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## Teacher Beliefs Regarding Positive Behavior Support Programs in Mississippi Middle Schools

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TEACHER BELIEFS REGARDING POSITIVE  
BEHAVIOR SUPPORT PROGRAMS IN  
MISSISSIPPI MIDDLE SCHOOLS

by

Chad Joseph Davis

A Dissertation  
Submitted to the Graduate School  
and the Department of Educational Leadership and School Counseling  
at The University of Southern Mississippi  
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements  
for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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ABSTRACT

TEACHER BELIEFS REGARDING POSITIVE  
BEHAVIOR SUPPORT PROGRAMS IN  
MISSISSIPPI MIDDLE SCHOOLS

by Chad Joseph Davis

August 2016

In today's educational environment of continued and high-stakes accountability, school administrators are constantly looking for effective techniques to improve the academic performance and behavior of their students. In an effort to attain improvement by their pupils, many educational leaders are choosing to implement positive behavior support (PBS) programs in their schools. This study examined the differences between teachers' beliefs about PBS programs and their impact on reported student attendance, standardized test scores, engagement, and behavior. It also examined the differences in reported changes in these variables between teachers at schools with PBS programs and teachers at schools without the behavior programs. Lastly, this study examined the relationships between teacher beliefs pertaining to PBS programs and their associated characteristics, including age, highest degree attained, years of teaching experience, grade level taught, subject area taught, and whether the teacher was in general education or special education.

Findings for these research questions at the .05 significance level are presented in this study. With regard to teacher beliefs about positive behavior support (PBS) programs, none of the independent variables (reported student attendance, standardized test scores, engagement, or behavior) were found to be statistically significant. However,

three relationships were found to be approaching significance. Teacher beliefs pertaining to student attendance and teacher age were approaching significance with a small negative correlation, while teacher beliefs pertaining to student attendance and years of teaching experience were also approaching significance with a small negative correlation. Similarly, teacher beliefs pertaining to student behavior and teacher age were approaching significance with a small negative correlation.

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## DEDICATION

This research is dedicated to my family, friends, and colleagues who have helped me get to this point in my educational career. I would like to thank my parents, L.J. and Kathy, for instilling in me such a hard work ethic. Thank you for never allowing me to settle for less than my best and always encouraging me to reach my potential.

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## CHAPTER I - INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this chapter is to introduce the topic of the research, positive behavior support (PBS) programs, and the variables that were examined in this study. Schools with and without PBS programs participated in this research. The study focused on teachers and students at the middle school level and consisted of two topics. The first topic involved teacher beliefs about PBS programs pertaining to teacher reported student attendance, standardized test scores, engagement, and behavior. All participants, regardless of whether their schools had positive behavior support programs, responded to statements about PBS programs. Additionally, there was a change over time component included in the questionnaire. Only teachers who had been employed at their schools for more than one year answered the change items.

The second topic for this study involved teacher attributes. Demographic variables included teacher age, highest degree earned, years of teaching experience, grade level taught, subject area taught, and whether the respondent taught general education or special education. Once again, all teachers, regardless of whether their schools had implemented PBS programs, responded to the items in the demographic section of the questionnaire.

Positive behavior support (PBS) programs were originally created in the 1980s and increased in utilization by schools after Congress passed the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) in 1997. These programs were designed to encourage special education students to maintain good behavior in the classroom (Positive Behavioral Supports and the Law, n.d.). Since the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act of 2001, school districts have been under increased pressure to ensure that all students are

successful; similar obligations were enacted for those states that received waivers from NCLB during the Obama administration. In an attempt to ensure the success of students, many districts are now prioritizing instructional time. Disciplinary issues disrupt not only the education of the student causing the problem, but of other students in the classroom (Lassen, Steele, & Sailor, 2006). Thus, in an effort to keep students in the classroom and out of trouble, many districts have begun implementing school-wide PBS programs (Hoyle, Marshall, & Yell, 2011).

Student safety is a top priority in schools. It is the responsibility of school districts to provide students with “safe, well-disciplined, and orderly schools and other learning environments” (Turnbull, Wilcox, Turnbull, Sailor, & Wickham, 2001, p. 472). Effective PBS programs enable schools to offer positive incentives to students as a method of reducing disciplinary issues and creating a safe educational climate (Cregor, 2008).

Major acts of student misbehavior, including violent altercations, typically bring school safety into the public spotlight. School leaders are responsible for establishing safe environments that are conducive to student learning, and they may opt for “more effective, less exclusionary methods for maintaining safe, productive school climates” (Skiba & Sprague, 2008, p. 41). Some research suggests that PBS programs are effective at curbing this type of misconduct, as they “can change the trajectory of students who are on a path toward destructive outcomes, as well as prevent the onset of negative behavior in typically developing students” (Skiba & Sprague, 2008, p. 41). Administrators in many schools are implementing PBS programs in an attempt to create atmospheres that are welcoming and promote student learning.

Some states have begun the process of linking student performance on standardized testing to teacher evaluations and merit pay. Schools in these states are implementing PBS programs in an effort to combat student misconduct. Some research states that teachers lacking the appropriate classroom management skills spend “a large portion of class time repairing the initial launch of the task and managing behavior problems” (Hill, Kapitula, &Umland, 2010, p. 823). This results in a loss of instruction for all students in the classroom. Reducing the frequency of behavior issues in the classroom allows teachers to make better use of instructional time, which should result in increased student engagement and learning (Hill et al., 2010).

While schools may choose to utilize PBS programs in various ways, there are some commonalities. Students are informed of the program and what it entails before implementation. Schools usually promote heavily the rewards for attaining the defined goals and also cover the consequences for negative behavior. Because of the many potential benefits of PBS programs, they are used at all levels of education, from elementary school to middle school to high school. Schools typically have PBS teams or leaders who are responsible for creating rewards that are appropriate for the age level of the students (McCurdy, Kunsch, & Reibstein, 2007).

There have been many reported success stories from schools that have implemented PBS programs (Oswald, Safran, & Johanson, 2005). Improvements have included reductions in discipline referrals and safer schools with effective learning environments (Sherrod, Getch, & Daigle, 2009). After these programs have been put into action, schools have reported “increased time engaged in academic activities and improved academic performance” (Cohn, 2001, p. 2). However, some authors, including

Chitiyo, May, and Chitiyo (2012) and Kelm and McIntosh (2012), suggest in their findings that more research is needed on PBS implementation. Future research is necessary to measure variables, including academic achievement and student discipline, and “examine whether changes in student outcomes may mediate the relationship between PBS implementation and teacher outcomes” (Kelm & McIntosh, 2012, p. 145).

#### Statement of the Problem

Since No Child Left Behind became law in 2001, schools have gone to great lengths to ensure that all students have access to a quality education. The regulations imposed by this law, which was passed during the first term of former President George W. Bush, mandated that all students score proficient or higher on state assessments by the 2014 school year. The Obama administration granted waivers from NCLB to many states, but there is still a level of accountability to all students. In an environment of continued and high-stakes accountability, school leaders have looked for effective behavioral, social, and academic intervention strategies to keep students actively engaged and away from trouble (Cook et al., 2007). One way that schools have gone about striving to make the necessary improvements in promoting student behavior is by implementing PBS programs. These programs encourage students to maintain good behavior, which typically results in fewer discipline problems. Fewer disruptions in the classroom tend to lead to better instruction by the teachers and enhanced learning by students. Thus, positive behavior support programs enable educators to tackle behavioral issues in a proactive and positive manner (Thompson & Webber, 2010). However, while there has been a great deal of research conducted on PBS programs, teacher beliefs pertaining to these programs are typically lacking in extant studies.



While extensive data have been gathered on PBS, “few strategies that use data to compare teacher and student perceptions of school expectations and develop goals to facilitate behavioral improvements” have been implemented (Thompson & Webber, 2010). Because educators are dealing with students the majority of their time at school, teachers’ beliefs are valuable to the overall success of PBS programs (Barker, Yeung, Dobia, & Mooney, 2009). Gorgueiro (2008) adds that since classroom teachers interact with students on a daily basis, their input is essential to gauge the effectiveness of school PBS programs.

This study gauged teachers’ beliefs pertaining to positive behavior support (PBS) programs and their impact on reported student attendance, standardized test scores, engagement, and behavior. Additionally, teachers at schools with and without PBS programs participated in this research. Thus, teachers’ beliefs pertaining to change at schools with PBS programs was compared to teachers’ beliefs pertaining to change at schools without the programs. Lastly, teacher attributes were examined to determine if correlations existed between beliefs about PBS programs and teacher demographic variables.

### Research Questions

The purpose of this study was to examine middle school teachers’ beliefs about PBS programs and the effect these programs have on students. This study surveyed classroom teachers to solicit their beliefs about PBS programs and the impact of these programs on student achievement and behavior variables. Teachers from schools with and without PBS programs participated in the study. This research consisted of two topics. For the first part of the study, the implementation of a PBS program was the

dependent variable, and teacher beliefs about reported student attendance, standardized test scores, engagement, and behavior were the independent variables. There was also a change component to this part of the study. Only teachers who were employed at the same school for more than one year responded to the change over time items. The second part of this study involved teacher attributes. Demographic variables included teacher age, highest degree attained, years of teaching experience, grade level taught, subject area taught, and whether the respondent taught general education or special education.

Specific research questions for study included:

RQ1. Is there a difference in teacher characteristics and beliefs about PBS programs between schools that have implemented PBS programs and in schools that have not?

RQ2. Is there a difference in teacher characteristics and beliefs about change between schools that have implemented PBS programs and in schools that have not?

RQ3. Is there a relationship between teacher beliefs about PBS programs and teacher characteristics?

Teachers completed online questionnaires consisting of a demographics section followed by statements pertaining to PBS programs and change over time items. The latter portion of the questionnaire contained items with response options organized in Likert scales through which respondents indicated the level to which they agreed or disagreed with each statement. These items allowed the researcher to examine the differences between teacher beliefs pertaining to PBS programs between teachers at

schools with and without these behavior programs. Additionally, the researcher examined the relationship of selected teacher attributes to these beliefs.

#### Delimitations

Participants for this study were limited to classroom teachers who worked in schools in the state of Mississippi. Additionally, only middle school teachers participated in the study. To account for varying socioeconomic statuses and ensure geographic representation, efforts were made to include teachers from a representative sample of schools throughout the state.

#### Assumptions

It was assumed that all participants in the study were honest when they completed the survey. It was also assumed that participants completed the survey without fear of retaliation or consequences for their responses. Finally, it was assumed that participants had a basic understanding of positive behavior support (PBS) programs.

#### Definition of Terms

The following terms will be used extensively in this study and are defined particularly for the content of this research:

*Accountability systems:* Accountability systems are implemented by school districts to meet the requirements of No Child Left Behind. They consist of standards, objectives, and subject matter that are structured by the state departments of education (Linn, 2005).

*Achievement:* Achievement will be measured by the increase of knowledge and skills that students have learned over a period of time. A customary method of measuring

student achievement is to compare standardized test scores from one year to the next. (Glossary of Education Reform, 2013).

*Adequate yearly progress (AYP):* Adequate yearly progress is the measure by which schools are held accountable for student performance under the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) of 2001. The U.S. Department of Education has developed state-specific approaches to measure accountability in those states that received NCLB waivers (U.S. Department of Education, 2009).

*Behavioral intervention plans (BIP):* Behavioral intervention plans are created for individual students within schools to help encourage and promote positive forms of behavior (Cook et al., 2007).

*Collective efficacy:* Collective efficacy refers to a “group’s shared belief in its conjoint capabilities to organize and execute the courses of action required to produce given levels of attainments” (Bandura, 1997, p. 477).

*Engagement:* Student engagement “refers to the degree of attention, curiosity, interest, optimism, and passion that students show when they are learning or being taught” (Glossary of Education Reform, 2014).

*Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA):* The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act ensures certain educational services to children with disabilities (U.S. Department of Education, 2003).

*Motivation theory:* The motivation theory states that “motivated behavior was thought to depend on the magnitude of bodily needs multiplied by the strength of pertinent behavioral patterns that had been strengthened by rewards” (Weiner, 2010, p. 28).

*No Child Left Behind (NCLB)*: The No Child Left Behind Act was passed in 2001, and it established the standards by which schools are to be held accountable for student performance (No Child Left Behind Act, 2002).

*Positive behavior support (PBS) programs*: Positive behavior support programs are “strategies that enhance students’ capacity to meet behavioral expectations” (Voltz, Sims, & Nelson, 2010, p. 50).

*Response to Intervention (RtI)*: The Response to Intervention model offers a way of “thinking about how educators can ensure that each child receives the time and support needed to succeed in school and life” (Buffum, Mattos, & Weber, 2012, p. 1).

*School-wide positive behavior support (SWPBS) program*: The SWPBS program was originally developed by Rob Horner and George Sugai, and is “a process used by school staff to prevent and intervene with student problem behaviors” (Hoyle et al., 2011, p. 164).

*School culture*: School culture “generally refers to the beliefs, perceptions, relationships, attitudes, and written and unwritten rules that shape and influence every aspect of how a school functions” (Glossary of Education Reform, 2013).

*Self-efficacy*: Self-efficacy refers to students’ judgments of their capabilities to attain desired results or outcomes. It provides the foundation for “human motivation, well-being, and personal accomplishment” (Pajares, 2002).

*Social Cognitive Theory (SCT)*: The Social Cognitive Theory was created by Albert Bandura and describes learning in “terms of the interrelationship between behavior, environmental factors, and personal factors” (IDEA, 2006).

## Justification

According to Morrissey, Bohanon, and Fenning (2010), schools rely too heavily on punitive measures to correct student misbehavior. This research claimed that reactionary forms of discipline are frequently ineffective because, often, students who have been suspended continue to misbehave after receiving their consequences. Instead, this research advocated for proactive approaches, in which students are recognized for following rules and acting appropriately. Such approaches are deeply engrained in the models of behavior management referred to as positive behavior support (PBS) programs. In lieu of punitive disciplinary procedures, PBS programs are being used by an increasing number of schools.

Studies have been conducted to determine the effectiveness of PBS programs at the school-wide level (Morrissey et al., 2010; Sherrod et al., 2009; Simonsen, Sugai, & Negrón, 2008). One such study (Sherrod et al., 2009) occurred in an elementary school that implemented a SWPBS program and received mixed results. Overall, there was a 26% decrease in the number of referrals processed by administration, including a 43% decrease in referrals for not following directions, 40% decrease in physical aggression, 53% decrease in bus issues, and a 66% decrease in inappropriate behaviors. However, in this study, referrals for disrespectful behavior increased by 25%, and referrals for disruptive behavior rose 63% (Sherrod et al., 2009).

Oswald et al. (2005) focused their study on improving student behavior in middle school hallways. They observed students for a five-week period both before and after the implementation of an SWPBS program in a middle school. After the implementation of an SWPBS program, which consisted of “positive practice, pre-correction, verbal praise,

reinforcement, correction of inappropriate behavior, active supervision, discussion of behavior with students, and on-time dismissal,” they found a statistically significant difference between pre-intervention behavior and post-intervention behavior (Oswald et al., 2005, p. 265).

Lassen et al. (2006) conducted a three year study of the effectiveness of a middle school PBS program and found that the school recovered approximately 659 instructional hours during the school year after the program’s implementation. This figure was calculated by factoring the amount of instructional time students lost in classrooms due to administrators processing office referrals. Additionally, this study found a statistically significant relationship between academics and behavior (Lassen et al., 2006).

Extensive research evidence suggests that PBS programs are effective (Hoyle et al., 2011; Morrissey et al., 2010; Sherrod et al., 2009; Simonsen et al., 2008). Many positive benefits have been attributed to the implementation of SWPBS programs. Simonsen et al. (2008) stated that if implemented correctly, SWPBS programs can result in an “improved disciplinary climate, more available instructional minutes, enhanced academic achievement, greater family and community relations, and improved capacity to address the needs of students who need more intensive behavior and/or academic supports to be successful” (p.40).

It should be noted that some authors, including Chitiyo et al. (2012) and Kelm and McIntosh (2012) question the research behind SWPBS programs. While SWPBS programs may be effective in schools, Chitiyo et al. (2012) claim that studies on the topic “do not have the methodological rigor for evidence-based practices” (p. 20). Another area of concern is the paucity of such research that involves teacher input concerning SWPBS

programs. Kelm and McIntosh (2012) acknowledge the expansive amount of research conducted on PBS programs and related student outcomes, but they note that few studies involving classroom teachers have been performed.

This study is important because it examined much needed data on teacher beliefs pertaining to the impact of PBS programs on students. Furthermore, understanding middle school teacher beliefs about whether PBS programs provide incentives that positively impact student choices and behaviors is crucial in an era of high-stakes accountability that requires that every student achieve proficiency in school. Additionally, this study explored the teacher beliefs about PBS programs as they relate to student attendance and motivating students to attend school regularly.

One of the top priorities in education is to provide all students with access to quality instruction (Simonsen et al., 2008). Many districts have chosen to implement PBS programs in an effort to improve student behavior, thus keeping them in the classroom to receive instruction. It is therefore useful to determine whether teachers believe that PBS programs are successfully achieving their goals. The purpose of this study was to get middle school teacher input in order to examine the relationship between PBS programs and student behavior and achievement variables. This research will contribute to the body of knowledge, and to policy and practice, related to these important constructs.

### Summary

Positive behavior support programs were initially created in the 1980s, and their utilization in schools increased with the passage of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) in 1997. The No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act of 2001 forced school districts to ensure that all students are successful. Even those states that received



waivers during the Obama administration have continued rigorous obligations regarding student success. In an effort to reduce the number of student disciplinary referrals, thus improving the learning environment, many schools have implemented PBS programs. With respect to student discipline and performance, many success stories have been reported from schools that implemented PBS programs. However, research methodologies for this research have been questioned. Additionally, the absence of teacher beliefs in these studies indicates that additional inquiry is needed. The goal of this study was to focus on positive behavior support programs at the middle school level, while incorporating the teacher input that is currently lacking in PBS research.

## CHAPTER II – REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Positive behavior support (PBS) programs have been around since the 1980s. They have evolved from initially being used for students with disabilities, to being used with general education students, and finally being used on a school-wide basis. The purpose of this chapter is to provide a background on the evolution of PBS programs since the 1980s, the theories that undergird the proposed research, and the literature on the study variables. Among these variables are teachers' beliefs about the programs and the effects of the programs on student achievement and behavior.

### Background and Policy Context for the Study

In the 1980s, a need emerged for “non-aversive behavioral strategies in the treatment of individuals with severe disabilities” (Solomon, Klein, Hintze, Cressey, & Peller, 2012, p. 106). In the late 1980s, federal funding was allocated for research of these strategies. The term, ‘positive behavioral support,’ was established by Robert H. Horner, a researcher from the University of Oregon, in 1990 (Solomon et al., 2012).

When the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) was reauthorized in 1997, language requiring the use of “positive behavioral intervention strategies and supports for any child in special education with emotional and behavioral problems” became law (Solomon et al., 2012, p. 106). After the success of positive behavior support programs with special education students, schools began to use these programs with individual regular education students. After continued success, the next step involved implementing PBS programs on a school-wide level of prevention and intervention. According to Sugai and Horner (2002), the first attempts to develop and implement a school-wide positive behavior support program (SWPBS) took place in the late 1980s

and early 1990s. Horner, Sugai, and their colleagues at the University of Oregon “were among the first to apply systematically many of the defining components of PBS to address behavior problems on a system-wide level in school settings” (Warren et al., 2006, p. 189). Sugai and Horner (2002) claim that the “expansion and evolution of PBS have been accelerated by increased national attention on incidents of school violence and the lack of discipline and pro-social behavior in schools” (p. 130).

### *Definition*

Positive behavior support programs promote teaching students established behavioral expectations and recognizing their achievements when these expectations are met. PBS programs focus on “addressing systemic issues in schools to positively address the areas of discipline, academic performance, and social/emotional development” (Walker, Cheney, Stage, & Blum, 2005, p. 194). Another group of authors define the primary goal of positive behavior support programs as creating “environments that promote student learning and engagement and decrease students’ risk for learning and/or social/behavior problems” (Ervin, Schaughency, Matthews, Goodman, & McGlinchey, 2007, p. 8).

Positive behavior support programs can be designed for individual students who consistently demonstrate undesirable behaviors. PBS programs are “organized and conceptualized to meet the needs of students with a vast range of behavioral challenges” (Hagan-Burke et al., 2005, p. 401). The ultimate goal of these behavior programs is to “increase the structure and support needed to promote pro-social behaviors among students” (Hagan-Burke et al., 2005, p. 402).

PBS programs can also be implemented across all grades of a school. Stormont, Lewis, and Smith (2005) found that many schools recognize the importance of supporting appropriate behavior and the use of positive behavior support programs school-wide. Pas, Bradshaw, and Mitchell (2011) define a school-wide positive behavior support program as a “universal prevention model that aims to promote consistent use of discipline practices” (p. 543). With SWPBS programs, behavioral expectations are defined and taught consistently to all students. After students have been made aware of school expectations, the faculty rewards those who choose to follow the rules instead of waiting to respond to misbehavior after the incident (Sugai & Horner, 2002). School-wide positive behavior support (SWPBS) programs emphasize a student environment where:

- Behaviorally defined expectations are taught directly and formally acknowledged
  - Data are used for decision making and action planning
  - A function-based system of supports is established
  - Durable outcomes and accurate intervention implementation are stressed
- (Sugai et al., 2000)

According to Lewis and Sugai (1999), schools must first create a list of expected behaviors based on problem behaviors in their settings. For each ‘problem behavior,’ schools should develop an acceptable, or replacement, behavior. Replacement behaviors should be stated in positive and observable terms. These behaviors should be relayed to all staff members and then to all students. School officials should continually promote positive behavior and discourage problem behavior by handling all violations in a fair and consistent manner (Lewis & Sugai, 1999). School districts have begun implementing

school-wide positive behavior support programs “in response to multiple demands to improve accountability, school climate, and the structure of discipline systems in public schools across the United States” (Frey, Lingo, & Nelson, 2008, p. 5).

*Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)*

In recent years, legislation has increased the expectation that school districts will meet the educational needs of all students. Multiple factors, including government initiatives, make this difficult for schools to achieve (Sugai & Horner, 2006). For instance, the passage of one amendment of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) of 1997 required school districts to address behavioral concerns of students. Gagnon, Rockwell, and Scott (2008) discuss IDEA and its provisions that have been implemented to support students with disabilities. They state that IDEA “emphasizes addressing behavioral difficulties of students with disabilities through positive behavior interventions and supports” (Gagnon et al., 2008, p. 2). The authors continue by saying that “prevention systems, such as positive behavior support (PBS) programs, are a necessary and effective approach to managing the behaviors of students, including those with the greatest degree of difficulty” (Gagnon et al., 2008, p. 2).

Turnbull et al. (2001) relate some of the provisions of IDEA to positive behavior support programs. They state that the law requires schools to examine the frequency of long-term suspensions and expulsions of children with disabilities. If discrepancies are found between these students and non-disabled students, IDEA requires schools to implement safeguards, including individualized education plans (IEPs) and positive behavior programs (Turnbull et al., 2001). The authors continue by stating that, when the behavior of a child with disabilities impedes his learning or the learning of his peers,

IDEA requires schools to consider behavior interventions, strategies, and supports to address the issue (Turnbull et al., 2001). Braddock (1999) compiled research conducted on PBS programs by numerous authors and found them to be an effective approach in meeting the needs of disabled students with behavior problems. He concluded that there was a 50% to 66% reduction in problem behaviors in these students when PBS programs were utilized (Braddock, 1999).

*No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB)*

Gagnon et al. (2008) discuss the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act of 2001. This legislation, which was implemented by the Bush administration, requires schools to meet adequate yearly progress (AYP) for all students. The authors state that “to address the harmful impact of problem behaviors, national legislation has emphasized the importance of school safety and behavior interventions” (Gagnon et al., 2008, p. 1). They continue by discussing No Child Left Behind and its goal of ensuring that all schools are held accountable for factors affecting students’ learning (Gagnon et al., 2008). Another group of researchers discuss the four major principles of NCLB, and they include “accountability for results, state and local flexibility and reduced ‘red tape,’ a focus of resources on proven educational methods, and expanded parental choice” (Lewis, Hudson, Richter, & Johnson, 2004, p. 247).

No Child Left Behind stresses the importance of high-quality teachers, results, and scientifically-based research. The public has placed the majority of the NCLB attention on the accountability of student performance on state assessments. Schools are faced with immense pressure to improve student scores. Thus, in an effort to increase student learning, many schools have implemented behavioral programs hoping they lead

to better test scores (Lewis et al., 2004). Although the Obama administration granted waivers from NCLB to many states, a level of accountability still remains for school districts in these states.

### *Response to Intervention (RtI)*

Students who do not meet behavioral expectations may require additional interventions than what schools are utilizing with the entire student body. Lewis, Sugai, and Colvin (1998) believed that students who continuously exhibit higher rates of problem behavior after the school-wide strategies have been implemented require “further individualized assessment and interventions” (p. 455). Response to Intervention (RtI) is one method schools are using to help students achieve success. RtI “represents the broader concept that addresses both academics and behavior, whereas PBS provides a model for the continuum of services that can be provided to address behavior” (Anderson-Ketchmark & Alvarez, 2010, p. 61).

An effective school-wide positive behavior support (SWPBS) program should consist of three tiers: primary intervention, secondary intervention, and tertiary intervention. Primary intervention “is implemented across the entire school, for all students, in all settings” (Horner, Sugai, & Anderson, 2010, p. 4). Secondary intervention is designed for students who are not achieving success at the primary level. These students continue to participate in the primary intervention, but they may also require additional supports to be successful. Tertiary intervention supports are designed for students “whose behavior has not responded (or is unlikely to respond) to the primary or secondary interventions in a school” (Horner et al., 2010, p. 5). These students will likely require individualized attention, such as the creation of a behavioral intervention plan

(BIP). Tertiary supports are typically created individually based upon the unique needs of the student (Horner et al., 2010).

McIntosh, Campbell, Carter, and Zumbo (2009) encourage utilizing school office discipline referrals (ODRs) as a basis for school-wide positive behavior support programs. They claim that students who receive zero or one office referral are adequately supported by Tier I support. Students with two to five office referrals fall in Tier II, and students with six or more office referrals are in Tier III. Based on this information, the researchers believe that 80% of students are categorized as Tier I (primary intervention), 15% to 20% of students are in Tier II (secondary intervention), and 1% to 5% of students are in Tier III (tertiary intervention) (McIntosh et al., 2009).

Anderson-Ketchmark and Alvarez (2010) state that students are typically moved to Tier II (secondary intervention) when they begin exhibiting serious problem behaviors. Movement to Tier II requires a slight increase in the frequency and intensity of the intervention (Anderson-Ketchmark & Alvarez, 2010). Horner et al. (2010) also believe that a relatively small percentage of the student population requires Tier III, or tertiary, intervention. Tier III is developed for those students who are consistently displaying chronic behavior problems. These students will require frequent progress monitoring and a large investment of time and resources (Horner et al., 2010).

#### Theoretical Framework

The theories that guide this research include motivation theory and the social cognitive theory (SCT). The concept behind motivation theory is that individuals behave a certain way because of the associated outcomes. With positive behavior support programs, students are rewarded for maintaining good behavior. Bandura's social



cognitive theory is rooted in the premise that individuals are inclined to meet challenges if they feel they are capable of doing so. With PBS programs, students are taught the ‘right way’ of doing things. Thus, students know the expectations, and they are likely to recognize that these set goals are attainable and strive to achieve them.

### *Motivation Theory*

Positive behavior support (PBS) programs are closely related to motivation theory because both pertain to the encouragement factor of individuals. Motivation theory assumes that individuals are prompted to act by the outcomes or rewards that accrue from their actions (Weiner, 2010). When students leave elementary school, a majority of their motivation comes in the form of tangible rewards (Otis, Grouzet, & Pelletier, 2005). Otis et al. (2005) also believe that many students do not complete assigned tasks or exhibit positive behavior because they strive to be successful or because it is the right thing to do. Instead, the authors believe that many students complete their work and behave appropriately because of the potential rewards they may receive (Otis et al., 2005).

Stone (1999) stated that the students who experience success at school are often those who view schoolwork as important. These students understand that learning takes time and effort, and they continually strive to do their best (Stone, 1999). In an effort to improve student learning, Stone (1999) believed that schools are increasingly implementing tools to capture the students’ interest and enthusiasm. Another group of researchers acknowledge the fact that some students are not naturally motivated to achieve academic or behavioral success at school. They believe that the possibility of receiving a reward for achieving positive outcomes motivates some students to put forth extra effort in the classroom (Bohanon et al., 2006).

### *Social Cognitive Theory*

This study also relates to the social cognitive theory (SCT) created by Albert Bandura. This theory maintains that people will only be motivated to meet set goals if they believe they can produce the outcome that is desired (Bandura, 2001). The social cognitive theory was well established in the late 1970s and early 1980s. The SCT assumes that “humans are the active shapers of their lives” (Goddard, 2001, p. 467). Goddard (2001) continues by writing that the social cognitive theory also assumes that “individuals possess capabilities for self-reflection, vicarious learning, symbolization, and self-regulation” (p. 468).

Efficacy is a primary element of Bandura’s social cognitive theory. According to the SCT, “the control individuals and collectives exert over their lives is influenced by their perceptions of efficacy” (Goddard, 2001, p. 467). Martin (2004) states that Bandura’s social cognitive theory is “self-determination exercised as self-regulation, the most important volitional component of which is self-efficacy” (p. 139).

Efficacy is one’s ability to produce a desired result. Goddard (2001) defines student self-efficacy as the “students’ perceptions of self-capability to organize and execute the actions required to attain success in various subjects” (p. 468). His definition of collective efficacy in education is “the perceptions of teachers in a school that the faculty as a whole can execute the courses of action necessary to have positive effects on students” (Goddard, 2001, p. 467). Goddard (2001) continues by stating that Albert Bandura issued repeated calls for further research on the effects of collective efficacy, but relatively few researchers studied the topic.

There is some research that ties efficacy to certain student factors. According to Goddard (2001), “a relatively large body of research suggests that student efficacy and teacher efficacy are positively related to important educational outcomes” (p. 468). Some authors believe that when students conclude that their teachers believe they are capable of performing assigned tasks, the students have a tendency to meet or exceed those expectations (Ryan & Patrick, 2001). Goddard (2001) notes that in a meta-analysis of thirty-six studies, a group of researchers found that “students’ efficacy beliefs were positively related to their academic attainment and their persistence in academic endeavors” (p. 468).

There is research to suggest that as students get older, they are motivated by the rewards that may accompany their actions; this is the basis of motivation theory. There is also research that addresses student willingness to strive for goals they believe are attainable, which is the basis of Bandura’s social cognitive theory. In this study, teacher demographic variables, including age, highest degree attained, years of classroom experience, grade level taught, subject/content area taught, and whether the teacher was in general education or special education, were analyzed to determine if they impact beliefs pertaining to PBS programs. The researcher also examined the extent to which these demographic variables affected the teachers’ beliefs of change over time in their schools.

#### Review of Literature on Research and Professional Perspectives

The disciplinary methods used in schools can impact many factors in educational settings. In this section, the importance of maintaining a positive school culture and a welcoming climate is addressed. The importance of getting support from the faculty,

students, and parents is mentioned. Punitive disciplinary measures, and their associated consequences, are also discussed. Additionally, positive behavior support program research that has been conducted regarding student attendance, behavior, achievement, and engagement is presented.

### *Culture*

According to Waldron and McLeskey (2010), school culture is defined as “the guiding beliefs and expectations evident in the way a school operates” (p. 59). Douglas Roby (2011) believes that school culture includes “shared vision, values, goals, beliefs, and faith in school organizations” (p. 783). Rooney (2005) maintains that schools should have a culture with a “sense of wholesomeness and kid-centeredness” (p. 86). The author also believes that a school maintaining a positive culture “knows what it believes in and where it is going” (Rooney, 2005, p. 86). In a study conducted of California schools, researchers found that “improved student achievement seems to be the product of how well a school operates and depends on the quality of leadership and the effectiveness of instructional programs and practices” (Chrisman, 2005, p. 17). One of the primary elements of positive behavior support programs is establishing a positive school culture. Horner and Sugai (2005) state that PBS programs should “establish a social culture within which both social and academic success is more likely” (p. 360).

If a school’s culture is not contributing to desired results, it may be necessary for the school to undergo a culture change. Changing a school’s culture requires educators to “question their beliefs about teaching and learning for students who struggle to learn and engage in a collaborative change process that results in new values, beliefs, norms, and preferred behaviors” (Waldron & McLeskey, 2010, p. 59). According to Rooney (2005),

schools should want cultures that “foster student learning and build healthy relationships among everyone in the school” (p. 86). Douglas Reeves (2006/2007) believes that meaningful school improvement starts with changing the school’s culture, and that starts at the top, with the school leader. Rooney (2003) agrees with Reeves by stating that “every principal has the power to weave an environment in which people care for one another – and thereby to foster excellent teaching and learning” (p. 76). Reeves contends that there are four essential components to lasting cultural change:

- Define what will not change. Schools should identify values and traditions worth preserving.
- Recognize the importance of actions. Talking is not enough; all vested staff must be willing to make personal changes.
- Use the right change tools for your school. Ensure that professional development opportunities and training are readily available to all staff members.
- Be willing to do the ‘scut work.’ School leaders should be willing to perform tasks that are not necessarily in their job descriptions (Reeves, 2006/2007).

Before schools attempt to undergo a culture change, it is essential for everyone to understand why and how the change will take place. Chrisman (2005) believes that schools tend to reach their achievement goals in a more timely manner when they involve their teaching staff before implementing new intervention strategies and techniques.

Rooney (2003) states that a school with a good culture recognizes that change “must be worked out by those who live within its walls – in conversations about students, about teaching, and about learning” (p. 78). The author continues by writing “this dialogue

includes all who participate in and enhance the community” (Rooney, 2003, p. 78). Schools wishing to change their cultures by implementing a positive behavior support program should follow these steps by involving everyone on campus. Swain-Bradway, Pinkney, and Flannery (2015) believe that implementation of a school-wide positive behavior support program may require “realignment of long-standing organizational structures and practices” (p. 254).

### *Climate*

Many studies involving student perceptions of school climate have been conducted over the years. However, Bevans, Bradshaw, Miech, and Leaf (2007) conducted a study pertaining to school climate in which teacher input was solicited. Their results emphasized the importance of positive faculty beliefs regarding the school climate for productivity and focus on student success (Bevans et al., 2007). Another group of researchers conducted a study across 37 schools covering five states in which they analyzed teacher beliefs and their teaching practices. The results from the study showed that school climate had a significant impact on the teachers’ instructional practices and behavior management in the classroom. In fact, teacher “perceptions of the school climate significantly related to how students behaved” (O’Brennan, Bradshaw, & Furlong, 2014, p. 125).

There is a great deal of research that links positive behavior support (PBS) programs with improved school climates. Kern and Manz (2004) believe that school-wide positive behavior support (SWPBS) programs have “emerged as a very promising approach for creating safe schools with a positive social climate” (p. 56). Mitchell, Bradshaw, and Leaf (2010) state that PBS programs are typically “effective at altering the

school climate, as perceived among students and staff” (p. 278). Ross, Romer, and Horner (2012) believe that school-wide positive behavior support programs are filled with “opportunities for teachers to have positive interactions with their students” (p. 120). Furthermore, the authors state that these positive behavior support programs improve “school climate, student learning, and social behavior through the implementation of three tiers of support” (Ross et al., p. 118). Lampi, Fenty, and Beaunae (2005) contend that PBS programs also decrease the use of punitive methods, which typically results in a more positive and welcoming school climate. Halawah (2006) believes that schools maintaining environments that are conducive to learning and behavior positively influence student outcomes, such as achievement and attendance.

#### *Punitive Disciplinary Measures*

Over the course of recent years, many schools have elected to utilize punitive measures to address student misbehavior. Some have even adopted strict guidelines when dealing with certain issues. Gagnon et al. (2008) state that many schools have implemented punitive policies to handle discipline over the past twenty-five years. They continue by saying that “schools frequently administer these punishments rigidly and without regard to the context of the rule infraction” (p. 4). All fifty states have enacted some type of zero-tolerance policy that demands suspension or expulsion when dealing with certain rule violations and infractions. However, there is research (Gottfredson, 1997; Skiba, 2002) contending that these rigid policies are often ineffective. Muscott et al. (2004) state that there is a great deal of research suggesting these zero-tolerance policies typically resulting in suspensions or expulsions from school “do not improve student behavior or make a positive contribution to school safety” (p. 454).

Punitive measures, “can often produce a rapid – although often temporary – suppression in most students’ inappropriate behaviors” (Maag, 2001, p. 176). These measures are desirable at times because of the ease with which they can typically be administered. Maag (2001) also states that punitive measures typically work for approximately 95% of students. The remaining 5% of students who exhibit the most challenging behaviors require additional interventions (Maag, 2001). However, Gagnon et al. (2008) claim that while these punitive measures may be popular in many schools, they “are actually ineffective at preventing or reducing violent and disruptive behavior” by the students (p. 4).

There is a great deal of research encouraging schools to look at what students are doing correctly instead of getting caught up in what they are doing wrong. Preble and Taylor (2008/2009) discuss the importance of focusing on the positive instead of dwelling on the negative by stating that schools should try “catching students being good and acknowledging positive behavior rather than focusing solely on punishing misbehavior” (p. 39). Sugai and Horner (2006) state the assumption is that “responding to repeated problem behavior with increasingly severe consequences will teach students that unruly behaviors are unacceptable and will not be tolerated” (p. 246). The authors continue by discussing evidence that students who exhibit the most severe behavior problems are the “least likely to be responsive to these consequences, and the intensity and frequency of their behavior is likely to get worse instead of better” (Sugai & Horner, 2006, p. 246). Nelson, Martella, and Galand (1998) also believe that punitive measures can do more harm than good, as the authors state that these methods can actually promote and accelerate disruptive behavior by students.



Some researchers have conducted studies in which they interviewed teachers and other education professionals to gather their feelings about punitive measures and positive behavior support (PBS) programs. In her qualitative study, researcher Veronica Gorguiero (2008) interviewed middle school teachers asking their opinions about the value of PBS programs in their schools. One teacher responded, “I think any time you concentrate on trying to look for positive things in students that is a good thing for the school. We want to recognize student’s behavior” (Gorguiero, 2008, p. 56). Another teacher commented, “I’ve noticed that it has made me think more in that [positive] mindset too. Not just helping the students, but it has helped me too.” (Gorguiero, 2008, p. 56).

In another study where three preschool teachers were interviewed, Stormont, Smith, and Lewis (2007) found that all three teachers rated positive behavior support programs favorably. One of the teachers strongly agreed with all seven items related to PBS programs, whereas the other two teachers strongly agreed with six of the seven statements (Stormont et al., 2007). While research regarding teacher beliefs of positive behavior support program effectiveness is limited in quantity, there is some evidence that those in the classroom find value in PBS programs.

#### *Lost Instructional Time*

A number of punitive measures can result in the student’s removal from the classroom, which means lost direct classroom instruction. Osher and Fleischman (2005) believe that punitive disciplinary methods actually hinder student achievement because these approaches typically involve removing students from the classroom. Their removal results in the loss of valuable instructional time. Instead, the authors recommend

changing the educational environment by “being explicit about behavioral expectations, directly teaching appropriate behavior, providing support to help students meet expectations, monitoring individual and school-wide behavior, and providing frequent positive reinforcement” (Osher & Fleischman, 2005, p. 84). Another group of researchers advocate for minimizing “administrative interventions that result in removal from instructional time.” They continue by stating that “sending a student to the office is likely to result in some loss of instructional or scheduled time” (Spaulding et al., 2010, p. 81).

Positive behavior support (PBS) programs have been linked to teachers having additional time available for daily instruction. Gagnon et al. (2008) mention research that associates PBS programs with increased instructional time by stating that “following PBS implementation, students experienced many more hours of instruction because less student time was spent in exclusionary punishment and less teacher time was spent addressing behavioral concerns” (p. 6). Additionally, Kern and Manz (2004) state that the adoption of positive behavior support programs is likely to promote an orderly classroom environment, which increases the likelihood of “student engaged time and the number of minutes available for instruction” (p. 56). Finally, Lampi et al. (2005) also believe that PBS programs are likely to increase instructional time, as teachers should spend less time correcting misbehavior.

### *Student Attendance*

There is a limited amount of research discussing the relationship between positive behavior support (PBS) programs and student attendance. In one study conducted in a western Massachusetts public middle school, student attendance increased modestly for four consecutive years after implementation of a PBS program (Luiselli, Putnam, &

Sunderland, 2002). In another study conducted from a large sample of high schools from thirty-seven states, the researchers concluded that school-wide positive behavior support (SWPBS) programs had “statistically significant positive effects on attendance” (Freeman et al., 2015, p. 291). Additionally, the researchers linked schools with PBS programs for extended periods of time to reductions in student dropout rates (Freeman et al., 2015).

### *Student Behavior*

Most of the research conducted on positive behavior support (PBS) programs examines changes in student behavior. The majority of this research has been conducted in the elementary setting and found these programs to positively impact student behavior. Lewis, Colvin, and Sugai (2000) conducted a study of the impact of a pro-active school-wide positive behavior support (SWPBS) program in an elementary setting. At the end of the study, the researchers concluded that the PBS program “effectively reduced rates of problem behavior across the student body” (Lewis et al., 2000, p. 118). Another group of researchers conducted a SWPBS program effectiveness trial. They concluded that elementary students who were deemed ‘at-risk’ and ‘high-risk’ may benefit most from SWPBS programs. Specifically, students in these groups were significantly less likely to receive office referrals than their peers (Bradshaw, Waasdorp, & Leaf, 2015).

Many studies analyze the relationship between the implementation of PBS programs and changes in the number of students seen in the office for disciplinary infractions. For instance, a group of researchers examined the impact of a school-wide positive behavior support program on the number of discipline referrals processed by school administrators. They concluded that a higher number of discipline referrals and a

more “problematic school behavioral climate” are likely to be present when schools do not have a SWPBS program in place (Irvin, Tobin, Sprague, Sugai, & Vincent, 2004, p. 138). In another study, an Illinois urban elementary school experienced a 22% decrease in overall suspensions after the implementation of a school-wide positive behavior support program. The number of overall discipline referrals also decreased, but at a slower rate (Netzel & Eber, 2003). Another example involved a group of researchers who conducted a four-year longitudinal study from the 2002-2003 school year to the 2006-2007 school year at Glenn C. Marlow Elementary School in North Carolina. After the implementation of a SWPBS program, student behavioral office referrals decreased by 47.8%. Consequently, fewer office referrals lead to a 56.5% decrease in instructional days lost by the students (Curtis, Van Horne, Robertson, & Karvonen, 2010).

Another study focused on a particular behavior problem that has become more prevalent in schools in recent years – bullying. This study was conducted in thirty-seven Maryland public elementary schools, and it analyzed the effect PBS programs have on bullying in schools. The researchers found that all schools experienced an increase in bullying incidents during the course of the four-year study. However, they also discovered that children in schools with PBS programs displayed “significantly less bullying behavior over time versus children in the comparison schools” (Waasdorp, Bradshaw, & Leaf, 2012, p. 153).

Some PBS program research has also been conducted at the middle school level; once again, many of these studies find benefits in positive behavior support programs. In their study of a Massachusetts middle school, Luiselli et al. (2002) examined the impact of a PBS program on three behavior categories, including disruptive or antisocial

behavior, vandalism, and substance use. They found that incidents in all three categories dropped annually after the school's implementation of a PBS program (Luiselli et al., 2002).

PBS programs also appear to have an impact on the number of middle school students seen by administrators for disciplinary infractions. For example, the state of Maryland instituted a state-wide PBS initiative. Results for the 2005-2006 school year showed that all grades had a smaller percentage of office referrals per 100 students per school day than the national average. With regards to middle school, Maryland middle schools reported 33% fewer referrals than the average middle schools from across the nation (Barrett, Bradshaw, & Lewis-Palmer, 2008).

In their study of a public middle school, Taylor-Greene and Kartub (2000) discuss the significant impact that the Hive Five program had on school culture. High Five is the name of the school's PBS program, and it was perceived by school faculty members to have created a different and improved environment. During the 1994/1995 school year, administrators processed more than 2,500 discipline referrals. That number dropped 47% after the first year of High Five to approximately 1,500 referrals. During the 1998/1999 school year, the number of office referrals dropped to approximately 800, an astounding 68% decrease compared to the 1994/1995 school year (Taylor-Greene & Kartub, 2000).

Zlomke and Zlomke (2003) also advocate for positive behavior support programs. They discuss a token economy, which is a type of behavior program where tokens are earned by students exhibiting good behavior. After a specified period of time, tokens "can then be redeemed for reinforcing objects or activities" (Zlomke & Zlomke, 2003, p.

177). In their study, the researchers associated token economies with significant decreases in student misbehaviors (Zlomke & Zlomke, 2003).

Yet another group of researchers conducted a longitudinal study on the implementation of a positive behavior support program at an inner-city middle school in a Midwestern city. After the program's first year, the total number of discipline referrals decreased by 20%, in-school-suspensions decreased by 5%, and short-term suspensions decreased by 57%. However, the news was not consistently positive, as these gains were not sustained during the second year of the PBS program (Warren et al., 2006).

While the amount of research conducted at the high school level is not as expansive as at the lower levels, the results are similar. For instance, a group of researchers conducted a case study of the school-wide application of a PBS program in an urban high school. The study measured the number of discipline referrals over a three-year period. Between years two and three, student office referrals per 100 students were cut by 20%. Additionally, certain behaviors that were considered to be more serious in nature saw even a greater decrease. For instance, disobedience of authority dropped from 1.64 referrals per 100 students in year two to 0.05 referrals per 100 students in year three (Bohanon et al., 2006).

In additional research, Flannery, Fenning, Kato, and McIntosh (2014) conducted a study of twelve high schools in the Pacific Northwest and Midwest. The study covered a three-year span after a SWPBS program was implemented. During the baseline year, rates of problem behavior increased. However, while schools without a PBS program saw a steady increase in disciplinary infractions during the same time period, "there was a

statistically significant decrease in problem behavior for students in schools implementing SWPBS over the course of the study” (Flannery et al., 2014, p. 120).

Regardless of whether the studies are conducted at the elementary, middle, or high school level, many researchers are finding a correlation between the presence of a PBS program and positive changes in student behavior. One group of authors discusses many research studies that have been conducted at various levels with a common result – that PBS programs are effective at reducing behavior problems in students. Additionally, studies have shown that PBS programs are also likely to reduce the occurrences of repeated behavioral infractions by the same students (Gagnon et al., 2008).

Researchers have conducted several studies on PBS programs and their associated impacts on student behavior. While some studies found little benefit or negative consequences associated with PBS programs, the majority of the research finds these programs to be beneficial when dealing with student behavior in the classroom. It should be noted that much of the research focuses on the impacts of PBS programs at the elementary level. Swain-Bradway et al. (2015) state that PBS programs were initially used at the elementary level; however, the authors mention that secondary schools have increasingly begun to implement them. For example, in the state of Illinois, only eight high schools had PBS programs in 2006; that number had grown to 200 schools by 2013 (Swain-Bradway et al., 2015). Another group of researchers advocate for further PBS program research at various levels, including middle school (Solomon et al., 2012). This study was conducted of middle school teachers and will add to the needed research at this level.

### *Student Achievement and Standardized Test Scores*

While the body of literature on relationships among PBS and affective/behavioral variables is more extensively developed, some researchers have examined the relationship between PBS programs and student achievement. Halawah (2005) claims that there is a relationship between a positive school atmosphere and improved student achievement. Also, in a study conducted in ten public schools in the Pacific Northwest, a group of researchers found programs that attempt to reduce forms of disruptive and antisocial behavior during students' elementary and middle school years are likely to have a positive impact on their overall academic achievement (Fleming et al., 2005).

In light of modern accountability systems that assess the performance of public schools, school personnel need to stay focused on standardized test scores. In a high stakes testing environment, it is "imperative that we continue to discover and document the most efficient, culturally respectful, and inclusive approaches to dealing with disruptive behavior" (Bloom, 2013, p. 4). Bradshaw, Mitchell, and Leaf (2010) conducted a five-year longitudinal study involving thirty-seven elementary schools, specifically third and fifth grades. They concluded that SWPBS programs had a positive impact on the standardized test scores of these third and fifth grade students. Students in schools with positive behavior support programs outperformed students in schools without PBS programs in grades three and five in math and reading. Additionally, students at schools with PBS programs gained more percentage points than their peers (Bradshaw et al., 2010).

Yet another study conducted in Illinois found that, after implementation of a PBS program, a school in the state saw increasing scores on the Illinois Statewide



Achievement Test over a two year period (Muscott et al., 2004). In their research, Preble and Taylor (2008/2009) also found that schools in Tennessee that had worked on school climate by implementing behavior programs outperformed schools who had not attempted to improve climate on the state achievement tests.

In the limited amount of research that has been conducted on teacher beliefs regarding PBS program effectiveness, many educators find value in these programs. In a study conducted of 217 participants from 217 schools that had PBS programs, a majority of the respondents believed that positive behavior support programs have an impact on academic achievement scores and attendance. The calculated mean from the four point scale where four indicates strong impact was 3.12 (McIntosh et al., 2013).

The impact of PBS programs on student achievement is an area that has research potential. Curtis et al. (2010) state that “investigating the effect of SWPBS programs on academic achievement is a rich area for exploration” (p. 163). Warren et al. (2006) claim that the vast majority of PBS research focuses on outcomes related to behavioral issues. The researchers believe that “increased attention should be devoted to corresponding improvements in academic outcomes” (Warren et al., 2006, p. 196). This study examined teacher beliefs pertaining to the impact of PBS programs on student achievement at the middle school level.

### *Student Engagement*

There have been some studies that analyze the impact of positive behavior support programs on student engagement. In their article on PBS programs in middle school classrooms, Cramer and Bennett (2015) state that these positive behavior support programs “increase academic achievement for most students” (p. 24). They also make

reference to a science teacher who attributed fewer discipline issues and more participation in class, particularly in lab experiments, to the school's PBS program (Cramer & Bennett, 2015). Another group of researchers discuss how a school counselor piloted a PBS program in the fourth grade. One of the target areas the counselor hoped to address with the program was the level of student engagement, as some students were refusing to do their work on a routine basis. The counselor experienced success after implementing the program in fourth grade, as students became more actively engaged in class. Therefore, she expanded the program to fifth grade the following year, and it was successful once again. She then launched a school-wide positive behavior support (SWPBS) program after that (Cressey, Whitcomb, McGilvray-Rivet, Morrison, & Shander-Reynolds, 2014/2015).

While some research has been conducted on the topic, PBS program impact on student engagement is an area that has research promise. Some researchers question the reliability of positive behavior support program research, saying that there is little or no evidence that PBS programs have a routine and sustainable impact in school settings. For instance, Solomon, Tobin, and Schutte (2015) question some of the research conducted on PBS programs by stating that many research instruments "lack robust evidence for both their reliability and validity for the purpose of measuring PBS fidelity" (p. 175). Thus, according to some researchers, there is a need for further PBS program research.

#### *Staff Involvement*

As is true with most programs in education, positive behavior support programs require faculty support to be successful. School personnel need to understand the program and adopt its concepts for it to work as intended. Much research has been

conducted in recent years detailing the importance of teacher buy-in or involvement and PBS program effectiveness (Feuerborn & Chinn, 2012). The authors contend that the “perceptions teachers hold toward SWPBS can affect implementation” (Feuerborn & Chinn, 2012, p. 220).

Feuerborn and Chinn (2012) found that schools with ineffective PBS programs typically did not have the buy-in from their faculty members. Lack of communication, misunderstandings, differing philosophical beliefs, and limited knowledge about the programs were common reasons for positive behavior support programs to be unsuccessful. The authors propose creating a behavior leadership team to ensure that all staff members are informed of program details and are properly trained (Feuerborn & Chinn, 2012). Another group of researchers concur, stating that the behavior team should consist of a minimum of four to six individuals, based on school size. Furthermore, they contend that the behavior leadership team should include an administrator, regular education teacher, and special education teacher (Eber, Hyde, & Suter, 2010). Yet another group of authors advocate for including staff members in the development and implementation of positive behavior support programs to ensure program longevity (Flanney, Guest, & Horner, 2010).

Flannery et al. (2010) also believe that faculty members must be given sufficient time to understand the reasoning and explore the value of PBS programs. Another set of researchers state that for PBS programs to be effective across the school, expectations need to be defined, agreed upon, and relayed to the entire faculty. Students are then acknowledged when they demonstrate these expectations. Additionally, it is essential that the consequences for noncompliance be administered consistently (Flannery, Frank,

Kato, Doren, & Fenning, 2013). Finally, Eber et al. (2011) state that prior to the implementation of a PBS program, faculty members often responded to “behavior problems solely with reprimands and punishments” (p. 788). After the program’s implementation, “they are more positive and understanding that students with intensive needs require time and support to experience success” (Eber et al., 2011, p. 788).

#### *Student and Parent Involvement*

In addition to faculty support, positive behavior support (PBS) programs also require buy-in from students and their parents. Flannery et al. (2010) state that to increase their motivation and ownership in PBS programs, schools should incorporate students into the development and implementation of the programs. For example, they could be included on leadership teams, advisory groups, focus groups, etc. Students are able to provide useful insight into the overall effectiveness of positive behavior support programs (Flannery et al., 2010).

Additionally, Flannery, Sugai, and Anderson (2009) believe that not including parents in PBS programs may result in several problems, including poor school/community relations and lack of parental participation when needed. Brusnahan and Gatti (2008) also believe that parental involvement in PBS programs is vital to their success. The authors state that parents can provide schools with information on family priorities and community cultural values. Parents can also solicit the assistance of community members and implement PBS program strategies at home (Brusnahan & Gatti, 2008). The authors believe that while parental involvement in PBS programs is helpful for all students, it is crucial for those on Tier III (tertiary) (Brusnahan & Gatti,

2008). Student and parental support are essential to the overall success and longevity of many school initiatives, including PBS programs.

### *Sustainability*

For SWPBS programs to be effective, it is imperative that schools continually examine their programs and make changes as needed. Additionally, to insure PBS program longevity, it is often necessary for schools to adjust policies and procedures. Coffey and Horner (2012) list seven dimensions of PBS programs that should be routinely monitored:

- Behavior expectations defined
- Behavior expectations taught
- Ongoing behavior reward system
- System for responding to behavior violations
- Monitoring and decision making
- Management
- District level support. (pp. 411-412)

In their article, Geoff Colvin and Elizabeth Fernandez (2000) discuss the success that Clear Lake Elementary School in Oregon experienced using positive behavior support (PBS) programs. As of the 2000 school year, the school had been actively implementing a PBS program for nearly a decade. The authors note that the school's administrators and teachers attribute the program's success to its continuous development and maintenance tailored to students exhibiting challenging behaviors (Colvin & Fernandez, 2010). Kennedy, Mimmack, and Flannery (2012) note that due to rigid contemporary education standards, schools are collecting a range of data for

accountability purposes. Schools with effective PBS programs use these data to evaluate the effectiveness of their programs and make the necessary adjustments.

### *Teacher Beliefs and Characteristics*

Many studies have confirmed the importance of teacher beliefs in education. Stipek, Givvin, Salmon, and MacGyvers (2001) conducted a study revealing an association between teacher beliefs and practices with their students. Bryan, Day-Vines, Griffin, and Moore-Thomas (2012) state that teacher expectations of student ability often impact student performance. Johansen, Little, and Akin-Little (2011) believe that teachers' belief systems, perspectives, and attitudes have an impact on student behavior in the classroom. Another group of researchers agree that teacher perceptions may moderate student behavior, and the management styles of teachers influence their ratings of student behavior (Vitaro, Tremblay, & Gagnon, 1995).

While many studies have been conducted connecting teacher beliefs to student outcomes, little research has been done relating to teacher beliefs about positive behavior support programs. Stormont et al. (2005) believe that "one area that has not been explored to date is the teacher perceptions and characteristics that contribute to the success of implementing PBS practices" (p. 133). One study conducted of participants from ten states found that teachers' beliefs can influence the success of schools' PBS programs. For instance, if teachers are skeptical of the programs or have philosophical beliefs that are not consistent with PBS programs, they can have an impact on their implementation (Lohrmann, Forman, Martin, & Palmieri, 2008). Teacher beliefs about positive behavior support programs is an area with rich research potential. This study

aims to contribute to the current research, as it gathered teacher beliefs pertaining to the impact of PBS programs on student achievement and behavior.

Some research has been conducted pertaining to teachers' characteristics and their beliefs about student behavior. Friedman (1995) examined the gender of teachers and their perceptions of challenging behavior and found them to be quite different. Another group of researchers conducted a study of 800 elementary, middle, and high school teachers and found significant differences between teacher gender and student behavior variables (Alter, Walker, & Landers, 2013). There is some inconsistency in the research, as another study found minimal differences in teacher genders and student behavior (Caldarella et al., 2009).

One study explored the connection between the teacher's level of experience and perceived student behavior. In their study of 243 educators, Kokkinos, Panayiotou, and Davazoglou (2004) found that a teacher's experience level had a significant impact on the way they rated students' behavior. Bryan et al. (2012) speculate that subject context may also have an impact on teacher beliefs, and the researchers encourage further research between subject matter and teacher perspectives. O'Brennan et al. (2014) believe that research on teacher characteristics and student outcomes is mixed, and they advocate for more research involving teacher demographics and student variables.

There has been little research conducted on teachers' personal and professional characteristics and how they relate to beliefs about positive behavior support programs. In a study of ninety-two early childhood education professionals, Stormont et al. (2005) analyzed the characteristics of the individuals who participated. They found that "statistically different group differences were documented for importance ratings by

educational levels” (Stormont et al., 2005, p. 136). The groups of educators with undergraduate degrees or higher had “significantly higher mean ratings for total importance” of the PBS programs than those with less education (Stormont et al., 2005, p. 136). When the researchers analyzed the participants’ years of experience with their responses, significant correlations were not found (Stormont et al., 2005). Because the support of teachers is vitally important to the longevity of PBS programs, it would be helpful to determine if demographic variables, such as age, highest degree attained, number of years of teaching experience, grade level taught, and subject area taught, impact teacher beliefs regarding positive behavior support programs.

### Conclusion

Schools today are faced with ever-increasing accountability pressures. Districts are responsible for providing students with safe learning environments and ensuring they have the tools necessary to be successful. One technique schools are choosing to implement in an effort to attain these goals is the use of positive behavior support (PBS) programs. Instead of punitive measures, the premise of these programs involves teaching students how to behave appropriately and rewarding them for meeting the set expectations. Solomon et al. (2015) state that the goals of PBS programs include fostering “safety, pro-social behavior, and academic readiness by outlining a structure to explicitly teach and reinforce these behaviors in schools” (p. 175).

Positive behavior support programs have been linked to positive outcomes in various educational settings. For instance, researchers George, Harrower, and Knoster (2003) believe that PBS programs ultimately lead to decreases in the number of behavior



issues. The authors also believe that PBS programs have a positive impact on academic achievement and school climate (George et al., 2003).

While a great deal of research has been conducted on positive behavior support (PBS) programs, little is known about some aspects of these programs. Thus, there is a need for more extensive research regarding teacher beliefs about the impact of PBS programs. Many studies conducted up to this point have shown promising results. Frey et al. (2008) state that while much research needs to be conducted on the effectiveness of school-wide positive behavior support programs, “there appears to be a growing body of evidence to suggest that professionals in K-12 and early childhood education settings are adopting this approach and that PBS is a legitimate strategy for promoting school success for children” (p. 13). However, not all researchers are convinced that positive behavior support programs are effective. While Stephen Safran (2006) acknowledges that many studies conducted on the effectiveness of PBS programs have yielded promising results, his research does not necessarily reach the same conclusion. In his study involving two elementary schools and a middle school in southeastern Ohio, he found that “teachers and staff in these schools did believe that individual student supports were inadequately functioning” (Safran, 2006, p. 8). Additionally, in a study conducted of 2,507 school staff members from multiple states, no significant differences were found in many variables between schools with PBS programs and comparison schools (Bradshaw, Koth, Bevans, Ialongo, & Leaf, 2008). Because of the conflicting information that has been written about PBS programs, additional research regarding teacher beliefs about the impact of PBS programs would be helpful. This study aims to contribute to that much-needed research.

## CHAPTER III - METHODOLOGY

This chapter describes the research design for this study. Research questions and hypotheses are also presented in this section. The rationale for the method of selecting the participants as the research population is also discussed. The contents of Chapter III further consist of the research design, research questions and hypotheses, participants in the study, instrumentation, and data collection process. The independent and dependent variables will be explained, along with the statistical processes used to analyze the data.

### Research Design

The research design for this study regarding teacher beliefs about the impact of positive behavior support programs on student achievement and behavior was non-experimental and employed quantitative analyses. Data was gathered from an online questionnaire completed by middle school teachers from the state of Mississippi. Teachers from schools with and without positive behavior support (PBS) programs participated in the study, which consisted of two topics. The areas of focus in the first part included teacher beliefs pertaining to PBS programs and reported changes in student attendance, standardized test scores, student engagement, and student behavior. The areas of focus for the second topic of the study were teacher attributes, including teacher age, highest degree attained, years of teaching experience, grade level taught, subject area taught, and whether the teacher was in general or special education. Including these demographic items in the survey instrument allowed the researcher to analyze the differences in beliefs pertaining to PBS programs with specific teacher attributes.

The implementation of a PBS program was the dependent variable in the first part of the study. Teacher beliefs about student achievement and student behavior variables

were the independent variables. Achievement and behavior factors that were examined include teacher beliefs about reported student changes in attendance, standardized test scores, effort in the classroom, and discipline as impacted by PBS programs. There was also a change component included in this first part of the study. Only teachers who had been employed at the same school for more than one year responded to the items involving change over time. The second part of the study consisted of teacher attributes, including teacher age, highest degree attained, years of teaching experience, grade level taught, subject area taught, and whether the teacher worked in general education or special education. In both parts of the study, Cronbach's alpha was used to determine reliability and internal consistency of the variables.

#### Research Questions and Hypotheses

This study examined middle school teachers' beliefs about the impact of PBS programs on students and reported changes of student performance and behavior in their schools. In the first part of the study, classroom teachers were surveyed to get their beliefs about PBS programs and the impact of the programs on student achievement and behavior variables. Additionally, teachers who had been employed at their schools for more than one year were surveyed to get their beliefs about change over time. The second part of the study examined the relationships between teacher attributes and their associated beliefs about PBS programs. Based on the literature, specific research questions for the study included:

RQ1. Is there a difference in teacher characteristics and beliefs about PBS programs between schools that have implemented PBS programs and in schools that have not?

RQ2. Is there a difference in teacher characteristics and beliefs about change between schools that have implemented PBS programs and in schools that have not?

RQ3. Is there a relationship between teacher beliefs about PBS programs and teacher characteristics?

Research hypotheses for the study were as follows:

H<sub>1</sub>: There is a difference in teacher characteristics and beliefs about PBS programs between schools that have implemented PBS programs and in schools that have not.

H<sub>2</sub>: There is a difference in teacher characteristics and beliefs about change between schools that have implemented PBS programs and in schools that have not.

H<sub>3</sub>: There is a relationship between teacher beliefs about PBS programs and teacher characteristics (teacher age, highest degree attained, years of teaching experience, grade level taught, subject area taught, and whether the teacher is in general education or special education). This relationship will be negative for teacher age and years of teaching experience.

#### Participants in the Study

Middle school teachers in the state of Mississippi were asked to participate in the study. The study sample was to consist of approximately 150 teachers from various areas of the state. While the participants for this study were drawn from a convenience sample, these participants offered a representative sample of middle school teachers by including schools that had PBS programs and those schools that did not have the behavior

programs. It further attended to representativeness by ensuring that participants were from various regions and school-based socio-economic profiles in the state of Mississippi.

### Instrumentation

The instrument that was used in this study was created by the researcher (Appendix A). The title of the instrument is Teacher Beliefs about Positive Behavior Support Survey Instrument. The survey consisted of two parts. The first part was comprised of seven items; the first six of these items focused on teacher attributes, including age, highest degree attained, years of teaching experience, grade level taught, subject area taught, and whether the teacher worked in general education or special education. The final question in this section asked respondents to indicate whether their school participated in a PBS program. All teachers, regardless of whether their schools participated in PBS programs, completed the first part of the survey. The items in the first part of the survey allowed the researcher to examine the relationship between specified teachers' characteristics and their beliefs about positive behavior support programs.

The second part of the survey instrument consisted two sections containing twenty-three items. In the first section, teachers responded to thirteen statements pertaining to their beliefs about PBS programs. Statements included in this section pertained to reported student attendance, standardized test scores, engagement, and behavior. After respondents finished this section of the survey, they were asked if they had been employed by the same school for more than one year. Teachers who answered no were informed that they had completed the survey. Teachers who indicated that they had been employed by the same school for at least two years were taken to the second

section of part two. This section consisted of nine statements pertaining to change over time. Topics for this section of the survey included teacher beliefs about reported changes in student attendance, standardized test scores, engagement, and behavior over a two-year period. Once again, teachers who worked at schools with and without PBS programs completed the second part of the survey. The information obtained from this part of the study allowed the researcher to compare the differences about PBS programs between teachers whose schools had the behavior programs and those who did not. Additionally, data collected from the change over time items allowed the researcher to compare the differences in reported changes in student attendance, standardized test scores, engagement, and behavior between teachers whose schools had positive behavior support programs and those who did not.

Permission to conduct the study in middle schools was solicited via a letter from the researcher (Appendix B). After the permission of superintendents or their designees to conduct the study in their districts was secured, and after Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval (Appendix C) was obtained, the survey was made available in electronic format. Teachers at the participating middle schools from the state of Mississippi were notified of the online survey. After their participation in the survey, the responses were quantified and the data was entered into SPSS.

Part I of the instrument, which consisted of seven items, contained the teacher attribute and demographics section of the instrument. The first item pertained to age, and available options include 20-29, 30-39, 40-49, or 50 or above. The next item dealt with the highest degree attained, and choices included Bachelor's, Master's, Specialist, or Doctorate. Item three was about years of teaching experience, and respondents entered

their number of years in the classroom. The next item related to grade level taught, and there were five options ranging from fifth grade through ninth grade. Item five pertained to subject area taught and contained five options:

- Computer/Social Studies
- Language Arts (Language/Reading)
- Math/Science
- Elective (Art, Music, Physical Education, Etc.)
- Other

The sixth item in Part I asked participants to indicate whether they taught general education or special education. The final item in Part I asked participants to indicate if they worked in schools with PBS programs; options included yes, no, and don't know.

Part II of the instrument contained two sections and twenty-three statements about PBS programs and change over a two-year period. The thirteen items in the first section of part two included teacher beliefs pertaining to PBS programs as they relate to reported student attendance, standardized test scores, engagement, and behavior. This portion of the survey contained items with response options organized in Likert scales through which respondents indicated the level to which they agreed or disagreed with each statement. Likert scales were established where a rating of 1 indicated strong disagreement with the statement, 2 indicated some disagreement with the statement, 3 indicated neither agreement nor disagreement with the statement, 4 indicated some agreement with the statement, and 5 indicated strong agreement with the statement.

After teachers finished the section pertaining to PBS programs, they were asked if they had been employed with the same school for more than one year. Teachers who had

been working with the same school for two or more years then responded to nine statements pertaining to changes over time. Respondents indicated their level of agreement as to how reported student attendance, standardized test scores, engagement, and behavior changed at their schools over the past two years. Items stated that the four areas being studied, changes in attendance, standardized test scores, engagement, and behavior, had improved at schools over the past two years. Once again, response options for this section were organized in Likert scales. Respondents indicated the extent to which they agreed or disagreed with each statement. Likert scales were established where a rating of 1 indicated strong disagreement with the statement, 2 indicated some disagreement with the statement, 3 indicated neither agreement nor disagreement with the statement, 4 indicated some agreement with the statement, and 5 indicated strong agreement with the statement.

Research Question 1 of the study was supported by the thirteen items pertaining to beliefs about PBS programs in the first section of Part II of the survey instrument. Research Question 1 and related Hypothesis 1 were supported by Items 1-13 in the first section of Part II of the instrument. Research Question 2 of the study was supported by the nine items pertaining to change over time in the second section of Part II of the survey instrument. Research Question 2 and related Hypothesis 2 were supported by Items 1-9 in the second section of Part II of the instrument. Research Question 3 of the study was supported by the six items pertaining to teacher characteristics in Part I of the survey instrument. Research Question 3 and related Hypothesis 3 were supported by Items 1-6 in Part I of the instrument. Responses from Parts I and II were divided into two categories and analyzed after participants indicated if their schools participated in



positive behavior support programs. This division allowed the researcher to compare teacher beliefs pertaining to the impact PBS programs have on reported student attendance, standardized test scores, engagement, and behavior between schools with behavior programs and those without.

In order to ensure validity and item clarity of the online questionnaire, a panel of experts reviewed the instrument and provided detailed advice on its applicability and appropriateness for the research purposes described in this chapter. The form on which panel members provided feedback for editing the instrument appears as Appendix D. To ensure instrument reliability, a pilot test was administered to approximately thirty participants prior to the study. The data collected from the pilot study was analyzed using the statistical program SPSS. The Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient test was utilized to determine reliability.

At the conclusion of the study, the researcher was able to examine teacher beliefs about the impacts that PBS programs may have on the behavior and achievement of middle school students. The researcher also examined beliefs from those teachers who work in schools with PBS programs compared with those who do not. Additionally, the researcher examined the beliefs teachers held about change in their schools between those with and without PBS programs. Lastly, the researcher examined the relationship of selected teacher attributes to these beliefs.

#### Data Collection Process

Survey responses for this study were collected using the online questionnaire engine, Qualtrics. Participants were notified at the beginning of the survey that participation was voluntary. Furthermore, they were assured that there were no negative

consequences should they have chosen not to participate. Participants were also informed that completion of the online questionnaire indicated agreement to be included in the study. The cover letter to participants appears as Appendix E. Informed consent information is included in Appendix F.

### Analysis of Data

Responses for this quantitative study were analyzed using descriptive statistics, logistic regression, Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient, and Pearson's product moment correlation coefficient. Descriptive statistics, including mean, standard deviation, frequency, and percentages, were calculated. In the first part of the study, logistic regression was utilized with implementation of a PBS program as the dependent variable and teacher beliefs about reported student attendance, standardized test scores, engagement, and behavior as the independent variables. Logistic regression was also utilized to determine if there was a significant difference in beliefs pertaining to change over time between teachers at schools with PBS programs and those without the behavior programs. Once again, implementation of a PBS program was the dependent variable, and teacher beliefs about change in student attendance, change in standardized test scores, change in engagement, and change in behavior were the independent variables.

For the part of the study pertaining to teacher demographics and characteristics, correlations were used to determine if relationships existed between the teacher attributes, including age, highest degree attained, years of teaching experience, grade level taught, subject area taught, and whether the teacher was in general education or special education, and their associated beliefs about PBS programs. Pearson's product moment correlations were calculated to examine the relationships between the variables in this

part of the study. Data for both parts of the study were analyzed using the statistical program SPSS.

### Summary

Chapter III details the research method design that was used for this study. Research questions and hypotheses were also presented in this section. The study included two topics, and all respondents participated in both parts of the survey. Items in Part I examined the relationships between teacher attributes, including age, highest degree attained, years of teaching experience, grade level taught, subject area taught, and whether the teacher was in general education or special education, and their beliefs about the impact of PBS programs on student achievement and behavior. Items in Part II pertained to the extent to which respondents agreed or disagreed with statements about PBS programs, and their perceived impact on reported student attendance, standardized test scores, engagement, and behavior. Additionally, Part II also included items where teachers, including those who worked at schools with and without PBS programs, responded to statements pertaining to change over time.

## CHAPTER IV – RESEARCH RESULTS

### Introduction

This chapter will include results from the research that has been conducted for this study. Because the researcher created the instrument used for this study, a pilot test was conducted. Twenty-seven respondents from two Mississippi middle schools participated in the pilot study. One of the schools in the pilot study had a positive behavior support (PBS) program in place, and the other school did not have a PBS program. The pilot study was conducted in February and March 2016. The results from the pilot study insured instrument reliability; thus, the researcher proceeded with the full study.

The data for this study were collected by using a thirty item online survey hosted by Qualtrics, and the complete study was conducted in March and April 2016. The respondents were middle school teachers in the state of Mississippi. Two hundred thirty participants from thirteen schools participated in the study, including those from schools with and without positive behavior support (PBS) programs in place.

The first topic for this study involved teacher beliefs about PBS programs pertaining to reported student attendance, standardized test scores, engagement, and behavior. All participants, regardless of whether their schools had positive behavior support programs, responded to statements about PBS programs. Additionally, there was a change over time component in the survey. Only teachers who had been employed at their schools for more than one year answered the items pertaining to change. These items allowed the researcher to compare teacher-believed changes at schools with PBS programs to those at schools without behavior programs. For this part of the study, the

implementation of a PBS program was the dependent variable, and teacher beliefs about student attendance, standardized test scores, engagement, and behavior were the independent variables.

The second topic for this study involved teacher attributes. Demographic variables included teacher age, highest degree earned, years of teaching experience, grade level taught, subject area taught, and whether the respondent taught general education or special education. In this study, descriptive statistics, Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient, logistic regression, and Pearson's product moment correlation coefficient were used to analyze the data. Based on the data collected, the results of this study answered the following research questions:

RQ1. Is there a difference in teacher characteristics and beliefs about PBS programs between schools that have implemented PBS programs and in schools that have not?

RQ2. Is there a difference in teacher characteristics and beliefs about change between schools that have implemented PBS programs and in schools that have not?

RQ3. Is there a relationship between teacher beliefs about PBS programs and teacher characteristics?

The following sections of this chapter include the descriptive and statistical data for the research. Also included in these sections are the interpretations of these data and the results of the study.

## Descriptive Data

Descriptive statistics for the study are presented in this section. Table 1 reflects the frequencies and percentages for the participants' age, highest degree attained, and years of teaching experience. Regarding age, respondents were distributed fairly evenly with the smallest age group being 20-29 (18.9%) and the largest group being 30-39 (30.2%). Those ages 40-49 represented 23.9% of all respondents, while those 50 and above made up 27.0% of the sample size. The majority of respondents held a Bachelor's degree (52.0%), followed closely by those with a Master's degree (41.2%) and a Specialist degree (4.5%). The smallest group attained a Doctorate degree (2.3%). With regard to years of teaching experience, the largest group of respondents was relatively new to the profession with five or fewer years (32.3%), while the smallest group was those with 16-20 years of teaching experience (11.7%). The mean for the years of teaching experience was 12.12 with a standard deviation of 9.437.

Table 1

### *Participants' Age, Degree, and Teaching Experience*

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
Age		
20-29	42	18.9
30-39	67	30.2
40-49	53	23.9
50 and above	60	27.0

Table 1 (continued).

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
Highest Degree Attained		
Bachelor's	115	52.0
Master's	91	41.2
Specialist	10	4.5
Doctorate	5	2.3
Years of Experience		
1-5 years	72	32.3
6-10 years	44	19.7
11-15 years	34	15.2
16-20 years	26	11.7
21 or more years	47	21.1

Table 2 reflects the frequencies and percentages for the participants' grade level taught, subject area taught, and whether they were in general education or special education. The grade level taught was distributed fairly evenly between sixth (27.1%), seventh (36.2%), and eighth grade teachers (32.1%), with a small percentage of fifth (3.2%) and ninth grade teachers (1.4%). With regards to subject area, the smallest group of respondents taught electives (9.9%), while the largest group taught language/reading (28.4%). Lastly, the majority of respondents were general education teachers (81.0%) compared to 19.0% of special education teachers.

Table 2

*Participants' Grade Level, Subject Area, and General or Special Education*

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
Grade Level Taught		
Fifth	7	3.2
Sixth	60	27.1
Seventh	80	36.2
Eighth	71	32.1
Ninth	3	1.4
Subject Area Taught		
Computer/Social Studies	43	19.4
Language/Reading	63	28.4
Math/Science	60	27.0
Elective	22	9.9
Other	34	15.3
Teaching Assignment		
General Education	179	81.0
Special Education	42	19.0

Table 3 reflects the means and standard deviations for the four independent variables, including beliefs pertaining to reported attendance, standardized test scores,



engagement, and behavior. The means and standard deviations for all four variables were similar.

Table 3

*Statistics for Attendance, Test Scores, Engagement, and Behavior*

Variable	Mean	Standard Deviation
Attendance	3.645	1.142
Standardized Test Scores	3.669	1.168
Engagement	3.712	1.209
Behavior	3.743	1.206

Note: 1 = Strongly Disagree, 5 = Strongly Agree

Table 4 reflects the means and standard deviations for the four independent variables, including beliefs pertaining to change in attendance, change in standardized test scores, change in engagement, and change in behavior. Only teachers employed at the same school for more than one year answered the items pertaining to change over time. The means and standard deviations for all four variables were somewhat similar, but not as close as the previous table.

Table 4

*Statistics for Changes in Attendance, Test Scores, Engagement, and Behavior*

Variable	Mean	Standard Deviation
Change in Attendance	3.186	1.020
Change in Test Scores	3.507	1.014
Change in Engagement	3.451	1.034
Change in Behavior	3.235	1.172

Note: 1 = Strongly Disagree, 5 = Strongly Agree

## Statistical Data

Statistical data for the study are presented in this section. For the pilot study, survey items were grouped into eight variables: beliefs about student attendance, beliefs about student standardized test scores, beliefs about student engagement, beliefs about student behavior, beliefs about changes in student attendance, beliefs about changes in student standardized test scores, beliefs about changes in student engagement, and beliefs about changes in student behavior. The Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient test was conducted, and all variables were above the recommended reliability coefficient of .7. Seven of the variables had a Cronbach's alpha greater than .8, while the remaining variable, beliefs about changes in student attendance, had an alpha of .706. Table 5 contains the eight variables and their corresponding Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficients.

Table 5

*Cronbach's Alpha Reliability Coefficient Test Results for Pilot Study*

Variables	Cronbach's Alpha
Attendance	.923
Standardized Test Scores	.937
Engagement	.937
Behavior	.958
Changes in Attendance	.706
Changes in Standardized Test Scores	.842
Changes in Engagement	.837
Changes in Behavior	.914

Using the same eight variables, the Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient test was also conducted for the entire study, and all variables were well above the recommended reliability coefficient of .7. All variables had a Cronbach's alpha greater than .8. Table 6 contains the eight variables and their corresponding Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficients.

Table 6

*Cronbach's Alpha Reliability Coefficient Test Results for Full Study*

Variables	Cronbach's Alpha
Attendance	.925
Standardized Test Scores	.952
Engagement	.949
Behavior	.965
Changes in Attendance	.893
Changes in Standardized Test Scores	.933
Changes in Engagement	.877
Changes in Behavior	.920

Logistic regression was used to determine if there was a difference in teacher characteristics and beliefs about PBS programs between schools with and without PBS programs. All participants, whether they were employed by schools with or without positive behavior support programs, responded to statements about PBS programs. The dependent variable was implementation of a PBS program, while the independent variables were centered scores for teacher beliefs about student attendance, standardized test scores, engagement, and behavior. Additional independent demographic variables included teacher age, highest degree attained, years of teaching experience, grade level taught, whether the teacher was in general education or special education, and subject area taught. The subject areas consisted of computer/social studies, language/reading,

math/science, electives, and other subjects. The Hosmer and Lemeshow Test for the logistic regression was not significant ( $\chi^2 = 7.015$ ,  $df = 8$ ,  $p = .535$ ). However, the Omnibus Tests of Model Coefficients was also not significant ( $\chi^2 = 10.906$ ,  $df = 13$ ,  $p = .619$ ). Thus, the model was determined to be not significant.  $R_1$  suggested there would be a statistically significant difference in teacher beliefs about PBS programs in schools that had implemented PBS programs and in schools that had not. At the .05 level, there were no statistically significant differences in teacher beliefs pertaining to student attendance, standardized test scores, engagement, and behavior. Table 7 represents the centered variables for attendance, standardized test scores, engagement, and behavior. Also included in the table are teacher demographic variables, including age, degree, experience, grade level, assignment of general education or special education, and subject area. Additionally, odds ratios and levels of significance for all variables are presented.

Table 7

*Table of Odds Ratios for Current Belief Variables and Characteristics*

Variable	Exp(b)	Significance
Attendance	1.032	.892
Standardized Test Scores	.786	.414
Engagement	1.585	.180
Behavior	.837	.517
Age	.661	.096
Highest Degree Attained	1.011	.968

Table 7 (continued).

Variable	Exp(b)	Significance
Years of Experience	1.036	.216
Grade Level Taught	-.847	.395
General/Special Education	1.275	.629
Subject Area Taught		
Computer/Social Studies	.492	.178
Math/Science	.627	.337
Electives	.387	.130
Other Subjects	.378	.086

Logistic regression was also used to determine if there was a difference in teacher characteristics and beliefs about change between schools with and without PBS programs. Only teachers who had been employed at the same school for more than one year answered survey items pertaining to change. As in the previous logistic regression, the dependent variable was implementation of a PBS program. The independent variables were centered scores for teacher beliefs about changes in attendance, changes in standardized test scores, changes in engagement, and changes in behavior. The additional independent demographic variables remained the same, and they included teacher age, highest degree attained, years of teaching experience, grade level taught, whether the teacher was in general education or special education, and subject area taught. The subject areas consisted of computer/social studies, language/reading, math/science,

electives, and other subjects. Once again, the Hosmer and Lemeshow Test for the logistic regression was not significant ( $\chi^2 = 11.801$ ,  $df = 8$ ,  $p = .160$ ). Additionally, the Omnibus Tests of Model Coefficients was yet again not significant ( $\chi^2 = 13.611$ ,  $df = 13$ ,  $p = .402$ ). Thus, this model was also determined to be not significant.  $R_2$  suggested there would be a statistically significant difference in teacher-reported changes in student attendance, student standardized test scores, student engagement, and student behavior in schools that had implemented PBS programs and in schools that had not. At the .05 level, there were no statistically significant differences in these variables. Table 8 represents the centered variables for change in attendance, change in standardized test scores, change in engagement, and change in behavior. Also included in the table are teacher demographic variables for respondents who answered the change items in the survey. Variables included teacher age, highest degree attained, years of teaching experience, grade level taught, whether the teacher was in general education or special education, and subject area taught. Associated odds ratios and levels of significance for all variables are also reported.

Table 8

*Table of Odds Ratios for Change Belief Variables and Characteristics*

Variable	Exp(b)	Significance
Change in Attendance	.606	.132
Change in Test Scores	.851	.597
Change in Engagement	1.595	.182

Table 8 (continued).

Variable	Exp(b)	Significance
Change in Behavior	1.319	.284
Age	.699	.284
Highest Degree Attained	.961	.894
Years of Experience	1.037	.324
Grade Level Taught	.903	.678
General/Special Education	1.847	.381
Subject Area Taught		
Computer/Social Studies	.457	.265
Math/Science	.545	.347
Electives	.326	.177
Other Subjects	.245	.068

The relationship between teacher beliefs about PBS programs and teacher attributes was examined by calculating Pearson product moment correlation coefficients.  $R_3$  suggested there would be a statistically significant relationship between teacher beliefs about PBS programs and teacher characteristics, including teacher age, highest degree attained, years of teaching experience, grade level taught, subject area taught, and whether the teacher was in general education or special education. Additionally, the researcher suggested the relationship would be negative for teacher age and years of teaching experience. According to the Pearson product moment correlation coefficients,



there were no significant relationships among teacher beliefs pertaining to student attendance, standardized test scores, engagement, and behavior and the teacher demographic variables listed above. However, there were some variables approaching significance. Teacher beliefs pertaining to student attendance and teacher age were approaching significance with a small negative correlation ( $r = -.128, p = .059$ ). Teacher beliefs pertaining to student attendance and years of teaching experience were also approaching significance with a small negative correlation ( $r = -.124, p = .068$ ). Lastly, teacher beliefs pertaining to student behavior and teacher age were approaching significance with a small negative correlation ( $r = -.125, p = .069$ ).

#### Summary

All variables for this study were statistically tested. Regarding positive behavior support (PBS) programs, none of the independent variables (reported student attendance, standardized test scores, engagement, or behavior) were found to be significant at the .05 level. However, there were three relationships approaching significance ( $p = .07$  or below). Teacher beliefs pertaining to student attendance and teacher age were approaching significance with a small negative correlation, while teacher beliefs pertaining to student attendance and years of teaching experience were also approaching significance with a small negative correlation. Similarly, teacher beliefs pertaining to student behavior and teacher age were approaching significance with a small negative correlation. No other areas of statistical significance were found in the study.

## CHAPTER V – DISCUSSION

### Introduction

Chapter V contains the conclusions derived from this study. Also included in the chapter are recommendations for school administrators on how to use the results of the study to benefit their students. Limitations are also presented. Based on the findings of the study, this chapter provides researchers with suggestions for future research. Chapter V concludes with a comprehensive overview of the entire study.

### Conclusions and Discussion

This quantitative study explored teacher beliefs pertaining to positive behavior support (PBS) programs and their associated impact on reported student attendance, standardized test scores, engagement, and behavior. Additionally, teacher attributes, including age, highest degree attained, years of teaching experience, grade level taught, subject area taught, and whether the teacher was in general education or special education, were also analyzed to determine if there was a relationship between these characteristics and the teacher beliefs. Based on the data collected, the results of this research answered three research questions. Those questions, along with the findings and conclusions drawn, are presented in the following sections.

#### *Research Question #1*

Is there a difference in teacher characteristics and beliefs about PBS programs between schools that have implemented PBS programs and in schools that have not?  $R_1$  suggested there would be a statistically significant difference in teacher characteristics and beliefs about PBS programs between schools with PBS programs and those without the behavior programs. At the .05 level, there were no statistically significant differences

in teacher beliefs pertaining to reported student attendance, standardized test scores, engagement, or behavior between schools with or without positive behavior support programs.

All statements on the survey instrument were written stating that PBS programs resulted in increases in student achievement and behavior variables. The Likert scales used were established where 1 indicated strong disagreement with the statement and 5 indicated strong agreement with the statement. Teachers had a somewhat favorable rating of PBS programs for all four independent variables, as the means of reported student attendance, standardized test scores, engagement, and behavior were 3.645 or higher. However, the differences between teachers at schools with PBS programs and those without the behavior programs were found to be not statistically significant.

#### *Research Question #2*

Is there a difference in teacher characteristics and beliefs about change between schools that have implemented PBS programs and in schools that have not?  $R_2$  suggested there would be a statistically significant difference in teacher characteristics and beliefs about reported change in student attendance, change in student standardized test scores, change in student engagement, and change in student behavior in schools with PBS programs and those without the behavior programs. At the .05 level, there were no statistically significant differences in these variables between teachers at schools with or without PBS programs.

All statements on the survey instrument were written stating that student achievement and behavior variables had increased at schools over the past two years. Once again, the Likert scales used were established where 1 indicated strong

disagreement with the statement and 5 indicated strong agreement with the statement. Teachers had a somewhat favorable rating of reported change in student attendance, change in standardized test scores, change in engagement, and change in behavior. The means for these variables were 3.186 or higher. However, the differences between teachers at schools with PBS programs and those without the behavior programs were found to be not statistically significant.

### *Research Question #3*

Is there a relationship between teacher beliefs about PBS programs and teacher characteristics? R<sub>3</sub> suggested there would be a statistically significant relationship between teacher beliefs about PBS programs and teacher demographics, including teacher age, highest degree attained, years of teaching experience, grade level taught, subject area taught, and whether the teacher was in general education or special education. Using Pearson product moment correlation coefficients, there were no statistically significant relationships among teacher beliefs pertaining to student attendance, standardized test scores, engagement, or behavior and the demographic variables previously mentioned. However, there were some correlations approaching significance. Teacher beliefs relating to student attendance and teacher age were approaching significance with a small negative correlation ( $r = -.128, p = .059$ ). Additionally, teacher beliefs pertaining to student attendance and years of teaching experience were also approaching significance with a small negative correlation ( $r = -.124, p = .068$ ). Lastly, teacher beliefs pertaining to student behavior and teacher age were approaching significance with a small negative correlation ( $r = -.125, p = .069$ ).

## Recommendations for Policy and Practice

While the research questions for this study did not lead to statistically significant results, school administrators can use the data to enhance the practices within their schools and improve the achievement of their students. Aaron Thompson and Kristina Webber (2008) conducted a study pertaining to the implementation of a behavior management program with middle school students that did not lead to statistically significant results. However, the research did produce important information and data for the participants in their study. Results from the study revealed that teachers saw a drop in student disciplinary referrals to the office, an increase in instructional time in the classroom, and improved teacher-student relationships (Thompson & Webber, 2010).

It is also important for school leaders to ensure that their faculty members take ownership of positive behavior support programs. In their research, Feuerborn and Chinn (2012) discovered that schools with ineffective PBS programs typically did not have the buy-in or support of their staff. Flannery et al. (2010) also proclaim that including staff members in the development and implementation of PBS programs helps to ensure program longevity. Gorgueiro (2008) notes that “because teachers are both the primary implementers of PBS interventions and also consumers of its outcomes, their perceptions are critically important” (p. 14).

School administrators who currently have PBS programs on campus must continually examine their programs and modify them as needed. Coffey and Horner (2012) believe that schools must adjust the policies and procedures of their PBS programs regularly. Colvin and Fernandez (2010) note that the success of positive

behavior support programs is contingent on the school's administrators and teachers continually developing and adjusting the procedures to fit the needs of their students.

#### Limitations

This study only included teachers from schools in the state of Mississippi. Future researchers may want to include teachers from other states. While this study contained a diverse geographic sample from Mississippi, researchers may want to get input from a more varied group by including beliefs of teachers from other regions of the country. Doing so would allow the researchers to compare the beliefs of Mississippi teachers pertaining to positive behavior support programs to those of other states or geographic areas.

This study consisted solely of middle school teachers. Future researchers may want to include teachers at the high school and/or elementary level. Researchers may also choose to incorporate various types of schools. This study measured only the beliefs of public school teachers, but future researchers may want to analyze the beliefs pertaining to PBS programs of public school teachers to private school teachers.

While this study focused on teacher beliefs pertaining to PBS programs, the survey instrument did not clearly define what these programs consist of or how they are sustained. With respect to positive behavior support programs, schools have various methods and techniques for implementation and sustainability. During a conversation between the researcher and a school administrator, the school leader noted that her school had a PBS program but that it had not been properly implemented. Future researchers may want to establish detailed guidelines as to what constitutes an adequate positive behavior support program.

This study asked respondents to recall information from a previous year of teaching experience and compare it to the current year. Recall of information is completely dependent of memories that can be imperfect. Retrospective recall questions are subject to bias, as respondents may not accurately remember their feelings or actions from previous years.

#### Recommendations for Future Research

While the research questions for this study did not produce statistically significant results, there were variables in the study that were approaching significance. School administrators can utilize the information contained in this study to enhance the current practices in their schools.

This study included teachers at schools with and without positive behavior support programs. Future researchers who are interested in analyzing teacher beliefs relating to PBS programs may choose to change the criteria from schools with PBS programs to schools with PBS programs for a specified period of time. Walker et al. (2005) believe that it takes three years for schools to effectively implement and evaluate their PBS programs. This proposed modification to the research protocol would change the study sample to teachers at schools without PBS programs and teachers at schools with PBS programs for a minimum of three years.

Future researchers may also explore the correlations of this study that were approaching significance. Beliefs pertaining to PBS programs and teacher age and years of teaching experience were both approaching significance ( $p < .07$ ) with a small negative correlation. By increasing the sample size or incorporating other states or

geographic areas, future researchers may be able to discover statistically significant results from these variables.

### Summary

As discussed in Chapter I of this study, the *No Child Left Behind Act of 2001* placed pressure on schools to ensure that all students achieve success. While the Obama administration granted waivers to many states, a level of accountability still remains. Thus, school leaders are looking for effective academic and behavioral intervention strategies to increase the achievement level of their students (Cook et al., 2007). In an effort to make the necessary improvements, many administrators have chosen to implement positive behavior support programs (Thompson & Webber, 2010).

The purpose of this study was to investigate teacher beliefs pertaining to the impact of PBS programs on student achievement and behavior variables. Additionally, teacher attributes were examined to determine if relationships exist between beliefs about PBS programs and teacher demographic variables. This study is beneficial because school administrators continue to search for strategies and techniques that lead to student growth and achievement.

As detailed in Chapter II, this study was grounded in motivation theory and Bandura's social cognitive theory (SCT). The premise of motivation theory is that individuals act a certain way because of the associated outcomes (Weiner, 2010). PBS programs reward students for good behavior. The concept behind Bandura's social cognitive theory is that individuals will likely meet challenges if they feel they are attainable (Bandura, 2001). PBS programs involve teaching students the 'right way' to do things, and they often strive to meet their goals.



As described in Chapters III and IV, this study was quantitative in nature and consisted of two topics. The first topic pertained to teacher beliefs about the impact of positive behavior support programs on student achievement and behavior variables. All teachers, regardless of whether their schools had implemented a PBS program, participated in this part of the study. Also included in the first topic of the study was a change over time component. Teachers who had been employed at the same school for more than one year responded to items pertaining to change over a two-year period. The second topic of the study involved teacher attributes, including age, highest degree attained, years of teaching experience, grade level taught, subject area taught, and whether the teacher was in general education or special education, and their associated beliefs about PBS programs. Once again, all teachers, including those at schools with and without PBS programs, participated in this part of the study.

After receiving IRB approval and obtaining permission from district superintendents to conduct the study, the researcher made the survey available in electronic format. The researcher created the survey instrument for this study. Validity for the questionnaire was obtained after it was reviewed and approved by a panel of experts. Additionally, a pilot study of twenty-seven participants was conducted, and all variables were above the recommended reliability coefficient in the Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient test.

After completion of the pilot study, the researcher contacted middle school principals, or their designees, to distribute informed consent information and survey links to teachers. The 230 participants in this study were from thirteen public middle schools throughout the state of Mississippi. The survey instrument, titled Teacher Beliefs About

Positive Behavior Support Survey Instrument, was created by the researcher. The online questionnaire consisted of two sections containing thirty items. All teachers, including those who worked at schools with and without positive behavior support programs, participated in both sections of the survey. The first section contained the teacher attribute items, including age, highest degree attained, years of teaching experience, grade level taught, subject area taught, and whether the teacher was in general education or special education. The final question in this section asked respondents if their schools had PBS programs in place. The second section of the survey instrument pertained to beliefs about PBS programs and change over time. For the first thirteen items, respondents indicated the extent to which they agreed or disagreed with the impact of PBS programs on reported student attendance, standardized test scores, engagement, and behavior. The next item asked respondents to indicate if they had been employed by the same school for more than one year. Only teachers who answered yes were taken to the change over time items in the second section of the survey. These nine items asked respondents to indicate the level of change they believe had occurred at their schools over the past two years. Topics for these items included reported change in student attendance, change in standardized test scores, change in engagement, and change in behavior.

Responses for this study were analyzed using descriptive statistics, logistic regression, Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient, and Pearson's product moment correlation coefficient. Data were entered and analyzed using the statistical program SPSS. For the first topic of this study, logistic regression was utilized with implementation of a PBS program as the dependent variable, while the independent variables included teacher beliefs about reported student attendance, standardized test

scores, engagement, and behavior. Logistic regression was also utilized to determine if there was a significant difference in beliefs pertaining to change over a two-year period between teachers at schools with PBS programs and those without the behavior programs. Once again, the dependent variable was implementation of a PBS program, while the independent variables consisted of teacher beliefs about change in student attendance, change in student standardized test scores, change in student engagement, and change in student behavior.

For the second topic of the study, correlations were utilized to determine if relationships existed between teacher attributes, including age, highest degree attained, years of teaching experience, grade level taught, subject area taught, and whether the teacher was in general education or special education, and their associated beliefs about PBS programs. Pearson's product moment correlation coefficients were calculated to examine the relationships between these variables.

The data obtained from this study addressed the following research questions:

RQ1. Is there a difference in teacher characteristics and beliefs about PBS programs between schools that have implemented PBS programs and in schools that have not?

RQ2. Is there a difference in teacher characteristics and beliefs about change between schools that have implemented PBS programs and in schools that have not?

RQ3. Is there a relationship between teacher beliefs about PBS programs and teacher characteristics?

At the .05 level, none of the variables in this study were found to be statistically significant. However, there were some variables approaching significance. Teacher beliefs pertaining to student attendance and teacher age were approaching significance with a small negative correlation. Teacher beliefs pertaining to student attendance and years of teaching experience were also approaching significance with a small negative correlation. Finally, teacher beliefs pertaining to student behavior and teacher age were approaching significance with a small negative correlation. While all of the research questions did not produce statistically significant results, school administrators can still use the findings of this study to improve the achievement level of their students.

# APPENDIX A – Teacher Beliefs about Positive Behavior

## Support Survey Instrument

### Teacher Attributes

The following survey contains items concerning teacher beliefs about positive behavior support (PBS) programs. Teachers at schools with and without PBS programs are invited to participate in this survey.

Part I - Answer the following items about teacher attributes.

Age:

20-29

30-39

40-49

50 or above

Highest Degree Earned:

Bachelor's

Master's

Specialist

Doctorate

Years of Classroom Teaching Experience:

My Grade Taught:

(If you teach more than one grade, select your primary grade.)

5th

6th

7th

8th

9th

My Subject Area:

(If you teach more than one subject area, select your primary subject area.)

Computer / Social  
Studies

Language Arts  
(Language / Reading)

Math / Science

Elective (Art, Music,  
Physical Education,  
Etc.)

Other

I Teach:

General Education

Special Education

Does your school currently participate in a positive behavior support (PBS) program?

Yes

No

Don't Know

PBS Programs

Part II - Select the answer that is representative of the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements about PBS programs.

PBS programs:

	Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree	Don't Know
Motivate students to attend school regularly	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Motivate students to arrive to school on time each day	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Motivate students to not check out before the end of the school day	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Have a positive impact on student standardized test scores	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Encourage students to take pride in their standardized test scores	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Motivate students to believe they are capable of greater achievement on standardized tests	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Increase the level of student participation and engagement in the classroom	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Motivate students to come to school ready to learn	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Encourage students to place a higher value on education	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Have a positive impact on major disruptive behavior	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Provide motivation to students to behave while at school	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Encourage students to follow school rules	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Assist in decreasing the number of discipline problems on campus	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Change

Have you been employed at your current school at least two years? If you answer "No" to this question, you will skip items pertaining to changes over time at your school.

Yes

No

Part II - Consider the last two years at your school. Indicate the degree to which you believe the following changes have occurred.

Over the past two years at my school,

	Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree	Don't Know
<i>Student attendance has improved.</i>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<i>Student tardiness has improved.</i>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<i>Student check-outs have improved.</i>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<i>Student scores in mathematics on standardized tests have improved.</i>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<i>Student scores in language arts (language and reading) on standardized tests have improved.</i>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<i>The number of students who actively participate in class (raise hand, volunteer, etc.) has increased.</i>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<i>The number of students who place a higher value on education has increased.</i>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<i>The number of students placed in ISS (in-school suspension) has decreased.</i>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<i>The number of students suspended has decreased.</i>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Please use the space below to discuss any questions or comments you have regarding the survey.

APPENDIX B – Letter to Superintendent Requesting Permission to Conduct Study

Chad Davis  
8105 Ridgewood Drive  
Kiln, MS 39556  
228-304-1914  
chad.j.davis@eagles.usm.edu

November 1, 2015

RECIPIENT NAME  
INSIDE ADDRESS  
CITY, STATE ZIP CODE

Dear TITLE:

I am a doctoral student at The University of Southern Mississippi (USM) under the direction of Dr. David E. Lee. The purpose of this letter is to ask permission to gather research data from teachers at the middle school(s) in your district. The information collected will be used in my dissertation. My study is entitled Teacher Beliefs Regarding Positive Behavior Support Programs in Mississippi Middle Schools.

My research focuses on positive behavior support (PBS) programs. Using the online questionnaire engine, Qualtrics, teachers will rate the believed impact of PBS programs on changes in student attendance, standardized test scores, engagement, and behavior. Additionally, the relationship of teachers' beliefs about PBS programs to teacher attributes, including age, highest degree attained, years of experience, grade level taught, subject area taught, and whether they work in general or special education will be examined. The study results will be useful in analyzing the believed significance of PBS programs by teachers and determining if teacher attributes relate to these beliefs.

I plan to begin collecting data in December 2015. Participation in the study is completely voluntary, and there is no inherent risk associated with participation. Completion of the survey should take less than ten minutes, and no teacher, school, or school district will be identified in the study.

Participation in this study is completely voluntary and confidential. Neither your district, nor teacher participants, will be identified in the dissertation or documents written about the study. Your approval to conduct this survey within your district will be greatly appreciated. Feel free to contact me if you have any questions or concerns at (228) 304-1914 or chad.j.davis@eagles.usm.edu. My committee chair is Dr. David E. Lee, and he can be reached at david.e.lee@usm.edu or at (601) 266-4580.



Thank you for your time and consideration of my request to include the middle school(s) in your district in my study. If you agree to have teachers from your district's middle school(s) participate, please copy the attached consent form to your district's letterhead, sign it, scan the signed document, and email it to me at [chad.j.davis@eagles.usm.edu](mailto:chad.j.davis@eagles.usm.edu).

Sincerely,



Chad Davis

#### Consent Form

By signing and returning this form, I give Chad Davis, a doctoral candidate at The University of Southern Mississippi, permission to conduct a research study in the \_\_\_\_\_ School District. I acknowledge that Mr. Davis may contact my district's middle school building administrators to identify the contact person who will provide email addresses for teachers and counselors.

Approved by:

---

Please print your name and title above.

---

Superintendent's signature

---

Date

## APPENDIX C – Institutional Review Board Approval



### **INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD**

118 College Drive #5147 | Hattiesburg, MS 39406-0001

Phone: 601.266.5997 | Fax: 601.266.4377 | [www.usm.edu/research/institutional.review.board](http://www.usm.edu/research/institutional.review.board)

### **NOTICE OF COMMITTEE ACTION**

The project has been reviewed by The University of Southern Mississippi Institutional Review Board in accordance with Federal Drug Administration regulations (21 CFR 26, 111), Department of Health and Human Services (45 CFR Part 46), and university guidelines to ensure adherence to the following criteria:

- The risks to subjects are minimized.
- The risks to subjects are reasonable in relation to the anticipated benefits.
- The selection of subjects is equitable.
- Informed consent is adequate and appropriately documented.
- Where appropriate, the research plan makes adequate provisions for monitoring the data collected to ensure the safety of the subjects.
- Where appropriate, there are adequate provisions to protect the privacy of subjects and to maintain the confidentiality of all data.
- Appropriate additional safeguards have been included to protect vulnerable subjects.
- Any unanticipated, serious, or continuing problems encountered regarding risks to subjects must be reported immediately, but not later than 10 days following the event. This should be reported to the IRB Office via the "Adverse Effect Report Form".
- If approved, the maximum period of approval is limited to twelve months.  
Projects that exceed this period must submit an application for renewal or continuation.

PROTOCOL NUMBER: 16021105

PROJECT TITLE: Teacher Beliefs Regarding Positive Behavior Support Programs in Mississippi Middle Schools

PROJECT TYPE: New Project

RESEARCHER(S): Chad Davis

COLLEGE/DIVISION: College of Education and Psychology

DEPARTMENT: Educational Leadership and School Counseling

FUNDING AGENCY/SPONSOR: N/A

IRB COMMITTEE ACTION: Expedited Review Approval

PERIOD OF APPROVAL: 02/25/2016 to 02/24/2017

**Lawrence A. Hosman, Ph.D.**

**Institutional Review Board**

**INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD**

118 College Drive #5147 | Hattiesburg, MS 39406-0001

Phone: 601.266.5997 | Fax: 601.266.4377 | [www.usm.edu/research/institutional.review.board](http://www.usm.edu/research/institutional.review.board)

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- The risks to subjects are minimized.
- The risks to subjects are reasonable in relation to the anticipated benefits.
- The selection of subjects is equitable.
- Informed consent is adequate and appropriately documented.
- Where appropriate, the research plan makes adequate provisions for monitoring the data collected to ensure the safety of the subjects.
- Where appropriate, there are adequate provisions to protect the privacy of subjects and to maintain the confidentiality of all data.
- Appropriate additional safeguards have been included to protect vulnerable subjects.
- Any unanticipated, serious, or continuing problems encountered regarding risks to subjects must be reported immediately, but not later than 10 days following the event. This should be reported to the IRB Office via the "Adverse Effect Report Form".
- If approved, the maximum period of approval is limited to twelve months.  
Projects that exceed this period must submit an application for renewal or continuation.

PROTOCOL NUMBER: CH16021105

PROJECT TITLE: Teacher Beliefs Regarding Positive Behavior Support Programs in Mississippi Middle Schools

PROJECT TYPE: Change to a Previously Approved Project

RESEARCHER(S): Chad Davis

COLLEGE/DIVISION: College of Education and Psychology

DEPARTMENT: Educational Leadership and School Counseling

FUNDING AGENCY/SPONSOR: N/A

IRB COMMITTEE ACTION: Expedited Review Approval

PERIOD OF APPROVAL: 02/25/2016 to 02/24/2017

**Lawrence A. Hosman, Ph.D.**

**Institutional Review Board**

## APPENDIX D – Validity and Item Clarity Rubric for Panel of Experts

The following rubric is to be used to assess the validity and item clarity in a dissertation survey instrument. The survey instrument was created by Chad Davis, a doctoral candidate at The University of Southern Mississippi. The study focuses on positive behavior support (PBS) programs, and the title of the survey instrument is “Teacher Beliefs About Positive Behavior Support Survey Instrument.” Teachers in Mississippi middle schools will be included in the study, and they will complete the electronic survey using the online questionnaire engine, Qualtrics.

The survey instrument consists of two parts. All teachers will participate in both parts of the study. They will rate the believed impact of PBS programs on student attendance, standardized test scores, engagement, and behavior. There will also be a change in time component of this part of the survey instrument in which respondents at schools with and without PBS programs compare the changes at their schools. In the second part of the study, the relationship of teachers’ beliefs about PBS programs and teacher attributes, including age, highest degree attained, years of experience, grade level taught, subject area taught, and whether the teacher works in general or special education will be examined. The study results will be useful in analyzing the believed significance of PBS programs by teachers and determining if teacher attributes relate to these beliefs.

Members of the panel of experts have two options for completing the rubric, which is found on the following page. They may respond electronically and email the completed rubric to Chad Davis at [chad.j.davis@eagles.usm.edu](mailto:chad.j.davis@eagles.usm.edu). Additionally, they may print the rubric, complete it by hand, scan, and email it to researcher using the email address provided above. Thank you for providing your insight into the validity and item clarity of the survey instrument.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Title/Position: \_\_\_\_\_

<b>Criteria</b>	<b>Score</b> 1 = Unacceptable 2 = Below Expectations 3 = Meets Expectations 4 = Exceeds Expectations	<b>Comments and Suggestions</b>
<b>Clarity</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The questions are direct and specific.</li> <li>• There are no ambiguous questions.</li> <li>• Only one question is asked at a time.</li> <li>• Participants can easily understand what is being asked.</li> </ul>	1      2      3      4	
<b>Conciseness</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The questions are concise.</li> <li>• There are no unnecessary words or phrases.</li> </ul>	1      2      3      4	
<b>Bias</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The questions are unbiased and do not lead participants.</li> <li>• The questions are asked in a neutral tone.</li> </ul>	1      2      3      4	
<b>Technical Language</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The use of technical language is appropriate.</li> <li>• All acronyms are identified.</li> <li>• The terms can be easily understood by the target population.</li> </ul>	1      2      3      4	
<b>Instrument Questions</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The number and nature of the questions are adequate to achieve the study's purpose.</li> <li>• The questions will enable the researcher to sufficiently answer the research questions.</li> </ul>	1      2      3      4	
<b>Instrument Responses</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The available choices allow participants to respond appropriately.</li> <li>• No response covers more than one choice.</li> </ul>	1      2      3      4	

## APPENDIX E – Participant Cover Letter

Chad Davis  
8105 Ridgewood Drive  
Kiln, MS 39556  
228-304-1914  
Chad.j.davis@eagles.usm.edu

December 1, 2015

Dear Participant:

My name is Chad Davis, and I am a doctoral student at The University of Southern Mississippi (USM). The title of my dissertation is Teacher Beliefs Regarding Positive Behavior Support Programs in Mississippi Middle Schools. The purpose of the study is to examine teachers' beliefs pertaining to positive behavior support (PBS) programs. The study will include middle school teachers from the state of Mississippi and will consist of two parts. All middle school teachers will participate in both parts of the study. Part one will examine teachers' beliefs pertaining to student attendance, standardized test scores, engagement, and behavior as associated with these PBS programs. There will also be a change component in part one where teachers working at schools with and without PBS programs rate changes over time at their schools. Phase two pertains to teacher demographic information, including age, highest degree attained, years of experience, grade level taught, subject area taught, and whether the teacher is in general education or special education. This information will be collected to analyze the relationship between these teacher attributes and believed impacts of the PBS programs. I have received permission from the superintendent of your district to include your school in my study.

The link to the online survey, which will be hosted by Qualtrics, can be found at the bottom of this message. Participation in the study is completely voluntary, and there is no inherent risk associated with participation. If you choose to participate, please answer all questions as honestly as possible. The survey should take less than ten minutes to complete.

The data collected from the completed online surveys will be compiled and analyzed. All data collected will be anonymous; no teacher, school, or school district will be identified in the study. All information gathered will be kept completely confidential and reported in aggregated form. Upon completion of this research, I will permanently delete all surveys. This email message contains an attachment with informed consent information. By clicking the link at the end of this email message, you will be confirming consent and will be directed to the online survey. As the researcher, I am very appreciative of your participation. However, you have the option to decline to participate if you so wish. If you decide to withdraw from participation at any time, there is no penalty or risk of negative consequence.

The research is being conducted under the supervision of Dr. David E. Lee, The University of Southern Mississippi, email: david.e.lee@usm.edu, phone: (601) 266-4580. This research project has been reviewed and approved by the Human Subjects Protection Review Committee, which ensures that all research fits the federal guidelines for research involving human subjects. Any questions or concerns about the rights of a research participant should be directed to the Chair of the Institutional Review Board, The University of Southern Mississippi, 118 College Drive # 5147, Hattiesburg, MS 39406-0001, (601) 266-5997.

Teacher beliefs pertaining to program effectiveness is an area that is lacking in current PBS research. The goal of this study is to begin filling these gaps in the literature. Thank you for taking the time to assist me with my research.

<LINK TO ONLINE SURVEY>

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Chad Davis".

Chad Davis

APPENDIX F – Informed Consent

**The University of Southern Mississippi  
118 College Drive #5147  
Hattiesburg, MS 39406-0001  
(601) 266-5997**

**Consent to Participate in a Research Study**

**Date: December 1, 2015**

**Title of Study: Teacher Beliefs Regarding Positive Behavior Support Programs in Mississippi Middle Schools**

**Research will be Conducted by: Chad Davis**

**Phone Number: (228) 304-1914      Email Address: chad.j.davis@eagles.usm.edu**

**Faculty Advisor: Dr. David E. Lee**

---

**What are some general things you should know about research studies?**

Classroom teachers currently employed in public schools are being asked to take part in research studies. Participating in these studies is voluntary. You may choose not to take part, or you may withdraw your consent to be in the study, for any reason, without penalty.

Research studies are designed with the intent to obtain new knowledge or expand on information that is already known. This new information may help people in the future. You may not receive any direct benefit from participating in research studies. There may be risks associated with being in research studies. For this particular study, the risks are very minimal and are described in this document.

Details about this study are discussed below. It is important that you understand the information provided so that you can make an informed decision about participating in this research study.

**What is the purpose of this study?**

One purpose of this study is to determine middle school teachers' beliefs pertaining to the effectiveness of positive behavior support (PBS) programs as related to student attendance, achievement, engagement, and behavior. The other purpose of this study is to analyze the relationship between teacher attributes, including age, highest degree attained, years of experience, grade level taught, subject area taught, whether the teacher is in general education or special education, and beliefs about PBS programs. The goal of



this research is to provide information that can help educators make appropriate decisions regarding implementation and modification of positive behavior support programs.

**How many people will take part in this study?**

The study sample will consist of approximately 150 Mississippi public middle school teachers.

**How long will your part in this study last?**

If you chose to participate in the study, you will receive a link to an online survey that will take you no longer than ten minutes to complete. A consent form will also be provided online for you to read prior to completing the survey. You will not be asked to provide your name or any identifying characteristics in the survey, nor will your personal information be reflected anywhere within this research.

**What will happen if you take part in the study?**

Middle school teachers willing to participate in this study will be asked to read a consent form online, indicate consent to participate, and complete an online survey. A group email message containing an attachment with informed consent information will be sent to all teachers from schools selected for this study. By clicking the link at the end of the email message containing the consent question, teachers will be confirming consent and will be directed to the online survey. The researcher will collect data from the surveys. All surveys will be permanently deleted upon completion of this project.

**What are the possible benefits from being in this study?**

While there are no personal benefits related to your participation in the study, findings are intended to help educators analyze the believed value of positive behavior support programs. The results of this study could also potentially play an important role by providing valuable insight that can be shared with persons involved in the educational system, including administrators, teachers, students, and parents. These insights could potentially provide administrators with a deeper understanding of teacher beliefs about PBS programs, thus resulting in the administrator's ability to modify components of his/her school's program.

**What are the possible risks or discomforts involved from participating in the study?**

The risks that may be associated with this study are minimal. They include the possibility that the participant may not feel comfortable providing feedback pertaining to his/her personal views regarding his/her beliefs about positive behavior support programs. Additionally, the participant may not feel comfortable providing certain demographic information. These concerns may be alleviated by the assurances of confidentiality for respondents that will be provided.

**How will your privacy be protected?**

Participants will not indicate their identities during the survey. They will not be identified in any report or publication about this study. Only the researcher and faculty advisors will view the participant responses. All responses will be stored securely online. The

researcher will be the only person with access to the password needed to view responses. Surveys will be permanently deleted upon completion of the project.

**What if you have questions about this study?**

You have the right to ask, and have answered, any questions you may have about this research. If you have questions or concerns, you should contact the researcher listed on the first page of this form.

**What if you have questions about your rights as a research participant?**

This project has been reviewed by the Human Subjects Protection Review Committee, which ensures that research projects involving human subjects follow federal regulations. Any questions or concerns about rights as a research subject should be directed to the Chair of The Institutional Review Board, The University of Southern Mississippi, 118 College Drive #5147, Hattiesburg, MS 39406-0001, (601) 266-5997.

APPENDIX G – Signed Consent Forms

**GREENVILLE PUBLIC SCHOOL DISTRICT  
OFFICE OF CURRICULUM & INSTRUCTION**



Director of Curriculum & Instruction, Mrs. Eddie Mae Springfield  
556 Bowman Boulevard  
Greenville, MS 38701  
Office: 662.334.8601 Fax: 662.334.2888  
[espringfield@gville.k12.ms.us](mailto:espringfield@gville.k12.ms.us)

Consent Form

By signing and returning this consent form, I give Chad Davis, a doctoral candidate at The University of Southern Mississippi, permission to conduct a research study in the Greenville Public School District. I acknowledge that Mr. Davis may contact my district's middle school building administrators to identify the contact person who will provide email addresses for teachers and counselors.

Approved by:

Mrs. Eddie Mae Springfield, Director of Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessments

Please print your name and title above.

*Eddie Mae Springfield*

Director's signature

January 29, 2016

Date

---

"Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world."

— [Nelson Mandela](#)

Consent Form

By signing and returning this consent form, I give Chad Davis, a doctoral candidate at The University of Southern Mississippi, permission to conduct a research study in the Hancock County School District. I acknowledge that Mr. Davis may contact my district's middle school building administrators to identify the contact person who will provide email addresses for teachers and counselors.

Approved by:

Alan Dedeaux, Superintendent of Education

\_\_\_\_\_  
Please print your name and title above.

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Superintendent's signature

November 17, 2015

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date



POST OFFICE BOX 288  
LAUREL, MS 39441  
PHONE: (601) 649-6391  
FAX: (601) 649-6398



February 1, 2016

Chad Davis  
8105 Ridgewood Drive  
Kiln, MS 39556

RE: Consent Form

By signing and returning this consent form, I give Chad Davis, a doctoral candidate at The University of Southern Mississippi, permission to conduct a research study in the Laurel School District. I acknowledge that Mr. Davis may contact my district's middle school building administrators to identify the contact person who will provide email addresses for teachers and counselors.

Approved by:

Chuck Benigno - Superintendent

Please print your name and title above.

Chuck Benigno

Superintendent's signature

2/1/16

Date



**LEE COUNTY SCHOOLS**

Jimmy Weeks, Superintendent

Consent Form

By signing and returning this consent form, I give Chad Davis, a doctoral candidate at The University of Southern Mississippi, permission to conduct a research study in the Lee County School District. I acknowledge that Mr. Davis may contact my district's middle school building administrators to identify the contact person who will provide email addresses for teachers and counselors.

Approved by:

Jimmy Weeks Superintendent

Please print your name and title above.

Jimmy Weeks

Superintendent's signature

11/19/15

Date



Dr. Robin Ballard  
Assistant Superintendent

Dr. Peggy J. Rogers  
Assistant Superintendent

## Lowndes County School District

Percy Lee  
Vocational and Tech Prep Director

1053 Hwy 45 South – Columbus, MS 39701  
(662) 244-5000 – Fax (662) 244-5043

Dr. Susan Johnson  
Special Education Director

Kenneth Hughes  
Business Officer/Administrator

Lynn Wright  
Superintendent

Betty Clinton  
Child Nutrition Director

Veronica Hill  
Personnel Director

*“Challenge all students to attain their greatest potential.”*

Jeanise Andrews  
Technology Coordinator

### Consent Form

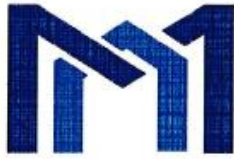
By signing and returning this consent form, I give Chad Davis, a doctoral candidate at The University of Southern Mississippi, permission to conduct a research study in the Lowndes County School District. I acknowledge that Mr. Davis may contact my district's middle school building administrators to identify the contact person who will provide email addresses for teachers and counselors.

Approved by:

Lynn Wright Superintendent  
Please print your name and title above.

  
Superintendent's signature

11-17-15  
Date



**MADISON COUNTY  
SCHOOLS**

**MARK OF EXCELLENCE**

SUPERINTENDENT  
Dr. Ronnie McGehee

BOARD OF EDUCATION  
Sam Kelly, President  
Philip Huskey, Secretary  
Dr. Pollia Griffin  
William Grissett  
Ken McCoy

Consent Form

By signing and returning this consent form, I give Chad Davis, a doctoral candidate at The University of Southern Mississippi, permission to conduct a research study in the MADISON COUNTY School District. I acknowledge that Mr. Davis may contact my district's middle school building administrators to identify the contact person who will provide email addresses for teachers and counselors.

Approved by:

RONNIE MCGEHEE, SUPERINTENDENT

Please print your name and title above.

*Ronnie McGehee*

Superintendent's signature

NOVEMBER 19, 2015

Date



# Pearl River County School District

ALAN LUMPKIN  
Superintendent of Education

MELISSA HOLSTON  
Assistant Superintendent

7441 Highway 11  
Carriere, Mississippi 39426  
(601) 798-7744  
Fax (601) 798-3527

THOMAS BURLESON  
Business Administrator

KIMBERLY ALFORD  
Curriculum Coordinator

By signing and returning this consent form, I give Chad Davis, a doctoral candidate at the University of Southern Mississippi, permission to conduct a research study in the Pearl River County School District. I acknowledge that Mr. Davis may contact my district's middle school building administrators to identify the contact person who will provide email addresses for teachers and counselors.

Approved by:

Alan Lumpkin, Superintendent of Education



February 1, 2016



## Vicksburg Warren School District

1500 Mission 66 • P. O. Box 820065

Vicksburg, Mississippi 39182

601/638-5122

FAX: 601/619-2338

*Michael A. Winters, Ph.D.  
Administrative Assistant to the  
Superintendent*

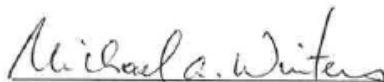
*Mr. Chad Shealy  
Superintendent*

### Consent Form

By signing and returning this consent form, I give Chad Davis, a doctoral candidate at The University of Southern Mississippi, permission to conduct a research study in the Vicksburg-Warren School District. I acknowledge that Mr. Davis may contact my district's middle school building administrators to identify the contact person who will provide email addresses for teachers and counselors at their discretion.

Approved by:

Michael A. Winters, Administrative Assistant to the Superintendent  
Please print your name and title above.

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Superintendent designee's signature

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Date



OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDENT

# WEST POINT CONSOLIDATED SCHOOL DISTRICT

*"All students will be successful."*

westpoint.k12.ms.us

429 Commerce Street • P. O. Box 656  
West Point, Mississippi 39773

Telephone: 662-494-4242  
Fax: 662-494-8605

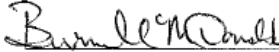
## Consent Form

By signing and returning this consent form, I give Chad Davis, a doctoral candidate at The University of Southern Mississippi, permission to conduct a research study in the West Point Consolidated School District. I acknowledge that Mr. Davis may contact my district's middle school building administrators to identify the contact person who will provide email addresses for teachers and counselors.

Approved by:

Burnell McDonald, Superintendent

\_\_\_\_\_  
Please print your name and title above.

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Superintendent's signature

12/10/15

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

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