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The Impact of PBIS Instructional Strategies on Student Engagement

Kathy Hughes-Tucker
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Walden University

College of Education

This is to certify that the doctoral study by

Kathy Hughes Tucker

has been found to be complete and satisfactory in all respects,
and that any and all revisions required by
the review committee have been made.

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Walden University

2022

Abstract

The Impact of PBIS Instructional Strategies on Student Engagement

by

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MA, Nova Southeastern University, 1998

BS, University of Kentucky, 1993

Project Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree of
Doctor of Education

Walden University

March 2022

Abstract

School districts across the United States are using multiple systems to improve teacher instruction and student engagement. The problem at a middle school in North Texas is that it is unknown how middle school teachers are using Positive Behaviors Interventions and Supports (PBIS) to engage students. The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to explore how sixth-grade teachers are using PBIS instructional strategies to engage students, as well as sixth-grade teachers' perceptions of PBIS for engaging students in the classroom. PBIS, along with Watson's behavioral theory and Vygotsky's cognitive development theory, served as the conceptual framework for this study. The research questions concerned how teachers used PBIS instructional strategies to engage students and teachers' perceptions of PBIS instructional strategies to engage students. This study encompassed open-ended semi-structured interviews using nine participants who were certified teachers, taught a core subject, and used PBIS instructional strategies in their classrooms. The data were collected and analyzed through the process of open, axial, and selective coding. Three themes emerged: effective environment, systems for support, and learning leakages. Based on the findings of this project, professional development was integrated to address concerns and reoccurring themes. Teachers may benefit from positive social change by gaining insight needed to better meet the needs of all students through PBIS systems. Students may benefit from positive social change by an enhance the overall learning experience and in turn, improving student academic achievement.

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Dedication

I dedicate this research to my mom, Loreen P. Hughes, my dad, Alexander Hughes, my daughter Kaala and my granddaughter Alijah. Thank you, Mom, for always pushing me past what I thought I could accomplish and for always seeing the greater good. I can still hear you say: “Miss K when you see a ‘good fight,’ get in it.” Thank you, Dad, for teaching me how to love freely and be obedient and to do it not because it was popular, but because it is the right thing to do. I am forever grateful. To my beloved daughter, thank you for bringing me closer to God and learning how to trust Him through it all. To my granddaughter, dream big and trust God always.

I also dedicate this research to all the educators who continue to seek knowledge so they can do what’s in the best interest of the students we serve.

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My first acknowledgment goes to my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Thank you for allowing me to dream and to know that I can do all things through You. Thank you for keeping me on the right path and pushing through all the “noise,” for “No weapon formed against me shall prosper.” Without you, Lord, I would not have completed this project. Next I acknowledge my committee chair, Dr. Sunddip Aguilar. Thank you for your words of encouragement, even when I was unsure. “Kathy, you got this!” To my second chair, Dr. Jamie Jones, and university research reviewer, Dr. Heather Caldwell, thank you for sticking with me and offering support where needed.

To my children, Jayven, Kaana “with a long K” (as you always say), and Jacqur (Jacq): Jayven for looking over my shoulder smiling and saying “Yep that’s a lot of words,” and for the kiss on the cheek to keep going; Kaana for telling me, “I’d stop,” when I asked if this was long enough, which told me I needed to write more; and Jacq for sitting at the table and working with me and for your infectious laugh that made me smile. I love each of you like my next breath. Thank you to my brothers, Eben Hughes, Kevin Hughes, and sisters, Shaurie Matthews, Ann Smith, for always checking in to see how I was doing and helping me stay the course. To James “Tuck” Tucker, thank you for working through this process with me. To my BBC church family. Thank you for your continued prayers as I worked on my research. Thank you to the ladies of 502A, for all the lessons learned and friendships formed. Thank you Tonnea Williams and Mary Lamothe for your support and all the 45s. I’m ready for one now. Finally, thank you to AISD and my YJH family. I started this with you, loving our fight for GREATNESS!

Table of Contents

List of Tables	v
List of Figures	vi
Section 1: The Problem.....	1
The Local Problem.....	1
Rationale	6
Evidence of the Problem at the Local Level	6
Evidence of the Problem in the Literature	7
Definition of Terms.....	9
Significance of the Study	10
Research Questions	12
Review of the Literature	12
The Conceptual Framework.....	13
Review of the Broader Problem.....	17
Traditional Discipline Practices	17
Classroom Management.....	18
Zero Tolerance	21
Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS).....	23
PBIS Instructional Strategies	26
Student Engagement	28
Implications.....	30
Summary.....	30

Section 2: The Methodology.....	32
Qualitative Research Design and Approach	32
Participants.....	34
Gaining Access	36
Ethical Considerations	37
Data Collection	37
Gaining Access	42
Role of the Researcher	42
Data Analysis	44
Coding Data	45
Evidence of Quality	46
Discrepant Cases.....	46
Data Analysis Results	47
Coding.....	47
Theme 1: Effective Environment.....	51
Monitoring Student Academia and Behavior	51
Relevance.....	52
Theme 2: Systems for Support.....	53
Preteaching.....	53
Building Relationships.....	54
Theme 3: Learning Leakages.....	55
Peer Collaboration	55

Quality Feedback	56
Discussion of Findings.....	57
RQ1: The Use PBIS Instructional Strategies to Engage Students	58
RQ2: Teachers' Perceptions of PBIS.....	61
Conclusion	63
Summary.....	64
Section 3: The Project.....	65
Rationale	65
Review of the Literature	67
On-Going Content-Specific Professional Development.....	68
Professional Learning Communities (PLC).....	71
Deliverables and Outcomes	74
Literature Review Summary.....	79
Project Description.....	80
Potential Barriers and Solutions.....	81
Project Timetable for Proposed Implementation	83
Roles and Responsibilities	83
Project Evaluation Plan.....	85
Evaluation Goals.....	86
Project Implications	87
Social Change for the Local Site	87
Larger-Scale Social Change.....	87

Conclusion	88
Section 4: Reflections and Conclusions.....	89
Project Strengths and Limitations.....	89
Project Strengths	89
Project Limitations.....	90
Recommendations for Alternative Approaches	91
Scholarship, Project Development and Evaluation, and Leadership and Change	92
Reflection on Importance of the Work	94
Implications, Applications, and Directions for Future Research	95
Conclusion	96
References.....	98
Appendix A: Interview Question Protocol	127
Appendix B: Interview Schedule	129
Appendix C: Permission Letter.....	132
Appendix D: The Project	133
Appendix E: Training Evaluation	141

List of Tables

Table 1. WMS 3-Year Discipline Cycle Report	6
Table 2. Teacher Experience and Content Area	36
Table 3. A Sample Table Showing Axial and Open Coding	48
Table 4. A Sample Theme Development Table	51

List of Figures

Figure 1. Continuum of School-Wide Instructional & Positive Behavioral Support 25

Figure 2. Four Key Elements of PBIS Linked with Culturally Responsive Teaching 27

Section 1: The Problem

The Local Problem

Throughout the United States, instructional change has been occurring in the educational system, and each year district leadership teams seek better ways to meet the needs of the students they serve (McShane & Eden, 2015; National Center for Education Statistics [NCES], 2018). At the same time, problems with students' behavior and attendance have also been increasing. These increasing problems create barriers affecting schools to meet the needs of the students they serve. Therefore, districts must find a way to overcome these behavior and attendance barriers across all school levels (Parsons, 2017). These behavior problems contribute to the attendance problem. Students who exhibit disruptive behaviors risk being removed from the classroom and are alternatively placed in in-school suspension (ISS), on-campus intervention (OCI), or suspended receiving no academic instruction causing them to fall behind (Horner et al., 2015).

The disruptive behaviors often stem from minimally engaged students in the classroom (Kagan, 2009; Kagan et al., 2016). According to Goodman (2016), the essence of student engagement derives from teachers' student-centered lessons, which involve student interaction with peers and teachers and re-engagement activities if necessary. While student behavior has been at the forefront of the public education system for over 35 years (McIntosh et al., 2016), only in the last 10 years has the conversation shifted towards instructional practices (Hunter et al., 2015). Many different systems exist addressing how to handle problematic behaviors, and the Positive Behavioral

Interventions and Supports (PBIS) system is one used throughout the United States.

According to the U.S. Department of Education (2016), as of the 2014-2015 school year, about half of public schools reported using an early warning system (EWS) to identify students who are at risk of dropping out of school. According to Young (2012), *at risk of dropping out* refers to disruptive behavior, truancy, low academic achievement, and minimally engaged parental involvement. EWS is the identifier as PBIS is the tool used to intervene. The PBIS system offers ways to approach and address these behaviors in many cases before they escalate out of control (Pitts, 2017). Educators have been instructed to use best practices for instructing students when often all that is needed is a refocused energy to engage students in the target of the lesson (Goodman, 2016; Reschly & Christenson, 2012). PBIS allows students a better opportunity to remain in the instructional learning environment, even with misbehaviors, because teachers can offer preventive interventions and continue teaching the curriculum. EWSs strategically use data to identify students in need of additional support and interventions that help improve student success (NCES, 2018).

PBIS provides a systemic process for data-driven decision making, which aids in the selection and implementation of scientific research-based best practices for academics and behaviors (Betters-Bubon et al., 2016; Sugai & Horner, 2006). Minimal student engagement suggests a gap in practices, which may be overcome by using PBIS. PBIS offers a resolution to both misbehavior and student engagement by keeping students in the instructional setting (Skiba & Spague, 2011; McKevitt & Braaksma, 2010; Sugai et

al., 2006). PBIS's proactive approach to resolving and preventing behavioral problems serves all stakeholders: parents, teachers, administrators, and students (Cregor, 2008; McKevitt & Braaksma, 2010). According to Cooper (2011), when teachers have fewer behavior problems, they can place more emphasis on instruction while students are retained in the classroom. Keeping the students in the classroom allows the teachers the opportunity to offer the instruction needed for those students and to assist them in advancing in their academics rather than being placed in an alternative learning setting.

The NCES (2018) conducted a study on EWS and found districts are seeing improvements and using the data collected to refine various EWS to tailor them even more to fit the needs of the different campuses. Critically using the data and allowing the data to drive the decision making improves student engagement (Lochner et al., 2015; NCES, 2018). PBIS offers an educational initiative that allows teacher instruction to take place while promoting positive behavior and student engagement as well as improving students' academic success (Bettors-Bubon et al., 2016). PBIS is not a curriculum but a program that offers a systematic approach to enhance academic and social behavior outcomes for all students by using data and organizing resources to improve teacher instruction with fidelity increasing student engagement and success (Center on PBIS, 2019).

The problem at J. A. Wilburn Middle School (WMS, a pseudonym) is that, despite the efforts of administrators requiring teachers to use PBIS instructional strategies to improve student engagement, it is unknown how middle school teachers are using

PBIS instructional strategies to engage students. PBIS is a system geared towards equipping teachers with a range of interventions to reinforce appropriate student conversation/behavior conducive to learning in a positive learning environment (Center on PBIS, 2019). Within PBIS, there are instructional strategies to support students. PBIS also equips teachers with instructional strategies such as Kagan Structures, such as think pair share, rally coach, and rally robin (Kagan & Kagan, 2009), so the teachers can effectively deliver an engaging lesson with few disruptions (Hunter et al., 2015). According to the Texas Education Agency (2016), school districts have adjusted their accountability ratings to reflect instructional-based practices within individual districts. Students cannot receive best practices in learning if they are placed in an environment where the teacher is not trained in instructing them with the appropriate tools and resources (Plumb et al., 2016).

Background to the Problem

PBIS was introduced to the district in 2012 and PBIS training is offered during the summer and is ongoing throughout the school year. Teachers are receiving this training but it is unknown how middle school teachers are using PBIS instructional strategies to engage students. There has not been a significant reduction in office discipline referrals (ODRs). This professional development (PD) is offered to all teachers and is reinforced during professional learning communities (PLC). On average, PD is offered every 6 weeks, and PLCs occur daily at WMS. Measures have been put in place to lessen classroom disruptions, such as small group instruction, parent call log teams,

social caseworkers, and gender groups (Teacher, personal communication, January 12, 2019). Even with these measures, in an instructional team meeting at WMS, one of the instructional coaches suggested students stay behind unless they stay after school for tutoring or come early for tutoring. The instructional coach also suggested teachers could reduce the number of referrals being written due to students' poor choices and behavior and handle those infractions in the classroom with the students.

Teachers are under time restraints from pacing guides, which are set by the district for how long each unit should take that allow little flexibility to address student off-task behavior (Independent School District, 2019; Instructional Team Meeting, February 5, 2019). Time restraints may pose a disconnect of the use of the PBIS instructional strategies to engage students in the classroom. When students experience learning problems, teachers rely on strategies, interventions, and assessments of those outcomes to effectively identify and create a plan of action to resolve the problem (E. Hall & Karanxha, 2012; Levi-Keren & Patkin, 2016). According to Childs et al. (2016), PBIS instructional strategies are successful if they are implemented with fidelity, for PBIS serves "to realign resources and design interventions to promote positive student outcomes" (p. 90). These positive student outcomes could include higher student attendance, more student engagement, and an overall appreciation of education (Cornell et al., 2016).

Rationale

Evidence of the Problem at the Local Level

WMS, the local setting, has implemented PBIS to give students and teachers the proper tools to keep students in class instead of sending them to the office for every infraction. Currently, 2,750 referred students have been placed in alternate school settings, which is a decrease of 250 referred students compared to the previous year. This decrease reflects a decline of 8.35% over the last year (see Table 1).

Table 1

WMS 3-Year Discipline Cycle Report

Number of Referrals for the Year 2016-2019				
Grade	2016	2017	2018	2019
6th	2481	2735	3000	2750

According to Bradshaw et al., (2015), Pitts (2017), and Feuerborn et al., (2016), the undermining of valued instructional time is interrupted by student misbehavior, which prevents the normal operations of a classroom. An administrator at WMS stated there is a growing number of students being displaced in alternative learning settings (personal communication, February 16, 2017). According to Cooper (2011) and Predy (2014), the growing number of students who are being placed in alternative learning environments because of discipline referrals is high, and middle school teachers' perceptions of

engagement are a concern. Feuerborn et al. (2018) noted the relevance of using best practices and best engagement for students to help foster learning environments that invite students to want to learn and not misbehave.

The principal at WMS addressed the faculty in a meeting about reassessing the determining factors of the written referrals due to the large numbers being submitted. The principal desires to mitigate the number of students being removed from the instructional setting (personal communication, February 22, 2017). WMS is seeking to acquire an understanding through implementing behavioral interventions that could provide a wealth of data that could assist teachers and administrators. With the comprehension of these interventions, the stakeholders may obtain effective tools to engage and support students in the classroom (Bradshaw et al., 2015; Feuerborn et al., (2016). According to Simonsen et al. (2014), effective management of behaviors, instructional practices, and assessments should be aligned to provide students with the utmost support for increased learning opportunities in school. Understanding this demand will lead to supporting the need to address teachers' instructional interventions to address the academic and behavioral needs of students (Kuchle et al., 2015). PBIS could be an effective systemic approach for redirecting or altering students' problematic behaviors and increasing student engagement and support at this local site.

Evidence of the Problem in the Literature

Properly implementing PBIS instructional strategies and following a curriculum with alignment helps reduce problematic behavior (Cornell et al., 2016; Robertson &

Pfeiffer, 2016;-U.S. Department of Education, 2016). According to Ahmed et al. (2016), support for middle school teachers implementing PBIS helps stabilize student academic achievement. Houchens et al. (2017) posited that middle school teachers who used PBIS instructional strategies experienced an increase in student academic improvement because of the decrease in alternative academic placement. McKellar (2017) concluded that when PBIS is implemented schoolwide at the middle school level, the significant achievement is shown in the areas of Language Arts and mathematics as PBIS helps students to stay in instructional settings versus being put in alternative settings, enabling them to receive more instruction.

Teachers maintain fidelity with the curriculum through instructional practices with purposeful planning of the PBIS instructional strategies. Having the tools of how to implement PBIS instructional strategies with fidelity and best practices allows for optimal instruction with student engagement (Houchens et al., 2017). PBIS instructional strategies may assist teachers in promoting student achievement at the highest level of mastery content. The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to explore both how middle school teachers use PBIS to engage and support students as well as how middle school teachers perceive PBIS for engaging students in the classroom. Teachers are experiencing low student performance due to high levels of alternative placements according to attendance and test scores, as reported by the principal at WMS (personal communication, February 22, 2017). Although district PD has been offered, teachers must properly engage students with PBIS instructional strategies if academic

achievement is the end goal.

Definition of Terms

The following terms are used in this basic qualitative study:

Academic Achievement: Academic achievement refers to the individual students' scores on the Measuring Academic Progress (MAP) assessment as well as the State of Texas Assessment of Academic Readiness (STAAR) test. Reading and math are two of the academic indicators of growth for school improvement (Texas Education Agency, 2016).

Culturally Responsive Teaching: Culturally responsive teaching refers to using the cultural familiarity of information to scaffold information to students as part of the learning process (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017).

Measuring Academic Progress (MAP): MAP is a computerized state standard aligned assessment that identifies students' academic levels. MAP identifies individual skills and concept levels over time (Northwest Evaluation Association, 2014).

Office Discipline Referral (ODR): ODRs are a form of documentation of students' discipline infractions. An ODR documents a student's violation of a campus or district rule. Teachers and administrators provide details of the incident and the type of violation as well as concerns and other interventions used before writing a referral. An ODR indicates the consequence(s) that was rendered because of the referral (Katz & Blagg, 2016).

PBIS Instructional Strategies: PBIS Instructional Strategies refers to the various strategies that help engage students in learning opportunities (Center on PBIS, 2019).

Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS): PBIS is a systematic individualized approach to addressing disruptive behaviors. According to the Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP), PBIS was initially designed to minimize problematic behaviors of individuals with disabilities; however, it has expanded to the mainstream or general educational population (Center on PBIS, 2019). PBIS helps prevent disruptive behaviors with the use of universal best practices (Lassen et al., 2006).

Response to Intervention (RtI): RtI is an approach used to help struggling learners to aid them in the classroom using different strategies such as small group instruction and accommodations within the lesson (Texas Educational Agency, 2019).

Student-centered: For this study, student-centered refers to the learning process of students taking ownership of their learning by actively participating in evolving in their learning experiences, the use of instructional approaches, and the use of academic support strategies (Richmond, 2014).

Student engagement: For this study, student engagement refers to a combination of constructs derived from the teacher's instructional delivery and a student's attention, comprehension, willingness, and desire to participate in the learning process (Bundick et al., 2004).

Significance of the Study

The significance of this study was to foster an understanding of the barriers that

impact the teachers' use of PBIS instructional strategies to engage students while addressing teachers' perceptions of PBIS to engage students in the classroom. This study may provide data that can assist teachers with instructional strategies to engage students. This study may also develop teachers' support for using PBIS to engage students in the classroom. The need for conducting this study relates to how middle school teachers are using PBIS instructional strategies to engage and support students and what the middle school teachers' perceptions are of PBIS for engaging students in the classroom. According to Lambert et al. (2014) and Lochner et al. (2015), understanding and identifying teachers' use and support for PBIS to engage students could provide support for student growth and preparedness. The results of this study could be used to identify resources teachers need to understand how to best use PBIS and their perception of PBIS instructional strategies for engaging and supporting students in the classroom. The insight from this study could also provide teachers with an understanding of how their perceptions of PBIS affect student engagement in the classroom and how it promotes students' success. The findings of this study may lead to positive social change by helping educators gain insight on how to better meet the needs of all students by using PBIS instructional strategies, which may enhance the overall learning experience for students, and in turn, improve student academic achievement.

When teachers fail to prepare an engaging lesson, students lose focus. According to Wiles and Bondi (2014), preparedness is an important consideration because gaps in learning often cause students to fall behind and struggle academically. Bradshaw et al.

(2015) suggested that PBIS instructional strategies can be an effective systemic approach for teachers addressing problematic behavior and instructional concerns to increase engagement and academic achievement. With the focus on academic achievement, teachers can place more emphasis on instruction and student engagement as opposed to lecturing, therefore increasing content mastery (Cooper, 2011; Levi-Keren & Patkin, 2016). Bradshaw et al. (2015), Lochner et al. (2015), and Ross & Bruce (2007) suggested PBIS instructional strategies give teachers the tools needed to improve behavior and increase learning outcomes that promote student success. The relevance for studying this problem is examined in the existing literature.

Research Questions

The research questions for this basic qualitative study were focused on how middle school teachers are using PBIS instructional strategies to engage and support students in the classroom. I explored which PBIS instructional strategies teachers use and the perception of how PBIS instructional strategies assist with student engagement:

RQ1: How do middle school teachers use PBIS instructional strategies to engage students in the classroom?

RQ2: What are middle school teachers' perceptions of PBIS to engage student learning?

Review of the Literature

To substantiate the objective of this basic qualitative study, I conducted an analysis of the literature from current peer-reviewed studies, articles, and research to

provide further information on the topic. The related literature supports the problem and highlights considerations for understanding how middle school teachers are using PBIS instructional strategies to engage students in the classroom.

For this basic qualitative study, key ideas, words, and search terms were used for the exploration of research. The following keywords were used to locate peer-reviewed articles: *teacher instruction, Positive Behavior Intervention and Supports (PBIS), PBIS instructional strategies, PBIS student engagement, PBIS best practice, tier 1 interventions, tier 2 interventions, Response to Intervention (RtI), and zero tolerance.*

These keywords were selected based on their connection to PBIS instructional strategies and student engagement. The themes presented from the literature include the conceptual framework, school behavior management, traditional discipline practices, zero tolerance, PBIS, PBIS instructional strategies, and student engagement.

The Conceptual Framework

Grounded in behavioral theory, PBIS is a framework that entails a system that allows changes to occur for both the teacher and the student while also promoting positive behaviors to create an environment conducive to learning (Lane et al., 2013; Sugai & Horner, 2006, Vygotsky, 1978; Watson, 1913). PBIS, a tiered process, emphasizes three preventative methods. Each tier has a focus point that guides the intervention process.

According to Center on PBIS (2019), the first tier is the instruction given on behavior expectations, and when working within this tier, the focus is on preventing new

behavior problems by implementing high-quality learning for all students. Next, is school/home communication, and within this tier, the school/home communication is increased, and the focus is on nonresponsive approaches to problematic behaviors (Center on PBIS, 2019). By involving guardians quickly and putting measures in place such as small groups, the students are better able to adapt to the directions requested by the teacher (Center on PBIS, 2019; Lochner et al., 2015). Finally, individualized interventions are needed. Within this tier, a focus on reducing the intensity of prevalent problem behaviors one-on-one is suggested (Center on PBIS, 2019). The framework is further validated by behaviorist theoretical underpinnings for PBIS, which calls for three basic components: systems change framework, school building level procedures, and the use of varied levels of interventions and support (Sardina, 2012). For this study, I used Vygotsky's (1978) theory of cognitive development and Watson's (1913) theory of behaviorism as the theories align with the PBIS system.

PBIS relies on the use of proactive strategies and interventions to increase desired positive student behavior (Childs et al., 2010). PBIS has a foundation in the philosophical terms of Vygotsky's (1978) theory of cognitive development, which is based on the principle that a student's cognitive development evolves from social interaction. Vygotsky investigated the relationships between teaching and child development and proposed that teaching leads to development. According to Vygotsky, teachers should promote a child's development by stimulating capabilities. To be effective, teaching needs to anticipate development (Guseva & Solomonivich, 2017).

Vygotsky's (1978) theory of cognitive development applies to PBIS because it provides insight into how children's brains develop from instruction and offers strategies for aiding in a child's cognitive development (McLeod, 2018). Students learn from observation and doing, part of social interaction and imaginative play, and both are integral in the cognitive development process of children (McLeod, 2018). As children become teens, they have learned or developed certain behaviors that may or may not be conducive to a positive learning environment (Beecher & Sweeney, 2008).

The theory of the psychology of behaviorism by Watson (1913) and the theory of cognitive development by Vygotsky (1978) provided a conceptual framework for this study. These theories guided me in exploring how middle school teachers are using PBIS instructional strategies to engage students in the classroom. Such a framework parallels the basic qualitative study because these theories contribute to an exploration of how the psychology of behaviorism affects instructional strategies and how cognitive development impacts student support in the classroom.

Grounded in the work of Watson (1913), foundational support of PBIS rests in the theory of behaviorism. The science of observable behavior, behaviorism originated with Watson in 1913. Behaviorism emphasized locating and validating functional relationships between the conditions of the environment and the behavior of the individual (Flannery et al., 2009). Watson theorized that human behavior is obtained through conditioning, eliminating any reference to the mental process (Flannery et al., 2009; Priester, 2015). According to Flannery et al. (2009), Watson believed that previous experiences

conditioned the nerve pathways of humans, thereby shaping their response to an environment. Watson's accession to behavior was engineered in the belief that human behaviors are determined by factors external to their environment (Flannery et al., 2009; Priester, 2015).

To apply Watson's (1913) theory of behaviorism, locating and validating a functional relationship should exist between the conditions of the environment and the behavior of the individual. The functional relationship combination allows for observable behaviors from the individual and the individual's presence in the environment at the time to determine means, interventions, or strategies to change inappropriate behavior. One of the research-based interventions to curtail inappropriate behavior is PBIS (Scott & Cooper, 2013). PBIS is based on the theory of behavior, as it is a system in which changes occur for both the teacher and the student, while also promoting positive behaviors to create an environment conducive to learning (Lane et al., 2013). The behaviorist theoretical underpinnings for PBIS call for three basic components: systems change framework, school building level procedures, and the use of varied levels of interventions and support (Sardina, 2012). For this study, Watson's (1913) theory of behaviorism aligns with the PBIS system.

This is an appropriate framework as this study explored how the implementation of PBIS strategies improves instruction based on Watson's (1913) theory of behavior and through the philosophical terms of Vygotsky's (1978) theory of cognitive development. The combination of the theory and PBIS created an in-depth process from which data was

generated. The research questions explored how this study impacts classrooms, and PBIS served as an initial lens for viewing and organizing the data collected.

Review of the Broader Problem

The broader problem involved determining how educational practices have evolved and how those practices have impacted instruction and student engagement. Finding instructional strategies that have an effective impact on student engagement is important to a school district to improve academic achievement (Better-Bubon et al., 2016). It is challenging, however, to find effective instructional strategies that both engage students and improve achievement in the public school systems, by both researchers and practitioners (Ficarra & Quinn, 2014; McKellar, 2017), especially in low socioeconomic areas (Grace & Nelson, 2019). Research studies conducted by the previously mentioned researchers, practitioners, and more are assessed in the following subsections.

Traditional Discipline Practices

Schools are organized to teach particular standards and expectations. The purpose of public education was to eliminate the inequalities in society in such a way that experiences in school would ensure that all individuals could have the opportunity to soar in school and beyond (Better-Bubon et al., 2016). According to Mann (1957), education is the greatest equalizer of people, over any other accessories of human origin. With that being said, the traditional discipline practices consisted of mandatory parent conferences, lunch or after-school detention, ISS, out-of-school suspension, or corporal punishment.

Schools followed the student code of conduct policy for their districts that were voted on by their school board. Exclusionary discipline, corporal punishment, and out-of-school suspensions were greatly criticized and excluded from some districts (Haydon et al., 2016; Wayman et al., 2021) when examining the effectiveness and unintended outcomes such as the negative impact on achievement and emotional trauma (Gregory et al., 2010).

Classroom Management

Classroom management, an element of PBIS, refers to the methods and strategies used by a teacher to maintain order and organization within a classroom to create an environment conducive to learning geared towards students performing at their highest levels. According to Garrett (2015), some educators believe that classroom behavior management means keeping control of the students by making sure they are seated and quiet. However, Vygotsky (1978) stated that true learning stems from social interaction, which is impossible with students sitting quietly all day. While classroom behavior management encompasses control, validating includes students up and out of their seats, fully engaged with one another as learning is considered active (Garrett, 2015). Allowing students to take responsibility for their learning is a must; thus, the teacher acts as the learning facilitator. The teacher's role is to work with students (Garrett, 2015). These changes have resulted in some school officials turning towards proactive and preventative methods such as PBIS (Lewis et al., 2010).

Classroom management is a part of the pedagogical content; however, it often receives minimal focus, therefore becoming less important and seemingly focused on

misbehaviors only (Eisenman et al., 2015). Having a good understanding of classroom management helps explain why when teachers master the art of teaching, they realize classroom management is part of the student's learning as much as the content being studied (Eisenman et al., 2015; Ficarra & Quinn, 2014). Ficarra and Quinn (2014), Reinke et al. (2013), and Tenenbaum et al. (2010) have suggested that teachers are consistently revealing more classroom management training is needed to ensure they have an adequate skill level in the area. The literature in this section of the study offers insight as to how classroom management is part of learning.

Understanding that classroom management is part of student learning provides teachers with insight that can reduce unwanted behaviors or misbehavior and determine whether student learning is taking place. When classroom management is considered a tool for improving student learning instead of a method of controlling, instruction improves and learning will follow (Eisenman et al., 2015). Effective classroom management practices promote appropriate behavior and increase academic engagement, and subsequently academic achievement (Evertson & Weinstein, 2006; Garwood & Vernon-Feagans, 2016; Korpershoek et al., 2016; Stronge et al., 2011). Therefore, sufficient training, resources, and strategies in classroom management are needed for teachers to obtain the proper efficacy (Ficarra & Quinn, 2014). Teachers can benefit from PD that is designed to teach and support the implementation of effective classroom management procedures that promote appropriate student behavior (Duncan et al., 2007; Simonsen et al., 2014). Add summary and synthesis to balance out the use of the

information from the literature with your own analysis.

Classroom management requires the mindset of structures, routines, and procedures, which translates into building blocks and processes; the systems that are the fundamentals of education, which allow students to become acclimated to expectations. Students learn better if they are provided with a structured environment that is conducive to learning (Garrett, 2015). Building blocks start with the relationship forged by the teachers with their students. The most impactful part of teaching is building relationships with students. Weinberg (2010) stated that all children need an adult who will believe in them, one who knows how important relationships are to a child and pushes them to become all they can be. Teacher-student relationships influence how a student develops. This relationship relates to a wide range of school adjustment outcomes, including liking school, work habits, social skills, behavior, and academic performance (Kagan et al., 2016). Not all pedagogical strategies work with all students. For this reason, teachers need to actively engage and learn about their students. This active engagement should include learning likes, dislikes, hobbies, experiences, anything that will make a connection between the teacher and student and give the students a reason to trust their teachers (Kagan et al., 2016; McKellar, 2017). Add summary/synthesis to connect back to your study.

Classroom management involves a process, the daily routines established by teachers that become second nature to the students as time goes on. These processes/routines condition students for the next steps (Lester et al., 2017). Ellerbrock et

al. (2015) found that classroom management routines play a role in establishing a community in which teachers create an academic-focused classroom culture (a) that is safe, (b) establishes shared norms and values, (c) encourages open and honest communication, (d) makes purposeful time to know their students, (e) facilitates mutual respect, (f) encourages reciprocal care and mutual responsibility, (g) requires academic excellence from each student, and (h) uses student-centered cooperative group structures. If teachers want to be effective and maximize the learning process in the classroom, daily routines must be planned out and established before the school year begins (Lester et al., 2017). Attempting to establish a sustainable classroom management process should not be done haphazardly. According to Lester et al. (2015), when teachers provide written rules and routines for students and parents, the presumption of the outcome is known, and it aligns with the culture of the classroom. Classroom management requires a systematic approach. Add summary and synthesis to connect back to your study. Create a strong conclusion for the section.

Zero Tolerance

Zero tolerance arose from the phenomenon that if the severity of the punishment of minor to major misbehaviors was increased, it would send a message to students that any form of disruption would not be tolerated (Raible & Irizarry, 2010). This policy emerged from the Federal Gun-Free Schools Act of 1994, which stemmed from the Gun-Free School Zones Act of 1990, which made it illegal for an unlicensed individual to possess a firearm on school property. A person caught possessing a firearm on school

property would be fined \$5,000, jailed up to 5 years, or both (18 U.S.C. § 924(a)(4)).

School districts across the United States have included several disruptive behaviors as a reason for removing disruptive students to secure the safety of students and lessen the distractions in classrooms (Brown & Clarey, 2012; Fabelo et al., 2011; Skiba et al., 2014). Although zero-tolerance policies were initially put into place to help fight the war on drugs and keep the school environment safe, little to no evidence exists substantiating the policies' effectiveness in reducing drug use and school violence (Skiba et al., 2014).

In 2005, the American Psychological Association (APA) Council of Representatives approved the Zero Tolerance Task Force (ZTTF) Project (2008). The focus of the project was to review the different zero-tolerance policies, backgrounds, and implementations. The discovery of the ZTTF was comprehensive in characterizing possible outcomes from the district and school-based policies. Two primary areas of concern precisely related to zero tolerance were identified as being (a) excessive consequences for frivolous infractions, and (b) an increased number of students denied access to instruction, the greater concern of the ZTTF being the latter has been discussed as negative unintended consequence (Morgan & Walker, 2012).

Although zero-zero-tolerances intended to increase the safety of schools and improve the classroom environment so learning could take place with minimal disruptive behaviors, it is believed that schools were being considered gateways to the prison system, known as the school-to-prison pipeline, and were not serving the educational

needs of children (Grace & Nelson, 2019). As result, Brown et al. (2020) concluded that students who commit infractions in school increasingly end up in the criminal justice system. The rise in schools' use of law enforcement officers has led to the criminalization of behaviors that traditionally were handled by school staff (Brown et al., 2020).

Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS)

School officials have been pushed to address the issues of classroom behavior. The fear of disruptive behaviors has led schools to look at more punitive methods, which were ineffective, and which only led to a disproportionate number of students of color being placed in alternative settings (Losen & Gillespie, 2012; Bastable et al., 2021; U.S. Department of Education, 2016). The federal government proposed that school discipline policies and practices be monitored and evaluated continuously to eradicate discrimination and disproportionality among students of color (U.S. Department of Education, 2016). The need for schools to establish a framework that helps administrators and teachers promote appropriate behavior and student achievement has increased.

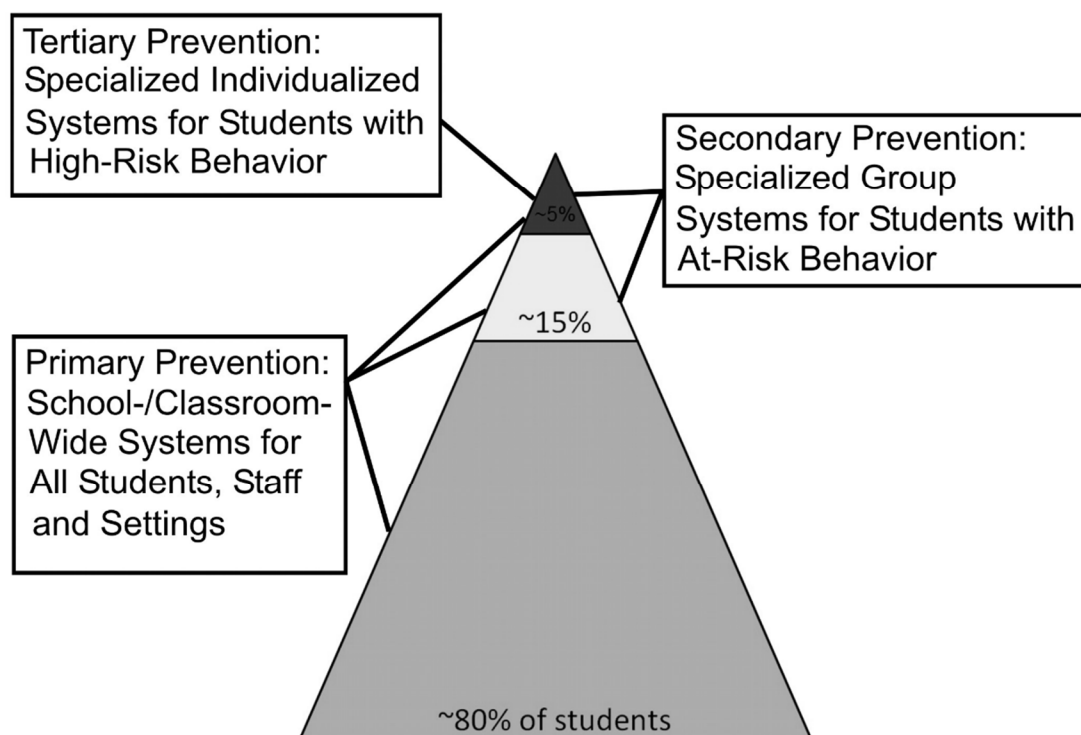
The integration of PBIS with culturally responsive practices has the potential to enhance student-teacher relationships, decrease disproportionality, and increase the instructional time (Parsons, 2017). Hence, restorative discipline practices have emerged and are changing the policies of responding to the wrongdoings of students (Liang et al., 2021). For this study, the researcher found it necessary and relevant to explore the evolution of PBIS to mainstream classrooms.

PBIS, a tiered process, emphasizes methods of preventing problematic behaviors

through transforming the whole school environment, a process that differs from traditional and zero-tolerance discipline practices, which often displace students in an alternative placement for extended periods (Liang et al., 2021). The PBIS systems initiative creates an opportunity for stakeholders to help schools promote positive behavior and student engagement with the overall intent to keep students in the instructional setting (Bettors-Bubon et al., 2016). The OSEP described PBIS as an evidence-based instructional framework with strategies that incorporate a data-driven decision-making process to improve behavioral and academic outcomes (Center on PBIS, 2019). This school-wide transformation includes students, teachers, administrators, and support staff in a holistic approach to behavioral management (Noltemeyer et al., 2019). Noltemeyer et al. (2019) suggested that PBIS teaches social skills young people need for achievements such as respect, persistence, and responsibility. The three tiers which compose PBIS as seen in Figure 1 are the following: (a) Primary, the instruction is given on behavior expectations, consequences, and rewards; (b) Secondary, school/home communication is increased; and (c) Tertiary, individualized intervention occurs based on functional behavioral and team-based comprehensive assessment (Center on PBIS, 2019).

Figure 1*Continuum of School-Wide Instructional & Positive Behavioral Support*

Continuum of School-Wide Instructional & Positive Behavioral Support



Note. Adapted from Center on PBIS, 2019.

The data from all three tiers are collected and analyzed continually and used for decision-making assessments (Center on PBIS, 2015). Bohanon et al. (2006) evaluated the effectiveness of PBIS in an urban high school setting. Using data gathered before and after implementation, teacher training, and implementation of the plan with an 80% overall level of implementation over five of the seven domains measured, Bohanon et al. concluded there was a decrease in office referrals by 20% in year three. Although

improvement was made in the reduction of office referrals, challenging limitations arose. Teacher buy-in was difficult as well as integrating instruction consistent with PBIS expectations. In another study, positive results were seen after year four of implementation of PBIS in office referrals and school-level gains in achievement in math and reading on standardized state tests (Bradshaw et al., 2010).

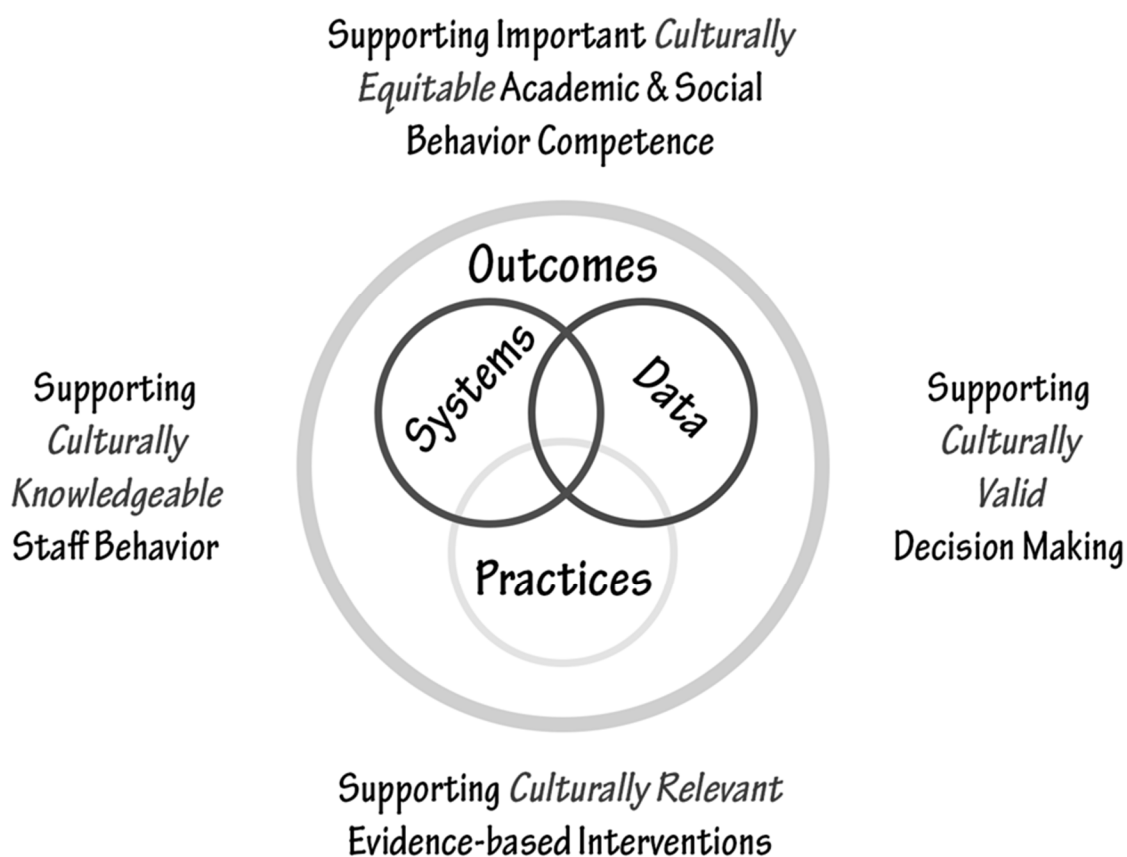
PBIS Instructional Strategies

As seen in Figure 2, PBIS instructional strategies focus on the needs of the student and create a student-centered approach to learning, taking into account the cultural relevance of each student. Therefore, a school-wide, culturally responsive PBIS approach would increase instructional time and engagement in the classroom where most PBIS implementation occurs (Johnson et al., 2018) and most referrals originate (Parsons, 2017). Bosworth and Judkins (2014) noted a modern constructivist, Bandura, viewed learning as a person's interactions with all aspects of his/her environment, a perspective more like Vygotsky's socialization theory of learning. The researchers described learning as an event that requires a physical change in a person's brain. Learning is also having the wherewithal in new situations to determine knowledge, behaviors, and experiences (Bosworth & Judkins, 2014). Educators have had to shift their thinking of instructional practices originally developed in the mid-20th century (Murphy et al., 2021). The shift is from direct teaching to focusing on a more student-centered and engaging environment (Murphy et al., 2021). An examination of middle school implementation of PBIS

instructional strategies to engage and support students in the classroom is relevant to this current study.

Figure 2

Four Key Elements of PBIS Linked with Culturally Responsive Teaching



Note. Adapted from California Association of Health and Education Linked Professions JPA, 2018.

The creators of PBIS stress the importance of combining discipline strategies with academic instruction; however, they do not promote any one specialized approach.

Although it is recommended that the instructional approach connects as to “assist students in acquiring behaviors that facilitate teaching and the learning process” (Lane et al., 2013, p. 10). According to Kagan et al. (2016), PBIS connects with cooperative learning engagement strategies that help foster a link between student-centered and cultural relevance. A few of those strategies according to Kagan et al. (2016) are indicated below:

- Rally Robin - In pairs, students alternate generating brief oral responses.
- Timed Pair Share - In pairs, after students have written down their thoughts, students share with a partner for a predetermined time while the partner listens. Then partners switch roles.
- Rally Coach - Partners take turns, one solving a problem while the other coaches. Then partners switch roles.

When teachers fuse PBIS with effective instructions, students will be provided with a wide range of opportunities to be academically successful as the focus is placed on their social, emotional, and behavioral needs (Anderson-Saunders, 2016; Chaparro et al., 2015; Lane et al., 2013).

Student Engagement

According to Bundick et al. (2014), student engagement is a student’s willingness and desire to participate while maintaining a focus on the learning target. Teachers are a vital part of this process as their instructional delivery either engages or disengage a students’ involvement (McKellar, 2017). The lack of student engagement may lead to

problem behaviors and low academic achievement. Goodman (2016) posited, when students are not engaged, they tend to be disruptive, causing distractions that may lead to behavior problems. PBIS has been noted to increase student engagement thus reducing behavior problems and improving academic achievement (McKellar, 2017). Through PBIS instructional strategies, students are offered opportunities to be academically successful in the classroom (Chaparro et al., 2015).

Academic interventions when used contemporaneously aid in addressing behavior by changing the classroom environment (Sinclair et al., 2019). Teachers using clarification for students' learning experiences and teacher objectives, (explicit instruction), enable students' background knowledge to be sparked. The activity stretches the brain in such a way it blocks out issues of behavioral problems because the student is engaged in learning (Center on PBIS, 2019; Chaparro et al., 2015; U.S. Department of Education and Justice, 2016). Teachers who use such intervention practices tend to have students who exhibit increased instructional engagement which may have an indirect effect on improved academic outcomes (Gage et al., 2015; Gage et al., 2018).

To effectively engage students, Stevenson and Mussalow (2019) suggested teachers must preplan and prepare innovative and strategic activities. When students have downtime, they are more likely to engage in behaviors that cause latency in completing the required activity. Sinclair et al. (2019) and Wehby et al. (2003) found less academic instruction is provided when students engage in disruptive behavior, so having a tight plan is required to obtain the desired academic outcomes.

Implications

Implications from this research may encompass information as to how teachers use PBIS instructional strategies to impact student engagement. The purpose of this research is to explore how middle school teachers use PBIS to engage students and middle school teachers' perceptions of PBIS to engage students in the classroom. Ideally, the results from this study will help teachers to better support students and assist in helping them improve student engagement.

The anticipated findings from the interview data may provide ideas regarding how middle school teachers use PBIS instructional strategies to engage and support students in the classroom. Other findings could be that the teachers are not using PBIS instructional strategies in the classroom at all. Probable project directions on the anticipated results may include more training and PD for increasing knowledge and comfort about the instructional strategies, as well as addressing concerns of implementation (Cetin, 2016; Kyndt et al., 2016; Lia, 2016).

Summary

This section of the project presented the key points associated with the study, including the identification of the local problem, the study's rationale and the intended purpose, a review of current literature relevant to the study, and a discussion of the study's implications. Each section provided information on the study's direction and the need for further research on the topic.

Section 2 of the project focuses on the methodology and provides additional

information on the qualitative design and approach, the study participants, and the data collection and analysis. Section 2 also offers an explanation and rationale for research design and the determination of the sample size and data collection methods. Within this section, data analysis procedures and related interpretations of data will also be discussed.

Section 2: The Methodology

In this basic qualitative study, I reviewed the process by which the data were generated, gathered, and recorded. In doing so, I focused on how the middle school teachers are using PBIS instructional strategies to engage students in the classroom. I also explored which PBIS instructional strategies teachers use and the perceptions of how PBIS instructional strategies assist with student engagement. In Section 2, I explain (a) my research design, (b) the role of the researcher, (c) the participant selection, (d) the data collection and analysis processes, and (e) the ethical procedures. I also provide a summation.

Qualitative Research Design and Approach

According to Creswell (2014), qualitative research explores a key concept to clarify and explain the viewpoints and experiences of the participants related to a particular problem or a central phenomenon. The basic qualitative study chosen for this study derived directly from the need to provide an in-depth inquiry into a specific problem, which supports the purpose of this study (see Merriam, 2015). In assisting in finding the best approach, Creswell described the different approaches relevant to qualitative studies: (a) phenomenology, (b) narrative, (c) grounded, (d) ethnography, and (e) basic qualitative study. I carefully considered each approach before making a final selection of a basic qualitative design. I chose a basic qualitative study because it aligned with the criteria and directly connected to the purpose and problem of this study.

I ruled out a quantitative design for this study as it did not align with the goal,

purpose, or research questions of the study. Quantitative characteristics include the examination of possible relationships between variables, which receive representation through numeric data collection (Creswell, 2014). A mixed-method study was not a consideration because Creswell (2014) posited combining both quantitative and qualitative methods involved philosophical assumptions, which were not aligned with my purpose. For this study, I was interested in researching how people interpret their experiences connected to a particular phenomenon and was not interested in examining the relationship among variables.

Phenomenological research tradition was a consideration for my study as it seeks to determine the essence of the human experience described by the participants (see Creswell, 2014). However, phenomenology is the study of what commonalities participants have because of a particular shared phenomenon (Lodico et al., 2010). Additionally, this tradition requires prolonged time in the field to collect data (Lodico et al., 2010).

I also considered a narrative research design. I rejected it because a narrative research design focuses on the lives of individuals and collections of stories of those individuals such as homelessness, divorce, and the like to develop a collaborative narrative with the participants and my life (see Creswell, 2012). For this study, there was no need to focus on the lives of the participants outside of their work environment.

I initially gravitated towards grounded theory because of similar data collection techniques, but this approach remained unsubstantiated as the development of a new

theory proved unfeasible for this study, with the purpose of the study being to identify existing concerns. Grounded theory designs use inductive approaches, grounded in data, for generating a new theory (Charmez, 2014; Creswell, 2014). Common methods used for grounded theory include participant observations and interviews and the aggregation of texts and artifacts, which in turn may lead to prolonged data collection.

The next design I reviewed was ethnography, which would require me to study a particular culture in their native surroundings for a substantial amount of time as well as the culture's behavior and attitude (Creswell, 2014). For this project study, the observations of the participants' surroundings are not required as the data collection was obtained from the day-to-day activities of the educational classrooms of the participants and their instructional educational processes within the school day. The study also examined teacher perceptions.

After reviewing other qualitative research designs, I decided in favor of the basic qualitative study. A basic qualitative study is flexible and is used to study a real-world problem in the field, featuring participants' experiences and perceptions (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). A basic qualitative study design with interviews only was used to explore how middle school teachers are using PBIS instructional strategies to engage and support students and middle school teachers' perceptions of PBIS to engage students in the classroom.

Participants

The participants within this basic qualitative study consisted of all academic core

teachers in the chosen site. According to Adams (2014), any case study revolves around individuals or a specific group. The participants of this basic qualitative study were chosen based on the following criteria: certified teacher, core content teacher, and their use of PBIS instructional strategies.

Determining the appropriate number of participants to use in a case study is critical to providing the data necessary to help answer the research questions. According to Rubin and Rubin (2012), the researcher does not need to recruit a large number of participants. In a phenomenological study, Zack (2013) sought to use 10 participants, but nine participants responded. Farrar's (2019) study on the perceptions of urban teachers regarding PBIS used nine participants with the target being 12. There was also a study by Scott (2018) where there were 15 interviews conducted over Classroom teachers' perception of the PBIS program in an inner city school. Educational research typically uses large numbers, but as Patton (2015) and Simons (2009) discussed, a researcher can gain much more in-depth information by using a smaller number of participants.

Realizing that the goal of qualitative research is to gather an in-depth, meaningful data sample, I sought 10 participants in the study. WMS is a school in north Texas. WMS has an approximate enrollment of 460 sixth-grade students. A total of 27 teachers teach at this site. Sixteen of those teachers teach core content from which I selected 10 teachers who teach core content, are certified, and use PBIS instructional strategies. The school is a sixth-grade campus that is separated from the seventh and eighth grade level of the middle school. Table 2 shows the teacher participants, years, and content areas they

teach.

Table 2

Teacher Experience and Content Area

Participants	Years of Experience	Content Area
1 P1	15	Science
2 P2	11	Science
3 P3	6	Social Studies
4 P4	5	English
5 P5	15	English
6 P6	4	English
7 P7	6	English
8 P8	5	Math
9 P9	6	Science

Gaining Access

The procedure for gaining access to the participants required obtaining written permission from the district. To obtain permission, an explanation of the research study and objectives, including the requirements for the participants was provided (see Creswell, 2014; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Once I gained institutional review board (IRB) approval (04-02-21-0541440) and permission was gained from the district official, I attended weekly PLC meetings following the guidelines of the Center of Disease Control (CDC). During that time, an explanation was provided of the research study

objectives as related to the teacher perceptions and concerns as well as any foreseen with the implementation of the instructional strategies. After providing the basis for the study, I issued a request for participation voluntarily.

After participant selection, to establish a researcher-participant working relationship, I held a pre study meeting following the guideline of the CDC with the group of participants to answer any questions or concerns the participants may have had. I informed participants of the 60-minute interviews (see Creswell, 2014; Yin, 2014) with notetaking and audio recording. I informed participants that they could discontinue participation at any time (see Creswell, 2014).

Ethical Considerations

I took numerous steps to protect the rights of the participants, such as completion of National Institutes of Health training, confidentiality, informed consent, and protection from harm was used for the study. The precautions included approval from the Walden University IRB and provided all participants with a detailed description of the study to address the issue of informed consent. Protection from harm and equitable treatment was emphasized to develop trust and to support the researcher-participant relationship (Creswell, 2014; Yin, 2014). Each participant received a consent form and voluntary participation was emphasized (see Yin, 2014). I also informed the participants that they could discontinue participation at any time (see Creswell, 2014).

Data Collection

According to Merriam and Tisdell (2015), an effective basic qualitative study

requires flexibility to address real-life phenomena based on participants' experiences and perceptions. To address the research for this study, the data was collected from semi structured interviews. The data was only used to look for evidence of implementation of PBIS instructional strategies and student engaged instruction to address achievement of the Texas Essential Skills. This exploration may help determine what PBIS instructional strategies teachers use and teachers' perception of using them to increase student engagement during instructional time.

The recommended timeframe for interviews is 60 minutes to allow for audio recordings, directions, and asking probing questions as well as to maintain clarity and gain rich responses (Creswell, 2014; Yin, 2014). When following a protocol, Yin (2014) explained shorter case study interviews as a viable option when focused on a specific area. The study focused on PBIS instructional strategies; therefore, a shorter timeframe was suitable.

Interviews allow for an in-depth view of the perceptions and the practices of the participants. Yin (2014) stated that interviews are important to a basic qualitative study because questions developed by the researcher answer the questions *how what*, and *why*. The design of the interview questions was derived from the PBIS framework and related literature of the study (see Appendix A).

The justification for using interviews aligns with the framework for the study. Creswell (2014), Merriam and Tidwell (2016), and Yin (2014) all suggested that conducting interviews will allow for an in-depth look to view the participants'

perceptions and experiences. The interview data targeted specific topics of this study and allowed for an insightful look into the perceptions, attitudes, and obstacles if any, for this study.

I designed interview questions with the intent of addressing the research questions for the study. This was an opportunity to engage in a purposeful dialogue and obtain rich in-depth views of the participants' perceptions, practices, and obstacles about the topic, which is the purpose of the study. I used the interviews to explore how middle school teachers are using PBIS instructional strategies to engage and support students and their perceptions of PBIS to engage students in the classroom. Additionally, Creswell (2014) and Merriam and Tisdell (2016) believed that the use of interview data will offer an insightful look into attitudes, values, and perceived obstacles.

I designed interview questions (see Appendix A) with the intent of addressing the research questions for the study. The interview questions addressed any concerns, practices, and obstacles perceived by the teachers that directly affect the implementation of PBIS instructional strategies to engage and support students in the classroom. According to Creswell (2014), Merriam and Tisdell (2016), and Yin (2014), interviews are an important source of data for a basic qualitative study that offers rich in-depth data collection. The research questions were designed using the RQs for the study as a guide. The interview questions were aligned to allow for sufficient data to answer RQ1 and RQ2.

I requested written permission from the district before collecting and recording

data. Once IRB permission was granted, due to the pandemic, I requested a Zoom staff meeting to ensure all staff members were safe and I requested permission to explain the study. Once the staff meeting was called, I explained the study and that I needed 10 participants to respond through email. I thanked the principal and staff for the opportunity to explain and requested their participation in the study. Once I received the first 10 emails, I notified the campus of the numeric goal of participants met. I then thanked everyone who emailed or was considering participation in the study. I gave participants pseudonyms 1 through 10: the first participant was 1, and the rest followed in sequence through 10. I then met with Participants 1–5 at a specific time and date to further explain the study, receive consent, and explain confidentiality and the ability to withdraw at any time. I repeated this process with Participants 6–10. All participants were allowed to meet in person, following current CDC and Prevention guidelines, or meet virtually. One participant chose not to participate. After obtaining the consent of all nine participants, I used Zoom to set up individual interview times and dates, and I put the dates and times on the interview schedule (see Appendix B). Interviews were conducted after school and/or during the weekend. I used the following week as alternate days for any participant who needed to reschedule. The semi structured interviews consisted of a series of audio-recorded interview questions no longer than 60-minutes. Once interviews were completed, I emailed each participant to review and offer changes or modifications to check for accuracy. Once the transcriptions were verified, I downloaded the Zoom recordings to a password-protected computer or flash drive that will be in a locked

cabinet and then disposed of after 5 years. After all data had been collected, analyzed, and presented, the flash drive and all corresponding data will be deleted after 5 years.

For consistency of the interview process, an interview question protocol was developed (see Appendix A). As suggested by Wiles and Bondi (2014), the interview questions were developed from the research questions from the necessity to ensure fidelity and alignment of the implementation of instructional strategies (see Appendix A). To record the interviews, an iPhone app and Zoom audio recording was used to record each participant then transferred to a flash drive.

To ensure credibility and validity, consistency in data collection methods must be of the greatest importance (Creswell, 2014; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). This system for tracking data included the best practices (Creswell, 2014). Therefore, the system for tracking data from the interviews included the interview transcripts and a reflective journal. Upon completion of the semi structured interviews, I transcribed the recordings and code the transcription. According to Saldana (2015), a code describes a word or phrase that is symbolically assigned a meaning. I used three codes, open, axial, and selective, to disseminate the data. In the open coding process, I broke down the data into headings, concepts, or subheadings (see Merriam, 2015).

According to Merriam (2015), the next step is axial coding. During this process, I categorized and grouped like properties from data. In doing this, I strategically reassembled data that was split in the initial coding process to then form categories. After open and axial coding, I used selective coding with a Word program on my computer to

decipher patterns. I then grouped the categories into patterns, coloring coding them in search of themes. Merriam posited that selective coding is when a theme is developed from the study.

Gaining Access

Before any data was collected, the researcher requested a written letter of agreement from the district (see Appendix C). The request included access to the participants during their weekly PLCs and permission to conduct interviews. I sought approval from Walden University's IRB. Once approval was granted, I met with the principal of the location site and explain the goals and procedures of the study as well as met with the participants. I ensured that the participants knew that participation was voluntary. The informed consent letter explained the procedures and informed the participants that all information will be kept confidential, anonymous, and in a locked file cabinet. Assuring the participants the information disclosed in a relationship of trust is of the utmost importance (Davis et al., 2017). The informed consent letter also addressed issues of discomfort/dangers and reiterate the voluntary nature of the study and withdrawal of the study was at any time permissible.

Role of the Researcher

I have been in the field of education for 25 years, 20 years as a teacher and 2 years as an instructional coach, 1 year as a dean of instruction, and 2 years as an assistant principal. I currently serve as an assistant principal in the same district as the subject school and was previously the dean for the subject school. I do not currently have a

professional role at the subject school. According to Stake (2013), the role of the researcher is the key instrument in examining all the documents, observing behavior, interviewing, and collecting data. My role as a researcher in this basic qualitative study consisted of collecting data through semi structured interviews then analyzing this data. I sought to have all participants offer candid perceptions of their classroom instructional practices in connection with PBIS instructional strategies. My professional relationships with the participants at the research site included collaborating with team members, common planning, and participation in staff events. Roles and relationships may affect data collection but on a limited basis. Furthermore, participants could opt out at any time during the study. Biases potentially influencing data collection may have included poorly written or skewed interview questions and reflexivity, where participants respond according to what he or she believes the researcher wants to hear (see Yin, 2014). An additional bias potentially may have been researcher-related as I am familiar with the curriculum and potentially some of the participants and had to remain cognizant of personal bias. Merriam (2015) posited that human bias is impossible to preclude in a basic qualitative study. Member checks and the reflective journal helped mitigate this. The limitation that existed was that participants may have chosen not to respond accurately during data collection procedures as well. To reduce the potential of reflexive or biased responses, I reiterated that participant responses remain confidential, and privacy will be protected.

Personal experiences or biases related to the topic connect to my current work

with PBIS as a teacher-leader. Because I have had teacher-training responsibilities in the past with PBIS and have been a PBIS trainer, maintaining a bias-free view was important in determining concerns and barriers, without consideration to personal experience. To reduce the potential of bias, interview transcripts were reviewed by participants and member checks were conducted. Additionally, as recommended by Yin (2014), I used reflective practices as I analyzed data to ensure objectivity and reporting of the data only, free of any researcher opinion or bias.

Data Analysis

I interviewed the participants via Zoom and audio-recorded each interview and transcribe the recordings. After all, the interviews were completed and confirmed, I downloaded them to my password-protected computer. Then, using Microsoft Word, I transcribed each interview and emailed the transcript to each participant to check for accuracy (Merriam, 2015). During this time, I allowed 3 days for each participant to review and respond with changes or corrections to the transcriptions. If no changes or corrections were needed, I began the analysis of the interview data.

Data analysis involves moving deeper into understanding and making an interpretation of the larger meaning (Creswell, 2014). I analyzed the participants' interview transcripts by printing them in a secured room at my home. This room had a lock, for which I am the only person who has a key. For the semistructured interviews, I assigned participant identifiers (e.g. P1, P2, P3) to ensure confidentiality. I posted enlarged copies of the participant's responses on the wall of the secured room. Once the

responses were posted, using multiple colors, I divided the responses into patterns and themes (Creswell, 2014; Yin, 2014). I then focused on the interpretations of the participants' use of PBIS instructional strategies for student engagement, and the participants' perceptions of PBIS to assist in student engagement. According to Creswell (2014), Merriam and Tisdell (2016), and Yin (2014), data analysis also requires organization, time, and reflection.

Coding Data

Creswell (2014) and Yin (2014) recommended an inductive process designed to narrow data into specific themes. Coding is the process of breaking down the data into themes (Merriam, 2015). The coding took place after each component of data was acquired from each participant. The coding of the participants' responses to this study was broken down into various steps.

I used open, axial, and selective coding methods. Open coding allowed me to reduce paragraphs and sentences to phrases or single words. Axial coding allowed me to search for relationships among the open codes. Then, the use of selective coding allowed me to search for patterns among the axial codes for relationships and themes. To do this, I asked each participant a set of interview questions about the PBIS instructional strategies being used in the classroom. I read interviewees' responses, transcribed them, and coded the data to allow for themes and subthemes to emerge (Creswell, 2014; Yin, 2014). According to Creswell (2014), segmenting and labeling any overlapping responses and differing responses so that data can be organized into broader themes helps in making

sense of the data. After transcribing the coding, I analyzed how the data answered the RQs.

Evidence of Quality

To develop evidence of quality and procedures and to reduce biases, I used various methods to support accuracy and credibility (Creswell, 2014; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Yin, 2014). I analyzed the data from the interviews after member checks and reviewed my reflective journal. If common themes are established from the interviews, the process adds validity to the study (Creswell, 2014). Member checking allows the participants an opportunity to correct wrong interpretations, volunteer information during the playing back process, places all participants on the record with their responses, provides participants an opportunity to assess the accuracy of data, and it allows an opportunity to summarize preliminary results of data (Merriam, 2015). I monitored my subjective perspectives and biases by keeping a reflective journal (Lodico et al., 2010). Using different strategies enhances a researcher's ability to assess the accuracy of findings as well as convince the reader of the accuracy (Creswell, 2014). If any discrepant or negative data was collected, I recorded and analyzed it in the same fashion as all data.

Discrepant Cases

Procedures for dealing with discrepant cases according to Creswell (2014) and Yin (2014) generally include the accurate reporting of any inconsistencies or discrepancies in the data to reduce bias and support credibility. Discrepant cases for this

study could be my bias as an educator, relationships with participants (teachers), and years in the educational profession.

Data Analysis Results

As recommended by Creswell (2014) and Yin (2014), data needs to be narrowed into specific themes through an inductive process. Breaking down data into themes is coding (Merriam, 2015). To support credibility according to Creswell (2014) and Yin (2014), trustworthiness must be established so the results of the study are viewed as valid and reliable. The credibility measure used in this study was member checking. In general, member checking is especially important because it legitimizes the responses by the participants substantiating them, supporting trustworthiness.

Following the completion of the data collection, data analysis occurred and took approximately five weeks. Participant responses received similar analysis to identify trends, patterns, and themes apparent in the data. The initial analysis took place from close readings of the transcriptions and underlining and highlighting any findings that applied to the problem of the study and its RQ. I then conducted open, axial, and selective coding to determine themes. The process used is outlined below.

Coding

I conducted a thematic analysis of interview data using an open coding process to condense paragraphs to sentences and sentences to words/phrases or single words. I then organized similar data using code words/phrases based on related categories from a conceptual lens such as involvement, dedication, commitment, accountability, and

training or lack thereof (Table 3). Once open coding was completed, axial coding was initiated in the third phase. During this phase, I searched the open codes for relationships among the codes which was followed by searching for patterns within the axial categories for relationships. A sample is shown in Table 3.

Table 3

A Sample Table Showing Axial and Open Coding

Axial code	Open codes	Participant code	Data sample from interviews
Monitoring Student	Greeting students at the door, checks for understanding,	P1	“I can gauge their attitude when they come in.”
Academia and Behavior	understanding,	P5	“I do CFU, often throughout the lesson.”
Peer Collaboration	Think time-write-share, peer language, pairing students	P4	“I put a timer on so the students know how much time they have to think and write before we share out with a partner.”
		P6	“I allow the students to explain in their own words how they comprehend a concept.”
		P8	“Usually, I have a few students that understand the lesson and I

			pair them with struggling students to discuss the process.”
Pre-teaching	Front loading, building background knowledge, modeling	P1	“Hey, let’s go back to this topic, and let’s find out where we went wrong.”
		P2	“We read a short excerpt and discuss new topics to fill in the gaps about different cultures.”
		P3	“I model new skills for the students, and they watch and take notes, then I ask questions about the model.”
Building Relationships	Build relationships, parent calls, share each’s culture	P3	“Early on I call parents to build a rapport with them, and students realize I call for good and not so good things.”
		P7	“I allow for each student to share their culture when we discuss things they know details about.”
Relevance	Relatable lessons, community involvement	P3	“I like to relate things to the students’ real life by including

			examples when appropriate to the jobs of their parents.”
		P9	“I involve the parents and community as often as I can when we introduce or learn about new topics and concepts.”
Quality	Immediate	P1	“I like giving immediate
Feedback	feedback, specific		feedback and reminding the
	feedback, glows and		students of the process steps
	grows	P5	when they forget.”
			“Giving specific feedback to
			students on their paper or
			suggestion for corrections is how
		P7	I like to give feedback.”
			“I give 2 glow and 2 grows to
			lessen the feeling of negative
			feedback.”

Lastly, selective coding was conducted as I attempted to decipher themes during this phase. The following themes (Table 4) stemmed from the open and axial coded data,

effective environment (Theme 1), systems of support (Theme 2), and learning leakages (Theme 3), giving me the selective code student success.

Table 4

A Sample Theme Development Table

Theme	Concepts/patterns within themes
1- Effective Environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitoring Student Academia and Behavior • Relevance
2- Systems for Support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pre-teaching • Building Relationships
3- Learning Leakages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Peer Collaboration • Quality Feedback

Theme 1: Effective Environment

Theme 1 reflected student surroundings that emerged from data on teacher responses about the use of PBIS instructional strategies to facilitate instruction and engage students in learning. The following two subthemes emerged from the participant's responses to determine theme 1: monitoring student academia and behavior and relevance. The combination of these two patterns determined the theme, Effective Environment. The details of how the patterns were determined and combined are below.

Monitoring Student Academia and Behavior

An example of monitoring student academia and behavior was through observations from the beginning of the day and while the students worked. Three participants (P1, P3, and P4) that greeted the students at the door echoed each other stating, "When I greet them at the door, I can see what kind of day they are having before

class even starts. This way I can foresee an issue from the beginning.” The participants used active monitoring as they walked the room to observe their students while working in groups or independent work. By engaging activities for the students, such as engagement through technology, hands-on activities, differentiated resources based on learning styles, and/or job assignments based on preferences, strengths, or classroom needs. They (P2, P5, P8, P6, P7, and P9) had a consensus that “watching the students work together was two-fold, by seeing their interaction with others, they could see if the student was having a good or bad day and they could determine if they were comprehending the group work.

Relevance

Most of the participants shared how they use relevance to help students take interest and to better understand concepts, most of the time having to fill in gaps from lack of exposure, by frontloading (giving the background information) with students when they do not have the background knowledge on a topic. They did this in various ways, through videos (i.e., Ted Talks), gallery walks, virtual field trips, jigsaw reading, etc. One participant (P5) expressed, “I am teaching in an intercity at a Title I school so that they are lacking exposure which does affect their educational experience and their learning, so I try my best to fill in those gaps,” which was a common pattern among the participants.

There were other techniques used to encourage students and promote learning as well. When allowing students to have hands-on opportunities to engage with the learning

was found very helpful. A few of the participants (P2, P3, and P4) stated that they use KWL charts which stand for: what you know, what you want to know, and what you learned, or they use BDA charts which stand for before you read, during reading, and after reading. They also stated, “These tools engage students while they are doing an assignment and require them to draw on prior knowledge.” The teachers all noticed that to get the student’s attention and excitement about new concepts, they first had to make the information relevant or expose them to knowledge (in some instances) they were absent from.

Theme 2: Systems for Support

Theme 2 was derived from similar responses repeating the same notion that the teachers wanted to prep students by pre-teaching and giving confidence to them by building relationships. These combinations of patterns determined theme 2: Systems for Support. The details of how these patterns were determined and combined are below.

Preteaching.

When prepping for student success on different concepts, teachers plan on maximizing the time block they have each period. To do this, the data showed that teachers use different methods to provide the needed support for the students. One of those methods was that teachers prefer to work out the problems/questions beforehand to anticipate questions or misconceptions. Participant P8 said, “It helps me prepare the lessons better.” The majority of the participants modeled the skills for the students and had them take notes to use as a guide when they work independently. One of the

participants (P1) commented, “I like to give them process steps to follow so it’s easier for them to go back and check the steps before asking for help when they get stuck.”

The organization of the lessons was geared towards this process of pre-teaching so the students would have a map of the lesson. For example, P6 commented, “I post daily agenda so the students know what we are doing if they get lost.” Participants P3 and P5 both stated, “As I guide the students, I use keywords for them to follow along with the sequences of events which allows the students to stay on track and engaged.” This is done with intentional questions to verify if pacing, clarity, and comprehension have met their intended goal.

Building Relationships

Even though teachers encourage collaborative efforts between students, they also shared how they work to develop personal (through professional interaction) relationships with their students. The data showed that participants engaged with students by giving them what they wanted in return, respect, and cooperation. “More than anything, I want my students to know that they can come to me about anything. Yes, my content is important, but if they don’t know I care, they won’t care.” Participant P1 stated.

Reassurance through the teacher-student relationship was evident in the data as the participants confessed the efforts made to know their students. Participant P2 stated, “I find out what motivates my students. I take time out to learn who they are and their aspirations.” When interviewing the participants, their faces were all smiles when they spoke of their interactions with their students. The data also revealed the teachers try to

incorporate as much of the students' cultures into their lessons as possible. Participant P5 declared, "By incorporating their culture in the lesson, it gives them a sense of pride and makes them feel as if they already know at least a little bit about the concept."

Theme 3: Learning Leakages

Theme 3 surfaced as the findings indicated all participants' affirmed learning was happening through collaborative efforts. Similar to the main theme Systems for Support, in which teachers sought to build relationships with the students, creating an environment where students can learn from each other is equally important along with feedback from the teacher. Two subthemes emerged from the participants' responses peer collaboration and quality feedback. These two subthemes combined determined the theme: Learning Leakages. The details of how these patterns were determined and combined are below.

Peer Collaboration

The majority of the participants shared they use peer collaboration for the students to discuss, share, and learn from each other when working on new concepts and/or to see things differently for already learned ones. Through collaboration, students develop a variety of skills. To name a few as believed by P2, they develop patience, listening to hear and not respond, and different ways of thinking. She said, "As the students are collaborating, I like to remind them that there is more than one way of seeing something and we all make mistakes, but listen to what your partner said and their rationale. How is it different from yours and does that difference make their answer incorrect or just a different way of seeing it?"

The participants shared that when putting students in collaborative groups, they try and ensure that the groups are based on needs when appropriate. Participant P3 expressed, “during the collaborative work time when students are working with partners, I like to pair a struggling student with a non-struggling student. I give them guiding sentence stems to use when questioning each other to aid in the discussion.” Other participants admitted to using guiding stem questions as well as they enriched the academic conversations. Participant P5 argued, “When my students stay true to the stems, they are more confident when asking questions and have the vocabulary to answer. They begin requiring their partners to go back to the stems. It’s great to see them grow.”

Quality Feedback

Data indicated that all participants used immediate feedback to communicate with their students. What was noticed was that learning was happening for both the teachers and the students through this dialogue. Participant P1 stated, “Sometimes I ask a student, ‘Show me how you did that. Talk me through it.’ Because sometimes they explain it differently using the same steps and it makes it easier for their classmates to understand.” One of the participants P9 shared, “I like to reteach concepts quickly so the students did not practice the concepts wrong.” Giving feedback quickly allows the students to share their thinking and fix misconceptions.

The data also revealed that the participants took into account the needs of the students when they gave feedback. Participant P5 declared, “Different needs of my students do not alter the feedback given, only the approach.” Most teachers affirmed that

they take into account the students' individual educational plans when they give feedback. The participants explained that when the feedback seems to confuse the students, they try and explain it differently, "Sometimes I give the feedback through a story to make it plain to them," says P7. Most participants verbalized they try and have mini-conferences with their students on certain concepts to ensure the students are understanding the feedback given. Participant P2 shared:

On high leverage standards, I like to call the students up individually to let them ask me questions about the feedback if they have any. If they don't have any questions, I ask them to tell me what the feedback given means. That way I know they understand. I don't want to leave anything to chance on these standards.

The participants' data made it evident that student success was their top goal. Participant P1 made it clear, "Before my students leave each class period, I make sure I answer any lingering questions so they understand before they leave." That statement was echoed by the majority of the participants.

Discussion of Findings

This study was designed to explore teachers' use of PBIS instructional strategies to engage and support students. The study was guided by two research questions: (RQ1) How do middle school teachers use PBIS instructional strategies to engage students in the classroom? (RQ2) What are middle school teachers' perceptions of PBIS to engage students? I analyzed thirteen interview responses that aligned with RQ1 and RQ2 that were used to guide the interviews (see Appendix A).

The data revealed the teachers' use of PBIS instructional strategies to engage students in the classroom through differentiated instruction, peer collaboration, giving immediate feedback, and providing engaging activities. The data also revealed a positive perception of PBIS instructional strategies from the teachers. However, the teachers collectively only used one PBIS instructional strategy consistently. Below is the explanation of findings as they aligned to research questions.

RQ1: The Use PBIS Instructional Strategies to Engage Students

Research question 1: *How do middle school teachers use PBIS instructional strategies to engage students in the classroom?* In focusing on RQ1, the findings from the analysis of interview data implied all teachers used PBIS instructional strategies in the classroom; however, they only used one strategy to engage students.

Interview data showed all teachers were aware of the constructs of PBIS per their responses. During the interviews, the teachers shared how they monitored their students, scaffolded material, modeled the assignments, and reinforced positive behaviors to provide the instruction needed for their students to achieve and grow in their academia (McKellar, 2017). Participant P4 used volunteers to repeat what the students were to do before she turned them loose to work independently, then asked questions to make sure everyone understood. Three key principles vital to creating productive learning environments are: being proactive—developing positive and respectful school climates, being fair—making clear and appropriate expectations, and being scientifically based—using data to guarantee fairness and equity for all students. The data demonstrated the

knowledge of the teachers' expertise in their content areas. The interviews revealed they took the time to learn and build relationships with their students to offer them the best academic experience possible as all teachers expressed as much through their responses. There was a lack in how to accomplish engagement other than through turn and talk or think-pair-share. There were missed opportunities by the teachers to engage students with other strategies as there was never a mention of another engaging instructional strategy used.

Theme 1: Effective Environment

Theme 1, teacher-student relationships, emerged from data on teacher responses about using PBIS instructional strategies to engage students in learning. All the participants conveyed they want the students to feel safe in their classrooms and comfortable enough to take risks answering questions especially when they were unsure of the answers. Participants P1, P3, and P4 did this by greeting the students at the door while the others asked questions about the weekend or good day/bad day "by a show of hands..." While discussing student engagement and the reluctance of some students, the participants suggested that making the atmosphere of their classroom inviting helped to relax the students where they "wanted to engage with each other." Participant P6 offered incentives for participating such as getting to sit in a different seat, the student and a partner being able to sit in a different area of the room, or 10 points added to a homework assignment. Participant P6 said, "if they know it's no penalty for getting the answer wrong and are rewarded for just trying, they perform."

According to many of the participants, once they have established a rapport and built relationships with the students, teaching was easy. They observed the students wanting to be in class even if they did not do well on the assignments, at least they would try and accepted help when offered. Participant P1 stated:

We don't know what students go through at home; at least we can give them what we would want from an adult. It's easy to care about them. [Laughing participant P1 continued] You might not always like their behavior, but that you can correct with the right relationship.

The participants affirmed that an effective environment was necessary for learning to take place.

Theme 2: Systems for Support

From similar responses affirming maximizing student achievement, the theme of systems for support emerged. Overall, the participants had systems in place to help guide their work and help determine what steps to take next. One participant, P8, stated:

I would survey students about particular things in the lesson to see who was getting it and who was lost. Depending on the number of students that were understanding or not, I would have information stations and have captains of the table. And the ones that understood and could explain that particular process step would be the captains, and the other students would visit whatever table they needed to if they were stuck on that part. This worked well with science, and I would imagine it would work with math too.

The teachers spoke candidly of their experiences and shared how when the students are aware they would get support from the teacher, they performed much better and they turned in more work. Participant P9 shared,

My students know if they are stuck on a problem they had for homework because I skip around on the question/problems I have them to complete, they can come in the next morning and get help working through that question and complete another one similar, and I'll grade that one.

Another participant, P7, said, "When the students know the process of my systems, they no longer see it as a treat."

All participants through their responses conveyed how they use some type of system to help support the learning in their classroom and help their students achieve.

RQ2: Teachers' Perceptions of PBIS

Research question 2: *What are middle school teachers' perceptions of PBIS to engage students?* In focusing on RQ2, information was obtained about the teachers' perceptions of PBIS to engage students. The findings revealed teachers' perceptions of PBIS to engage students to be affirmative according to their responses. The teachers shared how peer-to-peer collaboration was an effective tool to use when introducing new concepts. They also conveyed that this helped develop cooperative learning skills with the students; a skill that proved to be vital as the year progressed. Teachers expressed how audio, visual, and kinesthetic instruction helps to maximize student learning and engagement as it addresses multiple learning styles. A consensus was formed that

learning was inevitable when the students were allowed to converse with one another with the teacher being the facilitator; knowledge that might not ordinarily arise surfaced, based on the verbal responses.

The knowledge base that PBIS instructional strategies are beneficial to students alone is not enough. Teachers must seek out which of the strategies best fit the instruction at the time; gaps in the practice occur if they do not. According to Sugai and Horner (2006), the PBIS framework should be integrated with planned instruction to support behavior, student social competence, decision making, and academic achievement. For PBIS instructional strategies to be effective, they must be implemented and practiced with fidelity (Sugai & Horner, 2006; Sugai & Simonsen, 2012).

Based on the verbal responses of the interviews, I found that the teachers at WMS need PD on how to effectively integrate PBIS instructional strategies in their instruction. The findings from this study can be used to address this gap by providing research-based results that teachers can use to assist them in writing and planning their lessons to implement PBIS instructional strategies to engage students.

Theme 3: Learning Leakages

In response to the data of teachers' perceptions of PBIS instructional strategies to engage students in learning, the findings revealed the participants were aware of learning leakages and used them to their advantage. The last theme that emerged from the data was learning leakages. Each participant offered some sort of model for the students before they allowed them to work independently on any part of an assignment. The

model either came from the teacher or a peer (depending on the lesson). Showing differentiation, a term meaning matching different teaching styles to tailor to the needs of students, allows for success for students with different learning styles (Ismajli, & Imami-Morina, 2018). The participants suggested that learning can come from hearing the information in multiple ways and from multiple people even the students' peers. One participant, P4, stated, "I let them work with a shoulder partner if the partner understands. Sometimes the verbiage they use is a little different, and it works." Many of the participants conveyed after they shared out that they ask the students what they heard and how what someone said offers insight or changes the perspective. Participant P5 said, "By asking questions after sharing, it allows me to see the depth of the understanding they have. I love seeing the lightbulb come on when they get it." All the other participants, P1, P2, P3, P6, P7, P8, and P9, had similar responses as they too allow students to work in pairs sharing out with the group or just with each other.

Discrepant Cases

I found no discrepant cases during the data analysis process. According to Creswell (2014) and Yin (2014), discrepant cases would consist of data that vary from identified patterns or themes. In my analysis of the interview data, I found that all teachers understood how to use PBIS instructional strategies to engage students.

Conclusion

This study was conducted to explore how middle school teachers used PBIS instructional strategies to engage students. The perspectives of the teachers were

comprised of various methods of how to best use PBIS instructional strategies within their classroom, but they lacked PD on the different PBIS instructional strategies that worked best with different activities to engage the students. Considering the results of the study, a 3-day training on PBIS instructional strategies was designed. The training consists of hands-on training of three different PBIS instructional strategies and planning time for teachers to incorporate the strategies into their lessons and practice their delivery of the lesson.

Summary

In this section, the process of conducting interviews is as detailed as qualitative approaches to answer the research questions. An explanation detailing the analysis of data was presented. The findings offered experiences and perceptions of teachers and their use of PBIS instructional strategies to engage students in the classroom. The results of the findings were then used to develop a 3-day training on PBIS instructional strategies. Section 3 of this basic project study provides details on the project rationale, timeline, and goals.

Section 3: The Project

Through this basic qualitative study, I sought to determine how middle school teachers were using PBIS to engage and support students in the classroom and teachers' perceptions of PBIS to engage students in the classroom. In this project study, I focused on issues of student engagement and support as well as teachers' perceptions of PBIS in the classroom. Based on the results and current literature, I determined that the project that best aligned with the study was PD and training curricula and materials. According to Herman (2013) and Musandy (2018), to improve practice, research should consist of actionable outcomes based on analytical data. The components of this project included (a) purpose, (b) goals, (c) learning outcomes, (d) timelines, (e) implementations and evaluation plans, and (f) hour-by-hour details of the training. A format for training and a sample agenda is contained in the artifact. The 3-day training consists of 1 day to explore teacher perceptions, 1 day of training on particular PBIS instructional strategies, and 1 day of collaborative content planning with peer-lesson demonstrations followed by reflections. Section 3 provides the rationale, review of literature, project description, project evaluation plan, and project implications.

Rationale

The rationale for this choice of the project stems from current literature in support of ongoing PD on new strategies before being required to implement with fidelity (see Hirsh et al., 2015). The problem of the study, which included middle school teachers' use of PBIS instructional strategies to engage students and their perceptions of the use of

PBIS to engage students in the classroom, received primary consideration as the basis of this project. The teachers of WMS were trained on implementing PBIS but were allowed to integrate PBIS using their preferred teaching style. There was a mandate by the school district to implement PBIS instructional strategies, but there were no specific instructional methods required. Thus, there was a gap created in the practice. In my project study, I examined and addressed the data analysis with the intent to develop, encourage, and support student engagement through PD.

PD is the best method for presenting the study to inform the principal at WMS on how the use PBIS instructional strategies to engage students. The design of the project connects directly to adult learning and addresses six characteristics described in Jordan's (2016) work. The necessities to support adult learning as listed by Jordan are (a) the need to know, (b) the reality of self-concept, (c) in the moment experience, (d) the will to learn, (e) opportunities to learning, and (f) internal motivation. These aspects have been considered in this project by addressing the learner's needs as a teacher facilitator expressed personally. The findings, presented in the PD can be used to assist the principal to understand what teachers may lack in implementing PBIS instructional processes (see Skiba et al., 2016; Werts et al., 2014).

Related research and analysis led to the development of a framework for a 3-day PD to support teachers in the process of implementing new strategies. Teachers may acquire the skills needed to implement new strategies with fidelity from a better understanding of the processes suggested in the instructional practice of PBIS. The

training also offers opportunities for peer collaboration and lesson planning as well as an opportunity to reflect on teacher experience learned through the process to improve instruction.

Review of the Literature

According to Creswell (2014), qualitative researchers explore complex issues and the perceptions of their underlying assumptions. A literature review was conducted to determine how the PBIS instructional strategies were used to impact student engagement. I determined these categories, noted from the data analysis of the semistructured interviews, best exhibited the thematic scope of the project: (a) ongoing content-specific training, (b) PLCs, and (c) deliverables and outcomes. I conducted a broad literature search to provide direction for this project by using electronic archives from the Walden University Library. The databases used for researching literature were the following: EBSCOhost, Education Resources Information Center (ERIC), ProQuest, and Thoreau. Terms connected to my literature search included *professional development*, *active professional development*, *in-service training*, *active participation in professional development*, *content-specific*, *peer collaboration*, *collaboration team approach*, *benefits of teacher collaboration*, *approaches to teacher collaboration for integrating PBIS*, and *professional learning communities (PLCs)*. The literature review provided evidence to support the 3-day PD training for this project. The design of the conceptual framework uses the development of knowledge and skills since the PD includes identifying different

learning styles of teachers before the expected implementation of new instructional strategies.

On-Going Content-Specific Professional Development

The first part of my action plan is an ongoing content-specific PD on integrating PBIS instructional strategies with each core content to address the needs of the teachers at WMS. On-going content-specific training refers to continued training on one type of curriculum versus PD on administrative issues. Upon completion of my investigation of teachers' perceptions of their use of PBIS instructional strategies to engage students, I concluded that teachers needed PD on the lack of consistency in the application of PBIS instructional strategies. Addressing one specific type of curriculum during PD allows for teachers to direct their thinking towards their instructional patterns, objectives, implementations, and assessments as it pertains to the rigor and goal of the curriculum. Addressing the use of instructional methods is necessary for determining the instructional support needed to affect positive student learning (Rivkin & Schiman, 2015). According to Bautista et al. (2017) and Fenton (2017), through the approach of on-going and content-specific training, teachers gain the support of the fidelity of teaching because teachers experience sample lessons, pay attention to sequence, and learn the rationale behind the design.

According to Bautista et al.'s (2017) study for effective teacher learning, PD requires specific features. These features contain the consistency of equal parts such as duration, group participation, content-focused learning, active/collaborative learning

opportunities, and coherence. When PD is being considered, the primary goal is centered on benefits connected to student learning (Bautista et al., 2017). PD is intended to provide professional growth and increase knowledge about a given topic. For teachers to invest their time and effort, they need to see the relevance in the PD being offered (Avidov-Ungar, 2016; Opfer & Pedder, 2011; Rutter, 2017). Informed instruction and content knowledge have a positive effect on student learning through PD (Bautista et al., 2017). According to Filipe et al. (2014) and Mendoza (2018), PD can provide activities for the teacher to enhance knowledge, accountability, instruction, skills, communication, and technology. When teachers know the PD relates to their content, they are more open and have positive intentions when attending. Although to provide best practices for teachers, PD needs to be investigated to afford the best resources for teachers to promote learning and consistent instructional practices (Hirsh et al., 2015).

In another study that parallels Bautista et al.'s (2017) findings, Fenton (2017) conducted a study with 191 teachers within 10 districts seeking information on PD for technology integration using iPads. Fenton's (2017) study found that content-specific PD on technology integration significantly improved teacher knowledge of the content and student achievement. The results from the study concluded that when teachers had the time and opportunity to learn, collaborate, and plan with the taught strategies for implementation, the outcome from the PD was very high.

Based on the study by De Neve et al. (2015) to help teachers better understand how to implement intervention processes, ongoing content-specific PD is necessary, thus

having a positive effect on instructional practices. Content-specific training gives educators the ability to use different strategies and gain valuable knowledge in knowing how they can use integrated content instruction in their classrooms (Mendoza, 2018). It builds confidence and energizes teachers who are struggling with their content. Providing ongoing content-specific PD at the study school, WMS could assist teachers in how to implement PBIS instructional strategies in their lessons to improve their instruction.

A study by Castillo et al. (2016) sought to obtain the relationship between PD training focused on the RTI and educators' beliefs about RTI implementation from educators in 34 schools (12 districts). A focused PD resulted in positive changes in data-based decisions when implementing RTI by educators. Content-specific training addresses a teacher's need to meet a student's need. PD training should address the individual needs of the campus as the needs may vary from campus to campus (Castillo et al., 2016). Thus, the models and modeling of activities should lead to effective practice as the individual needs of the teacher/campus are being met. Allowing teachers to participate in ongoing content-specific PD gives teachers the cognitive lift needed in the content to promote ultimate achievement from the students (Castillo et al., 2016; Davis et al., 2017). My project's design focuses on content-specific PD allowing for teachers to see the relevancy of the content and implementation strategies. Having ongoing content-specific PD will allow time for mastery by the teacher before being required to implement the strategies in the classroom, thus improving instructional practices (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017; Fenton, 2017; Jordan, 2016).

Professional Learning Communities (PLC)

Dufour et al. (2008) described a PLC as a group of teachers working together to plan lessons, discuss student progress, reflect on instructional/assessment strategies, and problem-solving. From the findings at the study site, the teachers could use PLCs to help guide their planning to implement PBIS instructional strategies consistently and effectively. Teachers benefit from the opportunity to plan together, bounce ideas off one another (receiving peer feedback), and collaborate to develop the best instructional plan for students (Jones & Thessin, 2017; Turner et al., 2018; Vanblaere & Devos, 2018). Turner et al. (2018), found that the communication between peers and team members improved because of the collaborative aspect of PLCs. Add summary and synthesis throughout the paragraph.

An overview of 82 literature sources on teacher collaboration was conducted by Vangrieken et al. (2015). They determined that there were benefits from teacher collaboration, and they range from improved instruction by the teacher to student achievement/learning. Collaboration from teachers aids in enhanced morale, increased motivation, better job performance as well as more support from both colleagues and administrators. As noted by the researchers, the whole school was positively affected when teachers collaborate. It not only brings about change in the academic performance of students, but it also positively changes the culture of the school (Vangrieken et al., 2015).

In a qualitative case study, Carreño and Hernandez Ortiz (2017) determined that teacher collaboration promotes research-based standards of instruction to enhance student learning. Five teachers and five mentors were interviewed by the researchers to examine their perceptions of a collaboration (coplanning) program (English proficiency) and teacher mentoring, implemented for 3 years. Posited by Carreño and Hernandez, the success of coplanning comes through teacher mentoring as teachers feel empowered. During collaborative planning, teachers are more willing to see and receive advice from their peers than from others outside this structure (Sun et al., 2016). Patterson et al. (2018) reported from their study on student interest in social studies and integrated content that lessons strengthened content as well as civic literacy of students through focused collaborating plans in motivation, depth of knowledge, and cross-curricular connections. Open dialogue amongst teachers aids in effective problem-solving and collaborating. According to Jones and Thessin (2017), peer support and collaboration are considered to be the top benefits of PLCs. These findings support the design for the my project.

When trying to obtain the best PD for teachers, it is recommended to consider the cognitive theory of learning. (2009) stated, “This theory focuses on the learner finding meaning in what is being taught and being able to apply the new information to examine previous experiences” (p. 21). Teachers and adult learners make connections with their content and with their learners (students). According to Grippen and Peters (1984), “The thinking person interprets sensations and gives meaning to the events that impinge upon

his consciousness” (p. 76). As teachers receive PD, districts hopefully are aiding them in being life-long learners with aspirations to inspire social change. Therefore, the primary goal as a learner is to make connections (Knowles et al., 2012). PD helps teachers to strive to be better; helping them build upon skills they already acquired and add new ones. Allowing the opportunity for teachers to collaborate during PLCs to connect with the learning and experience of others will enhance the session and improve teacher practices and student learning (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017; Werts et al., 2014). My project supports this notion as there is time built in for teachers to collaborate and create lesson plans using the strategies.

Although teacher collaboration is a benefit to the entire campus, collaboration is also a challenge for most schools (Ronfeldt et al., 2015). According to El-Bilawi and Nasser (2017), the challenges can stem from a lack of understanding of the purpose, a lack of teacher buy-in, or dissatisfaction with a particular training because of the lack of support or no follow-up. El-Bilawi and Nasser explored the challenges experienced by teachers when receiving training for the implantation of a new state-mandated initiative. Noted in the findings was little to no change in methods and strategies in the classroom from short-duration PD. They also found that the teachers resisted moving away from the traditional ways of doing things instead of adopting the new knowledge presented in the PD. Add summary/synthesis to connect back to your study.

Yuan and Zhang (2016) explored teacher collaboration in Chinese schools. This process is known as joint lesson planning. According to the research, a variety of

challenges are associated with the developmental process of teacher collaboration (i.e., superficial collaboration, homogeneity of teachers, and lack of structure). Finding the hoi polloi between sources and disciplines can help bridge the gap among content areas (Patterson et al., 2018). Posited by Patterson et al. (2018), one barrier to teacher collaboration is locating and incorporating sources. Another challenge for teacher collaboration is time and support. As suggested by Yuan and Zhang, the failure of teacher collaboration is attributed to the gap between teachers and administrators, and it stems from “insufficient collaborative time, ineffective school leadership, unfavorable accountability policy, and lack of collaborative professional culture” (p. 219). Add summary and synthesis throughout the paragraph to balance out the use of information from the literature with your own analysis. Develop a strong conclusion for the section.

Deliverables and Outcomes

For PD to have relevant attainability, there should be tangible tools for teachers to take with them to review and reflect upon (Carson & Dawson, 2016). These tools can be used as guidance for lesson planning and reminders of how and when to use the skills/strategies learned. Carson and Dawson (2016) and Hendricks et al. (2016) determined that for optimal engagement, participants require clearly stated and applicable outcomes. These tools can consist of lesson plans, checklists, reflective journals, implementation strategies, or goal setting. All participants, when attaining deliverables, add details jointly to ascertain the best results (Urban et al., 2017). According to Chandran et al. (2017) and Urban et al. (2017), the quality of the deliverables depends on

the depth of collaboration by the participants. The participants must put in the work to obtain the quality results they anticipate from the collaboration. The design for this project sets aside time for the participants to put in the work required with core teachers of like contents to collaborate. The participants will be able to create relevant deliverables to impact and improve instruction which will lead to an increase in student learning (El-Bilwai & Nasser, 2017; Shagrir, 2017). Three deliverables will be associated with the design of this project: (a) a reflective journal, (b) a checklist/lesson plans to self-monitor if all components of the lesson are being met, and (c) a collaborative demonstration of the lesson.

Reflective Journal

The use of a reflective journal or self-assessment is one of the most crucial practices that is encouraged of teachers (Okpe & Onejewu, 2017; Tuncer & Özkan, 2018). Tuncer and Özkan (2018) conducted a study on teacher reflectivity using a reflective teaching/learning model over a 10-week practicum period involving classroom management, lesson planning, microteaching, and teachers' roles. The researchers sought to see if the data supported the value in reflective journals at three levels. Level 1 is the recall level: this level is just a description of what was done. Level 2 is the rationalization level: this level goes a little deeper and connections/relationships are made between the situations/experiences. Level 3 is the reflectivity level: this level is the analysis level where change/improvements and deeper connections are developed. What researchers found was that without prompts to trigger deep thinking, the teachers did not go past the

recall level in their journals (Tuncer & Özkan, 2018). They simply stated what the situation was and what occurred. With a specific focus on reflective prompts, only 29% of the teachers went past the recall level. Tuncer and Özkan (2018) concluded that with more practice, the teachers would rate higher on Level 3 as the interviews rated higher on Level 3 through the interview discussions using the newly developed language by the teachers.

Through a self-assessment model for professional self-development (PSD), Okpe and Onjewu (2017) offered support. Through PSD, the researchers focused on self-awareness, self-monitoring, peer teaching, action research, and troubleshooting. Like Tuncer and Özkan (2018), Okpe and Onjewu discovered that PD that encompasses various types of self-reflection/assessment strengthens language development and skills for mutual counseling. Increased confidence, boldness, improved social skills, and other skills were revealed. Knowing these factors, the project design gives the teachers at WMS the opportunity to practice and reflect with a deeper understanding of the purpose of the reflective journal and be very intentional and direct with their entries.

Checklist/Lesson Plans

The use of a checklist and lesson plans promotes the integrity of the organization and pacing of the task of planning the lesson (Longhurst et al., 2016). Districts that supply a curriculum framework for their teachers have helped with the “what” and “when” of the lesson planning process. The teachers in those districts are now only charged with the “how” of the planning process. Checklists help ensure that nothing has

been missed in the preparation of the lesson (Hill, 2017). Lesson plans deliver the details of the lesson providing the “how” with all the add-ins. Cavanagh and McMaster (2017) and Chandran et al. (2017) agreed that the collaborative effort of creating lesson plans and checklists is a necessity to increase effectiveness and meet the level of the objective. With this form of collaboration, the administrator would know how teachers are using PBIS instructional strategies to support student engagement as it would be displayed in the lesson plans and evident in the instructional practices.

According to OSEP Technical Assistance at the Center on PBIS (2019), academic instructional plans to show how PBIS is being implemented should indicate how PBIS is integrated to support the behavioral competence of students. By using the collaborative approach to lesson planning, teachers can discuss and integrate the best PBIS instructional strategies to address behaviors and enhance the learning experience. The use of differentiated instruction, determined by the OSEP Technical Assistance Center, should match students’ academic, emotional, social, and behavioral needs to be considered an effective integration of support. The teachers at WMS will be able to be intentional and direct in the planning process and hopefully increase learning by using collaboration while planning.

When looking at the practicality of collaborative lesson planning, teachers must focus on identifying effective PBIS instructional strategies for implementation (Meador, 2017). To prevent negative behaviors for high jacking the learning environment, Ennis et al. (2017) suggested integrating intentionally planned corrective techniques. For WMS,

those corrective techniques would be the integrating of PBIS instructional strategies. Hill (2017) posited ensuring monitoring occurs during the development of collaborative lesson planning will hold teachers accountable and allow for the evaluation of the process. Add summary and synthesis to connect back to your study.

Collaborative Team Teaching

Cavanagh and McMasters (2017), Drew et al. (2017), and Miguel and Duran (2017) concurred that working toward a common purpose while working with others forges ownership and is a beneficial team practice that supports the professional growth of teachers. Using collaborative team teaching allows teachers different teaching techniques from one another, techniques that they may have not used before or just not in the same way. These collaborations assist in improving the instructional methods of each.

One of the findings by researchers Cavanagh and McMasters (2017) and Miquel and Duran (2017) was that student learning improved from the collaborations of problem-solving and teaching methods. The researchers also found that the morale and the confidence of teachers were higher knowing they had the support of their peers and administrators. As Hill (2017) stated, so is agreed by Bautista et al. (2017), the use of monitoring strategies provides accountability measures for teachers and administrators. Allowing teachers, the opportunity to collaboratively team teach, they have the opportunity to see real-time teaching from their peers and ask questions; hence, improving skills and knowledge of their craft and their delivery to the students they will serve in the classroom. The entire campus shows improved cultural change when

everyone is working together for the good of everyone involved: administrators, students, teachers, and all stakeholders (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017). The proposed design for this project allows for collaborative team teaching on the final day of the training.

Literature Review Summary

In summary, from the literature, relevant information was provided to support the training and deliverables for this project. The literature supported ongoing content-specific PD. From studies by Bautista et al. (2017) and Fenton (2017), when the PD is relevant to the content in which the teachers give instruction, they are more vested and find the value in the information being presented. The literature also supported the idea that when teachers are allowed to collaborate with teachers in the same content to problem solve and plan, they can accomplish more (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017; Jones & Thessin, 2017). Finally, the literature supported having specific deliverables and outcomes provides much-needed structure to the planning process (Urban et al., 2017). Given teachers' time to create lesson plans together and discuss empowers them with confidence in their knowledge to deliver instruction that will improve student achievement (Cavanagh & McMasters, 2017). Along with the creation of collaborative lesson plans, teachers have the opportunity to reflect on what they have learned and what they are still questioning through a reflective journal to self-assess and become the agents of change through their experiences and improving instructional practices (Okpe & Onejewu, 2017; Tuncer & Özkan, 2018).

Project Description

The project consists of three, half-day training, which will include a teacher perception plug/activity and a 2-day training on PBIS instructional strategies (see Appendix D). Each session will be approximately four hours. The activities for the first day of training will include teachers writing their perceptions of PBIS instructional strategies on a post-it or (in a post in Padlet while on Zoom). Then they will share out with their table group or (in their breakout groups.) The one with the longest hair will go first and continue clockwise until everyone has shared. As the group listens, each person will write one wondering or a comment about what each speaker says or (respond under their post in Padlet) to discuss later (Okpe & Onejewu, 2017). After each speaker speaks, they will put their reflection post-its in front of them or (mute their mic) so the next person knows when to go. Once everyone has gone, the group will then discuss their wonderings/comments from each speaker. Next, they will post their post-its on the designated chart paper (if virtual, it will already be on Padlet). The teachers will then be given an overview of PBIS and then an emphasis of the study, *The impact of PBIS Instructional Strategies on Student Engagement*. At the end of the day one presentation, teachers will be given the objectives for the next two days and the opportunity to ask questions about the information.

On day two of the training, a recap will be given of day 1, and the teachers will be allowed to share any “aha” moments from day 1. The teachers will then be trained on the first two of three PBIS instructional strategies. In groups, the teachers will practice and

discuss how each strategy can be used in their content and in their classrooms to support engagement and learning (Cavanagh & McMasters, 2017; Jones & Thessin, 2017). The teachers will also identify any concerns they have with the use of the instructional strategy.

On the final day of training, a recap will be given of day 2, and the teachers will be asked for any comments or questions before the training begins. The teachers will be trained on the third PBIS instructional strategy for the session. Once the training has been completed, the teachers will have the opportunity to lesson plan with their groups inserting the PBIS instructional strategies learned during the training. After each group finishes lesson planning, they will present their lesson plan to the other groups and receive feedback. The teachers will then complete a reflective journal using prompts to reflect and to evaluate their experience (Tuncer & Özkan, 2018). The purpose of the feedback and reflective journal is to help support the teachers in the delivery and effectiveness of the lesson they will be presenting to their students (Okpe & Onejewe, 2017; Tuncer & Özkan, 2018). The last activity includes an evaluation of the training for future improvements and suggestions for the training.

Potential Barriers and Solutions

The potential barriers to the project are funding and scheduling time for the training. Because the budget is decided upon before the close of the prior school year, the district/campus may not have the funding to support such training. If this is the case, two alternate avenues for funding could help. One way is to have an outside source fund the

training. This study site's district has a private organization that funds schools for projects and training that are outside of the regular budget if approved through their proposal process. If that does not work, another way is to go through the site-based decision-making committee (SBDM) to request money to be moved to allow for the training to take place. The principal would have to agree that the training is necessary and then present it to the committee for them to vote.

The second barrier is scheduling time for the training before the academic school year begins. Because this training will be considered a school-wide PD outside of the district PD given the week before the students return, the teachers will be asked to commit to three days before the official report day. Things that will need to be considered are the benefit of the added time and the buy-in from the teachers. The first consideration could be handled by the principal giving the teachers flex-time for attendance. Each year teachers are required to receive a certain number of flex-time hours. Giving them 12 hours for this training would be a selling point that most would appreciate. The next consideration would be the teacher buy-in. The teachers would need to see the relevance of the training. If the principal requires at least two strategies to be present in the lesson plan and implemented, the teachers will see the need and benefit of learning the strategies well enough to use with the students daily. These potential solutions would work for both the teachers and the administration. Teachers would get flex-hours and learn new strategies that would impact instruction and student learning, and administrators will see an improvement in instruction and student learning during walk-throughs.

Project Timetable for Proposed Implementation

The proposed timetable for the proposed implementation will take place August 8-10, 2022. The training days will each begin with an introduction, followed by modeling and an activity using the strategies with collaborative teaming, and ending with reflective journaling. Because the proposed training is the week before teachers return, the teachers will have the opportunity to plan without interruptions to discuss in-depth the best ways to implement the strategies into their lesson planning and practice. Identifying concerns before requiring implementation is recommended (George et al., 2006). Having the training at the beginning of the semester with no interruptions of district demands shows the relevancy of the training and administrative support.

Roles and Responsibilities

The Researcher

As the researcher, my role and responsibilities are to share the results, present the results, and assist with the implementation of the project (if asked). Upon completion and acceptance of this project through the university, I will first share the results by providing a copy of the project for all the stakeholders to see. I will share the results from the analysis conducted of the data to address the problem of the study. If requested, I will present the results of the data analysis to the stakeholders: faculty, staff, and board of directors. If the proposed project is requested for implementation, I will offer support in the capacity necessary to the faculty and staff of the study site.

Project Facilitator

As the facilitator, my role will be to request approval of the budget and location of the PD. I will present the agenda and timelines to the administration for approval. My primary goal is to create an environment of collaboration and support for the teachers to engage in relevant and meaningful PD and lesson planning, so impactful outcomes will be the result. I will encourage team collaboration and self-reflection as strategies are learned and practiced to create normalcy of reflectivity to affect instructional change.

Administrators

The administrators will first need to approve the budget and the location of the PD. They will also need to encourage attendance by the teachers for each session. They will also need to offer support to the teachers for the strategies learned by observing their use of the strategies in the classroom and giving constructive feedback. According to Turner et al. (2018) and Willis and Templeton (2017), a key role is played by the administrators in providing PD opportunities to support teachers and encouraging a positive climate through collaboration.

Students

Although students will not be a part of the training, they could be directly impacted by the results of the training based on the reflectivity and improved instructional practices of the teachers. Students could gain the desired results of improved achievement through the engagement of the PBIS instructional strategies.

Teachers

The role of the teachers will be to attend each of the sessions with an open mind and good intentions to receive the information from the designed PD. The teachers will be charged with the task of collaborative discussions, designing improved lesson plans through collaborative team planning, and being self-reflective of the process and experiences. The teachers will have the opportunity to present their lesson plans to their peers and receive constructive feedback and tweak their plans before delivering them to their students.

Project Evaluation Plan

The deliverables of this proposed PD training are (a) the development of a collaborative team lesson plan, and (b) a self-reflective journal using specific prompts and focused areas of change/improvement of teacher growth that will have the biggest impact on student achievement. Research-based approaches to be used include Davis et al. (2017), Fenton (2017), and Mendoza (2018) on collaborative discussion during PD, collaborative team lesson planning, and reflective journaling. The recommendation of these deliverables has been justified. According to Trumbull and Lash (2013), based on the proposed project, a formative assessment will best fit this evaluative plan.

Formative assessments are described by Trumbull and Lash (2013) as being ongoing and relevant to the skills being taught. Formative assessments are used to determine where further support is needed because of the gaps in the learning of concepts/content or from the misconceptions of the students. The formative assessments

allow for opportunities for the teachers to re-teach concepts focusing on the misconceptions and needs of the students (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017). There are various forms of formative assessments that all assess learning differently. For the implementation of formative assessments, self-reflection, actionable feedback, open dialogue, having clear criteria, and the collection of useful information to give constructive feedback are recommended (Trumbull & Lash, 2013). The proposed PD training aligns with these formative measurements by offering the opportunity for (a) collaborative problem-solving through discussion, (b) collaborative lesson planning, (c) practice delivery of lesson plan, and (d) self-reflection.

Evaluation Goals

A primary goal of the evaluation of the project is to support teacher learning and their professional growth through collaboration and feedback. Another goal of the evaluation of the project is to improve student learning through the training and reflective process of the teachers. The final goal of the evaluation of the project is to determine the effectiveness of the PD for the teachers and its relevance. To determine this, the participants will fill out a formative assessment, a questionnaire. The data derived from the evaluation of the PD will be used to adjust and modify future training. This data will be beneficial to the improvement of the PD.

Project Implications

Social Change for the Local Site

The outcomes from the PD and evaluation resulting from the research will provide an action plan to address the needed training and support on the implementation process of the problem of this study. At the local site, the PD may improve the instructional efforts of the teachers and improve student engagement. This in turn will improve student achievement and increase scores on high-stakes tests. The project will allow time for teachers to collaborate with their peers to problem-solve and provide the opportunity to create new normalcy of self-reflective practice by identifying their professional strengths and areas for professional growth.

Larger-Scale Social Change

On a larger scale, the improvements will impact social change by providing a design for educators to use before implementing new strategies and a plan for them to collaborate more effectively. The project will present opportunities for problem-solving among peers and opportunities to address gaps in instruction with critical feedback before lessons are presented to students. The results from the study will show the value in self-reflectivity of educators and the need for it to become a normal practice for professional growth. The results from the project will assist administrators in empowering teachers and breaking down barriers of collaborating with their peers for fear of ridicule for asking questions. In the larger context, the benefits from the project will establish a culture of collaboration that will extend beyond the classroom and impact the world.

Conclusion

Section 3 has described the rationale supporting literature, description, goals, evaluation plan, implementation methods, study barriers, and implications for social change for my project study. Research studies were presented that support the design and outcomes of the project. A research-based action plan for PD was presented to train teachers on implementing PBIS instructional strategies to engage students. This section also detailed the following components: PD, PLCs, deliverables and outcomes, reflective journals, checklist/lesson plans, and collaborative team teaching. The project will provide data and training support to address implementing PBIS instructional strategies with fidelity.

Section 4: Reflections and Conclusions

I conducted the project study to address the problem of how middle school teachers are using PBIS instructional strategies to engage students and to assess middle school teachers' perceptions of PBIS to engage students in the classroom in north Texas. To address the problem, I collected and analyzed data of the PBIS instructional strategies teachers used to engage students and the teachers' perceptions of PBIS. I chose a project study because PBIS instructional strategies are a systematic approach to engage learning, and the use of these strategies should be ongoing if the engagement is to be sustained long term (see Sugai & Horner, 2014). Section 4 reflects the study and provides direction for future research. The subsections include (a) project strengths and limitations; (b) recommendations for alternative approaches; (c) scholarship, project development and evaluation, and leadership for change; (d) reflection on importance of the work; and (e) implications, applications, and directions for future research.

Project Strengths and Limitations

Project Strengths

A major strength of the project is that it addressed the problem of the study by determining how PBIS instructional strategies were being used to engage students in the classroom. Then, through an extensive literature review and the collection of data, the study took shape. Through the process and the choice of design for the study, it was evident how it fit in responding to the study's problem. Another strength is in the presentation of the study. I presented the study in a concise manner that will assist all

stakeholders including administrators, district leaders, students, and teachers in realizing the need to address the problem. The third strength of the project was in the evaluative part of the training portion of the project. Through the PD tangible deliverables and activities, participants will derive skills and strategies that will lead to the professional growth of instruction in the classroom (see Jordan, 2016). The self-assessment of the project will allow for critical reflection on the implementation of the instructional strategies (see Fenton, 2017). The PD training from this project will allow teachers the time to process and analyze and collaborate on how best to incorporate the strategies into their lesson plans.

Project Limitations

The first limitation of the project is the lack of time. Because of previously scheduled in-service training, meetings, district/campus PD, faculty meetings, PLC meetings, and parent/teacher conferences, the allotment of time may have posed an issue for the site. The second limitation is the budgetary component. The principal decides what PD the campus needs. Depending on the vision and determining needs of the campus and stakeholders, the school budget may not allow funding for the extra PD training and the development of teachers. Limited funding may result in limited presentation resources. The third limitation and probably the biggest is tied to teacher buy-in. This project is meant to help better the teachers' "craft," improving their instruction and in turn improving student learning. The project had a small sample size of

nine but to increase the validity and generalization the majority, if not all teachers, need to participate (see Creswell, 2014; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

Recommendations for Alternative Approaches

I chose PD as my approach to address this problem as I am a leader in the district as a campus administrator (although on a different campus from the study site) and can provide the continued support needed to change practice and give feedback (see Castillo et al., 2016). Not only should district leaders and campus administrators support the PD, but according to Voogt et al. (2015), the PD should be based on current research.

However, there were different ways to address this problem of study. One could have been to evaluate the implementation process of PBIS. By doing this, I could have used the number of ODR to gauge if the process was being done with fidelity. I could have also used both ODR and test scores to determine if the implementation of PBIS instructional strategies improved standardized test scores. Each of these different methods would have helped address a gap in practice and lead to viable ways to improve the problem.

A different approach to address this problem could have been to use a concerns-based adoption model (CBAM). By using this model, I would have started with a survey to determine the needs and concerns of the teachers and address them directly (see George et al., 2006; G. Hall & Hord, 2015). Using the CBAM provides a tool for evaluating and a system to monitor growth as well as to support ownership of the change.

This strategy would give teachers a say as the survey would address areas of concern and show relevancy to their needs creating a sense of teacher buy-in.

Scholarship, Project Development and Evaluation, and Leadership and Change

Park and Ham (2016) suggested that scholarship is an intricate process that combines critical thinking and involves listening, teaching, discovering, integrating, and applying. During the process of this study, I have grown as a practitioner, scholar, and project developer by trial and error intellectually. This project study has challenged me harder than ever intellectually. I have learned a different kind of perseverance and tenacity. Through this process, I have learned how to trust myself and to problem solve out loud. I have also learned to challenge others intellectually and help them to problem solve out loud as well. One of the most prolific lessons I have learned through research is to be objective in my acquisition of knowledge. During the process of research, I have learned how to gather, sort, analyze, and aggregate data to see a clear picture/account of the situation. Searching for concrete answers helped in acquiring the sought information of the problem without bias and sticking to the facts.

Writing this doctoral study taught me the importance of scheduling, not just for interviews, but for scheduling out my time to write. It also taught me to reach out for help when I needed it. Writing this study presented challenges of “Now that I have this data, what do I do now,” and “How do I find...?” Learning to reach out to the Walden University library was a tremendous help. Trying to figure out the “How” on my own, caused me to waste valuable time. The librarian was so helpful in assisting me with my

searches and understanding how to search for the articles that were specific to my topic. I overcame many obstacles becoming a research practitioner, and as a result, I now know how to conduct a research study.

In the development and evaluation of the project, I learned that the problem of how teachers use PBIS instructional strategies to engage students is not unique. According to Ficarra and Quinn (2014), and Garland (2017), researchers have been looking for solutions to integrate academic models with behavioral models to increase student learning and engagement for some years. I found that researching the problem is easier than researching the solution to the problem. I reviewed literature that offered solutions to the problem of this study. Within the literature, I found that teachers need the opportunity to work through/problem solve issues with new strategies before being required to implement those strategies (see Miquel and Duran, 2017). The data from the interviews and the review of the literature revealed the best way to address the problem. I determined the best form of evaluation of the PD would be through a questionnaire because a questionnaire would allow for feedback on the specifics of the PD and allow for the attendees to provide suggestions for improvement on future presentations (see Appendix E).

The results of the data aligned with the research questions, which I used to determine what deliverables and outcomes would best accompany the study. From my research, an action plan will be developed to assist the administrator of WMS in knowing how the teachers are using PBIS instructional strategies to engage students. Providing

teachers PD/training to collaborate and problem solve with their peers will strengthen their knowledge and confidence which will only improve the instructional delivery of their lessons. The PD/training will ultimately benefit the students by having a positive impact on their achievement. Overall, this process has allowed me to see my strength as a positive leader for change by providing me the opportunity to develop the skills needed to assist teachers in using strategies to better instruct and engage their students. These changes will serve as beacons for teachers to continue to grow professionally and in their confidence to ask questions and share their experiences. More importantly, through this process, I have become more confident and secure in my efforts to see problems and be solution-oriented.

Reflection on Importance of the Work

In reflecting on the importance of the work, I reflected on my years as a teacher and the goals I had for my students. I wanted them to achieve, and although achievement looked different for each student, the goal was the same...achievement. Providing teachers an avenue to collaborate and practice during PD with their intended lessons will be a positive change. Not only will teachers have the opportunity to ask questions to the presenters but also their peers. For too long, teachers have struggled with strategies to maximize learning (Meador, 2017). I want teachers to get away from experiencing success in isolation and away from their peers. The importance of this work will allow teachers to problem-solve together and create successful lessons that will positively

impact students' learning across grade levels and content areas, raising the levels of expectation.

This project has taught me the importance of keeping the main thing, the main thing. Paying attention to details and staying organized helps create a sense of urgency to being solution oriented. When the research you do will have an impact on others, you must have high moral standards and maintain your code of ethics because that will bring about credibility (Creswell, 2014; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Yin, 2014). I understand the importance of equipping teachers with the support and strategies needed to be successful because only then can they do the job they are charged with, teaching our children and youth.

Implications, Applications, and Directions for Future Research

I chose a PD project because the findings indicated a need for training for the WMS teachers to implement PBIS instructional strategies with fidelity. Within the PD, I present an action plan that allows WMS teachers to collaborate, problem-solve, team, teach a lesson, and self-reflect. Being proactive and not reactive to situations allows administrators the opportunity to set their teachers up for success and create buy-in to new implementations because the teachers will see they are supported. I designed this PD to be used by administrators before the school year begins to allow time for teachers to collaboratively problem-solve and work-out kinks before they are required to implement new strategies to their students, improving instruction and student achievement. Such

steps will promote positive social change propelling district leaders and policymakers in the direction to acquire the funding needed to support this type of teacher training.

Conducting mixed-method research in the future and looking at students' academic achievement on state tests as a result of the PD could further determine the effectiveness of teacher collaboration and team teaching. The addition of quantitative research would strengthen the validity of the study by adding a stronger form of triangulation (Creswell, 2014; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Another direction for future research could be a program evaluation. Conducting a program evaluation could offer more information on the effectiveness of PBIS instructional strategies and how they are being used. These future directions for further research align with this study as they all seek to gain a deeper revelation of improving teacher instruction by improving student engagement to ultimately improve student achievement.

Conclusion

This research study focused on investigating how middle school teachers were using PBIS instructional strategies to engage students. Using the findings, I designed a 3-day PD to provide teachers with the training needed to implement PBIS instructional strategies with fidelity. I chose PD as the design for my project because it offers hands-on training for implementation which is a necessity when creating a change in practice. I used the results from the qualitative data to determine the deliverables and outcomes necessary to create this required change in practice. The 3-day PD offers teachers the opportunity to collaborate with their peers, create a lesson plan using the strategies, then

the team teaches the lesson, and the opportunity to self-reflect on the entire experience with guided prompts. The goals of this study and project have not changed: to improve instruction through student engagement and increase student achievement.

This research has provided potential avenues for future research and potential influences on local and state policymakers to make available funding to create positive change. In education, there is no “one size fits all.” It is a daily struggle to ensure that the needs of all students are met. Though sometimes teachers/educators fall short, the results of this research have provided opportunities for support from administrators and peers so, in the reteaching stage, the teachers can focus on the misconceptions and revamp the lesson. It is all a process.

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Appendix A: Interview Question Protocol

Researcher: 30-45 Minute Semi- Structured Interview

Time: Date:

Participant Code:	Years of Experience:
Grade Level:	

RQ1: How do middle school teachers use Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS) instructional strategies to engage students in the classroom?

1. As a teacher, how do you engage students in observable ways in your classroom on a day-to-day basis?
2. How do you ensure all students are participating in your classroom?
3. Before you allow students to answer questions independently, how do you solicit the correct answers from educational material?
4. When students are unsure of how to complete an assignment, how do you coach them to avoid behavior problems?
5. What interventions do you take to provide cultural significance as it relates to a particular assignment for students without any background knowledge of the topic?
6. As a teacher, how do you prepare your lesson/instruction to activate students' prior knowledge?
7. In what ways are parents/guardians involved to ensure student participation?

How does this help?

RQ2: What are middle school teachers' perceptions of PBIS to engage students?

1. What best practices do you use to demonstrate a process using real-life examples?
2. Describe how you take into account students' cultural backgrounds when activating prior knowledge.
3. During instruction, describe how you provide intentional and direct feedback to your students?
4. How do you take into account your students' different needs when providing feedback?
5. During a class discussion, how do you immediately stop and reteach a lesson/concept when students are responding incorrectly?
6. Describe how you solicit parental support for your students.

Appendix B: Interview Schedule

Date: Time:

Participant:

Participant's Name:

Time/Length of interview:

Interview #1

Date: Time:

Participant:

Participant's Name:

Time/Length of interview:

Interview #2

Date: Time:

Participant:

Participant's Name:

Time/Length of interview:

Interview #3

Date: Time:

Participant:

Participant's Name:

Time/Length of interview:

Interview #4

Date:

Time:

Participant:

Participant's Name:

Time/Length of interview:

Interview #5

Date:

Time:

Participant:

Participant's Name:

Time/Length of interview:

Interview #6

Date:

Time:

Participant:

Participant's Name:

Time/Length of interview:

Interview #7

Date:

Time:

Participant:

Participant's Name:

Time/Length of interview:

Interview #8

Date:

Time:

Participant:

Participant's Name:

Time/Length of interview:

Interview #9

Appendix C: Permission Letter



Date: May 9, 2019

To: Kathy Tucker

Re: Request for External Research with [REDACTED]

Your application to conduct research in FWISD has been reviewed. We are pleased to inform you that your study, *Improving Instruction through PBIS Instructional Strategies* [REDACTED] has been approved, pending receipt of the following document:

- IRB approval from Walden University

You are free to begin your study. Please remember that all data collected in [REDACTED] schools are protected by the Grants Compliance and Monitoring CERR and IRB functions. This authority supersedes any contractual agreement or Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) per [REDACTED] Legal.

You agree to keep all data confidential which includes creating special subject numbers, keeping data safeguarded, not sharing or reporting individual data to third parties for research or other purposes, and using the data only for agreed upon research and program development purposes. You understand and agree that no confidential information regarding any individual teacher or student will be disclosed in any document intended for public disclosure.

Although this letter constitutes approval from the Grants Compliance and Monitoring Department, you must have principal's consent before you can start your study. Teacher, student, and parent participation in your study is strictly voluntary.

Please send us results and/or publications resulting from your study. We wish you the best in your research. Please contact [REDACTED] if you have further questions.

Sincerely,

A large black rectangular redaction box covering the signature of the sender.

CC: [REDACTED]

Appendix D: The Project

Professional Development/Training

Based on the findings from this study, the design of the following project seeks to support teachers when implementing PBIS instructional strategies to engage students.

The two primary objectives include identifying teachers' use of PBIS instructional strategies to engage students in the classroom and middle school teachers' perceptions of PBIS to engage student learning. Considering the setting and the problem, the immediate applicability for the use of instructional strategies to allow for student engagement directly coincides with the training needed to implement with fidelity.

Purpose	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identifying teachers' comprehension of PBIS instructional strategies • Provide teachers with PBIS instructional strategies • Provide instruction on PBIS instructional strategies • Provide collaborative/supportive opportunities • Provide self-assessment/reflection opportunities
Goals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase knowledge of PBIS instructional strategies • Increase competency and fidelity with the use of PBIS Instructional strategies • Develop learning teams for collaboration • Time to demonstrate lesson plans with peers
Learning Outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased proficiency in the use of PBIS instructional strategies • Pragmatic use of peer-developed lesson plans for use in the classroom.

Target Audience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 6th-grade teachers
Timeline	The proposed timeline is a 3-day training held from August 8-10, 2022. Each session will run from 9:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. A follow-up session will be scheduled later in the year, based on budget approval.

Proposed Activities

The PD/training consists of activities to address the lack of use and the understanding of the PBIS instructional strategies. All activities are described day by day. The activities for the first day of training will include all teachers writing their perceptions of PBIS instructional strategies on a post-it, or (in a post on a Flip Grid). Then they will share out with their table group or (in their breakout groups). The one with the longest hair will go first and continue clockwise until everyone has shared. As the group listens, each person will write one wondering or a comment about what each speaker says or (respond under their post in Flip Grid) to discuss later. After each speaker speaks, they will put their reflection post-its in front of them or (mute their mic) so the next person knows when to go. Once everyone has gone, the group will then discuss their wonderings/comments from each speaker. Next, they will post their post-it on the designated chart paper (if virtual, it will already be on the Flip Grid). The teachers will then be given an overview of PBIS and then an emphasis of the study, *The Impact of PBIS Instructional Strategies on Student Engagement*. At the end of the day one

presentation, teachers will be given the objectives for the next two days and the opportunity to ask questions about the information so far.

On day two of the training, the instructor will give a recap of day 1 and allow the teachers to share any “aha” moments from day 1. The teachers will then be trained on the first two of three PBIS instructional strategies. In groups, the teachers will practice and discuss how each strategy can be used in their content and their classrooms to support engagement and learning as well as identify any concerns they have with the use of the instructional strategy.

On the final day of training, the instructor will give a recap of day 2 and ask for any comments before the training begins. The teachers will be trained on the third PBIS instructional strategy for the session. Once the training has been completed, the teachers will have the opportunity to lesson plan with their groups inserting the PBIS instructional strategies learned during the training. After each group finishes lesson planning, they will present their lesson plans to the other groups and receive feedback. The teachers will then complete a reflective journal. The purpose of the feedback and reflective journal is to help support the teachers in the delivery and effectiveness of the lessons they will be presenting to their students. The last activity includes an evaluation of the training for future improvements and suggestions for the training.

Hour-by-Hour Layout

Session	Activities	Timeline	Resource Material
Day 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teacher perception activity • Introduction • Overview 	<p>9:00-10 a.m.: Post-it/Padlet perception activity</p> <p>10:00-10:50 a.m.: The Impact of PBIS on student engagement</p> <p>10:50-11:00 a.m.: Break</p> <p>11:00-12:00 p.m.: Teacher perception activity-round robin</p> <p>12:00-1:00 p.m.: What's to Come and Q & A</p>	<p>Laptops</p> <p>PBIS literature</p> <p>PBIS instructional strategy literature</p> <p>Reflective journal</p>
Day 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Welcome • Review • Training of first two PBIS instructional strategies 	<p>9:00-10 a.m.: Welcome and review and training on the first strategy- instructor lead</p> <p>10:00-10:50 a.m.: Core group discussion on how to incorporate the learned PBIS instructional strategy</p>	<p>Laptops</p> <p>PBIS literature</p> <p>PBIS instructional strategy literature</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Core group discussion 	<p>10:50-11:00 a.m.: Break</p> <p>11:00-12:00 p.m.: Training on the second strategy</p> <p>12:00-1:00 p.m.: Core group discussion on how to incorporate the learned PBIS instructional strategy/ Identify concerns of using the strategies</p>	Reflective journal
Day 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recap of Day 2 Training of third PBIS instructional strategy Core group discussion Content group planning 	<p>9:00-10 a.m.: Recap of Day 2 and training on the third strategy- instructor lead</p> <p>10:00-10:50 a.m.: Core group discussion on how to incorporate the learned PBIS instructional strategy/ Identify concerns of using the strategies</p> <p>10:50-11:00 a.m.: Break</p>	<p>Laptops</p> <p>PBIS literature</p> <p>PBIS instructional strategy literature</p> <p>Reflective journal</p> <p>Lesson plan template</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reflection 	<p>11:00-12:30 p.m.: Content group 3-week lesson planning and reflection writing</p> <p>12:30-1:00 p.m.: Teachers complete training evaluation</p>	
Project Deliverables	Peer-designed lesson plan	Peer feedback notes	Self-reflective journal

Training Agenda

Session	Agenda
Day 1:	9:00 a.m.: Teacher perception activity 10:00 a.m.: Introduction/Overview 10:50 a.m.: Break 11:00 a.m.: Discussion of Perceptions 12:00 p.m.: What's to Come/ Q & A
Day 2:	9:00 a.m.: Welcome/ Recap Day 1/Training on 1 st PBIS instructional strategy 10:00 a.m.: Core group discussion 10:50 a.m.: Break 11:00 a.m.: Training on 2 nd PBIS instructional strategy Noon: Core group discussion
Day 3:	9:00 a.m.: Recap Day 2/ Training on 3 rd PBIS instructional strategy 10:00 a.m.: Core group discussion 10:50 a.m.: Break 11:00 a.m. Content group 3-week planning incorporating PBIS instructional strategies/Reflection writing

Reflection Questions

Directions: Please answer the following reflection questions about today's training.

1. What concept was learned today?
2. The concept today connects to...
3. I can incorporate this concept during...
4. I will remember to incorporate this by...
5. I need more help with... incorporating this concept with fidelity.
6. The thing that stood out the most to me today was...
7. The thing I still have questions about is...
8. The learning today will change my instruction by...

