

St. Cloud State University

The Repository at St. Cloud State

Culminating Projects in Child and Family
Studies

Department of Child and Family Studies

8-2023

Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports: Perspectives from Teachers and Support Staff

Chelsea Halseth

Follow this and additional works at: https://repository.stcloudstate.edu/cfs_etds

Recommended Citation

Halseth, Chelsea, "Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports: Perspectives from Teachers and Support Staff" (2023). *Culminating Projects in Child and Family Studies*. 45.
https://repository.stcloudstate.edu/cfs_etds/45

This Starred Paper is brought to you for free and open access by the Department of Child and Family Studies at The Repository at St. Cloud State. It has been accepted for inclusion in Culminating Projects in Child and Family Studies by an authorized administrator of The Repository at St. Cloud State. For more information, please contact tdsteman@stcloudstate.edu.

**Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports: Perspectives from Teachers and Support
Staff**

by

Chelsea M. Halseth

A

Starred Paper

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of

St. Cloud State University

in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

for the Degree of

Master of Science

in Early Childhood Special Education

August 2023

Starred Paper Committee:
Frances Kayona, Chairperson
Brittany Sullivan
Deborah Wheeler

Acknowledgements

This endeavor would not have been possible without my advisor, Frances Kayona for her invaluable time and patience with my completion of this Starred Paper. I would also like to express my deepest gratitude to Brittany Sullivan and Deborah Wheeler for being a part of my committee and offering insight and feedback during my research.

Many thanks to my co-workers for their encouragement, patience, and moral support throughout this three-year process. I am also grateful to St. Cloud State University library for providing past research for me to explore.

Lastly, I'd like to mention and send thanks to my family, especially my husband and children. Their encouragement and positive energy has kept me going; even on the days we were in the thick of things with a newborn.

Abstract

School staff members face challenging behaviors in school settings daily. There will be times when an educator will be exhausted and even perplexed when a challenging behavior occurs. In this Starred Paper, one evidence-based practice is closely examined to help reduce these challenging behaviors and it is called Positive Behavior Intervention and Supports (PBIS). The research focused on the manageability of PBIS strategies, the training provided to school staff, and the overall perspective on the effectiveness of PBIS strategies from teachers and paraprofessionals specifically. Research has shown repeatedly that the use of schoolwide PBIS improves the likelihood that students will engage in behavior that is effective, efficient, relevant, functional, and socially appropriate (Hill & Flores, 2013). Overall, the goal as teachers is to provide students with the skills, they need to be successful members of the community and the PBIS framework proves to be effective and malleable for each school or classroom to increase academic learning and decrease challenging behaviors.

Table of Contents

Chapter	Page
I: Introduction.....	6
Background of the Study.....	6
Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports.....	7
Rationale for the Study.....	8
Research Questions.....	9
Literature Search Description.....	9
Definition of Terms.....	10
II: Literature Review.....	12
Challenging Behaviors.....	12
Characteristics of K-5 Children.....	12
Academic Learning Disruptions.....	13
Behavioral Interventions.....	14
PBIS Program Overview and Development.....	15
Tiered Levels.....	16
Tier One Supports (Primary Supports).....	16
Tier Two Supports (Secondary Supports).....	17
Tier Three Supports (Tertiary Supports).....	17
Program Monitoring of PBIS.....	18
Professional Development for School Staff on PBIS.....	19
Staff Development for Teachers and Paraprofessionals.....	20
Resources and Support for PBIS.....	21

Chapter	Page
Manageability Utilizing Positive Behavior Intervention and Support.....	22
Learning Environment.....	23
School Culture.....	24
Literature Review Summary.....	25
III: Results.....	27
Conclusions.....	27
Recommendations for Future Research.....	29
Personal Reflections from the Field.....	30
References.....	32

Chapter I: Introduction

As the number of young children displaying challenging behaviors grows, so does the need to implement evidence-based practices that prevent challenging behaviors (Russel & VanNorman, 2010). School staff members face challenging behaviors in school settings daily. There will be times when an educator will be exhausted and even perplexed when a challenging behavior occurs. Schools are implementing intervention programs that are designed to address these types of behaviors. Therefore, this Starred Paper is written to examine the research literature on teacher and support staff perspective on Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS) to assist with mitigating challenging student behaviors.

Background for the Study

Challenging behaviors come in many forms and can express multiple functions. Challenging behaviors are defined as any behavior that interferes with a child's learning, engagement, and social interactions with peers or adults (Chazin & Ledford, 2016). Most educators understand that challenging behaviors affect their teaching and the academic achievement of all children in a classroom in which a challenging behavior is occurring. To address challenging behaviors educators must first understand the *function* of the behavior. What Chazin and Ledford (2016) ask when describing the function of a behavior is, "what is the child trying to access by engaging in the challenging behavior?" Otherwise stated, educators need to understand and ask themselves, what is the child trying to communicate (i.e., attention, avoidance, sensory, etc.).

Educators can turn to Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS) as a tool to decrease challenging behaviors in a school setting. PBIS is an evidence-based, three-tiered framework for improving and integrating all the data, systems, and practices affecting student

outcomes every day (Center on PBIS, 2023).

Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS)

Green, Robbins, and Bucholz (2019) found several systems of positive behavior support. The data has shown great promise for effectively establishing behavioral expectations and decreasing challenging behaviors in school settings when used consistently and properly among all staff members.

However, there is evidence that school staff members lack the knowledge needed to properly implement PBIS strategies. Beam and Gershwin Mueller (2017) suggest that poor outcomes for students with challenging behaviors can be attributed to a lack of educator knowledge about evidence-based practices. Evidence-based practices are defined as interventions, instructional strategies, or teaching programs according to Beam and Gershwin Mueller (2017). These evidence-based practices have been systematically researched and shown to make a positive difference in the behavior of children.

From the perspective of the current researcher, schools that have adopted the PBIS model, typically introduced in professional development settings, whether it is for administrators who then pass information to educators, or training for teachers, who then pass information to other staff members, etc., information can get lost in communication when passing through too many sources. If PBIS is to become a well-practiced system in a school setting to reduce challenging behaviors, professional development should be given directly to all staff, including paraprofessionals. This study is intended to inform the field of elementary education on the benefits of PBIS and the impact on school environments and teacher practices when addressing challenging behaviors among K-5 learners in a public-school setting.

Rationale for the Study

The need for this study is to examine the perspectives of teachers and paraprofessionals regarding positive behavior interventions and supports. Information from this study will assist school leaders in making decisions that more effectively support the implementation of PBIS as well as provide a better understanding of appropriate professional development and training for both teachers and those support staff that assist with the implementation of the PBIS program.

The purpose of this paper is to describe and understand the perspectives teachers and paraprofessionals have regarding PBIS and how manageable implementing PBIS strategies are. Given the popularity of PBIS and the increasing use in schools, it is important to know if this system is being implemented to positively impact student learning. For this to be realized, educators (teachers, paras, and administrators) must be given proper training. It is imperative that these educators are comfortable with the processes and procedures related to the effective implementation of PBIS while simultaneously addressing behaviors that are, at times, extremely challenging *and stressful*.

While there has been significant research about positive behavior intervention supporting teachers as subjects of research, there is a gap in the literature base from the perspectives of paraprofessionals. Paraprofessionals work closely with children who have challenging behaviors every day. Therefore, the purpose of this starred paper is to shed light on the training and implementation pieces of PBIS by including the views and opinions from paraprofessionals regarding the training they receive on PBIS, their perceptions of the impact and benefits, and the overall manageability with implementing PBIS.

Research Questions

The following research questions will help guide this starred paper literature review:

1. What perspectives do K-5 public school teachers and paraprofessionals have related to the overall effectiveness of positive behavior interventions and supports?
2. What perspectives do K-5 public school teachers and paraprofessionals have about the professional development they received on positive behavior interventions and supports?
3. How manageable are positive behavior interventions and supports for K-5 public school teachers and paraprofessionals in the school setting?

Literature Search Description

The articles, journals, and other research sources reviewed were retrieved from ERIC and Academic Search Premier databases. This paper provides a review of the literature on positive behavior interventions and support and research studies on perspectives from teachers on their use of PBIS. Much of the research on this topic has been conducted in the last 10 years and includes studies using non-experimental designs (Beam & Gershwin Mueller, 2017), case studies (Green et al., 2019; Pierce & Gershwin Mueller 2018), quantitative studies using survey designs (Garbacz et al., 2018), single-subject, multiple-baseline designs (Russell Carter & Van Norman, 2010), and qualitative narratives (Chazin & Ledford (2016). Search terms, such as *effects of Positive Behavior Support Systems, PBIS, perceptions from school staff using PBIS, paraprofessionals, challenging behaviors, problem behaviors, training, professional development, and manageability for utilizing PBIS strategies* focused the search for potential sources. This review of the literature on PBIS is organized into these main topics: challenging

behaviors, PBIS program overview and development, professional development for school staff on PBIS, and the manageability of PBIS for school staff.

Definition of Terms

Challenging Behaviors: “Behavior that interferes with or is at risk of interfering with the child’s optimal learning or engagement in prosocial interactions with peers and adults” (Division for Early Childhood, 2017, p. 2).

Positive Behavior Intervention and Supports (PBIS): “PBIS is a multitiered system of support that provides a framework for schools to organize behavioral prevention and intervention strategies to help all students” (Grasley-Boy et al., 2021).

Tier 1 Supports: Emphasizes modeling, teaching, and acknowledging positive social, emotional, and behavioral (SEB) skills (Center on PBIS, 2023).

Tier 2 Supports: More intensive targeted interventions that support specific individuals who are not responding to primary supports (Hill & Flores, 2013).

Tier 3 Supports: Interventions for specific students and involves conducting a functional behavior assessment (FBA) and developing a behavior intervention plan (BIP) for specific students (Hill & Flores, 2013).

Teacher Stress: “Teacher stress is a state of anxiety produced when events and responsibilities exceed one’s abilities to cope” (Jamil et al., 2021).

Paraprofessionals: “Many schools employ paraprofessionals to support student learning. The position is sometimes called a paraeducator, education assistant (EA), instructional assistant, or educational support person (ESP)” (Kuklinski, n.d.).

Functional Behavior Assessment: “A functional behavioral assessment (FBA) is a process schools use to figure out what is causing challenging behavior” (Lee, 2023).

Behavior Intervention Plan: “Written improvement plan created for a specific student based on the outcome of the functional behavior assessment” (When a BIP may be needed - Michigan, 2022).

Chapter II: Literature Review

This starred paper is focused on the perceptions among kindergarten through grade five teachers and paraprofessionals on positive behavior interventions and supports (PBIS). This study also examines the manageability or use of PBIS strategies when working with children who may experience challenging behaviors. Growing pressure on schools to provide safe and orderly learning environments has contributed to the increased adoption of prevention models at district and state levels (Bradshaw & Pas, 2011), such as the PBIS framework. The number of schools adopting school-wide positive behavioral interventions and support is increasing and projected to expand (McCurdy et al., 2019).

Challenging Behaviors

Before discussing PBIS programming, training, and implementation, a review of challenging behaviors among young adolescents should be noted. It appears that challenging behaviors are more prevalent in school settings than ever before, in both regular and special education classrooms. Green et al. (2019) state challenging behaviors are not only of concern for teachers but can also be detrimental to children's future academics and social success. Viewing behaviors as malleable offers opportunities to build and implement positive behavior supports, while viewing behavior as fixed renders both the teacher and student without tools for improvement (Jamil et al., 2021).

Characteristics of K-5 Children

Children grow and mature at different rates during school-age years, it is hard to identify what "normal" behaviors are (U.S. National Library of Medicine, 2016). During elementary years, parents or teachers begin to recognize behavioral problems in children and these behaviors can get worse as time goes on if no help is sought out early on (U.S. National Library of

Medicine, 2016).

Behavioral development of young children differs from kindergarten to fifth graders. Lying, cheating, and even stealing are all examples of behaviors that school age children may “try on” as they learn how to negotiate the expectations and rules placed on them by family, friends, school, and society (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2023). Some challenging behaviors are temporary and due to stress a child is experiencing such as; birth of a sibling, divorce, death in the family, etc. (U.S. National Library of Medicine, 2016).

Beam and Gershwin Mueller (2017) found teachers believe students with challenging behaviors are often the most difficult population to work with in schools due to noncompliance, and/or aggression, and extreme disrespectful behaviors. However, young children’s behavior must be viewed in the context of their relationships and is influenced by multiple factors: (a) children’s development, (b) children’s temperament, (c) environmental factors, and (d) socio-cultural factors (Division for Early Childhood, 2017, p. 3). Children need to have clear expectations around what behaviors are appropriate and not appropriate. Parents and school staff alike should praise for “good behavior” with a focus on what the child did, “you worked hard to figure this out” rather than on a trait, “you are smart” (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2023). Lastly, there should be a follow up discussion (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2023) with a child who demonstrated a challenging behavior so they are provided tools and ideas for how to act or react when presented with a challenging obstacle for them to maneuver around.

Academic Learning and Disruptions

Ineffective classroom management and difficulties resulting from inappropriate behavior have historically been contributing factors to other school-related issues, including reduced

academic achievement (Alter et al., 2013). Disruptive and challenging behaviors is widely recognized problem in the classroom and predicts several adverse outcomes in relation to education (Whear et al., 2012). Students lose about twenty minutes of instructional time per office discipline referral (challenging behavior) (Ryoo et al., 2018).

Chazin and Ledford (2016) say in the short-term, challenging behaviors lead to fewer social interactions, lesser academic engagement, and the diagnosis of emotional behavioral disorders. Chazin and Ledford (2016) also identify long-term effects of challenging behaviors in children that include putting children at risk for late academic dropout, criminal behavior, drug use, limited income and occupational success, and repeated patterns of failure.

Behavioral Interventions

As the number of young children displaying challenging behaviors grows, so too does the need to implement evidence-based practices that prevent these behaviors (Russell Carter & Van Norman, (2010). Positive Behavioral Intervention Support (PBIS) is an evidence-based practice commonly adopted by school organizations to address disruptive and challenging behaviors among students at all grade levels. Most behavioral intervention programs use some form of positive reinforcement to help change or alter undesirable behaviors, and these interventions tend to work on a universal (like Tier 1 of PBIS) classroom basis (Whear et al., 2012). For example, each teacher in a school building spends time teaching schoolwide rules to students and then acknowledges students who demonstrate school wide expected behaviors with “Gotcha” tickets; these tickets are earned by students throughout the school day and delivered by school staff (i.e. teachers, paraprofessionals, administrators, etc.) using behavior specific praise (i.e. “Lauren, I like the way you raise your hand”) (Hill & Flores, 2013).

Once a teacher chooses to begin an intervention (i.e. reward chart, positive feedback,

tablet, etc.) to change a challenging behavior, the positive or more desirable behaviors either maintained or increased gradually when the adaptations were made and self-monitored by the teacher in the classroom (Bruhn et al., 2018). An example of an intervention utilized in classroom settings is data-based individualization (DBI). DBI is ongoing progress-monitor data used to gauge students' responses to interventions and to determine when adjustments are needed (Bruhn et al., 2018). DBI is a continual process linking data to interventions to improve student outcomes by intensifying or adapting instruction for nonresponders (Tier 2 or 3 in the PBIS framework), continue a specific intervention as is, or fade an intervention if the student is responding and challenging behaviors are decreasing (Tier 1 in the PBIS framework) (Bruhn et al., 2018).

For data-based interventions to be a feasible and sustainable practice, teachers must be able to collect, interpret, and respond to behavioral data independently while ongoing professional development and coaching are critical to this practice, as many teachers are not adequately trained on data-based decision making, particularly as it relates to behaviors (Bruhn et al., 2018).

PBIS Program Overview and Development

Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS) is a non-curricular universal prevention model that draws upon behavioral, social learning, and organizational principles, targeting staff behavior to promote a positive change in students (Bradshaw & Pas, 2011). PBIS incorporates a multi-tiered framework to promote the adoption of evidence-based practices in schools to prevent and address problem behavior (McCurdy et al., 2019).

Tiered Levels

The PBIS model is three-tiered, which includes a layer of “primary supports,” Tier 1, implemented school-wide, a “secondary support”, Tier 2, level of targeted interventions for groups of children with greater needs, and a “tertiary support”, Tier 3, layer of more intensive support for individual students (Bradshaw et al., 2008). This starred paper is centered around Tier 1 supports due to the malleable nature of Tier 1 supports.

Tier One Supports (Primary Supports)

Core features of Tier 1 PBIS include a) three to five positively stated expectations that apply to all students and staff and are operationally defined and explicitly taught across settings, b) a system for reinforcing appropriate behaviors, c) a continuum of responses for inappropriate behaviors that match the severity of the behavior, and d) frequent review of behavioral data (Grasley-Boy et al., 2021).

Tier 1 implementation of PBIS involves creating a school-wide behavior management system that includes explicit instruction on behavioral expectations along with strategies to reinforce those expectations and respond to inappropriate behaviors (Grasley-Boy et al., 2021). Tier 1 supports may include but are not limited to preference assessments, verbal reinforcement, or tangible reinforcement (i.e. positive notes home) (Hill & Flores, 2013). Preference assessments or reinforcer sampling, involves presenting potential reinforcers (i.e. koosh ball or stickers) non-contingently and observing which choices the individual selects and then that reinforcer item is used to promote appropriate behaviors (Hill & Flores, 2013).

Tier 1 PBIS strategies have been implemented extensively and evaluated in public schools for over 20 years and evidence that Tier 1 PBIS can increase academic outcomes in public school settings is emerging (Grasley-Boy et al., 2021).

Tier Two Supports (Secondary Supports)

Secondary supports are more intensive targeted interventions that support specific individuals who are not responding to primary supports (Hill & Flores, 2013). Tier 2 supports include but are not limited to check-in, check-out system (CICO), self management, and social skills instruction (Bruhn et al., 2018).

A rather popular intervention is the CICO intervention. This intervention has several studies that include effective data based adaptations for responders such as reducing the amount of feedback provided to students, varying the schedule of reinforcement, and raising behavior goals incrementally. For non responders of the CICO intervention, effective adaptations have included adding a midday check in and extra support (Bruhn et al., 2018).

Another popular Tier 2 intervention is self-monitoring. Self-monitoring is a cognitive-behavioral strategy requiring students to think about and record their behaviors and has proven to improve self-regulation skills across Kindergarten-Twelfth grade students (Bruhn et al., 2018).

Tier Three Supports (Tertiary Supports)

Tier 3 supports are for specific students who do not respond to Tier 1 or Tier 2 supports and involve conducting a functional behavior assessment (FBA) and developing a behavior intervention plan (BIP) for specific students (Hill & Flores, 2013). A diagnostic functional behavior assessment (FBA) may be recommended; the assessment results can be used to develop or select different and more intense Tier 3 interventions (Bruhn et al., 2018). A functional behavioral assessment (FBA), typically completed by a school psychologist, is a process schools use to figure out what is causing challenging behavior and leads to developing a plan with strategies to improve the challenging behavior (Lee, 2023). The FBA tries to figure out what's causing the problem or challenging behavior; steps of the FBA include defining the challenging

or problem behavior, why is it happening, gather information as to where or when the behavior occurs, how often the behavior occurs, and finally decide if the student is trying to escape or avoid times of day, people, activities, etc. (Lee, 2023). The development and step by step process of an FBA offers interventionists a systematic method for tailoring interventions to students' individual needs by developing a behavior intervention plan (BIP) (Bruhn et al., 2018). A behavior intervention plan (BIP) is a written, typically by a school psychologist, improvement plan created for a student based on the outcome of the FBA and specifies the actions to take to improve or replace the negative behavior from a specific student (When a BIP may be needed - Michigan, 2022). A BIP includes a definition or description of the problem behavior (specific to each child), why the problem behavior is occurring (information gathered during the FBA process), and how to replace the problem behavior using positive strategies to encourage acceptable behavior (When a BIP may be needed - Michigan, 2022).

Program Monitoring of PBIS

The developers of PBIS created a formal school-wide evaluation tool (SET) as a measure of the degree to which schools are implementing the key features of PBIS (Bradshaw et al., 2008). The SET is typically completed annually by a trained external observer, typically someone from the PBIS training cohort involved in school trainings, who assesses the following seven key features: Expectations Defined (three to five positive school-wide behavioral expectations are defined); Behavioral Expectations Taught (these expectations are taught to all children in the school); System for Rewarding Behavioral Expectations (rewards are provided for meeting the behavioral expectations); System for Responding to Behavioral Violations (a consistently implemented continuum of consequences for problem behavior is in place); Monitoring and Evaluation (behavior patterns are monitored and the information is used for

ongoing decision-making); Management (an administrator actively supports and is involved in the PBIS effort, and a comprehensive school-wide behavior support team is formed); and District-Level Support (the school district provides support to the school in the form of functional policies, staff trainings, and data collection opportunities) (Bradshaw et al., 2008). The results of the SET will provide schools with a measure of the proportion of features of the PBIS framework that are 1) not targeted or started, 2) in the planning phase, and 3) in the implementation/maintenance phases of development toward a systems approach to school wide effective behavior support (Center on PBIS, 2023). Other research has shown that there are several other forms of PBIS assessments that can be completed at classroom levels, Tier specific, surveys, checklists, etc. and they can be found directly on the PBIS website, for free alongside the SET tool to check for fidelity across all areas, grade levels, and age levels that are implementing PBIS.

Professional Development for School Staff on PBIS

Pierce and Gershwin Mueller (2018) found that educators in school settings face unique challenges to meet academic and behavioral needs of all their students. Many qualified teachers report a lack of training in managing disruptive behaviors within the classroom and cite it as a common source of stress or burn out (Whear et al., 2012). The same study suggests that optimizing teachers' skills in the promotion of appropriate behaviors in children may also increase academic achievement (Whear et al., 2012), as described in the PBIS framework.

Professional development interventions focus on increasing teacher knowledge of effective classroom strategies and addressing specific interpretations of challenging behaviors, such as that which is taken in Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (Jamil et al., 2021). Identifying the most prevalent challenging behaviors has the potential to impact pre-service and

in-service teacher trainings and to build skills that increase academic achievement and decrease problematic behaviors is likely the gateway that leads to providing teachers with other strategies to engage learners at a higher rate and decrease challenging behaviors within the classroom (Alter et al., 2013).

Staff Development for Teachers and Paraprofessionals

A study about Improving Teacher Implementation done by Russell Carter and Van Norman suggests that teachers and paraprofessionals do not have the training or resources to implement research-based strategies in school settings. Without explicit administrative and organizational support, staff members may be reticent or under-skilled to engage in the daily implementation of PBIS practices (Swain-Bradway et al., 2013).

Research shows there are some challenges educators face with the implementation of PBIS strategies. Interviewees mentioned the lack of systems for (1) staff training, (2) prioritizing resource allocation, (3) merging initiatives, and (4) managing collaboration with outside agencies (Swain-Bradway et al., 2013). Garbacz et al., (2018) found that funding and staffing are a challenge in implementing evidence-based practices. Another study, done by Pierce et al., (2018) found schools, rural schools, continue to face minimal financial support and personnel resources, making implementation of complex systems challenging. These factors lead to fewer professional development days for educators to learn, practice, and ask questions about PBIS strategies. Veteran teachers are able to rely on their experience to move through complex steps and multiple layers of the intervention processes while interventions can present challenges to new teachers who are juggling multiple professional responsibilities for the first time (Vostal & Mrachko, 2019). Newer teachers must rely on their university training to help them manage the demands of teaching, classroom management, and establishing themselves as professionals.

(Vostal & Mrachko, 2019). To meet the needs of reducing challenging behaviors, educators must be innovative and lean heavily on the implementation of an evidence-based practice, such as PBIS.

Teachers also neglect to remember children with challenging behaviors are often receiving a substantial portion of their instruction from paraprofessionals who do not require any tertiary or specialized training and often learn while on the job (Beam & Gershwin Mueller, 2017). It is important that all educators in schools' settings teach the same evidence-based practices, to ensure all children receive the same support from educator to educator and room to room during their school day. Variations in teachers' interpretations of challenging behaviors also suggest the need for, and perhaps an avenue towards, more individualized professional development (Jamil et al., 2021) for teachers, paraprofessionals, and school staff. A learner-centered professional development approach enhances personal growth and collaboration, allowing teachers to actively apply constructive knowledge in the educational environment (Hill & Flores, 2013).

Resources and Support for PBIS

PBIS is low cost, given that many of the training and implementation materials are free through the National PBIS Technical Assistance Center, which is funded by the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Special Education Programs (Bradshaw & Pas, 2011). The process of providing professional development, or training, should be contextualized within school operations to have the greatest desired result of implementation (McCurdy et al., 2019). Any form of professional development, didactic training should be accompanied by guided practice and onsite coaching with feedback loops (McCurdy et al., 2019).

Coaching or consultation in the classroom helps ensure the practices learned in training

are used in everyday settings (Division for Early Childhood, 2017, p. 5). A PBIS coach stated during an interview, “People (educators) are trained repeatedly on the basics and to the point where when the teachers come through the program (PBIS framework), it is just a part of their repertoire. It is not a technique anymore; it is just the way they do business” (Swain-Bradway et al., 2013, p. 43). High quality training includes defining the practice, discussing the theory or research behind it, demonstrating the practice and providing opportunities for practice with feedback (Division for Early Childhood, 2017, p. 5). Explicit training in the development and application of the key school-wide PBIS systems, as well as assistance from a behavior support coach in the shift toward positive behavior management approaches, are likely to result in more substantial gains in school-wide PBIS implementation (Bradshaw et al., 2008).

Manageability Utilizing Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports

Educators' lack of confidence in handling challenging behaviors appears to be slim. During interviews of teachers done by Beam and Gershwin Mueller (2017), they found teachers of students with challenging behaviors often lack even the basic certification knowledge and skills required to meet the unique needs of students. Arbuckle and Little’s findings are consistent with other studies that have shown that lower teacher confidence levels are associated with higher levels of difficulty in terms of teachers’ ability to teach and manage difficult students (Aldabbagh et al., 2022). It has been suggested that the Covid-19 Pandemic has had a considerable influence on children and adolescents behavior and mental well being (Musa & Dergaa, 2022).

A challenge educators face is commitment to the implementation of PBIS strategies. If educators are unable to practice and manipulate training to meet the needs of their own classrooms, while the trainer is present for questions, how effective can the training be for

educators? Pierce and Gershwin Mueller (2018) found inconsistencies during his case study of data-based guidelines for implementing a multitier system. They noted inconsistent implementation across levels of schools, with higher levels of implementation at the elementary level and lower levels of implementation at the high school level. This study also proves that the overused day professional development session model, otherwise noted as the “train and hope” practices, does not work efficiently (Pierce & Gershwin Mueller, 2018).

However, based on past research, there seems to be a positive relationship between the use of PBIS and the implementation from educators. Teaching and modeling schoolwide positive behavior supports at the staff level informs and involves teachers in the PBIS process by implementing the principles in the classroom with their students while also experiencing PBIS for themselves as a member of the teaching community (Hill & Flores, 2013). A study completed by Hill and Flores (2013) surveyed twenty three teachers and all twenty three individuals found modeling PBIS to be valuable when developing behavior expectations and helped them understand their roles as teachers in the process. Green et al. (2019) found that systems of positive behavior support have shown great promise for effectively establishing behavioral expectations and decreasing challenging behaviors in school settings.

Learning Environment

Teaching is one of the most stressful occupations, often due to the emotional investment of managing and caring for a classroom of students (Jamil et al., 2021). Managing student’s problem behaviors in the classroom is a difficult challenge for many teachers (Wink et al., 2021). However, a study completed by Houchens et al. (2017) regarding The Impact of PBIS on Teacher Perceptions of Teaching Conditions and Student Achievement found that when school wide PBIS implementation occurred with high-fidelity, teachers perceptions of managing

challenging behaviors was more positive than negative and there was an increase in academic achievement in students.

A single-subject multiple baseline study was conducted by Russell Carter and Van Norman (2010) about Improving Teacher Implementation through Consultation, investigated the effects of consultation on teachers' implementation of universal PBIS practices and children's academic engagement. This study found that all teacher participants agreed that the consultations about PBIS in their own classrooms had a positive impact on the desired classroom outcomes (Russell Carter & Van Norman, 2010). When educators can practice evidence-based practices within their own classrooms and situations, it appears to work best over sitting in a large room with multiple other educators while someone talks to you about evidence-based practices. Similarly, in a case study completed by Green et al. (2019), who studied positive behavioral interventions and supports, maximizing the universal Tier (Tier 1) found teachers need to be intentional and systematic in their use of supportive strategies to be successful with implementation.

School Culture

PBIS aims to alter the school environment by creating improved systems and procedures to promote positive changes in staff and student behavior in all school contexts (Bradshaw & Pas, 2011). In addition, the PBIS framework is flexible and compatible with the culture and climate of each implementing school or district (Bradshaw & Pas, 2011). Usage of school wide positive behavior interventions and supports emphasizes unity of staff expectations regarding student behavior, the proactive teaching of positive behaviors, and tiered, data-driven system of interventions (Houchens et al., 2017).

Collaboration is essential to addressing challenging behavior because young children

often receive services and support across different settings and therefore interact with a variety of adults (Division for Early Childhood, 2017, p. 6). Some school-based interventions have begun taking shape to include more support and training for school staff that focus on school staffs' attributions for children's problem behaviors (Wink et al., 2021).

Meeting the needs of behaviorally-challenging students can be especially difficult even with the wide range of classroom behavior management tools and strategies available to teachers and schools (Wink et al., 2021). Incorporating various perspectives—with the aim of establishing and delivering a consistent intervention plan—increases the likelihood that plans will be effective and sustainable (Division for Early Childhood, 2017, p. 6) Teachers must have the necessary culture and support from the school administration to reduce stress and be successful in implementing behavioral interventions, such as PBIS (Wink et al., 2021).

Literature Review Summary

Overall, it appears that experiences with challenging behaviors and how to alter or decrease such behaviors is understudied and there appears to be minimal training for school staff. It seems that it is an expectation that teachers are utilizing their own versions of Tier 1 PBIS strategies in their classrooms. Therefore, schools and districts are not requiring or requesting professional development sessions or training when it comes to reducing challenging behaviors in school settings.

The research had minimal findings regarding what, if any, training is provided to paraprofessionals directly rather than second hand learning from a licensed professional (teacher). It should be noted that paraprofessionals typically spend more time with students 1:1 than teachers do and paraprofessionals do provide direct instruction to students under the direction from a licensed professional (teacher).

When different interventions are implemented, some teachers do so without any prior knowledge regarding challenging behaviors, such as reward charts, prize boxes, positive praise, etc. Previous research has proven that many teachers rely on past experiences and their classroom management skills taught during university to be ready and equipped to handle challenging behaviors in their classrooms. However, the research has also shown that when PBIS strategies are implemented, challenging behaviors decrease in the classroom, and therefore more academic teaching and learning is able to happen.

Chapter III: Results

This writer has gathered information regarding positive behavior interventions and supports (PBIS), the training for school staff members, the manageability of implementation, and the overall effectiveness of PBIS from the perspectives of teachers and paraprofessionals specifically. Research has shown time and time again that the use of schoolwide PBIS improves the likelihood that students will engage in behavior that is effective, efficient, relevant, functional, and socially appropriate (Hill & Flores, 2013). It appears to be rare that teachers need to move from Tier 1 supports, as most children respond to this level of behavior intervention strategies of the PBIS framework. However, the PBIS framework provides next steps to intervene when specific students are in need of a more intense or individualized behavior intervention to begin the reduction of the challenging behaviors and increase academic learning.

Conclusions

This literature review was guided by these three questions:

1. What perspectives do K-5 public school teachers and paraprofessionals have related to the overall effectiveness of positive behavior interventions and supports?

Green et al. (2019) found that systems of positive behavior support have shown great promise for effectively establishing behavioral expectations and decreasing challenging behaviors in school settings. Another study completed by Houchens et al. (2017) regarding “The Impact of PBIS on Teacher Perceptions of Teaching Conditions and Student Achievement” found that when school wide PBIS implementation occurred with high-fidelity, teachers’ perceptions of managing challenging behaviors was more positive than negative and there was an increase in academic achievement in students.

2. What perspectives do K-5 public school teachers and paraprofessionals have about the professional development they received on positive behavior interventions and supports?

Many qualified teachers report a lack of training in managing disruptive behaviors within the classroom and cite it as a common source of stress or burn out (Whear et al., 2012). Children with challenging behaviors are often receiving a substantial portion of their instruction from paraprofessionals who do not require any tertiary or specialized training and often learn while on the job (Beam & Gershwin Mueller, 2017). It is important that all educators in schools' settings teach the same evidence-based practices, to ensure all children receive the same support from educator to educator and room to room during their school day.

3. How manageable are positive behavior interventions and supports for K-5 public school teachers and paraprofessionals in the school setting?

During a study about improving teacher implementation of PBIS, researchers found that all teacher participants agreed that consultations about PBIS in their own classrooms had a positive impact on the desired classroom outcomes (Russell Carter & Van Norman, 2010). When educators can practice evidence-based practices within their own classrooms and situations, it appears to work best over sitting in a large room with multiple other educators while someone talks to you about evidence-based practices. Similarly, in a case study completed by Green et al. (2019), who studied positive behavioral interventions and supports, maximizing universal supports (Tier 1), found teachers need to be intentional and systematic in their use of supportive strategies to be successful with implementation. There was very little research regarding paraprofessionals

perspectives regarding PBIS and its manageability while working with children in the school setting.

Recommendations for Future Research

1. Research Including Paraprofessionals

The researcher began this study by investigating already completed research on PBIS. The literature review focused on effectiveness of implementation, how to implement, and why to implement PBIS strategies. What past research lacked was descriptions from current educators, teachers, and paraprofessionals, using PBIS strategies in school settings. This study aims to close the gap between who implements PBIS by including paraprofessionals and understanding their perceptions of PBIS strategies.

2. Research Regarding Who Receives Formal PBIS Trainings; Teachers, Paraprofessionals, Administrators, All of the Above, etc.

There are numerous studies regarding PBIS, its implementations, and challenges included. However, there is a gap in the research in who receives training and implements PBIS strategies. This descriptive survey will enable other educators to see how PBIS strategies are currently used in school settings and in similar situations with challenging behaviors.

If and when this study is completed, it will be interesting to discover whether teachers and paraprofessionals are comfortable and confident using PBIS strategies in school settings. The knowledge discovered from this proposed study will expand the literature on the actual practices of PBIS strategies. If teachers and paraprofessionals indicate they are comfortable and confident with implementing PBIS strategies, this information would provide teachers and/or administrators an evidence-based practice to add to our toolboxes when handling challenging behaviors or working to prevent them.

Personal Reflections from the Field

While the research suggests that implementation of Tier 1 supports of the PBIS framework decreases challenging behaviors, the research does not fully support that staff members including teachers and paraprofessionals feel they are equipped with the tools and training to properly implement interventions and strategies.

Challenging behaviors are becoming more common in the school setting. I currently work with children 3-5, and the amount of aggressive behavior, negative verbal language used, and property destroyed this school year (2022-2023) alone is excessive. These children are disruptive to peers and the disruption interferes with a teacher's ability to teach academics. I know my team does not have proper training on how to de-escalate these types of challenging behaviors nor staffing to be present for these children.

From my perspective as a previous paraprofessional, I never received formal training on how to decrease challenging behaviors or how to implement PBIS strategies in the school I was working in. Any and all information I received was third hand; a teacher who went to a professional development conference provided by the district informed me about the school beginning to adopt the PBIS framework and how to implement Tier 1 supports and interventions. As a current special education teacher, I have been in the field for almost five years, not once have I received training on how to decrease challenging behaviors through the two different districts I have worked for. This is a problem. The districts want us, as teachers and paraprofessionals, to work as a team and teach academics while counteracting challenging behaviors, but we do not attend training or professional development together as a team; teachers attend a training and paraprofessionals attend a different training, if they are invited to a training at all. Districts need to provide training for all staff in their buildings so everyone is hearing,

implementing, practicing, and understanding all the components of the PBIS framework to work at decreasing challenging behaviors.

Coming from a district where I did receive at least third hand information regarding PBIS, Tier 1 supports, I do have some tools in my pocket to try when approaching a child demonstrating a challenging behavior. The overall ability to adapt and use what I have observed, learned through discussions, and tried over the last five years, allows me to easily implement PBIS strategies for students with challenging behaviors. PBIS supports can be as specific as I need them to be or very open ended for all students as needed. For example, I have implemented a classroom reward (Tier 1 support) for showing expected behaviors (based on “BEE” rules that were set upon on the first day of school), and I have implemented child specific reward charts (Tier 2 support) for remembering to raise a hand rather than blurting, or even helped develop a behavior plan (Tier 3 support) for a child who was eloping from a classroom.

From my experience and based on past research, the PBIS framework has been and can be implemented with little to no real training, but for the purposes of working as a team and providing consistency for all children in a school building, it is best practice to receive the proper training and provide that training to all staff members in school buildings. Teachers also feel that the traditional “train and hope” method is outdated and being able to practice and discuss specific behavior situations lead them to be more willing to implement training and continue with implementation. Overall, the goal as teachers is to provide students with the skills they need to be successful members of the community and the PBIS framework proves to be effective and malleable for each school or classroom to increase academic learning and decrease challenging behaviors.

References

- Aldabbagh, R., Glazebrook, C., Sayal, K., & Daley, D. (2022). Systematic Review and meta-analysis of the effectiveness of teacher delivered interventions for externalizing behaviors. *Journal of Behavioral Education*. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10864-022-09491-4>
- Alter, P., Walker, J., & Landers, E. (2013). Teachers' Perceptions of Students' Challenging Behavior and the Impact of Teacher Demographics. *Education & Treatment of Children (West Virginia University Press)*, 36(4), 51–69. <https://doi-org.scsuproxy.mnpals.net/10.1353/etc.2013.0040>
- Beam, H., & Gershwin Mueller, T. (2017). What do educators know, do, and think about behavior? An analysis of special and general educators' knowledge of evidence-based behavioral interventions. *Preventing School Failure*, 61(1), 1-13.
doi:10.1080/1045988X20161164118
- Bradshaw, C. P., Mitchell, M. M., & Leaf, P. J. (2009). Examining the Effects of Schoolwide Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports on Student Outcomes. *Journal of Positive Behavior Interventions*, 12(3), 133-148. doi:10.1177/1098300709334798
- Bradshaw, C. P., & Pas, E. T. (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. <https://doi-org.scsuproxy.mnpals.net/10.1080/02796015.2011.12087528>
- Bradshaw, C. P., Reinke, W. M., Brown, L. D., Bevans, K. B., & Leaf, P. J. (2008). Implementation of School-Wide Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) in Elementary Schools: Observations from a Randomized Trial. *Education & Treatment of Children (West Virginia University Press)*, 31(1), 1–26. <https://doi->

[org.scsuproxy.mnpals.net/10.1353/etc.0.0025](https://doi-org.scsuproxy.mnpals.net/10.1353/etc.0.0025)

Bruhn, A. L., Rila, A., Mahatmya, D., Estrapala, S., & Hendrix, N. (2018). The effects of data-based, individualized interventions for behavior. *Journal of Emotional and Behavioral Disorders*, 28(1), 3–16. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1063426618806279>

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2023, February 23). *Child development basics*.

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Retrieved March 19, 2023, from <https://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/childdevelopment/facts.html>

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2023, February 23). *Child development basics, Middle Childhood*. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Retrieved March 19, 2023, <https://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/childdevelopment/positiveparenting/middle.html>

Center on PBIS. (2023). Retrieved February 24, 2023, from <https://www.pbis.org/>

Chazin, K.T. & Ledford, J.R. (2016). *Challenging behavior as communication*. Evidence-based instructional practices for young children with autism and other disabilities. Retrieved from <http://ebip.vkcsites.org/challenging-behavior-as-communication>

Division for Early Childhood. (2017). *Position Statement on Challenging Behavior and Young Children*. Council for Exceptional Children.

Garbacz, A., McIntosh, K., Vatland, C., Minch, D., & Eagle, J. (2018). Identifying and Examining School Approaches to Family Engagement within School wide Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports. *Journal of Positive Behavior Interventions*, 20, 127-137. doi:10.1177/1098300717752318

Grasley-Boy, N. M., Reichow, B., van Dijk, W., & Gage, N. (2021). A Systematic Review of Tier 1 PBIS Implementation in Alternative Education Settings. *Behavioral Disorders*, 46(4), 199–213. <https://doi-org.scsuproxy.mnpals.net/10.1177/0198742920915648>

- Green, K., Robbins, S., & Bucholz, J. (2019). Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports: Maximizing the Universal Tier for Young Children with or At Risk for Disabilities. *Young Exceptional Children*, 22(1), 6-19.
- Hill, D. A., & Flores, M. M. (2013). Modeling positive behavior interventions and supports for preservice teachers. *Journal of Positive Behavior Interventions*, 16(2), 93–101.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/1098300713478665>
- Houchens, G. W., Zhang, J., Davis, K., Niu, C., Chon, K. H., & Miller, S. (2017). The Impact of Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports on Teachers' Perceptions of Teaching Conditions and Student Achievement. *Journal of Positive Behavior Interventions*, 19(3), 168-179. doi:10.1177/1098300717696938
- Jamil, F. M., Emerson, A., McKown, G., & Stephan, A. T. (2021). The Struggle is real: An Investigation of Preschool Teachers' Perceptions of Students' Challenging Behaviors Through Reflective Writing. *Early Childhood Education Journal*, 50(8), 1395–1405.
<https://doi-org.scsuproxy.mnpals.net/10.1007/s10643-021-01267-1>
- Kuklinski, W. (n.d.). *Paraprofessionals*. MN Department of Education. Retrieved February 24, 2023, from <https://education.mn.gov/mde/dse/para/>
- Lee, A.M.I. (2023, February 3). *What is functional behavioral assessment (FBA)?* Understood. Retrieved April 28, 2023, from <https://www.understood.org/en/articles/functional-assessment-what-it-is-and-how-it-works>
- McCurdy, B. L., Empson, D. N., Knoster, T., Fluke, S. M., & Grant, C. A. (2019). School resource officers and schoolwide PBIS: Considerations for training. *Preventing School Failure*, 63(4), 317–324. <https://doi-org.scsuproxy.mnpals.net/10.1080/1045988X.2019.1605970>

- Musa, S., & Dergaa, I. (2022). A Narrative Review on Prevention and Early Intervention of Challenging Behaviors in Children with a Special Emphasis on COVID-19 Times. *Psychology Research & Behavior Management, 15*, 1559–1571. <https://doi-org.scsuproxy.mnpals.net/10.2147/PRBM.S354428>
- Pierce, C., & Gershwin Mueller, T. (2018). Easy as A-B-C: Data-Based Guidelines for Implementing a Multi-tiered System of Supports Into Rural Schools. *Rural Special Education Quarterly, 37*, 183-191. doi:10.1177/8756870518777850
- Russell Carter, D., & Van Norman, R. (2010). Class-Wide Positive Behavior Support in Preschool: Improving Teacher Implementation Through Consultation. *Early Childhood Education Journal, 38*(4). doi:10.1007/s10643-010-0409-x
- Ryoo, J. H., Hong, S., Bart, W. M., Shin, J., & Bradshaw, C. P. (2018). Investigating the effect of school-wide positive behavioral interventions and supports on student learning and behavioral problems in elementary and middle schools. *Psychology in the Schools, 55*(6), 629–643. <https://doi-org.scsuproxy.mnpals.net/10.1002/pits.22134>
- Swain-Bradway, J., Swoszowski, N. C., Boden, L. J., & Sprague, J. R. (2013). Voices from the Field: Stakeholder Perspectives on PBIS Implementation in Alternative Educational Settings. *Education & Treatment of Children (West Virginia University Press), 36*(3), 31–46. <https://doi-org.scsuproxy.mnpals.net/10.1353/etc.2013.0020>
- U.S. National Library of Medicine. (2016, March 11). *Child Behavior Disorders*. MedlinePlus. Retrieved March 19, 2023, from <https://medlineplus.gov/childbehaviordisorders.html>
- U.S. National Library of Medicine. (2016, April 14). *Child development*. MedlinePlus. Retrieved March 19, 2023, from <https://medlineplus.gov/childddevelopment.html>
- Vostal, B. R., & Mrachko, A. A. (2019). Describe it: A strategy for teacher candidates

implementing behavior interventions. *The Clearing House: A Journal of Educational Strategies, Issues and Ideas*, 92(3), 78–84.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/00098655.2019.1579696>

Whear, R., Thompson-Coon, J., Boddy, K., Ford, T., Racey, D., & Stein, K. (2012). The effect of teacher-led interventions on social and emotional behaviour in primary school children: A systematic review. *British Educational Research Journal*, 1–38.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/01411926.2011.650680>

When a BIP may be needed - Michigan. (2022, February). Michigan Department of Education.

Retrieved April 28, 2023, from <https://www.michigan.gov/->

[/media/Project/Websites/mde/specialeducation/familymatters/FM1/BIP_FactSheet.pdf?rev=6dc5853e921640a0b15200d6facadfd8](https://www.michigan.gov/-/media/Project/Websites/mde/specialeducation/familymatters/FM1/BIP_FactSheet.pdf?rev=6dc5853e921640a0b15200d6facadfd8)

Wink, M. N., LaRusso, M. D., & Smith, R. L. (2021). Teacher empathy and students with problem behaviors: Examining teachers' perceptions, responses, relationships, and burnout. *Psychology in the Schools*, 58(8), 1575–1596. <https://doi->

[org.scsuproxy.mnpals.net/10.1002/pits.22516](https://doi-org.scsuproxy.mnpals.net/10.1002/pits.22516)