questions presented first to those presented last is anticipated to be related to fatigue, since the survey took approximately 20-30 minutes of time to complete.



Table 2

*Respondents by Position, Survey*

Position	Frequency	%	Representative Percent
Administrator	11	7.9%	3.7%
Gen. Ed. Teacher	92	66.7%	78.6%
Counselor	3	2.2%	2.8%
Sp. Ed. Teacher	32	23.2%	14.7%

The response rate was very low due to the timing of the survey launch, since teachers were leaving school for the summer. Due to the low response rate, it was determined that a qualitative component be added to the study, by way of structured interview of all ten of the high school principals in the county. All 10 principals participated in the interview component.

### Inductive Data Analysis

A priori categorization was used when creating the coding system, based on the subcategories of the survey. General themes and obvious differences were taken into account in the creation of the organization of data. As the interviews were coded, certain codes needed more or less expansion depending upon the variability of responses. Typically, the average answers were easily coded, but the contrasting information that appeared different often required more intensive analysis.

Categorization of the interview data included eight major themes:

Table 3

*Themes and Subcategories from Interview Data*

Theme	Subcategories
Current Practices in: Schoolwide Supports & Systems	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Supervision</li> <li>2. Freshman Transition Programs</li> <li>3. Behavioral Expectations</li> <li>4. Mentoring Programs</li> <li>5. Anti-Bullying, Character Education</li> <li>6. Clubs and Counseling Groups</li> <li>7. Awards Assemblies</li> </ol>
Current Practices in: Non-instructional Supports	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Data Gathering and Analysis</li> <li>2. Sharing with Faculty</li> <li>3. Required Reports to Central Office</li> <li>4. Attendance Issues</li> <li>5. At-Risk Student Groups</li> </ol>
Current Practices in: Classroom Supports	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Proximity &amp; Environmental Design</li> <li>2. Teacher Modeling of Appropriate Behaviors</li> <li>3. Build Rapport with Students (Teacher &amp; Counselors)</li> <li>4. Communication with Parents</li> <li>5. Referral Systems for Negative Behaviors</li> <li>6. Systemic Response to Problem Behaviors</li> </ol>
Current Practices in: Individual Student Supports	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Habitual Offender &amp; Discipline Process</li> <li>2. Pro-Active Planning with Administrator / School Counselor</li> <li>3. Prevention, Action, Resolution (1 school)</li> <li>4. Parent Communication</li> <li>5. 8<sup>th</sup> – 9<sup>th</sup> identification of students with behavioral issues</li> <li>6. Continuum of Educational Options / Placement Change</li> </ol>
Current Priorities in: Schoolwide Supports & Systems	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Specific Programs (Rachel's Challenge, Be the Change, Challenge Day)</li> <li>2. Coalition Classes</li> <li>3. Increased Student/Parent Survey Data</li> </ol>
Current Priorities in: Non-instructional Supports	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Refine Data Analysis Practices</li> <li>2. Awareness of Supervision Needs and Ability to Change Duties</li> <li>3. Rapport with Students</li> </ol>
Current Priorities in: Classroom Supports	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Increase teacher comfort in holding classroom meetings</li> <li>2. Calibrating Teachers' needs to contact administration</li> </ol>
Current Priorities in: Individual Student Systems	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Consistency on problem solving</li> <li>2. Increased communication inside/outside of the school</li> </ol>

### Summary of Findings: Answers to Research Questions

Current implementation or “status” of each of the 4 main sub-areas of school-wide positive behavior supports was investigated in the first research question. The findings suggest that 3 of the 4 components are partially in place; school-wide systems, non-instructional systems and classroom systems. Individual student supports were found to not be in place, according to respondents.

Priority for improvement in each of the 4 main sub-areas of school-wide supports was investigated in the second research question. All 4 sub-areas were considered low priority for improvement, based on the findings of this study.

A significant difference exists between current status and priority for improvement in 3 of the 4 sub-areas of school-wide positive behavior supports; school-wide supports, non-instructional supports and classroom supports. However, a significant difference does not exist between the current status and priority for individual student supports. These findings indicate that school staff perceive themselves to be implementing, at least partially and with confidence, 3 of the 4 sub-systems of school-wide positive behavior support. Additionally, the lack of a significant difference in the individual student systems category suggests that the school staff perceptions of their implementation of these systems are weak at best, and they lack confidence in these systems.

### District Wide Analysis of Findings

Overall, the school district means indicated that three of the four sub-areas of school wide positive behavior supports are partially in place. School-wide systems, non-classroom systems and classroom systems status all fell within the “partially in place” range, while individual student systems fell within the “not in place” range. The school district priority ratings for each of the sub-areas all fell within the “low” range.

Table 4.

*Means by Sub-Area, District Wide*

	Current Status	Priority
School-Wide Systems	2.209	1.896
Non-Classroom Systems	2.191	1.789
Classroom Systems	2.440	1.900
Individual Student Systems	1.987	1.962

A significant difference was identified between school-wide systems status and priority, non-classroom systems status and priority and classroom systems status and priority. This indicates that survey respondents felt more confident in the current status of implementation of these 3 areas of SWPBS, and reported a lower priority for refining these systems. However, individual student systems status and priority were not significantly different, as indicated in Table 5. These findings indicate that less variability exists between answers within the individual student systems status and priority scores. Less variability may be an indicator that individual student systems are the least developed of the school-wide positive behavior support structures within the school district, and that professionals feel the least confident in the current implementation of these systems. The lowest mean score (1.987) and the highest priority mean score (1.962) of the four sub-areas was reported for individual student systems. The mean score for priority indicates that this area is the highest priority of the four sub-areas for future training.

Expectedly, the highest mean scores for status were reported in the classroom supports sub-area. With the majority of respondents being teachers, their greatest confidence of implementation should reflect classroom systems as the most developed. The mean score for priority of improvement

in classroom systems ranks second, only to individual student systems.

Table 5

*Paired Samples T-Test Results for District Wide Status and*

*Priority*

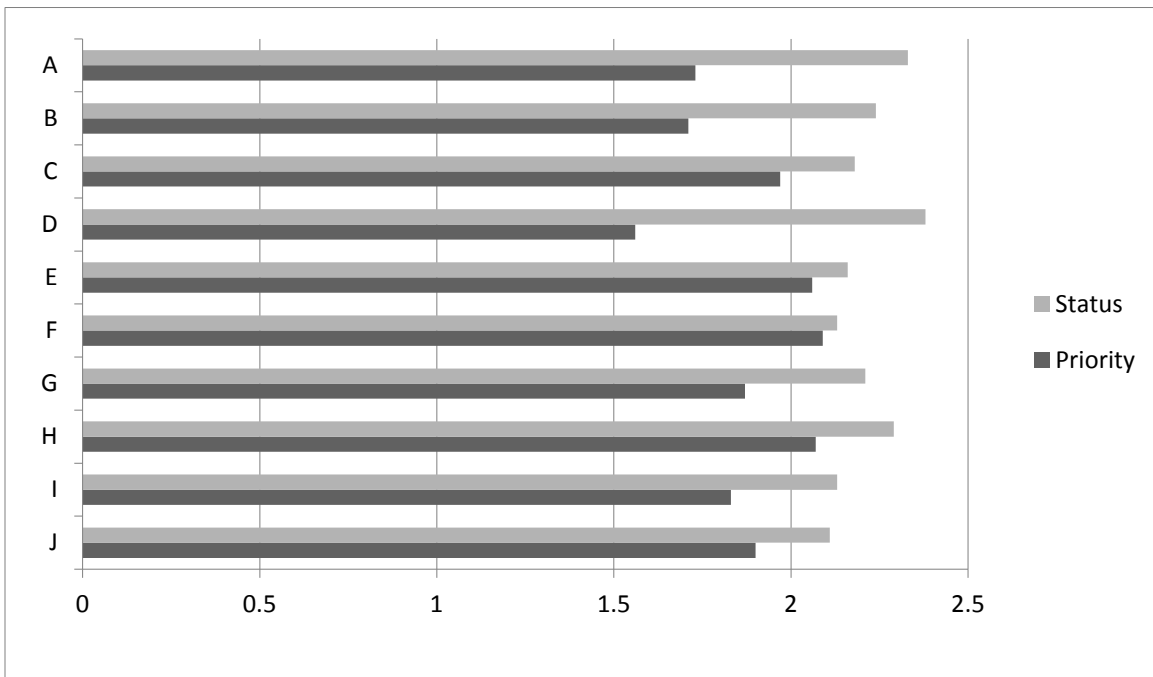
	Status	Priority	<i>t</i>	P
School-Wide	2.209	1.896	4.610*	.000
N=107	(.401)	(.454)		
Non-Instructional	2.191	1.789	4.624*	.000
N=86	(.481)	(.529)		
Classroom	2.440	1.900	5.891*	.000
N=79	(.411)	(.583)		
Individual Student Systems	1.987	1.962	.223	.824
N=78	(.570)	(.618)		

### School-Wide Supports

School-Wide support is defined as involving all students, all staff and all settings within the school building. This subsection included a total of 18 questions. In the subsection of the survey devoted to systems of support that impact the school-wide positive behavior supports questions, no school varied significantly from another in the reported mean scores. This indicates that the schools in the district respond that their school-wide behavior supports are equally developed. Figure 1 below indicates the current status and priority of school-wide behavior support systems, as perceived by respondents.

Figure 1

*School-Wide Status & Priority Means by School*



All schools (A-J) identified themselves as having school-wide supports as “partially in place”. Evidence exists, in the form of interview data, to support the survey data. School principals responded that several practices are in place, including supervision of school spaces, transition

programs for incoming freshmen, universal behavioral expectations, mentoring programs, anti-bullying and character education campaigns, clubs, counseling groups, and award assemblies. One principal's comments on supervision:

First and foremost, we have supervision and expectations for all staff to supervise in the halls between classes. Also in the cafeteria during lunches, we have administration and teachers that supervise those areas. In all of our athletic events, we also provide supervision through our administrative team, and aspiring administrators that would like the opportunity to get some experience working in those environments have that chance.

Several principals spoke about transition programs for incoming freshmen. "I think we would start that with our freshman transition program in the summer. We work with a group of students currently enrolled at [our high school] to teach and mentor the freshmen coming in." Another school uses a comprehensive school year plan for transitioning freshmen;

Two years ago we developed a freshmen mentor study hall. We identify students who are coming from our middle schools. We take a look at their academics. We take a look at their attendance. We take a look at their discipline record. And then we identify a group of forty-five to sixty ninth graders who we believe if we put them in a study hall as their seventh class instead of as an elective, we might be able to make their transition to high school better. We have seen some significant success with that. We trained our teachers who are using it. They work with students on a weekly basis about tracking their academics, monitoring what they are doing, watching for any behavior issues. If need be, they will ask teachers to do teacher reports for them. So that supports those individual students.

Another popular way to include students on a school-wide scope is the use of peer mentoring programs;

We do that through our mentoring program, especially the first semester. Every two weeks we have what we call “Mentoring Monday,” which was done through our direct study block periods. And they addressed different concepts. A lot of it was very pro-social behavior, scenarios of doing the right thing, trying to reinforce ethics I guess for lack of a better word on some things. You find a wallet in the hallway. What would you do with it? To have those discussions at least, because I think for a lot of our kids, those discussions aren’t happening anywhere outside of school.

Another principal commented on the extensive school-wide programs in the school, related to anti-bullying and character education, particularly those led by students;

Some student to student mentoring is Circle of Friends and that is general education to Exceptional Education students. Then we also have...last year started our first ever senior, freshman mentoring. We wanted to turn senior hazing on its ear. This was student driven and student led and as a result of “Be the Change” from Challenge Day. So they said one way we want to be the change is we want to be the first ever senior class that mentors freshmen instead of hazing them. So we had an official mentoring program through homeroom, it was awesome. They did the entire Academy, the adults facilitated, but the kids led. It was funny, they did skits, and it was way more engaging than the blah, blah, blah in the past. Then they forge relationships and if nothing else, in the very least of it all, I think the freshmen realized, “oh my gosh, I am okay. I fit in here”. More of the freshmen felt comfortable going and trying new clubs after seeing, okay these leaders...and not all of them were the best behaved seniors to. It was funny, because it was completely voluntary. So we had some kids who said, I want to tell them how to do it right instead of messing it up like I did. It was awesome.

Clubs and counseling groups are also in use in several schools;



We have several programs in place and the first is, Circle of Friends, where our Gen Ed students work very closely with our special needs students. We also had a faculty staff basketball game where the special needs students were included and the General Ed students really worked to make those students feel like a valued part of the game. With Rachel's Challenge, we had a group of one hundred students trained and to be ambassadors to take the message of Rachel's Challenge back into the school. Actually, our school fall play dealt with social behaviors and how to be more accepting and less judgmental in a school environment.”

“...We have peer tutors and peer mentors and the group meets two or three times a week depending on what the need is of each student. The administrative team and counselors meet with parents or bring in parents and have conversations sometimes with the school's social worker, sometimes with the principal depending on the types of work that is needed.

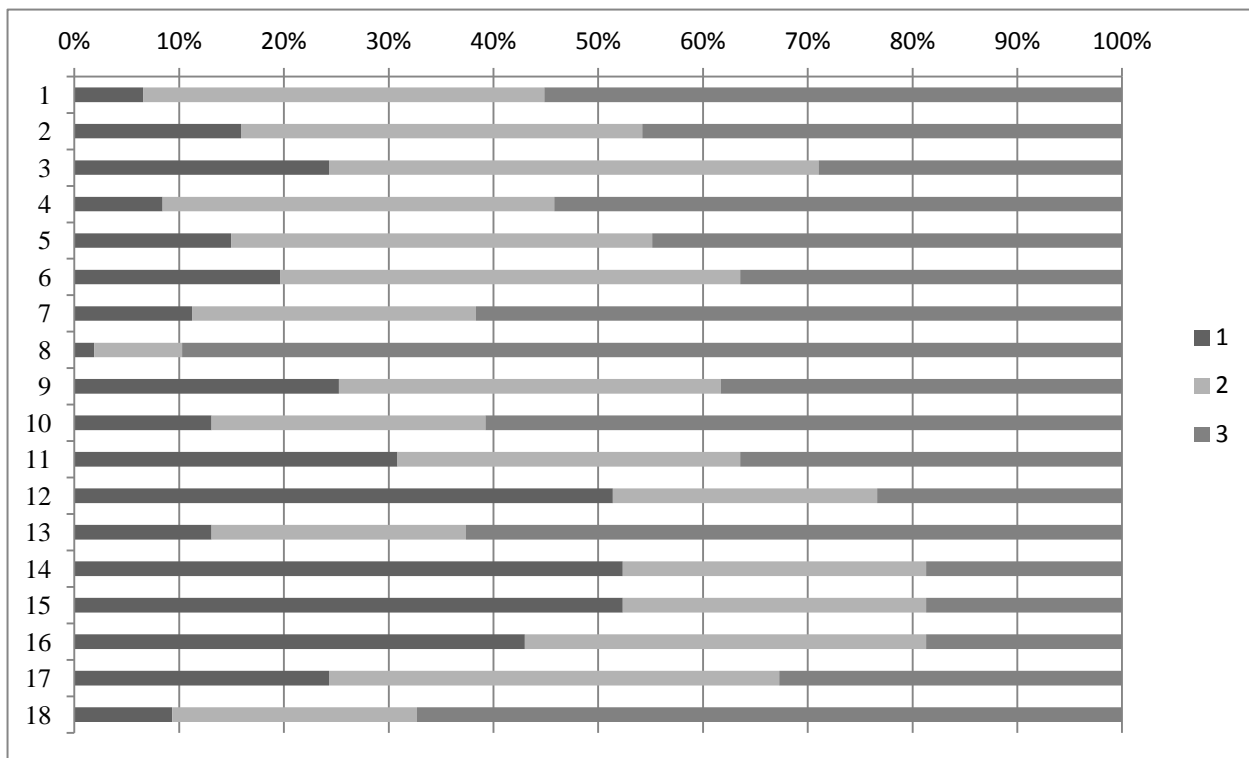
Awards assemblies are in place in all of the high schools;

Then we also have something in just your senior year, but it is still a big deal, it is talked about all the way through at the Senior Honors assembly, are our medallions that are given for character and integrity. We have so many ways that we celebrate academics, which is very, very important, but in this particular venue, we really celebrate character and people who have given to the school community, so that really promotes that leadership. Senior year too, we have the most valuable [school mascot] that is named in the fall and that is celebrate all year and then we have plaques throughout the school with pictures and so forth. I think that is really important too. In school you have a lot of visibility for the celebrations of the positive, whether it is positive sportsmanship trophies, not just the wins of the chess club and everything, but also the comments and the things that are made, special awards about character related to that and that is just as highly visible as anything else.

Deeper understanding of responses to individual questions within this subsection, as related to school-wide systems status is illustrated below, in Figure 2.

Figure 2

*School-Wide Status, Questions 1-18, Frequencies*



1. A small number (e.g. 3-5) of positively & clearly stated student expectations or rules are defined.
2. Expected student behaviors are taught directly.
3. Expected student behaviors are rewarded regularly.
4. Problem behaviors (failure to meet expected student behaviors) are defined clearly.
5. Consequences for problem behaviors are defined clearly.
6. Distinctions between office v. classroom managed problem behaviors are clear.
7. Options exist to allow classroom instruction to continue when problem behavior occurs.
8. Procedures are in place to address emergency/dangerous situations.
9. A team exists for behavior support planning & problem solving.
10. School administrator is an active participant on the behavior support team.
11. Data on problem behavior patterns are collected and summarized within an on-going system.
12. Patterns of student problem behavior are reported to teams and faculty for active decision-making on a regular basis (e.g. monthly).
13. School has formal strategies for informing families about expected student behaviors at school.
14. Booster training activities for students are developed, modified, & conducted based on school data.
15. School-wide behavior support team has a budget for (a) teaching students, (b) on-going rewards, and (c) annual staff planning.
16. All staff are involved directly and/or indirectly in school-wide interventions.
17. The school team has access to on-going training and support from district personnel.
18. The school is required by the district to report on the social climate, discipline level or student behavior at least annually.

On seven of the 18 questions in the section, 50% or more of the school respondents indicated that the practices were “in place”. These were questions numbered 1, 4, 7, 8, 10, 13 and 18 with

corresponding topics of the presence of a few positively worded expectations, problem behaviors are clearly defined, options exist to allow classroom instruction to continue when a problem behavior occurs, procedures to address emergency situations are in place, school administrator is an active participant on the behavior support team, formal strategies are in place to communicate with families about problem behaviors, and the school is required to report to the district on social climate, discipline and student behavior.

Three of the 18 questions in the section were answered “not in place” more than 50% of the time. These questions were numbered 12, 14 and 15 including the topics of patterns of behavior being shared with the faculty on a regular basis, booster training is offered to students based on the data shared and school-wide behavior support team has a budget for teaching students, on-going rewards and annual staff planning.

While the findings indicate that many features of school-wide behavior supports are in place, the principals almost always minimized their support structures because those systems were not directly named “School-Wide Positive Behavior Supports.” A principal indicated;

Okay... In terms of a school-wide behavior plan, it does not exist. Some of these behavior programs that are out there with discipline and such we don't have that here. I would say that in terms of any system at all, it's just enforcing the student code of conduct, trying to give positive feedback when students are seen doing something right, trying to provide students with alternatives when they're in a crisis situation to allow them to make the right choice, and then sort of nudge them in that direction. You have to be able to actually teach them how to behave, and that's something that we do both inside and outside of the classroom.

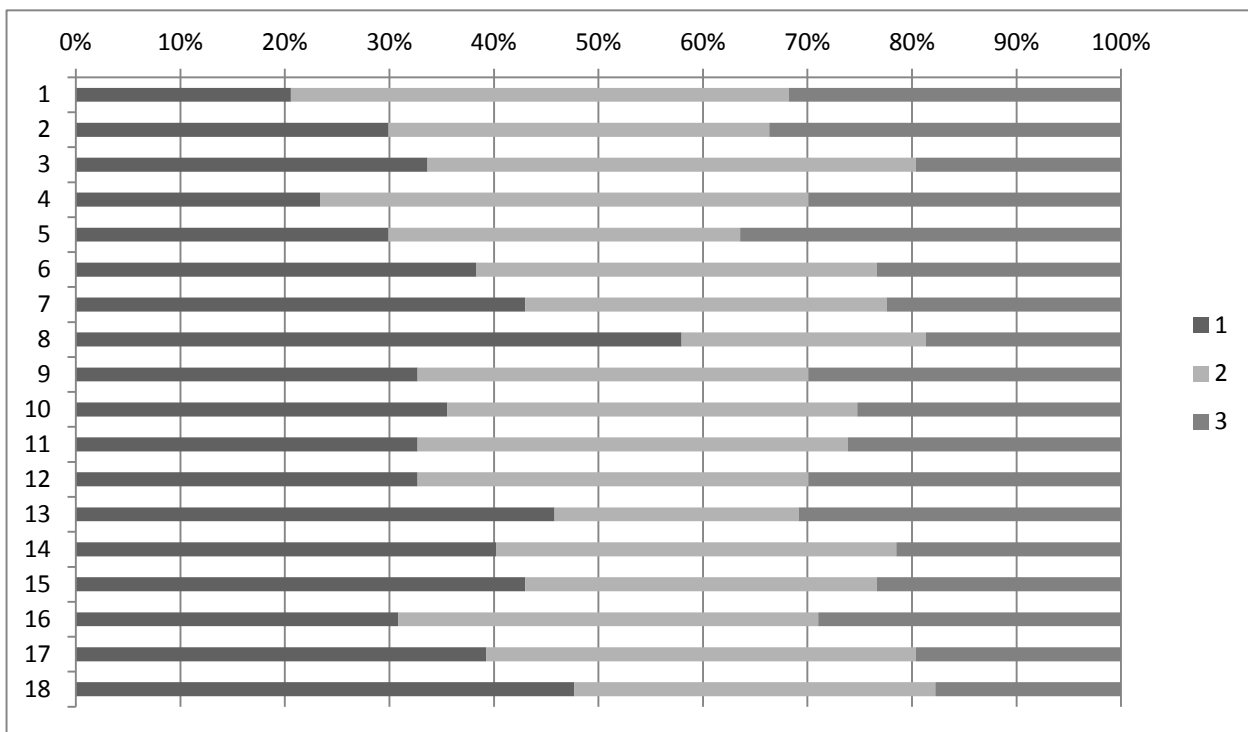
The principal directly identified 4 major themes of effective school-wide behavior supports in his remarks, yet didn't believe he earned the opportunity to call it SWPBS. This was seen repeatedly

throughout the interviews and speaks directly to the need for coordinated support structures that assist principals in identifying and organizing the positive behavior supports they already have in place.

Figure 3 indicates survey response frequencies on questions directed at identifying school-wide priorities.

Figure 3

*School-Wide Priorities, Frequencies by Question*



Findings from the survey only point to one item considered “low priority” for improvement.

This was evaluated through question 8 regarding the existence of procedures for addressing emergency/dangerous situations. All other areas of priority were fairly similar. School level priorities according to administrators included increasing SWPBS include increasing the use of specific programs, such as Rachel’s Challenge, Be the Change and Challenge Day, while others noted more effective use of the information shared through the Coalition (a district level initiative to foster

inclusive schools).

It is interesting, because all of this stuff is things that I will help make happen, but it has been the kid's idea. A previous principal started the Inclusive Community Advisory Group. He had it underway here as a student group ninth, tenth, eleventh and twelfth graders and I have kept that going. Teachers and counselors suggest after the first month or so the freshman that we bring and we bring in about four or five, it is a nice cross section of the school then the rest of the kids train them and stuff. And what they do each year is, they set priorities. They are the ones who found out about Challenge Days and asked to have it. They are the ones who brought to my attention and said, how am I going to pitch this it is a lot of money? They came up with ideas. It is amazing to work with high schoolers. Then for this year, they said we need to have more challenges. There were so many kids that wanted who wanted to be involved and how are we going to pull in the kids that cannot go, because you can only have a hundred per day. And so they came up with ideas to keep it going and keep the momentum. We have a meeting this afternoon that I initiated with four or five other nearby principals so that each of us can have a day and to share the travel expenses and stuff, but also...because they did it in student government and it was so well received that they have gone back and see the kids nag the principals.

Another principal commented on prioritizing coalition class meetings;

Well, we're still working. Last year was really the first year of the structured coalition class meetings once a month in through fourth period study block. That went beautifully in some classes, and barely at all in others. And that would be predictable knowing the teacher and what that teacher happens to have fourth period. It makes a difference, so we will continue

that. It's just a matter of helping teachers get more comfortable in that role as running a class meeting. It's interesting looking at our trend data from our student survey feedback.

Several of the principals noted the desire to see increases in their school climate and culture surveys, particularly those from students' perspectives.

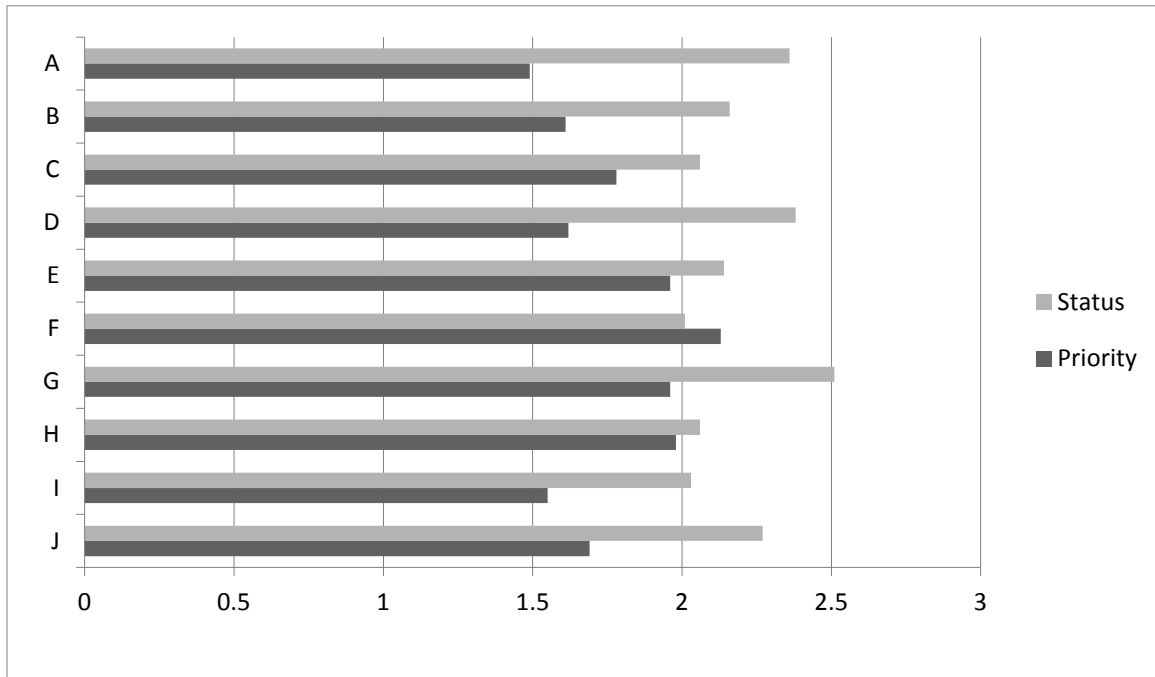
Students survey, parents survey, staff survey, they are all going to get different parts of the student behavior. Discipline data and the data of our students that we are tracking in at-risk categories. Has their attendance improved? Have their tardies improved? Have their grades gone up? How are their SAT scores? Or has their on-time graduation—which is part of our CCEP and SAT data to—are we closing the achievement gap? All of those things really add in.

Overall, the desire to create a space of mutual acceptance resonated with all of the principals. Indicating, “It's not so much that we're trying to tolerate somebody. We're trying to teach kids to accept other people.”

### Non-Instructional Supports

In the subsection of the survey devoted to the non-instructional positive behavior supports questions, no school varied significantly from another in the reported mean scores. This indicates that the schools in the district respond similarly developed school-wide behavior supports. Figure 4 below indicates the current status and priority of school-wide behavior support systems, as perceived by respondents.

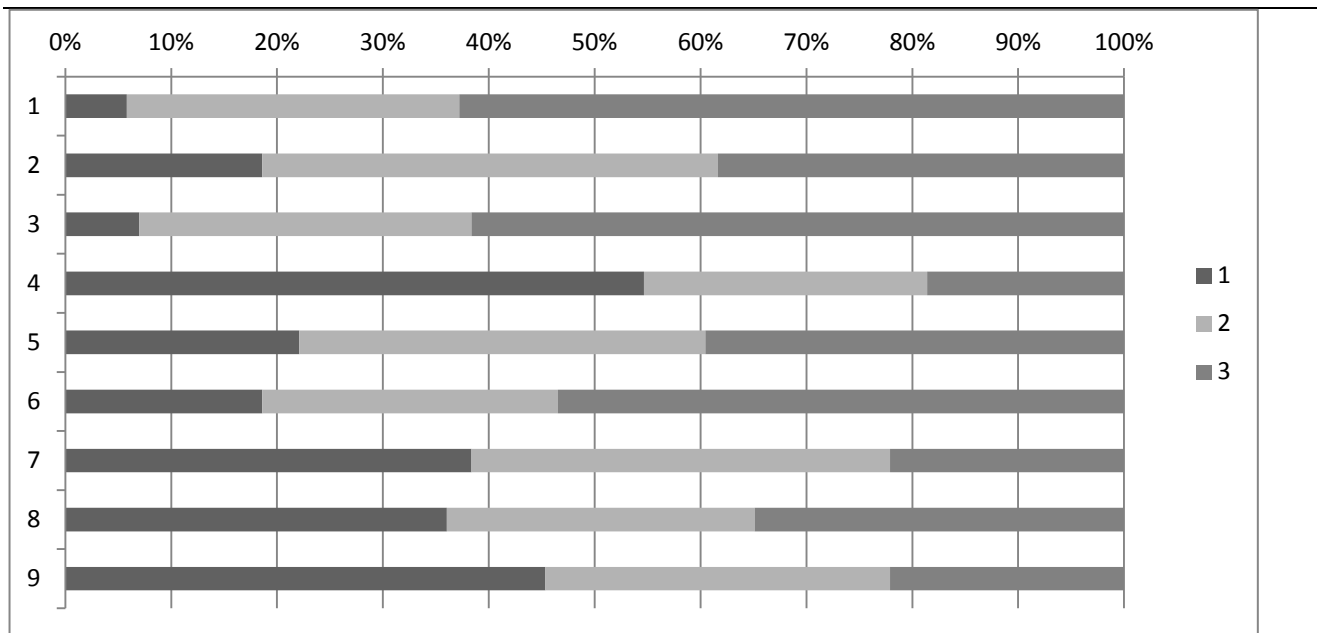
Figure 4

*Non-Instructional Status & Priority Means By School*

Non-instructional supports are often described as those things that impact student behaviors in the common areas of the school, when typical instruction isn't taking place. This could range from scheduling of class changes, to environmental factors to data analysis and reporting. All of the schools (A-J) reported that their non-instructional supports are at least "partially in place", noting current practices in areas of data gathering, analysis and sharing, required reporting on student discipline and attendance and at-risk student interventions. All schools noted district wide practices of reporting on quarterly discipline data as the starting point for analyzing this information and sharing with the faculty. Figure 5 indicates frequencies by question, in the area of non-instructional supports current status.

Figure 5

*Non-Instructional Systems Status, Questions 1-9, Frequencies*



1. School-wide expected student behaviors apply to non-classroom settings.
2. School-wide expected student behaviors are taught in non-classroom settings.
3. Supervisors actively supervise (move, scan, & interact) students in non-classroom settings.
4. Rewards exist for meeting expected student behaviors in non-classroom settings.
5. Physical/architectural features are modified to limit (a) unsupervised settings, (b) unclear traffic patterns, and (c) inappropriate access to & exit from school grounds.
6. Scheduling of student movement ensures appropriate numbers of students in non-classroom spaces.
7. Staff receives regular opportunities for developing and improving active supervision skills.
8. Status of student behavior and management practices are evaluated quarterly from data.
9. All staff are involved directly or indirectly in management of non-classroom settings.

More than 50% of respondents indicated that topics covered by questions one, three and six were “in place”. These practices include school-wide rules application to non-instructional spaces, active supervision occurring in non-instructional spaces, and scheduling of student movement ensures appropriate numbers of students in the hallways at any given time. Only one question was rated as “not in place” by more than 50% of respondents; question 4 related to rewarding positive student behaviors in non-instructional spaces.

Principal interview data indicated similar confidence in the current status of non-instructional



systems of support. On the topic of data gathering and analysis, principals reported;

We're actually pretty good at that. We run quarterly discipline reports. In fact I just sent one off. If you were here a half an hour ago you would have seen it. We run quarterly discipline reports. We analyze trends and behavior trends. Even if we have a teacher who seems to be referring more students, we will look into that. We look at trend behavior. If we are having certain behaviors or problems that are showing up more, we communicate back to the staff in faculty meetings using pretty simple data tools, charts and such. And if we see something that we need to focus on, then we put something in place to be able to focus on that. Just to give you a real quick example, smoking was a real problem here a while ago. It's not to say that it's gone, but it's nothing like what it was six months ago. We targeted high enforcement areas. We figured out who the smokers were, and we were able to curb that behavior.

Another principal on the same topic of data analysis and reporting;

Our associate principal tracks our data for discipline throughout the year. About once a month [he] brings an update with all of the student data to our leadership team meetings. We sometimes then take that data to the larger staff, but we at least do it monthly within our administrative team. This is so we can determine where we are seeing the big issues that are unfolding, and then we can talk about, "Are we really using the right consequences? Do we need to alter what we are doing? Do we need to address it in small class meetings? What strategies can we use to change the behavior?" The district asks us again as an administrative team, to take a look at our suspension data each quarter. So we do that as well. Mostly, they ask us to do it for state reporting. But we use it as an opportunity to take a look and see what else is going on, and what is causing suspensions in the building.

Data sharing with faculty was an area where no systematic practice was in place, through

most principals reported that they did share information outside of the leadership team on at least an informal basis. “Yes, on an informal basis. This year we did it through the coalition that did an activity as a part of our professional development about what kind of issues you hold and what kind of issues you pass on.” Another principal talked about the process of deciding when to share with the faculty and the effectiveness of all hands on deck in response to problem situations;

Because you are bringing different points of view and perspectives together, it’s important to disseminate information about student behavior. We will do that in faculty meetings when it is a whole group thing. For example, last year...people were saying the kids are getting really lax in getting to class on time. So in administrative team we brainstormed some ideas, we brought it to leadership to get more buy in and then we presented it once we tweaked some things with their input and we presented it to the faculty team. It was about tardy sweeps. So we would just have random tardy sweeps and we had a whole system in place that was consistent, we would put things on the door that would say, report to this person. We did something similar with dress code, so that we had more eyes on the situation and it was not five administrators checking dress code, it was everyone everywhere.

Required reporting to central office was discussed by several principals;

Quarterly, we look at the Discipline, Student Discipline. We receive the report Research and Planning. At that time, we kind of analyze the levels of high discipline. We kind of look at the strategies or look at our action plans that we have in place to address those behaviors. Usually, it is attendance, tardies.

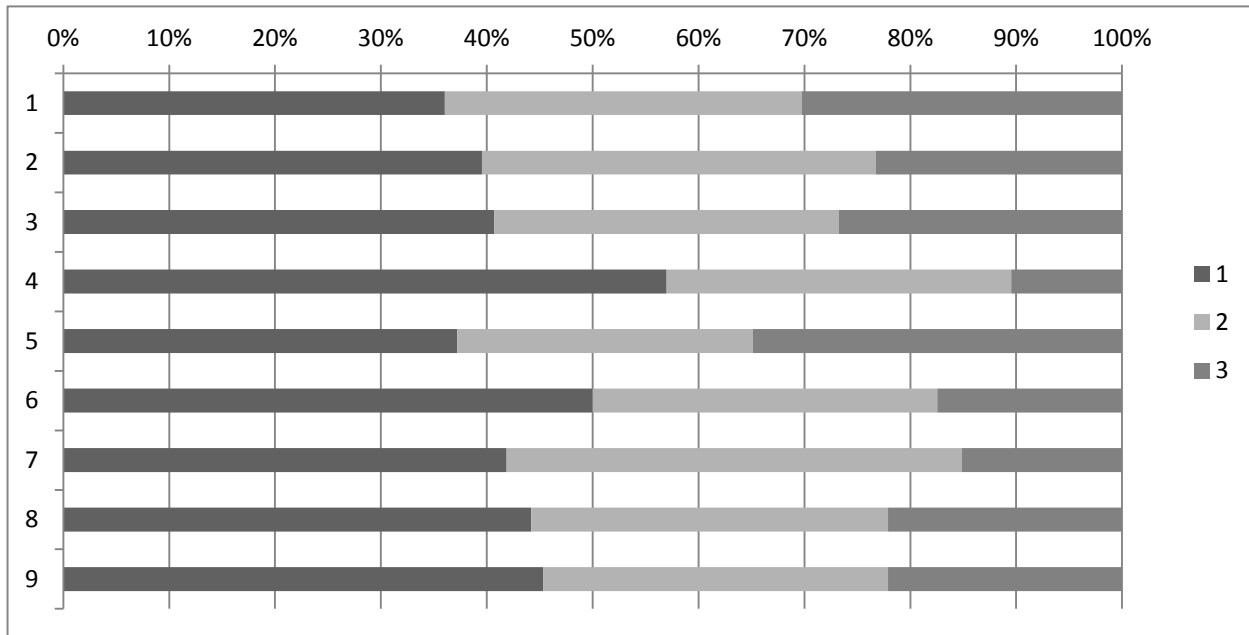
Three principals identified attendance data as being paramount to addressing behavioral concerns. All principals discussed hallway and cafeteria supervision. Some incorporated the idea of other students modeling appropriate behaviors, particularly related to at-risk student groups;

The adult presence I think is huge, whether it's teachers, nurse, administrators, or whoever it happens to be. But I also think there is just an expectation by most of the students here. The other piece is expectation by upper class that there is not a tolerance for ridiculousness. So very quickly students see what is expected. And just the whole climate of student interaction, I think it's just interesting when people move into this school district and start coming here from having been at other schools in other locations where there's just different behavior in the hallway or cafeteria. A part of that I think is when you have all grade levels in the hall at the same time. We found that the ninth grade wing didn't work for that very reason. We needed upper classman modeling positive behavior.

While non-instructional supports were all considered "partially in place", the priorities identified in moving forward were "low" in all schools except one, which rated it as a "medium" priority. Figure 6 illustrates how the staff responded to survey questions directed at non-instructional support priorities.

Figure 6

*Non-Instructional Support Priorities, Frequencies by Question*



One particular school has undergone a dramatic change in population the past two years and has seen an increase in disciplinary referrals involving infractions in non-instructional spaces, beyond the scope of the other schools. They indicated the need to communicate more with parents and community members about appropriate behaviors in the school and are doing that through phone calls to individual students' parents. The staff perception of the current status of non-instructional supports is also the lowest in this school, as identified by survey data. The principal indicated a desire to push forward in revising some policies within the school;

Now, we as a team have to say, honestly, yes, this is all bad. But, is it warranting suspension?

What we have to do, and we know that we are working on this, we are revising our handbook this summer. Not really to let kids get away with anything, but to say if these are our number one hitters, is it good for us to put them out of school? Or, should we bring them in school?

Can we do something with community service? Is there an alternative to us just suspending

the students, because of course, some of the kids will want to be suspended? They don't want to come to school.

Priorities for improvement from the perspective of the principals included refining data analysis practices, ability to quickly identify problem areas and adjust staff coverage as needed and building rapport with students. "[Using data] has got to become priority number one for us. We have to look at our policies and stuff that we have implemented here, and see if those programs are closing up loopholes for kids in school." Principals spoke candidly about wanting to move the disciplinary infraction numbers down by using staff wisely, and responding quickly;

Obviously, we want to reduce the number of discipline infractions. Especially those related to classroom disruptions and disrespect in the hallways. Other than attendance, those are probably our two highest areas that we deal with regularly. We have to analyze the data we have on location and time of infractions so we can move staff to the hot spots. It's the only way we will develop a culture within our building of expectations in students or to demonstrate appropriate behavior at all times. They should be able to meet expectations of our teachers. They should know how to communicate effectively with the staff members without having to get overly excited.

Building relationships with students and families came up repeatedly;

I think overall, we have got to look at the bigger picture. Yes, to use a cliché, but we have to build relationships. We really have to get our teachers to understand the importance...the true importance of why you need to really build a relationship with this child, and not to sound cliché'-ish, but to get the teacher to really understand these students do not care how much you know, until they know how much you care.

Despite all schools indicating they had non-instructional supports in place, nearly all of them

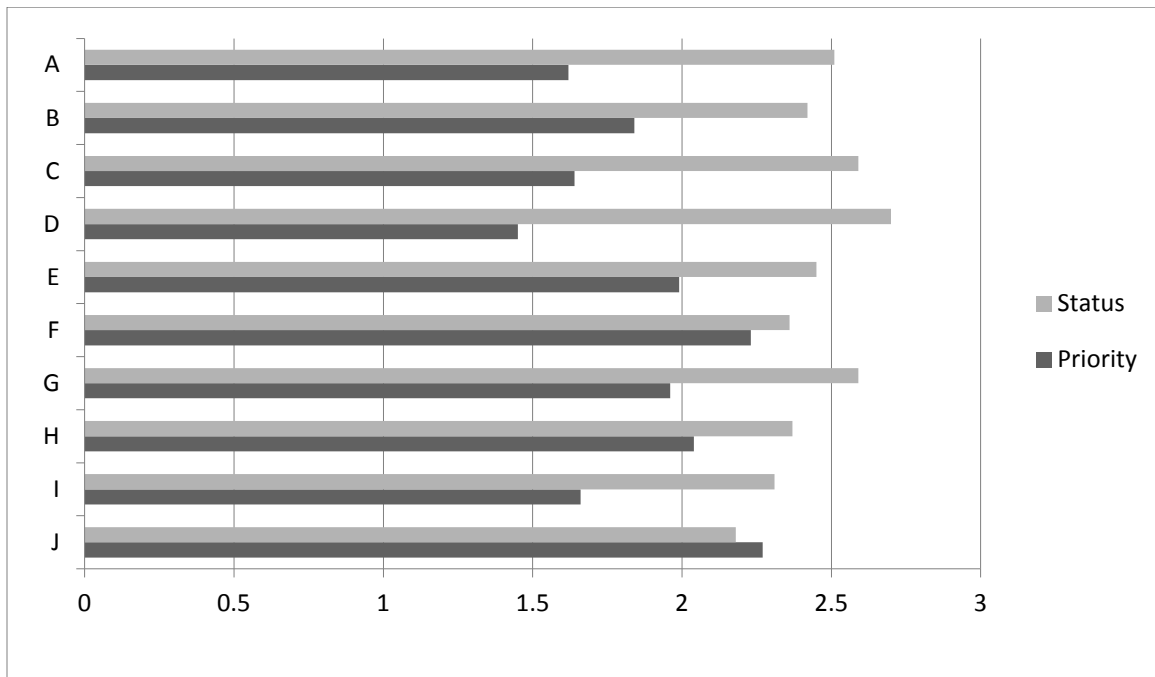
indicated that they didn't necessarily relate some of their supervision and data analysis practices to features of effective school-wide positive behavior supports. They viewed this category of questions specifically from the disciplinarian standpoint. Further education on the importance of effective disciplinary practices as a feature of SWPBS would allow these schools to combine many of their practices into a coordinated set of activities that could decrease rates of suspension, and rates of truancy, increase student's academic performance and increase school climate.

### Classroom Supports

In the subsection of the survey devoted to classroom supports, no school varied significantly from another in the reported mean scores. This indicates that the schools in the district respond similarly developed school-wide behavior supports. Figure 7 below indicates the current status and priority of school-wide behavior support systems, as perceived by respondents. All schools rated themselves as having classroom systems that were at least "partially in place" and all but 3 schools rated their priority for improvement in this area as "low".

Figure 7

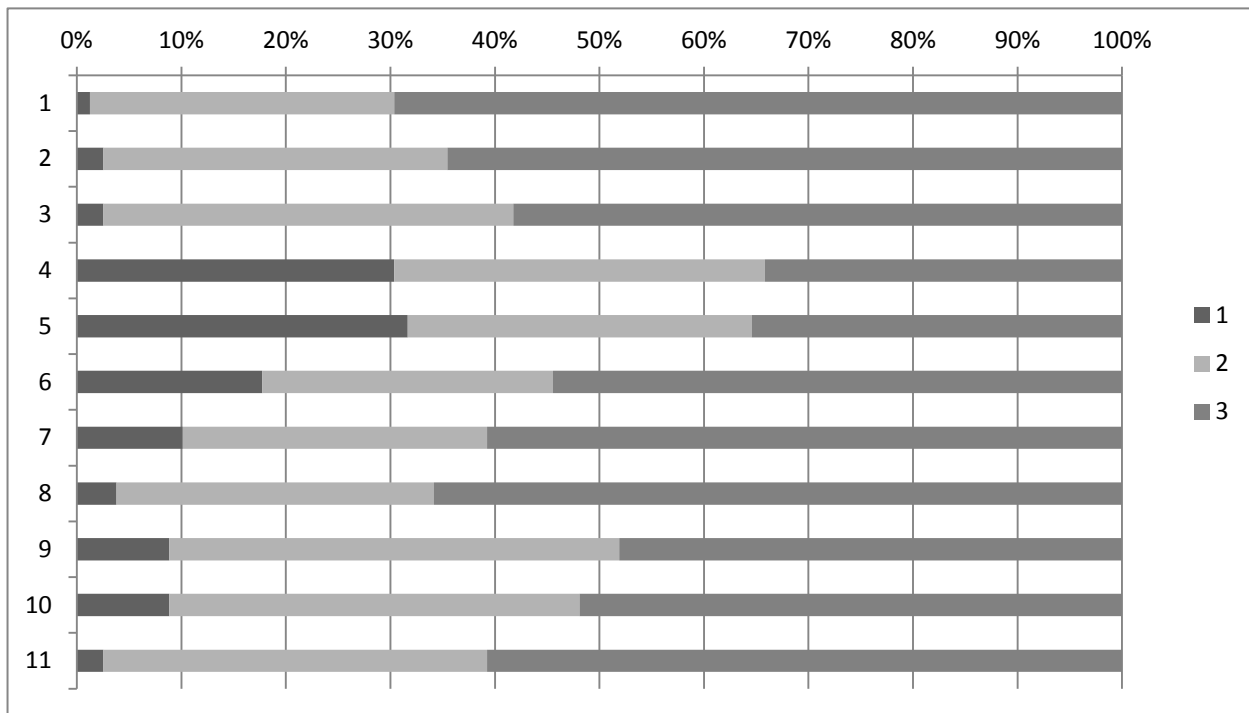
*Classroom Status & Priority Means By School*



Classroom supports are considered to be the practices a teacher uses within the classroom to engage students on positive behaviors. This includes direct instruction of pro-social behaviors, proximity and environmental design, rapport building with students and parents, communication with parents and systematic responses to problematic behaviors through the schools disciplinary referral process. Figure 8 indicates the frequency that staff in each of the ten schools (A-J) answered questions on classroom supports status.

Figure 8

*Classroom Supports Status, Questions 1-11, Frequencies*



1. Expected student behavior & routines in classrooms are stated positively & defined clearly.
2. Problem behaviors are defined clearly.
3. Expected student behavior & routines in classrooms are taught directly.
4. Expected student behaviors are acknowledged regularly (positively reinforced) (>4 positives to 1 negative).
5. Problem behaviors receive consistent consequences.
6. Procedures for expected & problem behaviors are consistent with school-wide procedures.
7. Classroom-based options exist to allow classroom instruction to continue when problem behavior occurs.
8. Instruction & curriculum materials are matched to student ability (math, reading, language).
9. Students experience high rates of academic success ( $\geq 75\%$  correct).
10. Teachers have regular opportunities for access to assistance & recommendations (observation, instruction, & coaching).
11. Transitions between instructional & non-instructional activities are efficient & orderly.

Only three out of 11 questions were rated as partially in place or not in place by more than 50% of the respondents. Those questions were numbered 4, 5 and 9 and they address the current status of positive reinforcement of expected student behaviors, problem behaviors receiving consistent consequences and students experience high rates( >75% correct) of academic success. Principal responses to interview questions identified 6 main subcategories as main ideas for their thoughts; proximity and environmental design, teacher modeling of appropriate behaviors, building rapport with students, communication with parents, referral system for negative student behaviors and



systematic response to problem behaviors. A principal commenting on classroom arrangement;

I guess for most of them it starts the very first day at school, whether it's a seating arrangement, assigned seating, or whether it's the way you've got your desks or tables arranged. It's how you set the tone of, "This is what we do from bell to bell," whether it's the teacher modeling, whether it's other students, whether it's the teacher very quickly reminding students of what's expected. That tone gets set from the very beginning, whether it's a homeroom teacher. We try to start it with [Freshman Transition] in August as well when they come in for that orientation session. I think that's one of the benefits of having a veteran staff. There's a certain amount of professional peer pressure, This is how we structure our classrooms here in this building, and we expect you to do the same thing.

Teacher modeling of appropriate behavior extends beyond traditional classroom management;

In the classroom...I guess in and out of the classrooms, teachers are asked throughout the year to find pretty much, Starfish. And what they do is select in the classroom and out of classroom that they need to help somebody that they see who is at-risk, or someone that they need to specifically build a relationship with to help pull that child in, to make sure he or she is going to be successful.

Another principal on classroom systems of support related to rapport building;

Teachers established a rapport; a lot of them establish a routine. They do collaborative learning activities. That is just a really nice climate to have in your classroom. And I think, too, a variety of activities and technology. And things that kids like to do. If they like to do things, they are better behaved. When they are more engaged, they are better behaved.

Communication with students and parents regarding behavior was mentioned by every principal;

Well, we have...each teacher is expected to have a classroom management system that they have had in place, with the expectation is that they will meet with students to discuss the inappropriate behaviors, have conferences with parents or call parents to discuss behaviors as well. Teachers are encouraged to have a system in place where they can do detentions after school.

Behavior referrals and consistent application of consequences for negative behaviors were also discussed multiple times in interviews;

We also have a referral system in place for our teachers. Where our teachers can sit and make referrals to administrators regarding behaviors that are continue to take place in their classroom. And we have a process that we use to reply to these different referrals depending on the behaviors, what those discipline consequences will be.

Many went further to discuss a triage system for behavioral issues that arise;

We do have a behavior plan for the teachers. Our coalition team constructed it last year so that they know what kind of steps that they should use to promote good behavior. And then after that if they have issues with students, what kind of steps they go up the ladder from a behavioral standpoint. So what kinds of items warrant a student conference? What items warrant a parent contact? If those strategies don't work, what are the next steps that they can use to assist students up to and including referrals to administration for support?

The commonality of direct instruction of pro-social behaviors details special coalition lessons and elective courses. There was no evidence to support the idea that classroom teachers are directly instructing pro-social behaviors as a matter of typical practice.

In the regular education setting, it's not systematized. It does happen in certain cases. I'd say that the cases that it happens most often are in perhaps your collaborative classes where

you've got some students who are functioning at a lower level. The English teachers are great at talking about, "This is how you phrase this question. You need to stop. You need to wait for them to stop talking, and then say excuse me," so whether it's manners or the appropriate phraseology. I see that happening on a pretty regular basis in some collaborative classes.

The specialized activities that do include direct instruction of pro-social behaviors are effective and are able to be adapted based on the needs of the school. A level of social responsiveness is evident in many of the principals' answers.

I would say we do have some things that happen in some of our elective courses. That would be primary instruction. We have a relationships course that we added two years ago through our family consumer science program. And that was as a direct result of some of the things that we were seeing with our students. Our family consumer sciences teachers came to us and said, "Hey, why don't we get rid of this child development class. We really think that our students could benefit from this relationships class." So that has been an addition, and is led by a teacher who is very invested in that. We also have our school counselors who go into and do classroom guidance lessons about a variety of issues by grade level. So sometimes they will have a bullying lesson that they will provide to the entire ninth grade class. Or, we do have times when we have teachers who will request for an individual counselor come in and talk to a specific class where they have seen some behaviors. So they will do a classroom guidance lesson on how to interact with each other better. We do our class meetings, and we have things like that in class meetings. We also do some of those things in our freshmen transition program, which is a summer time program. We also have a ladies club. And that was started by two of our ninth grade English teachers who felt like our young ladies would benefit from having some etiquette lessons, and to learn how to go out to lunch and to write a

thank you note. So they have done some of those things with our ninth graders. Similarly, back to the freshmen mentor study hall, they take the students out to lunch in the community at a restaurant that has linen napkins and white tablecloths, so that students will know how to behave in that setting.

In some cases, the principal verified that classroom systems of support are often misunderstood to be only related to disciplinary practices.

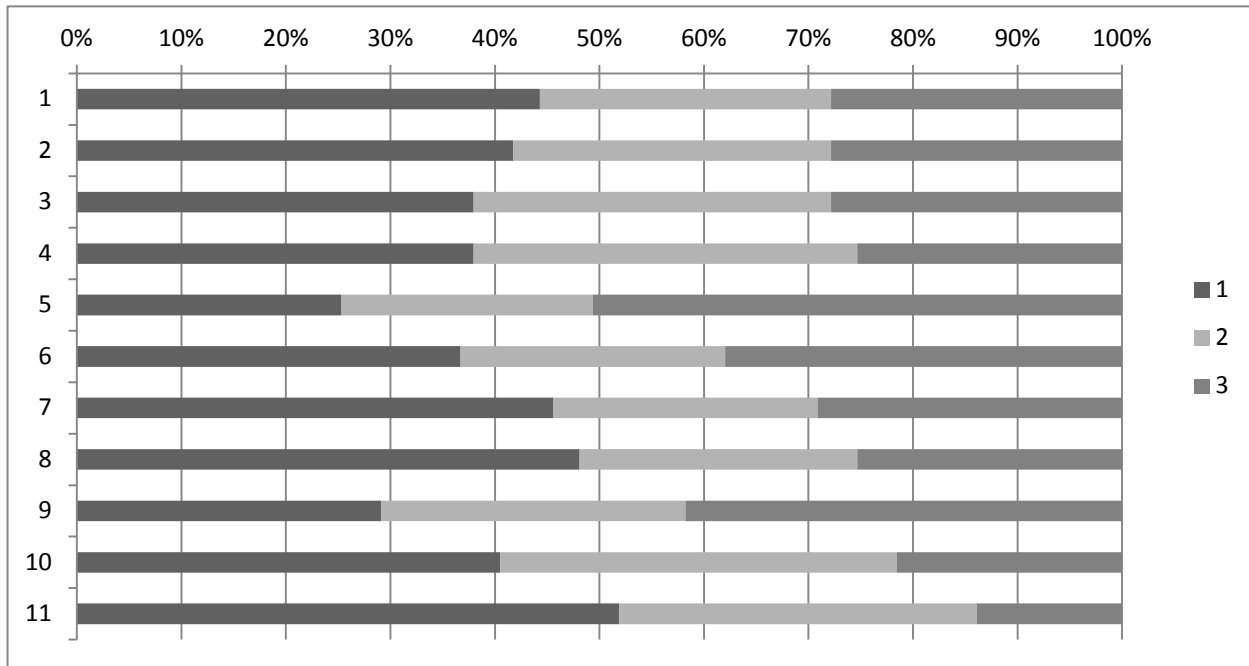
Each teacher is expected to have a classroom management system that they have had in place, with the expectation is that they will do a meeting with students to discuss the inappropriate behaviors, have conferences with parents or call parents to discuss behaviors as well. Teachers are encouraged to have a system in place where they can do detentions after school. And then we also have a process where the teacher has exhausted those means, that we use a timeout program where students can be removed from the classroom for that period. They are sent to a location where they can complete their work. But at the same time, there will be discipline consequences if the student is removed from the class.

Unfortunately, half of the principals responded to questions regarding classroom systems of support by stating disciplinary practices as carried out by the teacher.

A common theme regarding classroom practices supported communication between the teacher and the parents of their students. Several principals talked about this trait of SWPBS.

Figure 9 illustrates the frequency of responses to questions related to classroom supports priorities.

Figure 9

*Classroom Supports Priorities, Frequencies by Question*

More than 50% of respondents indicated that question 5, students receive consistent consequences for problem behaviors, is high priority. Going forward, the principals indicated priorities in increasing teacher comfort in holding classroom meetings, and calibrating teachers referral usage.

I think it always has to be for us as a priority is to provide consistency. It is one of the priorities, and is one of the biggest challenges that we have. As large as we are, as diverse as we are, as much varied level of experiences our teachers have, it is a challenge to provide consistency. It doesn't mean that our teachers don't do a good job with it. It doesn't mean that our administrators don't do a good job with it. We just all come to behavior supports with our own individual bias and our own individual feeling about how we can best address student needs. So how could we as a school create a culture of consistency, so that our students and

our teachers know what the expectations are?

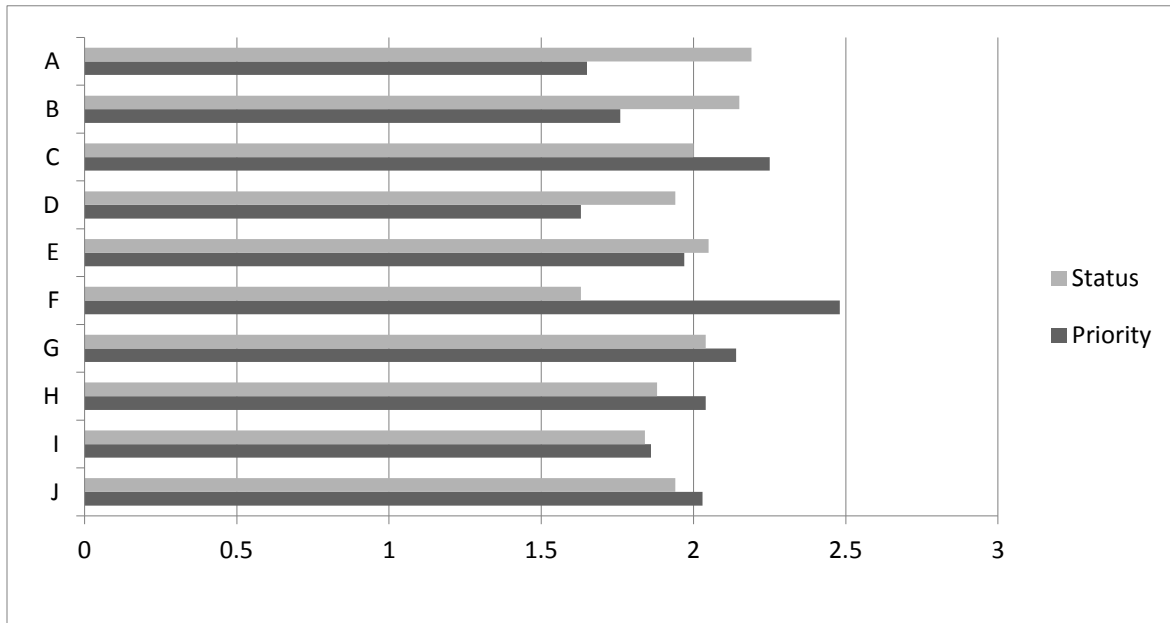
This portion of SWPBS was rated the highest in survey data, because primarily teachers were answering the survey questions. In the implementation of a full scale SWPBS model it would be imperative to delineate the effective supports being used by individual teachers so that the practices could be shared. Through interviewing principals it was evident that a disconnect exists between school staff and the principal's understanding of this particular category of SWPBS , which education and coordination could potentially remedy.

#### Individual Student Supports

In the subsection of the survey devoted to the individual student supports questions, no school varied significantly from another in the reported mean scores. This indicates that the schools in the district respond similarly developed school-wide behavior supports. Figure 10 below indicates the current status and priority of school-wide behavior support systems, as perceived by respondents.

Figure 10

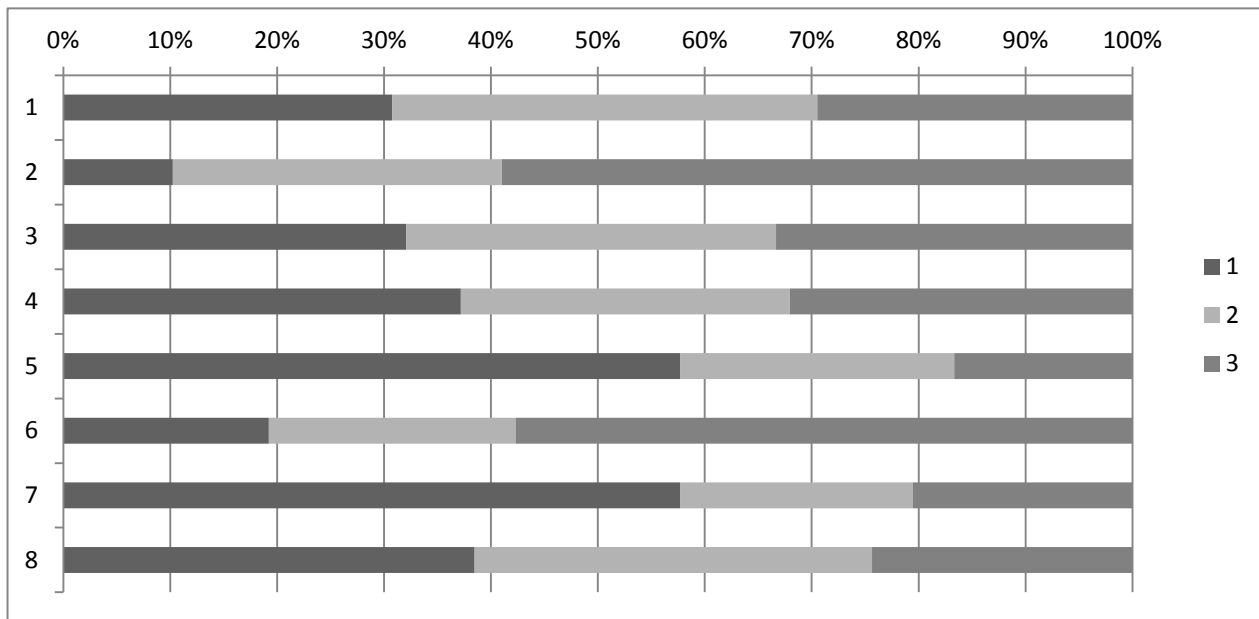
*Individual Student Support Status & Priority Means By School*



Individual student supports questions revealed the most difficult area for schools to grasp and feel confident with. Six schools reported that individual student supports were “not in place”, with the other 4 just making it over the “partially in place” boundary. Additionally, half of the schools reported this area as a “medium” priority for improvement. The other half reported it as “low priority”. Figure 11 indicates the frequencies by question, in the area of individual student supports status.

Figure 11

*Individual Student Supports Status, Questions 1-8, Frequencies*



1. Assessments are conducted regularly to identify students with chronic problem behaviors.
2. A simple process exists for teachers to request assistance.
3. A behavior support team responds promptly (within 2 working days) to students who present chronic problem behaviors.
4. Behavioral support team includes an individual skilled at conducting functional behavioral assessment.
5. Local resources are used to conduct functional assessment-based behavior support planning (~10 hrs/week/student).
6. Significant family &/or community members are involved when appropriate & possible.
7. School includes formal opportunities for families to receive training on behavioral support/positive parenting strategies.
8. Behavior is monitored & feedback provided regularly to the behavior support team & relevant staff.

More than 50% of respondents indicated that individual student systems are in place, as related to questions 2 and 6. These questions asked if a simple process exists for teachers to request assistance and if significant family and community members are involved when appropriate for individual students. More than 50% of the respondents indicated that local resources are not used to conduct functional behavior assessment and that parents are not offered formal opportunities for training on behavioral support/positive parenting strategies, questions 5 and 7.

The principal interviews revealed significant interventions available to students, but it appeared that the most efficient vehicle to those supports has come through the disciplinary procedures of the county.



If a student is becoming a habitual offender, we sit down and have a face-to-face conference with the parent and the student early on within the first four or five violations. So if the student is tracking the wrong way, there is going to be a face-to-face conference with the parent. We generally would include our school counselor with that, because they also can help us with strategies. If it's an exceptional education student, the case manager would also be involved. Even though we are a secondary school, we also utilize the child study process for behaviors. A lot of folks probably believe that child study is predominantly a vehicle for exceptional education identification, and that is not what we use it for in any way shape or form. We use it for that at times, but we really do use it as an opportunity to sit down with our parents and with a larger group of people to try to help a student improve. We also have a structure in place where when we have attendance issues, our school social worker does Friday meetings, where once a student reaches a certain level of absences, the parent is required to come in and sit down with the school social worker and the student to discuss the impact that attendance is having on their student.

Another principal talked about pro-active planning with administration;

Yeah, we have two ways of doing that. There's the target meeting. It encompasses more than just discipline. If a teacher is having issues with a child, they may contact school counseling, and school counseling will set up a parent conference. We'll bring all of the teachers together and we'll address not only negative behavior, but also academic performance and such. There's also as a part of our countywide discipline, habitual offender conferences, where I'm required to meet with them at least once, and in most cases twice to discuss behavior. We review it and we discuss it with the parent. We try to put a behavior plan in place. If it's an exceptional education student, there's a process for that. And if it's not an exceptional

education student, we follow a similar process of trying to put some sort of behavioral support in place to try to minimize the negative behavior and focus on positive behavior.

All principals indicated that schools must be willing to try new options for keeping students within their buildings.

I do not think you ever exhaust a list. There are always more ideas. It is individualized; it is really a similar approach as if you were talking about an Individualized Education Plan, IEP. You might have seen the general brush stroke of that behavior before, but every kid is different. And at the high school age, one of the most important things is, to write basically, to do a BIP with the kid and decide what would be rewarding to you? What are we working towards? Doing goal setting we saw improvement in our student's stakeholder survey with, I know how to set goals and reach them and access the resources to reach them. What are my supports? So we saw improvement in our stakeholder data for that, which was encouraging, because I think it is something that we are all really working on, whether it is through the at risk, whether it is through the mentoring or whether it is just through generally teachers just talking about it all the time at our school. They are so good about connecting teaching in the classroom to real world goals.

In at least one school, an individual student support team is established and is referred to as PAR, Prevention, Action and Resolution;

It is like coming up with a behavioral contract for an exceptional education student. These are for students who are not exceptional education who do not have those supports. So, it is a team of teachers. That is their duty. They have PAR team duty. And they collect data from the kids' teachers just as you would in a child study, or any of the exceptional education settings. And they – the team gets together with the parents and with the child.

Parent communication starts in the classroom, and extends to all specialized support teams within the schools;

If we continue to see inappropriate behaviors, there is a second hearing that is required with the principal. We review student attendance, their current progress, their grades. We try to...basically, the meeting has two purposes. One, it is kind of giving the student some strategies, some ideas and things that they can do with the mom or the dad, for improving student behavior, student performance.

Data analysis and functional behavior assessment were primary features of the individual student supports, from the perspective of the administrators.

We do pattern analysis of behaviors. We may do a functional behavior assessment to look at if there is a pattern of behaviors that we see from that particular student. At that point, we will put in place a BIP, Behavior Improvement Plan, and give the student some strategies, again, to clarify expectations as far as appropriate behaviors.

Many schools work with their feeder middle schools to identify rising ninth graders who have a history of difficult behaviors;

We identify students who are coming from our middle schools. We take a look at their academics. We take a look at their attendance. We take a look at their discipline record. And then we identify a group of forty-five to sixty ninth graders who we believe if we put them in a study hall as their seventh class instead of as an elective, we might be able to make their transition to high school better. We have seen some significant success with that. We trained our teachers who are using it. They work with students on a weekly basis about tracking their academics, monitoring what they are doing, watching for any behavior issues.

And some of our kids that you could possibly see down the road as being at risk. But one of

things that we started doing, and it has grown immensely in the two years we've been doing it, is that we're doing a mentoring program here. We identify some of our at risk ninth graders coming into the building, and we partner them up with a mentor for the entire year. The meetings can take places as often as you'd like. It's proven to be very successful. We're talking about academically, behavioral. Those are the two criteria generally that we look at when we established that we want these people to be a part of this mentoring program. It's not all about the academic parts. We take the kids out to VCU for a basketball game. There's a cooking class that we all go to. There are several other activities that go along to where the student gets to know their mentor. It's not so all academic to where they don't feel like it's always from the educational standpoint.

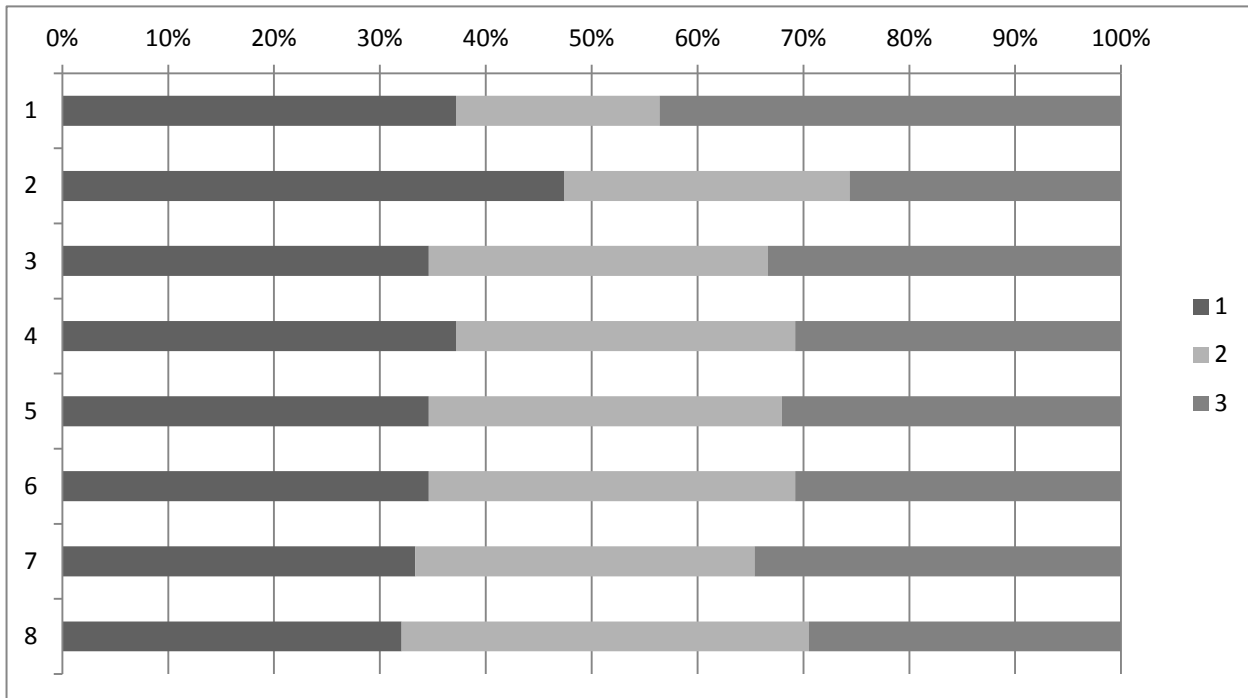
Only one principal indicated the option of an alternative school choice, available within the county, for children who were having difficulty in the comprehensive high school.

We have to make some allowances for those kids. The last thing that we want to do is get rid of a child and throw our child away. Sometimes, we have to look at another placement for a child. If this is too big for a student, we often recommend another placement. We have an alternative setting, a couple of alternative settings here in the county.

Figure 12 indicates the frequency of staff responses to questions directed at the priorities related to individual student supports.

Figure 12

*Individual Student Supports Priorities, Frequencies by Question*



The staff response to the survey indicates a fairly evenly developed profile with regards to individual student supports, with 30-48% responding that the support structures for individual students are “low” priority, about another 30% rating it as a “medium” priority and another 30-35% responding that it should be “high” priority. Overall, the principal responses clearly identify the practices that are in place for indentifying individual student behaviors that are not acceptable. A few of the schools indicated the presence of a “behavior support team” with loose explanation of how they operated.

We just did our ninth graders last year, but this year we are doing each grade level. A parent meeting to call our students in, and the parents, and we even fed them at this evening meeting, to let them know where their student was, academically and behaviorally. I think if they had three or more violations of the code, parents were asked to come in so they could have a one-

on-one meeting with us as well, the administrators as well as the school counselors, so that we could help correct that behavior.

Another principal on their individual support process;

Typically, what happens is that, the administrator will meet the teachers or with the counselors to be proactive with a plan and also reach out to the parents. We have been lucky and I think that is because we have been small and that, that number has been a very manageable number. I think the parent partnerships with the administrative team and the school counseling team has proven to be very strong. The parents are truly establishing that trust within the school that we really have the best interest of their child in place.

The teacher responses were less confident and resulted in lower mean scores than any other area of SWPBS. Additionally, survey findings indicate that this area of SWPBS is the highest priority area for improvement from the teachers' perspective. Coordinated practices could assist in assuring that all teachers understand the processes in place for addressing individual student behavioral issues, however, every school has a basic understanding of what is needed and is already practicing many of the required features.

### Summary of Findings

This study sought to describe the current status and priority areas of a large school district beginning to implement school-wide positive behavior supports in 10 high schools. This was to gain further understanding of how to create a model of implementation of SWPBS that is sustainable and takes into account the current needs of each individual school. To begin the research, an online survey was administered to a random sample of all licensed professional staff members in the 10 high schools being studied. Due to a low survey response, an additional component was added to the

study to include direct interviewing of all 10 high school principals. The data gleaned from the interviews was incorporated through authentic quotes through the data analysis and is reported in each school-level discussion related to the four subcategories. The survey results indicate that features of SWPBS in the areas of school-wide supports, non-instructional supports and classroom supports are rated as “partially in place”, while individual student supports is rated as “not in place”. In the same categories, priorities for improvement were noted as “low” in all areas.

A significant difference between status of school-wide supports, non-instructional supports and classroom supports exists, indicating a confidence in the school staff that they have a firm understanding of the practices of these three features of SWPBS. Conversely, no significant difference exists between status and priority of individual student supports. The staff perceives these features to be “not in place” and they identify priority for improvement as “low”. When principals were interviewed, deeper evaluation of the survey results occurred and their words were used to explain some of the current practices and priorities within their respective schools.

In all cases, principals identified key components of SWPBS evident on each level of support from school-wide systems all the way to individual student systems. They noted clear definitions of behavioral expectations, some direct instruction of expected behaviors, many on-going systems of rewarding pro-social behaviors, consistent responses to problem behaviors, effective monitoring and decision making regarding student behavior, some efficient management practices and the involvement of district level supports.

While some of the features are not yet fully developed, the seedlings are planted and the schools are exhibiting a readiness to move forward on implementation. According to survey results, training and coordination of individual student support systems would be the first area to address.

## CHAPTER 5

### CONCLUSION

#### Framing the Context of the Study

School violence has been a part of the PK-12 public educational system since its beginnings. However, until the shooting incident at Columbine High School in Littleton, Colorado in 1999, the number of victims, reported in an entire school year, usually totaled fewer than 5. Typically, the count of victims was fewer than 3. In 1999, 15 victims were reported for the shooting rampage; 12 students, a teacher and both of the shooters. Since that time, there have been several other school shootings that resulted in students' perishing in Michigan, Florida, California, Louisiana, Pennsylvania, Minnesota, Tennessee, Vermont, North Carolina, Wisconsin, Washington, Ohio, Alabama, Illinois, Nebraska and Hawaii. Schools responded by adopting zero tolerance policies regarding weapons, drugs and physical aggression/assault to reduce the possibility that students who threatened the safety of staff and other students would not be in the school buildings. Legislature responded by supporting these policies and in some instances, enacting laws to that effect.

Most of the writing on the use of SWPBS began to emerge around 2000. Applying the research supported tools of positive behavior support (PBS) first to entire school buildings, and then to school districts, appeared to be one way of identifying students with problem behavior, providing appropriate interventions to these students and keeping them in school buildings so that they were available for instruction. However, for schools that immediately implemented these practices, they often found that they did not have enough research based interventions for student with repetitive problem behaviors. This remains a problem for SWPBS. SWPBS is more than just effective interventions for students with problem behavior. It's about a culture of inclusion, direct instruction



in appropriate school behaviors, systematic processes of data analysis and efficient maneuvering of students from one research-based intervention to the next in either a more or less restrictive environment. It's about student centered outcomes like graduation, employment and avoiding involvement in the adult criminal and judicial system. SWPBS has been determined to be an effective process for reducing observed problem behaviors (Horner, Sugaie, Todd, & Lewis-Palmer, 2005) and reported office discipline referrals (Barrett et al., 2008; Eber, 2006; Horner et al., 2005; and Luiselli, Putnam, & Sunderland, 2002). Benefits including academic gains and improved social behavior are also documented (Eber, 2006; Gottfredson, Gottfredson, & Hybl, 1993; Nelson et al., 2002; Putnam, Horner, & Algozzine, 2006).

### School District Synopsis

The school district that participated in this research is large and diverse, with a stable number of residents. The county is home to nearly 300,000 people, according to the U.S. Bureau of the Census, in 2009. The county's high schools include approximately 12,000 students distributed across nine comprehensive high schools and one alternative education site for high school age students. The school district began to directly address the idea of Response to Intervention in 2005, and quickly considered the impact a similar system could have on maintaining students within the comprehensive school setting. In Virginia, this program was referred to as Effective School-Wide Discipline. The school district responded to the need by creating "Equitable and Inclusive Schools" Teams. These teams were trained at the district level on inclusive practices for people of diverse religious, racial, gender, disability related and socio-economic status. Once the initiative became well known, the school district had a change in leadership that impacted the work of the teams. Throughout the study, "coalition classes" were referred to several times by the principals. This is what is left, from the

building perspective, of that initiative.

### Summary of the Study

This study sought to indentify current status of effective behavior supports and priorities related to these supports in high schools in a large diverse school district in Virginia. The study took place over a two year data collection period, first high school staff members randomly received an invitation to participate in an online survey and then direct interviews with each of the ten high school principals occurred. Of the ten high schools, one school served students who, by choice or through suspension, were being educated in an alternative education environment. While survey response was very low with only 11% completing the entire survey, participation in the principal interviews was 100%.

The findings of the survey indicate that all ten schools similarly reported that effective behavior supports were at least partially in place in three of the four subcategories being investigated; school-wide supports (2.21), non-instructional supports (2.19) and classroom supports (2.44). In the fourth category, individual student supports, the district mean (1.99) indicated that the status of this type of support was not in place. All four subcategories were rated as low priority for improvement; school-wide supports (1.90), non-instructional supports (1.79), classroom supports (1.90) and individual student supports (1.96). Analysis of the findings was completed, using an independent samples t-test to determine if there were statistically significant differences between status and priority of each of the four subcategories. Data analysis revealed that statistically significant differences existed in the subcategories of school-wide supports and priorities,  $t(107) = 4.61, p < .000$ , non-instructional supports and priorities,  $t(86) = 4.62, p < .000$ , classroom supports and priorities,  $t(79) = 5.89, p < .000$ , but not in individual student supports and priorities,  $t(78) = .223, p < .000$ .

.824. The scores indicated that staff believed that three of the four systems were at least partially in place and therefore were lower priorities for them. Individual student supports, however, was rated the lowest in terms of status (1.99) and the highest in terms of priority for improvement (1.96), indicating less confidence with this particular feature of SWPBS and highest need for improvement.

Principal interviews provided information regarding specific programs used in each of the four subcategories. Principals indicated a much greater understanding of individual student supports than the survey revealed and potentially identified a disconnect among what teachers are aware of and what administrators do when a student with problem behaviors comes to the administrators attention. The school district has a very specific practice related to habitual offenders of the student code of conduct in addition to a district wide coalition that focuses on building inclusive school practices. Both of these came to light through the interview process. Because of the depth of information gained through the interviews and the limited response rate of the survey, it is important to view the results of the study through a lens balanced with that in mind. Greater weight should be placed on administrative views illustrated through interview data, and to that end, much of the interview data has been left in its original form, without edit.

#### Researcher's Perspective

As a previous employee of the school district that participated in the study, I was involved in the initial groundwork related to SWPBS. The district leadership team intentionally did not communicate a division wide plan for implementation of a SWPBS process, called by name, but instead embarked on a journey of education and training of the staff to decrease suspension rates and increase pro-social behaviors through the equitable and inclusive schools teams, based on the principles of the MANDT system. Consequently, shared language around SWPBS is not always

evident in the results. Instead, the information gleaned from the surveys and interviews gives a glimpse of what the school level staff believes to be the current status of effective behavior supports, and their resultant perceptions of the priorities that should be placed on each of those features towards improvement. The district leadership team recognizes the importance of a systematic approach to supporting students' behavior and has continued moving forward with staff training to improve student behavior. This study documents current status of effective behavior supports within each of the schools and priorities for improvement in those same support features, through the eyes of school staff. It should be noted that the perspective of the current administration in the school district is that SWPBS is being implemented systemically. Common difficulties with garnering support for SWPBS processes include shared recognition of a problem, belief in developmental appropriateness of rewarding pro-social behaviors in teenagers, and community perception of school culture and climate.

### Discussion

An inclusive school culture is at the heart of effective behavioral practices (Lewis & Sugai, 1999). Recently, much has been in the news regarding disproportionality related to students receiving disciplinary consequences. In most localities in Virginia, a greater percentage of students with disabilities, racial differences and lower socio-economic status are disciplined with a greater number of days out of school than their non-disabled, white and middle class counterparts (VDOE, 2012). Students who spend more time out of school than receiving instruction run a larger risk of being underemployed, uneducated and criminally involved as adults (Biglan 1995 & Morse et al. 2004). The practice of removing a student through suspension, because the school is unable to meet the child's behavioral needs, has vast implications for life after high school, in addition to the poor community opinion of how schools are doing at meeting the needs of the greater population.

The focus in Virginia, as related to SWPBS, has been around fairly administering discipline, with little emphasis placed on directly teaching students pro-social behaviors. These students came to the school building with different life experiences and potentially limited interactions with diverse others. Teaching students to value each other for their differences is a big goal. Schools have been comfortable celebrating the academic successes of students within the building, but have expected students to know exactly how to behave. Schools struggle with systematic decision making around data related to student behavior. Part of this problem, is that the data that is available for analysis is all gathered after the behavior occurs, the student has been given a consequence for it and has missed instruction, and then reported out to the district or the state. Potentially, it's a year or more before the school begins to analyze what could be causing the problem. Required reporting practices allow for basic trends to be analyzed, such as disproportionality, but it does little for preventing problem behaviors in the future. The timing of the analysis can be terrible, and is rarely focused on individual students.

As school districts spent time planning response to intervention protocols for quickly identifying academic problems with students, most were less attentive to behavioral needs. With the same level of scrutiny placed on behavioral practices and interventions, surely students would have been identified for individual review more quickly than in the past. Schools would have known that they didn't have enough interventions in place to support the students whose behavior was getting in the way of their learning. Additionally, resources to support individualized functional behavior assessment and behavior intervention planning would have been sought more quickly. The refinement of collecting and analyzing academic results has taken more than a decade.

The literature around SWPBS focuses on seven effective practices that schools can use to reduce suspensions. The seven practices are: 1) defining clear expectations throughout the schools,

2) systematic instruction on behavioral expectations, 3) on-going systems of reward for appropriate behaviors, 4) formal systems for responding to violations, 5) on-going monitoring and analysis of discipline data, 6) consistent leadership that encourages and promotes the system, and 7) district level support for the system (Horner & Sugai 2004). High schools traditionally have difficulty with at least a few of these practices because of their departmentalized nature and beliefs about developmentally appropriate behavior of teenagers. Additionally, measuring implementation at the high school level is difficult to do the pace of instruction and volume of staff involved (McIntosh et al. 2006). Very little research on effectiveness of the seven components exists at the high school level at this time.

The study was created to determine a baseline for describing high school readiness to begin using a system like SWPBS to positively impact student outcomes, and reduce suspensions. A large district with representation of urban, sub-urban and rural communities with varying racial composition was selected in order to allow for the greatest number of districts to use the results to assist in their own decision making about SWPBS. For school districts that are similar in make-up, they may choose to use the baseline data as a way to determine how much they have moved the needle in implementation, if they did not collect their own baseline data before starting. This study adds to the very small pool of research related to implementation of SWPBS on the high school level, and from a district wide view. Additionally, the study gave light to practices that teachers and administrators in this particular county can identify and prioritize around student behavior.

Most districts that have implemented SWPBS have not published their findings of initial status of effective behavior supports and priorities. In fact, not one such research article could be found that paralleled the current study. This missing information has created great difficulty within school districts that wished to start SWPBS on a large scale. SWPBS features can easily be identified, once implementation begins, after the practices are typically thrust onto schools as an

entire initiative. No empirical data exists to explain any relationship between a school districts' current status of effective behavior supports and strength of their implementation at one, two or three years into implementation. With a few strokes of a keyboard, any person is able to find implementation blueprints, written directions for implementation, readiness measures and implementation measures. Yet no baseline data exists in the research upon which to compare before and after, for a first year implementation. School districts should know approximately where each school is, in terms of status before creating priorities for them. Outside of the educational literature, implementation literature suggests that four distinct phases exist during an effective implementation (Fixsen & Blasé, 2007). First, the exploration phase describes needs based assessment, identification of priorities, description of available resources and identification of long term goals. Following exploration, demonstration (implementation), elaboration (measuring fidelity) and continuous regeneration are the remaining three phases for successful implementation (Sanetti & Kratochwill, 2009). The intersection of educational practice and implementation research was the framework for the current study, to create a method that utilized expertise found inside and out of education to enable school districts to initiate a lasting program around supporting positive outcomes for students.

As a former high school teacher, administrator, and district level administrator, experience led me to believe that the best method for introducing something new was to first see what is in place and how it is used, to tailor training to the individual needs of the buildings, to support effective current practices and to refine those practices that were less developed than they should be, and to provide an example by which other similar school districts could approach the problems of extensive suspension and disproportionality. This led to the development of the study, in hopes to shed light on how implementation of SWPBS can be done on a large scale, in a diverse school district, and with all high schools on-board.

Implementation of SWPBS will change the outcomes for students in the school district. With a greater focus on multi-tiered programs for students who are considered habitual offenders, academic achievement and graduation rates should increase. Focus on individual student systems will allow for the most behaviorally needy students to be identified and addressed early, before they receive suspensions that will further remove them from the educational process. Disproportionate suspension of students who are black, disabled, or from lower socio-economic family situations will be affected by appropriate use of behavioral interventions within the schools. The structure of a district wide SWPBS model will allow for individual school teams to cross-collaborate, allowing schools with better practices to share with those who are still in the development stages. Communication within the school building and collective decision making will increase inclusive practices at the school level when systematic data gathering, analysis and sharing are commonplace. Overall, students should be in school more frequently and exhibiting more pro-social behaviors if a SWPBS system is implemented.

### Policy Implications: Measuring Readiness

The school district has a history of suspending a disproportionate number of students who are in at-risk categories (race, disability, socio-economic status). Training in the use of effective behavioral strategies will be required to change that problem. The school staff who participated in the survey and the principals who participated in the interviews collectively acknowledge their limitations and need for improvement in understanding and implementing SWPBS, particularly individual student supports.

The school district has demonstrated, through survey and interview data that they are aware of the four main types of supports required for SWPBS to be fully implemented. A core of sufficient understanding exists in school wide, non-classroom and classroom supports. Limited understanding



and application of individual student supports was evident. In moving forward with implementation, a core team of leaders from the district and the school level should analyze the findings for each individual school and then build a systematic plan for increasing understanding and application of the individual student systems, first, with ongoing booster trainings for the other three areas. Small adjustments may be all that is required in some buildings, while others will require more support. It is evident that county wide disciplinary policy has been in place and that schools are very confident in their application of the code of conduct. However, it is also clear that schools lack the structures of support that can meet students' needs when they require more behavioral instruction than is typically offered to high school students. Due to the variety of environmental factors in the county, individualized tiered structures would be needed at each school to offer appropriate options for students who demonstrate habitual inappropriate behaviors.

Policy change should be considered around the use of School-wide Positive Behavior Supports in this school district to include required organization of tiered interventions to address students with habitual problem behaviors, use of student support teams in every high school, and increased consistency of application of the code of conduct. The "habitual offender" policy should be reconsidered, for students committing non-violent offenses. Resources should be committed to each building, by way of professional development and consultation, to develop in-house opportunities for educating students with habitual problem behaviors.

The findings of this study clearly document the current status and priorities of the school staff in the area of behavioral interventions. Finding three of the four main features "in place" indicates the readiness of the schools to embark on full scale implementation.

### Limitations of the Study

The current study was designed to determine the current status and priorities for SWPBS in a large diverse school district, for schools at the high school level. The findings include survey data from all ten high schools and interview data from each school principal. While it is a comprehensive study into the individual school district, it is not a reflection of all school districts. Researchers or practitioners who reference this work should consider the process that was used to determine readiness (use of surveys, direct interviews of school leaders) as much as they consider the results section of the study. Limitations to this study include restricted generalizability due to the poor response rate on the survey.

Another limitation to the study exists in the understanding of the term “priority”. On the survey itself, priority is defined only as “priority for improvement”. While there is evidence to document that the tool itself is a reliable measure, questions are easily generated about what priority means to each individual that answered the survey.

The study was conducted over a two year time period, with survey responses collected one year before interview data was obtained. Changes may have occurred within the district as a result of their implementation of effective behavior supports that may have been reflected in the interviews and less so in the survey data. Because of this time lapse and the richness of data collected in the interviews, it is important to weight the content of the interviews more than that of the quantitative data gained in the surveys.

Lastly, the interview participants were all knowledgeable of the researcher and had individual natural working relationships with her from previous years. This allowed for deeper questioning and potentially more honest responses. While I believe this to be an asset to the study, it is still important to document the nature of the relationships to provide a context for which the information was

obtained.

### Practical Implications for the School District

As a researcher and an employee within the school division at the onset of this study, I had great hopes of creating a study that could be useful and meaningful to the disciplines of school leadership, systems change and SWPBS, in addition to collecting information that could be useful for the school district in creating future plans for implementation of the SWPBS process. If I were starting over again, I would choose to do the same thing, though I would keep a closer eye on the tone and planning of the school district planning team. Moving forward, the data that was gathered through the survey should be shared individually with the school leaders associated with those schools, in order to provide them a baseline set of data upon which to gauge their progress as they move forward in implementation. Support in crafting school improvement goals around increasing pro-social behavior would be useful. I would advise them to utilize the same tool each year to document their progress towards implementing effective behavior supports in each of their schools, and to garner feedback from the staff members around priorities for improvement in each area. Additionally, student outcome measures such as graduation rate, attendance rate and office disciplinary referrals should be monitored through their systemic data review process to determine the effectiveness of their programs. It is my belief that with a more robust student support teams, more systematic data collection, analysis and sharing, adoption of a model that addresses instructing pro-social behaviors for all students, creation of a tiered system of behavioral supports available within each building, all ten of the schools in this study could make sweeping change in their climate and outcomes for students.

Because it can be difficult to bring high school staff members into agreement on rewarding

appropriate behaviors of teenagers, it is important that the schools focus on developmentally appropriate reward systems that are heavily reliant on student to student rewards. By that, I mean that teenagers are more frequently motivated to do certain behaviors because their peers support those behaviors. Some of the strategies that are already in place, and should be expanded, include student awards for pro-social behaviors, student mentoring practices, student-nominated recognition options, and activities like Challenge Day.

### Implications for Future Research

Future research on this topic should focus on the relationship of pre-implementation readiness as measured by the EBSSAS to post-implementation fidelity as measured by the EBSSAS, SET or ISSET. Additionally, the practices of SWPBS at the high school level should be continually evaluated to assess effectiveness of the process on attaining student centered positive outcomes such as reduction in disproportionate suspension rates, increased graduation rates and increased attendance. Additionally, the study illustrates a need for professional development in the area of individual student supports. Future studies could focus on efficacy data of teachers who utilize these techniques to decrease negative student behaviors.

### Conclusion

With district wide support, a small operating budget for each school and training from a source that understands the intricacies of the district, this district could be operating a fully sustainable SWPBS program at the high school level within three to five years. This could lead to measurable growth in the areas of student attendance, graduation and potentially increased academic scores. Additionally, it could decrease disciplinary events, school drop-out, and disproportionality of

suspensions among students who are black, those with disabilities, and those who are considered low social-economic status. While none of the features of SWPBS are fully in place at this time, it is now documented that these schools are ready to structure behavior supports differently, to create more inclusive practices, and to do so to the benefit of the students, the school and the community.

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Appendix A

Table 6

*School Means by Question*

	School A		School B		School C		School D		School E		School F		School G		School H		School I		School J	
	status	priority	status	priority	status	priority	status	priority	status	priority	status	priority	status	priority	status	priority	status	priority	status	priority
<i>School-wide is defined as involving all students, all staff, &amp; all settings.</i>																				
1. A small number (e.g. 3-5) of positively & clearly stated student expectations or rules are defined.	2.50	1.83	2.31	2.00	2.25	2.00	3.00	1.40	2.37	2.11	2.36	2.45	2.79	2.07	2.60	2.30	2.43	2.21	2.40	2.60
2. Expected student behaviors are taught directly.	2.42	1.75	2.15	1.62	2.50	2.25	2.60	1.60	2.42	2.21	2.09	2.36	2.36	2.07	2.50	2.00	2.21	2.21	1.60	2.20
3. Expected student behaviors are rewarded regularly.	2.08	1.67	1.92	1.92	2.50	1.75	2.20	1.40	1.95	2.11	2.09	1.64	1.79	1.79	2.50	2.20	1.86	1.93	2.40	1.60
4. Problem behaviors (failure to meet expected student behaviors) are defined clearly.	2.58	2.00	2.38	1.85	2.50	2.00	2.20	1.80	2.42	2.11	2.27	2.18	2.50	2.14	2.80	2.00	2.50	2.14	2.20	2.40
5. Consequences for problem behaviors are defined clearly.	2.42	1.83	2.08	1.85	2.25	2.00	2.60	1.60	2.47	2.00	2.09	2.18	2.36	2.29	2.50	2.10	2.29	2.29	1.60	2.40
6. Distinctions between office v. classroom managed problem behaviors are clear.	2.33	1.75	2.38	1.85	2.00	2.25	2.80	1.60	2.11	2.00	2.00	2.00	2.36	1.71	2.30	1.90	1.79	1.64	1.60	2.00
7. Options exist to allow classroom instruction to continue when problem behavior occurs.	2.50	1.75	2.92	1.69	2.25	2.00	3.00	1.20	2.21	2.00	2.82	1.91	2.64	1.50	2.20	2.10	2.29	1.86	2.40	1.60
8. Procedures are in place to address emergency/dangerous situations.	3.00	1.83	2.77	1.54	3.00	1.25	3.00	1.20	2.95	1.68	3.00	1.73	2.79	1.57	2.90	1.60	2.79	1.50	2.60	1.80
9. A team exists for behavior support planning & problem solving.	2.67	1.67	2.23	1.85	2.00	2.00	1.80	1.60	2.16	2.16	1.82	2.27	2.21	2.07	2.00	2.50	2.00	1.64	2.00	1.60
10. School administrator is an active participant on the behavior support team.	2.83	1.58	2.62	1.62	2.50	2.25	3.00	1.40	2.42	2.05	2.09	2.36	2.50	2.00	2.30	2.00	2.29	1.71	2.60	2.00

Table 6, continued

*School Means by Question*

	School A		School B		School C		School D		School E		School F		School G		School H		School I		School J	
	status	priority	status	priority	status	priority	status	priority	status	priority	status	priority	status	priority	status	priority	status	priority	status	priority
11. Data on problem behavior patterns are collected and summarized within an on-going system.	1.92	1.92	2.15	1.77	1.25	2.25	2.20	1.60	2.05	2.16	2.09	2.18	2.00	1.64	2.60	2.10	1.93	1.86	2.00	1.80
12. Patterns of student problem behavior are reported to teams and faculty for active decision-making on a regular basis (e.g. monthly).	1.75	1.75	1.92	1.62	1.50	2.50	1.60	2.00	1.68	2.21	1.45	2.27	1.57	1.93	2.10	2.10	1.64	1.86	2.00	1.60
13. School has formal strategies for informing families about expected student behaviors at school.	2.67	1.25	2.15	1.69	2.75	1.75	2.80	1.60	2.47	2.05	2.55	2.09	2.43	1.93	2.50	2.40	2.64	1.71	2.20	1.80
14. Booster training activities for students are developed, modified, & conducted based on school data.	2.00	1.92	1.77	1.31	1.50	2.00	1.60	1.80	1.47	2.05	1.91	1.82	1.64	1.79	1.20	2.20	1.71	1.71	1.80	1.40
15. School-wide behavior support team has a budget for (a) teaching students, (b) on-going rewards, and (c) annual staff planning.	1.58	1.92	1.62	1.54	1.75	1.75	1.40	1.40	1.58	1.74	1.55	1.91	1.79	1.79	1.50	2.20	1.93	1.71	2.00	2.20
16. All staff are involved directly and/or indirectly in school-wide interventions.	1.67	1.75	2.00	1.77	1.75	2.00	1.80	2.00	1.79	2.37	1.45	2.09	1.93	2.07	1.90	2.00	1.57	1.64	1.60	2.00
17. The school team has access to on-going training and support from district personnel.	2.25	1.67	2.31	1.62	2.25	1.75	2.40	1.20	1.95	1.84	2.18	2.18	1.79	1.93	2.10	1.90	1.86	1.86	2.40	1.60
18. The school is required by the district to report on the social climate, discipline level or student behavior at least annually.	2.75	1.33	2.54	1.69	2.75	1.75	2.80	1.60	2.47	2.26	2.45	2.00	2.43	1.43	2.80	1.60	2.57	1.43	2.60	1.60

Table 6, continued

*School Means by Question*

	School A		School B		School C		School D		School E		School F		School G		School H		School I		School J	
	status	priority	status	priority	status	priority	status	priority	status	priority	status	priority	status	priority	status	priority	status	priority	status	priority
<i>Non-classroom settings are defined as particular times or places where supervision is emphasized (e.g., hallways, cafeteria, playground, bus).</i>																				
1. School-wide expected student behaviors apply to non-classroom settings.	2.80	1.70	2.60	1.60	3.00	2.00	2.80	1.40	2.41	2.12	2.50	2.38	2.89	2.33	2.22	2.22	2.55	1.73	2.40	1.60
2. School-wide expected student behaviors are taught in non-classroom settings.	2.30	1.70	2.40	1.50	2.50	1.50	2.80	1.60	2.29	2.00	1.88	1.88	2.56	2.00	1.56	2.22	2.09	1.64	1.80	2.00
3. Supervisors actively supervise (move, scan, & interact) students in non-classroom settings.	2.60	1.50	2.20	1.90	2.00	2.50	2.80	1.40	2.59	2.06	2.63	2.50	2.78	1.67	2.67	1.89	2.36	1.73	2.60	1.60
4. Rewards exist for meeting expected student behaviors in non-classroom settings.	1.80	1.40	1.60	1.30	1.00	1.50	1.80	1.40	1.53	1.65	1.25	1.50	1.89	1.56	1.44	1.78	1.73	1.45	2.20	1.80
5. Physical/architectural features are modified to limit (a) unsupervised settings, (b) unclear traffic patterns, and (c) inappropriate access to & exit from school grounds.	2.80	1.40	2.10	1.90	2.50	1.00	2.60	2.20	2.12	2.24	1.75	2.50	2.56	2.33	2.00	2.33	1.64	1.64	2.20	1.20
6. Scheduling of student movement ensures appropriate numbers of students in non-classroom spaces.	2.70	1.10	1.90	1.40	3.00	1.00	2.60	1.60	2.47	1.76	2.13	2.25	2.67	2.22	2.33	1.78	1.91	1.45	2.40	1.80
7. Staff receives regular opportunities for developing and improving active supervision skills.	1.90	1.60	2.20	1.60	1.50	1.50	1.60	1.40	1.71	1.94	1.75	1.88	2.00	1.78	1.67	1.78	1.82	1.45	2.00	2.20
8. Status of student behavior and management practices are evaluated quarterly from data.	2.00	1.50	2.20	1.50	1.00	3.00	2.00	1.80	1.82	2.06	1.63	1.88	2.33	2.11	2.00	1.78	2.00	1.45	2.40	1.40
9. All staff are involved directly or indirectly in management of non-classroom settings.	2.30	1.50	2.20	1.80	2.00	2.00	2.40	1.80	2.35	1.82	2.63	2.38	2.89	1.67	2.67	2.00	2.18	1.36	2.40	1.60

# Determining Readiness: SWPBS

Table 6, continued

## School Means by Question

	School A		School B		School C		School D		School E		School F		School G		School H		School I		School J	
	status	priority	status	priority	status	priority	status	priority	status	priority	status	priority	status	priority	status	priority	status	priority	status	priority
<i>Classroom settings are defined as instructional settings in which teacher(s) supervise &amp; teach groups of students.</i>																				
1. Expected student behavior & routines in classrooms are stated positively & defined clearly.	2.67	1.67	2.50	2.10	3.00	1.00	3.00	1.25	2.69	2.00	2.75	2.00	2.78	1.78	2.56	1.89	2.63	1.75	2.75	1.75
2. Problem behaviors are defined clearly.	2.56	1.67	2.50	2.10	2.50	1.50	3.00	1.50	2.69	2.00	2.25	2.25	2.89	1.67	2.67	1.89	2.63	1.50	2.50	2.00
3. Expected student behavior & routines in classrooms are taught directly.	2.22	1.78	2.60	2.00	2.50	1.50	2.75	1.25	2.50	2.06	2.63	2.25	2.78	1.78	2.67	1.89	2.63	1.63	2.25	2.25
4. Expected student behaviors are acknowledged regularly (positively reinforced) (>4 positives to 1 negative).	2.33	1.56	1.70	1.80	2.50	2.00	1.25	1.50	2.44	1.88	2.00	2.25	2.11	1.89	2.11	1.89	1.75	1.75	1.50	2.50
5. Problem behaviors receive consistent consequences.	1.89	2.00	2.10	2.10	2.50	1.50	2.50	1.75	2.00	2.25	1.88	2.63	2.22	2.33	1.89	2.44	2.13	2.13	1.75	3.00
6. Procedures for expected & problem behaviors are consistent with school-wide procedures.	2.56	1.89	2.40	1.70	3.00	1.00	2.75	1.50	2.38	2.06	2.00	2.38	2.67	2.00	2.33	2.33	2.13	1.75	1.75	3.00
7. Classroom-based options exist to allow classroom instruction to continue when problem behavior occurs.	2.56	1.67	2.80	1.50	2.50	1.50	3.00	1.25	2.44	2.00	2.50	2.13	2.78	1.67	2.11	2.22	2.13	1.63	2.50	2.50
8. Instruction & curriculum materials are matched to student ability (math, reading, language).	2.67	1.44	2.40	1.90	2.50	2.50	3.00	1.25	2.50	1.88	2.63	1.63	2.78	2.33	2.67	1.67	2.63	1.63	2.75	1.50
9. Students experience high rates of academic success ( $\geq 75\%$ correct).	2.78	1.22	2.80	1.80	2.50	2.00	3.00	1.75	2.06	2.50	2.38	2.50	2.33	2.33	2.44	2.44	2.13	1.88	1.75	2.50
10. Teachers have regular opportunities for access to assistance & recommendations (observation, instruction, & coaching).	2.44	1.67	2.40	1.50	2.00	2.50	2.75	1.50	2.69	1.69	2.50	2.25	2.44	2.11	2.11	2.22	2.25	1.38	2.25	1.75
11. Transitions between instructional & non-instructional activities are efficient & orderly.	2.89	1.22	2.40	1.70	3.00	1.00	2.75	1.50	2.63	1.63	2.50	2.25	2.67	1.67	2.56	1.56	2.38	1.25	2.25	2.25

# Determining Readiness: SWPBS

Table 6, continued

## School Means by Question

	School A		School B		School C		School D		School E		School F		School G		School H		School I		School J	
	status	priority	status	priority	status	priority	status	priority	status	priority	status	priority	status	priority	status	priority	status	priority	status	priority
<i>Individual student systems are defined as specific supports for students who engage in chronic problem behaviors (1%-7% of enrollment)</i>																				
1. Assessments are conducted regularly to identify students with chronic problem behaviors.	2.44	1.67	2.20	1.70	2.00	3.00	2.25	2.00	2.00	2.06	1.71	2.57	2.11	2.33	1.67	2.11	1.75	1.88	1.50	2.25
2. A simple process exists for teachers to request assistance.	2.67	1.33	2.80	1.90	2.50	1.50	2.75	1.50	2.44	1.75	2.29	2.29	2.44	1.56	2.33	2.22	2.13	1.75	2.75	1.75
3. A behavior support team responds promptly (within 2 working days) to students who present chronic problem behaviors.	2.11	1.78	2.10	1.90	2.50	2.00	2.50	1.50	2.31	1.75	1.29	2.71	2.00	2.11	1.89	1.89	1.88	2.25	1.50	2.25
4. Behavioral support team includes an individual skilled at conducting functional behavioral assessment.	2.11	1.67	2.10	2.10	1.50	2.50	1.75	1.50	2.25	1.75	1.29	2.57	2.11	2.33	1.89	1.78	1.63	1.88	2.00	1.50
5. Local resources are used to conduct functional assessment-based behavior support planning (~10 hrs/week/student).	1.89	1.78	1.70	1.80	1.50	2.50	1.00	1.50	1.50	2.19	1.43	2.29	1.89	2.22	1.22	1.67	1.75	1.75	1.75	2.25
6. Significant family &/or community members are involved when appropriate & possible.	2.56	1.44	2.60	1.60	3.00	1.50	2.25	1.50	2.44	2.06	2.14	2.71	2.44	2.22	2.56	2.11	2.13	1.88	1.50	2.25
7. School includes formal opportunities for families to receive training on behavioral support/positive parenting strategies.	1.67	1.89	1.60	1.60	1.50	2.00	1.50	1.75	1.69	2.00	1.43	2.29	1.33	2.11	1.67	2.33	1.75	1.75	2.25	2.75
8. Behavior is monitored & feedback provided regularly to the behavior support team & relevant staff.	2.11	1.67	2.10	1.50	1.50	3.00	1.50	1.75	1.81	2.19	1.43	2.43	2.00	2.22	1.78	2.22	1.75	1.75	2.25	1.25



## Appendix B

### RESEARCH SUBJECT INFORMATION AND CONSENT FORM: SURVEY

TITLE: Describing High School Readiness; Implementing School-Wide Positive Behavioral Supports.

VCU IRB NO.: pending

#### PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this research study is to find out how school staff report on the four domains of school-wide effective behavior supports.

You are being asked to participate in this study because you are a school staff member that works in a high school.

#### DESCRIPTION OF THE STUDY AND YOUR INVOLVEMENT

If you decide to participate in this research study, you will be asked to acknowledge your consent after you have read the consent information and been provided the opportunity to have all your questions answered.

You will be asked to answer a short survey that will take between 15-20 minutes of your time. You will be asked to answer these questions from your perspective, and in a confidential setting. You will be asked to provide general demographic information but will not be asked to personally identify yourself. While some answers will be identifiable by position, all answers will be kept strictly confidential. All participants have been randomly selected from the entirety of the high school staff members in the participating locality. Your employment status will not be impacted in any way by choosing to participate in this study.

This survey is being conducted as a research project through VCU, as a part of a dissertation. It is not being conducted by the school district.

#### RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS

There are no risks associated with this study that are different from those you normally encounter.

#### BENEFITS TO YOU AND OTHERS

You may not get any direct benefit from this study, but, the information we learn from people in this study may help us design better programs for schools.

#### COSTS

There are no costs for participating in this study other than the time you will spend in filling out questionnaires.

#### CONFIDENTIALITY

Potentially identifiable information about you will consist of generally collected information in the demographic section of the surveys. Data is being collected only for research purposes. The data collected will be stored on an encrypted website, transferred to a secured computer, and accessed only

by the research team. All personal identifying information will be kept in password protected files and these files will be deleted prior to June 2011. Other printed records regarding the study will be kept in a locked file cabinet for one year after the study ends and will be destroyed at that time. Access to all data will be limited to study personnel. A data and safety monitoring plan is established.

We will not tell anyone the answers you give us; however, information from the study and information about aggregate groups may be utilized by Virginia Commonwealth University for the purpose of research.

What we find from this study may be presented at meetings or published in papers, but your name will not ever be used in these presentations or papers. The name of your school and the school district will never be shared in the presentation of the findings.

#### **VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION AND WITHDRAWAL**

You do not have to participate in this study. If you choose to participate, you may stop at any time without any penalty.

#### **QUESTIONS**

In the future, you may have questions about your participation in this study. If you have any questions, complaints, or concerns about the research, contact:

Office for Research  
Virginia Commonwealth University  
800 East Leigh Street, Suite 113  
P.O. Box 980568  
Richmond, VA 23298  
Telephone: 804-827-2157

Primary Investigator: Jonathan Becker, PhD,  
School of Education  
Virginia Commonwealth University

Student: Emily S. Snead, PhD Candidate  
Educational Leadership  
Virginia Commonwealth University  
e-mail: bowerses@vcu.edu  
telephone: (804) 572-6330

#### **CONSENT**

*I have been given the chance to read this consent document. I understand the information about this study. Questions that I wanted to ask about the study have been answered. My selection below indicates that I am willing to participate.*

## Appendix C

### Sample E-mails for Survey Participants

Dear High School Staff Members,

In the coming weeks you will be invited to participate in a survey that asks questions to determine high school readiness and current status of school-wide effective behavior supports as a part of a research project. **This study is being conducted as a part of dissertation research and is meant to gauge current status of the four main areas where effective behavior supports are utilized in schools.** In addition to looking at current implementation levels, you will have the opportunity to prioritize areas that are specifically concerning to you. This information will then be given to the school principals, in aggregate, so that they are aware of the school staff's perception of effective behavior practices, and prioritized areas of improvement. This information is being collected specifically for the purposes of research, and is affiliated with an individual project being conducted through Virginia Commonwealth University. None of the information will be shared from the study with supervising staff in Henrico County until it is shared during the final stages of the research, around March 2011.

You will be asked to give very general information about yourself, including the school in which you work, and your current position. At no time will you be asked to identify yourself by name, nor will any identifying trace of electronic data be utilized. Your consent to participate will include specific information about data storage and later usage.

Choosing to participate in this study will include two phases: a pre-test survey given in the fall and a follow up post-test survey in early spring. The study poses no risks to you that you would not normally encounter in your daily tasks. The commitment on your part will be time, in that each survey will take approximately 15-20 minutes to complete. The survey will be sent to you, via e-mail link.

The benefits of participating in this study, and the desired outcomes, will include further understanding about practices related to effective behavior supports in high schools. Very little is known about current status in high schools, prior to implementation of any such plans. The research will provide a baseline for further studies that could impact how implementation of tiered behavioral interventions can be done effectively. The more respondents that consent to participate mean the stronger the base for research. I hope you will consider this opportunity to assist with the research study.

TITLE: Describing High School Readiness; Implementing School-Wide Positive Behavioral Supports.

Thank you for your time,

Emily Snead  
[bowerses@vcu.edu](mailto:bowerses@vcu.edu)  
(804) 572-6330  
PhD Candidate  
VCU

Sample e-mail #2 (distribution of survey)

TITLE: Describing High School Readiness; Implementing School-Wide Positive Behavioral Supports.

Dear High School Staff Members,

As you may recall, you received an e-mail not long ago that introduced you to a research study about the status of effective behavior supports in high schools. This is the link to the first survey:

<http://surveymonkey.com> (exact link will be provided)

The link will be live for 7 days (exact dates to be provided)

The first section of the survey will ask for your consent to participate in the research. If you have questions regarding the survey, please feel free to contact me at (804) 572-6330. Following a few basic demographic questions about your location and current job title, you will be answering a series of questions on effective behavior supports. You will be rating current status (not in place, partially in place, in place) as well as priority for improvement (low, medium, high) for each question. This information will be shared with school principals in aggregate form, with no identifying information present.

A follow-up survey will be coming to you in February 2011.

Thank you for your desire to participate in this study, and further our knowledge about effective behavior supports in high schools.

Sincerely,

Emily Snead  
[bowerses@vcu.edu](mailto:bowerses@vcu.edu)  
(804) 572-6330  
PhD Candidate  
VCU

Sample e-mail #3 (follow-up)

TITLE: Describing High School Readiness; Implementing School-Wide Positive Behavioral Supports.

High School Staff Members,

If you have not had a chance to complete your survey on Effective Behavior Supports, you still have \_\_\_ days to do so! The link is listed below:

<http://surveymonkey.com> (exact link will be provided)

The link will be live for \_\_\_ more days. (exact dates to be provided)

Thank you for your participation,

Emily Snead  
[bowerses@vcu.edu](mailto:bowerses@vcu.edu)  
(804) 572-6330  
PhD Candidate  
VCU

Sample e-mail #4 (distribution of survey)

TITLE: Describing High School Readiness; Implementing School-Wide Positive Behavioral Supports.

Dear High School Staff Members,

You are invited to participate in a survey that asks questions to determine high school readiness and current status of school-wide effective behavior supports as a part of a research project. **This study is being conducted as a part of dissertation research and is meant to gauge current status of the four main areas where effective behavior supports are utilized in schools.** In addition to looking at current implementation levels, you will have the opportunity to prioritize areas that are specifically concerning to you. This information will then be given to the school principals, in aggregate, so that they are aware of the school staff's perception of effective behavior practices, and prioritized areas of improvement. This information is being collected specifically for the purposes of research, and is affiliated with an individual project being conducted through Virginia Commonwealth University. None of the information will be shared from the study with supervising staff in Henrico County until it is shared during the final stages of the research, around March 2011.

This is the link to the post-test survey:

<http://surveymonkey.com> (exact link will be provided)

The link will be live for 7 days (exact dates to be provided)

The first section of the survey will ask for your consent to participate in the research. If you have questions regarding the survey, please feel free to contact me at (804) 572-6330. Following the basic demographic questions about your location and current job title, you will be answering a series of questions on effective behavior supports. You will be rating current status (not in place, partially in place, in place) as well as priority for improvement (low, medium, high) for each question. This information will be shared with school principals in aggregate form, with no identifying information present.

One additional question will appear in the follow-up survey that will ask what new things have been done this year to impact effective behavior supports in your school.

Thank you for choosing to participate in this study, and further our knowledge about effective behavior supports in high schools.

Sincerely,

Emily Snead  
[bowerses@vcu.edu](mailto:bowerses@vcu.edu)  
(804) 572-6330  
PhD Candidate VCU

Sample e-mail #5 (follow-up)

TITLE: Describing High School Readiness; Implementing School-Wide Positive Behavioral Supports.

High School Staff Members,

If you have not had a chance to complete your survey on Effective Behavior Supports, you still have \_\_\_ days to do so! The link is listed below:

<http://surveymonkey.com> (exact link will be provided)

The link will be live for \_\_\_ more days. (exact dates to be provided)

Thank you for your participation in this study,

Emily Snead  
[bowerses@vcu.edu](mailto:bowerses@vcu.edu)  
(804) 572-6330  
PhD Candidate  
VCU

Sample e-mail #6 (close-out)

TITLE: Describing High School Readiness; Implementing School-Wide Positive Behavioral Supports.

High School Staff Members,

Thank you all sincerely for your participation in the research study on effective behavior supports. Your answers, as well as your colleagues, will be analyzed for trends in the current status of effective behavior supports at the beginning of the school year, and at the mid-way point. As a reminder, all of your answers are strictly confidential and no identifying information has been recorded. This e-mail serves as a concluding message to the study.

Your participation will be utilized as a means to describe the current status of EBS in high schools. This will build a stronger research base for further studies and could be used to assist in effective implementation planning in the future.

Again, I appreciate your willingness to participate in this study. If you are interested in learning about the results of this study, those will be available in the summer of 2011.

Sincerely,

Emily Snead  
[bowerses@vcu.edu](mailto:bowerses@vcu.edu)  
(804) 572-6330  
PhD Candidate  
VCU



Appendix D

Interview protocol for HM13464

- 1) Tell me about the systems in place in your school to support positive student behaviors in non-instructional spaces.
- 2) What are some things that your teachers do (consistently in this school), in the classroom, to support positive student behaviors?
- 3) What are the practices you use within your leadership team to collect, analyze and disseminate information related to student behavior?
- 4) Is there a structure in place for reviewing problem student behavior cases? If so, how does it operate?
- 5) What practices are in place for supporting individual students who require more than typical interventions for learning appropriate behavior?
- 6) How are pro-social behaviors directly instructed in your school?
- 7) What sources of outcomes-based data do you use to determine effectiveness of your practices around behavior?
- 8) What are your priorities around student behavior for the coming year?

Appendix E

Sample Principal E-mails

Email #1, Introduction

TITLE: Describing High School Readiness; Implementing School-Wide Positive Behavioral Supports.

Dear Principal,

As you know, your staff participated in a survey last spring that asked questions to determine high school readiness and current status of school-wide effective behavior supports as a part of a research project. The study investigates the implementation levels of effective behavior supports within the school environment. The information was collected specifically for the purpose of research, and is affiliated with an individual dissertation being conducted through Virginia Commonwealth University. It is not being conducted by the school division.

To ensure that all perspectives are considered in the research, you are being asked to participate in a short interview. It is anticipated that the interview will take no more than 30 minutes of your time. Your participation is confidential. Results will be shared with you, at the school level, in summary form and will exclude demographic characteristics so that it will not be possible to identify specific individuals who participated in the survey. The name of your school and the school division will not be shared in the presentation of the findings. Your interview data will be coded so that they match with those gained in the survey, and will be reported in combination with the survey results, not separately.

Upon completion of the study, the information will be given to you, the school principal, in aggregate, so that you are aware of the school staff's perception of effective behavior practices, and prioritized areas of improvement.

The commitment on your part will be time, in that the interview will take approximately 30 minutes. The interview may be scheduled at your convenience, between now and June 30. We can meet in your building or at another convenient location. This study is being conducted as a part of dissertation research and is meant to gauge current status of the four main areas where effective behavior supports are utilized in schools. The benefits of participating in this study, and the desired outcomes, will include further understanding about practices related to effective behavior supports in high schools. Very little is known about current status in high schools, prior to implementation of any such plans. The research will provide a baseline for further studies that could impact how implementation of tiered behavioral interventions can be done effectively. The more respondents that consent to participate mean the stronger the base for research.

I hope you will consider this opportunity to assist with the research study.

Thank you for your time,

Emily Snead  
bowerses@vcu.edu  
(804) 572-6330  
PhD Candidate, VCU

Sample e-mail # 2

TITLE: Describing High School Readiness; Implementing School-Wide Positive Behavioral Supports.

Dear Principal,

As you may recall, you received an e-mail not long ago that introduced you to a research study about the status of effective behavior supports in high schools. I am looking forward to interviewing you before the end of June. For your convenience, I am including the interview questions so that you are aware of what we will be discussing:

- Tell me about the systems in place in your school to support positive student behaviors in non-instructional spaces.
- What are some things that your teachers do (consistently in this school), in the classroom, to support positive student behaviors?
- What are the practices you use within your leadership team to collect, analyze and disseminate information related to student behavior?
- Is there a structure in place for reviewing problem student behavior cases? If so, how does it operate?
- What practices are in place for supporting individual students who require more than typical interventions for learning appropriate behavior?
- How are pro-social behaviors directly instructed in your school?
- What sources of outcomes-based data do you use to determine effectiveness of your practices around behavior?
- On a scale of 1-3, with 1 being the least and 3 being completely intact, how would you rate your schools non-instructional behavioral supports? School-wide behavioral supports? Classroom supports? Individual student supports?
- How do you believe your teachers and counselors would rate the same 4 areas, on a scale of 1-3?

As a reminder, the interview will take 30 minutes or less of your time. We can meet at your school, or another convenient location. Please let me know when you are available. I can be reached at (804) 572-6330, or [bowerses@vcu.edu](mailto:bowerses@vcu.edu). I will be coding your data for current status (not in place, partially in place, in place). This information will be shared with school principals in aggregate form, with no identifying information present, once the study is complete. Thank you for your desire to participate in this study, and further our knowledge about effective behavior supports in high schools.

Sincerely,  
Emily Snead  
[bowerses@vcu.edu](mailto:bowerses@vcu.edu)  
(804) 572-6330  
PhD Candidate  
VCU

Sample e-mail #3

TITLE: Describing High School Readiness; Implementing School-Wide Positive Behavioral Supports.

Principal,

Thank you sincerely for your participation in the research study on effective behavior supports. Your answers, as well as your colleagues, will be analyzed for trends in the current status of effective behavior supports. As a reminder, all of your answers are strictly confidential and no identifying information has been recorded. This e-mail serves as a concluding message to the study. Your participation will be utilized as a means to describe the current status of EBS in high schools. This will build a stronger research base for further studies and could be used to assist in effective implementation planning in the future.

Again, I appreciate your willingness to participate in this study. If you are interested in learning about the results of this study, those will be available in the fall of 2012.

Sincerely,

Emily Snead  
bowerses@vcu.edu  
(804) 572-6330  
PhD Candidate  
VCU

Appendix F

RESEARCH SUBJECT INFORMATION AND INFORMED CONSENT FORM:  
INTERVIEW PARTICIPANTS

TITLE: Describing High School Readiness; Implementing School-Wide Positive Behavioral Supports.

VCU IRB NO.: HM13464

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this research study is to find out how school staff report on the four domains of school-wide effective behavior supports.

You are being asked to participate in this study because you are a principal of a high school.

DESCRIPTION OF THE STUDY AND YOUR INVOLVEMENT

If you decide to participate in this research study, you will be asked to acknowledge your consent after you have read the consent information and been provided the opportunity to have all your questions answered.

You will be asked to answer a short collection of interview questions that are developed using the Effective Behavior Supports Survey, previously administered to your staff. This interview will take approximately 30 minutes of your time and will be recorded to accurately capture your comments. You will be asked to answer these questions from your perspective, and in a confidential setting. You will be asked to provide general demographic information but will not be asked to personally identify yourself. While some answers will be identifiable by position, all answers will be kept strictly confidential. Your employment status will not be impacted in any way by choosing to participate in this study. It is anticipated that 10 interviews will be conducted as a part of this research.

The interview questions include:

- 1) Tell me about the systems in place in your school to support positive student behaviors in non-instructional spaces.
- 2) What are some things that your teachers do (consistently in this school), in the classroom, to support positive student behaviors?
- 3) What are the practices you use within your leadership team to collect, analyze and disseminate information related to student behavior?
- 4) Is there a structure in place for reviewing problem student behavior cases? If so, how does it operate?
- 5) What practices are in place for supporting individual students who require more than typical interventions for learning appropriate behavior?
- 6) How are pro-social behaviors directly instructed in your school?
- 7) What sources of outcomes-based data do you use to determine effectiveness of your practices around behavior?
- 8) What are your priorities around student behavior for the coming year?

This survey is being conducted as a research project through VCU, as a part of a dissertation. It is not being conducted by the school division.

#### RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS

There is minimal risk associated with this study. The primary risk is a breach of confidentiality.

#### BENEFITS TO YOU AND OTHERS

You may not get any direct benefit from this study, but, the information we learn from people in this study may help us design better programs for schools.

#### COSTS

There are no costs for participating in this study other than the time you will spend participating in the interview.

#### CONFIDENTIALITY

Potentially identifiable information about you will consist of your signed consent form only. All data will be coded to ensure anonymity. Data is being collected only for research purposes. The data collected will be recorded for the purposes of transcription and data coding. The data will be stored on a password protected document, transferred to a secured computer, and accessed only by the research team. No consent forms will be kept with collected data or other documents. The electronic and paper files will be deleted after the study is completed. Other printed records regarding the study will be kept in a locked file cabinet for one year after the study ends and will be destroyed at that time. Access to all data will be limited to study personnel.

We will not tell anyone the answers you give us; however, information from the study and information about aggregate groups may be utilized by Virginia Commonwealth University for the purpose of research.

What we find from this study may be presented at meetings or published in papers, but your name will not ever be used in these presentations or papers. The name of your school and the school division will never be shared in the presentation of the findings.

#### VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION AND WITHDRAWAL

You do not have to participate in this study. If you choose to participate, you may stop at any time without any penalty.

#### QUESTIONS

In the future, you may have questions about your participation in this study. If you have any questions, complaints, or concerns about the research, contact:

Office for Research  
Virginia Commonwealth University  
800 East Leigh Street, Suite 113  
P.O. Box 980568  
Richmond, VA 23298

Telephone: 804-827-2157

Primary Investigator: Jonathan Becker, PhD,  
School of Education  
Virginia Commonwealth University

Student: Emily S. Snead, PhD Candidate  
Educational Leadership  
Virginia Commonwealth University  
e-mail: bowerses@vcu.edu  
telephone: (804) 572-6330

**CONSENT**

*I have been given the chance to read this consent form. I understand the information about this study. Questions that I wanted to ask about the study have been answered. My signature says that I am willing to participate in this study. I will receive a copy of the consent form once I have agreed to participate.*

---

Participant name printed	Participant signature	Date
--------------------------	-----------------------	------

---

Name of Person Conducting Informed Consent  
Discussion / Witness  
(Printed)

---

Signature of Person Conducting Informed Consent Discussion / Witness	Date
---	------

Appendix G  
Survey Instrument

SCHOOL-WIDE SYSTEMS

Current Status			Feature	Priority for Improvement		
In Place	Partial in Place	Not in Place	<b>School-wide</b> is defined as involving all students, all staff, & all settings.	High	Med	Low
			1. A small number (e.g. 3-5) of positively & clearly stated student expectations or rules are defined.			
			2. Expected student behaviors are taught directly.			
			3. Expected student behaviors are rewarded regularly.			
			4. Problem behaviors (failure to meet expected student behaviors) are defined clearly.			
			5. Consequences for problem behaviors are defined clearly.			
			6. Distinctions between office v. classroom managed problem behaviors are clear.			
			7. Options exist to allow classroom instruction to continue when problem behavior occurs.			
			8. Procedures are in place to address emergency/dangerous situations.			
			9. A team exists for behavior support planning & problem solving.			
			10. School administrator is an active participant on the behavior support team.			
			11. Data on problem behavior patterns are collected and summarized within an on-going system.			
			12. Patterns of student problem behavior are reported to teams and faculty for active decision-making on a regular basis (e.g. monthly).			



## Determining Readiness: SWPBS

Current Status			Feature	Priority for Improvement		
In Place	Partial in Place	Not in Place	<b>School-wide</b> is defined as involving all students, all staff, & all settings.	High	Med	Low
			13. School has formal strategies for informing families about expected student behaviors at school.			
			14. Booster training activities for students are developed, modified, & conducted based on school data.			
			15. School-wide behavior support team has a budget for (a) teaching students, (b) on-going rewards, and (c) annual staff planning.			
			16. All staff are involved directly and/or indirectly in school-wide interventions.			
			17. The school team has access to on-going training and support from district personnel.			
			18. The school is required by the district to report on the social climate, discipline level or student behavior at least annually.			

## NON-CLASSROOM SETTING SYSTEMS

Current Status			Feature	Priority for Improvement		
In Place	Partial in Place	Not in Place	<b>Non-classroom settings</b> are defined as particular times or places where supervision is emphasized (e.g., hallways, cafeteria, playground, bus).	High	Med	Low
			1. School-wide expected student behaviors apply to non-classroom settings.			
			2. School-wide expected student behaviors are taught in non-classroom settings.			
			3. Supervisors actively supervise (move, scan, & interact) students in non-classroom settings.			
			4. Rewards exist for meeting expected student behaviors in non-classroom settings.			
			5. Physical/architectural features are modified to limit (a) unsupervised settings, (b) unclear traffic patterns, and (c) inappropriate access to & exit from school grounds.			
			6. Scheduling of student movement ensures appropriate numbers of students in non-classroom spaces.			
			7. Staff receives regular opportunities for developing and improving active supervision skills.			
			8. Status of student behavior and management practices are evaluated quarterly from data.			
			9. All staff are involved directly or indirectly in management of non-classroom settings.			

## CLASSROOM SYSTEMS

Current Status			Feature	Priority for Improvement		
In Place	Partial in Place	Not in Place	<b>Classroom settings</b> are defined as instructional settings in which teacher(s) supervise & teach groups of students.	High	Med	Low
			1. Expected student behavior & routines in classrooms are stated positively & defined clearly.			
			2. Problem behaviors are defined clearly.			
			3. Expected student behavior & routines in classrooms are taught directly.			
			4. Expected student behaviors are acknowledged regularly (positively reinforced) (>4 positives to 1 negative).			
			5. Problem behaviors receive consistent consequences.			
			6. Procedures for expected & problem behaviors are consistent with school-wide procedures.			
			7. Classroom-based options exist to allow classroom instruction to continue when problem behavior occurs.			
			8. Instruction & curriculum materials are matched to student ability (math, reading, language).			
			9. Students experience high rates of academic success ( $\geq$ 75% correct).			
			10. Teachers have regular opportunities for access to assistance & recommendations (observation, instruction, & coaching).			
			11. Transitions between instructional & non-instructional activities are efficient & orderly.			

## INDIVIDUAL STUDENT SYSTEMS

Current Status			Feature	Priority for Improvement		
In Place	Partial in Place	Not in Place	<b>Individual student systems</b> are defined as specific supports for students who engage in chronic problem behaviors (1%-7% of enrollment)	High	Med	Low
			1. Assessments are conducted regularly to identify students with chronic problem behaviors.			
			2. A simple process exists for teachers to request assistance.			
			3. A behavior support team responds promptly (within 2 working days) to students who present chronic problem behaviors.			
			4. Behavioral support team includes an individual skilled at conducting functional behavioral assessment.			
			5. Local resources are used to conduct functional assessment-based behavior support planning (~10 hrs/week/student).			
			6. Significant family &/or community members are involved when appropriate & possible.			
			7. School includes formal opportunities for families to receive training on behavioral support/positive parenting strategies.			
			8. Behavior is monitored & feedback provided regularly to the behavior support team & relevant staff.			

Appendix H

IRB Approval

# VCU Memo

V i r g i n i a C o m m o n w e a l t h U n i v e r s i t y

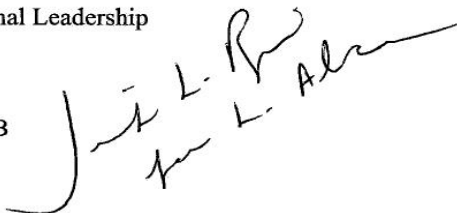
**Office of Research Subjects Protection**  
BioTechnology Research Park  
BioTech One, 800 E. Leigh Street, #114  
P.O. Box 980568  
Richmond, Virginia 23298-0568  
(804) 828-3992  
(804) 827-1448 (fax)

DATE: May 3, 2011

TO: Jonathan D. Becker, JD, PhD  
School of Education, Educational Leadership  
Box 842020

FROM: Lisa M. Abrams, PhD  
Chairperson, VCU IRB Panel B  
Box 980568

RE: **VCU IRB #: HM13464**  
**Title: Describing High School Readiness; Implementing School-Wide Positive Behavior Supports**



On May 2, 2011, the following research study was approved by expedited review according to 45 CFR 46.110 Category 7. The approval reflects the revisions received in the Office of Research Subjects Protection on April 20, 2011, and the documents received on April 20, 2011, April 27, 2011, and May 2, 2011. This approval includes the following items reviewed by this Panel:

**RESEARCH APPLICATION/PROPOSAL:** None

**PROTOCOL (Research Plan):** Describing High School Readiness; Implementing School-Wide Positive Behavior Supports, received 4/20/11, version 1, dated 4/7/11

- Survey, received 4/20/11, version 2, dated 4/7/11

**CONSENT/ASSENT (attached):**

- Consent to Participate (consent contained within first 2 pages of survey), received 4/20/11, version 2, dated 4/7/11, 2 pages
- Waiver of Documentation of Consent for Online Survey: One of the conditions set forth in 45 CFR 46 117(c) (2), for waiver of documentation of consent has been met and the IRB Panel has waived documentation of consent.

**ADDITIONAL DOCUMENTS (attached):**

- Sample Email #1 (Introduction of Study), received 4/20/11, version 2, dated 4/7/11
- Sample Email #2 (Distribution of Survey), received 4/20/11, version 2, dated 4/7/11
- Sample Email #3 (Follow-Up), received 4/20/11, version 2, dated 4/7/11
- Sample Email #4 (Close-Out), received 4/20/11, version 2, dated 4/7/11

**This approval expires on April 30, 2012.** Federal Regulations/VCU Policy and Procedures require continuing review prior to continuation of approval past that date. Continuing Review report forms will be mailed to you prior to the scheduled review.

(Continued...)

The Primary Reviewer assigned to your research study is Lisa Abrams, PhD. If you have any questions, please contact Dr. Abrams at [lmabrams@vcu.edu](mailto:lmabrams@vcu.edu) and 827-2627; or you may contact Jennifer Rice, IRB Coordinator, VCU Office of Research Subjects Protection, at [jlrice@vcu.edu](mailto:jlrice@vcu.edu) and 828-3992.

***Conditions of Approval:***

In order to comply with federal regulations, industry standards, and the terms of this approval, the investigator must (*as applicable*):

1. Conduct the research as described in and required by the Protocol.
2. Obtain informed consent from all subjects without coercion or undue influence, and provide the potential subject sufficient opportunity to consider whether or not to participate (unless Waiver of Consent is specifically approved or research is exempt).
3. Document informed consent using only the most recently dated consent form bearing the VCU IRB "APPROVED" stamp (unless Waiver of Consent is specifically approved).
4. Provide non-English speaking patients with a translation of the approved Consent Form in the research participant's first language. The Panel must approve the translated version.
5. Obtain prior approval from VCU IRB before implementing any changes whatsoever in the approved protocol or consent form, unless such changes are necessary to protect the safety of human research participants (e.g., permanent/temporary change of PI, addition of performance/collaborative sites, request to include newly incarcerated participants or participants that are wards of the state, addition/deletion of participant groups, etc.). Any departure from these approved documents must be reported to the VCU IRB immediately as an Unanticipated Problem (see #7).
6. Monitor all problems (anticipated and unanticipated) associated with risk to research participants or others.
7. Report Unanticipated Problems (UPs), including protocol deviations, following the VCU IRB requirements and timelines detailed in VCU IRB WPP VIII-7:
8. Obtain prior approval from the VCU IRB before use of any advertisement or other material for recruitment of research participants.
9. Promptly report and/or respond to all inquiries by the VCU IRB concerning the conduct of the approved research when so requested.
10. All protocols that administer acute medical treatment to human research participants must have an emergency preparedness plan. Please refer to VCU guidance on <http://www.research.vcu.edu/irb/guidance.htm>.
11. The VCU IRBs operate under the regulatory authorities as described within:
  - a) U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Title 45 CFR 46, Subparts A, B, C, and D (for all research, regardless of source of funding) and related guidance documents.
  - b) U.S. Food and Drug Administration Chapter I of Title 21 CFR 50 and 56 (for FDA regulated research only) and related guidance documents.
  - c) Commonwealth of Virginia Code of Virginia 32.1 Chapter 5.1 Human Research (for all research).

010507

# VCU Memo

V i r g i n i a C o m m o n w e a l t h U n i v e r s i t y

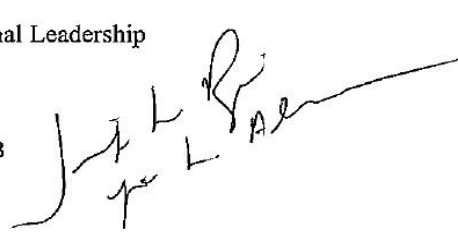
Office of Research Subjects Protection  
BioTechnology Research Park  
BioTech One, 800 E. Leigh Street, #114  
P.O. Box 980568  
Richmond, Virginia 23298-0568  
(804) 828-0868  
(804) 827-1448 (fax)

DATE: May 9, 2012

TO: Jonathan D. Becker, JD, PhD  
School of Education, Educational Leadership  
Box 842020

FROM: Lisa M. Abrams, PhD  
Chairperson, VCU IRB Panel B  
Box 980568

RE: **VCU IRB #: HM13464**  
**Title: Describing High School Readiness; Implementing School-Wide Positive Behavior Supports**



On May 8, 2012, this research study was approved for continuation by expedited review according to 45 CFR 46.108(b) and 45 CFR 46.109(e) and 45 CFR 46.110 Categories 6 and 7. This approval reflects the revisions received in the Office of Research Subjects Protection on May 6, 2012, and May 8, 2012.

In addition, changes to your research study were approved in accordance with 110 (b) (2). This approval includes the following items reviewed by this Panel:

**PROTOCOL (Research Plan):** Describing High School Readiness; Implementing School-Wide Positive Behavior Supports, received 5/6/12, version 2, dated 5/5/12

- VCU IRB Study Personnel Roster, received 4/2/12, version date 3/26/12

**CONSENT/ASSENT FORM (attached):**

- Research Subject Information and Informed Consent Form: Interview Participants, received 5/8/12, version 3, dated 5/8/12, 2 pages

**ADDITIONAL DOCUMENTS (attached):**

- Sample Email #1, received 5/8/12, version date May 2012
- Sample Email #2, received 5/8/12, version date May 2012
- Sample Email #3 (Close Out), received 5/8/12

Please Note: The Consent to Participate in the Survey and Waiver of Documentation of Consent for the Survey are no longer being approved since Survey data is complete.

**This approval expires on April 30, 2013.** Federal Regulations/VCU Policy and Procedures require continuing review prior to continuation of approval past that date. Continuing Review report forms will be mailed to you prior to the scheduled review.

(Continued...)

The Primary Reviewer assigned to your research study is Lisa Abrams, PhD. If you have any questions, please contact Dr. Abrams at [labrams@vcu.edu](mailto:labrams@vcu.edu) and 827-2627; or you may contact Jennifer Rice, IRB Coordinator, VCU Office of Research Subjects Protection, at [irbpanelb@vcu.edu](mailto:irbpanelb@vcu.edu) and 828-3992.

***Conditions of Approval:***

In order to comply with federal regulations, industry standards, and the terms of this approval, the investigator must *(as applicable)*:

1. Conduct the research as described in and required by the Protocol.
2. Obtain informed consent from all subjects without coercion or undue influence, and provide the potential subject sufficient opportunity to consider whether or not to participate (unless Waiver of Consent is specifically approved or research is exempt).
3. Document informed consent using only the most recently dated consent form bearing the VCU IRB "APPROVED" stamp (unless Waiver of Consent is specifically approved).
4. Provide non-English speaking patients with a translation of the approved Consent Form in the research participant's first language. The Panel must approve the translated version.
5. Obtain prior approval from VCU IRB before implementing any changes whatsoever in the approved protocol or consent form, unless such changes are necessary to protect the safety of human research participants (e.g., permanent/temporary change of PI, addition of performance/collaborative sites, request to include newly incarcerated participants or participants that are wards of the state, addition/deletion of participant groups, etc.). Any departure from these approved documents must be reported to the VCU IRB immediately as an Unanticipated Problem (see #7).
6. Monitor all problems (anticipated and unanticipated) associated with risk to research participants or others.
7. Report Unanticipated Problems (UPs), including protocol deviations, following the VCU IRB requirements and timelines detailed in VCU IRB WPP VIII-7:
8. Obtain prior approval from the VCU IRB before use of any advertisement or other material for recruitment of research participants.
9. Promptly report and/or respond to all inquiries by the VCU IRB concerning the conduct of the approved research when so requested.
10. All protocols that administer acute medical treatment to human research participants must have an emergency preparedness plan. Please refer to VCU guidance on <http://www.research.vcu.edu/irb/guidance.htm>.
11. The VCU IRBs operate under the regulatory authorities as described within:
  - a) U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Title 45 CFR 46, Subparts A, B, C, and D (for all research, regardless of source of funding) and related guidance documents.
  - b) U.S. Food and Drug Administration Chapter I of Title 21 CFR 50 and 56 (for FDA regulated research only) and related guidance documents.
  - c) Commonwealth of Virginia Code of Virginia 32.1 Chapter 5.1 Human Research (for all research).

[010507]