

## Effect of Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports on School Wide Discipline in a Title I Intermediate School

Joshua P. Spencer, Ed.D.

Associate Faculty, Ashford University, Teacher, Marion Intermediate School  
915 Willcox Ave. Ext., Marion, SC 29571

[jos Spencer@marion.k12.sc.us](mailto:jos Spencer@marion.k12.sc.us) & [j Spencer73@sc.rr.com](mailto:j Spencer73@sc.rr.com)

**Abstract:** The implementation of positive behavioral interventions and supports (PBIS) has become a priority to school districts and departments of education due to the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004, which requires the development and implementation of behavior intervention plans. At a Title I school in South Carolina, a PBIS was implemented after students were increasingly being removed from the classroom due to disruptive behavior. This quantitative program evaluation examined the effect of PBIS on office referrals. The theoretical framework associated with PBIS involves transformational theory, which includes actions that empower, inspire, and encourage others to show their potential. The research question explored the effect of PBIS on reducing the number of students sent to the office with a referral by teachers, and the quasi-experimental design was pretest-posttest with no control group. A paired *t* test was used to examine differences in the number of students sent to the office before and after PBIS implementation, and the sample size studied was 412 students. After PBIS implementation, there were significant decreases in the number of office referrals for each offense category. This study also provides teachers with information to help students exhibit desirable behaviors and decrease disruptive ones.

### INTRODUCTION

Due to increasing demands on educators to provide safe learning environments for students, schools and school districts have placed greater emphasis on school-wide prevention programs. These prevention programs are meant to provide a positive learning environment and reduce behavior problems. Bradshaw, Koth, Thornton, and Leaf (2009) stated that school-based prevention models, such as positive behavioral interventions and supports (PBIS), have a goal to establish a positive school environment so students know what behaviors are expected of them and to create systems to help increase the positive behavior of students with higher needs, who are students who have received five or more office referrals during the school year.

PBIS is a proactive approach to school-wide behavior; it sets expectations and procedures at the beginning of a school year so students know what types of behaviors are expected of them, unlike a reactive approach where the behavior is addressed only after it has occurred (Sugai, 2008). The PBIS model is a three-tiered approach and uses strategies that are preventive and positive. It includes systematically training students as to what positive behaviors are expected and then positively reinforcing those behaviors.

Looking at a school's population, the PBIS model expects 80% to 90% of those students to be very responsive to basic behavior interventions such as verbal warnings or a conference with the teacher (Bradshaw, Reinke, Brown, Bevans, & Leaf, 2008). Of that population, 5% to 10% will need some type of secondary support, to include interventions, increased structure, and consistent feedback on a regular basis (Bradshaw, Reinke, Brown, Bevans, & Leaf, 2008). In addition, 1% to 5% of the population, who do not respond to school-wide expectations or interventions, will need very intensive interventions and structure in order to be successful in the classroom environment (Bradshaw, Reinke, Brown, Bevans, & Leaf, 2008).

For the PBIS model to be successful, the school must be able to collect and track student behavior. A data collection system that tracks and monitors student behavior can include the location at which the behavior occurred as well as the time of day. A school team can then come up with a specific plan to target the behaviors exhibited by the students (McIntosh, Frank, & Spaulding, 2010). The school's ability to measure the social behavior of students, and how that may affect student achievement, is an essential part of the PBIS model.

The school in this study, Main Street Intermediate School (a pseudonym), proposed this research to confirm the effect that PBIS is having on reducing office referrals at the school. Currently, the data have not been examined nor analyzed in three years it has been implemented, so a study was appropriate to investigate whether behavior issues in the classroom are being handled so students are not being sent to the office as in the past school years before PBIS was implemented.

### Definition of the Problem

An issue in many schools is the number of office referrals. At Main Street Intermediate, a Title I school in South Carolina, the problem was the number of students who were removed from the classroom and sent to the office with a referral. When a student is removed from the classroom, he or she may miss hours or days of instructional time, which has become a concern of the school. Prior to PBIS being implemented, the school had approximately 600 referrals per year. In cases where students were sent home or placed in in-school suspension,

they missed several days of instructional time. In the past, schools such as Main Street Intermediate used corrective actions to address student behaviors. These actions included loss of recess, parent conferences, time-out, and loss of privileges; when these corrective actions failed, students then received an office referral. Other reasons for the high number of students being sent to the office with a referral could have included the classroom management procedures of teachers in the school as well as the need to reexamine the school district's code of conduct, which may be outdated (Hershfeldt et al., 2009; Jeloudar & Yunus, 2011).

PBIS offers a school plan for creating a positive school environment as well as providing students having limited social skills the ability to gain understanding on how to behave in school. Main Street Intermediate implemented PBIS at the beginning of the 2010-2011 school year in order to reduce the number of students sent to the office with a referral as well as to increase the amount of instructional time for students. PBIS is an initiative that is encouraged by the state department of education (South Carolina Department of Education, 2012). Due to this encouragement, PBIS was implemented to prevent disruptive behavior problems and promote a positive school climate through the application of practices and systems consistent with the three-tiered public health prevention framework (Bradshaw & Pas, 2011).

Main Street Intermediate School has a population of 612 students in Grades 3 through 5, with 508 students, approximately 83%, receiving free or reduced lunches. The county in which Main Street Intermediate is located has the highest unemployment rate in the state at 17.3% (South Carolina Department of Employment and Workforce, 2012). Students who are eligible to receive free or reduced lunch and whose families have high unemployment are more likely to be the recipients of office referrals than are their peers (Noltemeyer & Mclouglin, 2010). Main Street Intermediate is 83% African American. Research has shown that African American students are two to three times more likely to receive an office referral than Caucasian students are (Noltemeyer & Mclouglin, 2010; Skiba et al., 2011). Cultural misinterpretations by teachers can result in African American students, for example, being disproportionately referred to the office because their behavior is seen as disruptive. Other possibilities include socioeconomic status or students aligning with the dominant behavior of the school population, which may be defiance (Hershfeldt et al., 2009).

The school district expressed concern to Main Street Intermediate about the number of office referrals and wanted students to stay in the classroom in order to receive instruction while spending less time being referred to the office. The school district wanted to increase year-end student test scores. Students being removed from the classroom, which caused loss of instructional time, could have a negative impact on student year-end test scores.

## **Rationale**

### **Evidence of the Problem at the Local Level**

The purpose of this study was to evaluate the PBIS program implemented at Main Street Intermediate School, a Title I School, which has a high percentage of low-income families, to determine the effect the program had on reducing the number of students sent to the office with referrals compared to a year when PBIS was not implemented. As of 2009, approximately 7,500 schools have implemented PBIS to address students' academic and behavioral problems (Bradshaw et al., 2009). Because of this number, there is an increased need to evaluate these programs adequately to determine if their effectiveness and relevance has increased (Miramontes, Marchant, Heath, & Fischer, 2011). PBIS aims to improve a school's procedures and systems to prevent disruptive behavior and enhance the school's climate.

PBIS is data driven; in this study, I compared a year in which PBIS was not implemented to a year in which PBIS was implemented to see if the program has been successful in decreasing the number of office referrals school-wide. These data served as motivation for a critical review of the school's PBIS policies and procedures in place to see if these policies and procedures kept students from losing instructional time in the classroom. Without looking at the data to determine the success of the program, Main Street Intermediate School risked losing more instructional time for students, thereby affecting student achievement. Loss of instructional time can contribute to lower student achievement in the classroom environment and on year-end test scores.

This study used a quantitative approach in a program evaluation. A program evaluation examines programs to determine their worth and to make recommendations for program refinement and successes (Spaulding, 2008). PBIS was evaluated at Main Street Intermediate to determine its effectiveness in reducing the number of office referrals. I was an internal auditor who knew the setting, the language used in the PBIS program, and how to access the data from the school's data tracking system. The findings of this study were presented to the school in an evaluation report.

The setting for this program evaluation was a Title I Intermediate School comprising Grades 3, 4, and 5 located in a rural part of South Carolina. The school serves approximately 612 students. The sample comprised third and fourth grade students who attended school for the 2010-2011 school years and fourth and fifth graders who attended school for the 2011-2012 school years. The size of the sample was 412 students.

The data collected were the number of office referrals for the specific grade levels in a school year when PBIS was not implemented, school year 2010-2011, and also from the specific grade levels the following school

year when PBIS was implemented, school year 2011-2012. This summative data was collected from the school's data tracking system called PowerSchool, a web-based public information program that tracks not only office referrals, but student absences, tardiness, grades, and other relevant student information needed by the school for each student.

For the purposes of this study, only the number of office referrals from the sample size was collected. The office referrals were broken down into categories: disrespect, refusal to obey, disturbing class, physical contact, fighting, profanity, disruptive behavior, and other. The categories were maintained and compared throughout each year to look for an increase, a decrease, or no change at all. A statistical test, specifically a paired *t* test, was used to determine if the implementation of PBIS reduced the number of office referrals from the sample size studied.

### **Evidence of the Problem From the Professional Literature**

The implementation of PBIS has become a priority to school districts and departments of education due to the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004 (IDEIA), which requires the development and implementation of a behavior intervention plan based on PBIS (Killu, Weber, & Derby, 2006). Research has shown that school climate can affect children academically, as well as socially, and their school attendance. Legislation, such as No Child Left Behind (NCLB, 2001), has forced schools to adopt intervention strategies that result in better outcomes for students (Anderson-Ketchmark & Alvarez, 2010; Dee & Jacob, 2011; Paciotti, 2010). Schools can no longer wait until students begin to fail or are failing before interventions can be in place.

One of the biggest challenges teachers and other school personnel face is implementing effective behavior strategies that keep children in the classroom and out of the principal's office. Interventions and consequences, such as loss of recess or detention, address behavior for a short period of time but provide no incentive for students to make long lasting changes in their behaviors (Cuccaro & Geitner, 2007). Schools realize they need an entirely new approach, such as PBIS, in order to effectively deal with disruptive behaviors (Becker & Domitrovich, 2011).

Children with behavior problems who are aggressive in school are at risk for behaviors such as delinquency and academic failure. These students can also develop mental health problems later on in life, such as anxiety disorders, depression, and other antisocial behaviors (Reinke, Splett, Robeson, & Offutt, 2009). In schools across the nation, disruptive behaviors are the most common reason for students receiving an office referral. These types of behaviors are the main reason for loss of instructional time in the classroom (Reinke et al., 2009). Preventing these types of behaviors can have a great impact on a student's education.

Yeung, Mooney, Barker, and Dobia (2009) discussed how school environment that is undesirable could lead to low student motivation and engagement as well as making learning less effective. Disruptive behaviors impede the school environment as well as learning outcomes. Schools want environments that have a focus on academic work, thereby positively affecting student achievement.

The use of school-based interventions can help identify students early in their academic careers who are at risk of struggling with their behavior as well as their academics. Waiting for a long period time before intervening on a student's behavior can have a prolonged effect on a student's achievement in the classroom and social interactions with other students (Hawken, Vincent, & Schumann, 2008).

Fairbanks, Sugai, Gardino, and Lathorp (2007) stated that schools are becoming more accountable for their efforts to improve academics as well as student behavior, despite the lack of support in the form of resources. With legislation for schools to come up with strategies to provide students with support behaviorally as well as academically, schools are implementing intervention plans that will meet the needs of their students.

Research-based intervention models, such as PBIS, have been recommended as effective ways in decreasing behavior problems at schools. These models have demonstrated that schools can improve their behavioral support by identifying and instructing students on behavior expectations, providing positive reinforcement, and using data to track problem areas and whether the school-wide plan is reducing office referrals (Crone, Hawken, & Bergstrom, 2007).

Hawken, MacLeod, and Rawlings (2007) stated that implementing a behavior support program is recommended for schools to respond to disruptive social behaviors in the school setting. These support systems can range from the very least intensive to the very most intensive. More evidence points to interventions as effective ways to help students function at a higher level not only behaviorally but also academically in a school setting. With the reauthorization of IDEIA (2004), school districts were allowed to use intervention models to identify students needing additional support, implement these research-based models, provide ongoing support throughout their academic year, continue to monitor their progress, and examine data to make evidence-based decisions (McIntosh, Campbell, Carter, & Dickey, 2009).

Like academic difficulties, behavior difficulties remain a concern for teachers as well as those who support public education. The severity of behavior problems continues to grow, as well as these types of behaviors contributing to poor school climate. Developing methods that will intervene in these problems as well as managing behavior will help decrease the waste of instructional time and increase the chances of student educational success

(Stewart, Benner, Martella, & Marchand-Martella, 2007). Without effective behavior implementation problems in place, schools can expect to observe their students exhibiting behavior problems.

### **Significance of the Problem**

School climate, which consists of the interactions between students and teachers, can have a positive or negative affect on academic achievement and performance. Student learning can often be impacted negatively when a teacher has to stop instruction to address student behavior (Koth, Bradshaw, & Leaf, 2008). When learning stops, not only is the student who is being addressed affected, but also other students in the classroom.

Pressure has increased on teachers and their students to perform due to high stakes teaching and legislation such as No Child Left Behind (2001). With an increasing number of behavioral challenges, teachers are being mandated to deal with classroom issues without the help of additional school resources. Teachers who struggle with behavior problems can become emotionally exhausted, which can cause the quality of their teaching and the relationships with their students to suffer (Pas, Bradshaw, Hershfeldt, & Leaf, 2010). As a result, teachers may be more likely to try to punish students as opposed to addressing the behaviors directly.

According to Rosas and West (2009), teachers historically have stated that student behavior has been one of their top concerns. Teachers want to maintain order in the classroom environment while providing high quality instruction. Disruptive behaviors from students can cause tremendous stress on teachers, can interfere with learning, and are a major reason why teachers leave the profession. Maintaining positive classroom environment is a challenge for novice and experienced teachers. Schools are expected to maintain safe learning environments because of the accountability placed on teachers for student academic achievement.

Many teachers find it difficult to maintain discipline in their classroom. Research has shown that teachers who use effective techniques to prevent classroom disruptions can find their students being more successful academically and socially. Techniques such as setting clear expectations, rewarding positive student behavior, and dealing directly with students who misbehave have shown to reduce classroom disruptions (Sadrudin, 2012). Students who are punished can be less motivated to complete work in the classroom.

Englehart (2012) stated teachers often develop ways to deal with student behavior based on past experiences. This can limit their belief system and make them feel they are better at managing student behavior than they actually are as a teacher. Professional development opportunities and intervention systems can help provide teachers with a systematic approach to addressing student behavior, making them better classroom managers and, thereby, making them better teachers. It can be as simple as clearly communicating expectations and enforcing boundaries in order to elicit the desired behaviors from students.

Teachers at the beginning of their careers appear to be the ones who struggle the most with student behavior. They can become inundated with behavior issues that can lead to them leaving the profession very early because they had often lacked the training necessary to deal with disruptive behaviors. Higher institutions of learning have started putting more emphasis on providing training in this area during coursework, but there appears to be gap between theory and practice. These teachers often develop this skill during student teaching and field experiences (Putman, 2009) and will often use their experiences in the field as opposed to what they learned in the classroom.

Brophy (2010) stated that in order for students to learn at optimal levels the classroom environment must be maintained. Teachers must model behaviors, set expectations and procedures, and exert pressure on students who do not comply. A classroom environment that is not managed is one where learning suffers and has teachers who are not teaching to the best of their ability. If students are to be successful in the classroom with their behavior, they must be given the tools necessary to define what is expected of them.

Academic achievement and student behavior are linked. Students who do not exhibit sociably accepted behaviors in the classroom may spend more time in the office and less time receiving instruction. This can have devastating consequences on their academic careers, especially for students who are repeatedly sent to the office, and can cause students to fall behind in their studies, which will affect their grades as well as their year-end test scores and, eventually, the chances of these students graduating high school (Kennedy & Swain-Bradway, 2012).

### **Guiding/Research Question**

The guiding research was as follows: What is the effect that PBIS had on the number of students sent to the office with a referral at Main Street Intermediate, a Title I School? The testable hypothesis was to determine if PBIS had made a significant difference in the number of office referrals in Main Street Intermediate School. The null hypothesis was PBIS had no significant effect on the number of office referrals in Main Street Intermediate School.

There is evidence to suggest, in the literature, that PBIS has been effective in reducing disruptive behaviors in students by promoting a positive school climate (Bradshaw et al., 2008). It provides schools consistent strategies to manage student behavior. This school-wide program can help the organizational health of

the school using a three-tiered system of supports. A program evaluation was a valuable resource to Main Street Intermediate making decisions about PBIS moving forward.

Although the literature has shown PBIS to be effective and in widespread use in schools across the nation, PBIS needs to be evaluated to determine if it is meeting the needs of school as well as the students. For example, looking at the office referrals can determine if the procedures and expectations that are in-place are reducing the number of students being sent to the office. This information can allow school-based PBIS teams to develop, implement, and monitor intervention activities. It can also identify problematic behaviors, the settings in which these behaviors are occurring, and assess pre- and post-behavior interventions (Clonan et al., 2007).

### **Research Design and Approach**

This project study was a quantitative program evaluation and the quasi-experimental design was pretest-posttest with no control group, and examined the difference PBIS had on the number of office referrals at Main Street Intermediate. Creswell (2012) stated how quantitative research is a method for testing objective theories by examining the relationship between variables. These variables can then be analyzed using statistical procedures. Quantitative researchers typically use an experiment or survey to collect data for the purpose of generalizing findings at the end of the study. Quantitative approaches include descriptive survey research, experimental research, quasi-experimental research, casual comparative or ex-post facto research, and correlational research. The approach in this project study was quasi-experimental research, which has a goal of testing a hypothesis to determine if a cause-effect relationship exists. The overall purpose is to determine whether a particular approach to doing something has improved on the traditional approach that has been used as standard practice (Lodico et al., 2010).

### **Setting and Sample**

Random sampling is typically used in quasi-experimental research, where participants are assigned randomly to one or more groups. Convenience sampling involves participants who were not selected at random and are already formed. A researcher would use this type of sampling because participants are available to be studied (Creswell, 2012). I used convenience sampling because the students were grouped by grade, and the office referrals were grouped by category. I focused on the third and fourth grade students from the 2010-2011 school year when PBIS was not implemented and the fourth and fifth grade students from the 2011-2012 school year, which were generally the same students, when PBIS was implemented. The number of referrals for the 2010-2011 school year served as the baseline data and was compared to the number of referrals for the 2011-2012 school year.

### **Instrumentation and Materials**

Data for this study were obtained from the Power School student information system, which contains all school discipline data. It is a web-based public information program that tracks student schedules, absences, grades, and other relevant student information needed by the school. I used this database to identify the sample and to calculate all disciplinary data associated with the sample. Specifically, I examined the data accumulated on the third and fourth grade students who were enrolled during the 2010-2011 school year and the fourth and fifth grade students enrolled during the 2011-2012 school year within the identified setting. I used the disciplinary data to determine the number of office referrals accumulated by the sample studied. The disciplinary data were separated and maintained by offense category, and then I compared to the preimplementation data to the postimplementation data.

### **Data Collection and Analysis**

The role of the researcher was that of an internal auditor who knew the language of the program and the school setting and knew how to access the data from the school's data tracking system. The independent variable was the PBIS program. The dependent variable was the number of office referrals for the third and fourth graders in a school year when PBIS was not implemented (school year 2010-2011) and also the following school year, when they became fourth and fifth graders and when PBIS was implemented (school year 2011-2012). The summative data collected was the number of office referrals for the third and fourth graders in a school year when PBIS was not implemented (school year 2010-2011) and also the following school year, when they became fourth and fifth graders and when PBIS was implemented (school year 2011-2012). This summative data was collected from Power School, the school's data tracking system.

For the purposes of this study, interval data were analyzed. The interval data collected were only the number of office referrals for the third and fourth graders from the 2010-2011 school year and the fourth and fifth graders from the 2011-2012 school year. The office referrals were broken down into categories: disrespect, refusal to obey, disturbing class, physical contact, fighting, profanity, disruptive behavior, and other. The categories were maintained and compared throughout each year to look for an increase, decrease, or no change at all. A statistical

test, specifically a paired *t* test, was used to determine if the implementation of PBIS reduced the number of students sent to the office with a referral by teachers from the sample size studied. A *t* test is a statistical test that is used to test the difference between two variables, one independent and one dependent variable. A significant *t* value will show that a true difference exists between the two variables (Lodico et al., 2010).

In Table 1, because the absolute value of the *t*-stat is greater than *t*-critical two-tail, or because the probability that the null hypothesis is true is smaller than the alpha, I rejected the null hypothesis that there is no statistical difference between the two data sets. P value is significantly smaller than 0.05. Based on this information, there is a significant difference between the office referrals of the third and fourth graders from 2010-2011 school year and the fourth and fifth graders from the 2011-2012 school year.

**Table 1**  
*T Test Paired Two Sample for Means for Office Referrals*

	2010-2011 school year 4 <sup>th</sup> and 5 <sup>th</sup> graders	2011-2012 school year
3 <sup>rd</sup> and 4 <sup>th</sup> graders		
Mean	74.125	33.5
Variance	1760.125	330.8571429
Observations	8	8
Pearson correlation	0.789149054	
Hypothesized mean Difference	0	
DF	7	
T STAT	3.859098606	
P(T<=T) One-Tail	0.003109373	
T Critical One-Tail	1.894578605	
P(T<=T) Two-Tail	0.006218747	
T Critical Two-Tail	2.364624252	

Table 2 contains the office referral categories and the total number of offenses in each for the third and fourth graders for the 2010-2011 school year and the fourth and fifth graders for the 2011-2012 school year.

**Table 2:** *Number of Office Referrals for Each Offense*

	2010-2011 school year 3 <sup>rd</sup> and 4 <sup>th</sup> graders	2011-2012 school year 4 <sup>th</sup> and 5 <sup>th</sup> graders
Disrespect	112	40
Refusal to Obey	131	50
Disturbing Class	74	57
Physical Contact	102	32
Fighting	87	46
Profanity	19	12
Disruptive Behavior	19	6
Other	49	25
Total Referrals	593	268

In order for the PBIS model to be successful, the school must be able to collect and track student behavior. A data collection system that tracks and monitors student behavior can include the location at which the behavior occurred as well as the time of day. A school team can then come up with a specific plan to target the behaviors exhibited by the students (McIntosh et al., 2010). The school’s ability to measure the social behavior of students and how it may affect student achievement is an essential part of the PBIS model (Bradshaw & Pas, 2011; Lannie, Coddling, McDougal, & Meier, 2010; McIntosh et al., 2010). The use of this data tracking system on office referrals can be used as an ongoing evaluation tool to measure student behavior that can be helpful in monitoring and developing interventions (Pas, Bradshaw, & Mitchell, 2011). The data are used to determine whether a student

is responding to universal supports or if the student may require more targeted support (Ennis & Swoszowski, 2011). Teachers can use office referral data to make decisions at the classroom level, and the school district can use this same data to make decisions at their level (Upreti, Liaupsin, & Koonce, 2010). This data will be helpful in making any changes in the implementation of PBIS.

#### **Assumptions, Limitations, Scope, and Delimitations**

The following assumptions were made regarding this doctoral study: (a) All data reported by the teachers and entered into the school's data tracking system, PowerSchool, were coded properly in reference to incident type; and (b) the school-wide PBIS plan was implemented with fidelity in the classrooms and grade levels used in this study.

A limitation of this study was the fact that data were collected from only one school in two different school years. The data gathered may only be applicable to this school and school district or other schools with the same size student population and demographics. Teacher differences, and how teachers implement PBIS in their classrooms, were also limitations to this project study. Teachers used positive reinforcements in their classrooms, but how much and how often varied from teacher to teacher.

The scope of this study was to complete a program evaluation of PBIS and the effect it had on the number of office referrals in this one school. The project study was delimited to office referral data taken from the same sample of students in two different school years. Therefore, generalizing the results beyond the local setting to larger populations and other schools who have implemented PBIS was limited. However, it may be possible to generalize the findings in other schools with similar student population, demographics, and similar office referral data.

#### **Protection of Participants' Rights**

Parental consent and student assent to conduct this study was not necessary because the data collection process was part of the normal procedures at Main Street Intermediate School. Student discipline data are routinely collected and analyzed by the PBIS committee. To protect the anonymity of the participants, it was possible for me to collect these data without obtaining any student names or other identifiable information. The school-wide discipline plan was implemented consistently across the school by all teachers in all grade levels.

This study was a program evaluation of positive behavioral interventions and supports (PBIS) to determine the effectiveness in reducing office referrals. This study was based on the research indicating the effectiveness of school-wide PBIS in reducing student office referrals, as well as suspensions and behavior problems, and in improving school climate (Bradshaw, Koth, Bevans, et al., 2008; Bradshaw, Koth, Thornton, et al., 2009; Bradshaw, Mitchell, & Leaf, 2010). In addition to evidence of the effectiveness of school-wide PBIS demonstrated in randomized controlled trials, statewide evaluations have also demonstrated favorable outcomes associated with PBIS (Barrett, Bradshaw, & Lewis-Palmer, 2008; Muscott, Mann, & LeBrun, 2008).

The theoretical framework associated with PBIS involves transformational theory. Transformational theory includes actions that empower, inspire, and encourage others to show their potential by acting as positive role models and leading by example through demonstration and inspiring others. Students can learn to think for themselves, have school leaders pay attention to their needs and celebrate their personal accomplishments (Wilson et al., 2012). Through individualized consideration, transformational theory involves acting with care, compassion, and empathy.

This program evaluation was used to determine a program's effectiveness to make recommendations in order to refine the program and evaluate its success (Spaulding, 2008). PBIS is a systematic program that creates a school-wide plan to manage student behavior in a positive way (Bradshaw et al., 2008). Research-based intervention models, such as PBIS, have been recommended as effective ways in decreasing behavior problems at schools. These models have demonstrated that schools can improve their behavioral support by identifying and instructing students on behavior expectations, providing positive reinforcement, and using data to track problem areas and to evaluate whether the school-wide plan is reducing office referrals (Crone et al., 2007).

The purpose of this study was to complete a program evaluation on PBIS and the effect it had on reducing the number of referrals at Main Street Intermediate. The results of this study can be used as a guide to help this school proactively and positively approach student behavior, as well as provide teachers with information in helping students exhibit desirable behaviors and decrease disruptive ones. The goal of this study was to submit the findings to serve as a basis for determining if and what types of changes needed to be made in regards to PBIS. Teachers who can effectively manage classroom behavior may find themselves more effective in their profession.

#### **Implications, Applications, and Directions for Future Research**

Future research could be applied to schools with similar population size and demographics that are implementing PBIS and could be replicated in other schools in the district. Another direction for research could be to continue to follow a school's number of referrals years after PBIS has been implemented to see if the number

of referrals stays the same, increases, or decreases. As with any program, teachers and school staff can become complacent and expect the same results.

In order for schools to be successful, classrooms need to have students who are, for the most part, compliant and teachers who are prepared to deal with disruptive behaviors when the need arises. Every day, teachers are faced with new challenges and are required to come up with ways to deal with these challenges. Any research that can contribute to a teacher's knowledge for addressing student behavior will be beneficial in the end and should be considered with academic rigor. Due to legislative efforts, schools can no longer afford to allow classroom management to affect academic achievement.

### Conclusion

When students exhibit disruptive behaviors, these students need to be identified and appropriate behaviors communicated to them. A school-wide behavior management plan with clear expectations and procedures can help affect disruptive students. It can also provide them tools to change their actions positively. Teacher praise can increase the number of students behaving appropriately in the classroom, thereby affecting how effectively teachers teach, and how successfully students learn. More time will ultimately be needed to determine the effectiveness of PBIS in the future. Although significant improvements were noticed in the number of students being sent to the office with a referral at Main Street Intermediate, changes and adjustments will be needed as school years come and go. Classroom management issues will always continue in schools, but if student behavior can be dealt with in a positive manner, and the data analysis continues, better days are ahead for all involved at Main Street Intermediate School.

### References

- Anderson-Ketchmark, C., & Alvarez, M. (2010). The school social work skill set and positive behavior support: A good match. *Children & Schools, 32*(1), 61-63.
- Barrett, S., Bradshaw, C., & Lewis-Palmer, T. (2008). Maryland state-wide PBIS initiative. *Journal of Positive Behavior Interventions, 10*, 1005-114.
- Becker, K., & Domitrovich, C. (2011). The conceptualization, integration, and support of evidence-based interventions in the schools. *School Psychology Review, 40*(4), 582-589.
- Bradshaw, C., Koth, C., Bevans, K., Ialongo, N., & Leaf, P. (2008). The impact of school-wide positive behavioral interventions and supports (PBIS) on the organizational health of elementary schools. *School Psychology Quarterly, 23*(4), 462-473.
- Bradshaw, C., Koth, C., Thornton, L., & Leaf, P. (2009). Altering school climate through school-wide positive behavioral interventions and supports: Findings from a group-randomized effectiveness trial. *Prevention Science, 10*(2), 100-115.
- Bradshaw, C., Mitchell, M., & Leaf, P. (2010). Examining the effects of school-wide positive behavioral interventions and supports on student outcomes: Results from a randomized controlled effectiveness trial in elementary schools. *Journal of Positive Behavior Interventions, 12*, 133-148.
- Bradshaw, C., & Pas, E. (2011). A statewide scale up of positive behavioral interventions and supports: A description of the development of systems of support and analysis of adoption and implementation. *School Psychology Review, 40*(4), 530-548.
- Bradshaw, C., Reinke, W., Brown, L., Bevans, K., & Leaf, P. (2008). Implementation of school-wide positive behavioral interventions and supports in elementary schools: Observations from a randomized trial. *Education & Treatment of Children, 31*(1), 1-25.
- Brophy, J. (2010). Classroom management as socializing students into clearly articulated roles. *Journal of Classroom Interaction, 45*(1), 41-45.
- Clonan, S., McDougal, J., Clark, K., & Davison, S. (2007). Use of office discipline referrals in school-wide decision making: A practical example. *Psychology in The Schools, 44*(1), 19-27.
- Creswell, J. W. (2012). *Educational research: Planning, conducting, and evaluating quantitative and qualitative research* (4th ed.). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Education.
- Crone, D., Hawken, L., & Bergstrom, M., (2007). A demonstration of training, implementing and using functional behavioral assessment in 10 elementary and middle school settings. *Journal of Positive Behavior Interventions, 9*(1), 15-29.
- Cuccaro, C., & Geitner, G. (2007). Lunch and recess: The "eye of the storm" using targeted interventions for students with behavioral problems. *Teaching Exceptional Children Plus, 3*(4), 1.
- Dee, T., & Jacob, B. (2011). The impact of No Child Left Behind on student achievement. *Journal of Policy Analysis And Management, 3*(3), 418-446.
- Engelhart, J. (2012). Five half-truths about classroom management. *Clearing House, 85*(2), 70-73.



- Ennis, R., & Swoszowski, N. (2011). The top 10 things to consider when implementing secondary-tier PBIS interventions. *Beyond Behavior*, 20(1), 42-44.
- Fairbanks, S., Sugai, G., Gardino, D., & Lathrop, M. (2007). Response to intervention: Examining classroom behavior support in second grade. *Exceptional Children*, 73(3), 288-310.
- Hawken, L., MacLeod, K., & Rawlings, L. (2007). Effects of the behavior education program (BEP) on problem behavior with elementary school students. *Journal of Positive Behavior Interventions*, 9, 94-101.
- Hawken, L., Vincent C., & Schumann, J. (2008). Response to intervention for social behavior: Challenges and opportunities. *Journal of Emotional and Behavioral Disorders*, 16(4), 213-225.
- Hershfeldt, P., Sechrest, R., Pell, K., Rosenberg, M., Bradshaw, C., & Leaf, P. (2009). Double-Check: A framework of cultural responsiveness applied to classroom behavior. *Teaching Exceptional Children Plus*, 6(2), 2-18.
- Jeloudar, S., & Yunus, A. (2011). Exploring the relationship between teachers' social intelligence and classroom discipline strategies. *International Journal of Psychological Studies*, 3(2), 149-155.
- Kennedy, M., & Swain-Bradway, J. (2012). Rationale and recommended practices for using homegrown video to support school-wide positive behavioral interventions and supports. *Beyond Behavior*, 21(2), 20-28.
- Killu, K., Weber, K., & Derby, K. (2006). Behavior intervention planning and implementation of positive behavioral support plans: An examination of states' adherence to standards for practice. *Journal of Positive Behavior Interventions*, 8(4), 195-200.
- Koth, C., Bradshaw, C., & Leaf, P. (2008). A multilevel study of predictors of student perceptions of school climate: The effect of classroom-level factors. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 100(1), 96-104.
- Lannie, A., Coddling, R., McDougal, J., & Meier, S. (2010). The use of change-sensitive measures to assess school-based therapeutic interventions: Linking theory to practice at the tertiary level. *School Psychology Forum*, 4(2), 1-14.
- Lodico, M., Spaulding, D., & Voegtle, K. (2010). *Methods in educational research: From theory to practice*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- McIntosh, K., Campbell, A., Carter, D., & Dickey, C. (2009). Differential effects of a tier 2 behavioral intervention based on function of problem behavior. *Journal of Positive Behavior Interventions*, 11(2), 82-93.
- McIntosh, K., Frank, J., & Spaulding, S. (2010). Establishing research-based trajectories of office discipline referrals for individual students. *School Psychology Review*, 39(3), 380-394.
- Miramontes, N., Marchant, M., Heath, M., & Fischer, L. (2011). Social validity of a positive behavior interventions and support model. *Education and Treatment Of Children*, 34(4), 445-468.
- Muscott, H., Mann, E., & LeBrun, M. (2008). Positive behavioral intervention and supports in New Hampshire. *Journal of Positive Behavior Interventions*, 10, 190-205.
- Noltemeyer, A., & Mcloughlin, C. S. (2010). Patterns of exclusionary discipline by school typology, ethnicity, and their interaction. *Penn GSE Perspectives On Urban Education*, 7(1), 27-40.
- Paciotti, K. (2010). Caring behavior management: The spirit makes the difference. *Delta Kappa Gamma Bulletin*, 76(4), 12-17.
- Pas, E., Bradshaw, C., Hershfeldt, P., & Leaf, P. (2010). A multilevel exploration of the influence of teacher efficacy and burnout on response to student problem behavior and school-based service use. *School Psychology Quarterly*, 25(1), 13-27.
- Pas, E., Bradshaw, C., & Mitchell, M. (2011). Examining the validity of office discipline referrals as an indicator of student behavior problems. *Psychology in the Schools*, 48(6), 541-555.
- Putman, S. (2009). Grappling with classroom management: The orientations of pre-service teachers and impact of student teaching. *Teacher Educator*, 44(4), 232-247.
- Reinke, W., Splett, J., Robeson, E., & Offutt, C. (2009). Combining school and family interventions for the prevention and early intervention of disruptive behavior problems in children: A public health perspective. *Psychology in the Schools*, 46(1), 33-43.
- Rosas, C., & West, M. (2009). Teachers beliefs about classroom management: Pre-service and in-service teachers' beliefs about classroom management. *International Journal of Applied Educational Studies*, 5(1), 54-61.
- Sadrudin, M. (2012). Discipline - Improving classroom management through action research: A professional development plan. *Journal of Managerial Sciences*, 6(1), 23-42.
- Skiba, R., Horner, R., Chung, C., Rausch, M., May, S., & Tobin, T. (2011). Race is not neutral: A national investigation of African American and Latino disproportionality in school discipline. *School Psychology Review*, 40(1), 85-107.
- South Carolina Department of Education (2012). Retrieved from <http://ed.sc.gov/agency/programs-services/173/PositiveBehaviorInterventionsandSupports.cfm>.

- South Carolina Department of Employment and Workforce (2012). Retrieved from [http://dew.sc.gov/documents/lmi-monthly-trends/August\\_2012.pdf](http://dew.sc.gov/documents/lmi-monthly-trends/August_2012.pdf).
- Spaulding, D. (2008). *Program evaluation in practice: Core concepts and examples for discussion and analysis*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publications.
- Stewart, R., Benner, G., Martella, R., & Marchand-Martella, N. (2007). Three-tier models of reading and behavior: A research review. *Journal of Positive Behavior Interventions* 9, 239-253.
- Sugai, G. (2008). *Update on PBIS*. Paper presented at the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) Director's Meeting, Washington DC.
- Upreti, G., Liaupsin, C., & Koonce, D. (2010). Stakeholder utility: Perspectives on school-wide data for measurement, feedback, and evaluation. *Education & Treatment of Children*, 33(4), 497-511.
- Wilson, A., Liu, Y., Keith, S., Wilson, A., Kermer, L., Zumbo, B., & Beauchamp, M. (2012). Transformational teaching and child psychological needs satisfaction, motivation, and engagement in elementary school physical education. *Sport, Exercise, And Performance Psychology*, 1(4), 215-230.
- Yeung, A., Mooney, M., Barker, K., & Dobia, B. (2009). Does school-wide positive behaviour system improve learning in primary schools? Some preliminary findings. *New Horizons in Education*, 57(1), 17-32.