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# Voices of the Implementers: The Perceptions and Experiences of Educators Implementing PBIS

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Voices of the Implementers: The Perceptions and Experiences of Educators  
Implementing PBIS

By  
Jacqueline Nicole Freeman

A Dissertation Submitted to the  
Gardner-Webb University School of Education  
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements  
for the Degree of Doctor of Education

Gardner-Webb University  
2018

## Approval Page

This dissertation was submitted by Jacqueline Nicole Freeman under the direction of the persons listed below. It was submitted to the Gardner-Webb University School of Education and approved in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education at Gardner-Webb University.

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## **Acknowledgements**

I thank my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ daily for the opportunities he has given me which allowed me to embark on and complete this journey. He has ordered my steps, opened the doors, and put the right people in place at the exact times they were needed. Romans 8:28 reads, “And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.” Philippians 4:13 reads, “I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.”

Mama and Daddy, thank you for inspiring me and pushing me to be the best in everything! I love you both more than you will ever know! I don't think we did too bad being the granddaughter of farmers, a mill worker, and the daughter of a tobacco farmer, tool and dye maker, and a mother who worked tirelessly to help her husband and take care of her children. The Lord has provided me love and support through my wonderful husband, children, parents, brother, sister-in-law, the Littles, and my Maggie.

To my husband and children who supported me throughout this process! All of you had confidence in me from the beginning. Thank you for being proud of me, just as I am of proud of being your wife and mom! I love you all to Infinity and Beyond!

Dr. Stedman you are the person God placed in my path years ago to help me accomplish this feat. I thank you for everything you have done for me over the years while I was getting my Master's Degree and now through the Doctoral process. You mean more to me than you know and always will. Thank you for allowing God to use you in my life as a source of help, inspiration, and encouragement.

## Abstract

Voices of the Implementers: The Perceptions and Experiences of Educators Implementing PBIS. Freeman, Jacqueline Nicole, 2018: Dissertation, Gardner-Webb University, Teacher Resistance/Educator Experiences/Implementation/PBIS/Change/Tiered Intervention

This qualitative research study was developed around the problem that teachers are resistant to change when implementing educational initiatives that are new to them. “Rather than blame teachers and ask, ‘Why do teachers resist?’ perhaps those of us who lead change should ask, ‘What can we do to make it easier for teachers to implement new practices?’” (Knight, 2009, p. 508)? Research supports the need for district and school administrators to focus on strategies that positively impact change and develop successful initiation and implementation procedures. This study focused on the types of strategies identified by the teachers that facilitated and/or hindered their PBIS initiation and implementation experiences in their classrooms and schools. The prior research conducted on PBIS and the implementation of PBIS by various researchers has shown that PBIS interventions are successful when the program is implemented and all parts of the program are implemented and used as intended (Office of Special Education Programs [OSEP], 2015). The researcher used one-on-one interviews to collect teacher experiences. This allowed for the contemplation of the experiences of the teachers who are the key stakeholders in PBIS implementation in both the school and classroom settings. Martin (2013) stated that giving the teachers a voice about issues that had always been the domain of district and school administrators built trust. Once the teachers were allowed to plan and develop systems for successful implementation, they experienced greater teacher buy-in that resulted in successful implementation of the programs (Martin, 2013). The themes that were identified under the category hindrances were direct expert training, ownership/buy-in, and consistency with themes in the category of successes focused on committees, materials, and continuous improvement.

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## Chapter 1: Introduction

Implementation of change remains a crucial concern for educational leaders in the 21st Century. One of the factors affecting implementation of reform is resistance to change. Veteran teachers in particular present unique challenges, and stereotypically the greatest resistance, for implementation of change. (Snyder, 2017, p. 1)

“Resistance to change among any teacher slows the implementation of educational reform. In spite of hopeful prescriptions from researchers, policymakers, and educational leaders, implementation of educational reform remains inconsistent” (Snyder, 2017, p. 2; Dufour & Marzano, 2011; Payne & Kaba, 2007; Tyack & Cuban, 1995).

“Even when the attributes of resistance were not fully clear, several studies cited teacher resistance as the cause of implementation problems” (Gay, 2016, p. 22; Feuerborn & Tyre, 2012; Holtzapple et al., 2011; Rajan & Basch, 2012; Reinke, Herman, & Stormont, 2013).

“Managing unruly behavior is one of the most difficult, frustrating, and even frightening parts of being a teacher” (Walker, Ramsey, & Gresham, 2004b, p. 1). Intervention-based programs that begin with young children in the early elementary years have the greatest impact on preventing disruptive, antisocial behaviors. In a perfect world, these antisocial students would be removed from the regular classroom setting and placed in an alternative classroom where they could receive specialized, intense interventions based on their needs. The reality for teachers is that they face disruptive, antisocial behaviors on a daily basis, and they need strategies which will reduce these disruptions and preserve teaching time in the classroom (Walker et al., 2004b).



## Statement of the Problem

When efforts to improve student learning fail, teachers often end up being blamed. Teachers were resistant to new ideas, say the leaders who were working with them. Rather than blame teachers and ask, “Why do teachers resist?” perhaps those of us who lead change should ask, “What can we do to make it easier for teachers to implement new practices?” (Knight, 2009, p. 508)

“Umpteen reforms have come and gone, using up time, money, and hope. They have left a crippling disillusionment in their wake, a cynicism about staff development and any belief that training or innovation benefits students” (Zimmerman, 2006, p. 245; Schmoker, 1999, p. 37). “If, indeed, most school reform efforts fail, educational leaders are asking themselves what they can do in their schools to beat the odds” (Zimmerman, 2006, p. 245; Fullan & Hargreaves, 1996). “Because resistance is a major factor in the failure of school reforms, it is crucial for principals to discover why teachers resist change, before they can work to overcome this resistance” (Zimmerman, 2006, p. 245).

Gallup and Phi Delta Kappa surveyed the opinions of Americans on issues related to education in public schools. The survey identified the top five problems public schools in the community face. The greatest problem Gallup identified was “lack of funding/financial support,” while “lack of discipline,” “overcrowded schools,” “use of drugs,” and “fighting and violence” finished off the big five (Mazzuca, 2002). When surveyed about the biggest problems in public schools, 17% of participants responded, “lack of discipline.” Thirteen percent of participants who responded with lack of discipline as the biggest problem in public schools were adults with school-age children, while 18% of adults who mentioned lack of discipline had no children. Gallup also noted violence as a big problem in public schools. Nine percent of participants responded that

violence was the biggest problem facing public schools (Mazzuca, 2002). Urban and inner city school districts are stereotyped as having high rates of violence and challenging behaviors; however, research has shown that rural and suburban area high school, middle school, and elementary school students also exhibit the same challenging antisocial behaviors in their schools (Wheeler & Richey, 2005). Walker et al. (2004a) identified lack of discipline and violence in schools as increasing problems as more and more children from troubled, chaotic homes are coming to school with well-developed patterns of antisocial behavior. These students' "aggressive, disruptive, and defiant behavior" create a climate of chaos which threatens students and teachers. Learning in the classroom is disrupted for all students as valuable teaching time is wasted while the teacher corrects disruptive behavior (Walker et al., 2004a).

Surveys conducted by the American Federation of Teachers show that 17% of teachers reported losing 4 or more hours of teaching time per week due to disruptive behavior, and 2-3 hours were reported lost by 19% of surveyed teachers. As academic expectations and rigor increased with college and career readiness standards, time on task is crucial for all students to be successful academically, yet it is difficult to make significant gains in academic achievement with so much teaching time lost as a result of disruptive behaviors (Walker et al., 2004a). Each year, students begin school without the social skills necessary to develop and maintain appropriate behaviors. Antisocial behaviors, defiance, and disrespect have become normal interactions for students who are on track for difficulties in later adolescence and into adult life (Lewis, Sugai, & Colvin, 1998). Parents and communities model antisocial interactions which compound problem behaviors. Because of this, students are not provided the necessary support or taught the prerequisite social skills needed to be successful (Lewis et al., 1998).

Research by McEvoy and Welker (2000) stated that students who begin school with social skill deficits have an inability to fulfill academic and behavior expectations. The research suggests that the disruptive behaviors of the student will affect the academic performance of other students due to the public nature of the classroom. The distractions caused by interruptions due to the student's negative behavior have a negative impact on academic engagement and the allocated instructional time needed by the teacher.

Research by Walker et al. (2004a) used a study by the American Federation of Teachers which indicated that antisocial school-age children who have a "limited repertoire of cooperative behavior skills" use coercive tactics which include disobeying, communicating threats, yelling, whining, and hitting to manipulate adults and others (p. 5). These students use these tactics to avoid following directions and to get their "way" at home and at school (Walker et al., 2004a). Although university teacher preparation programs require future teachers to take one or more courses in classroom management, in order to learn strategies to handle difficult classroom behavior, it remains the primary struggle for beginning teachers (Yost & Mosca, 2003). Antisocial, disruptive behaviors are not only a struggle for beginning teachers but for veteran teachers as well. As the various behaviors increase in frequency and intensity, teachers face the challenge of dealing with behaviors which they have not been prepared to face. This classroom reality directly correlates to the increased frustration levels of teachers in our classrooms and schools (Wilson, 2011). Along with training and support, planning and preparation play key roles in the management of student behavior according to Whitlock (2012) and Danielson (2007). Students in the classroom are well aware when teachers and staff members are not prepared for instruction. Disruptive students easily identify that lack of preparation and take full advantage of the situation by creating a climate of chaos

(Whitlock, 2012; Wong & Wong, 2009). Improperly managed student behavior can be attributed to lack of parental and administrative support, lack of professional development focusing on classroom management, lack of consistent routines and procedures, and inconsistency of classroom and school rules (Sugai & Horner, 2006; Whitlock, 2012). Issues with university preparation of teachers in the area of behavior management frequently arise with questions about how well teachers understand the behaviors, best practices for handling the behavior, and what role the teacher plays in the escalation of the disruptive behavior.

Another difficulty teachers have in managing problematic behavior in the classroom and school wide is the fact that teachers hold differing perspectives. In a classroom, a behavior that is not deemed problematic for one teacher may be considered problematic or disruptive by another. “A teacher’s perceptions about behavior can affect how they attribute misbehavior, perceive outcomes in the classroom, and implement interventions” (Butler, 2014, p. 6). Teachers tend to immediately place complete responsibility for the disruptive behaviors on the child and connect the antisocial disruptive behaviors to problems with the child’s upbringing or personality. This connection allows the teacher to completely disregard any involvement or responsibility in the disruptive behavior’s occurrence or escalation (Bibou-Nakou, Kiosseoglou, & Stogiannidou, (2000); Butler, 2014).

Research from the nonprofit organization Public Agenda Foundation (2004) highlighted issues that impede the school’s ability to manage antisocial and challenging students. The research reported that 78% of administrators and teachers had to deal with students who frequently threaten them with lawsuits brought by their parents because student rights were in some way violated. Forty-nine percent of teachers and

administrators reported that their decisions on disciplinary actions for certain students have been called discriminatory and unfair. The research also showed that 55% of administrators and teachers have had their superiors at central office change or reverse their disciplinary recommendations because of pressure and threats from assertive parents. These issues hinder the ability of the nation's schools to effectively manage challenging discipline problems that are preventing teachers from teaching and students from learning (Public Agenda Foundation, 2004).

### **Purpose Statement**

The purpose of this study was to articulate teacher perceptions and experiences with Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS) initiation and implementation and to develop an understanding of the impact of change on the lived experiences of teachers who have implemented PBIS for at least 1 year. This study focused on the types of strategies identified by the teachers that facilitated and/or hindered their PBIS initiation and implementation experiences in their classrooms and schools. The researcher stressed the importance of focusing on PBIS implementation and made sure the participants understood that this study would not focus on changing aspects of the PBIS program. The prior research conducted on PBIS and the implementation of PBIS by various researchers have shown that PBIS interventions are successful when all parts of the program are implemented and used as intended (Office of Special Education Programs [OSEP], 2015). This research study focused on the initiation and implementation strategies that were experienced by the teachers during classroom and school-wide initiation and implementation of PBIS.

Schools that implement PBIS need strong administrative support and leadership throughout the training and implementation process. PBIS training is unique because it

“seeks to help administrators and faculty build collaborative teams and work together to ensure effective implementation” (Martin, 2013, p. 6; Dunlap et al., 2000; Wasilewski, Gifford, & Bonneau, 2008); therefore, in order for the PBIS model to be successful, schools must have buy-in from teachers, administrators, and staff at a minimum of 80%.

Schools have few initiatives that focus on readiness or on increasing the use of appropriate behaviors for students already attending school. Once students begin school, the focus becomes teaching academics not prerequisite social skills. “Although many students have significant social skills needs, social skills are not usually a component of the school-wide curriculum” (Wilson, 2011, p. 6). School environments and expectations are not in agreement with the needs and temperaments of disruptive students which lead to combative and confrontational relationships between students and teachers (McCormick, O’Connor, Cappella, & McClowry, 2013).

Many schools manage disruptive behavior primarily through the use of punitive discipline strategies that create negative consequences for the school. Those negative consequences lead to a decrease in academic achievement and prosocial behaviors which in turn create an increase in antisocial behaviors and violent adult-student interactions (McEvoy & Welker, 2000). According to research by Barry McCurdy, PhD. the strategies implemented by schools in response to disruptive antisocial behavior are some form of punishment or counseling that do not prevent recurrences of those behaviors in the same student (McCurdy, Mannella, & Eldridge, 2003). School systems have implemented many approaches to manage disruptive student behavior. Schools have established elaborate security systems and plans which included increasing the number of security personnel on campus to manage violent behaviors. The implementation of “zero tolerance” policies are another way schools have tried to manage disruptive and violent

behavior (American Federation of Teachers, 1995-1996; Leone, Mayer, Malmgren, & Meisel, 2000; McCurdy et al., 2003; Nelson, 2000).

Research shows that student academic performance in the classroom is influenced by the environment in which they learn. The classroom environment is greatly affected by how educators handle disruptive students and the chaotic classroom environment created by their challenging behaviors (Caldarella, Shatzer, Gray, Young, & Young, 2011; Dion, 2016). Research by Sugai and Horner (2008) indicated that schools must create a prosocial climate in order to promote and support academic achievement. Schools that do not lay the foundation for a “constructive social culture” will not achieve the necessary academic gains to ensure academic success for all students. Sugai and Horner (2008) also indicated that for schools to support and promote academic achievement, they “need to attend simultaneously to developing the school-wide systems of constructive social behavior,” along with implementing instructional practices that promote learning and achievement for all students (p. 67).

Schools have dealt with antisocial behavior using discipline strategies that punish the student with “reprimands, loss of privileges, detentions, suspensions, and expulsions” (Dion, 2016, p. 3). Students who engage in disruptive antisocial behavior and are disciplined with punitive strategies have developed a mindset with the “focus on not getting caught” (Dion, 2016, p. 3; Horner et al., 2004).

“Punishment in schools, suspension or corporal, is often referred to school discipline, which is somewhat of a misrepresentation given that punishment and discipline are two distinctly different things” (Mohrbutter, 2011, p. 2; Richey, 2009). The distinct difference in discipline and punishment has become blurred; and in many schools, discipline and punishment are referred to synonymously. Punishment is defined

as being inflicted on the student, and discipline is a consequence which corrects and teaches the student appropriate behavior as well as how to take responsibility for their behavior (Mohrbutter, 2011; Wallace, 2010).

“Discipline in education is about providing young people with the opportunity and teaching them how to become more responsible” (Marshall, 2005, p. 2).

Schools spend a plethora of hours writing; organizing; and deciding upon rules, consequences, and policies to develop the student code of conduct contained within the student handbook. The consequences are listed along with the types of behavior violations, so students are able to recognize the consequence for a particular behavior. The consequences are developed to teach the students that their particular behavior has defied the rules and that the school will not accept that type of behavior (Sugai & Horner, 2008).

As disruptive behaviors have continuously increased, schools have implemented the practice of monitoring in an attempt to decrease future issues. Schools have also reiterated the rules and procedures in an effort to eliminate repeated offenses, with little success. Schools then react by extending and making the consequences of suspension and expulsion longer in an attempt to emphasize the zero tolerance, no questions asked consequences that may take place in the future (Sugai & Horner, 2002).

Punitive discipline has been and still remains the most frequently used discipline strategy in schools. The two major punitive disciplinary strategies are suspension and expulsion. The use of these strategies has increased over the years because of an increased fear of violence in the schools. This fear has prompted the implementation of zero tolerance policies which mandate that discipline for weapons, guns, gang activity, and drugs be an automatic 1-year expulsion from school. The implementation of zero



tolerance policies has led to suspension as the recommended discipline for school disruption, dress code violations, disrespect, and smoking which are considered to be less violent offenses (Skiba & Losen, 2016).

Suspension continues to endure as the most used discipline strategy in schools. Suspensions could be short-term removal from school which is 3-5 days or long-term removal which is 7-10 days. School system suspension rates differ greatly among schools and states. Once the removal of a student from school exceeds 10 days, the discipline becomes expulsion instead of suspension. This strategy is used with less frequency than suspension since the decision to expel a student has to be recommended by a discipline committee and then approved by the superintendent and the board of education. Expulsion lengths can vary due to the severity of the behavior; some schools have expelled students for 9 weeks, a semester, or even the entire calendar year (Skiba, Eaton, & Sotoo, 2004; Skiba & Sprague, 2008).

Instead of suspending students out of school, which places them at home without supervision, many schools resort to in-school suspension (ISS), which keeps students in school. ISS that is used effectively eliminates the negative effects of out-of-school suspension (OSS) and provides the students an opportunity to receive behavioral support (Andrews, Taylor, Martin, & Slate, 1998); Smith, 2001). Administrators sometimes assign disruptive students who will not heed to the expectations and code of conduct to ISS. ISS provides the student with a consequence for their disruptive, antisocial behavior while keeping them in school (Adams, 1992; Mohrbutter, 2011). Students assigned to ISS are kept in an alternate classroom setting on campus away from the rest of the student body. ISS students have a separate time scheduled to use the restroom and eat lunch, but they do not have any other privileges (Mohrbutter, 2011). Since the students will remain

on campus in an alternate classroom setting, it becomes the responsibility of the teacher to plan and provide the student with meaningful academic lessons for the duration of their ISS assignment (Smith, 2001). Even though ISS is used as a punishment, students are still able to complete all assignments they would have missed if they had been assigned OSS (Adams, 1992). The components of an effective ISS reduce the amount of class time that would have been lost due to OSS and allows the students to have instructional and behavioral support from the assigned ISS teacher. The punishment, along with the support, should keep students from repeat occurrences of disruptive behavior and it should dissuade the onset of inappropriate behavior in other students (Hrabak & Settles, 2005; Mohrbutter, 2011).

Research by Mohrbutter (2011) highlighted a discussion by Gushee (1984) in which he noted that the student discipline policies within American schools focus on correcting disruptive behavior with the use of punishment. Corporal punishment and suspension, both in school and out of school, were identified as the most frequently used strategies in American schools for handling disruptive behaviors. In the discussion, Gushee stated, “neither of these strategies has proved very effective in changing, improving, and/or eliminating inappropriate student behavior” (Mohrbutter, 2011, p. 19).

Research has indicated that an effective ISS model would be more beneficial and less exclusionary than any type of OSS. The ISS models that have been indicated as effective offered students strategies which taught them how to cope with situations that are beyond their control and how to problem solve positively. The main proponent in using ISS as a discipline strategy is that it keeps the students in school learning but in a separate environment which is used to punish the disruptive behavior (Blomberg, 2004; Mohrbutter, 2011).

Various researchers have made recommendations to schools about how to establish a “constructive social culture.” The recommendations called for a shift in discipline practices from punitive strategies such as suspensions to positive strategies (Sugai & Horner, 2002).

Communities in Schools, in order to create a more constructive social culture, developed School-Based Mentoring Programs (SBMPs) to increase positive interactions and to promote success for students and schools. SBMPs recruit adult mentors who are not parents to be positive role models for students “through sharing knowledge, skills, expertise, and offering personal support” (Gordon, Downey, & Bangert, 2013, p. 227; Delgado, 2002). SBMPs is a program that has been established to provide various types of students from various backgrounds with positive support and collaboration (Gordon et al., 2013; Karcher & Herrera, 2007). SBMPs allow at-risk students to engage in academic and life goal setting, character building, problem-solving, and coping skills through activities and encouragement from a mentor with whom they have established a personal relationship (Barron-McKeagney, Woody, & D’Souza, 2000; Gordon et al., 2013). Teachers and other school personnel refer students to SBMP based on student academics, behavior, social interactions, or home-life concerns. Once the student is referred to the mentoring program, the administrator, teacher, guidance counselor, mentoring staff, and parent discuss the student’s needs and determine the best way to reach the established goals set by the team. Students are then placed with a mentor who they will meet with each week for 1 hour on campus. This allows the students to receive one-on-one mentoring in an environment in which they are familiar to work on social, emotional, and academic difficulties during the school day (Gordon et al., 2013; Jucovy, 2000). SBMPs have become advocates for students at little to no cost to parents. The

programs focus on students and families who are at risk socially, behaviorally, and academically (Gordon et al., 2013; Rhodes, 2002). Although SBMPs have advantages for the school and students, one drawback to this program is the mentor's inability to work with students for an extended period of time. Mentoring relationships typically last less than 1 year; and research has shown that such a short period of time has little to no effect on the student's academic, social, or emotional skill development (Gordon et al., 2013; Jekielek, Moore, Hair, & Scarupa, 2002).

“Schools must be able to access and implement relevant, efficient strategies of managing this increase in behavioral problems as well as being capable of meeting new discipline needs” (Swinney, 2009, p. 6; Kinch, Lewis-Palmer, Hagan-Burke, & Sugai, 2001). Amendments made to the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) in 1997 state that at-risk students and students manifesting problem behaviors that prevent them from academic success need to have Functional Behavior Assessments (FBAs) and PBIS implanted to meet their individual needs, so they have the same opportunity to be successful as their prosocial peers (Sugai et al., 2000).

FBAs provide schools with the ability to address behavioral problems and implement effective behavior strategies. FBAs are used to determine the cause of the disruptive behavior through observations and data collection (Lane, Barton-Arwood, Specer, & Kalberg, 2007; Swinney, 2009). Prior to completing an FBA, it is assumed that environmental factors are affecting the place that the behaviors are manifesting and how they are being interpreted by the teacher or administrator. It is also believed that the student's behavior has a function and is used to achieve a purpose for the student (Marston, 2001; Swinney, 2009). The major asset of the FBA for a student and the school is that it helps to establish a practical Behavioral Intervention Plan (BIP) for the

student. Once the disruptive and problematic behaviors are identified and the relationship with environmental triggers has been established through classroom observations, the external stimuli can be reduced or eliminated. The data that are collected and analyzed do not place the student in a percentile rank or give a numerical comparison score. The data are used for the specific student's behavior intervention needs (Scott & Caron, 2005; Swinney, 2009). Teachers and administrators use the data that are collected to create a BIP that outlines interventions that are to be put in place in the classroom. The BIP also identifies interventions or strategies that are not effective for the particular student, so they can be eliminated from the teacher's behavior management repository (Peterson, 2002; Swinney, 2009). For the student to receive the maximum benefit of the FBA, the school and teacher need to begin the behavioral assessment process at the onset of the disruptive behaviors in order to lessen the effect of the disruptive behaviors on the learning taking place in the classroom (McConnell & Patton, 2005; Swinney, 2009).

Schools implementing a tiered behavior support program in their classrooms focus on a Response to Intervention (RtI) system which will manage disruptive behaviors that are displayed in the classrooms. "The term *Response to Intervention* (RtI) applies to educational approaches that embrace multi-level prevention and intervention systems" (Sayeski & Brown, 2011, p. 120; National Center on Response to Intervention, 2010). Using RtI provides teachers in all types of classroom settings the opportunity to concentrate on the broad spectrum of individual student needs. "RtI includes the use of assessment data, progress monitoring, and evidence-based practices to identify students in need of support, monitor their progress as they receive targeted interventions, and adjust levels or type of interventions depending upon students' responsiveness" (Sayeski

& Brown, 2011, p. 120, National Center on Response to Intervention, 2010). RtI addresses the behavioral and social needs of the students as well as the academic needs. When using RtI to focus on classroom or individual behavior, it is broken down into a three-tiered support system. The main supports of the program which fall into tier one of the prevention framework, focus on the classroom as a whole and the teacher providing the students with clear specific procedures and routines which are practiced and mastered, high expectations that are clearly communicated and understood by all students, and engaging the students with active quality instruction. The tier one prevention framework of RtI sets the tone for the classroom and should eliminate the majority of behavior problems within the classroom. Tiers two and three provide intervention support for the students who do not respond to the prosocial preventive framework in tier one. RtI is a broad tiered framework of support which is set up and used in the individual teacher's classroom which differs from other tiered support programs that are used school wide (Sayeski & Brown, 2011).

Research suggests that for schools to truly change disruptive behaviors in a way that the students are consistently exhibiting prosocial behavior, the school must implement interventions throughout every area of the school. For school-wide approaches to be successful, the framework must have three tiers of preventative strategies and interventions (a primary, secondary, and tertiary level), and the preventative measures and interventions must be implemented fully (Walker et al., 1996).

Although RtI and PBIS are three-tiered behavioral support models, they are implemented differently. RtI is implemented in individual classrooms, and PBIS is implemented school wide in all areas where disruptive, antisocial behavior has been observed by the faculty and staff. The first tier, which focuses on prevention, is also

referred to as “universal support for all students.” Tier two, which is also referred to as “target group support,” provides research-based interventions and monitoring. The third tier is focused on behavior assessments and individual interventions and is also referred to as “individualized support” (Sayeski & Brown, 2011).

PBIS focuses on preventing antisocial, disruptive behaviors as well as identifying the magnitude of the disruptive behaviors, while at the same time providing support throughout the school in all of the common areas and individual classrooms (Sugai & Horner, 1999). “The systemic application of PBIS offers schools, families, and communities a promising approach that enables the adoption and sustained use of effective academic and behavior practices” (Sugai & Horner, 2002, p. 130).

Sugai and Horner’s (2002) research highlighted the key ideas of school-wide PBIS as a “prevention-focused continuum of support,” “proactive instructional approaches to teaching and improving social behaviors,” “conceptually sound and empirically validated practices,” “systems change to support effective practices,” and “data-based decision making” (p. 131). The goal of PBIS is to decrease the amount of antisocial behaviors and prevent new occurrences of those behaviors within other students done through the primary tier of prevention. This tier uses best practices to provide this support for every student in the school. The emphasis is placed on the best practices in instruction, classroom management, and discipline throughout the entire school. The secondary tier focuses on decreasing the disruptive behaviors of a small group of students who are at risk for academic and social failure. This group of students needs more diverse support systems for behavior than those provided by the primary tier. Such interventions and supports are implemented either through small groups or individually. The highest level of PBIS is the tertiary tier of prevention which focuses on

students who display complex, violent, and long-term behaviors that demonstrate a high risk of failure academically, emotionally, socially, and behaviorally (Sugai & Horner, 2002).

As noted earlier, in order for the PBIS model to be successful, schools must have buy-in from teachers, administrators, and staff at a minimum of eighty percent. PBIS training is unique because it “seeks to help administrators and faculty build collaborative teams and work together to ensure effective implementation” (Martin, 2013, p. 6; Dunlap et al., 2000; Wasilewski et al., 2008). This type of training differs from other professional experiences which are focused on workshops, make and takes, and lectures. PBIS training takes an on-site approach which allows the trainings to take place in the community and the schools that will be implementing the program. The creators of PBIS developed the School-wide Evaluation Tool (SET) in order to measure the fidelity of PBIS implementation. This evaluation tool assesses the seven attributes of PBIS and is conducted by an external evaluator who has been trained in the annual evaluation process of PBIS schools. The seven key elements that are evaluated by SET are

Expectations Defined (three to five positive school-wide behavioral expectations defined); Behavioral Expectations Taught (these expectations are taught to all children in the school); System for Rewarding Behavioral Expectations (rewards are provided for meeting the behavioral expectations); System for Responding to Behavioral Violations (a consistently implemented continuum of consequences for problem behavior is in place); Monitoring and Evaluation (behavior patterns are monitored and the information is used for ongoing decision-making); Management (an administrator actively supports and is involved in the PBIS effort and a comprehensive school-wide behavior support team is formed); and



District-Level Support (the school district provides support to the school in the form of functional policies, staff training, and data collection opportunities.

(Bradshaw, Reinke, Brown, Bevens, & Leaf, 2008, p. 3; Horner et al., 2004).

A systematic process which provides support for teachers and staff throughout the implementation of PBIS prevention and intervention strategies is required for the successful implementation of PBIS. In Martin's (2013) research, she found that for PBIS implementation to be effective, four main levels had to be in place. The four main levels described in her research are Management and Implementation Teams which provide engaged leadership; Professional Development, Coaching, and Evaluation Processes which are provided by the management and implementation teams; Phase In Implementation which allows the comprehensive PBIS program to be slowly implemented piece by piece until the complete program is fully implemented; and Sustainability which allows for the continuation of research-based decision-making and planning.

PBIS has become the chosen program "of school leaders to build a contextual framework concerning school culture" (Tobia, 2015, p. 5; Bradshaw et al., 2008). PBIS has been hailed "as one of the leading comprehensive prevention program" in the United States and other countries (Curtis, Horne, Robertson, & Karvonen, 2010, p. 159). As of 2016, PBIS has been implemented in 21,559 schools and state-wide training and coordination systems have been created in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, and the island territory of Guam (OSEP, 2015). Although the popularity of PBIS and state-wide training and coordination systems have increased, the teachers still become the "key stakeholders in implementing PBIS" once successful implementation of school-wide PBIS by the collaborative team has taken place (Martin, 2013, p. 7).

## **Theoretical Framework**

In order to implement PBIS in a school, an overhaul of change must take place. Change requires people to move out of their comfort zone and into an area in which they are not sure how to act or react to the new things that are taking place. In implementing a multifaceted program like PBIS, which changes all areas of a school and its culture, the teacher plays a critical role. Fullan (1993) addressed educational change and reform on this magnitude in *Change Forces: Probing the Depths of Education Reform*. Fullan recognized that teachers are “prime change agents” since they are professionals that focus on academic, cultural, and societal improvement (Friborg, 2014, p. 6).

Fullan (2007) has conducted, written, and published various research that relates to change in the area of education. In Fullan’s (1999) book *Change Forces the Sequel*, he identified four phases of educational change. These four phases of change are referred to as Fullan’s Educational Change Theory and are the initiation, implementation, continuation, and outcome stages (Fullan, 1999). When administrators, teachers, and other stakeholders in the school system set out to initiate or implement change through programs such as PBIS or RtI, each of the four phases of the Educational Change Theory are important to the process (Henson, 2011). This research study focused primarily on the initiation phase of Fullan’s Change Theory.

## **Research Questions**

Participants were asked questions that focused on the two essential research questions which were developed using qualitative inquiry methodology.

1. What have you experienced in terms of the initiation and implementation of PBIS?
2. What contexts or situations have typically influenced or affected your

experiences of initiating or implementing PBIS?

The researcher stressed the importance of focusing on PBIS implementation and made sure that the participants understood that this study would not focus on changing aspects of the PBIS program. The purpose of this study was to articulate teacher perceptions and experiences with PBIS initiation and implementation and to develop an understanding of the impact of change on the lived experiences of teachers who have implemented PBIS for at least 1 year. This study focused on the types of strategies identified by the teachers that facilitated and/or hindered their PBIS initiation and implementation experiences in their classrooms and schools. The researcher stressed the importance of focusing on the PBIS implementation and made sure the participants understood this study would not focus on changing aspects of the PBIS program. The prior research conducted on PBIS and the implementation of PBIS by various researchers has shown that PBIS interventions are successful when the program is implemented and all parts of the program are implemented and used as intended (OSEP, 2015). This research study focused on the initiation and implementation strategies that were experienced by the teachers during classroom and school-wide initiation and implementation of PBIS.

### **Significance**

Research indicates that PBIS is a popular, and in many cases, an effective program for behavioral intervention. Thorough research has been done on the use of PBIS to decrease behavior problems, increase academic achievement, and affect overall school culture. The research becomes limited when the focus narrows to teacher experiences with PBIS, especially in the areas of initiation of the program, classroom implementation, teacher satisfaction, and teacher motivation to implement the program

(Horner, Freeman, Nelson, & Sugai, 2007; Pavlovich, 2008). This qualitative study focused on the individual experiences of teachers who have implemented PBIS in their classrooms. The researcher used one-on-one interviews to collect teacher experiences and compared individual responses to determine the patterns or common themes that emerged within the research. North Carolina's state-wide PBIS training and support system teams can use this research to address barriers to initiation and implementation in districts and in schools. The study provides the school's collaborative teams that are exploring the idea of initiating PBIS implementation with information from teachers who are already implementing the program. This research study allowed for the contemplation of the experiences of the teachers who are the key stakeholders in PBIS implementation in both the school and classroom settings.

### **Overview of Methodology**

Merriam (2009) stated that when educational researchers have a goal of understanding how people make sense of their experiences, qualitative research design is most commonly used. Merriam also described qualitative research as being an interpretive research approach. Creswell (2013) outlined the procedures for a basic qualitative research study. Creswell (2013) stated that qualitative research engages the researcher in rich conversations that are guided by in-depth questions posed by the researcher. These questions are answered by the participants through their experiences and perceptions. The researcher collects participant perceptions and experiences which make up the study data. The researcher then analyzes and explains the data by establishing themes and drawing conclusions (Creswell, 2008). Merriam also explained that a qualitative research approach is used to discover and interpret participant experiences in relation to the research question. Creswell (2013)

defines qualitative research as the application of research strategies in order to acquire participant perceptions, experiences, and information which are then analyzed so a problem can be understood.

PBIS is not a new concept, although it has become a major component for behavioral intervention in the United States and specifically North Carolina. As of 2016, PBIS has been implemented in 21,559 schools and state-wide training and coordination systems have been created in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, and the island territory of Guam (OSEP, 2015). Although the popularity of PBIS and state-wide training and coordination systems has increased, the teachers still become the “key stakeholders in implementing PBIS,” once successful implementation of school-wide PBIS by the collaborative team has taken place (Martin, 2013, p. 7). There are many supporters of PBIS in districts and classrooms across North Carolina as well as many adversaries to the program and its implementation. The success of PBIS is based on the level of investment of the classroom teachers who will be the key implementers of the program. In order for the PBIS model to be successful, schools must have buy-in from teachers, administrators, and staff at a minimum of 80% (Dunlap et al., 2000; Martin, 2013; Wasilewski et al., 2008).

Based on the scant research specific to teacher experiences with PBIS, basic qualitative research is the best methodology to examine this research problem on the critical importance of the teacher’s role in implementing PBIS. U.S. News and World Report investigated districts and schools within the United States that had successful implementation of federal and state initiatives in education including the shift to common core. The findings of the investigation highlighted the importance of the voices of the teachers in initiating and implementing new programs. In the article, Martin (2013)

stated that giving the teachers a voice about issues that were previously the domain of district and school administrators built trust and allowed them to candidly speak about the challenges of implementation by working collaboratively with administrators to develop action plans to alleviate those issues. Once the teachers were allowed to plan and develop systems for successful implementation, they experienced greater teacher buy-in which resulted in successful implementation of the programs (Martin, 2013).

This study was appropriate for basic qualitative research and aligned with Merriam's (2009) and Creswell's (2013) research on qualitative research. This research study allowed for data to be collected through interviews based on two essential questions. These also allowed for the understanding of teacher perceptions and experiences during initiating and implementing PBIS in two schools which are in different districts in southeastern North Carolina. The research focused on teacher perceptions and experiences that improved or hindered their PBIS initiation and implementation experiences. This qualitative research adds to the currently limited research in the area of teacher perceptions and experiences with the initiation and implementation of classroom PBIS.

This qualitative inquiry study took place in two elementary schools in two different districts in the southeastern region of North Carolina. The attendance area of the first district contains one high school, one middle school, and three elementary schools that are divided into Grades Pre-K-1, 2-3, and 4-5. The second district contains 53 elementary schools that are broken up into attendance areas. The elementary schools in the identified attendance area are all prekindergarten through fifth grade. Both districts operate on a traditional calendar schedule. This study was conducted through face-to-face interviews with participants who were teachers in second and third grade. Upon

approval of participation in the study by the districts and by both school principals, the teachers volunteered to be interviewed for the study with assurance of anonymity.

### **Definition of Terms**

**Antisocial behavior.** The encyclopedia of Children's Health defines antisocial behavior as actions which are disruptive and are characterized with intentional hostility and aggression. The behaviors include defiance, repeated violation of rules and social norms, and disregard for authority and for the well-being and happiness of others (Simcha-Fagan, Langner, Gersten, & Eisenberg, 1975, p. 7).

**Prosocial behavior.** Actions and behaviors that are intended to help and benefit others. These behaviors show care and concern for others and are behaviors such as cooperation, respect, sharing, and helping (Batson, 1987).

**Office discipline referrals.** Office documentation of a violated school rule. These documents are used to record inappropriate student behavior, are turned in to the school administrators, and result in a consequence of some type (Norton, 2009; Sugai & Horner, 1999).

**ISS.** Suspension which takes place in the school where the student is assigned. The student is placed in an alternate area in the school building in which they have access to their assignments and supervision by an ISS teacher. ISS is usually assigned prior to OSS and for lesser offenses (Gushee, 1984; Norton, 2009).

**OSS.** Refers to the removal of the student from the school setting for a period of time that is determined by the school or district handbook and enforced by the school administrator.

**SBMP.** School-based programs that pair students who are at risk with volunteers who are able to meet with them regularly on the school campus to focus on academic and

behavioral related activities.

**FBA.** Assessment that determines the underlying purpose of a behavior in order for the school staff to develop an effective behavior intervention (Allen, 2014; Scott, Anderson, Mancil, & Alter, 2009).

**BIP.** Individualized plan which provides the teacher with behavioral intervention strategies for a student. This individualized BIP is developed with the Individual Education Program Team using data from the FBA (Hendrickson, & Gable, 1999).

**RtI.** Multi-tiered, research-based approach that uses interventions that are implemented for students based on their specific academic or behavioral needs. These interventions use progress monitoring strategies to plan and assess student achievement (Allen, 2014; Fuchs, Fuchs, & Compton, 2004).

**PBIS.** Three-tiered behavioral intervention framework for students that is organized to develop and increase positive social and behavioral results in the entire school setting (OSEP, 2015).

### **Delimitations**

The research focused on two schools in separate school systems within an area of North Carolina that has state, regional, and local PBIS support for the schools and teachers. The researcher focused the study around the experiences of five individuals who are second- through third-grade teachers at two different schools in separate school districts which have fully implemented PBIS.

### **Limitations**

The researcher was unknown to the individual participants and conducted face-to-face interviews which could have created an uneasiness or unwillingness to be completely forthcoming about their experiences. The findings of the study were based on



the individual experiences of the participants which may or may not have been influenced by the community and demographic area in which these schools are located. All the elementary schools in the selected districts or selected attendance areas may not have fully implemented PBIS.

### **Organization of the Dissertation**

Chapter 1 introduced the problem that this research studied and why this research was important, an explanation of the theoretical framework based on Fullan's (1993, 1999) Change Theory definition of terms as well as an explanation of delimitations, and limitations. Chapter 2 of this research study explores the review of related literature with an overview of teacher resistance to change, the history of PBIS, implementation of PBIS, necessary strategies for PBIS implementation, Fullan's (1993, 1999) Change Theory, and the PBIS Implementation Inventory. Chapter 3 serves as a description of the methodology that was used in this study. Chapter 3 also identifies the participants, instruments, procedures, and explanations of how the data were collected and analyzed.

## Chapter 2: Literature Review

When schools implement new programs, many times the programs are not implemented with fidelity or are not implemented at all by select teachers. Teachers are resistant to change.

When efforts to improve student learning fail, teachers often end up being blamed. Teachers were resistant to new ideas, say the leaders who were working with them. Rather than blame teachers and ask, “Why do teachers resist?” perhaps those of us who lead change should ask, “What can we do to make it easier for teachers to implement new practices?” (Knight, 2009, p. 508)

“Umpteen reforms have come and gone, using up time, money, and hope. They have left a crippling disillusionment in their wake, a cynicism about staff development and any belief that training or innovation benefits students” (Zimmerman, 2006, p. 245; Schmoker, 1999, p. 37). “If, indeed, most school reform efforts fail, educational leaders are asking themselves what they can do in their schools to beat the odds” (Zimmerman, 2006, p. 245; Fullan & Hargreaves, 1996). “Because resistance is a major factor in the failure of school reforms, it is crucial for principals to discover why teachers resist change, before they can work to overcome this resistance” (Zimmerman, 2006, p. 245).

### Overview

The purpose of this study was to articulate teacher perceptions and experiences with PBIS initiation and implementation and to develop an understanding of the impact of change on the lived experiences of teachers who have implemented PBIS for at least 1 year. This study focused on the types of strategies identified by the teachers that facilitated and/or hindered their PBIS initiation and implementation experiences in their classrooms and schools. The researcher stressed the importance of focusing on the PBIS

implementation and made sure the participants understood this study would not focus on changing aspects of the PBIS program. The prior research conducted on PBIS and the implementation of PBIS by various researchers has shown that PBIS interventions are successful when the program is implemented and all parts of the program are implemented and used as intended (OSEP, 2015). This research study focused on the initiation and implementation strategies that were experienced by the teachers during classroom and school-wide initiation and implementation of PBIS.

The research questions on which this study was based focus around two essential research questions.

1. What have you experienced in terms of the initiation and implementation of PBIS?
2. What contexts or situations have typically influenced or affected your experiences of initiating or implementing PBIS?

### **The History and Tenets of PBIS**

In 1997, the Individuals with Disabilities Act was reauthorized and legislated that a national Center on Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports be established. The purpose of this center would be to provide evidence based best practices and support to schools for students with behavioral disabilities. The PBIS Center was established at the University of Oregon and established a partnership with leading researchers and other universities across the United States. The center has provided direct support through technical assistance and professional development to schools across the nation.

PBIS is an implementation framework (Sugai & Simonsen, 2012) that has roots in Applied Behavioral Science and was designed to enhance social and academic outcomes for all students.

B.F. Skinner and Albert Bandura's behavioral research contributed to the development of behavioral theories and foundations from which Applied Behavioral Science was created. The behaviorist B.F. Skinner's theory of operant and classical conditioning was founded on extrinsic factors that relate to both punitive and positive responses to behaviors (Hansen, 2014; Johnston, Foxx, Jacobson, Green, & Mulick, 2006; Todd & Morris, 1995). Skinner's theory stated that favorable stimuli used with positive reinforcement will increase a desired behavior. Modern behavioral psychology has foundations in Skinner's theory of operant conditioning which includes reinforcing consequences and antecedent events that go beyond just the stimulus-response model. This and other research from Applied Behavior Analysis provided the framework for positive changes in behavior (Hansen, 2014; Skinner, 1974). Other research that was vital in the creation of the PBIS framework was the social learning theory by Albert Bandura. This research demonstrated that when behaviors are modeled, people will observe and learn the behaviors and begin to imitate the desired behavior (Bandura, 1971; Hansen, 2014). The developers of PBIS used these theories to develop the framework that allows schools to establish and demonstrate positive social and behavioral expectations that use positive behavioral reinforcements. These reinforcements can change the academic, social, and personal behaviors of the students (Hansen, 2014).

Sugai, Horner, Fixsen, and Blase (2010) defined PBIS as a "framework or approach comprised of intervention practices and organizational systems for establishing the social culture, learning and teaching environment, and individual behavior supports needed to achieve academic and social success for all students" (p. 13). Sugai and Horner (2009) emphasized that PBIS is a framework; not a curriculum or practice, but rather an approach or process that has evidence-based behavioral practices organized into

a continuum of support.

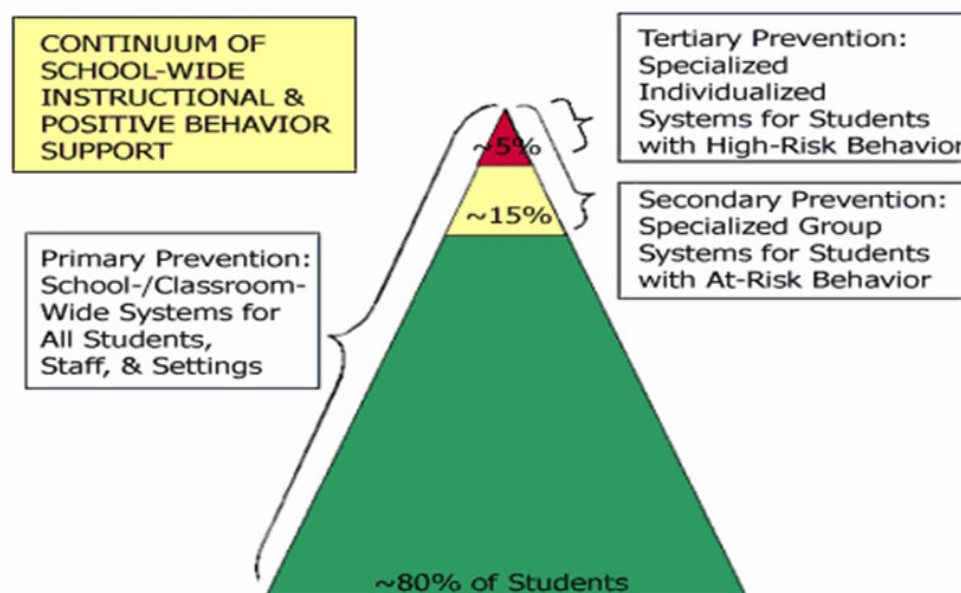
PBIS is implemented school wide in all areas where disruptive, antisocial behavior has been observed by the faculty and staff. The first tier, which focuses on prevention, is also referred to as “universal support for all students.” Tier two, which is also referred to as “target group support,” provides the research-based interventions and monitoring. The third tier is focused on behavior assessments and individual interventions and is also referred to as “individualized support” (Sayeski & Brown, 2011).

PBIS focuses on preventing antisocial disruptive behaviors as well as identifying the magnitude of the disruptive behaviors while providing support throughout the school in all of the common areas and individual classrooms (Sugai & Horner, 1999). “The systemic application of PBIS offers schools, families, and communities a promising approach that enables the adoption and sustained use of effective academic and behavior practices” (Sugai & Horner, 2002, p. 130).

Sugai and Horner’s (2002) research highlighted the key ideas of school-wide PBIS as a “prevention-focused continuum of support,” “proactive instructional approaches to teaching and improving social behaviors,” “conceptually sound and empirically validated practices,” “systems change to support effective practices,” and “data-based decision making” (p. 131).

The goal of PBIS is to decrease the amount of antisocial behaviors and prevent new occurrences of these behaviors from other students. This is done through the primary tier of prevention which uses best practices for every student in the school. The emphasis is placed on the best practices in instruction, classroom management, and discipline throughout the entire school. The secondary tier focuses on decreasing the

disruptive behaviors of a small group of students who are at risk of academic and social failure. This group of students needs more diverse support systems for behavior than those provided by the primary tier. Such interventions and supports are implemented through small groups or individually. The highest level of PBIS is the tertiary tier of prevention which focuses on students who display complex, violent, and long-term behaviors that demonstrate a high risk of failure academically, emotionally, socially, and behaviorally (Sugai & Horner, 2002). Figure 1 is the Continuum of School-wide Instructional and Positive Behavior Support. This triangle is a visual representation of the tiered system of PBIS and displays the three aspects of the PBIS program.



*Figure 1.* Northwest Area Education Agency (AEA) Continuum of School-wide Instructional and Positive Behavior Support. © 2018 Northwest Area Education Agency. All rights reserved.

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## Implementation of PBIS

Fowler (2013) stated that educational initiatives must be implemented at the

“grassroots level” by district and site administrators and all classroom teachers. Fowler went on to state that for implementation to be successful, schools and teachers need to be provided the materials, resources, and motivation to implement the new initiative. Often, new initiatives are either not implemented or completely modified while being implemented (Fowler, 2013).

School administrators play a significant part in the implementation of education initiatives, stated Fowler (2013). The role that school administrators play in implementation was outlined by Fowler as, “they are expected to develop a plan to carry it out, motivate teachers to cooperate, marshal the necessary resources, and provide feedback about the process” (p. 19).

Schools that implement PBIS effectively have strong administrative support and leadership throughout the training and implementation process. In order for the PBIS model to be successful, schools must have buy-in from teachers, administrators, and staff at a minimum of 80%. PBIS training is unique because it “seeks to help administrators and faculty build collaborative teams and work together to ensure effective implementation” (Martin, 2013, p. 6; Dunlap et al., 2000; Wasilewski et al., 2008). Research by Safran and Oswald (2003) stated that school administration, faculty, and staff commitment and ownership were paramount to implementing PBIS with fidelity and success.

Schools are implementing PBIS to change the negative social behaviors that are inhibiting classroom instruction, which is one of the biggest challenges faced by teachers. Several studies have been done with regard to the effectiveness of PBIS based on teacher perceptions of the framework and of the implementation. Research completed by Gottfredson et al. (2000) found that the responses from teachers who addressed the

challenges of PBIS were based around four commonly identified concerns.

Gottfredson et al. (2000) identified the concerns as

- implementation inconsistency,
- differing values of educating students,
- differing views on what are the challenging social behaviors, and
- system-wide delivery of intervention plans.

Survey research completed by Wilson-Brewer, Cohen, O'Donnell, and Goodman (1991) on the barriers of successful implementation of PBIS were narrowed down to four main areas:

1. Difficulty acquiring staff and the ability to implement the programs to the scale needed for sustainability.
2. Large responsibility placed on stressed out, overworked teachers who had no input in the decision-making process.
3. Denial of the existence of negative social behaviors in the school.
4. Lack of knowledge or training to evaluate the fidelity and implementation processes for the program.

According to Wilson-Brewer et al. (1991), resistance to program implementation generally occurs when the faculty and staff of a school do not support the selected program, they were not asked for any input in the program selection process, and they feel that it will create more work and add to their already overwhelming schedule.

In research by Gottfredson, Gottfredson, Payne, and Gottfredson (2005), there are factors that may promote or prohibit the successful implementation of a school-wide preventive behavior program. The factors are school climate, administrators, comprehension of expectations and goals, defined roles and responsibilities, leadership of



the administration, communication, involvement of educators in selection and planning, school's history of successful/unsuccessful implementations, morale of the staff, and faculty exasperation with difficult students. Gottfredson et al. (2005) simplified their findings by stating that successful implementation can be promoted or prohibited by each of these factors. If communication is clear and consistent, implementation will be easier to achieve; and if communication is low and unclear, implementation will be more difficult.

Horner et al. (2007) indicated in his research that for implementation of PBIS to be successful, the school's PBIS team must receive continual on-site consultations, participate with all staff in training modules, meet, review data, and plan consistently. Horner et al. (2007) also noted that in order to reach full implementation of a school-wide three-tiered PBIS framework, the school needs to commit to a 3-year implementation time frame.

In a research study conducted by Weissflug (2009), administrators from Rogers Middle school determined that the successful implementation of PBIS in their school was directly related to consistency of the faculty and staff and effective training and buy-in from all stakeholders. Weissflug conducted a quantitative study in which the researcher analyzed discipline data to determine if the implementation of PBIS would decrease the problem behaviors at Rogers Middle School. The school implemented the PBIS framework which promoted positive interactions, clear consequences, and appropriate interventions. The researcher gathered data from two student cohorts over a 3-year period of time. The researcher noted that while analyzing the data from the study, his original hypothesis that PBIS would make a lasting impact on the students at Rogers Middle School was far from what was experienced. The data showed that PBIS did not

make a significant influence on grade point averages, reading Lexile scores, or office discipline referrals. The researcher identified that the teachers in the school did not participate in the training that was necessary to increase their knowledge to appropriately implement PBIS. The researcher indicated that there was a lack of ownership by the staff that led to inappropriate follow through when it came to implementing the methods and strategies of PBIS (Weissflug, 2009).

Backman (2015) conducted a research study comparing the effectiveness of PBIS implementation to the effectiveness of the program in two schools in Cumberland County, North Carolina. Comparative research conducted by Backman in two Cumberland County, North Carolina schools provided evidence of the effectiveness of the PBIS program. Her research stated that of the two schools, one had implemented the program to fidelity while the other had not. The respondents from the school who had not implemented the program with fidelity identified that in their school, there was a lack of consistency reinforcing the ongoing expectations that were needed to maintain the PBIS program. Backman's research supports prior research which indicated to successfully implement PBIS, faculty and staff support and ownership of the program methods and principles are vital. If there are not full support and ownership of the program from the teachers, the efficacy of the program is impacted (Backman, 2015).

A preliminary study conducted by Ross and Horner (2007) determined that teacher self-efficacy was beneficial to the successful implementation of school-wide PBIS. The study assessed teacher stress and efficacy while implementing PBIS. The data were collected from 20 teachers through self-report measures all from schools that had varied degrees of PBIS implementation. To measure teacher efficacy, the study used a 30-item measure that was ranked from 1 to 6 on a Likert scale. The level of PBIS

implementation at each school was measured by the school's score on the SET, and varied degrees of implementation were included in this study. The 20 teachers who participated in the study were from four middle schools. Two scored high on the fidelity of implementation on the SET, while the other two schools had a low score on the fidelity of implementation on the SET. The data showed that at the schools with high fidelity of implementation, the teachers had greater teacher efficacy than the teachers of the low fidelity implementation schools. This study is consistent with previous research that indicates a link between increased student outcomes and teacher efficacy. The research indicated that teachers who have low efficacy have an increased risk of unfavorable relationships with both staff and students and of implementing negative strategies for discipline instead of positive preventions that are the basis for the PBIS framework (Ross & Horner, 2007).

Martin's (2013) research found that for PBIS implementation to be effective, four main levels had to be in place. The four main levels described in her research were Management and Implementation Teams which provide engaged leadership; Professional Development, Coaching, and Evaluation Processes which are provided by the management and implementation teams; Phase In Implementation which allows for the comprehensive PBIS program to be slowly implemented piece-by-piece until the complete program is fully implemented; and Sustainability which allows for the continuation of research-based decision-making and planning.

Research conducted by Sugai and Horner (2006), stated that four elements need to be in place for a systemic implementation of PBIS. The school must develop long-term achievable and measurable goals for academic and social behavior. These goals or outcomes must be endorsed by the faculty, staff, parents, and students. The school must

also identify and employ practices and approaches that are research based and backed by reputable educational evidence. The school must use data to analyze the effectiveness of interventions and practices that are routinely used and can demonstrate the need for change. The final component Sugai and Horner (2006) noted for effective school implementation is for the school to have systems in place that will enable sustained implementation of PBIS. These systems include training, administrative support, community backing, adequate personnel, and funding.

The OSEP Center on Positive Behavioral Support (2015) reported that schools do not have the appropriate experience and understanding of developing action plans to implement and establish PBIS. The outcome quality and fidelity of PBIS implementation are affected by the challenges of personnel, funding, training, coordination, evaluation, and the diversity and number of schools. The study further indicated that the size, location, local culture, staff positions and experiences, organizational structure, and socioeconomic status of the school or district can have an effect on the initial implementation experience and on the ability to sustain and expand PBIS initiatives.

### **Theoretical Framework: Fullan's (1993, 1999) Model of Change**

“PBIS is an integration of inclusive systems for improvement among all stakeholders across all school contexts. It is an expansion from classroom behavior management to an environmental and cultural change affecting students and staff” (Hansen, 2014, p. 20, Bradshaw & Elise, 2011).

In order to initiate and implement PBIS in a school, an overhaul of change must take place. Many times, change requires people to move out of their comfort zones and into areas where they are unsure how to act or react to the new things that are taking place. In implementing a multifaceted program like PBIS which changes all areas of a

school and the school's climate, the teacher plays a critical role. Fullan (1993) addressed educational change and reform on this magnitude in *Change Forces: Probing the Depths of Education Reform*. Fullan recognized that teachers are "prime change agents" since they are professionals that focus on academic, cultural, and societal improvement (Friborg, 2014, p. 6).

In research conducted by Friborg (2014), she noted that "extensive research exists in the areas of change theory, social influence, and power in the business world" (p. 6). Various change theories have been developed, and most recognize that change transpires concurrently on multiple levels (Fullan, 1993; Hall, 1992; McNeal & Christy, 2001). Change which takes place in an educational setting is multi-faceted and uses "new or revised materials, new teaching approaches, and alternation of beliefs" (Fullan, 1993, p. 30). Productive change is even more daunting due to increased complexity and effort (McNeal & Christy, 2001). "Dynamic complexity is the real territory of change" (Fullan, 1993, p. 31) because "productive change is the constant search for understanding, knowing there is no ultimate answer" (Fullan, 1993, p. 282). Fullan's (2008) research demonstrates that although complex and daunting, change can be achieved in a manageable and productive process.

Fullan (2007) has conducted, written, and published various research that relates to change in the area of education. In Fullan's (1999) book *Change Forces the Sequel*, he identified four phases of educational change. These four phases of change are referred to as Fullan's (1999) Educational Change Theory and consist of the initiation, implementation, continuation, and outcome stages (Fullan, 1999). When administrators, teachers, and other stakeholders in a school system set out to initiate or implement change through programs such as PBIS or RtI, each of the four phases of the Educational

Change Theory are important to the process (Henson, 2011). The initiation phase is the first phase and is made up of five elements as follows (Fullan, 1999; Henson, 2011):

1. Existence and quality of innovations.
2. Access to innovations.
3. Advocacy from central administration.
4. Teacher advocacy.
5. External change agents.

When describing external change agents, Fullan (1999) recognized all stakeholders in the process of educational change as change agents (Henson, 2011).

“This theory places special importance on the individual’s role in the change process as the organization moves through the four phases” (Henson, 2011, p. 16; Fullan, 1999).

Fullan (1993) believed that “effective change agents neither embrace nor ignore mandates, but use them as catalysts to reexamine what they are doing” (p. 24). “There is enormous potential for true, meaningful change simply in building coalition with other change agents, both within one’s own group and across all groups” (Ellsworth, 2000, p. 1).

Implementation is the second phase of this theory, and it has three factors: (a) characteristics of change, (b) local characteristics, and (c) external factors such as government and other outside agencies (Fullan & Stigelbauer, 1991).

These identified characterizations of change for each stakeholder and the issues that each stakeholder should consider before committing a change effort or rejecting it are vital at this phase. The need for change, clarity about these needs, goals, and the complexity of the process were the characteristics of the change process. (Henson, 2011, p. 11)

In educational research conducted by Henson (2011) that focused on educational change, he noted that the increased complexity of the change “included the extent of change required from those responsible for the implementation along with the quality and practicality of the program, model, or reform” (p. 13). Henson’s research also recognized Fullan’s (1999) second phase, external factors, that effected the educational change in his research. Henson identified the local factors as the school board, school district, principals and teachers; with the external factors being the federal, state, and local government agencies and other entities that create and enact educational policies (Fullan & Stigelbauer, 1991; Henson, 2011).

In the third phase, continuation, a decision is made either to continue or discontinue the change process; be it a program, reform, framework, or model. The decision of continuation is based on feedback, both positive and negative, and on stakeholder reaction to the process. In the continuation phase, there are three important factors that determine sustainability (Fullan & Stigelbauer, 1991). These factors are (a) change is embedded into the system (policies, human and fiscal resources); (b) skilled administrators and teachers are committed to the change process (program, reform, framework, or model); and (c) established procedures have been developed for continuation and continual support procedures.

The final stage of Fullan’s (1993, 1999) Educational Change Theory is outcome. Active involvement and participation from all stakeholders is necessary to achieve success in the process of change. This fourth stage of the process is continual and brings about the desired results of implementation.

Fullan and Stigelbauer (1991) stated that in order to reach sustainability and keep positive momentum, several things need to continually occur: continual active initiation

and participation; pressure; support and negotiation (expectations, buy-in, and communication); changes in skills, thinking, and committed actions (continual support); and overriding the problem of ownership (Fullan & Stigelbauer, 1991).

In the continued educational change research by Fullan (1999), he provided eight important lessons about change within the educational system:

1. Problematic and complex is the moral purpose of change.
2. Both theories of change and education work together.
3. Diversity and conflict are helpful in the change process.
4. Know and embrace what it means to “operate on the edge of chaos” (p. 18).
5. Emotional intelligence is anxiety containing and provoking.
6. Collaborative cultures are both anxiety containing and provoking.
7. Creation of knowledge and connectedness is critical, attack incoherence.
8. Create your own solutions/theories by being critical, there is no single answer.

In Fullan’s (1993, 1999) research, he addressed the complexity of the process of educational change. Fullan (1999) stated that in order to deal with this type of complexity, it is not a matter of controlling the change process but of guiding it.

Educational organizations should become “critical consumers of change” and begin to develop and create theories, actions, and processes (Henson, 2011, p. 16, Fullan, 1999).

Henson (2011) built on Fullan’s ideas of complexity by stating,

In order to accomplish this admirable goal, change agents must remember that moral purpose is complex and problematic, theories of education and change rely upon one another, conflict and diversity should be celebrated and used throughout this process, organizations will be operating on the edge of chaos during most of this process, in which they will overcome incoherence and misunderstanding of



purpose and gain connectedness and knowledge creation. (p. 16)

Every person is a change agent: “It is only by individuals taking action to alter their own environments that there is any chance for deep change” (Fullan 1993, p. 24).

### **Necessary Strategies for Successful Program Implementation**

According to various researchers, program initiation and implementation must have necessary components in place or ready to be put in place for the program to be implemented. The National Study of Delinquency Prevention in Schools (NSDPS) researched factors that enabled a school to successfully implement behavior prevention programs such as PBIS. The study researched key factors to successful implementation which the research team identified as organizational capacity, leadership, budget and resources, organizational support, program structure, integration into the normal procedures, program feasibility, and level of disorder (Gottfredson et al., 2000). The study found that organizational capacity is essential to implementation of any program. The amount of training and the quality of the training provided to the teachers and supervisors led to better use and understanding of the program and how it should be implemented. When the training used research and information from experts, the school personnel incorporated those best practices into their implementation of the program. The research by NSDPS indicated that the stability of the staff was not related to the quality of implementation. The results of the study indicated that leadership and administrative support was linked to the quality of, and support for, implementation. The findings also showed inconsistent support that the budget of a school had any negative impact on quality implementation (Gottfredson et al., 2000). The research had no test to show that the program structure had any effect on implementation quality, because the test schools used handbooks as quality implementation indicators. The study showed that

administrative supervision and quality training matter to ensure high-quality implementation that leads to the sustainability of the program. The research suggested that quality implementation is compromised when administrative support is weak or nonexistent. There was only moderate support in the research that quality implementation came from integrating the program into the school's procedures. The study also showed that the results were the same for both the elementary and secondary samples. The level of disorder or problems in the school found that schools that had higher degrees of disorder were able to implement the programs with more fidelity and had more organizational support (Gottfredson et al., 2000).

Boston (2016) conducted mixed-methods research on the implementation of PBIS in one elementary and one middle school, both of which are Tennessee public schools located in different districts. The research was conducted using a seven-part survey with part seven being the qualitative open-response question on the survey. The responses on part seven of the survey were coded and grouped based on themes. The research contained two consistent themes among both schools. The first theme that emerged from the research was that administrators and staff members must be consistent with PBIS implementation. The second theme that emerged from both schools was the need for professional development and training that was ongoing, so new teachers and staff members are trained by the PBIS team (Boston, 2016). The research also indicated that the research participants considered change, leadership and support, knowledge, and attitudes as elements that are necessary for the implementation of PBIS to be successful. Boston indicated in her research that the culture and climate of a school needs to be analyzed prior to implementation in order to determine the level of urgency to change. In this study, Boston indicated that the level of complacency, the lack of urgency, lack of

trust and buy-in from administration and staff can prevent, or at the very least, impede the implementation of highly effective research-based programs like PBIS (Boston, 2016).

Phenomenological research conducted by Fredrich (2015) described the experiences of middle school staff members who implemented the three-tier education initiative called RtI. This study was a qualitative study in which the researcher focused on the experiences of the participants who have been involved in the implementation process of RtI for at least 2 years. The researcher conducted semi-structured interviews with nine participants who were selected based on recommendations from the participants' administrators. The researcher recorded the interviews and used commercial software to organize and analyze the data. The software coded the data using queries for coding comparisons and word frequency. Three major themes emerged from the data: leadership with shared ownership, competency with capacity building, and professional learning communities within the organizational environment. The theme of shared ownership that was identified in the study indicated that the research site had a common vision and common expectations for the implementation of RtI and was shared by all stakeholders at the site. The study did support the role of the administrator as an instructional leader who creates and enables the shared vision within the school. The data from this study reinforce that strong administrators address concerns and questions from their staff as well as provide quality time for training and professional development that is ongoing in order to build teacher capacity. Building the capacity of the teachers allowed them to implement the new methods through an increase in their own knowledge and understanding that was provided by the training and professional development. The data from the study also indicated the need for continuous improvement using data-driven decision-making and collaboration that was put into place at the site through the

implementation of professional learning communities. Fredrich stated, “Research has shown that implementation that is deployed with integrity and fidelity can yield the same results as is has in research settings” (p. 185).

In research conducted by Schwierjohn (2011), the key strategy that was found for successful implementation of the RtI program was the slow and purposeful implementation of the program in small chunks. The chunking, combined with teacher input and communication, directed the process and the development of a successful implementation plan. The research from the study showed “a connection between teacher input and increased levels of identifying key factors in implementing and sustaining RtI” (Schwierjohn, 2011, pp. 88-89). This research suggests that teachers and staff members are more likely to implement the key features of a program such as RtI or PBIS with fidelity when teacher and staff input is taken into consideration and when the process of implementation occurs slowly over a period of time which allows for gradual change.

Quantitative research by Hansen (2014) explored teacher perceptions of the processes of PBIS implementation. The rationale behind this study was to determine if the perceptions of the teachers led to successful or failed implementation of PBIS. The study explored three relationships: “teacher perception of PBIS and the implementation process, teacher perception and the role of the administrator in the PBIS implementation process, and teacher perception of the role of the administrator and the implementation process” (Hansen, 2014, p. 50). Participants were public school teachers from kindergarten to eighth grade in a school district located in Mississippi. The participants were provided with a validated researcher-created 25-question Likert scale survey. The researcher invited 225 participants with only 116 actual participants who returned a fully

completed survey. The results were analyzed to reveal that there was a significant correlation between teacher perceptions and the fidelity with which they implemented PBIS. There was also a significantly positive correlation between the perception of teachers and the role of the administration in the implementation of PBIS. The teachers indicated they were more likely to implement PBIS in their classrooms because the intervention system provided an opportunity for positive behavioral interactions. The teachers saw themselves as partners with the administration, collaborating with each other in order to do what was best for the students. The researcher did note that all the positive results from this study could indicate a successful PBIS team that was supportive of the teachers in order for there to be a positive implementation process. The researcher also indicated that the positive results could also be directly related to the schools having a strong supportive administrative team. Hansen (2014) recommended that administrators focus on implementing PBIS with fidelity and developing a strong level of teacher buy-in.

A multiple case study conducted by Jones (2015) analyzed the experiences of middle school teachers from one district who were from three different middle schools in North Carolina. The study explored the factors that impede and facilitate successful implementation of both RtI and PBIS. The study also examined the implementation experiences of the administration and teachers. The researcher used the methods of face-to-face semi-structured interviews, questionnaires, datasets to evaluate the implementation of both programs, and a focus group. The themes that emerged from this study were stakeholder ownership, systems cognition, systems design, and learning community (Jones, 2015). The research found that the three middle schools that participated in the study failed to obtain buy-in of 80% and lacked adequate stakeholder

groups to support implementation. The teachers did achieve what Jones referred to as system cognition through a developed belief system in which they were able to work together to benefit students, and they understood the framework of both programs. The research revealed that as the teachers became more knowledgeable of the frameworks and grew in capacity, the school culture experienced some change. The schools established processes and procedures that respond to the individual and group needs of the students and school, which increased stakeholder ownership. A disadvantage to the implementation of the frameworks at each school was the attitude that the programs were just individual, isolated reforms and the learning communities within the schools did not use the programs together to benefit student achievement and behavior. All three of the schools failed to become a working collaborative learning community through systemic change using the frameworks of RtI and PBIS to create a culture of academic and behavioral change. Jones stated that the lack of buy-in is one reason for the systemic change failure in all three middle schools. None of the programs were presented to teachers, parents, and students to gain community buy-in to insure the success of implementation. Jones also indicated that teacher turnover was a factor that prohibited full implementation of both programs. The system lacked a process to maintain constant training in order to build the capacity of new teachers or leaders within the schools to continue implementation (Jones, 2015). Based on her research, Jones recommended,

When top-down reforms begin at the district level, there needs to be a support system for schools and a process for getting buy-in from principals to ensure that school leaders will provide their teachers with the support needed to implement reforms with fidelity. (p. 134)

Research conducted by Pope (2016) examined the behaviors, procedures, and

strategies that were imperative to successful implementation of PBIS. The research also studied which primary change agents positively or negatively impacted the implementation of PBIS. Teams of teachers from a Title I primary school who taught first and second grades were the targeted population for the study. The research was a case study which used semi-structured interviews, field study, and school data review. The data were analyzed; and five themes emerged from the research: purpose, relationships, communication, leadership, and results. Pope established in her research that the teachers' purpose was they were all "invested in student achievement" (p. 74). The research also recognized, in the area of relationships, that one person can sabotage the entire team effort. The theme of communication revealed that collaboration was more important than the competition mentality. The study also noted that the leadership's delivery of the content is just as important as the content itself. The study was also able to show that implementing PBIS in the school produced results and change within the classroom setting (Pope, 2016). In Pope's research, the dynamics of teamwork positively impacted the implementation of PBIS. Participants stated that developing relationships which are based on open-mindedness, consistency, and communication can foster collaboration. This research aligns with the research that "collaboration promotes new and innovative ideas, teacher empowerment, shared responsibility, a sense of community, and a shared vision" (Pope, 2016, p. 84; Harris, 2013). The major barrier to successful implementation that was found in Pope's research was the teachers' "personal resistance to change" (p. 129). As an administrator, Pope's research provided insight into how to introduce new programs and initiatives to the faculty. The research stated, "No matter who initiates the change, weather it is proven prior to or through the implementation, there must be an actual and recognized need for the change or it will not be accepted by

teachers” (Pope, 2016, p. 130).

### **PBIS Implementation Inventory**

The creators of PBIS developed the SET in order to measure the fidelity of PBIS implementation. This evaluation tool assesses the seven attributes of PBIS and is conducted by an external evaluator who has been trained in the annual evaluation process of PBIS schools. The seven key elements being evaluated by the SET are

Expectations Defined (three to five positive school-wide behavioral expectations defined); Behavioral Expectations Taught (these expectations are taught to all children in the school); System for Rewarding Behavioral Expectations (rewards are provided for meeting the behavioral expectations); System for Responding to Behavioral Violations (a consistently implemented continuum of consequences for problem behavior is in place); Monitoring and Evaluation (behavior patterns are monitored and the information is used for ongoing decision-making); Management (an administrator actively supports and is involved in the PBIS effort and a comprehensive school-wide behavior support team is formed); and District-Level Support (the school district provides support to the school in the form of functional policies, staff training, and data collection opportunities.

(Bradshaw et al., 2008, p. 3; Horner et al., 2004).



## **Chapter 3: Methodology**

### **Introduction**

The purpose of this study was to articulate teacher perceptions and experiences with PBIS initiation and implementation and to develop an understanding of the impact of change on the lived experiences of teachers who have implemented PBIS for at least 1 year. This study focused on the types of strategies identified by the teachers that facilitated and/or hindered their PBIS initiation and implementation experiences in their classrooms and schools. The researcher stressed the importance of focusing on the PBIS initiation and implementation and made sure the participants understood this study would not focus on changing aspects of the PBIS program. The prior research that has been conducted on PBIS and the implementation of PBIS by various researchers has shown that PBIS interventions are successful when the program is implemented and all parts of the program are implemented and used as intended (OSEP, 2015). This research study focused on the initiation and implementation strategies that were experienced by the teachers during classroom and school-wide initiation and implementation of PBIS.

Chapter 3 presents the methodology that was used in this qualitative research study. This chapter describes qualitative research, processes for the data collection, participants, procedures, data analysis, and validation of the data.

### **Methodology Research Design**

This study used generic qualitative inquiry research methodology defined by Creswell (2013) and Merriam (2009) to answer the two research questions on which this study was based.

1. What have teachers experienced in terms of the initiation and implementation of PBIS.

2. What contexts or situations have typically influenced or affected teacher experiences initiating or implementing PBIS?

In order to answer these questions, generic qualitative inquiry research had to be understood. Creswell (2013) defined qualitative research as,

Qualitative research begins with assumptions and the use of interpretive/ theoretical frameworks that inform the study of research problems addressing the meaning of individuals or groups ascribed to a social or human problem. To study this problem, qualitative researchers use an emerging qualitative approach to inquiry the collection of data in a natural setting sensitive to the people and places under study, and data analysis that is both inductive and deductive and establishes patterns or themes. The final written report or presentation includes the voices of participants, the reflexivity of the researcher, a complex description and interpretation of the problem, and its contribution to the literature or a call for change. (p. 44)

Merriam (2009) stated that when educational researchers have a goal of understanding how people make sense of their experiences, qualitative research design is most commonly used. Merriam also described qualitative research as being an interpretive research approach. Creswell (2013, 2014) outlined the procedures for a basic qualitative research study. Creswell (2013) stated that qualitative research engages the researcher in rich conversations that are guided by in-depth questions posed by the researcher. These questions are answered by the participants through their experiences and perceptions. The researcher collects participant perceptions and experiences that make up the study data. The researcher analyzes and explains the data by establishing themes and drawing conclusions (Creswell, 2013). Merriam also

explained that a qualitative research approach is used to discover and interpret participant experiences in relation to the research question. Creswell (2014) defined qualitative research as the application of research strategies in order to acquire participant perceptions, experiences, and information which is then analyzed so a problem can be understood.

### **Research Context**

This research used generic qualitative inquiry methodology. This type of research is defined by Caelli, Ray, and Mill (2003) as research that is “not guided by an explicit or established set of philosophic assumption in the form of one of the known qualitative methodologies” (p. 4). This type of qualitative research does focus on analyzing the collected data and providing a descriptive summary of the data analysis (Horne, 2017; Sandelowski, 2000). Generic qualitative inquiry is a methodology that matches with research that will collect data through open-ended interviews with participants (Fossey, Harvey, McDermott, & Davidson, 2002; Horne, 2017). Participants are allowed to reflect on and share their perceptions of a shared experience by using generic qualitative inquiry (Horne, 2017; Percy, Kostere, & Kostere, 2015; Polkinghorne, 2005).

“Qualitative methodology allows the researcher to serve as the principal instrument for data collection” (Creswell, 2014, pp. 185-186).

PBIS is not a new concept, although it has become a major component for behavioral intervention in the United States and specifically North Carolina. As of 2016, PBIS has been implemented in 21,559 schools; and state-wide training and coordination systems have been created in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, and the island territory of Guam (OSEP, 2015). Although the popularity of PBIS and state-wide training and coordination systems has increased, the teachers still become the “key

stakeholders in implementing PBIS,” once successful implementation of school-wide PBIS by the collaborative team has taken place (Martin, 2013, p. 7). There are many supporters of PBIS in districts and classrooms across North Carolina as well as many adversaries to the program and its implementation. The success of PBIS is based on the buy-in and support of the classroom teachers who will be the key implementers of the program. In order for the PBIS model to be successful, schools must have buy-in from teachers, administrators, and staff at a minimum of 80% (Dunlap et al., 2000; Martin, 2013; Wasilewski et al., 2008).

Based on the scant research specific to teacher perceptions and experiences initiating and implementing PBIS, generic qualitative inquiry was the best methodology to examine this research problem, based on the critical importance of the teacher’s role in implementing PBIS. U.S. News and World Report investigated districts and schools within the United States that had successful implementation of federal and state initiatives in education including the shift to common core. The findings of the investigation highlighted the importance of the voices of the teachers in implementing new programs. In the article, Martin (2013) stated that giving the teachers a voice about issues that had always been the domain of district and school administrators built trust. This allowed teachers to candidly speak about the challenges of implementation and to work together with administrators to develop action plans that alleviate those issues. Once the teachers were allowed to plan and develop systems for successful implementation, they experienced greater teacher buy-in that resulted in successful implementation of the programs (Martin, 2013).

This study was appropriate for basic qualitative research methodology since it allowed for data to be collected through interviews. These interviews were based on two

research questions which allowed for the understanding of teacher perceptions and experiences with PBIS initiation and implementation in two different schools in two different southeastern school districts in North Carolina. This qualitative research adds to the currently limited research in the area of teacher perceptions and experiences during initiation and implementation of PBIS in individual classrooms and schools.

### **Participants**

This research study used criterion sampling in order to select participants. Criterion sampling is a method that allows participants to be purposefully selected by the researcher and is used to assure the participants meet a specific criterion (Creswell, 2013; Patton, 2015). The criteria for this study were general education second- and third-grade teachers who had no more than 3 years of experience implementing PBIS. This time frame allowed for the experience of PBIS implementation to be fresh in the participants' minds. The teachers have experience initiating and implementing other educational initiatives in order to have a frame of reference for strategies that have facilitated and/or hindered the initiation and implementation process. These criteria as set in order to gain the second- and third-grade teacher perceptions of PBIS initiation and implementation. This allowed teachers who fit this criterion to articulate their perceptions, experiences, and the types of strategies that facilitated and/or hindered their PBIS initiation and implementation experience in their classrooms and schools.

The researcher focused the study around the experiences of six participants who are second- through third-grade teachers at two different schools in two separate school districts that have implemented PBIS. The study took place in two elementary schools in two different districts in the southeastern region of North Carolina. The attendance area of the first district contains one high school, one middle school, and three elementary

schools that are divided into Pre-K-1, 2nd-3rd, and 4th-5th. The second district contains 53 elementary schools that are broken up into attendance areas. The elementary schools in the identified attendance area are all prekindergarten through fifth grade. Both districts operate on a traditional calendar schedule.

### **Instruments**

This study was conducted through face-to-face interviews with participants who met the criteria for study inclusion. Participation in the study was approved by the districts and by both school principals, then the teachers volunteered to be interviewed for the study with assurance of anonymity. The researcher conducted the study using in-depth, semi-structured interviews that occurred face to face. According to Van Manen (1990), interviews that occur in qualitative research have a dual purpose to explore the experience in a way that allows for material to be collected to develop a deeper understanding of the experience and to engage in a profound conversation about the deep-rooted meaning of the experience (p. 66). Following the general interview protocols of McNamara (2009), the guiding questions were open ended, and questions that addressed why were limited. To begin the interview, the researcher addressed the purpose, structure, anonymity, and other information or questions that the participant had in order for him or her to feel comfortable during the interview (McNamara, 2009). The structure and order of the questions followed the recommended sequence provided by McNamara in his General Guidelines for Conducting Research Interviews. McNamara suggested that the interview questions are a collection of demographic, factual, background, and personal experience questions. He also stated that the interview should begin with superficial questions that address participant demographics and background as related to the research questions and then move into the broad personally rooted

questions in order to allow the participant to adjust to sharing their experiences (McNamara, 2009).

The researcher chose semi-structured interviews in order to be in charge of the interview process while providing the flexibility of asking a guided question and then following the lead of the participant into areas that are relative to their experiences. Hatch (2002) stated, “Interviews are tools used to reveal the meanings and significance of artifacts collected in the field” (p. 91). The researcher-created guided questions are located in Appendix A. The questions were modeled after survey questions used in the research of Martin (2013). Dr. Martin granted the researcher permission to adapt the survey questions that were used in her research on the implementation of PBIS (Appendix B). Turner (2010) focused on research conducted by Creswell (2007) in order to develop research questions which would allow the researcher to gain information that was most beneficial to the research being conducted. Turner stated,

Creswell (2007) makes the suggestion of being flexible with research questions being constructed. Creswell believes that the researcher must construct questions in such a manner to keep participants on focus with their responses to the questions. In addition, the researcher must be prepared with follow-up questions or prompts in order to ensure that they obtain optimal responses from participants. (p. 757)

### **Pilot Testing**

In order to validate the guided questions, the researcher conducted a pilot test. Turner (2010) described the process of conducting a pilot test:

A pilot test should be conducted with participants that have similar interests as those that will participate in the implemented study. The pilot test will also assist

the researchers with the refinement of research questions, which is suggested and discussed by Creswell (2007, 2013).

Another important element to the interview preparation is the implementation of a pilot test. The pilot test will assist the research in determining if there are flaws, limitations, or other weaknesses within the interview design and will allow him or her to make necessary revisions prior to the implementation of the study. (p. 758).

The researcher developed a pilot test in order to determine if there were flaws or weaknesses in the guided interview questions. The researcher asked several people who met the criteria to participate in the research study if they would be willing to allow the researcher to interview them for the pilot test. The researcher explained what would happen during the pilot test and that they would be expected to provide feedback regarding the guided questions and their relevance to the two research questions of the study. Three people volunteered to participate in the pilot test. The researcher conducted the pilot test using the same procedures that would take place in the actual interview protocol. The pilot interviews took place after school in a one-on-one, face-to-face setting. The researcher digitally recorded the interviews to prepare for the actual interview process. The researcher provided the participants with the guided interview questions after the interview had taken place. After the interview, each participant discussed his or her thoughts and ideas in relation to the guided questions and the interview process with the researcher. The participants gave suggestions about the guided questions, which allowed the researcher to see the shift they felt the questions needed to take. The pilot group suggested the researcher ask each participant Guided Question 8 Parts A-B in order for the researcher to be able to discover the strategies that



hindered or facilitated the initiation and implementation process. The pilot participants all agreed that, through the rich discussion, the first research question should be addressed easily with the researcher only using the guided questions if necessary.

### **Procedures**

The regional PBIS coordinator helped the researcher identify the schools in each district that have implemented PBIS. The researcher focused on the schools that had PBIS in place no more than 3 years so the experience of PBIS implementation would be fresh in participant minds. Once the schools in the districts were identified, the researcher made contact with the superintendent of each school system and the principal of each school in order to gain consent for the study to take place at that school within each of the districts (Appendix C). The researcher is employed at a high school in one of the districts and maintains a good rapport with the superintendent of that district. The research study did not take place in the school where the researcher is employed. Once consent was gained from the superintendents and principals, the researcher then contacted the principals at each school and provided them with in-depth information about the research and gained consent to invite teachers from the school to participate in the study. The researcher used contacts in the districts to identify and gain access to teachers at the schools who met the criteria of the study. The researcher communicated with possible participants through emails that provided an overview of the study, criteria for participation, and the procedures of the study (Appendix D). After providing the possible participants with a few days to familiarize themselves with the study, the researcher made telephone contact and formally invited them to participate in the study and answered their questions about the study. After the participants gave verbal consent, the researcher scheduled face-to-face interviews which took place at the participants' school.

Participants completed the individual consent to participate form prior to beginning the interviews (Appendix E). Prior to the process of collecting data about their experiences, the researcher shared background, experiences, and interest in the study topic which “empowered the individuals to share their stories” (Creswell, 2013, p. 48). Participants were asked guided questions that focused around the two research questions that were established.

1. What have you experienced in terms of the initiation and implementation of PBIS?
2. What contexts or situations have typically influenced or affected your experiences of initiating or implementing PBIS?

The interviews were digitally recorded, with the permission of the participant, in order for the experience to be documented and later transcribed to written text. The privacy of the participants and the interviews were of the utmost importance to the researcher. The researcher used a random color system to label the recorded participant interviews and the text transcripts of the interviews. The researcher noted participant expressions, voice tone, and body language to provide all the details from the interview. The interviews were transcribed by a contracted professional third-party transcriptionist which ensured an accurate, unbiased account of all the interviews. The researcher collaborated with the participants directly by having them review and correct their data once they had been transcribed. This allowed the participants to validate the research that had been transcribed from their interview (Creswell, 2013). Once the written transcripts of the interviews had been gathered, the researcher used NVivo, a qualitative data analysis software. The software assisted the researcher in managing, coding, and analyzing the qualitative data. This software allowed the research data to go through a

process called horizontalization in which the software analyzed the transcripts and highlighted significant sentences, quotes, and statements that created “clusters of meaning” or themes based on significant sentences or statements (Creswell, 2013, p .82). The researcher took the themes that emerged through the use of the data analysis software and developed them into rich descriptions which allowed the research findings to emerge from the important themes identified in the data (Thomas, 2006). The researcher used the descriptions to compile recommendations for initiation and implementation strategies.

### **Research Reliability and Validity**

“The use of reliability and validity are common in quantitative research and now it is reconsidered in the qualitative research paradigm” (Golafshani, 2003, p. 597). When examining research validity, Joppe (2000) explained that the validity and reliability determined “whether the research truly measures that which it was intended to measure or how truthful the research results are” (p. 1). Lincoln and Guba (1985) addressed reliability and validity in qualitative research, stating, “Since there can be no validity without reliability, a demonstration of the former [validity] is sufficient to establish the latter [reliability]” (p. 316). Patton (2002) stated qualitative research reliability is a consequence of the validity in a study. Joppe continued by defining reliability as

the extent to which results are consistent over time and an accurate representation of the total population under study is referred to as reliability and if the results of a study can be reproduced under a similar methodology, then the research instrument is considered to be reliable. (p. 1)

The researcher recognized the potential of certain limitations to impact the analysis of the research data. With regard to the limited number of participants in the study, the researcher’s prior employment in the district, and the potential for unintentional

interpretive bias, the researcher used member checking. Member checking is “also known as informant feedback or respondent validation, member checking provides participants with an opportunity to review the researcher’s interpretation of data they provided” (Stewart, 2016, p. 50; Carlson, 2010). “With member checking, the validity procedure shifts from the researchers to participants in the study” (Creswell & Miller, 2000, p. 127). The researcher utilized member checking by following the procedures that were defined in *Determining Validity in Qualitative Inquiry* by Creswell and Miller (2000). Creswell and Miller illustrated several procedures with the researcher choosing to

have participants view the raw data (e.g., transcriptions or observational field notes) and comment on their accuracy. In turn, researchers incorporate participants’ comments into the final narrative. In this way, the participants add credibility to the qualitative study by having a chance to react to both the data and the final narrative. (p. 127)

“The consistency of data will be achieved when the steps of the research are verified through examination of such items as raw data, data reduction products, and process notes” (Golafshani, 2003, p. 601; Campbell, 1996).

## **Conclusion**

This chapter presented the methodology that was used in this qualitative research study. This chapter described the appropriate qualitative research method; participants; instruments; pilot testing; and procedures for collection, analysis, and validation of the data. The researcher was the interviewer who collected the data which made the basic qualitative inquiry the appropriate methodology. Chapter 4 of this research study involves an analysis of the data from the interviews which were coded by NVivo

software. The coded data were used to identify themes in order to develop descriptions of the initiation and implementation experiences of teachers.

## Chapter 4: Results

### Introduction

The purpose of this study was to articulate teacher perceptions and experiences with PBIS initiation and implementation and to develop an understanding of the impact of change on the lived experiences of teachers who have implemented PBIS for at least 1 year. This study focused on the types of strategies identified by the teachers that facilitated and/or hindered their PBIS initiation and implementation experiences in their classrooms and schools. The researcher stressed the importance of focusing on PBIS initiation and implementation and made sure the participants understood this study did not focus on changing aspects of the PBIS program. Prior research conducted on PBIS and the implementation of PBIS by various researchers has shown that PBIS interventions are successful when the program is implemented and all parts of the program are implemented and used as intended (OSEP, 2015).

### Overview

This study used generic qualitative inquiry research methodology defined by Creswell (2013) and Merriam (2009) to answer the two research questions on which this study was based.

1. What have teachers experienced in terms of the initiation and implementation of PBIS?
2. What contexts or situations have typically influenced or affected teacher experiences initiating or implementing PBIS?

The researcher had to understand generic qualitative inquiry research in order to answer the research questions. Creswell (2013) defined qualitative research as,

Qualitative research begins with assumptions and the use of interpretive/

theoretical frameworks that inform the study of research problems addressing the meaning of individuals or groups ascribed to a social or human problem. To study this problem, qualitative researchers use an emerging qualitative approach to inquiry, which allows data collection to take place in a natural setting being sensitive to the people and places under study, and data analysis that is both inductive and deductive and establishes patterns or themes. The final written report or presentation includes the voices of participants, the reflexivity of the researcher, a complex description and interpretation of the problem, and its contribution to the literature or a call for change. (p. 44)

Merriam (2009) stated that when educational researchers have a goal of understanding how people make sense of their experiences, qualitative research design is most commonly used. Merriam also described qualitative research as being an interpretive research approach. Creswell (2013, 2014) outlined the procedures for a basic qualitative research study.

Creswell (2013) also stated that qualitative research engages the researcher in rich conversations that are guided by in-depth questions posed by the researcher. These questions are answered by the participants through their experiences and perceptions. The researcher collects participant perceptions and experiences which make up the study data and the researcher analyzes and explains the data by establishing themes and drawing conclusions (Creswell, 2013).

Two school districts from southeastern North Carolina that had initiated and implemented PBIS were chosen to participate in this research study based on the districts' fulfillment of the referenced criteria. Research study participation approval was sought and granted by each district superintendent and research approval committee.

One school in each district was identified by the district PBIS coordinator as meeting the referenced criterion of PBIS implementation of at least 3 years. Once the schools were identified and the principals granted approval for participation in the research study, teachers who could possibly volunteer were identified. The researcher made contact with the prospective participants through email and provided them with information about the voluntary research opportunity. Five teachers were contacted initially to participate in the study, all of whom were either second- or third-grade teachers. Upon hearing about the study, a sixth teacher requested to participate. All participants were provided information about the study, and the five initial participants were provided with an electronic version of the voluntary participation consent form. Participants were also asked to provide days and times that were convenient in order to schedule the face-to-face interviews. The researcher conducted the face-to-face interviews that were digitally recorded and then transcribed by a contracted third-party transcription service. The participants were individually contacted again through email with specific directions to review and validate their attached transcripts. Once approved and validated by the participants, the transcripts were uploaded to NVivo coding software. The software helped the researcher establish nodes, patterns, connections, similarities, and themes that were the same through each transcript. The research findings were organized by theme and question with an analysis of the results provided in Chapter 4. The themes and exemplars from the raw data are located in Appendix F.

This research was conducted over the 2017-2018 school year with participants of varied backgrounds and experience levels. The population of this study consisted of six participants who volunteered and consented to be a part of the research study. The six participants all taught either second or third grade. The researcher was able to conduct



face-to-face interviews with three teachers from both districts. The duration of the face-to-face interviews varied from 40 minutes to 1 hour and 20 minutes. The interviews focused on the teacher's experiences initiating and implementing PBIS. Participants were able to freely talk and provide information that related to the research questions and to answer the specific guided interview questions when more clarification was needed, on either the part of the researcher or the participant. The researcher began the interviews by explaining the purpose of the research study, how the data would be used, and the researcher's role in the data collection. The researcher was known only by name to half of the participants since they were employed in one of the districts participating in the study. The researcher did not know and had not previously worked with any of the participants. The researcher shared personal background information and previous PBIS and implementation experiences with the participants prior to the beginning of the interview, in order to establish a rapport and create a calm conversational atmosphere where participants felt at ease to talk openly about their experiences during the initiation and implementation of PBIS. Creswell (2013) referred to this practice as the researcher "bracketing" out their own views. Creswell (2013) stated that bracketing allows for the researcher to begin a project by describing their own experiences and views before continuing on to the experiences and views of the participants (p. 60). As the interviews progressed, the focus for the participants became guided by Guided Question 8 Parts A-B. These guided questions focused on the strategies that facilitated and or hindered their own initiation and implementation of PBIS as well as other programs and frameworks which their individual schools or districts may have adopted.

In order to develop an understanding of the experiences and background of each participant, the researcher collected data during the interview process and from specific

information that was provided by each individual. Once the digitally recorded interviews were transcribed, each participant transcript was assigned an identification color code by the researcher. The data displayed in the Table provide the background information for all of the participants. The background of the participants did not include their gender, race, or specific grade level in an effort to maintain anonymity.

Table

*Participant Background Information*

Participant Identified by Color	Approximate Age of Participant	Total Years Teaching	Years at Current School	Level of Education	National Board Certified Teacher
Red	30-39	13	10	Bachelor's	No
Orange	30-39	14	6	Bachelor's	No
Yellow	30-39	14	4	Master's	Yes
Green	40-49	25	14	Bachelor's	No
Blue	20 -29	6	6	Bachelor's	No
Purple	40-49	18	5	Master's	No

### **Research Questions**

Research Question 1: “What have teachers experienced in terms of the initiation and implementation of PBIS?” With regard to teacher experiences in the initiation and implementation phases of PBIS, several themes were identified when the qualitative data from the face-to-face interviews were coded. Many participants reported positive experiences with the implementation phase of PBIS; but for many, there was no recall of a true district initiation phase in which teachers were asked for their opinions or input in order to gain the teacher advocacy for the change to PBIS.

Fullan (1999) noted teacher advocacy as an important element in the five stages of the initiation phase. The initiation phase is the first phase in Fullan’s (1999) Change Theory and the initiation phase is made up of five elements as follows (Fullan, 1999;

Henson, 2011):

1. Existence and quality of innovations.
2. Access to innovations.
3. Advocacy from central administration.
4. Teacher advocacy.
5. External change agents.

When describing external change agents, Fullan (1999) recognized all stakeholders in the process of educational change as change agents (Henson, 2011).

“This theory places special importance on the individual’s role in the change process as the organization moves through the four phases” (Henson, 2011, p. 16; Fullan, 1999).

Fullan (1993) believed that “effective change agents neither embrace nor ignore mandates, but use them as catalysts to reexamine what they are doing” (p. 24). During the interviews, the participants explained their experiences with the district initiation phase for PBIS. During the interviews, participants Red, Yellow, Blue and Purple stated,

Our school kind of followed what the district was already doing. We started to hear that PBIS was coming to our school. I think our district is using it in preparations as part of our MTSS (Multi-Tiered System of Support) model. I am not sure there was a district initiation because all schools do not have it.

Although the participants stated they did not have experience with initiation at the district level, the data collected from the interviews clearly indicates the initiation phase took place at the school level. During the interviews participants Red and Green stated,

Our school developed a correlate team to deal with PBIS and when we started we had a coach that believed in it, I mean wholeheartedly believed in it. And she took up kind of the mantra, she was in charge of training, in charge of materials,

she was in charge of beginning of the year, rolling it out, and making sure everyone understood what was expected. She got the ball moving in our school, it was contagious, and she convinced the people that were on the fence about it that this was the best way to go.

PBIS became more of a thing at our school and we established a committee and they took surveys of the staff using Google forms and that kind of helped to get everybody on the same page. They were able to find out what people already knew about PBIS.

Once the district and schools had established the initiation/adoption of PBIS and understood that it was a quality innovation and they had access to that innovation, the schools shifted into the second phase of Fullan's (1999) Change Theory which is the implementation phase.

Implementation, the second phase of Fullan's (1999) Change Theory, has three factors:

1. Characteristics of change.
2. Local characteristics.
3. External factors such as government and other outside agencies (Fullan & Stigelbauer, 1991).

These identified characterizations of change for each stakeholder and the issues that each stakeholder should consider before committing a change effort or rejecting it are vital at this phase. The need for change, clarity about these needs, goals, and the complexity of the process were the characteristics of the change process. (Henson, 2011 p. 11)

In educational research conducted by Henson (2011) that focused on educational

change, he noted that the increased complexity of the change “included the extent of change required from those responsible for the implementation, along with the quality and practicality of the program, model, or reform” (p. 13).

Fowler (2013) stated that educational initiatives must be implemented at the “grassroots level” by district and site administrators and all classroom teachers. Fowler went on to state that for implementation to be successful, schools and teachers need to be provided the materials, resources, and motivation to implement the new initiative. New initiatives are either not implemented or completely modified while being implemented (Fowler, 2013).

The district and the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction (NCDPI) played a role in the implementation process at the school level with regard to providing the necessary training and evaluation of the school’s progress. During the interviews, participants shared experiences with the implementation phase of PBIS. Interview participants stated,

We had a PBIS coach at our school and she got trained and took the lead of PBIS at the school. At first the district would send people out to help us sometimes and train us and evaluate us.

We developed a PBIS committee and they were sent to a training at the central office with PBIS trainers from NCDPI. The committee spent several days getting trained and they came back during the work days at the beginning of the school year and completed professional development sessions with the rest of the staff members. They explained to us exactly what it was, and did some team building activities and things with us to get us to truly understand.

We had DPI experts who talked to us about PBIS. It was on the district level with

each school sending a certain amount of people to form their team and they got trained a little more. The team has had two more trainings since then and actually sent us to be trained at the National PBIS Leadership Forum in Chicago. We at first of course put together a committee of teachers to help implement PBIS throughout the year. We had a presentation given to us to explain all the aspects of PBIS, the benefits, and just kind of the overall understanding of what the program was and the understanding was if we were going to do this then we need to have total buy-in. We had to have every grade level and teacher implement this at the same time so it was successful. That was the first process.

Participants shared that although they were not included in the district-level decision to initiate or adopt PBIS, the school and the PBIS committees or teams made teacher input and buy-in a priority. Fullan (1993) recognized that teachers are “prime change agents” since they are professionals that focus on academic, cultural, and societal improvement (Friborg, 2014, p. 6). During the interview, Purple shared,

It was given to us not in a way of, here’s something else for you to do. This was, listen if we can all be on the same page in this, this will become automatic for us. This will become automatic for the kids and it won’t be something you struggle with day in and day out.

Orange stated,

They take your teacher input based on, okay, this is working or I don’t think this is working. So people are actually listening to you and taking your opinions and stuff into consideration. It is not just we’re going to do this push out kind of thing.

Yellow shared that through the use of Google forms and surveys, the staff was able to get

everyone on the same page and begin doing things consistently as a school.

Other participants shared that support from the administration at the school was essential. Research conducted by Fowler (2013) indicated that school administrators play a significant part in the implementation of education initiatives. Blue expressed,

The opinions and perceptions of the teachers were taken into consideration and given to the PBIS team so they could take those concerns with them to the trainings so they were able to come back with a better understanding, and to address not just what they learned but also the concerns that we had as teachers on this side. Our assistant principal is really big on it and has more of the foundation.

Green shared positive experiences with the administrative support: “My administrators here are supporting PBIS fully, and they backed us up on basically everything that the committee had decided to go ahead and start implementing.” Yellow stated,

The assistant principal spent a lot of time working on this and meets with the PBIS committee. The AP actually attends all of the PBIS meetings and shares discipline data with the committee to show where we were last year versus this year. This is always more helpful to see the results yourself.

Teacher input in the district initiation process was deemed a significant challenge for all participants. The participants indicated that none of them had any input in the initiation/adoption of PBIS on the district level. All felt the district had made the adoption because it was the “natural progression of the district based on the states move toward a Multi-Tiered System of Support.” Participants in this study reflected on their experiences with school-wide initiation and implementation with positive focuses on teacher input at the school level, teams being trained by experts, administrative buy-in to

the program, and making a shift toward school-wide consistency. In order to address the experiences the teachers had in implementing PBIS, the researcher wanted to address what contexts or strategies facilitated or hindered the initiation and/or implementation of PBIS, which was addressed by Research Question 2.

Research Question 2: “What contexts or situations have typically influenced or affected teacher experiences initiating or implementing PBIS?” The researcher used guided questions during the interview to help the participants elaborate on their experiences with regard to Research Question 2. All participants were asked Guided Question 8 which was broken down into two parts. Guided Question 8 Part A: What challenges or hindrances were encountered during the process? Guided Question 8 Part B: What successes were encountered that facilitated the process?

In response to Research Question 2, the researcher used the coding system to breakdown the results based on the hindrances and successes of the initiation and implementation process. The themes that were identified under the category hindrances were direct expert training, ownership/buy-in, and consistency. The themes that were identified under the category successes were committees, materials, and continual improvement. The identified themes and raw data exemplars are located in Appendix F. These categories and themes are illustrated in Figure 2. The researcher noted during this portion of the interview that the participants began to discuss other initiatives that had been initiated and implemented along with PBIS at the school level.





*Figure 2.* Initiation and Implementation Categories and Themes.

The coding system developed themes under the category of hindrances to the initiation and implementation process based on the participant responses during the interview process. The themes developed under the category of hindrances focused on direct expert training, ownership/buy-in, and consistency.

**Theme 1: Direct Expert Training.** The experiences with training varied throughout with the participants. The participants noted that understanding, initiation, and initial implementation seemed easier for the members of the PBIS committees because they were directly trained by the experts from NCDPI. Orange stated,

Some new initiatives provide the committee or team training in the form of modules but there is no expert that comes to train the team. The team is supposed to train the school but they do not know what to do because they have not done it before either. Sure they completed the training modules but they have no expert or go to person in the building to lead them in the implementation.

Green shared,

I would say the staff training from DPI that the committee received was advantageous because they were able to hear the same thing and the training as two full days. There is a difference in the committee having all of that information and then taking it back to train the entire staff in a one to two hour professional development afterschool. It is just hard to get the entire staff to fully understand PBIS. It makes more sense coming from an expert or a person fully trained than sometimes their peers that have just had limited training.

Green continued to share that the biggest hindrance during this process was the time to train the staff:

Trying to condense every bit of that information into that little bit of time because we have been here all day long, and most professional developments are after school or on our workdays, and those are the two worst times basically because in the afternoon the teachers are tired. The last thing they want to do is hear what you have to say and stay after for more training, and on workdays they want to be in their classroom.

Blue, not being a member of the PBIS committee, expressed similar concerns over the way the trainings were presented at school professional developments:

I don't think sending five people from a school and saying you five are trained then come back to train the whole school is always going to be the most effective, because some things are lost in translation. Some things that you find important at that moment I might not see. So I might not come back and share that.

Several participants shared concerns with the lack of training for the school administrators. The research shows that the administration is a vital piece to the success

of PBIS implementation.

Schools that implement PBIS effectively have strong administrative support and leadership throughout the training and implementation process. PBIS training is unique because it “seeks to help administrators and faculty build collaborative teams and work together to ensure effective implementation” (Martin, 2013, p. 6; Dunlap et al., 2000; Wasilewski et al., 2008).

Red shared,

When first began our process we had a principal that was taking parts of ACT and PBIS and tried to kind of marry those two together and that was a little bit jumbled. That administrator got assigned somewhere else and we were assigned new administrator who did not really understand why we were doing two systems.

Orange expressed frustration over the administrators knowing and following the system that PBIS established: “We cannot have administrative support if they don’t understand their role and they don’t back us up or support us.” Yellow expressed similar concerns, stating, “I don’t really feel like we’ve had the...I hate to say leadership, but just the advice, and the specific layout, direction that we needed to have.”

**Theme 2: Ownership/Buy-In.** In order for the PBIS model to be successful, schools must have buy-in from teachers, administrators, and staff at a minimum of 80% (Martin, 2013, p. 6; Dunlap et al., 2000; Wasilewski et al., 2008).

Participants expressed not having total buy-in or ownership of the PBIS initiative as a hindrance to their initiation and implementation process. The participants expressed a variety of concerns they felt caused decreased buy-in from the teachers and staff at their school during their initial initiation and implementation phase. Yellow expressed

frustration at not having everyone on board and with having to change the perceptions of the initiative:

We still have some people who are not completely sold, and we are doing all we can to try and change those mindsets. I think for all of us no matter how committed to this we are it is hard to be positive all the time.

Green related the problem of buy-in to the number of initiatives that are set into motion each year and the length of time the initiatives are used before they are just put to the side. When several new initiatives are started up each school year, it causes some teachers to feel like they have been given one more thing to do, creating more work for already overwhelmed teachers. Green shared,

We get these new programs and we're trained on them briefly, and we are expected to implement, but it's like it fades away quickly before we really get to truly see if the program would have worked. We have new initiatives that have started this year and I can say that I do not feel I'm trained very well on the other initiatives because we have so many things going at once. Sometimes we get things thrown at us and it is alright we need to implement this. So, we start to implement it, but then the next year, it is okay now we're going to try this. If something is really effective, we've got to give it enough time to find out. We can't just implement it for one year and expect it to do miraculous things.

Yellow shared similar concerns:

I'd rather roll out one thing at a time, and get to where we have a true understanding and mastery. Let's just stick with it and get it the right way, because really it is pointless if you don't. There has been a lot of new things passed down to us this year and I truly believe if you are not going to do it the

way it is meant to be done then don't do it.

**Theme 3: Consistency.** The participants expressed concerns about the consistency of the PBIS initiation and implementation phase. Orange expressed, "Is everyone in the building doing it with fidelity? Are the expectations the same in all the classrooms? Are the resource teachers implementing it?" Yellow expressed that in order to keep the consistency up as a school, the process and the protocols of the implementation need to be kept fresh in everyone's mind. Blue expressed similar concerns about consistency, stating,

I don't think we were all consistent and we weren't all sure about what consistency looked like. What I interpret as one way to be honest, somebody else may not have thought of it as the same thing. They might have saw or interpreted it differently. Sometimes it was kind of like a jack-of- all trades and a master of none, where you're hitting some of them, missing most of them, occasionally you'll get this one.

Green stated,

Trying to get your entire staff on board with it has been a job. If they don't fully understand it then you're going to have what you call those Negative Nancy's, and it doesn't matter what you do, you're going to have those that still complain. We've already got kind of an idea of where we're going next and what part we want to work with as a staff. The only scary part about that is your next administrators come in, if they're not fully on board with this, then we've got to have the backup support. That's the only thing is the unknown of not knowing if our administrators are going to be here next year, or if the other administrators are going to tackle this as well.

The coding system developed themes under the category of successes to the implementation process based on the participant responses during the interview process. The themes developed under the category of successes focused on committees, materials, and continuous improvement.

**Theme 1: Committees.** Through the interview process, the interviewees were able to share their knowledge and experiences and identified their established PBIS committees or teams as a piece to their success during the initiation and implementation process. Each participant discussed the impact of the committees on the process of initiation and implementation. These committees take on the various roles in the process, all of which are consistent with the roles and responsibilities described in Martin's (2013) research which found that for PBIS implementation to be effective, management and implementation teams are in place and provide engaged leadership, professional development, coaching, and evaluation processes.

Each school had a committee or team which was created in order to initiate or implement PBIS school wide. Each team received training on PBIS from DPI experts that lasted a couple of days for each phase of implementation. The committees worked together throughout the summer and teacher workdays in order to establish how they would get this initiative off the ground at their schools. They had to develop plans for training the rest of the staff and for establishing staff buy-in. Three of the interview participants were members of their school PBIS committees. Red stated,

Our PBIS correlate team meets sometimes more than once a month. They were chosen by our PBIS coach and they really believe in it. This team did the research, sat down looked at the numbers, figured out how it was going to work in our building, within our culture, and then planned out the implementation and roll

out with the belief that it would work. Our committee had a head person that was the expert in the building which was such a key support. Everyone knew who the expert in our building was and they were the go to person. This is essential when you roll it out, when you implement, the first couple of years, but pretty soon everybody in the building becomes the expert. Not an expert in the sense of they become in charge of the committee but they are able to answer any question a new person has.

Orange offered more insight to the success of the committees:

The committee came and did presentations and they offered optional workshops for some of the staff that feel as though they need additional information or help. The member of the committee will give you the names of teachers in the building that you can go and visit their rooms and observe them if you need more information.

Purple shared the importance of the PBIS committee at the school in training and providing new teacher support:

Our PBIS committee keeps this initiative and implementation going throughout the years. They created a presentation that is part of the new staff orientation and that presentation is given every year to new teachers that are at our school or to anyone who wants to get re-acclimated with it if they need a refresher course. This training helps everyone know what to expect. They have even created and provided information for the parents so our parents are like we know this is what is going on here and they understand the system that is in place. The committee meets at least once a month and they have really good open communication. Every month we are privy to the information from that meeting. We are also

privity to the newsletter that they put out and it has anything we need to know in there. The constant support and communication is there if any teacher needs it on any level.

**Theme 2: Materials.** Materials were identified as a theme under the category of successes during the initiation and implementation of PBIS. All participants noted that their individual schools supplied all the materials they needed to be able to implement PBIS. The participants indicated that the teachers in their school were given notebooks filled with various materials, black line masters, and behavior matrices. Three of the participants also indicated that each teacher in their school was provided with training PowerPoints and behavior modeling videos to convey the expectations to the teachers and students. Red shared,

We received pocket charts, grid behavior tracker, they gave us sheets that say what the steps are to follow in case students are misbehaving or breaking a rule. We were given a matrix that allowed us to go up and look and determine what a behavior should look like so, the students and the staff have the same exact measure of expectation. It took the responsibility off of the teacher because I did not have to make up a chart or figure out how I was going to communicate behavior to parents it was all provided for us.

Orange expressed, “They pretty much gave you everything to set you up.” Yellow shared similar thoughts on the success of the materials that were provided to the teachers by the PBIS team: “The team provided us with a folder that contained the matrices, forms, and the tokens that were to be provided to the students along with directions and information about the store.” Green shared the provided materials as,

We were given websites to for PBIS and PowerPoint presentations for the staff



and students. The teachers were given a folder that had all the materials we needed. The teachers also had access to extra materials in the teacher workroom. Blue stated that the teachers had access to a large amount of materials that were provided to implement PBIS: “Materials...a plethora, yeah. A plethora of those.” Purple shared the various resources provided:

We were given all the materials that we would need. We were given the brag tags, tokens for the students, and even a parent letter. We were given how to explain it to the parents. We were given the planners for the students. We were given everything we that we could possibly need. So that it wasn't, we weren't fishing for materials or trying to get what we needed.

When initiating or implementing a large-scale change in an educational setting that is multifaceted, the agents must use “new or revised materials, new teaching approaches, and alternation of beliefs” (Fullan, 1993, p. 30).

**Theme 3: Continual Improvement.** The third and final theme that was identified in the category of successes in the initiation and implementation was continual improvement. Research by Sugai and Horner (2006) indicated that schools which have implemented PBIS analyze data to determine the effectiveness of interventions and practices that are routinely used in the classroom and school. Participants also echoed these findings when sharing their experiences which they deemed successes in the initiation and implementation process. Red stated,

Our PBIS committee and district PBIS coaches come in to our school and walk around with clipboards. They see what is going on, they ask kids and teachers questions, and a couple of weeks later we get the results back and they tell us what we are doing great on, what we can work on, and then the PBIS team meets

and goes over what the results said, and we as a school make the changes, and it's kind of a continual process.

Orange shared the benefits from everyone looking at the data of what works and what does not work and then making changes: "I more than positively benefit from the revisiting and reviewing that we do at the beginning of the year. Every year we have meetings and we tweak what's working and decide yes, this is working, this isn't working." Yellow stated,

At the beginning of the year, we do a presentation for the staff explaining PBIS and make sure we get everybody on the same page. Every year we revisit this, everybody is retrained at the beginning of the year. Even after sitting in the training, I know sometimes I would go home and say, wow, that was a lot to try and take in if I was just able to go back and just review for myself. We conduct surveys in order find out what the entire staff thought about what was working, or how they thought we could improve PBIS. I definitely think getting the teacher input is important so we can address and help our teachers. Teacher input is important because we're the ones that are driving the car. I really appreciate the honesty that we have gotten from our teachers.

Green also shared the value of using the surveys in order to make improvements each year:

The committee sends out these surveys. Then they analyze the results and go back to the staff and say this is where we're seeing we still have some issues, this is where we still need some training, or this is where we need to provide more clear instructions to the teachers.

Blue shared,

You get a lot of emails like, okay, what's working with PBIS? What do we need to change? What are your suggestions? So the committee is not just doing it on their own. But they're listening to the staff, and how it feels in getting a pulse around the school. They are still listening out for it and trying to see where they can fix it.

All of the participants indicated that they participated in mini PBIS professional developments at the beginning of each year for the new teachers and the veteran teachers alike. The phrase that was used by each of the participants in reference to the continued improvement through professional development was "we revisit it again."

### **Summary**

Chapter 4 revisited the purpose of the research study and provided an overview of the chapter in which the methodology, participants, and procedures were reviewed. The background data about the participants was shared, and the interview data were presented. The data were organized by the research questions and then by the categories and themes that were identified in the coded transcripts. The experiences of the participants were shared in their words in order to enrich the themes that emerged. Chapter 5 includes a summary of the results, a discussion of the findings, and recommendations to decrease teacher resistance to change in the areas of initiation and implementation with implications for districts and school administrators. Chapter 5 also includes recommendations for future research.

## Chapter 5: Conclusions

### Introduction

Implementation of change remains a crucial concern for educational leaders in the 21st Century. One of the factors affecting implementation of reform is resistance to change. Veteran teachers in particular present unique challenges, and stereotypically the greatest resistance, for implementation of change. (Snyder, 2017, p. 1)

“Resistance to change among any teacher slows the implementation of educational reform. In spite of hopeful prescriptions from researchers, policymakers, and educational leaders, implementation of educational reform remains inconsistent” (Snyder, 2017, p. 2, Dufour & Marzano, 2011; Payne & Kaba, 2007; Tyack & Cuban, 1995).

“Even when the attributes of resistance were not fully clear, several studies cited teacher resistance as the cause of implementation problems” (Gay, 2016, p. 22; Feuerborn & Tyre, 2012; Holtzapple et al., 2011; Rajan & Basch, 2012; Reinke et al., 2013).

This research study was developed around the problem that teachers are resistant to change when implementing educational initiatives that are new to them. Research supports the need for district and school administrators to focus on strategies that positively impact change and develop successful initiation and implementation procedures.

When efforts to improve student learning fail, teachers often end up being blamed. Teachers were resistant to new ideas, say the leaders who were working with them. Rather than blame teachers and ask, “Why do teachers resist?” perhaps those of us who lead change should ask, “What can we do to make it

easier for teachers to implement new practices?” (Knight, 2009, p. 508)

The purpose of this study was to articulate teacher perceptions and experiences with PBIS initiation and implementation and to develop an understanding of the impact of change on the lived experiences of teachers who have implemented PBIS for at least 1 year. This study focused on the types of strategies identified by the teachers that facilitated and/or hindered their PBIS initiation and implementation experiences in their classrooms and schools.

Generic qualitative inquiry research methodology defined by Creswell (2013) and Merriam (2009) was used to answer the two research questions on which this study was based.

1. What have teachers experienced in terms of the initiation and implementation of PBIS?
2. What contexts or situations have typically influenced or affected teacher experiences initiating or implementing PBIS?

Two school districts from southeastern North Carolina that had initiated and implemented PBIS were chosen to participate in this research study based on the districts' fulfillment of the referenced criteria. This research was conducted over the 2017-2018 school year with participants of varied backgrounds and experience levels. The researcher conducted the face-to-face interviews which were digitally recorded and then transcribed by a contracted third-party transcription service. The participants were individually contacted again through email with specific directions to review and validate their attached transcripts. Once approved and validated by the participants, the transcripts were uploaded to NVivo coding software. The software helped the researcher establish categories, nodes, patterns, connections, similarities, and themes that were the

same through each transcript. The research findings were organized by theme and question with an analysis of the results provided in Chapter 4.

### **Summary of Results**

Research Question 1: “What have teachers experienced in terms of the initiation and implementation of PBIS?” With regard to teacher experiences in the initiation and implementation phases of PBIS, several themes were identified when the qualitative data from the face-to-face interviews were coded. Many participants reported positive experiences with the implementation phase of PBIS; but for many, there was no recall of a true district initiation phase in which teachers were asked for their opinions or input in order to gain the teacher advocacy of the change to PBIS. Although the participants stated they did not have experience with initiation at the district level, the data collected from the interviews clearly indicate the initiation phase took place at the school level. Fullan (1999) noted teacher advocacy as an important element in the initiation phase (Henson, 2011). The schools shifted into the implementation phase, which is the second phase of Fullan’s (1999) Change Theory, once the schools had established the initiation/adoption of PBIS and understood that it was a quality innovation and they had access to that innovation at both the district and school levels.

Research Question 2: “What contexts or situations have typically influenced or affected teacher experiences initiating or implementing PBIS?” All participants were asked Guided Question 8 which was broken down into two parts.

Guided Question 8 Part A: What challenges or hindrances were encountered during the process?

Guided Question 8 Part B: What successes were encountered that facilitated the process?

The themes that were identified under the category hindrances were direct expert training, ownership/buy-in, and consistency. The themes that were identified under the category successes were committees, materials, and continual improvement. The researcher noted during this portion of the interview that the participants began to discuss other initiatives that had been initiated and implemented along with PBIS at the school level.

### **Discussion of the Findings**

The researcher found consistency between the research findings and the review of literature in Chapter 2. Fowler (2013) stated that educational initiatives must be implemented at the “grassroots level” by district and site administrators and all classroom teachers. Fowler went on to state that school administrators play a significant part in the implementation of education initiatives. The role school administrators play in implementation was outlined by Fowler as, “they are expected to develop a plan to carry it out, motivate teachers to cooperate, marshal the necessary resources, and provide feedback about the process” (p. 19).

The participants indicated that none of them had any input in the initiation/ adoption of PBIS on the district level. All felt the district had made the adoption because it was the “natural progression of the district based on the states move toward a Multi-Tiered System of Support.” Participants in this study reflected on their experiences with school-wide initiation and implementation with positive focuses on teacher input at the school level, teams being trainings by experts, administrative buy-in to the program, and making a shift toward school-wide consistency. According to Wilson-Brewer et al. (1991), resistance to program implementation generally occurs when the faculty and staff of a school do not support the selected program, they were not asked for any input in the

program selection process, and they felt that it would create more work and add to their already overwhelming schedule. Friberg (2014) noted that in order to initiate and implement PBIS in a school, an overhaul of change must take place. Many times, change requires people to move out of their comfort zone and into an area in which they are not sure how to act or react to the new things that are taking place. In implementing a multifaceted program like PBIS that changes all areas of a school and the school's climate, the teacher plays a critical role which was addressed by Fullan (1993).

### **Hindrances**

The themes that were identified under the category hindrances were direct expert training, ownership/buy-in, and consistency.

**Theme 1: Direct Expert Training.** The experiences with training varied throughout with the participants. The participants noted that understanding, initiation, and initial implementation seemed easier for the members of the PBIS committees because they were given the opportunity to be directly trained by the experts from NCDPI. Participants continued to share that the biggest hindrance during this process was the time to train the staff. Participants who were not members of the PBIS committee expressed similar concerns over the way the trainings were presented at school professional developments. Several participants shared concerns with the lack of training for the school administrators. Participants also expressed frustration over the administrators knowing and following the system that PBIS established. NSDPS researched factors that enabled a school to successfully implement behavior prevention programs such as PBIS. The study researched key factors to successful implementation which the research team identified as organizational capacity, leadership, budget and resources, organizational support, program structure, integration into the normal



procedures, program feasibility, and level of disorder (Gottfredson et al., 2000). The study found that organizational capacity is essential to implementation of any program. The amount of training and the quality of the training provided to the teachers and supervisors led to better use and understanding of the program and how it should be implemented. When the training used research and information from experts, the school personnel incorporated those best practices into their implementation of the program.

**Theme 2: Ownership/Buy-In.** Participants expressed not having total buy-in or ownership of the PBIS initiative as a hindrance to their initiation and implementation process. The participants expressed a variety of concerns which they felt caused decreased buy-in from the teachers and staff at their schools during their initial initiation and implementation phase. The NSDPS research study indicated that leadership and administrative support was linked to the quality of and support for implementation. (Gottfredson et al., 2000). Research conducted by Boston (2016) indicated that the level of complacency, lack of urgency, lack of trust and buy-in from administration and staff can prevent, or at the very least, impede the implementation of highly effective research-based programs like PBIS.

**Theme 3: Consistency.** The participants expressed concerns about the consistency of the PBIS initiation and implementation phase. Boston (2016) stated that administrators and staff members must be consistent with PBIS implementation.

### **Successes**

The themes developed under the category of successes focused on committees, materials, and continuous improvement.

**Theme 1: Committees.** Through the interview process, the interviewees were able to share their knowledge and experiences and identified their established PBIS

committees or teams as a piece to their success during the initiation and implementation process. Each participant discussed the impact of the committees on the process of initiation and implementation. Each school had a committee or team which was created in order to initiate or implement PBIS school wide. Each team received training on PBIS from DPI experts which lasted a couple of days for each phase of implementation. The committees worked together throughout summer and teacher workdays in order to establish how they would get this initiative off the ground at their schools. They had to develop plans for training the rest of the staff and for establishing staff buy-in. “There is enormous potential for true, meaningful change simply in building coalition with other change agents, both within one’s own group and across all groups” (Ellsworth, 2000, p. 1).

**Theme 2: Materials.** Materials were identified as a theme under the category of successes during the initiation and implementation of PBIS. All participants noted that their individual schools supplied all the materials they needed to be able to implement PBIS. Participants indicated that the teachers in their school were given notebooks filled with various materials, black line masters, and behavior matrices. Three of the participants also indicated that each teacher in their school was provided with training PowerPoints and behavior modeling videos to convey the expectations to the teachers and students. Fowler (2013) went on to state, for implementation to be successful, schools and teachers need to be provided the materials, resources, and motivation to implement the new initiative.

**Theme 3: Continual Improvement.** The third and final theme that was identified in the category of successes in the initiation and implementation was continual improvement. All the participants indicated they participated in mini PBIS professional

developments at the beginning of each year for the new teachers and the veteran teachers alike.

Fullan and Stigelbauer (1991) stated that in order to reach sustainability and keep positive momentum, several things need to continually occur. Fullan and Stigelbauer's (1991) suggestions are for continual active initiation and participation; pressure; support and negotiation (expectations, buy-in, and communication); changes in skills, thinking, and committed actions (continual support); and overriding the problem of ownership (Fullan & Stigelbauer, 1991). Research conducted by Fredrich (2015) indicated the need for continuous improvement using data-driven decision-making and collaboration that was put in place at the site through the implementation of professional learning communities.

### **Recommendations for Practice**

The research study findings can inform district initiation and implementation policy and practices, school initiation and implementation, and teacher professional development practices. "If, indeed, most school reform efforts fail, educational leaders are asking themselves what they can do in their schools to beat the odds" (Zimmerman, 2006, p. 245; Fullan & Hargreaves, 1996). "Because resistance is a major factor in the failure of school reforms, it is crucial for principals to discover why teachers resist change, before they can work to overcome this resistance" (Zimmerman, 2006, p. 245). The researcher recommends that districts and schools use a scaffold approach to implementation, so teachers can be trained on chunks of the new program and then implement the chunks. This allows the teachers the ability to become familiar with essential portions of the program or initiative without having to learn the entire program at once over the summer workdays and then have to implement it when school starts.

Teachers have a vested interest in wanting to get things right for their school and their students. They need to have the opportunity to develop a true understanding and mastery of the new initiatives in order to stick with it and get it right.

The researcher recommends that any training facilitated by an expert in the area of the initiative is equally provided to all teachers and staff members who will be responsible for program implementation and new initiatives. This takes into account the different perspectives and experiences of each teacher and staff member if they are given the opportunity to ask questions based on their understanding of the initiative or program. The study found that organizational capacity is essential to implementation of any program. NSDPS conducted by Gottfredson et al. (2000) identified that the amount of training and the quality of the training provided to the teachers and supervisors led to better use and understanding of the program and how it should be implemented. When the training used research and information from experts, the school personnel incorporated those best practices into their implementation of the program. This also allows for all teachers in the school to feel valued as professionals and eliminates the resistance of teachers to not implement the program due to discord with a peer colleague who was selected to facilitate the professional development. The researcher recommends an identified professional in the building interested and competent in the initiative and respected by teachers and staff serve as the coach, providing teachers with a human resource during the implementation.

The researcher recommends tiered professional development and training based on the needs of the individual teachers and staff members. Once teachers and staff have been trained in the initiative, the school should provide tiered support to the teachers who are having difficulty implementing the initiative in order to develop consistency in

building-wide implementation. These tiered levels of professional development/training support should be in place for all teachers, not just teachers new to the building or the profession. Tiered professional development support allows for all teachers and staff to receive only the level of support they need to master the implementation of the initiative. Using data to identify the teachers and staff members who are inconsistent and in need of more training and providing them with supplemental trainings allows the teachers who have mastered the implementation process the opportunity to work and develop in other areas in which they may need growth. Schools can then begin to dismantle teacher resistance to the change process. “Umpteen reforms have come and gone, using up time, money, and hope. They have left a crippling disillusionment in their wake, a cynicism about staff development and any belief that training or innovation benefits students” (Zimmerman, 2006, p. 245, Schmoker, 1999, p. 37).

In an effort to address teacher resistance to change, it is recommended that district and site-based leaders recognize that teachers are not resistant to educational change but to being changed. Teachers want to feel valued as professionals and able to take the core essentials of a program or initiative and implement it with fidelity for teachers and students. Just as differentiation and adaptation of concepts occur for students, leaders must be willing to differentiate and adapt initiatives through continual improvement in order for the program or initiative to meet the needs of teachers, students, and the school in general.

### **Implications for Future Research**

This research study explored teacher resistance to change based on teacher experiences with the initiation and implementation of PBIS. The researcher interviewed teachers about their experiences with the initiation and implementation of PBIS in their

district and school. The teachers articulated the strategies that hindered or facilitated their PBIS initiation/implementation experiences. First, this study's sample size was small since it was based on the experiences of second- and third-grade teachers who had been involved in the initiation and implementation of PBIS in select schools in two different districts. Additional research using a larger sample size would be needed to determine more specific generalizations for each district and/or school.

Second, research is needed that uses varied methodology in order to assess the need for specific changes to the district initiation and implementation phases in order to determine if a scaffold implementation or roll out would be beneficial to the various school districts and to the teachers in those systems.

Third, this research study used PBIS as a vehicle to discover teacher experiences of initiation and implementation since this is such a widely used initiative. Research into the initiation and implementation of various other programs and initiatives would be beneficial in order to determine if the initiation/implementation process was influenced by all of the research that previously has been conducted on PBIS and its specific implementation.

Finally, initiation and implementation are only two areas of Fullan's (1999) Change Theory. More research would have to be conducted in order to develop a holistic knowledge and understanding of the entire change process and its effect on teacher resistance to change.

## **Conclusion**

In order to study the problem of teacher resistance to change, the researcher was able to explore teacher experiences with the initiation and implementation of PBIS. The researcher focused specifically on the strategies that hindered and/or facilitated the

initiation and implementation of PBIS. The themes that were identified as hindrances to the process were direct expert training, ownership/buy-in, and consistency. The successes that facilitated the process were identified as committees, materials, and continuous improvement. The findings provided insight into reasons for teacher resistance and offered insight from teacher perspectives on initiating and implementing not only PBIS but other programs and initiatives as well. The research data allowed for the researcher to develop recommendations for districts and schools which can serve as a guide prior to the initiation or implementation of any new initiatives. Teachers were excited to voice their experiences with PBIS initiation and implementation in hopes of creating an understanding of teacher frustration and resistance and to provide insight into possible areas of change in the overall process.

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Appendix A  
Guided Interview Questions

Interview Questions:

**Research Questions:**

Participants will be asked questions that focus around the two essential research questions which were developed using the generic qualitative inquiry framework.

1. “What have you experienced in terms of the initiation and implementation of PBIS?”
2. “What contexts or situations have typically influenced or affected your experiences of initiating or implementing PBIS?”

Intro in to the interview process:

As we begin the interview process I want to reiterate the purpose of this study. The purpose of this study is to articulate how teachers experience PBIS initiation and implementation and to develop an understanding of the impact of change on the lived experiences of teachers who have implemented PBIS for at least one year. This study will focus on the types of strategies identified by the teachers that facilitated and/or hindered initiation and implementation experiences in their classrooms and schools. The teachers should have some experience initiating and implementing other educational initiatives in order to have a frame of reference for which strategies facilitated and/or hindered the process. The researcher must stress the importance that this study will not focus on changing aspects of the PBIS program. The prior research that has been conducted on PBIS and the implementation of PBIS by various researchers has shown that PBIS interventions are successful when the program is implemented and all parts of the program are used as intended (OSEP, 2015). This research study will focus on initiation and implementation strategies that were experienced by the teachers during the classroom and school wide process.

**PBIS Guided Interview Questions Correlated to the Research Questions:**

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Interviewee: \_\_\_\_\_

<b>Question #</b>	<b>Martin Survey Questions</b>	<b>Question #</b>	<b>Freeman Interview Guided Questions</b>
<b>6.</b>	How was PBIS implemented in this school?	<b>1.</b>	How was PBIS initiated in your district? What steps were taken in the adoption or initiation process on the district level?
<b>6a.</b>	a. Were teachers involved in pre-implementation?	<b>2.</b>	Were teachers involved in the decision to adoption/initiation PBIS? How?
<b>6b.</b>	b. Were their perceptions/opinions taken seriously before PBIS was implemented?	<b>3.</b>	Were the opinions and perceptions of the teachers taken into consideration prior to PBIS adoption/initiation?  a. What action steps did the district or school take to prepare teachers for PBIS adoption/initiation?
<b>6c.</b>	c. Did teachers have adequate training and feel prepared to implement PBIS?	<b>4.</b>	How were school/district personnel trained prior to the initiation and implementation PBIS process?  a. Was the training enough for the teachers and staff to feel prepared and knowledgeable in order to initiate or implement PBIS?
<b>7.</b>	How is PBIS currently being implemented in this school?	<b>5.</b>	How was PBIS initiated in your classroom? In your school?
<b>7a.</b>	a. What preparation have teachers done on their own to implement PBIS?	<b>6.</b>	Did you do anything to prepare yourself for PBIS adoption/initiation in your classroom?
<b>7b.</b>	b. Are teachers' perceptions/opinions taken seriously now that the program has been implemented?	<b>7.</b>	What perceptions or opinions have you shared or would you share about the process?



<b>7c.</b>	c. What aspects of PBIS hinder or facilitate its implementation?	<b>8.</b>	<p>What challenges were encountered during the process?</p> <p>a. Could these challenges have been avoided through more Professional Development or a support system, resource, or material that could have been provided by the school or district? What types of supports, resources both human and fiscal, or trainings do you think could alleviate these challenges?</p> <p>What successes were encountered during the process?</p> <p>b. Could these successes have been attributed to Professional Development or a support system, resource, or material that was provided by the school or district? What types of supports, resources both human and fiscal, or trainings do you think created the successes for your district or school implementation?</p>
<b>7d.</b>	d. Are teachers regularly updated on procedures and process of PBIS?	<b>9.</b>	Do you meet regularly with school or district personnel for updates/trainings on procedures/processes?
<b>25.</b>	What additional thoughts and concerns do you have about PBIS?	<b>10.</b>	Is there anything additional you would like to share about the strategies that facilitated and/or hindered you adopting/initiating PBIS in your district, school, or classroom?

Appendix B

Permission to Use and Modify Survey

## Your PBIS Dissertation Survey Inquiry

Dxxxxx Mxxxxx <xxxxxxx@treutlen.k12.ga.us>

Mon 11/13/2017, 5:58 AM

Nicole Freeman

Hi,

You can certainly use my research to help...modify it however you need. Best of luck with your dissertation. The end is in sight!

Sincerely,

D M.

On Sunday, November 12, 2017, Nicole Freeman <[xxxxxxx@gardner-webb.edu](mailto:xxxxxxx@gardner-webb.edu)> wrote:

Good Evening,

My name is Jacqueline Nicole Freeman. I am a doctoral candidate at Gardner-Webb University. I am currently writing my dissertation "Voices of the Implementers: The Perceptions and Experiences of Educators implementing PBIS". I am contacting you to request permission to use your PBIS Satisfaction Survey Instrument in my study. I am also requesting permission to modify the survey in order to use it as an interview protocol for my study. I look forward to hearing from you. Your research has been very beneficial to my study.

Thank you,

Jacqueline Nicole Freeman

GWU Doctoral Candidate

Appendix C  
Letter of Request

Jacqueline Nicole Freeman  
XXXXXX  
XXXXXX  
3/12/18

Ladies and Gentlemen of the XXX Research Approval Committee,

Good Morning, my name is Jacqueline Nicole Freeman. I am currently the AP at XXX. I am a previous graduate of XXX, teacher, and an instructional coach in XXX. I am writing to request permission to conduct dissertation research interviews in the XXX School District with a focus on being able to interview two teachers who teach in 2<sup>nd</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup> grade in a PBIS elementary school. The ability to conduct this research will enable me to complete my doctorate degree in Educational Leadership at Gardner-Webb University. My dissertation entitled “Voices of the Implementers: The Perceptions and Experiences of Educators Implementing PBIS.” will collect the experiences of teachers initiating and implementing PBIS in their schools and classrooms. This study will identify specific strategies that have facilitated and or hindered the initiation and implementation process of PBIS. The experiences will be collected through interviews with teachers in 2<sup>nd</sup>-3<sup>rd</sup> grade at schools that have at least one year’s worth of experience implementing PBIS. I have worked with XXX and XXX in the identification of schools that are PBIS schools within your district. The data collected from 2<sup>nd</sup> - 3<sup>rd</sup> grade teachers in your school system will be paired with the data from the 2<sup>nd</sup>-3<sup>rd</sup> grade teachers at XXX School in the XXX School District. Teachers will be asked to participate in a face to face interview and a follow up interview after the data has been coded and the themes have been identified. All information collected will remain anonymous. Written permission will be obtained from all teachers involved in the study. My research will be shared with Gardner –Webb University, XXX Schools, XXX Schools, and ProQuest dissertation data base. If you have any questions or concerns about this research you may contact Dr. Danny Stedman, chair of my dissertation committee, at [dstedman@gardner-webb.edu](mailto:dstedman@gardner-webb.edu).

Thank you for your time and consideration,

Jacqueline Nicole Freeman  
Doctoral Candidate at Gardner Webb University

Appendix D

Participant Request Letter

Jacqueline Nicole Freeman

XXXXXXXXXXXX

XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX

3/15/18

XXXX,

Good Morning, my name is Jacqueline Nicole Freeman. I am currently the AP at XXX. I am a previous graduate of XXX, teacher, and an instructional coach in XXX. I have received approval from XXX to conduct research interviews in your school. The ability to conduct this research will enable me to complete my doctorate degree in Educational Leadership at Gardner-Webb University. My dissertation entitled “Voices of the Implementers: The Perceptions and Experiences of Educators Implementing PBIS.” will collect the experiences of teachers initiating and implementing PBIS in their schools and classrooms. This study will identify specific strategies that have facilitated and or hindered the initiation and implementation process of PBIS without comparing the schools or districts. The experiences will be collected through interviews with teachers in 2<sup>nd</sup>-3<sup>rd</sup> grade at schools that have at least one year’s worth of experience implementing PBIS. The data collected from 2<sup>nd</sup> - 3<sup>rd</sup> grade teachers in your school system will be used in conjunction with the data from the 2<sup>nd</sup>-3<sup>rd</sup> grade teachers at XXX School in the XXX District to establish experiences from both large and small districts. Teachers will be asked to participate in a face to face interview and a follow up interview after the data has been coded and the themes have been identified. All information collected will remain anonymous. Written permission will be obtained from all teachers involved in the study. My research will be shared with Gardner –Webb University, XXX Schools, XXX Schools, and ProQuest dissertation data base. If you have any questions or concerns about this research you may contact Dr. Danny Stedman, chair of my dissertation committee, at [dstedman@gardner-webb.edu](mailto:dstedman@gardner-webb.edu).

Thank you for your time and consideration,

Jacqueline Nicole Freeman

Doctoral Candidate at Gardner Webb University

Assistant Principal XXX

Appendix E  
Informed Consent Form



Gardner-Webb University IRB  
Informed Consent Form

Title of Study: "Voices of the Implementers: The Perceptions and Experiences of Educators Implementing PBIS."

Researcher: Jacqueline Nicole Freeman, EDLS Doctoral Candidate

**Purpose**

The purpose of this study is to identify the types of strategies which are noted by the teachers that facilitated and/or hindered their PBIS adoption (initiation) and implementation experiences in their classrooms and schools. The researcher wants to show the strategies, professional developments, trainings etc. that helped you adopt and implement PBIS in your classroom. The researcher also wants to show what strategies, professional developments, trainings, etc. made the adoption (initiation) and implementation of PBIS in your classroom difficult.

**Procedure**

The researcher will communicate with possible participants through emails which will provide an overview of the study, guidelines for participation, and the procedures of the study. After providing the possible participants with a few days to familiarize themselves with the study the researcher will make telephone contact to formally invite them to the study and to answer any questions they may need answered. Upon the participants verbally agreeing to take part in the study, the researcher will schedule face to face interviews which can take place at the participants' school. Participants will complete the individual consent to participate form before beginning the interviews. The interviews will be digitally recorded in order to maintain accuracy. Participants may skip any question that causes discomfort and may stop the interview or survey at any time with no backlash. Participants will read through and confirm the accuracy of their transcripts which will be sent to them through email once they are returned to the researcher. Since the researcher has worked in both districts the researcher may be familiar with the participants by name only. The researcher has not worked in either school with any of the possible participants.

**Time Required**

It is anticipated that the study will require about 3 hours of your time. The face to face interviews will require 1 to 2 hours of your time and the electronic review and confirmation that your transcript is accurate will require 1 hour of your time.

**Voluntary Participation**

Participation in this study is voluntary. You have the right to withdraw from the research study at any time without penalty. You also have the right to refuse to answer any question(s) for any reason without penalty. If you choose to withdraw, you may request that any of your data which has been collected be destroyed unless it is not identified.

**Confidentiality**

The interviews will be digitally recorded with your permission so that your interview can be documented and then later transcribed to written text. The researcher will use a random color assignment system to label the recorded interviews and the text transcripts of the interviews. The digital audio recordings will be kept on a password protected thumb drive and kept with your consent documents in a locked file cabinet. The password protected thumb drive will be given to a paid professional transcriptionist who will transcribe the interviews. Once the interviews are transcribed the digital audio recording will be destroyed. Once transcribed the researcher will collaborate with you directly in order for you to review and confirm the accuracy of your interview transcript. All transcripts and consent forms will be destroyed three years after the research has been completed.

**Data Linked with Identifying Information**

The information that you give in the study will be handled confidentially. Your information will be assigned a color code. The list connecting your name to this code will be kept in a locked file cabinet. When the study is completed and the data have been analyzed, this list will be destroyed. Your name will not be used in any report. The digital audio recordings will be destroyed once they are professionally transcribed.

**Anonymous Data**

The information that you give in the study will be handled confidentially. Your data will be anonymous which means that your name will not be collected or linked to the data. Because of the nature of the data, it may be possible to figure out your identity; however, there will be no attempt to do so, and your data will be reported in a way that will not identify you.

**Confidentiality Cannot be Guaranteed**

In some cases it may not be possible to guarantee confidentiality (e.g., an interview of a prominent person, a focus group interview). Because of the nature of the data, I cannot guarantee your data will be confidential and it may be possible that others will know what you have reported.

**Risks**

There are no anticipated risks in this study. However, please note that with interviews it may not be possible to guarantee confidentiality.

**Benefits**

There are no direct benefits associated with participation in this study. The study may help us to understand the types of strategies that help and or discourage teacher initiation (adoption) and implementation of PBIS in classrooms and schools.

**Payment**

You will receive no payment or incentive for participating in the study.

**Right to Withdraw From the Study**

You have the right to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty. If you choose to withdraw from the study, your digital audio recording will be destroyed.

**How to Withdraw From the Study**

- If you want to withdraw from the study, please tell the interviewer to stop the interview you no longer wish to participate. There is no penalty for withdrawing.
- If you would like to withdraw after your materials have been submitted, please contact J. Nicole Freeman at (XXX) XXX-XXXX

**If you have questions about the study, contact the following individuals.**

J. Nicole Freeman  
Educational Leadership  
Gardner-Webb University  
Boiling Springs, NC 28017  
(XXX)XXX-XXXX

Dr. Danny Stedman  
Educational Leadership  
Gardner-Webb University  
Boiling Springs, NC 28017  
(XXX)XXX-XXXX

**If the research design of the study necessitates that its full scope is not explained prior to participation, it will be explained to you after completion of the study. If you have concerns about your rights or how you are being treated, or if you have questions, want more information, or have suggestions, please contact the IRB Institutional Administrator listed below.**

Dr. Jeffrey S. Rogers  
IRB Institutional Administrator  
Gardner-Webb University  
Boiling Springs, NC 28017  
XXX-XXX-XXXX

**Voluntary Consent by Participant**

I have read the information in this consent form and fully understand the contents of this document. I have had a chance to ask any questions concerning this study and they have been answered for me.

\_\_\_\_\_ I agree to participate in the interview session(s). I understand that this interview will be audio recorded for purposes of accuracy. The audio recording will be transcribed and destroyed.

\_\_\_\_\_ I do not agree to participate in the interview session(s).

\_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_  
Participant Printed Name

\_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_  
Participant Signature

You will receive a copy of this form for your records.

Appendix F

Themes and Exemplars from the Raw Data

The themes that were identified as hindrances to the process were direct expert training, ownership/buy-in, and consistency.

Theme	Exemplars
Direct Expert Training	<p data-bbox="711 333 1338 659">“Some new initiatives provide the committee or team training in the form of modules but there is no expert that comes to train the team. The team is supposed to train the school but they do not know what to do because they have not done it before either. Sure they completed the training modules but they have no expert or go to person in the building to lead them in the implementation.” Orange</p> <p data-bbox="711 701 1338 1461">“I would say the staff training from DPI that the committee received was advantageous because they we were able to hear the same thing and the training as two full days. There is a difference in the committee having all of that information and then taking it back to train the entire staff in a one to two hour professional development afterschool. It is just hard to get the entire staff to fully understand PBIS. It makes more sense coming from an expert or a person fully trained than sometimes their peers that have just had limited training. Trying to condense every bit of that information into that little bit of time because we have been here all day long, and most professional developments are after school or on our workdays, and those are the two worst times basically because in the afternoon the teachers are tired. The last thing they want to do is hear what you have to say and stay after for more training, and on workdays they want to be in their classroom.” Green</p> <p data-bbox="711 1541 1338 1793">“I don’t think sending five people from a school and saying you five are trained then comeback to train the whole school is always going to be the most effective, because some things are lost in translation. Some things that you find important at that moment I might not see. So I might not come back and share that.” Blue</p>
Ownership/Buy-in	<p data-bbox="711 1835 1338 1900">“We still have some people who are not completely sold, and we are doing all we can to</p>

	<p>try and change those mindsets. I think for all of us no matter how committed to this we are it is hard to be positive all the time.” Yellow</p> <p>“We get these new programs and we’re trained on them briefly, and we are expected to implement, but it’s like it fades away quickly before we really get to truly see if the program would have worked. We have new initiatives that have started this year and I can say that I do not feel I’m trained very well on the other initiatives because we have so many things going at once. Sometimes we get things thrown at us and it is alright we need to implement this. So, we start to implement it, but then the next year, it is okay now we’re going to try this If something is really effective, we’ve got to give it enough time to find out. We can’t just implement it for one year and expect it to do miraculous things.” Green</p> <p>“I’d rather roll out one thing at a time, and get to where we have a true understanding and mastery. Let’s just stick with it and get it the right way, because really it is pointless if you don’t. There has been a lot of new things passed down to us this year and I truly believe if you are not going to do it the way it is meant to be done then don’t do it.” Yellow</p>
Consistency	<p>“Is everyone in the building doing it with fidelity? Are the expectations the same in all the classrooms? Are the resource teachers implementing it?” Orange</p> <p>“I don’t think we were all consistent and we weren’t all sure about what consistency looked like. What I interpret as one way to be honest, somebody else may not have thought of it as the same thing. They might have saw or interpreted it differently. Sometimes it was kind of like a jack-of- all trades and a master of none, where you’re hitting some of them, missing most of them, occasionally you’ll get this one.” Blue</p>

	<p>“Trying to get your entire staff on board with it has been a job. If they don’t fully understand it then you’re going to have what you call those Negative Nancy’s, and it doesn’t matter what you do, you’re going to have those that still complain. We’ve already got kind of an idea of where we’re going next and what part we want to work with as a staff. The only scary part about that is your next administrators come in, if they’re not fully on board with this, then we’ve got to have the backup support. That’s’ the only thing is the unknown of not knowing if our administrators are going to be here next year, or if the other administrators are going to tackle this as well.” Green</p>
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The successes that facilitated the process were identified as committees, materials, and continuous improvement.

Theme	Exemplars
Committees	<p>“Our PBIS correlate team meets sometimes more than once a month. They were chosen by our PBIS coach and they really believe in it. This team did the research, sat down looked at the numbers, figured out how it was going to work in our building, within our culture, and then planned out the implementation and roll out with the belief that it would work. Our committee had a head person that was the expert in the building which was such a key support. Everyone knew who the expert in our building was and they were the go to person. This is essential when you roll it out, when you implement, the first couple of years, but pretty soon everybody in the building becomes the expert. Not an expert in the sense of they become in charge of the committee but they are able to answer any question a new person has.” Red</p> <p>“The committee came and did presentations and they offered optional workshops for some of the staff that feel as though they need additional information or help. The member of the committee will give you the names of teachers in the building that you can go and visit their rooms and observe them if you need more information.” Orange</p> <p>“Our PBIS committee keeps this initiative and implementation going throughout the years. They created a presentation that is part of the new staff orientation and that presentation is given every year to new teachers who are at our school or to anyone who wants to get re-acclimated with it if they need a refresher course. This training helps everyone know what to expect. They have even created and provided information for the parents so our parents are like we know this is what is going on here and they understand the system that is in place. The committee meets at least once a month and they have really good open communication. Every month we are privy to the information from that</p>

	<p>meeting. We are also privy to the newsletter that they put out and it has anything we need to know in there. The constant support and communication is there if any teacher needs it on any level.” Purple</p>
Materials	<p>“We received pocket charts, grid behavior tracker, they gave us sheets that say what the steps are to follow in case students are misbehaving or breaking a rule. We were given a matrix that allowed us to go up and look and determine what a behavior should look like so, the students and the staff have the same exact measure of expectation. It took the responsibility off of the teacher because I did not have to make up a chart or figure out how I was going to communicate behavior to parents it was all provided for us.” Red</p> <p>“They pretty much gave you everything to set you up.” Orange</p> <p>“The team provided us with a folder that contained the matrices, forms, and the tokens that were to be provided to the students along with directions and information about the store.” Yellow</p> <p>“We were given websites to for PBIS and PowerPoint presentations for the staff and students. The teachers were given a folder that had all the materials we needed. The teachers also had access to extra materials in the teacher workroom.” Green</p> <p>“Materials...a plethora, yeah. A plethora of those.” Blue</p> <p>“We were given all the materials that we would need. We were given the brag tags, tokens for the students, and even a parent letter. We were given how to explain it to the parents. We were given the planners for the students. We were given everything we that we could possibly need. So</p>

	<p>that it wasn't, we weren't fishing for materials or trying to get what we needed." Purple</p>
<p>Continuous Improvement</p>	<p>"Our PBIS committee and district PBIS coaches come in to our school and walk around with clipboards. They see what is going on, they ask kids and teachers questions, and a couple of weeks later we get the results back and they tell us what we are doing great on, what we can work on, and then the PBIS team meets and goes over what the results said, and we as a school make the changes, and it's kind of a continual process." Red</p> <p>"I more than positively benefit from the revisiting and reviewing that we do at the beginning of the year. Every year we have meetings and we tweak what's working and decide yes, this is working, this isn't working." Orange</p> <p>"At the beginning of the year, we do a presentation for the staff explaining PBIS and make sure we get everybody on the same page. Every year we revisit this, everybody is retrained at the beginning of the year. Even after sitting in the training, I know sometimes I would go home and say, wow, that was a lot to try and take in if I was just able to go back and just review for myself. We conduct surveys in order find out what the entire staff thought about what was working, or how they thought we could improve PBIS. I definitely think getting the teacher input is important so we can address and help our teachers. Teacher input is important because we're the ones that are driving the car. I really appreciate the honesty that we have gotten from our teachers." Yellow</p> <p>"The committee sends out these surveys. Then they analyze the results and go back to the staff and say this is where we're seeing we still have some issues, this is where we still need some training, or this is where we need to provide more clear instructions to the teachers." Green</p>

	<p>“You get a lot of emails like, okay, what’s working with PBIS? What do we need to change? What are your suggestions? So the committee is not just doing it on their own. But they’re listening to the staff, and how it feels in getting a pulse around the school. They are still listening out for it and trying to see where they can fix it.” Blue</p>
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