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Positive Behavior Support as Character Education: a Non-Experimental, Explanatory, Cross-Sectional Study

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POSITIVE BEHAVIOR SUPPORT AS CHARACTER EDUCATION:
A NON-EXPERIMENTAL, EXPLANATORY, CROSS-SECTIONAL STUDY

BY

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Submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements of the degree of Doctor of Education
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2012

SETON HALL UNIVERSITY
COLLEGE OF EDUCATION AND HUMAN SERVICES
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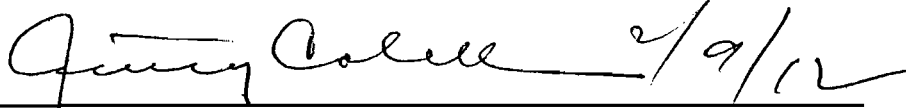
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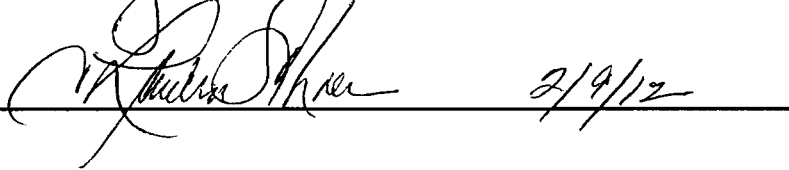
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Abstract

Positive Behavior Support as Character Education: A Non-Experimental, Explanatory, Cross-Sectional Study

This study examined the impact of Positive Behavior Support (PBS) on office discipline referrals (Category 1), suspensions (Category 2), and absence of infractions (Category 3) in an urban public elementary school in New Jersey. A sample of 267 second, third, fourth, and fifth grade students provided the data for the research. A chi-square analysis of the data was conducted and revealed that PBS is having an impact on the third category—absence of infractions.

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Cohort XIV, colleagues and friends, who worked, encouraged, and laughed with me for two years. What a fine group of educators!

Dedication

She was my first teacher, my editor-in chief, and my unfailing source of support. “All that I am or ever hope to be, I owe to my angel mother” (Abraham Lincoln). This work is dedicated to my mother, Kathleen Guenther O’Connell.

And to Fiona Kealey and Harry Patrick, my youngest teachers, my fervent wish is that you love school as much as your aunt.

Table of Contents

Abstract.....	ii
Acknowledgments	iii
Dedication	iv
List of Tables	vii
List of Figures	viii
I. Introduction1
Statement of the Problem5
Purpose of the Study7
Research Question8
Significance8
Theoretical Framework9
Limitations	11
Delimitations	13
Definitions of Terms	13
II. Review of Related Literature.....	15
Literature Search Procedures	15
Criteria for Inclusion and Exclusion of Literature	16
Review of Literature Topics	18
Major Studies.....	18
PBS Program Evaluation	18
Teacher Perceptions of Positive Behavior Support	19
Experimental Studies	21
Character Education	28
The Influence of Character Education on Present Day Social Problems	29
Training Teachers to Become Character Educators	30
Ethical Schools	32
Gender Differences in Disruptive Behaviors	33
The Effects of Character Education on Students	34
Collaboration Between Schools and Communities	35
Positive Behavior Support	35
Three Levels of Intervention	37
Implementation	38
Office Discipline Referrals	39
Assessment of Effectiveness of Office Discipline Referrals (ODRs)	40
Happiness, Helpfulness, and Hopefulness	41

Schoolwide Approach	42
Theoretical Framework	43
III. Design and Methodology	
Production Function Theory	48
Research Design.....	50
Methods	51
Setting	53
Sample	54
Measures of Behavior	56
Reliability	57
Validity	59
External	59
Ecological Validity	60
Temporal Validity	60
Internal Validity	61
Maturation	62
Social	63
Data Collection	63
Data Analysis	64
IV. Results	68
V. Summary of Findings, Conclusions, and Recommendations	
Findings	78
Recommendations for Policy	79
Recommendations for Practice	82
Recommendations for Future Research	85
References	88
Appendix A. Rooney School Office Discipline Referral	97

List of Tables

Table 1. Demographics of Rooney Student Sample 2007-2009	55
Table 2. Rooney Mobility Rates for 2007-2008 and 2008-2009	56
Table 3. Frequency of Behaviors at Rooney School (2007-2008)	69
Table 4. Frequency of Behaviors at Rooney School (2008-2009)	71
Table 5. Crosstabulation of Behavior Categories 1-3	75
Table 6. Chi-Square for Crosstabulation	76
Table 7. Eta Table for Chi-Square Analysis	76

List of Figures

Figure 1. Positive Behavior Construct	49
Figure 2. Histogram of Behaviors at Rooney School (2007-2008)	70
Figure 3. Histogram of Behaviors at Rooney School (2008-2009)	72

CHAPTER I

Introduction

Pearl, Mississippi ... Paducah, Kentucky ... Springfield, Oregon ... Jonesboro, Arkansas ... Littleton, Colorado—these cities are forever identified as places where students killed other students. “Between 1994 and 1999, there were 220 school-associated violent events resulting in 253 deaths—74.5% of these involved firearms. Handguns caused almost 60% of these deaths” (Anderson et al., 2001). In 2001, Congress established The Committee to Study Youth Violence in Schools. The committee’s purpose was twofold. First, it would study episodes of school violence in order to determine the causes of the shootings. Then, the committee would establish “what actions ... individuals and institutions [should] take ... to prevent these events from occurring in the first place” (Moore, Petrie, Braga, & McLaughlin, 2003, p. 2).

According to John Rawls (1993), the most widely accepted theory of justice is “justice as fairness—the basic idea ... that society must establish rules that are fair to all and then live by those rules” (p. 8). In order to address weapon-related disciplinary infractions, most schools have established clear rules in the form of zero-tolerance policies; since all offenders are treated the same way, these policies are fair and they are just. However, in twenty-first century schools, there are few rules that address the problem of bullying. This behavior has become so pervasive that one out of every four elementary students reports some form of verbal, mental, or physical abuse each month (www.bullyhelp.org). According to the New Jersey Coalition for Bullying Awareness and Prevention, elementary educators are unaware that bullying is a “common serious problem of school-age children” (www.njbullying.org). In order to respond to the

challenging reality of bullying in American public schools and to provide a just environment for all students, administrators must adapt their organizations to the times by diagnosing the problem, then acting to address it (Heifetz, Grashow, & Linsky, 2009, p. 6).

“The emphasis and preoccupation with bureaucratic scientism and management perspectives has given way to the importance of value, moral, and ethical bases for educational leadership” (Frick, 2009, p. 51). In the past, leaders focused on instruction; their primary focus was on academics and efficient management of their schools; however, in today’s society, students depend on schools for much more than reading, writing, and arithmetic; schools today provide students with meals, emotional support, and moral direction. In 2008, the National Policy Board for Educational Administration (NPBEA) adopted the Educational Leadership Policy Standards: ISLLC 2008. The ISLLC standards “provide high-level guidance and insight about the traits, functions of work, and responsibilities expected of school and district leaders” (The Council of Chief State School Officers [CCSSO], 2008, p. 5). According to the ISSLC standards, two of the ways educators promote the success of every student are by “advocating, nurturing, and sustaining a school culture and instructional program conducive to student learning and staff professional growth” and “acting with integrity, fairness, and in an ethical manner” (CCSSO, 2008, p. 19). Administrators are responsible, among many other things, to maximize instructional time and to promote social justice (CCSSO, 2008, 19). Today’s standards insist that administrators “take a stronger role in helping the young to discover the good and learn to become individuals of character” (Ryan, 1993, p. 16).

Historically, successful leaders were those who were well-versed in educational pedagogy and “efficient management of organizational operations” (Frick, 2008, p. 50). Today’s leaders must not only serve as instructional leaders, but also as the schools’ moral guides. According to Hoy and Tarter (2004), today’s leader “leads by example, and there may be no more important role than ... to be a moral leader” (p. 257).

In our contemporary age of accountability, schools that achieve high test scores are considered successful. The federal government provides financial incentives to districts that show growth measured by state mandated standardized tests. Unions are challenging the concept of merit pay for those educators who show the highest passing rates on annual exams. This laser beam focus on standardized assessments has “crowded out what should be an essential criterion for well-educated students: a sense of responsibility for the well being of others” (Engel & Sandstrom, 2010, p. A23). A recent Canadian study of playground behavior found that overt acts of bullying occurred four times every hour and bystanders did little to help their bullied classmates (Engel & Sandstrom, 2010, p. A23). In American schools, “the inclination and ability to protect one another and to enforce a culture of tolerance does not come naturally” (Engel & Sandstrom, 2010, p. A23). Therefore, there must be a concerted effort made within schools to teach these values.

Although the increase in violent crimes and overt acts of bullying within schools is alarming and merits immediate attention, there are other less extreme changes in the behaviors of today’s young people. One of four junior high school students experiments with some combination of smoking, drinking, drug use, and sex, while the typical

elementary school child spends 30 hours a week in front of the television set (Utley, Kozleski, Smith, & Draper, 2002; Lickona, 1991). Because these other trends in conduct imply disturbing changes in youth character, they too have attracted the attention of the public. Concern by parents, caregivers, and educators has led to an intense interest in the field of character education, an aspect of education defined as “the deliberate effort to teach virtues ... objectively good human qualities” (Lickona, 1997, p. 63). In order to insure that these values are passed on to future generations and in an attempt to improve the behavior of American adolescents, educators, parents, and community members are joining in a commitment to character education. The implementation of character education programs is critical because, in the words of Theodore Roosevelt (1906), “to educate a person in mind and not in morals is to educate a menace to society.”

Who is responsible for keeping society free of children so lacking in character that they become menaces to society? Traditionally, parents have been their children’s primary educators, assuming the responsibility for the moral education of their offspring. However, in the new millennium with the escalation of the divorce rate, the increase in family mobility, and a rise in the number of latchkey children, many students are now responsible for getting themselves home, fed, and entertained after school because their single parent is still at work (Zdenek & Schochor, 2007); “the National Institute on Out-of-School Time (2003) estimated that approximately eight million children between the ages of 5 and 14 were often unsupervised after school in 1999” (Apsler, 2009, p. 2). “American children, rich and poor, suffer a level of neglect unique among developed nations” (Hewlett, 1991, p. 333); while the level of neglect may be in part physical, it is

also psychological, as children shoulder the burden of their own after-school care. “The primary purpose of school is to promote academic skills, but school is a social setting in which the social and academic domains are inextricably connected” (Miles & Stipek, 2006, p. 103); therefore, schools must fill the void and assume the necessary responsibility of moral education (Zdenek & Schochor, 2007; Lickona, 1991). In response, many schools have turned to character education in an effort to teach students positive values and right conduct. While these character education programs appear pedagogically sound, it is essential that researchers study the effects of these programs on both students and teachers in order that school administrators and policy makers can make informed decisions about the implementation of such programs.

Statement of the Problem

Beginning in the 1970s, “the two traditionally stable institutions, the household and the church, which had done much of the educating for centuries were themselves in seriously weakened condition” (Goodlad, 2004, p. 7). In many families, either both parents held full-time jobs, or the single parent worked into the evening; “for large numbers of children and youths, no parent was there to greet them at the end of the school day” (Goodlad, 2004, p. 7). In addition, fewer and fewer families attended church together, if at all. Young people, once attracted to Sunday school for both the moral and social component, no longer attended the weekend classes. “Strained in performing their own functions, [the home and church] could only hope that the school would stand strong in performing its function—and perhaps pick up some of what they found increasingly difficult to do” (Goodlad, 2004, p. 7). More than three decades later, schools remain the

primary educator for many students. However, most school policy at the federal and state levels fail to address the character development aspect of education. “We have ignored the moral dimension of education in both our reform efforts and our schools. We have forgotten what great educators from the Greeks to John Dewey knew: at heart, education is a moral enterprise” (Ryan, 2001, p. 82).

“Helping students behave in a way that supports learning outcomes and a safe environment continues to be one of the most critical issues facing schools” (Ludlow, 2011, p. 6). In fact, the forty-second annual Phi Delta Kappa/Gallup Poll of the Public’s Attitudes Toward Public Schools included data that shows that student discipline and the importance of programs that address problem behavior have been priority concerns for the public for the last four decades. Problem behavior in schools, in addition to being a concern for the public at large, is a major issue for educators. “A National Center for Education Statistics analysis ... showed that 53% of teachers cited problem behavior as a major cause of job dissatisfaction and 44% of those who left teaching cited it as the primary reason they quit their jobs” (Ludlow, 2011, p. 6).

“Studies indicate that mental, emotional, and behavioral disorders are a major health threat and are as commonplace today as a fractured limb—not inevitable, but not at all unusual” (O’Connell, Boat, & Warner, 2009, p. 1). Since nearly one in five youngsters has one or a combination of mental, emotional, or behavioral disorders, disorders that have dramatic effects on children’s abilities to establish healthy peer relationships and find success in school, it is essential that administrators and teachers

“shift the focus to advancing health and preventing disorders from occurring in the first place” (O’Connell, Boat, & Warner, 2009, p. 2).

The National Research Council recently published a report that calls for “a coordinated, systematic approach to research across ... agencies with common concerns and identifies opportunities to improve the applicability of research” (O’Connell, Boat, & Warner, 2009, p. 2). Positive Behavior Support (PBS), a coordinated, systematic character education program, provides schools with strategies to advance and support positive student behavior. However, there is little quantitative empirical evidence to validate the claims of the program, that negative student behaviors can be addressed and adjusted. Since “researchers and communities need to develop partnerships to evaluate interventions that have both a solid theoretical grounding and are responsive to community needs” (O’Connell, Boat, & Warner, 2009, p. 4), it is essential that additional empirical research determine whether PBS is a character education program that positively influences student behavior.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this non-experimental, explanatory, cross-sectional study is to examine the influence of Positive Behavior Support (PBS) on student behavior as measured by office discipline referrals and suspensions before and after the implementation of PBS in 2008-2009 in grades two through five of an urban elementary school. I used a historical comparison control group to compare office referrals and suspension data before and after the implementation of PBS. The results of the study can help administrators determine whether the challenges of implementing a character

education program, one dedicated to benefiting the Starway Public Elementary School students and its surrounding community, can be met by teachers and administrators.

Research Question

What is the difference, if any, between the frequency of behavior categories for a group of students who did not experience the PBS character education program in grades two, three, and four during the 2007-2008 school year compared to the frequency of behavior categories for the same group of students in grades three, four, and five after the implementation of Positive Behavior Support during the 2008-2009 school year?

Significance

According to the Educational Leadership Policy Standards, educational leaders promote the success of every student by “advocating, nurturing, and sustaining a school culture and instructional program conducive to student learning and staff professional growth” and “acting with integrity, fairness, and in an ethical manner” (The Council of Chief State School Officers, 2008, p. 19). Administrators are responsible, among many other things, to maximize instructional time and to promote social justice (CCSSO, 2008, p. 19). The Positive Behavior Support program has the potential to help administrators fulfill both of these responsibilities of school leadership under the requirements of the Educational Leadership Policy Standards.

While there is a large body of qualitative research published on the topic, character education lacks the empirical research necessary for qualifying the effects of its programs (Lockwood, 1997). Should the researcher find that the Positive Behavior Support program does have an affirmative influence on student behavior in one of

Starway's four elementary schools, school administrators and policymakers should implement the program at all four of the district's elementary schools.

Theoretical Framework

In addition to reading, writing, and arithmetic, today's teachers must respond to the challenges of ever-changing student behaviors in American public schools. In the new millennium, the majority of public school students are reared by a single-parent and assume a level of independence greater than that of their twentieth century peers. While teachers and administrators may feel ill-equipped when helping students develop strong characters, "Lawrence Kohlberg's work in moral development addresses such concerns and provides a conceptual framework through which teachers are better able to integrate moral issues with the process and content of teaching" (Reimer, Paolito, & Hersh, 1990, p. 3).

The main goal of Kohlberg's research was "to understand the relation of the development of moral thought to moral conduct and emotion" (Turiel, 2008, p. 24). With the publication of *Vita Humana (Human Development)* in 1958, "researchers began to take the realm of morality seriously and did not view children as unwilling or reluctant recipients of coerced or imposed values, standards, or norms" (Turiel, 2008, p. 24). Central to Kohlberg's theory is that children are active participants in social environments and that their actions are guided by moral and social judgments, not "unconscious biological or psychological forces to act without choice" (Turiel, 2008, p. 25). Kohlberg posits, "Moral judgments are constructed through children's interactions with the social world" (Turiel, 2008, p. 27). One of the world's most

renowned educational psychologists, William G. Huitt, supports Kohlberg's contention that "moral principles can be taught in schools and the children can be trained in developing their characters" (Ping, 2009, p. 48).

Kohlberg's work is heavily influenced by the Swiss psychologist Jean Piaget, who described moral education as a vital element of schools. Fifty years after Kohlberg's revolutionary publication, moral education remains a top priority for most educators. According to Brad Zdenek and Daniel Schochor (2007), "few environments exist that are more conducive for affecting the moral development of youths than schools" (p. 517). Similarly, Mary M. Williams (2000) states, "Today, schooling must be about character and academic competence, focusing on achieving a balance between the cognitive, affective, and behavioral domains at the different stages of child development" (p. 34). In advocating for moral education, Williams cites the work of both Kohlberg and Piaget and concludes, "Indirect instructional methods of developing moral understanding emphasize the interpersonal interactions of peers under the guidance of caring adults" (Williams, 2000, p. 39); it is clear that, for Piaget and Kohlberg, teachers are moral educators.

Kohlberg describes the stage of the moral development of elementary students, ages six to ten years, as egocentric; these children follow rules because they respect their teachers and administrators (Reimer, Paolito, & Hersh, 1990, p. 43). Central to Kohlberg's work is the development of children's moral judgment. As children advance through school, they develop those thinking processes that allow them to make moral decisions in everyday conflicts (Reimer, Paolito, & Hersh, 1990, p. 48). In an academic

environment, “students are allowed to develop their moral reasoning in a social setting rather than having it offered to them, resulting in a cognitive dissonance that must be supported and developed by the classroom teacher” (Zdenek & Schochor, 2007, p. 523). Both Piaget and Kohlberg proved that “children have the capacity to think about moral experiences. Over the elementary school years, our efforts to foster moral reasoning and decision making should gradually increase” (White, 2001, p. 44). The focus of Positive Behavior Support is to provide students with opportunities to respond to everyday conflicts and for their teachers to assist the learners in their development of prosocial behaviors and good characters.

Limitations

As is the case with all research, some limitations exist in this non-experimental, explanatory, cross-sectional study.

This research relied on historical quantitative data that was collected in the first year of the implementation of the program. Despite the possible affirmative effects of PBS, student behavior, measured by office referrals and suspensions, may not have been radically altered in the early days of PBS since teachers and administrators had not had the opportunity to refine the program.

The focus of the study, Rooney School, has implemented a program of Positive Behavior support. This location, a district where I was once employed as a vice-principal, may pose a limitation because of the potential influence of my perspective.

Rooney School also has a high rate of student mobility; it is possible that students new to Rooney were responsible for negative behaviors that resulted in office discipline referrals or suspensions.

Idiosyncrasies and individual beliefs of teachers responsible for completing office discipline referrals may affect the number and types of referrals. For example, there are different standards among teachers about acceptable classroom behavior; some teachers permit talking in the classroom, while others do not.

Because of the small, purposeful sample and location of the study, generalizability of the results is difficult.

The non-experimental, explanatory, cross-sectional design of this study will not determine if the implementation of Positive Behavior Support caused a change in student behavior.

Without a comparison control group, it is possible that any improvement in student behavior as measured by ODR and suspension data may be due to normal student maturation.

Despite the limitations, it is essential for other researchers, aware of possible limitations, to begin investigations of their own in an effort to expand the research about character education; children in today's schools cannot be without it. It is the responsibility of adults in our society to determine which character education programs are best for the students. Additional research will assist the adults in making well-informed decisions.

Delimitations

The explanatory study took place in Rooney Elementary School, one of the four elementary schools in Starway, New Jersey. The PBS program involved elementary-aged students from grades two through five. I examined historical office referral and suspension data before and after the implementation of PBS to determine any effect of the character education program on student behavior.

Definitions of Terms

Teacher – An instructor who “acts as a caregiver, model, and mentor, treating students with love and respect, setting a good example, supporting prosocial behavior, and correcting hurtful actions” (Lickona, 1991, p. 68).

Character Education – “The deliberate effort to teach virtues, ... objectively good human qualities” (Lickona, 1997, p. 63) and the attempt to help students live a life of right conduct “in relation to other persons and in relation to oneself” (Lickona, 1991, p. 50).

Positive Behavior Support (PBS) – “A proactive, systems-level approach that enables schools to effectively and efficiently support student behavior” (Simonsen, Sugai, & Negrón, 2008, p. 33).

Office Discipline Referral (ODR) – A valid, useful, practical, and efficient measure to document a school’s behavioral climate and the effects of the PBS program (Muscott, Mann, & LeBrun, 2008).

Suspension – A school administrator’s decision to deny a student entry to school for any number of days based on the student’s infraction. “Suspension, a common response to

school misconduct, limits students' opportunities to learn" (Gottfredson, Gottfredson, & Hybl, 1993, p. 180).

Classroom – "A classroom is a small society with patterns and rituals, power relationships and standards for both academic performance and student behavior. Moral climate influences the classroom environment" (Ryan, 2004, p. 1).

Summary

This dissertation is organized into five chapters. The first presented an overview of the problem, the purpose of the research, and the study's significance. The remaining sections provide the reader with a review of the literature related to character education and positive behavior support, a detailed explanation of the research design, methods for data collection and an analysis of office referral and suspension data, and the results of the study. The final chapter summarizes the findings, presents conclusions, and offers recommendations to practicing school administrators and future researchers.

CHAPTER II

Review of Related Literature

“We have ignored the moral dimension of education in both our reform efforts and our schools. We have forgotten what great educators from the Greeks to John Dewey knew: at heart, education is a moral enterprise” (Ryan, 2001, p. 82). The second chapter provides a review of literature related to character education, its effects on student behavior, and the character education program *Positive Behavior Support* (PBS).

This chapter includes a description of the procedures I used to find related literature, the criteria for both inclusion and exclusion of literature, synopses of major studies related to Positive Behavior Support, and reviews of character education and the Positive Behavior Support program.

Literature Search Procedures

I begin Chapter II by summarizing seven recent research studies that related to this study. The reviewed research deals with Positive Behavior Support at the primary level, office discipline referrals, and behaviors of children from low-income homes. I chose these studies because of their similarities to my own research. In order to compile the remainder of the review, I read several books by educators who espouse character education as vital to school and student success; Noddings, Lickona, and Hewlett are examples of authors who champion character education. In addition, I used ProQuest and LexisNexis Academic to search for peer-reviewed journal articles related to the study. Using terms like *character education*, *morality in schools*, and *positive behavior support*, I found a wealth of information from long-established publications like *Educational*

Researcher, Journal of Education Research, and Journal of American Medical Association; additionally, more recent publications like *Journal of Positive Behavior Interventions* offered valuable information. There is a great deal of literature related to character education and “schools’ unavoidable and inevitable influence on student character” (Williams, 2000, p. 33). In addition, there is a recent abundance of work related to PBS and the program’s effects on students and schools. The Positive Behavior Support Program has several aliases; PBS is also known as Positive Behavior in Schools (PBIS), Positive Behavior Support in Schools (PBSIS), and ABS (Applied Behavior Support). In order to be consistent, and to make reading easier, I use the term PBS throughout this work. The review of related literature serves as the foundation for this research study.

Criteria for Inclusion and Exclusion of Literature

There is a plethora of literature related to character education and to PBS. In an attempt to provide a comprehensive and current review, I chose peer-reviewed research studies completed within the last decade. In addition, the studies were related to my work in some way; therefore, both quantitative and qualitative studies were included. As a practicing administrator in a district that is committed to PBS, I am interested in the effects of program implementation and its impact on school culture, teacher perceptions of behavior management, and the necessity of teacher training, patterns in office referral data, and the impact of behavior management on academic achievement. Peer-reviewed journals add validity to the literature review since the “peer- review process ensures that the published articles are of high quality, reflect solid scholarship in their fields, and that

the information they contain is accurate and based on sound research”

(<http://library.usm.maine.edu/pdfs/research/WhatIsPeerReviewed.pdf>).

For the character education component of the research, the seminal work upon which I relied is Dr. Thomas Lickona’s *Educating for Character: How Our Schools Can Teach Respect and Responsibility*. A developmental psychologist, Professor of Education at the State University of New York at Cortland and Director of the Center for the Fourth and Fifth Rs (Respect and Responsibility), Dr. Lickona’s 1991 work has been praised as “the definitive work in the field”

(www2.cortland.edu/centers/character/staff.dot). In addition to Lickona’s book, I also used Goodlad’s *A Place Called School* and Reimer, Paolito, and Hersh’s *Moral Development* as sources of information about morality, character, and education.

In addition to studies and books, the literature review draws heavily from information presented in peer-reviewed articles. Beginning in the early 1990s, there have been many articles published on character education. The overabundance of research on the subject was likely due to Congress’s repeated authorization of the Elementary and Secondary School Act of 2001, later reauthorized under President G.W. Bush as No Child Left Behind (NCLB). On the third day of his term in 2001, President Bush expressed his belief in America’s public schools and “their mission to build the mind and character of every child, from every background, in every part of America”

(www.ed.gov/nclb/overview/intro/execsumm.html). Character education was added to the schools’ traditional repertoire of reading, writing, and arithmetic.

Review of Literature Topics

Major Studies

“While there is growing interest in school-wide PBIS among policymakers, researchers, and educators, there has been relatively limited systematic research on the impact of [the program]” (Bradshaw, Koth, Thornton, & Leaf, 2009, p. 100). In an effort to determine what types of PBS research already existed, and to expand my knowledge base, I examined seven major studies relating to character education and Positive Behavior Support. Each analysis provided information that helped to shape this study.

PBS Program Evaluation

In 2002, the New Hampshire Department of Education collaborated with the state’s Department of Health and Human Services to address the “long-standing challenge of effectively and efficiently addressing problem behavior in schools without over reliance on reactive and punitive disciplinary responses” (Muscott, Mann, & LeBrun, 2010, p. 190). In response, the New Hampshire Center for Effective Behavioral Interventions and Supports developed a plan to introduce Positive Behavior Supports into a small cohort of schools in order to determine its effectiveness.

The researchers began the study by inviting school teams interested in Positive Behavior Support to a two-day workshop outlining the program and its requirements. The twenty-eight schools that applied to be part of the first PBS cohort were accepted. The cohort schools “were diverse in many respects. They represented all levels of schooling and were geographically located throughout the state. [The cohort] included 1

Head Start, . . . 13 elementary schools, 6 middle schools, 4 high schools, and 4 multilevel schools” (Muscott et al., 2010, p. 194).

The researchers used the *School-wide Evaluation Tool* (SET) “to determine whether implementation of a school-wide approach to discipline was achieved and sustained over time” (Muscott et al., 2010, p. 194). The majority of the participating schools were able to “implement schoolwide positive behavioral interventions and supports with fidelity within 2 years and to sustain implementation over the course of the following year” (Muscott et al., 2010, p. 190). The effects of PBS were measured in the schools’ significantly reduced number of office discipline referrals and suspensions. The reduction in discipline infractions led to increased teaching and learning time, which resulted in “academic gains in math for the vast majority of schools who implemented with fidelity” (Muscott et al., 2010, p. 190).

This study is useful to my research because of its attention to both office discipline referrals and suspensions. The study also provides helpful information for future researchers. The article concludes with a recommendation: “Future . . . investigations should attempt to untangle the variables contributing to readiness, implementation, and sustainability by examining multiple data sources at the individual program level” (Muscott et al., 2010, p. 202). My study examines Rooney School’s readiness for, implementation of, and sustainability of Positive Behavior Support.

Teacher Perceptions of Positive Behavior Support

The researchers conducted in-depth qualitative interviews with kindergarten and first grade teachers to learn their perceptions regarding behavior management and

intervention since “understanding teachers’ perspectives about behavior is an essential element of implementing prevention-focused initiatives because their perspectives likely influence their choice of behavior management strategy” (Tillery et al., 2010, p. 87). Since early childhood teachers are usually the first educators to interact with children who exhibit problem behaviors, the researchers were interested in the teachers’ management views.

The study was conducted during the 2005-2006 school year in a rural school system that educates nearly 10,000 students each year. Seven kindergarten teachers and thirteen first grade teachers were selected to participate in the study. The research design employed “face-to-face, in-depth interaction with the participants to examine their perceptions of behavior management and intervention” (Tillery, 2010, p. 89). The researchers met with the teachers and asked open-ended questions that allowed the interviewer to ask additional questions, ask for clarification, or probe for additional details (Tillery, 2010). Researchers tape-recorded, transcribed, and imported the interview commentaries into a coding software program.

After analyzing the data, the researchers found that “teachers viewed themselves as a strong influence on the development of [student] behavior” (Tillery et al., 2010, p. 97). In addition, teachers reported little, if any, undergraduate preparation for classroom management; “the teachers in this study received little training in behavior management” (Tillery et al., 2010, p. 97). Still, the teachers demonstrated a cache of management techniques that dealt with individual students; however, “strategies directed to groups of children or the school as a whole were few in number and limited in scope”

(Tillery et al., 2010, p. 97). The researchers determined that “successful implementation of [PBS] innovations requires system supports such as resources, training, and policies that involve general education teachers” (Tillery et al., 2010, p. 98).

This contemporary study is of paramount importance to my research because it confirmed the necessity of professional development for teachers; very few educators have formal training in behavior management (Leming, 1997a).

Experimental Studies

Because “there have been few rigorous studies of the effects of school-wide behavioral interventions on school climate,” researchers from the Department of Mental Health at Johns Hopkins Center for the Prevention of Youth Violence, “used data from a randomized controlled effectiveness trial of PBIS conducted in 37 elementary schools to determine the impact of school-wide PBIS training and implementation on the staff members’ perceptions of schools’ organizational health” (Bradshaw, Koth, Thornton, & Leaf, 2009, p. 100). The researchers worked with thirty-seven public elementary schools in Maryland; schools across five districts volunteered to be a part of the study. Of the thirty-seven schools, twenty-one were designated PBIS schools and sixteen comparison schools refrained from implementing PBIS during the four-year study.

In order to assess the quality of PBIS training and implementation across the schools, the researchers relied on Sugai’s School-Wide Evaluation Tool (SET), “a multi-component implementation quality measure ... which can be used to monitor program fidelity over multiple years of implementation” (Bradshaw, Koth, Thornton, & Leaf, 2009, p. 101). An objective outside observer used the SET to assess “the degree to which

a school has each of the [PBIS] model's seven critical features in place" (Bradshaw, Koth, Thornton, & Leaf, 2009, p. 104). The observer reviewed Codes of Conduct and office discipline referrals, noted displays of rules and procedures, and interviewed "administrators, teachers, and students about school procedures, policies, standards, and consequences for positive behavior and rule infractions" (Bradshaw, Koth, Thornton, & Leaf, 2009, p. 104). The researchers gathered data annually in May over four years.

The researchers found that high-quality PBIS training "is associated with significant changes in the schools' organizational context" (Bradshaw, Koth, Thornton, & Leaf, 2009, p. 113). Specifically, schools that were devoted to the PBIS model saw improvements in overall organizational health, staff commitment and capacity, and academic achievement during the four year study (Bradshaw, Koth, Thornton, & Leaf, 2009, p. 105).

Bradshaw, Koth, Thornton, & Leaf tout the initial results from non-randomized studies like mine: "Implementation of school-wide PBIS was associated with a reduction in office discipline referrals and suspensions, as well as improvements in student academic performance" (Bradshaw, Koth, Thornton, & Leaf, 2009, p. 101). However, the researchers caution that "it is possible that schools implementing universal PBIS may get initial benefits in school climate as a result of implementing the school-wide program, but may require secondary prevention efforts to meet the needs of children not responding adequately to the universal program" (Bradshaw, Koth, Thornton, & Leaf, 2009, p. 109). The researchers acknowledge that more research is necessary before PBIS can be labeled a panacea for improving student behavior and, therefore, school culture.

While office referral data has been used to inform program and policy decisions, few studies have examined “patterns in the office referral data related to grade or developmental level, gender, and race/ethnicity” (Kaufman et al., 2010, p. 44). Researchers in this study examined office referral data in elementary, middle, and high schools in order “to determine whether the patterns of office referrals changed by grade” (Kaufman et al., 2010, p. 46). The researchers worked in an urban center known for its high rate of poverty.

According to Kaufman et al., (2010), “Office referral forms included 27 reasons for referral” (p. 47); therefore, the researchers found commonalities among the referrals and formed four inclusive categories: attendance matters; delinquency (e.g., vandalism); aggression (e.g., fighting); and, acts of disrespect (e.g., profanity). Once they established the categories, the researchers worked to determine if there was a relationship between grade level, gender, or race, and the number of office referrals.

The researchers collected data during the 2004-2005 school year. For the 3,340 students enrolled, a regression analysis revealed an average of 2.6 referrals per student and nearly 50% of the students had more than one discipline referral (Kaufman et al., 2010). Not surprisingly, the high school students had more attendance referrals than the students in middle or elementary school. Contrarily, students in kindergarten through eighth grade were more aggressive than the students in the high school. Middle and high school students were responsible for the majority of delinquent acts and students in middle school were found to be the most disrespectful.

The researchers also analyzed the data for gender and ethnic differences. “For all four types of behavioral outcomes, males had significantly more referrals than females” (Kaufman et al., 2010, p. 49); the girls were referred to the office for discipline half the number of times boys were referred. Additionally, the researchers found “African American/Black students had significantly more referrals for delinquency, aggressive behavior, and disrespectful behavior, and more total referrals than the other groups” (Kaufman, 2010, p. 49). Students of Hispanic descent were responsible for the majority of referrals for delinquency.

In the discussion, the researchers made associations between the ages, genders, and ethnicities of students and the discipline referrals. Elementary students, who are likely to act the most aggressively, are learning to create friendships and hone their teambuilding skills. Middle school students, referred the most for being disrespectful, are “working toward identity development and autonomy” (Kaufman, 2010, p. 51). Finally, high school students are exerting their independence; not surprisingly, these adolescents had the greatest number of attendance referrals.

The researchers recommended that schools examine the patterns in office discipline referrals in an effort to “establish expectations for behavior that are meaningful for all students” (Sugai & Horner, as cited in Kaufman et al., 2010, p. 51). In addition, examining office referral data can assist administration in assessing teachers’ management styles. Teachers who refer an inordinate number of students may need professional development or classroom management training. Similarly, students with high numbers of referrals may benefit from additional supports such as counseling or

group therapy. These recommendations, in addition to the suggestion for categorizing discipline referrals, are essential to my research.

In another experimental study, the researchers' problem statement centered on the negative impact that disruptive behavior has on not only the school environment, but also on the unruly students' learning outcomes. The researchers posited that "an undesirable school environment would probably lead to low student engagement and motivation, and learning may become less effective in the classrooms" (Yeung, Mooney, Barker, Dobia, 2009, p. 18). The study "examined the impacts of [Positive Behavior Support] on the important psychosocial outcomes of learning" (Yeunget al., 2009, p. 21).

The study took place in six primary schools in the Western Sydney Region of Australia. Four schools, the experimental group, were implementing Positive Behavior Support and two schools, the control group, were not. While the sizes of the schools varied, each school was characterized as diverse and multicultural; "more than 100 languages were reported to be spoken at home" (Yeunget al., 2009, p. 22). At each school, students in Years 3 and 5 were invited to participate. The total sample included 557 students with 474 students from the schools implementing PBS and 83 students from the control schools. At the beginning of the research study, the experimental schools had implemented Positive Behavior Support for nine months; therefore, students had familiarity with the program.

Researchers administered an instrument that surveyed "nine psychosocial factors that are considered to be important learning outcomes. These educational outcomes were "school self-concept (cognitive), school self-concept (affective), English self-concept,

math self-concept, parent self-concept, effort goal orientation, planning, study management, and persistence” (Yeung et al., 2009, p. 22). After analyzing the results, the researchers found that “the students in the experimental schools tended to like going to school after the implementation of [PBS] more than the control group” (Yeung et al., 2009, p. 26). In addition to having increased study skills and motivation, students in the experimental group reported improved relationships with their parents and guardians. “Since students’ motivation and engagement in schoolwork tend to influence their interest in learning and subsequently lead to better achievement, any intervention that can enhance students’ positive motivation and engagement will ... be worthwhile” (Yeung et al., 2009, p. 28). The researchers caution, however, that while “the findings suggest that the school-wide [PBS] system has the potential to make a difference in learning outcomes” (Yeung et al., 2009, p. 29), the findings are only preliminary.

Miles and Stipek learned from previous research that student behavior and academic achievement are positively associated; students who exhibit prosocial behaviors tend to achieve academically while their misbehaving peers struggle to learn. In their longitudinal study, the researchers investigated associations between social skills and literacy development “in a sample of low-income children during elementary school” (Miles & Stipek, 2006, p. 103). Miles and Stipek (2006) hypothesized that “relatively poor literacy achievement at the beginning of school would predict increases in aggressive behavior” (p. 106). They expected the relationship between the two variables to become stronger as the students progressed through school.

The researchers used gathered academic information on a sample of 237 students, 118 girls and 119 boys. The students were an ethnically diverse group from both urban and rural areas of the country and most children attended schools that served a “relatively high proportion of low-income children” (Miles & Stipek, 2007, p. 107). The students’ literacy development was tested using the Woodcock-Johnson battery—“a letter-word reading and passage comprehension assessment” (Miles & Stipek, 2007, p. 108). In order to gather information about student behavior, the researchers gathered data from their teachers using Ladd & Profilet’s (1996) child behavior scale. For data analysis, Miles and Stipek (2007) relied on correlations, path analysis, and hierarchical linear regression analyses to “assess mediated or indirect effects of social skills and literacy in the first grade on these variables in the fifth grade” (p. 109).

The data revealed “significant associations between social skills and academic achievement” (Miles & Stipek, 2007, p. 111). As students’ prosocial skills increase, so does their academic achievement. The data analysis also revealed that as students’ academic achievement drops, their antisocial behaviors increase. Through an analysis of the teachers’ ratings of students’ aggressive behavior at first and third grades, the researchers discovered that there is some stability in children’s behavior; students who exhibit antisocial behaviors in first grade continued the negative behavior trend into third grade. In addition to boosting academic achievement, the researchers remind the reader, “Prosocial skills have been linked to a variety of positive outcomes, including adjustment, emotional well-being, positive self-concept, successful coping skills, high

academic achievement, educational attainment, and stable employment” (Miles & Stipek, 2006, p. 104).

Character Education

“An important modern piece of American legislation relating to the federal funding of character education is the Partnerships in Character Education Program as authorized under ... the Elementary and Secondary Act of 1965, as amended by the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001” (Zdenek & Schochor, 2007, p. 519). In addition to being part of federal law, character education is part of the fabric of school culture. In 1918, a group of progressive educators outlined seven principle objectives of education which included health, vocation, citizenship, and ethical character. According to Mary Williams, co-chair of the National Commission on Character Education, the character education movement is alive nearly 100 years after the publication of the Cardinal Principles. Williams (2000) maintains that character education, “the fastest growing reform in education today, is encouraging society to examine the personal values, social interactions, and civic responsibilities that children and youth struggle with during their school years” (p. 32); her statement is substantiated by the wealth of research on the topic. Any person interested in character education can gather information from newsletters, curriculum guides, research articles, and websites, to name but a few sources. No matter which source is plumbed for information about this trend in education, a researcher is likely to find common themes throughout the literature, such as the influence of character education on present day social problems (William, 2000; Lickona, 1998; Meier, 1995; Meier, 1999), training teachers to become character

educators (Utley et al., 2002; Milson & Mehlig, 2002; Leming, 1997a; Lickona, 1991; Marsh & Raywid, 1998; Williams, 1997; Noddings, 1998; Whitmer & Forbes, 1997; Reynolds & Reynolds, 1991), the effects of character education on students (Zdenek & Schochor, 2007; Lickona, 1998; Lasley & Biddle, 1996; Bernardo, 1997), and collaboration between schools and communities to ensure the success of character education (Schwartz et al., 2005; Leming, 1997a; Agostino, 1998; Lickona, 1991).

The Influence of Character Education on Present Day Social Problems

There are two significant factors that contribute to present-day social problems among school-aged youth: the decline of the stable family structure and disturbing changes in the character of today's children. "The most popular outcome identified for character education programs among the public, and the impetus for the development of many of them, is direct influence of [children's] behaviors" (Zdenek & Schochor, 2007, p. 525). Implementation of a character education program may help correct social problems (Milson & Mehlig, 2002; Williams, 2000; Lickona, 1998). When families neglect the moral education of their children, the school must assume the responsibility of teaching students the values that are not being taught at home. Within schools, "character education creates caring, moral communities that help children from at risk homes focus on their work, control their anger, feel cared about, and become responsible students" (Lickona, 1998, p. 334). In addition, teaching virtues to children encourages them to become responsible citizens because through character education students learn to be good citizens; those who "do good to others and do not harm others, function well in

society and live by its laws and norms, and take responsibility and do their very best” (Thornberg, 2008, p. 55).

Training Teachers to Become Character Educators

“The issue is not, then, whether values should be part of the school curriculum, but whether they will be taught haphazardly or systematically, unreflectively or thoughtfully” (White, 2001, p. 37). Recent efforts to systematically and thoughtfully implement character education programs require substantial effort from classroom teachers; however, these teachers receive “little training that is specific to character education” (Leming, 1997a, p. 23). Mary Williams (2000) concurs, “teacher and counselor education programs, by and large, are not emphasizing character education in their preparation programs” (Williams, 2000, p. 39). Kevin Ryan (2001), Director of the Center for the Advancement of Ethics and Character, believes that the key to school reform in the United States is “the return to the mission of moral and character education”; in order to return to that mission, Ryan proposes “colleges and universities ... prepare elementary and secondary teachers” for their work as character educators (p. 84).

A prevailing theme in the literature on character education is the notion that these teachers must act as caregivers, models, and mentors in order for the program to be effective; “educators must serve as models for students in a moral community” (Williams, 2000, p. 37). It is important to recognize that “while the burden of implementing programs of moral education within schools lies with the nation’s K-12 teachers, the role of higher education in the preparation of those teachers cannot be overlooked” (Zdenek & Schochor, 2007, p. 524). While a preservice teacher may learn

that journal writing can enhance moral learning, no person can be formally trained to be a model or mentor (Lickona, 1991; Milson & Mehlig, 2002). Since good teachers learn through experience, any reform or restructuring effort requires staff development (Schwartz et al., 2005; Utley et al., 2002; Marsh & Raywid, 1998; Milson & Mehlig, 2002). Most schools dedicated to character education offer in-service training for teachers (Schwartz et al., 2005; Williams, 2000) in order to increase the efficacy of character education programs.

A teacher's primary goal is to help students acquire knowledge. However, "the average classroom teacher [can] typically expect to find from two to nine students with some level of behaviour problem in his/her class of thirty students at any one time" (Beaman & Wheldall, 1997, p. 50). According to Conway (2005), behavioral issues are not restricted to students identified as "special needs," but are "common across both students with additional needs and their regular class peers" (p. 214). "Teachers engaged in such a complex instructional mission need highly effective behaviour management techniques in order to meet the needs of the all the students in their classrooms" (Beaman, Wheldall, & Kemp, 2007, p. 45). Since "effective management is the foundation from which learning can occur" (Garrahy, Cothran, & Kulinna, 2005, p. 57), it is essential that teachers learn skills and strategies to address problem behaviors so that student learning is maximized.

A great deal of research related to character education posits that students who develop good character are likely to exhibit improved academic performance (Yeung

et al., 2009; Muscott et al., 2008; Miles & Stipek, 2006; Nucci et al., 2005; Lickona, 1998; Gottfredson, Gottfredson, & Hybl, 1993; Reynolds & Reynolds, 1991). As teachers become more effective classroom managers, they are able to focus more on teaching pedagogy and imparting academic knowledge to their students (Nucci et al., 2005). According to Nel Noddings (1998), an advocate of character education, “Including themes of care in the curriculum ... may help expand our students’ cultural literacy ... and connect the standard subjects” (p. 185). Additional research asserts that constant reinforcement of values throughout the various subject areas is a most valuable teaching technique (Narvaez & Lapsley, 2008; Williams, 1997; Whitmer & Forbes, 1997).

Ethical Schools

“There is little doubt that the ethical climate within a classroom promotes a steady and strong influence in the formation of character and the student’s sense of what’s right and wrong” (Xiao-chuan, 2010, p. 33). Charles S. White, Associate Professor at Boston University’s School of Education, concurs. In order to prepare students for participation in our democratic society, “moral education in the elementary school should be based on a solid foundation of essential values, and students should conform to behavior expectations that mirror those virtues in order eventually to act virtuously as a matter of habit” (White, 2001, p. 38).

In ethical schools, teachers use a humanistic approach to classroom management and recognize that negative behavior is often affected by an individual’s feelings and self-esteem. These educators get to know their students as individuals and afford the

children mutual respect; the teachers serve as role models for their students (Garrahy, Cothran, & Kulinna, 2005). In these schools, children are members of mini-communities within their classrooms where they participate in “discussions and activities that require reflection on moral issues” (White, 2001, p. 39). Teachers serve as moral guides during these discussions, fostering their students’ development of “higher-order moral reasoning” (White, 2001, p. 39). In ethical schools, students develop both moral habits and moral reasoning; therefore, educators can hold high expectations for academic and moral behavior of their students (White, 2001). In addition to expanding their moral awareness, students who attend ethical schools have “a greater understanding of and appreciation for diverse populations within a school community” (Miller & Pedro, 2006, p. 296).

Gender Differences in Disruptive Behaviors

“Externally directed behaviors, generally associated with boys, are acts that are harmful to others or to the environment, such as stealing, lying, fighting, and destructiveness” (Kann & Hanna, 2000, p. 268). Expressions like “boys will be boys” point to society’s conviction that males tend to misbehave more than females. Moreover, studies from around the world find clear gender differences regarding student misconduct with boys consistently described as more troublesome than their female peers (Beaman, Wheldall, & Kemp, 2007; Kann & Hanna, 2000). According to Kazdin (1995), “Antisocial behaviors ... are much more evident in boys” (p. 10).

While antisocial behavior is troubling in and of itself, there is evidence that students who misbehave in school have low academic motivation and, therefore, low

academic achievement (Miles & Stipek, 2006). The research shows that girls have more prosocial behaviors than boys; it is essential that boys' disruptive behaviors are addressed so that male students are motivated to learn and show academic success.

The Effects of Character Education on Students

Research indicates that character education encourages students to behave conscientiously, and instills in them strong moral values (Lickona, 1998; Lasley & Biddle, 1996; Bernardo, 1997). Lickona (1998) describes good character as knowing the good, desiring the good, and doing the good. Teaching good character imparts in students several moral qualities, including both thoughtful decision-making and moral reasoning (Bernardo, 1997). Character education also guides students emotionally; emotional qualities inherent in character education are conscience, self-respect, empathy, self-control, and humility. In addition to these attributes, students develop moral competence, including the virtues of listening and cooperating, will to make judgments and act upon decisions, and moral habit (Lickona, 1998); character education assists students in their development of decision-making skills.

While fostering students' character is an end in and of itself, schools may reap additional benefits from the character education movement. According to Darcia Narvaez and Daniel Lapsley (2008) from the Center for Ethical Education at the University of Notre Dame, "Social and emotional learning programs pave the way for better academic learning. They teach children social and emotional skills that are intimately linked with cognitive development" (p. 5). Two recent studies, one in New Hampshire and one abroad, found that schools in which building student character was a

priority showed improved academic outcomes (Muscott et al., 2008; Yeung et al., 2009). In the age of accountability, character education becomes an even more important part of schooling.

Collaboration Between Schools and Communities

Involvement of citizens in the community surrounding the school is critical if a character education program is to succeed. Character education programs benefit from interaction with the public because “communities sustain themselves by agreement about values and goals” (Agostino, 1998, p.128). Communities are full of ethical experts who can provide students with additional exposure to good role models from whom they can learn the values of honesty, self-respect, and responsibility. Furthermore, the involvement of local citizens generates support for character education programs (Lickona, 1991; Sugai, Simonsen, & Horner, 2008). Schools supported by strong communities report fewer discipline and bullying problems and fewer delinquent acts. In addition, these schools boast higher attendance and improvements in academic performance (Narvaez & Lapsley, 2008).

Positive Behavior Support

Today’s students face unprecedented academic and social pressures. During the contemporary age of accountability, standards-based curricula and high-stakes tests have become the norm. In addition to carrying this academic burden, students also face intense societal pressure to conform. This intense focus on standardization has neglected the individual needs and interests of modern learners. Rather than relying on a standard, one size fits all curriculum, Positive Behavior Support is a character education program

that operates within the context of the school community and is tailored to the needs of individual students, particularly to those students with special needs. Schwartz, et al (2005), in their review of three significant character education research studies, identified four common attributes of effective programs:

1. Goals should be both explicit and ambitious
2. Professional development is crucial
3. The whole community should be involved, and everyone should have a voice
4. Adults need to be role models

Positive Behavior Support meets these criteria.

“Positive Behavior Support (PBS) is an applied science that uses educational methods to expand an individual’s behavior repertoire and systems change methods to redesign an individual’s living environment to first enhance the individual’s quality of life and, second, to minimize his or her problem behavior” (Bambara, 2002). Unlike other management systems that rely on negative consequences to address problem behavior, PBS gives students strategies that promote prosocial behavior (Gresham, 2004) and proves to students that antisocial behavior is ineffective (Bambara, 2002).

One of the defining features of PBS is its significance for students with special needs. PBS emerged as a result of the inclusion movement of the 1970s and 1980s, when people with disabilities were recognized as contributing members of society and afforded both respect and access to resources (Bambara, 2002; Gresham, 2004). By providing exceptional students with behavior management strategies, PBS allows the students to make lifestyle changes that assist both the students and those who support them.

Three Levels of Intervention

Positive Behavior Support (PBS) is a character education model defined by three levels of behavioral intervention: primary, secondary, and tertiary (Simonsen, Sugai, & Negron, 2008; Sugai, Simonsen, & Horner, 2008; Gresham, 2004). Primary interventions are those designed for the entire student population and are successful for 80 to 90% of the student body. The goal of the initial support is to keep students engaged academically and to encourage prosocial behavior. However, there are some students who do not respond to first tier behavior modifications. Secondary interventions exist for the 5% to 10% of at-risk students; these students struggle academically and exhibit antisocial behavior (Gresham, 2004). Teachers, administrators, and parents work with the student to design targeted interventions that prevent the problem behaviors from becoming routine (Simonsen, Sugai, & Negron, 2008). The third level of intervention is designed for the 1% to 5% of the students who are responsible for the majority of behavioral interruptions (Gresham, 2004). These students exhibit behaviors that pose a risk to themselves or others; these behaviors remain unchanged after primary and secondary levels of intervention. Because these students exhibit symptoms of mental illness, it is this group that requires the most intense interventions (Muscott, Mann, & LeBrun, 2008). The three levels of intervention are a critical piece of PBS since “it must surely be a priority for education systems that as many students as possible are educated in the least restrictive educational environment and [educators] must collectively guard against students with disruptive or troublesome behavior becoming ‘the new excluded’” (Beaman, Wheldall, & Kemp, 2007, p. 58).

Implementation

Like any initiative, PBS requires considerable resources, both human and financial. Before implementation, administrators and teachers must commit to the program by embracing its tenets and dedicating time to adapt to the PBS model. According to Hardman and Smith (1999), "Rules can serve as a powerful tool in developing and promoting positive interactions" (p. 178); therefore, teachers and administrators must work together to promote prosocial behavior and instill strong character in their students. After developing the rules, teams of teachers, staff members, and community members must focus on the tiered system and design interventions for each level (Muscott, Mann, & LeBrun, 2008). Another step in the implementation process is the formation of office discipline referrals (ODRs) by administrators and teachers. These structures provide specific examples of acceptable and unacceptable behavior and are used whenever a faculty member finds a student displaying antisocial behaviors (Utley, Kozleski, Smith, & Draper, 2002). Perhaps the most important element of PBS occurs when administrators and teachers analyze behavioral data provided by the ODRs and assess the strengths and weakness of the PBS program. It is this data analysis that allows the teachers and administrators to redesign tiered interventions with a focus on improving individual students' social skills and academic performance (Muscott, Mann, & LeBrun, 2008; Utley, Kozleski, Smith, & Draper, 2002).

Despite the seemingly positive elements of PBS, there are several barriers to implementation (Utley, Kozleski, Smith, & Draper, 2002). Recruitment of teachers to participate in PBS is a challenge. These educators must be persuaded to dedicate both

personal and classroom time to PBS implementation. In addition, community members must be engaged in PBS; local merchants may be encouraged to donate prizes for students who consistently display positive behaviors. Finally, administrators must invest time to data analysis. Antisocial student behavior must be tracked, monitored and addressed. While it appears that both teachers and administrators have to devote additional time to PBS implementation, schools with successful character education programs see an increase in classroom instructional time, since teachers have fewer discipline interruptions and principals act as instructional leaders rather than disciplinarians (Simonsen, Sugai, & Negrón, 2008).

Office Discipline Referrals

“Office discipline referrals are measures of problem behavior, which has been defined as ‘behavior that is socially defined as a problem, a source of concern, or as undesirable by the norms of conventional society and the institutions of adult authority’” (Irvin, Tobin, Sprague, Sugai, & Vincent, 2004, p. 141). ODRs are completed by members of the school staff who witnesses any student’s disregard for school rules. Plenty of information is available in ODRs; an analysis of ODR data reveals patterns of negative behavior and provides teachers with additional information about students of concern (Irvin et al., 2004, p. 142). Administrators may use ODR data to help staff members “increase their capacity to support students with behavioral challenges in general education settings and improve the overall quality of the school climate” (Irvin et al., 2004, p. 142).

While effective measures of discipline, ODRs are not without limitations. “The number of players involved in the ODR process and the potential complexity of interactions among them can be problematic for ensuring consistent outcomes” (Irvin et al., 2004, p. 143). In addition, staff members’ perceptions of disciplinary infractions may differ from person to person; one staff member may determine that a behavior is negative, while a different staff member may not warrant the behavior as antisocial. In order to address these limitations, special educator researchers from the University of Oregon recommended school staff members create operational definitions of negative student behaviors, “establish mutually exclusive and exhaustive categories for inappropriate behavior,” employ consequences with consistency, and meet to review and analyze the data school officials gather from the ODRs.

Assessment of Effectiveness of Office Discipline Referrals (ODR)

Another group of researchers and special educators from the University of Oregon agreed that “when all school staff members in all school settings actively teach and consistently reinforce appropriate behavior, the number of students with serious behavior problems will be reduced and the school climate will improve” (Irvin et al., 2004, p. 131). However, this group of researchers questioned the validity of office discipline referrals “as indices of school behavioral climates and intervention effectiveness” and received a grant from the Office of Special Education Programs, United States Department of Education, to evaluate ODR measures.

Schools that commit to school-wide character education and positive behavior programs “need valid indices of the school-wide behavioral climate, behavior support

needs, and the effectiveness of school-wide behavioral intervention programs in improving the behavioral climate in the school” (Irvin et al., 2004, p. 132). The researchers conducted a review of literature related to the validity of office discipline referrals. According to Irvin et al (2004), the evaluation “will serve to document both the empirical and ethical foundations of” interpretations and use of ODRs (p. 132).

Using Messick’s framework to assess the validity of ODRs, the researchers “found a variety of empirical evidence justifying interpretations of school-wide ODR measures as indicators of school-wide behavioral climate” (Irvin et al., 2004, p. 134). Among the findings from their review were the positive correlation between rebellious behavior and ODRs and that discipline referrals are significant predictors of suspension frequency; in sum, “higher levels of school-wide ODRs were associated with higher levels of problematic behavioral climates in schools” (Irvin et al., 2004, p. 137). The evidence pointed to the importance of school-wide behavior support programs and the necessity of ODRs as effective measures of school climate.

Happiness, Helpfulness, and Hopefulness

Students who exhibit negative behaviors struggle academically, socially, and emotionally. In addition, these antisocial behaviors also negatively impact the students’ families, educators, and classmates. PBS “balances the needs of the individual with the needs of the broader system in which the individual participates” (Carr, 2007, p. 5). By providing students with support and designing interventions that address negative behaviors, students begin to develop prosocial behaviors that lead to increased personal happiness and an improved quality of life (Carr, 2007; Carr et al., 2002). Furthermore,

when students transform old behaviors, the lifestyle change for the students also affects their families, educators, and classmates. In this age of accountability, schools that implement PBS often gain the advantage of an increase in instructional time and overall improvements in academic performance (Simonsen, Sugai, & Negrón, 2008).

Schoolwide Approach

“Piecemeal attempts to nurture ethical development in youngsters are praiseworthy, but they will not be nearly as effective as a thorough and consistent schoolwide effort” (Starratt, 1994, p. 60). Additional research shows that staff members must be willing and able participants in the implementation of Positive Behavior Support (Carr, 2007; Carr et al., 2002; Wilkins et al., 2010). Since students in school communities are interdependent, significant behavioral change must occur within those social settings (Carr et al., 2002; Bottery, 1990). Positive Behavior Support requires that the environment be redesigned to promote wellness, positive social interactions, and peaceful interchanges between students (Carr, 2007). In addition to creating caring environments for learners, educators who build relationships with students are likely to see increases in civil behavior. Administrators and teachers who engage in conversations with students, or provide emotional support, are likely to see the school climate improve (Wilkins et al., 2010). Similarly, when rules are regularly taught and enforced, “the school [becomes] a more positive and nurturing environment” (Wilkins et al., 2010, p. 550). When educators are invested in creating a civil school environment, and involve themselves in the implementation of PBS, the program is more likely to succeed.

Theoretical Framework

“Protradition educators recognize that American schools and colleges are important components of our country’s elaborate, pervasive, and powerful system of teaching morality. Indeed, without the support of our schools, the system cannot meet its essential ends” (Wynne & Ryan, 1993, p. 36). In Chapter I, I provided a brief synopsis of the theoretical framework that supports character education in schools. In the following paragraphs, I revisit Kohlberg’s theory and its impact on character education. In addition, I define the applied behavior analysis framework as it relates to Positive Behavior Support. Finally, I connect the two frameworks and show that PBS is an essential character education program for schools.

For Kohlberg, children are active participants in social environments and their actions are guided by moral and social judgments. Kohlberg’s stages of moral reasoning “begin in the preschool years and may still be developing during adulthood” (Lickona, 1994, p. 11). During the elementary years, children advance through the stages of moral development and eventually learn that their behavior impacts others. In fact, “the ability to take the role of another person is a social skill that develops gradually from about the age of six and proves to be a turning point in the development of moral judgment” (Reimer, Paolito, & Hersh, 1990, p. 49). Since there is no more social environment for most children than school, Kohlberg’s theory is central to elementary education.

In elementary schools, where classrooms are mini-communities, individual teachers often work to ensure respectful classroom environments where students are expected to adhere to classroom norms. However, “schools as well as classrooms have moral atmospheres, and although it is much harder to change whole schools, some

problems can be dealt with only on a school-wide level” (Reimer, Paolito, & Hersh, 1990, p. 236). In order to address the entire school community, Kohlberg designed the “just-community.” This approach to moral education “focuses on promoting individual development through building a group-based moral atmosphere” (Reimer, Paolito, & Hersh, 1990, p. 237). In his examination of Kohlberg’s community, philosopher and moral educator R.S. Peters argued, “There is no way of initiating youth into conventional morality without introducing specific rules, norms, or values that they may adopt as the content of their moral code” (Peters, as cited in Reimer, Paolito, & Hersh, 1990, p. 249). Kohlberg responded to the critique by introducing “the power of the collective—the moral authority of the group—to provide a support system for adolescents to act on their higher-stage modes of reasoning” (Reimer, Paolito, & Hersh, 1990, p. 251). Kohlberg’s attention to the community and its impact on individual students is remarkably similar to PBS.

Positive Behavior Support, “an applied science that uses educational methods to expand an individual’s behavior repertoire and systems change methods to redesign an individual’s ... environment” (Carr et al., 2002, p. 4) has roots in applied behavior analysis, the inclusion movement, and person-centered values. Like Kohlberg’s just-community, the overarching goal of PBS is to help individual children adjust their behaviors so that their quality of life, and the lives of those around them, improves.

Applied behavior analysis, a psychological system that examines the role of an individual’s environment in behavior modification, has made two critical contributions to PBS: “one element of a conceptual framework relevant to behavior change . . . and

equally important . . . a number of assessment and intervention strategies” (Carr et al., 2002, p. 5). The concept of stimulus-response-reinforcing consequence is critical to the PBS program; the strategy “is an experimental method for determining the motivation (purpose) of a variety of socially significant behaviors, thereby facilitating intervention planning designed to change behavior in a desirable direction” (Carr et al., 2002, p. 5). On a classroom level, PBS provides teachers with tools, such as common rules and incentives, which promote prosocial behavior in students. On a school-wide level, PBS is a program that demands educators collect data on student behavior, analyze the data to discover trends, and develop action plans to address the problems.

In addition to applied behavior analysis, PBS also grew out of the inclusion movement. Beginning in the early 1960s, there has been an increasing effort to include students of all abilities in the general education setting, including students with social, emotional, and behavioral disabilities. Positive Behavior Support affords educators the opportunity to address serious behavioral issues within traditional schools, “as opposed to segregated, special education facilities and, most significantly, changing systems so that specialized school support becomes fully integrated and coordinated with the general education program in neighborhood schools” (Carr et al., 2002, p. 5). In the era of fewer self-contained special education classrooms, general educators whose classrooms have become inclusive settings, need management strategies like those defined in PBS.

Finally, PBS is person-centered and seeks to empower individuals with disabilities and “invariably leads to a focus on the issue of self-determination” (Carr

et al., 2002, p. 6). Self-determination includes self-management, decision-making, problem solving, and goal setting. The person-centered approach “focuses on meeting a person’s need in critical life ... areas such as family ... [and] educational/vocational [domains]....The guiding hypothesis is that if an individual’s needs are met, then quality of life will improve and problem behavior will be reduced or eliminated altogether” (Carr et al., 2002, p. 6). This hypothesis is also one of the defining characteristics of Positive Behavior Support, “a proactive, systems-level approach that enables schools to effectively and efficiently support student behavior” (Simonsen, Sugai, & Negrón, 2008, p. 33).

Contemporary research studies, long-established writings on the purpose of schooling, articles from the *Journal of Positive Behavior Interventions*, a publication launched in the new millennium, and other renowned journals, provided an incredible amount of literature for this study. In addition to brief descriptions of recent studies, the research review contained a historical overview of character education in schools, the influence and impact of character education on present-day social problems, teacher training, and the importance of community involvement. The recent profusion of work related to Positive Behavior Support and the program’s effects on students and schools also added depth to the research review. The section on PBS described the three levels of behavioral interventions, the implementation of a program at the school level, and the potential impact of the character education program. Finally, I revisited the theoretical frameworks for character education and behavior modification.

The universal theme in the literature is that character education remains a top priority for schools. The What Works Clearinghouse review of character education programs promotes “systemwide or schoolwide behavior codes and discipline policies that focus on promoting core values in character education” and “school policies that require moral leadership from school administrators, staff and students” (http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/pdf/reference_resources/CharEd_protocol.pdf). Positive Behavior Support meets these criteria as a program promoting prosocial behavior in schools.

CHAPTER III

Design and Methodology

Positive Behavior Support (PBS) is touted as “a proactive, systems-level approach that enables schools to effectively and efficiently support student behavior (Simonsen, Sugai, & Negron, 2008, p. 33). The purpose of this study is to investigate the influence of PBS on student behavior before and after the program’s implementation in 2008-2009 in grades two through five of Rooney Elementary School. In the study, student behavior is measured by office discipline referrals and suspensions.

Production Function Theory

“For some time now economists have conceptualized learning as a production process. Most educational production functions specify only one output – usually a measure of cognitive achievement” (Chizmar & Zak, 1983, p. 18). However, it is essential that educators and researchers “recognize the multidimensional aspects of schooling, specifying outputs in both the cognitive and affective domains” (Chizmar & Zak, 1983, p. 18). According to Hanushek (2007), a simple production model lies behind much of the analysis in the economics of education” (p. 1). In my research, the input is the intervention model Positive Behavior Support, and the outcome is prosocial student behavior. Figure 1 is a visual representation of the production function model.

Intervention Model (Independent Variable)

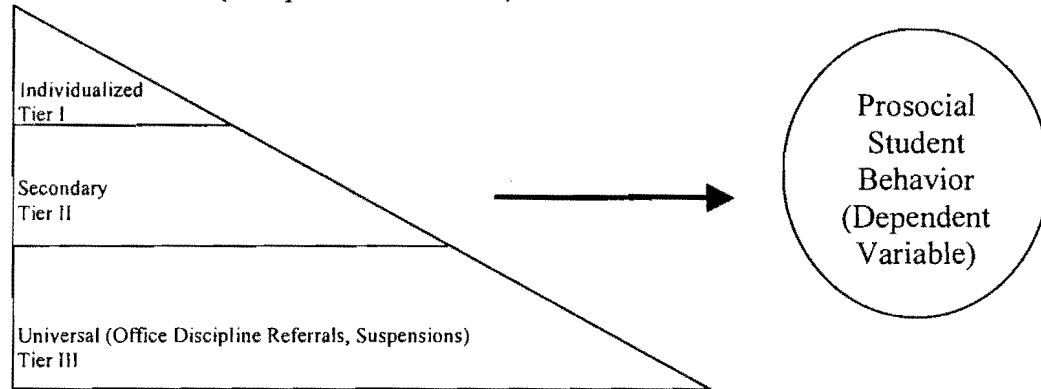


Figure 1. Positive Behavioral Construct.

Research Design

According to Johnson (2001), “The strongest designs for studying cause and effect are the various randomized experiments. [However,] the fact remains that educational researchers are often faced with the situation in which neither a randomized experiment nor a quasi-experiment (with a manipulated independent variable) is feasible” (p. 3). This is the case with my research. Since I was unable to conduct either a randomized experiment or a quasi-experiment, I used a non-experimental, explanatory, cross-sectional design to carry out the study. Despite lacking a control group and manipulated independent variable, “nonexperimental research is frequently an important and appropriate mode of research in education” (Johnson, 2001, p. 3). In addition to being appropriate for the field of education, this design is also easy to classify and defensible (Johnson, 2001). Since I described PBS and its influence on student behavior before and after the implementation of the character education program, the design is both descriptive and cross-sectional.

Qualitatively, there is a great deal of research on character education and PBS. However, character education, and its influence on office discipline referrals and suspensions at the second through fifth grade levels, lacks quantitative empirical research necessary to explain the effects of its programs. In the era of school violence and diminished moral expectations, school districts across the country are struggling to improve school climates. According to many researchers, character education positively influences both students’ quality of life and academic achievement (Muscott, Mann, & LeBrun, 2008; Carr, 2007; Utley, Kozleski, Smith, & Draper, 2002).

Methods

I used quantitative methods to explain the influence of PBS on student behavior at Rooney Elementary School. A historical comparison control group established empirical evidence to document the difference between student behavior before and after the implementation of Positive Behavior Support in grades two through five of an urban elementary school. I gathered the office discipline referrals and suspension records, and then compared the data from the school years 2007-2008 and 2008-2009, before and after the implementation of PBS.

In order to compare the data, I assigned nominal codes to each behavior, “the single property of nominal measurement is classification—that is, sorting observations into different classes or categories” (Witte & Witte, 2010, p. 11). I assigned Category 1 to students who received office discipline referrals, Category 2 to any student who was suspended, and Category 3 to students who neither received ODRs nor were suspended.

According to Key (1997), “Nonparametric statistical procedures test hypotheses that do not require normal distribution or variance assumptions about the populations from which the samples were drawn and are designed for ordinal or nominal data” (p. 1). Since my data are nominal, and therefore nonparametric, I chose to use Chi Square (χ^2) as the method of analysis. Although nonparametric tests are generally considered weaker than parametric tests, there is an advantage to using Chi Square; “nonparametric procedures ... can be used to treat data which have been measured on nominal (classificatory) scales. Such data cannot, on any logical basis, be ordered numerically; hence, there is no possibility of using parametric statistical tests which require numerical

data” (Key, 1997, p. 1). In order to protect student confidentiality, the data I collected is nominal and cannot be ordered numerically.

This research seeks to find the difference, if any, between the mean behavior referrals for a group of students who did not experience the PBS character education program in grades two, three, and four during the 2007-2008 school year compared to the mean behavior referrals for the same group of students in grades three, four, and five after the implementation of Positive Behavior Support during the 2008-2009 school year. “Chi-square provides a quantitative measure of the relationship between two categorical variables, first, by determining what the distribution of observations (frequencies) would be like if no relationship existed and, second, by quantifying the extent to which the observed distribution differs from that determined in the first step” (Berman, 2007, p. 147). In 2007-2008, the students had not yet been exposed to the character education program; therefore, the behavior would not have been impacted by PBS. Contrarily, in the next school year, 2008-2009, the PBS program began in earnest, and student behavior may have been affected. Chi-square will determine if Positive Behavior Support impacted the relationship between the student behavior variables – office discipline referrals, suspensions, and no behavior.

Kay (1997) explains, “the Chi Square (X^2) test is undoubtedly the most important and most used member of the nonparametric family of statistical tests. Chi Square is employed to test the difference between an actual sample and another hypothetical or previously established distribution such as that which may be expected due to chance or probability” (p. 1). Because I am comparing two samples of students, one group that did

not experience PBS, and one that did, chi-square is the most appropriate statistical method for this research.

Setting

Starway, New Jersey, an industrial city that is home to Merck Pharmaceuticals and the State Prison, is located in the center of the Garden State. At one time, Starway's population was racially segregated; Whites lived in Victorian homes in the verdant western half of town, while minorities, largely African-Americans, inhabited apartment buildings in the eastern half. In the 1970s, Starway ended racial segregation in schools through a busing program that integrated its schools. With the recent arrival of Mexican-Americans and the number of African-American residents remaining constant, the population is predominately a minority one. Industry in Starway provides opportunity for blue-collar labor, and the recently arrived can find work at the factories. The public school population city-wide reflects the ethnic and economic diversity of Starway.

In 1975, the New Jersey Department of Education (NJDOE) established the District Factor Grouping (DFG) System. The DFG is a letter code, ranging from A to J, which ranks the socioeconomic status (SES) of each school district in the state. The Garden State's "J" districts are highest in poverty, the most densely populated, and have the highest rate of unemployment. On the other end of the spectrum are the "A" districts, characterized by wealth and the prevalence of advanced degrees (New Jersey Department of Education (NJDOE), 2011). The system was developed by the NJDOE "for its own use in the reporting of test scores. ... Comparisons are made between districts of like SES, rather than on a geographic basis" (NJDOE, 2011). According to the NJDOE,

Starway is a 'CD' DFG because it is an urban area with approximately 60% of the student population qualifying for free- or reduced-lunch.

Rooney School, the most populous public elementary school in Starway, educates approximately 650 students from pre-kindergarten through grade five. Its students represent varied racial and socioeconomic backgrounds, making Rooney the most diverse school in the industrial city; minority learners comprise almost 80% of the student body. In addition to being the largest elementary school in Starway, Rooney is also home to the self-contained special education classrooms; students with special needs are bused to the school. In 2007-2008, 15.6% of the student population of Starway had Individual Education Plans (IEPs). The student population at Rooney is transient, with mobility rates at nearly double the state's average. During the 2007-2008 school year, 26.9% of students entered and left Rooney before the end of the school year in June. Student mobility is reflected in Rooney's standardized test scores; in 2008-2009, Rooney failed to make adequate yearly progress as mandated by President George W. Bush in *No Child Left Behind*. (State of New Jersey Department of Education, 2010).

Sample

In this research study, the historical comparison control group consisted of any student in grades two, three, or four, or grades three, four, or five who received an Office Discipline Referral (ODR) or was suspended during the 2007-2008 or 2008-2009 school year, respectively. In 2007-2008, there were 309 students, 145 female and 164 male, in grades two, three, and four. The students comprised four ethnic groups—165 African-American, 71 Hispanic, 67 Caucasian, and 6 Asian. 91 of the students were classified as

Special Education and had Individualized Education Plans, and 14 students were identified as Limited English Proficient. In the following year, 2008-2009, there were 299 students, 143 female and 156 male, in grades three, four, and five. The students comprised four ethnic groups—160 African-American, 71 Hispanic, 62 Caucasian, and 6 Asian. That year, 62 of the students were classified as Special Education and had Individualized Education Plans, and 15 students were identified as Limited English Proficient. During both school years, 267 students, 58% of whom qualified for free- or reduced-lunch, attended Rooney Elementary School; those students provided the ODR and suspension data for this study. For a demographic breakdown of the 267 students who attended Rooney for both years, see Table 1.

Table 1

Demographics of Rooney Student Sample 2007-2009

Students 2007-2009	Female	Male	African-American	Hispanic	White	Asian	Free/ Reduced Lunch
	125	142	141	62	59	5	155
Percentages	46.8%	53.2%	52.8%	23.2%	22.1%	1.9%	58%

As previously mentioned, Starway has a transient student population. During the 2007-2008 school year, there were 309 students enrolled in grades two, three, and four. Of those students, 42 students left Rooney School. During the 2008-2009 school year, there were 299 students enrolled in grades three, four, and five; 32 students transferred into Rooney School. Because I needed data from both before and during the implementation of PBS, transient students are not counted in the sample. For numbers of

transient students, and the percentage of mobility during the two years of the study, see Table 2.

Table 2

Rooney Mobility Rates for 2007-2008 and 2008-2009

	2007-2008	2008-2009
Number of Transient Students	42	32
Percentages of Transient Students	13.59%	10.7%

Measures of Behavior

According to Howard Muscott, Eric Mann, and Marcel LeBrun (2008), an office discipline referral is a valid, useful, practical, and efficient measure used to document a school's behavioral climate and the effects of the PBS program (p. 190). The ODRs are instruments, completed by school staff members that describe the nature of students' disciplinary infractions. The ODRs are collected and analyzed to find trends, such as locations where students exhibit antisocial behavior or those teachers whose students have high incidences of referrals. In addition to using the data to analyze student behavior, the PBS team can also use the information to make decisions about PBS implementation, celebrate good student behavior, and share PBS success with the community (Utley, Kozleski, Smith, & Draper, 2002). While the ODRs are valid measures of student behavior infractions, "the number of players involved in the ODR process and the potential complexity of interactions among them can be problematic for ensuring consistent outcomes ... each referring teacher ... brings some degree of

idiosyncratic behavioral/cultural standards, management skills/lack of skills, prejudices, expectations, and motivations to any disciplinary event” (Muscott, Mann, & LeBrun, 2008, p. 202); therefore, ODRs may skew reliability. While teacher discretion poses a limitation, I have attempted to control for it by using ODRs only from teachers who were part of the initial PBS training at Rooney School.

At the elementary level, suspensions occur less frequently than at the middle and upper levels of school (Muscott, Mann, & LeBrun, 2008). However, for some disciplinary infractions like physical fighting or willful disobedience, elementary-aged students can be suspended from school. Suspension data measure the number of students suspended from school for one day or more. It is a valid measure; however, suspensions are subject to the same reliability questions as ODRs. Unlike ODRs, administrators, not teachers, make the decision to suspend students; decisions made by administrators may be affected by idiosyncratic behavior. Still, the use of the ODR lends itself to the improved reliability of the suspension process since ODRs provide administrators with historical student behavior data that assist the school leaders in making decisions about keeping students home from school.

Reliability

“Reliability means dependability or trustworthiness ... [and] is the degree to which a test consistently measures whatever it is measuring” (Gay, Mills, & Airasian, 2009, p. 158). In my research, measurements were based, not on a test, but on office discipline referrals, suspensions, and the absence of negative behavior.

An office discipline referral is “a valid, useful, practical, and efficient measure to document a school’s behavioral climate and the effects of the PBS program” (Muscott, Mann, & LeBrun, 2008). As previously noted, there is some concern about inter-rater reliability in my research. At Rooney School, individual teachers complete the ODRs, and these educators may have different thresholds for tolerance of negative student behavior. I attempted to account for this idiosyncratic behavior by using ODRs only from teachers who were part of the initial PBS training at Rooney.

A suspension is a school administrator’s decision to deny a student entry to school for any number of days based on the student’s infraction. “Suspension, a common response to school misconduct, limits students’ opportunities to learn” (Gottfredson, Gottfredson, & Hybl, 1993, p. 180). Unlike ODRs, which may be impacted by inter-rater reliability, suspensions occur at the discretion of the administrator. At Rooney School, one administrator handles suspensions. While negating inter-rater reliability, suspensions may be impacted by intra-rater reliability, which “refers to the consistency of one individual’s scoring, rating, or observing over time” (Gay, Mills, & Airasian, 2009, p. 161). During the two years I conducted my research, the same administrator, a seven-year veteran of Rooney and the Starway Public School system, handled the suspensions. She was also part of the initial launch of the PBS system at Rooney. Her tenure and familiarity with the PBS program address the reliability concern.

One hallmark of Positive Behavior Support is its attention to common rules across all classrooms. At Rooney, students are well versed in school-wide rules. Since the inception of the PBS program at Rooney, the school year begins with an assembly where

students learn about behavioral expectations. Posters outlining rules for various areas adorn the walls of the cafeteria, auditorium, and hallways. In addition, students who follow school rules are celebrated at the conclusion of each week; the students who exhibit prosocial behavior are rewarded with recognition, lunch with the principal, and various other motivators. The common expectations and school-community aspect also enhance reliability of the research.

Validity

“Validity refers to the degree to which a test measures what it is supposed to measure and, consequently, permits appropriate interpretation of scores” (Gay, Mills, & Airasian, 2009, p. 154). A research study is valid only if the results are due to a manipulation of the independent variable and if the results are generalizable to a larger population. In this study, I have attempted to address threats to both external and internal validity.

External Validity

According to Johnson and Christensen (2000), external validity is “the extent to which the results of a study can be generalized to and across populations, settings, and times” (p. 200). The lack of random sampling present in this study, and in most educational research, limits generalizability; “all empirical research in the field of education are subject to considerable error” (Onwuegbuzie, 2003, p. 72).

Ecological Validity

At Rooney School, 267 students provided the ODR and suspension data for this research. These students attended second, third, and fourth grades during the 2007-2008 school year and were promoted to the third, fourth, and fifth grades during the 2008-2009 school year. The same sample of students was used for both years of the study. The small sample size created both ecological validity concerns and limited generalizations to other populations.

However, “PBS is not intended to be a laboratory-based demonstration or analog but, rather, a strategy for dealing with quality-of-life issues in natural community contexts. Although there is a continuing emphasis on issues related to internal validity, the main focus of the PBS approach concerns how applicable the science is to real-life settings, in other words, its ecological validity” (Carret al., 2002, p. 7). While I was unable to conduct an experiment, my research took place in a real-life setting, Rooney School. The “emphasis on normalization and inclusion in natural community contexts” (Carret al., 2002, p. 7) makes this research ecologically valid. Furthermore, both the theoretical frameworks and prior research support the results of the data analysis.

Temporal Validity

Temporal validity refers to the ability to generalize the results of a study across time (Gay, Mills, & Airasian, 2009). Any threats to temporal validity of my study were reduced by the stability of several factors. The sample of 267 students remained constant during the two years of the study. Student mobility was accounted for by eliminating transient students from the sample; the 267 students involved in the study attended

Rooney during both school years. In addition, the teachers and administrators involved in the study were stable. The educators involved in the study were part of the initial PBS training. Furthermore, no major curricular changes took place during this time; classroom teachers were able to focus on implementation of PBS. Although it is impossible to account for all threats to temporal validity, I am confident that the major threats are reduced.

Internal Validity

According to Gay, Mills, and Airasian (2009), “Internal validity is the degree to which observed differences on the dependent variable are a direct result of the manipulation of the independent variable” (p. 242). Again, the small sample size of 267 students posed a threat to the internal validity of this research. In addition to limiting generalizability to a national sample, the small sample size may have impacted statistical significance. However, all of the expected frequencies in this study are greater than five, which adds to internal validity since chi-square is only appropriate when the minimum expected frequency is five or more.

In addition, the non-experimental design limited my ability to determine whether PBS impacted ODRs or suspensions; however, the solid literature base, prior experimental research, and theoretical frameworks, all supporting PBS and its positive impact on student behavior, increased the validity of my research.

Maturation Validity

During the two-year time period of this study, all 267 students advanced to the next grade level. Therefore, there is a potential maturation threat to internal validity. “Maturation refers to physical, intellectual, and emotional changes that naturally occur within individuals over a period of time” (Gay, Mills, & Airasian, 2009, p. 243). The youngest students in the study were seven; threats to validity due to maturation are typically found in studies involving toddlers since “young participants typically undergo rapid biological changes, raising the question of whether changes on the dependent variable are due to the training program or to maturation” (Gay, Mills, & Airasian, 2009, p. 244). The students in this study were six, seven, eight, and nine years old; these students are in the preconventional stage of moral development and approach moral issues “from the perspective of the concrete interests of the individuals involved” (Reimer, Paolitto, & Hersh, 1983, p. 63). Children at the preconventional stage tend to obey those in positions of power and remain in the stage until about the age of thirteen. Although students who mature may see an increase in behavior infractions due to age, students who mature may see a decrease in behavior infraction due to cognitive and social growth. The hypothetical increases and decreases in antisocial behavior would be observed in both groups since the all of the student data was collected during the same time period. In addition, threats related to maturation are reduced since the study took place during a relatively short period of time.

Social Validity

“Social validity was first described by Wolf in 1978 as the value society places on a product. To legitimately analyze a program, Wolf proposed that society must evaluate its effectiveness based on goals, procedures, and outcomes. This information could then be used to tailor the program to better meet the needs of the customer” (Miramontes, Marchant, Heath, & Fischer, 2011, p. 446). A qualitative study out of Brigham Young University used a convenience sample to gather perceptions of administrators, teachers, and related service providers regarding the social validity of PBS. The researchers opined that it is crucial that researchers assess the social validity of programs prior to school-wide implementation.

According to Miramontes, Marchant, Heath, and Fischer (2011), “Improving a program’s viability begins by considering the dynamics between research and practice, which in the case of social validity includes a disconnect between published research and applied research as it is carried out in the field” (p. 446); it is essential that those most directly involved in the implementation of research-based programs gather information about implementation challenges. In Starway, Rooney School administration and staff were not involved in the district’s adoption of the PBS model. However, the educators were involved in the program’s implementation, which lends itself to the validity of my research.

Data Collection

The historical quantitative data exist as hardcopy ODRs located at Rooney Elementary School and suspension records located on the PowerSchool database

maintained by Starway Public Schools. I analyzed the ODRs for grade levels of referred students and trends in behavior. I also analyzed the number and types of suspensions for the 2007-2008 and 2008-2009 school years. The data analysis occurred during the 2010-2011 school year. As a practicing administrator in a different Starway elementary school, I had access to Rooney's ODRs and database; data collection was uncomplicated. Furthermore, the suspension records are also public records; each principal must report the statistics in his or her monthly report to the superintendent. The principal's reports are read and approved at monthly Board of Education meetings that are open to the public.

Data Analysis

Researchers use statistics to organize data and make generalizations about populations larger than their samples; statistics help people make interpretations and put things in perspective (Witte & Witte, 2010). Descriptive statistics provide researchers with tools allowing them to collect, organize, and describe data while "inferential statistics are tools that tell us how much confidence [researchers] can have when generalizing from a sample to a population" (Pyrzczak, 2010, p. 21). For my research, I relied on both descriptive statistics and inferential statistics to determine the difference, if any, between the frequency of behavior categories for a group of students who did not experience the PBS character education program in grades two, three, and four during the 2007-2008 school year compared to the frequency of behavior categories for the same group of students in grades three, four, and five after the implementation of Positive Behavior Support during the 2008-2009 school year.

The descriptive analysis is an attempt to organize and summarize the ODR and suspension data. The analysis includes a description of the gender, race, and educational status of the sampled students. In addition, a frequency distribution “organizes observations according to their frequency of occurrence” (Witte & Witte, 2010, p. 50). A simple table illustrates how often students received an ODR or were suspended from school.

The inferential analysis relies on a chi-square (X^2) test which “evaluates whether observed frequencies ... are adequately described by hypothesized or expected frequencies” (Witte & Witte, 2010, p. 424). In this study, the chi-square is a good choice because the anonymous data, because of student confidentiality, can be categorized. The sampled students are grouped into three distinct categories; the number one is assigned to students who received an ODR, the number two is assigned to students who were suspended, and the number three is assigned to students who exhibited neither behavior. “In such analyses, [the researcher compares] observed frequencies of occurrence with theoretical or expected frequencies. Observed frequencies are those that the researcher obtains empirically through direct observation; theoretical or expected frequencies are developed on the basis of some hypothesis” (Hinkle, Wiersma, & Jurs, 2003, p. 547). For this research, I collected data during the 2007-2008 school year, before the implementation of PBS; these are the observed frequencies. Then, I collected data again during the 2008-2009 school year, after the implementation of PBS; these are the expected frequencies.

The data for chi-square must meet certain assumptions. In behavioral research, the data often are nonparametric; “nonparametric tests can be used when the parametric assumptions of normality and homogeneity of variance are not met” (Hinkle, Wiersma, & Jurs, 2003, p. 546). The nominal data in my research have categorical values expressed as frequencies; therefore, the data meet the criteria for a nonparametric test. In addition, each of the expected frequency values in this data analysis is greater than five, a prerequisite for chi-square.

There are several advantages to using this statistical technique. According to Kay (1997), nonparametric tests are generally simple to compute. In addition, “nonparametric tests can be used to treat data which have been measured on nominal (classificatory) scales. Such data cannot, on any logical basis, be ordered numerically, hence there is no possibility of using parametric statistical tests which require numerical data” (p. 1).

While an appropriate choice for this research, the chi-square is not without limitations. “Nonparametric tests ... are less powerful than parametric tests. They are less likely to reject the null hypothesis when it is false. When the assumptions of parametric tests can be met, parametric tests should be used because they are the most powerful tests available” (Kay, 1997, p. 1). Again, the data used for my research is categorical and does not meet the assumptions of parametric tests; chi-square is the best statistical analysis for this study.

There are several parameters for interpreting the data generated from the chi-square analysis. “When no relationship exists between the variables, chi-square equals zero. The greater the relationship, the greater the value of chi-square. ... Chi-square is

always positive and ... it provides no information about the direction of the relationship” (Berman, 2007, p. 148). In addition, “the X^2 value does not indicate where the statistical significance lies; this is determined by computing the standardized residuals” (Hinkle, Wiersma, & Jurs, 2003, p. 553). The reader is referred to Chapter IV for an analysis of the data.

While not the most statistically rigorous study, my work is helpful to practicing administrators. The descriptive statistics explain the frequency of office discipline referrals and suspensions, while the chi-square reveals the frequency of behaviors. By reading this work and focusing on the statistical analysis of Positive Behavior Support, school administrators can make informed decisions about the potential implementation of PBS in their own schools.

CHAPTER IV

Results

The purpose of this chapter is to present research findings. I attempted to determine what the difference is, if any, between the mean behavior referrals for a group of students who did not experience the PBS character education program in grades two, three, and four during the 2007-2008 school year compared to the mean behavior referrals for the same group of students in grades three, four, and five after the implementation of Positive Behavior Support during the 2008-2009 school year at Rooney Elementary School.

In this investigation, the total number of participants was 267 students. In 2007-2008, these students attended grades two, three, and four; the record of students' office discipline referrals, suspensions, and the absence of any infractions provides the data for the study. The record of students' behavior during the following year, when the students attended grades three, four, and five also provides ODR and suspension data for the study.

In the year before Rooney's implementation of Positive Behavior Support, 198 or 74.2% of students received an office discipline referral (Category 1), 44 or 16.5% of students were suspended (Category 2), and 25 or 9.4% of students did not receive either an ODR or suspension (Category 3). See Table 3 for the behavior frequency table for the 2007-2008 school year and Figure 2 for the histogram of the behavior categories for the 2007-2008 school year.

Table 3

Frequency of Behaviors at Rooney School (2007-2008)

BEHCAT1=ODR2=SUP3=NO

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1.00	198	36.3	74.2	74.2
	2.00	44	8.1	16.5	90.6
	3.00	25	4.6	9.4	100.0
	Total	267	48.9	100.0	
Missing	System	279	51.1		
Total		546	100.0		

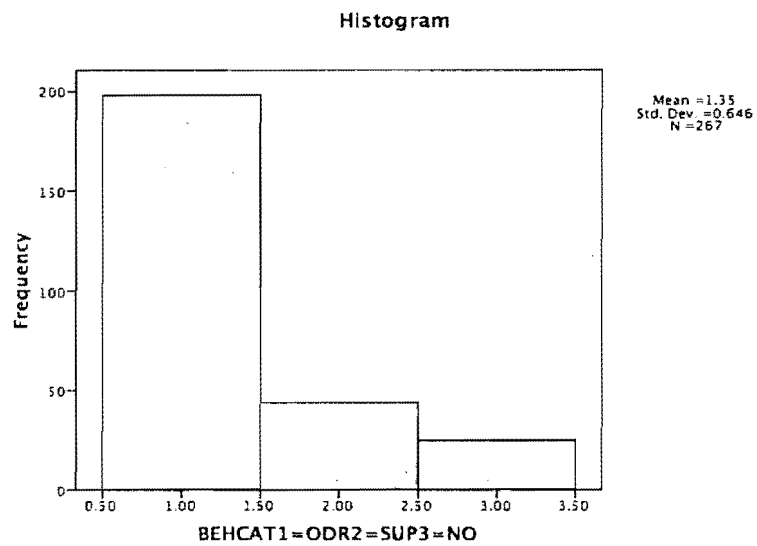


Figure 2. Histogram of Behaviors at Rooney School (2007-2008).

During the 2008-2009 school year, Rooney began implementing Positive Behavior Support. That year, 182 or 68.2% of students received an office discipline referral (Category 1), 30 or 11.2% of students were suspended (Category 2), and 55 or 20.6% of students did not receive either an ODR or suspension (Category 3). See Table 4 for the behavior frequency table for the 2008-2009 school year and Figure 3 for the histogram of the behavior categories for the 2008-2009 school year.

Table 4

Frequency of Behaviors at Rooney School (2008-2009)

BEHCAT1=ODR2=SUP3=NO

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1.00	182	33.3	68.2	68.2
	2.00	30	5.5	11.2	79.4
	3.00	55	10.1	20.6	100.0
	Total	267	48.9	100.0	
Missing	System	279	51.1		
	Total	546	100.0		

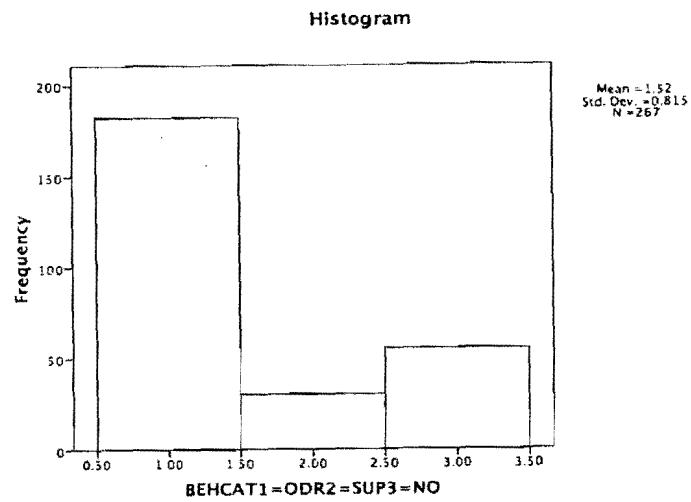


Figure 3. Histogram of Behaviors at Rooney School (2008-2009)

The descriptive statistics show that there is a difference in the frequency of incidents; however, these statistics do not provide enough information to determine if the character education program Positive Behavior Support affected the students' behavior. In order to determine if there was a difference between the mean behavior referrals for a group of students who did not experience the PBS character education program compared to the mean behavior referrals for the same group of students after the implementation of Positive Behavior Support, and to generalize from my small sample to the general population, I had to use inferential statistics. Because numbers categorize the variables in this work, I used chi-square (χ^2), "the statistical procedure of choice when ... variables are categorical" (Slate & LeBouef, 2011, p. 10).

The data for the two years show that Positive Behavior Support is making a difference, albeit a small one, in the students' behavior; the result was statistically significant, $\chi^2 = 14.572, p < .001$. See Tables 5, 6, and 7 for the chi-square statistical outputs. In the chi-square analysis, the greater the residual, the greater likelihood there is an impact. "When the data indicate that no relationship exists, between these variables, the values of observed and expected frequencies must be identical. Also, the greater the relationship, the greater the difference between the observed and expected frequencies" (Berman, 2007, p. 148). An adjusted residual greater than 2.0 indicates that there is an impact. Category 1 has a standard residual of 0.6 and adjusted residual of 1.5. Category 2 has a standard residual of 1.2 and adjusted residual of 1.8. While Category 2 comes close, it does not meet the threshold. Category 3 has a standard residual of -2.4, adjusted residual of -3.6. Since the residual is greater than 2, or more than two standard deviations

from the mean, this chi-square analysis reveals that the third category, no infractions, or absence of an ODR or suspension, is strong.

The Eta, effect size, shows the number of standard deviations above or below the mean. In this case, the effect size is small – $\eta = 0.117$. Still, this effect size is comparable to moving from the 50th percentile to the 54th percentile, which indicates that Positive Behavior Support is having a positive effect on student behavior, since fewer students had office discipline referrals or suspensions during the 2008-2009 school year, the first year of PBS implementation.

Table 5

Crosstabulation of Behavior Categories 1-3

BEHCAT1=ODR2=SUP3=NO * GROUP1=2007 Crosstabulation				
		GROUP1=2007		Total
		1.00	2.00	
BEHCAT1=ODR2=S UP3=NO	1.00 Count	198	182	380
	Expected Count	190.0	190.0	380.0
	% within BEHCAT1=ODR2=SUP3=NO	52.1%	47.9%	100.0%
	% within GROUP1=2007	74.2%	68.2%	71.2%
	% of Total	37.1%	34.1%	71.2%
	Std. Residual	.6	-.6	
	Adjusted Residual	1.5	-1.5	
2.00	Count	44	30	74
	Expected Count	37.0	37.0	74.0
	% within BEHCAT1=ODR2=SUP3=NO	59.5%	40.5%	100.0%
	% within GROUP1=2007	16.5%	11.2%	13.9%
	% of Total	8.2%	5.6%	13.9%
	Std. Residual	1.2	-1.2	
	Adjusted Residual	1.8	-1.8	
3.00	Count	25	55	80
	Expected Count	40.0	40.0	80.0
	% within BEHCAT1=ODR2=SUP3=NO	31.3%	68.8%	100.0%
	% within GROUP1=2007	9.4%	20.6%	15.0%
	% of Total	4.7%	10.3%	15.0%
	Std. Residual	-2.4	2.4	
	Adjusted Residual	-3.6	3.6	
Total	Count	267	267	534
	Expected Count	267.0	267.0	534.0
	% within BEHCAT1=ODR2=SUP3=NO	50.0%	50.0%	100.0%
	% within GROUP1=2007	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
	% of Total	50.0%	50.0%	100.0%

Table 6

Chi-Square Table for Crosstabulation

Chi-Square Tests			
	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	14.572 ^a	2	.001
Likelihood Ratio	14.868	2	.001
Linear-by-Linear Association	7.246	1	.007
N of Valid Cases	534		

^a 0 cells (.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 37.00.

Table 7

Eta Table for Chi-Square Analysis

Directional Measures			Value
Nominal by Interval	Eta	BEHCAT1=ODR2=SUP3=NO Dependent	.117
		GROUP1=2007 Dependent	.165

The data reveal that the character education program Positive Behavior Support is having a statistically significant, positive impact on Category 3–No Infractions. While that finding is in line with the research base, it would be beneficial to continue this research in order to determine if the problem behaviors, Category 1–ODR, and Category 2–Suspension, will be reduced as Rooney School hones its implementation of Positive Behavior Support.

The results gleaned from this study have implications for practicing school administrators and for education policy. This study also provides a framework for future studies. Chapter V addresses the impacts of this research.

CHAPTER V

Summary of Findings, Conclusions, and Recommendations

The final chapter of the dissertation presents results of my research, implications for policy and practice, and recommendations for future studies.

Findings

According to the chi-square analysis, Positive Behavior Support is making a statistically significant impact on the prosocial student behavior at Rooney School. While unable to report statistically significant differences in either the number of ODRs or suspensions, the results from this research align with the research and literature base.

Gottfredson, Gottfredson, and Hybl (1993) state, "School orderliness is related to the presence of a clear focus on appropriate student behavior; clear expectations for behavior; much communication about rules, sanctions, and procedures to be used; formal discipline codes and classroom management plans; and expressed concern for students as individuals" (p. 182). Positive Behavior Support meets these criteria and provides a catalyst for schools striving to educate the whole child. My research findings are supported by the wealth of character education and Positive Behavior Support research addressed in the Literature Review.

In contemporary society, in addition to educational purposes, schools serve many social functions. Because so many students depend on the institution for moral development, schools must provide caring environments in which all students make efforts to understand and respect one another. The student-on-student physical and/or psychological abuse that is bullying must be recognized, addressed, and consequences

imposed. Only when this is done in a consistent way will schools be able to provide the caring environments necessary for learning. As a character education program, Positive Behavior Support provides consistency.

Research related to character education suggests that schools can be instrumental in developing good character in students (Tierno, 1996). Schools must prioritize character development and assist other formative social institutions, especially the family, to do their part in teaching the young the virtues they need “to make a good life and to build a good society” (Lickona, 1997, p. 64). Furthermore, character education pedagogy “will need to be built both upward from practice and downward from theory and research” (Leming, 1997b, p. 31). This research, an attempt to determine the effects of a character education program, is informed by both practice and theory.

Recommendations for Policy

An analysis of the data collected before and during the implementation of Positive Behavior Support reveals that the character education program made a statistically significant difference in student behavior. The statistically significant chi-square suggests that PBS has affected the number of students exhibiting prosocial behaviors; the number of students receiving office discipline referrals, Category 1, or suspensions, Category 2, has been reduced while the number of students having no infractions, Category 3, has increased. However, these results are unique to Rooney Elementary Schools in Starway; the lack of random sampling present in this study limits generalizability. Still, the literature review and study results may be helpful to practicing

administrators interested in implementing a character education program in their own schools, especially those schools in districts across the Garden State.

The recent adoption of New Jersey's Anti-Bullying Bill of Rights, "considered the toughest legislation against bullying in the nation" (Hu, 2011, p. A1), demands that schools adopt anti-bullying curricula, appoint specialists to address complaints of harassment, and adhere to rigid reporting timelines. The Anti-Bullying Bill of Rights, signed into law in August 2011, is an attempt to address bullying-behavior that has become so pervasive that one out of every four elementary students reports some form of verbal, mental, or physical abuse each month (www.bullyhelp.org). In order to combat this pervasive problem, schools must adopt comprehensive approaches to address these antisocial behaviors. Bullying, and other antisocial behaviors, could be reduced if schools adopted character education programs like Positive Behavior Support. According to character education proponent Noddings (1999), "social policy guided by caring would try to establish conditions in which caring can flourish" (p. 16). Noddings posits that caring cannot flourish in an environment where problems are not addressed.

In New Jersey, the anti-bullying law has had a major impact on school functioning. In addition to requiring schools to appoint additional staff members to complete the paperwork and investigations required by the law, "schools ... shall annually establish, implement, document, and assess bullying prevention programs or approaches" (Anti-Bullying Bill of Rights, 2011). Rather than relying on legislation to foster prosocial behaviors, schools would be wise to adopt a coordinated, systematic

character education program like PBS. As evidenced by my research, the program provides schools with strategies to advance and support positive student behavior.

In addition to helping schools create more positive cultures, Positive Behavior Support, with its roots in the inclusion movement, affords educators more options when including students with disabilities in traditional public school classrooms. “The principal of normalization rests, most critically, on the idea of social role valorization; namely, that the ultimate goal is to ensure that people who are being devalued are helped to assume valued social roles, thereby increasing the likelihood that they will be accorded respect from others and will receive an equitable share of existing resources” (Wolfensberger, as cited in Carr et al., 2002, p. 5). PBS provides students of all abilities, particularly students with special needs, with the skills and strategies necessary to exhibit prosocial behaviors.

In the era of austere school budgets, administrators are forced to reduce spending. One of the biggest line items in most district budgets is for out-of-district placements for students with emotional and/or behavioral disabilities. “Positive behavior includes all those skills that increase the likelihood of success and personal satisfaction in normative academic, work, social, recreational, community, and family settings” (Carr et al., 2002, p. 4). The inclusion movement requires that traditional neighborhood schools integrate the programs once unique to specialized schools. Positive Behavior Support, in addition to addressing behavioral needs of all students, can be a cost cutting measure for most districts.

Recommendations for Practice

When implemented correctly, Positive Behavior Support provides educators with copious data about student behavior. Using the data to build consensus and action plans “can help school staff members increase their capacity to support students with behavioral challenges in general education settings and improve the overall quality of the school climate” (Irvin et al., 2004, p. 142).

In addition, an analysis of office discipline referrals by administration may enhance the professional development of teachers. In order to help teachers hone management techniques, administrators and/or behavior specialists may consult with “teachers of individual students who display high rates of referrals to assist the teacher in developing a behavior plan ... [and] to consult with teachers who frequently refer large numbers of students, to help those instructors use proactive classroom management strategies” (Irvin et al., 2004, p. 142). In general, teachers who spend less time managing problem behavior spend more time instructing.

Office discipline referrals, one hallmark of the PBS program, have some validity concerns. “The number of players involved in the ODR process and the potential complexity of interactions among them can be problematic for ensuring consistent outcomes” (Irvin et al., 2004, p. 143). In addition, idiosyncratic behaviors of the teachers who complete the referrals may be problematic. In order to address these issues, it would be helpful for administrators and teachers to operationalize definitions of various behaviors. Having common definitions of what constitute antisocial behaviors would

help teachers complete ODR paperwork and could, potentially, decrease the idiosyncrasies that threaten the validity of the referrals.

In addition to addressing individual student behavior, PBS provides administrators with tools to build positive school culture. In order to respond to the challenging reality of bullying in American public schools and to provide a just environment for all students, administrators must adapt their organizations to the turbulent times by diagnosing the problem, then acting to address it (Heifetz, Grashow, & Linsky, 2009, p. 6). One way for educators to manage antisocial behavior is school-based interventions like Positive Behavior Support. “Leaders should adopt a proactive stance that ensures certain uniform behaviors occur in every school in every classroom” (Marzano & Waters, 2009, p. 13). PBS provides universal expectations and a common language for all members of the school community. Administrators must remember that “enlightened leadership is an awareness that all problems have opportunities and possibilities embedded within them” (Houston & Sokolow, 2006, p. 82). While antisocial behavior by students is a problem most administrators are likely to encounter, Positive Behavior Support is a possible solution that may improve the culture of the entire school.

Training teachers to become moral educators is critical to any character education initiative. As mentioned in Chapter II, existing literature points to “insufficient behavior management training for some teachers” (Tillery et al., 2010, p. 98). Administrators who strive for successful implementation of PBS must recognize that “successful implementation of these innovations requires system supports such as resources, training,

and policies that involve general education teachers” (Tillery, et al, 2010, p. 98). It is essential that administrators considering adopting PBS provide sufficient training before and support during the implementation of the character education program.

Administrators would be wise to consider partnering with other district schools also implementing PBS. School leaders can share “data obtained by identifying critical factors that support or hinder the implementation of schoolwide PBS” (Kincaid, Childs, Blase, & Wallace, 2007, p. 182). A log of successes and areas for improvement would provide a valuable guide for colleagues.

If and when an administrator decides to implement PBS, there are several challenges that the school’s teachers and the school’s leader are likely to encounter. “Insufficient time, difficulty using the behavior recording form, ... and, most significantly, not knowing what to do with all the data once collected” (Chitiyo & Wheeler, 2009, p. 59) are difficulties commonly cited by classroom teachers. According to Chitiyo and Wheeler (2009), “PBS training can be enhanced and made more efficient by incorporating these issues into training programs. If school teachers encounter this information in their training programs, they could become more prepared and competent to implement the procedures, which may be a proactive way of overcoming the difficulties” (p. 62).

Finally, implementing Positive Behavior Support could help administrators positively impact the organizational trust of their schools. According to Hoy and Tarter (2004), “The leader leads by example, and there may be no more important role than fair and just interactions with teachers, students, and parents; that is, to be a moral leader”

(p. 257). PBS, like organizational trust, demands that administrators be equitable in their dealings with members of the school community, work in tandem with teachers to implement school-based programs, and “help teachers to cultivate a sense of trust among themselves by trusting them to make autonomous decisions in the best interest of their students” (Hoy & Tarter, 2004, p. 258). Administrators who emphasize these principles are likely to have more effective, trustworthy organizations.

Recommendations for Future Research

As mentioned in Chapter III, this study, as is the case with most educational research, lacks random sampling and therefore limits generalizability. According to Onwuegbuzie (2003), “Providing information about the sources of invalidity allows the reader to place the researchers’ findings in their proper context” (p. 72). As a practicing administrator in a public school in New Jersey, this contextual research was helpful to me and to my colleagues. Fellow administrators and researchers are encouraged to replicate this study in their own schools since “replications are the essence of research” (Onwuegbuzie, 2003, p. 73). This study can serve as a template for replications.

In addition to having a small sample, this research has only a quantitative analysis of data. “The purpose of social validity is not to gather false praise for a proposed program, but to gather useful information about potential pitfalls, implementation barriers, and varying perceptions regarding the program’s potential impact” (Miramontes, Marchant, Heath, & Fischer, 2011, p. 446). Educators who are involved in the selection of various programs, and those who are invited to share their opinions and expertise, are more likely to support and implement the innovation. A future researcher should gather

perceptions of educators involved in the implementation of PBS; a qualitative study would add to the knowledge base of existing literature and would provide a handbook of sorts to other educators interested in implementing PBS.

“Disturbing changes in youth conduct have been accompanied by concurrent declines in measured pupil learning” (Wynne & Ryan, 1993, p. 13). Since there has been minimal research on the impact of PBS on students’ academic performance, a future study might examine the relationship between classroom management and student learning. Specifically, an experimental design would add to the research base since “evaluation studies examining [PBS] that used research quality measures, but did not employ experimental designs document both implementation of the core feature by typical school personnel, and either improved academic performance, or reductions in office discipline referrals”
(www.pbis.org/common/pbisresources/.../evidencebaseswpbs08_04_08.doc).

Morality, virtue, and character are a part of every aspect of education, from Plato’s *Republic* to the recent educational reforms that have grown out of a response to the disintegration of the American society. Research suggests that the time to implement character education as an essential element of every school’s curriculum has come. The structure of the American family has changed and society has changed as a result. Violence has increased in schools. Acts of bullying are pervasive. The implementation of a character education program would enable students to make informed, rational decisions. “The sustainable power of one’s country depends on the human, social, political or spiritual aspects rather than economic success”

(<http://www.edpsycinteractive.org/topics/morchr/morchr.html>). A character education program like Positive Behavior Support will help students become better students and become better citizens. Society can only benefit from the rewards of character education.

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ROONEY ELEMENTARY SCHOOL OFFICE DISCIPLINE REFERRAL

Student Name: _____				Location ___ Classroom # ___ ___ Auditorium ___ Playground ___ Cafeteria ___ Art ___ Gym ___ Lab ___ Library ___ Bathroom(_____) ___ Hallway (_____)		
Teacher Name: _____		Grade: _____				
Date: _____		Time: _____				
Minor Problem Behavior (Addressed by Staff)				Action Taken by Staff to Remedy Minor Problem Behavior	Major Infractions (Addressed by Administration)	Disciplinary Decision by Administration to Address Major Infraction
Behavior	Offense 1 (Date)	Offense 2 (Date) 	Offense 3 (Date)	Check all that apply	___ Bullying/Harassment	___ Conference with Student
Dishonesty				___ Apology for Action	___ Cheating/Lying	___ Conference with Parent/Guardian
Disrespect				___ Loss of Privilege	___ Defiance	___ Conference with Case Manager/Counselor
Disregard of Rules				___ Student Verbally Corrected	___ Fighting	___ Loss of Recess Date(s): _____)
Horseplay				___ Student Assigned Different Seat	___ Inappropriate Contact	___ Detention Date(s): _____)
Inappropriate Language				___ Student's IEP Reviewed	___ Major Disruption	___ Suspension Date(s): _____)
Minor Disruption				___ Teacher/Student Conference (Date: _____)	___ Physical Assault on School Personnel	___ Referral to I&RS.
Teasing				___ Other (_____)	___ Possession/Use of Weapon	___ Referral to Outside Support Agency
				___ Property Damage/Vandalism/Theft		




APPENDIX A

Administrator's Signature: _____

Teacher calls home after second incident.
 See back for parent/guardian conference log.




PARENT/GUARDIAN CONFERENCE LOG

Student: _____

		
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>



Date: _____

Reason: _____

		
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>




Date: _____

Reason: _____

		
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>




Date: _____

Reason: _____

		
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>




Date: _____

Reason: _____

		
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Date: _____




Reason: _____

		
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Date: _____

Reason: _____

Key:

-  Phone Conference
-  Note Home
-  Conference