School-Wide Positive Behavior Support
Within a Tier I Response to Intervention Framework

A thesis presented
by
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to
The School of Education

In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Education

in the field of
Education

College of Professional Studies
Northeastern University
Boston, Massachusetts
February 2013
Abstract

This research study examined the effectiveness of a Tier I Response to Intervention (RtI) program for school-wide positive behavior support (SWPBS) in an urban northeastern school. It was designed to ascertain the effectiveness of this character program in promoting positive behavior growth of middle school students. In addition, it evaluated the perceptions of faculty regarding the implementation and effectiveness of this program as a school-wide positive behavior support model. The research questions that guided this study were:

1) To what extent did the application of the positive behavior support program impact behavioral performance of middle school students at a northeastern, United States public school?

2) What were the perceptions of the staff regarding the impact of the positive behavior support program on students’ behavior?

An evaluation research design was used, and data were collected from office discipline referrals before and during implementation using a quantitative approach. The second question was answered using a combination of quantitative and qualitative approaches, which included a survey with a Likert-type scale with open-ended responses. T-tests and Cronbach’s alpha were used during statistical analysis. Key findings of this study include that the program supports positive behavioral growth; however, the integrity of the implementation of the program influences its effectiveness. Although this study was conducted at a suburban middle school, the findings may be useful to school systems seeking to implement a school-wide positive behavioral support model in their school.

Keywords: Response to Intervention (RtI), school-wide positive behavior support (SWPBS), developmental theory, locus of control, self-regulation
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Chapter I: Introduction

A middle school teacher, who has designed an innovative and engaging lesson, approaches her classroom, optimistic that she will be able to have students’ thinking skills extend beyond the classroom. Children take their seats, and the lesson begins; however, within five minutes of Ms. Miller’s presentation, a restless student interrupts.

“This sucks! When’s lunch?” Mark blurts unabashedly.

Remaining focused, Ms. Miller continues with the lesson only to find that Mark has encouraged similar disruptive behavior from Michael and Samantha, a disruption that soon swells into a chorus of bad behavior for the entire class. The period spirals out of control and another class has gone by without a meaningful lesson. The educational process becomes thwarted as the learning environment is hurled into confusion and disorder.

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Classroom teachers across the country are challenged with ensuring that all students have access to both academic and behavioral supports (Horner, Sugai, & Anderson, 2010; Muhammad, 2009; Noell, et al., 2005; Sugai, Lewis-Palmer, Todd, & Horner, 2001; Wolfe & Mash, 2008). Sandomierski, Kincaid, and Algozzine (2007) point out that the 1997 reauthorization of the federally mandated Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) includes language that emphasizes the importance of school-wide positive behavior support (SWPBS). Individual school-wide positive behavior support is a decision-making framework geared toward providing the structures to “establish and maintain an effective, efficient, and relevant social culture in which teaching and learning are maximized” (Sailor, Dunlap, Sugai, & Horner, 2008, p. 307). School-wide positive behavior support (SWPBS) is geared toward the
idea that all members of a particular district have a shared idea of what the social and behavioral expectations are (Horner et al., 2010).

In an attempt to ensure student needs are being met in this area, legislators created legal requirements. The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act federal law requires school personnel to intervene and support all students’ social and emotional growth within a positive school climate whether they are identified as students with a disability or not (IDEA, 2004). Theorists define school climate using four aspects: teacher-to-student relations, student-to-student relations, the extent to which students are included in decision making, and the extent to which staff provide clear, consistent, and fair rules and regulations (Way, Reddy, & Rhodes, 2007). Response to Intervention (RtI) is the process by which teachers implement research-based strategies to respond to behavior and academics designed to meet specific learner needs. Through the RtI process, teachers are required to monitor learner progress with regard to behavior and academics and adjust instruction based on the student’s responsiveness (Shores & Bender, 2007). The image created below (Chart 1) illustrates the school-wide positive behavior support systems, within an RtI framework. This is a support model intended to facilitate social emotional success for 80% to 90% of the students within a Tier I level of support. More targeted interventions are developed to support the remaining 1% to 15% of the students by further evaluating responsiveness to interventions and providing support with Tier II and III interventions (Netzel & Eber, 2003).
Chart 1

**Continuum of Effective Behavior Support**

- **1-5%**
  - Students requiring more specialized intensive intervention

- **5-15%**
  - At risk students requiring additional support

- **80-90%**
  - All students in school-wide behavior support model

Scientific Research Based Intervention (SRBI) is used in the State of Connecticut as a requirement of the educational process (McQuillian, et al., 2008). This term, used synonymously with Response to Intervention, encompasses the areas of academics and behavior. When
systems are in place to assist students with their behaviors, students are in a better position for their individual learning to take place (Christenson, Reschly, & Wylie, 2012).

An important aspect of behavioral development is that of character development. As Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King once said, “intelligence plus character – that is the goal of true education” (Foundation, 1999, p. 410). A single act of kindness and thoughtfulness does not define character, but it is what we exercise consistently that expresses who we are. Foundation (1999) attests that acquiring character is an evolving development that requires strategic and thoughtful guidance. Through the RtI framework, school employees implement research-based practices that integrate social and emotional development within the core curriculum in an effort to provide a consistent structure for growth (Fuchs & Fuchs, 2006). It is for this reason that researchers need to examine and study methods in order to determine if these interventions encourage effective behavior, as well as academic support for all students.

One such approach to providing behavioral support is a structured character program. The program examined in this research study, which will be referred to as the positive behavior support program, was created by Earl Brown in 1984 (Brown, 2012) with input from his class of special needs students. Brown was seeking a behavior support system where all members of the class would feel supported in a respectful climate. The positive behavior support program in this study, which has evolved based on contributions from educators, parents, and students, is supported in over 162 districts across the United States (Brown, 2010). This program is a school-wide behavior program designed to provide all staff and students a framework through which to teach, guide and maintain good character. Lickona (2004) describes good character as one exhibiting virtues such as honesty, justice, courage, kindness and compassion. The program is an intervention to achieve the goal for all students to behave appropriately by knowing their
expectations in every class and throughout the school. Creating consistency benefits the children and the staff at the school (Sugai, & Horner, 2006). The design of this character program provides consistency of expectations for all stakeholders.

In addition, the intent of the positive behavior support program is to promote the development of a student’s internal locus of control (Brown, 2010). Locus of control is a “personality construct referring to an individual’s perception of the locus of events as determined internally by his or her own behavior versus fate, luck, or external circumstances” (North Central Regional Educational Laboratory, 2007, p. 1). Internal locus of control is an individual’s belief that outcomes are primarily the result of one’s own behavior or actions (Trevino & Nelson, 2010). External locus of control is an individual’s belief that outcomes are the results of fate or chance. Trevino and Nelson (2010) support the idea that individuals who have a tendency toward an internal locus of control are more likely to make ethical behavior choices.

Understanding and taking responsibility for one’s behavior is only one solution to addressing behavioral concerns. School personnel struggle with addressing behavioral problems for many reasons. A primary problem is the claim that the school environment is reactive and controlling (Horner, Sugai, & Anderson, 2010; Netzel & Eber, 2003) and focuses on carrying out punitive actions rather than teaching students how to appropriately behave in different environments throughout the school. Positive behavior support and school-wide positive support systems are designed to be preventive, positive and proactive, not reactive (Horner, Sugai, & Anderson, 2010; Netzel & Eber, 2003). The positive behavior support program examined in this research study is a positive behavior support model conceived as a school-wide intervention process to ensure positive character development while cultivating a child’s sense of internal locus of control (Brown, 2003, p. 2).
The superintendent of schools of the urban northeastern Connecticut school where this case study research was conducted first introduced the positive behavior support program in 2006 into the district. His previous district implemented this program and, based on his experience, the superintendent advised the staff at this school to consider implementation of the program (Finn, personal communication, February 4, 2013). The current district is located in a northeast urban community with a population of about 50,000 people. One board of education oversees the functions of the three middle schools in the community. The middle school of focus has a principal, an assistant principal, and about 61 state certified teaching professionals. Since that first introduction, there has been a significant staff turnover, coupled with the changes in student population. With this turnover, the program lost momentum. Currently, public policy (IDEA 2004 and NCLB 2001) has renewed the need for the implementation of programs such as this.

The goal of this research study was to examine the effectiveness of the positive behavior support program in an urban northeastern United States school. The school has an enrollment of 563 students from sixth to eighth grades. In this study, staff members continued to implement the program based on previous training in an effort to improve the overall culture of the school with regard to student behavior. The research study evaluated the effectiveness of this program within the constructs of a Response to Intervention framework as a core means for improving student behavior through positive behavior support intervention. Through a triangulated research study, which utilized pre and during-study office disciplinary referral data and a faculty survey using a rating scale and open-end questions (Appendix E) of the program, assumptions were made.
**Problem of Practice**

Pressured by public policy over the past decade, specifically the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB) and 2004 Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), Public Law 108–446, educators have been focusing attention on ways to improve the public education of our children. This effort is supported through the lens of standardized testing as a means to determine if a student and/or school is making Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) (NCLB, 2001).

George Sugai, Director of the Center for Behavioral Education & Research, and colleagues believe that with the implementation of researched-based interventions behavior and academic standards established by states will be achieved (Horner, Sugai, & Anderson, 2010; Muhammad, 2009; Noell, et al., 2005; Sugai, Lewis-Palmer, Todd, & Horner, 2001; Wolfe & Mash, 2008).

As a result of this legislation, “(w)e are asked to create a functional system in which every child could learn and would learn, despite the many obstacles and the myriad of tasks necessary just to be functional” (Muhammad, 2009, p. 12).

Current research frequently references the political framework of NCLB (2001) and IDEA (2004) as the bases for researching methods that ensure children are responding to academic, social and behavioral interventions (Bohanon, Flannery, Malloy & Fenning, 2009; Harlacher, Walker, & Sanford, 2010; Lewis, Jones, Horner, & Sugai, 2010). These laws mandate that school based staff implement educational programming that is evidenced-based (Hawkins & Heflin, 2011; IDEA, 1997, 2007; NCLB, 2001). In return, this has caused many schools to implement a positive behavior support system. The number of schools implementing multi-tiered positive intervention support has doubled from over 5,000 schools in 2006 (Sugai & Horner, 2006) to over 10,000 in 2011 (Uperti, Liaupsin & Koonce, 2011).
Positive behavior support lies within the framework of a data-driven, systemic RtI methodology (Fuchs & Fuchs, 2006). The impetus for this intervention framework stems from public policies (Bolman & Deal, 2011) encompassing the idea that all children must be provided with an individually responsive education (Bohanon et al., 2009). RtI is a tiered early intervention system in which the intent is to assist the practitioner in deciding what constitutes effective behavioral instruction for all students, some of whom need varying levels of support (Fuchs & Fuchs, 2006). It is the viewpoint of modern day theorists that this can only be determined through the intentional analysis of data driven decision-making (Crockett & Gillespie, 2007). With the application of a combination of research-based strategies and progress monitoring, educators can determine if the social/behavioral instruction is appropriate for a given child’s educational needs (Bender & Shores, 2007).

A positive behavior support model guides the facilitator in teaching students appropriate behavior in a constructive manner (Sandomierski, Kincaid, & Algozzine, 2007). In addition, facilitators teach students effective ways to address a situation when someone misbehaves towards them (Brown, 2010). Sugai and Horner (2009) state the RtI approach offers an umbrella of guiding principles. School-wide positive behavior support models are an example of the application of an RtI model, which utilizes the principles of a tiered support model by establishing a formal system of behavioral support for all students (Sugai & Horner, 2009).

When the legislation set the goal for every child to be successful academically and behaviorally, educators and researchers needed to devise practical strategies to help children reach their maximum potential. RtI focuses on both the academic and behavioral areas of concern; however, a greater emphasis in the research has been on academics and academic measures. A limited number of research studies have focused on behavior supports within an RtI
framework (Horner et al., 2010). This research study will examine a program designed to address behavioral support.

It is important to look at the behavioral dimension of an educational environment because discipline problems can be an overwhelming obstacle that affects an educator’s ability to succeed, to say nothing of a student’s sense of achievement and stability (Wolfe & Mash, 2008). The intent behind positive behavioral support is to shift the culture of a school’s behavioral intervention model from reactive to a preventive and positive focus (Brown, 2010). This system of support is designed so all staff and students have a shared idea of what the social and behavioral expectations are in the school community (Horner et al., 2010). It is also important to conduct further research in order to determine the efficacy of interventions and the sustainability of SWPBS implementation to determine if the intervention is followed by improvements in student behavior and whether or not it is grounded in research (Horner et al., 2010).

**Intervention in Need of Research**

This research study focused on the effect of the implementation of a positive behavior character program (Brown, 2010) as reported by teachers to determine the extent to which this method assists staff in meeting the expectations of state and federal guidelines for improving overall student behavior. One component of a positive behavior support system addresses the developmental needs of the learner (Sugai & Horner, 2006). The positive behavior support program examined in this research study is one of many programs designed to guide staff in teaching positive behaviors rather than punishing students because of negative behaviors (Brown, 2003). For example, rather than waiting to address a behavioral issue on the bus after it occurs, students are taught appropriate bus behavior at the beginning of the school year.

Embedded in this positive behavior support program is the understanding that faculty will teach
behavioral expectations in all school environments including on the bus, in the hall or in the classroom. The method and frequency of this instruction are dependent on the needs of the individual learners (Brown, 2010). However frequent, the one guiding principle throughout the program remains: “No one has the right to interfere with the safety, learning, and well-being of others” (Finn, personal communication, November 6, 2010).

**Program Outline**

Students requiring reminders of expected behaviors are guided through a scaffolding of steps of the positive behavior support program (see Appendix F and G, “The Program Manual” and permission to use copyrighted material). During Step One, a child is asked to remove herself or himself from the immediate learning environment without actually leaving the classroom. Step One is honored in a private nonjudgmental manner by informing the student that he or she has chosen Step One and by stating the undesirable behavior. The time spent on Step One allows the child an opportunity to reflect on her or his behavior. Prior to returning to the learning activity, the student is expected to state the offending behavior and that he or she is ready to return. When a child chooses Step One, the teacher would state, for example, “Step One for calling out.” He or she is then expected to move quietly to a seat away from the direct learning environment. After a brief opportunity for the child to reflect and gain control, the teacher privately asks what behavior made them choose Step One. These steps are designed to help a student begin to self-regulate her or his behavior by first recognizing the offending behavior.

**Step One through Step Three**

Three are a progression of redirection, likened to a series of time-outs, when a student needs further guidance with their behavior (see Appendix G). Students can progress through Step One, Two, and Three before choosing Step Four, depending on the level of support the child needs. If
a child chooses Step Four through her or his actions, he or she is in essence asking for a parent to help her/him with her/his behavior. At that time, the child calls her or his parent(s) and requests that they come to school for a conference between themselves and the adult who is helping the child to overcome the undesirable behavior. During this conference, the child explains to the parent(s) the behavioral choices he or she has made. The parent(s) and teacher guide the child through alternative ways of behaving before the parent(s) make(s) the decision as to whether the child is ready to return to class or not (Brown, 2010).

This positive behavior support program was designed to achieve a positive behavior support system with the goal of providing a structure for students to take responsibility for their own behavior through a class period point system. This self-assigned point system applies to the entire school community, teachers and students alike. With the goal of getting students to demonstrate positive character and responsibility, the point system stresses academic and behavioral expectations. At the beginning of each class period, the teacher reviews the expectations. Teachers communicate and model the desirable behavior as often as necessary for the students to understand the stated expectation. At the end of the period, the teacher closes by modeling her or his own points earned. By doing so, the teacher reflects on not only the lesson taught, but also her or his own character demonstrated during the class. Then, each student has the opportunity to reflect verbally on what was learned and how her or his behavior supported or compromised the learning, safety, and well-being of everyone. At the end of the day an individual knows if he or she “made their day” if they did not lose more than 11 points. Through these self-assigned points, students are intrinsically motivated to take responsibility for their actions. If a student requires help in understanding how her or his actions negatively influence
the environment, any caring participant can pose a concern towards that individual (Brown, 2010).

The overarching philosophy of this positive behavior support program is to promote an internal locus of control in the student. As stated earlier, an individual with an internal locus of control understands that the ability to control his or her own actions comes from within. Brown (2010), the program creator, states that maintaining the dignity of each of its participants and teaching students responsibility are essential. Brown notes that students are guided through the decision-making process, yet they are also allowed to learn through successes and failures experienced in the character education program (Brown, 2010). This research employs a triangulation of data to examine this program using office referral data, pre- and post-study data and staff perception survey to determine if the program has a positive influence on student behavior.

Concurrently, student data regarding disciplinary referrals at this same middle school were used to study the effectiveness of the program as it relates to office level intervention. A combination of these research methods enabled the researcher to explore whether or not student behavior improves with the implementation of this behavior program. This study afforded the researcher the opportunity to collect data from office referrals pre- and post-study and staff perceptions with the use of a survey. A comparison of office disciplinary referrals from previous years to those collected during this research was evaluated in an effort to determine in what ways they differ.

**Research Questions**

This study was guided through the use of the following overarching research questions:
3) To what extent did the application of the positive behavior support program impact behavioral performance of middle school students at a northeastern, United States public school?

4) What were the perceptions of the staff regarding the impact of the positive behavior support program on students’ behavior?

Theoretical Framework

Developmental and control theories provide lenses for the design of this research study in an effort to determine if, theoretically, the program meets the intent of the federal mandate for supporting students in their developmental growth. Developmental theory, specifically Vygotsky’s zone of proximal development (ZPD) (Vygotsky, 1978), provides insight into how to guide students in their development through a constructivist approach that allows the learner to create new learning in a supportive environment. This approach assists in the influence of character in each learner as respectable character attributes develop (Vygotsky, 1978).

Additionally, control theory, specifically locus of control (Bandura, 1997), provides an analytical lens to use in researching a school-wide positive behavior support model. Determining the best method to guide students in positive behavior acquisition requires a critical view of who should be or needs to be in control in the school environment (Bandura, 1997). It is through the perspectives of developmental theory and control theory that educators may gain a better appreciation of the implementation of behavior support interventions.

Developmental Theory. Developmental Theory, as applied to children in the school setting, stems from the thinking of psychologist Lev Vygotsky. Vygotsky believed that adults should not dictate what they want a child to learn; rather, they should orchestrate a child’s education. It is through this orchestrated planning and modeling that a child will come to
develop academic and social skills. Planning an intentional education is critical. Vygotsky believed that the child learns by interacting with their environment. Vygotsky (1978) understood that learning should coincide with a child’s developmental level. All of these variables, the child, the teacher, the social environment and the child’s developmental readiness, are necessary in guiding a child through the complexity of academic and social learning (Vygotsky, 1997).

Developmental theory is used to identify the level at which a child can perform without assistance (Vygotsky, 1978). Vygotsky’s zone of proximal development theory (Vygotsky, 1978) is defined as “the distance between the actual developmental level as determined by the independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers” (p.86). This theory supports the implementation of Response to Intervention with children who are struggling with a specific skill, in need of special education services based on a disability or gifted and in need of a more enriching learning experience (Moll, 2004). Vygotsky (1978) supported the idea that by understanding a child’s zone of proximal development educators would be able to advance a child’s learning. Developmental stages are a relevant and fundamental concept whether it is for academic or behavioral growth (Mennuti, Freeman, & Christner, 2006; Siegler, DeLoache, & Eisenberg, 2006). Staff members who recognize the functional levels of an adolescent will avoid a trial and error approach to providing appropriate interventions (Mennuti et al., 2006). Vygotsky (1997) stated, “the teacher is powerless to produce immediate effects in the student, he is all-powerful when it comes to producing indirect, mediated effects in him through the social environment” (p. xxiii). The connection to RtI is that the process involves providing tiered instruction that allows for a gradual removal of support as the child progresses towards an autonomous level of understanding (Stylianou, Blanton, & Knuth, 2009). This
scaffolding of support in the child’s environment, leading to self-sufficiency, addresses the challenging stages of adolescent development (Wolfe & Mash, 2008). Although Vygotsky (1997) did not use the term scaffold, he emphasized the need to consciously support the individualization of a rigorous and engaging education for children by layering instruction towards their learning goals. This idea of structured scaffolding, which considers the developmental needs of its learners, is beneficial when examining the research related to behavioral interventions.

In a classroom that consists of adolescents, many crises can occur. Peer pressure, physical appearance, depression, eating disorders, suicide, identity issues, postsecondary decisions, sexual choices, wanting to belong, and not wanting to be noticed are some of the potential issues that enter these classrooms (Karten, 2009). Karten (2009) states that, to avoid adolescent frustration, teachers are encouraged to recognize the need to honor cognitive and emotional differences by providing levels of instruction within each student’s zone of proximal development. “Moral imperfection,” as Vygotsky called it, challenges the idea that there is a “conditional relationship” that affects a child’s decision-making process. Adults should provide children with “…redoubled social attention, and quadrupled educational influences from the direct environment” (Vygotsky, 1997, p.230) and not enforce external power. Vygotsky’s research further supports the idea of inclusion in that he believed that the more involved a child is in a socially supported environment within an inclusive setting, the greater the chance of “preserving” or “transforming the child’s character” (p.231).

Vygotskian research conveys that individual adult action supports an individual child’s cognitive development (Miller, 2009; Vygotsky, 1978). As cited in Novack and Pelaez (2004), Vygotsky places importance on the social environment in facilitating the development of a child.
Communication between adult and child within their environment help to develop a child’s moral judgment. Piaget (2007) supports the thinking that self-regulatory behavior comes after a child has developed the skills to internalize the function of her or his behavior. The RtI theory embraces the zone of proximal development, social scaffolding, and cultural tools that a child has developed (Siegler, 2006). Determining a child’s responsiveness to intervention requires a critical look at both the adult’s and the child’s behavior and how they respond to each other (Hamburg & Hamburg, 2004). Davydov and Kerr (1995) state that “authentic teaching/learning and upbringing come through collaboration by adults with children and adolescents” (p. 13). By understanding the stages of development, educators can guide children to a higher levels of learning while implementing researched based interventions. A skilled practitioner uses prompts, discussion, modeling, and explanation to guide their students through the zones of development (Vygotsky, 1978, 1997) as they are developing character.

When examining the research regarding the development of a young person’s consciousness and human personality, it is critical to consider Vygotsky’s views on social emotional development (Vygotsky, 1978, 1997). Viewing the concept of developmental readiness through Vygotsky’s research helps to better understand the problems related to a student’s struggle with managing her or his own behavior. Vygotsky’s views provide a framework for adults to gain an understanding of how to support students in a school setting (Lickona, 2004).

Control Theory. Vygotsky’s theory of zone of proximal development does not stand alone as a theoretical lens for this research study. Vygotsky (1978) explained that a child will and must self-regulate her or his behavior and not receive punishment or threats as a means to find control. This thinking leads to control theory, a second theoretical lens through which to
view research on student behavior in the middle school setting. The belief that all behavior is a constant attempt to satisfy the needs or desires to survive, reproduce, belong and love is fundamental to control theory; central to it all are the needs or desires to gain power (Butchart & McEwan, 1998; CCAD, 1989). As stated earlier, the locus of control is a “personality construct referring to an individual’s perception of the locus of events as determined internally by her or his own behavior versus fate, luck, or external circumstances” (North Central Regional Educational Laboratory, 2007, p.1). Control theory merits examination of how behavior is most influenced and governed within the school setting.

Curwin, Mendler, and Mendler, (2008) stated that 70 to 90% of discipline problems are rooted in places outside the school environment. Despite the sense of helplessness educators may have when it comes to controlling external factors, 10 to 30% of the factors that teachers can control will have a positive impact on the lives of children (Marzano, Marzano, & Pickering, 2003). School-based staff members have the power and the responsibility to teach children more than the content of curriculum; they should also teach them about positive behavior, life choices and their effect on others (Marzano et al., 2003). Positive behavior intervention is about educators taking the time to “teach parenting-type skills” (Marzano et al., 2003, p.12), so students will have the self-control to acquire an understanding of positive character (Curwin et al., 2008). Foundation (1999) informed his readers that the parent is a child’s first character educator but that character development is evolving. In Foundation’s (1999) opinion, character development is a life-long process and it is critical for character education to be supported in the school environment. These “parenting-type skills” become a shared responsibility of parents and teachers.
Foundation (1999) indicated that parents reported that a teacher can be a positive role model and a parenting-type figure. He further contended that the school environment can and should be an extension of the home environment. This thinking indicates that teachers, at least from an emotional perspective, are in a role similar to that of a parent within the context of the classroom. Bowlby (2011) stated that a deep and enduring emotional bond can connect one person to another across time and space. This bonding effect can help students respond to a teacher in a positive way, allowing a teacher to guide a child’s social competence (Bowlby, 2005). Students should be given an autonomous opportunity to become self-regulated learners.

Another term used synonymously with locus of control is self-regulated learning (SRL). “This term refers to the self-directive process through which learners transform their mental abilities into task related academic skills” (Zimmerman & Schunk, 2012, p. 1). In return, when a student is able to do so, classroom behavior is well managed due to the engagement the student has created for herself or himself. “…Self-theorists generally assume that behavior is motivated, at least in large part, by inherent self-fulfillment or self-development goals and goals for self-determination or personal control” (Zimmerman & Schunk, 2012, p.110). In addition, students should be given a voice and reflect upon the choices they make (Karten, 2009). Ingrained in SWPBS is the idea that we should teach children how to handle the multitude of social nuances of society so that they may become independent productive members of society (Novak & Pelaez, 2004). This learning is built on a foundation of a positive, respectful, and trusting relationship in which interventions can develop and thrive (Mennuti et al., 2006).

In order for self-regulated learners to be reflective, they are encouraged to learn to monitor their actions. Mace and Kratochwill state that self-monitoring is a multistage process involving the observation and recording of one’s own behavior (as cited in Deci, Vallerand,
Pelletier, & Ryan, 1991). Deci et al., (1991) argue in favor of establishing an environment where self-determined behaviors are judged through an intrinsic self-evaluation process. Positive behaviors are engaged in because they are judged important for a valued outcome on a personal level. Learners who reflect and self-evaluate are given the opportunity to change their strategy if the desired outcome was not obtained.

Students need to develop internal locus of control (Glasser, 1986). Providing the opportunity to make choices helps students feel they are in control. Adults can provide a structure in which students feel a sense of power over their actions. Glasser (1986) stressed the importance of placing the responsibility on the learner for his or her own behavior. Solid behavior intervention programs support instructional settings that have the advantage of allowing students to take responsibility for their actions in a respectful manner while making room for individual differences and levels of maturity (Karten, 2009; Mennuti et al., 2006). Student morale can increase when guided in a respectful manner through the social decision making process when positive behavior interventions are evaluated through the lenses of accountability and control theory (Sorrells, Rieth, & Sindelar, 2004).

In summary, developmental and control theory complete the understanding of the intricate components behind the philosophy of positive behavior support as they relate to adolescent students. It is through the lens of developmental factors and control theory that research regarding the sustainability of positive behavior support, such as in the positive behavior support program, will contribute to an understanding of methods to improve student behavior through a school-wide effort. The theoretical framework discussed in this section helped to develop the research design, survey questions, and to draw reasonable conclusions based on the findings of this evaluation research.
Chapter II: Literature Review

Organization Statement

When reviewing the literature about the effects of positive behavior support on student behavior, it is necessary to explore this approach at the middle and high school levels to determine its sustainability. This review will focus on the philosophies of our forbearers who support the concept behind the Response to Intervention model and the role of positive behavior support within that model as informed by the postulates made by intellect Lev Vygotsky and his views on the Zone of Proximal Development (1978). The focus of this Literature Review will be on the works that address positive behavior support within a Response to Intervention educational system, and will evaluate that system’s overarching philosophy that if the right interventions are in place, students will meet with success. Research has targeted efforts to understand the best method for helping students at all developmental levels acquire skills for optimal behavior (Good, 2008) and to become productive members of society (Bohanon et al., 2009; Turnbull et al., 2002). Additionally, fidelity of any initiative is a critical component of measuring its effectiveness (Foorman & Moats, 2004). In order to deem a program effective or ineffective, the evaluators must be confident that it is being implemented as it was intended (Foorman & Moats, 2004). The claims found concerning positive behavioral supports within an RtI educational system in the literature will be evaluated in this review.

Fidelity of Program Implementation

In many of the studies reviewed, the need for fidelity in implementation of the program was emphasized as being central to its success (Dane & Schneider, 1998; Hord, Rutherford, Huing-Austin & Hall, 1987; Mowbray, Holter, Teague, & Bybee, 2003). Fidelity of implementation is traditionally defined as the extent to which the intervention is implemented as
designed (Hord et al., 1987). Fidelity of implementation can be differentiated into two primary categories: a) fidelity of structure (i.e., adherence and exposure); and, b) fidelity of process (i.e., program differentiation, quality of delivery and responsiveness) (Dane & Schneider, 1998; Mowbray et al., 2003). Research supports evidence-based practices as the root to effective instruction (Erdem & Demirel, 2007; Hawkins & Heflin, 2011; Myers, Simonsen, & Sugai, 2008; Sprague et al., 2008). Sprague and colleagues (2008) make many suggestions for selecting evidence-based practices. Two of the issues to consider are the evidence of effectiveness in a school setting and how teachers can integrate the intervention into their daily routine (Horner, Sugai, & Anderson, 2010). Horner and colleagues (2010) outline the following components to a multi-system approach in providing positive behavior supports:

- Clear expectations
- Positive behaviors provided to all members of the community
- Clear understanding of problem behaviors and consequences
- Planned instructional strategies for acceptable behaviors
- Motivational system
- Commitment from staff to stick with the intervention
- Ongoing training for staff
- A system for measuring and monitoring effectiveness of intervention.

In order for any intervention to be effective, there needs to be fidelity of its implementation (Horner et al., 2010).

Schools and districts are challenged by No Child Left Behind (2001) mandates to improve test scores and the Individuals with Disability Education Act (2004) to ensure that all children have an equal opportunity for a free and appropriate education (Sunderman, 2008). The
guidelines and suggestions regarding positive behavior support (Horner et al., 2010) and choosing effective practices (Sprague et al., 2009) may lead districts in supporting students and staff in this challenging endeavor.

Districts are cautioned that it is necessary to pre-plan in order to avoid staff resistance to adopting and implementing a behavioral framework such as Response to Intervention (Sprague et al., 2008). All staff members are inspired to commit to a core belief that removing behavioral obstacles is the responsibility of the adults and a student’s right (Zmuda, Kuklis, & Kline, 2004). Additionally, educators are encouraged to identify sustainable behavioral practices that can be integrated into the academic effort. Research suggests that this can only be successful if implemented with fidelity (Horner et al., 2010). Sprague and colleagues (2008) reported that 80% of the staff must want and believe in the change effort for the desired transformation to come to fruition.

Staff must not only believe in the intervention but also support its implementation (Zumda et al., 2004). To understand this better, it is important to review the literature regarding fidelity of practice. Hawkins and Heflin (2011) and Myers, Simonsen, and Sugai (2011) pursued studies in which the Response to Intervention methodology was implemented to support the performance of teachers as they received varying degrees of professional development. Teachers who proved to be unresponsive to the primary level of support move to secondary and tertiary levels of support (Myers et al. 2011). The theoretical assumption is that by applying Response to Intervention logic to teacher training, teachers will gain the necessary support they need in order to implement a new approach effectively into their practice (Myers et al., 2011). Teachers are affected by the support, structure and efficiency by which the teacher is capable of effectively controlling successful experiences for students (Erdem & Demirel, 2007). The results of a study
by Hawkin and Heflin (2011) raised concerns regarding the sustainability of behavior-specific praise statements. Teacher behavior has an impact on students’ behavior; however, teacher behavior returned to baseline levels once the researchers left (Simonsen, Fairbanks, Briesch, Myers, & Sugai, 2008). This suggests that there may be cause for ongoing teacher intervention built into the internal structure of the school in order to maintain the target teacher behavior.

Bradshaw, Reinke, Brown, Bevans, and Leaf (2008), in a study similar to the Response to Intervention professional development studies reviewed above, provided ongoing support for “trained in school-wide positive behavior intervention supports” school staff versus schools in which staff did not receive training in positive behavior intervention support (PBIS). Their study encompassed a method for addressing behavior through systematic positive behavior supports. The intent of the study was to test the impact of training in PBIS on implementation fidelity. For the majority of general educators, fidelity of the process of positive behavior intervention support implementation was most critical at the primary prevention level of intervention. These primary levels included school-wide, classroom, and non-classroom settings. When the primary level of support was effective, the majority of students were found not to have an elevated risk of antisocial behavior (Walker, et al., 1996).

In a separate study conducted by Blum and Cheney (2009), teachers completed the Teacher Knowledge and Skills Survey (TKSS) in order for Blum and Cheney to determine if the Comprehensive Model was being implemented with fidelity as it related to positive behavior intervention support. The Teacher Knowledge and Skills Survey focuses on five measures: specialized behavior support strategies; behavior screening, behavior support services, and evaluation; school-wide discipline process; individualized curriculum and modifications supporting students; and positive classroom environment (Blum & Cheney, 2009). When
evaluating a program, the researcher found that it would be beneficial to understand the knowledge and skill level of the implementers before making judgment on the program itself.

Increased self-efficacy may have a beneficial impact upon motivation for teachers as they pursue improvement in pedagogical skills and professional knowledge (Erdem & Demirel, 2007). The interrelationships between teacher efficacy, empowerment of positive teacher-student learning interactions, and fidelity of implementation (Ross & Horner, 2007) are beneficial to students who are recipients of this process (Bandura, 1997). Ross and Horner (2007) explored the role that training had on the implementation of school-wide positive behavior support and teacher perception of educational efficacy. Ross and Horner determined that teachers in schools where school-wide positive behavior support was implemented at a high level, as rated by using the School-Wide Evaluation Tool (SET), scored better on teacher efficacy. This tool was designed by Sugai, Lewis-Palmer, Todd, and Horner (2001) as a means to evaluate the effectiveness of the implementation of school-wide positive behavior supports. The results of that study suggest that there is reason to explore further the relationship between efficacy and fidelity of implementation.

Teacher fidelity to positive behavior intervention support played a large and statistically significant role in improving the behavioral functioning of students who were identified with an emotional disturbance (Benner, Beaudoin, Chen, Davis, & Ralston, 2010). The most important variable to achieving positive and sustainable outcomes is building the capacity of educators to implement evidence-based interventions within the PBIS model with fidelity (Benner, et al, 2010).

**Adolescents and self-regulation.** Not only is fidelity a critical aspect of behavioral support, it is also important to understand the social emotional needs of young adolescents.
Understanding the social emotional needs of adolescents is essential in order to avoid the negative outcome that is all too often the result of isolation through suspension or expulsion (Morrissey, Bohanon, & Fenning, 2010; Wisner, Jones & Gwin, 2010). Adolescents are still developing their reasoning skills and therefore engaging in more risk-taking behaviors (Lerner & Galambos, 1998 as cited in Salami, 2011; Wigfield, Lutz, & Wagner, 2005). Consequently, it is preferable that staff members not perceive the behaviors displayed by their students as a personal attack nor be treated as such (Caissy, 2002). Bowen and associates (2004) wrote that academic and behavioral instruction should be presented at the child’s emotional (Salami, 2011) and developmental level.

The school setting is an essential place to observe behavioral interventions that meet the emotional and development levels of its students. Behavioral problems in the classroom can have a significant impact on time spent on academic instruction (Bowen et al., 2004). In an effort to help students make the most of their educational experience, staff members are encouraged to ensure that behavioral issues do not interfere with the educational focus. Empowering students to manage their own behavior will have life-long benefits (Hagenbach, 2010).

 Teachers and other adult members of the school community can assist adolescents in developing skills by modeling appropriate adult behaviors (Caissy, 2002) which impact young adults in learning how to regulate their own behavior (Morrissey et al., 2010). Given the high rate of external factors such as the media and other role models in a child’s personal life (Udayar & University, 2008), staff members are charged with an even greater responsibility to model and intentionally teach positive behavioral choices to today’s youth. Staff members need to recognize that they are social agents and therefore primary role models to this impressionable
group of people (Caissy, 2002). Adults should guide students through challenging decision-making (Caissy, 2002) as the school setting lends itself to providing behavioral instruction that can assist a child in learning self-regulating conduct.

Understanding the developmental uniqueness of adolescents can help adults to guide students to an autonomous level of positive decision-making (Shute, 2011). According to Moffit, professor of psychology at Duke University and King’s College London, three factors appear to be keys to a person's success in life: (a) intelligence, (b) family's socioeconomic status, and (c) self-control (Shute, 2011). Self-management skills begin at a very young age (Shute, 2011). However, high school and middle school students are better at internalizing these skills than the elementary students (Dawson and Guare, 2010; Peacock, & Ervin, 2009). Pajares and Urdan (2006) support the idea that success in school and life in general is dependent on personal competencies in motivation, self-management, and cognitive ability. Jackson and Davis (2000) contend that the challenges early adolescents face can also bring about opportunities to develop their own identities. Teenagers are developing skills “to learn new social roles and to develop a personal code of ethics to guide one’s own behavior” (Jackson & Davis, 2000, p.6). As mentioned earlier, control theory is based upon the belief that our behavior is a constant attempt to satisfy basic needs (Butchart & McEwan, 1998). Caring adults who understand the importance of adolescents learning to satisfy basic needs can guide the skills necessary to develop self-regulation.

School environments have the distinct advantage of helping adolescents acquire the necessary skills for regulating and managing their own behavior, thereby ensuring that they are on a positive path to become productive members of society (Greenberg, 2010). Schools with the greatest level of behavioral success have staff members who help students to become self-
disciplined (Kendall & Braswell, 1993). Dawson and Guare (2010) acknowledge that adults are encouraged to recognize the need to scaffold the levels of support for executive functioning skills – the ability to plan, manage time, and display responsive inhibitions – as the child progresses through the developmental and behavioral stages. Greenberg (2010) defends the idea that educators should seize the opportunity to help children develop their self-management skills within the context of the school environment.

Capitalizing on the utilization of the school environment, as Greenberg (2010) contends, is important in recognizing that the school provides a natural setting for imparting habits of heart (Jackson & Davis, 2000). Jackson and Davis outline “four habits of heart” (2000, p.220) as vital to a student becoming a responsible and happy member of society. These four habits include the development of “caring, empathetic, tolerant and patriotic practices” (Jackson & Davis, p. 220). Siegler, Deloache, and Eisenberg (2006) stress the need to develop a moral conscience. Our moral conscience is our internal ability to make decisions that conform to the standards of our culture (Siegler et al., 2006). Positive development of a child’s moral conscience and habits is important in assisting with the regulation of his/her own behavior (Kendall & Braswell, 1993). Instilling self-regulating behavior in students is the key to educating children who will become productive members of society. It is also crucial to teach children to recognize the difference between desirable and undesirable behaviors. One strategy for teaching a child to develop an awareness of undesirable behaviors is providing corrective feedback (Bowen et al., 2004). This feedback should be specific, matter of fact, and non-judgmental (Bowen et al., 2004).

Much of the literature on positive behavior support for adolescents maintains the idea of social competency (McIntosh, Filter, Bennett, Ryan & Sugai, 2009; Dawson & Guare, 2010). The development of executive functioning skills, in addition to self-competency, is imperative as
a means to self-regulate. Dawson and Guare (2010) define executive functioning skills as the ability to plan, manage time, and display responsive inhibitions. These skills are reported as taking an individual two decades to fully develop (Dawson & Guare, 2010). School personnel are encouraged to recognize the need to incorporate the skills necessary to bring about social competency throughout the child’s educational career (McIntosh et al., 2009).

The Character Program Evaluated

Staff who understand the emotional needs of adolescents have a greater chance of cultivating a positive school climate (Gregory, Cornell, & Fan 2011). Gregory et al. (2011) take the position that students will be most successful in a school that is designed with a positive school climate. In a positive school climate, school expectations should be high and authoritative yet respectful and encouraging. Central to the success of a school design is a clear theory of action to achieve its goal (Jackson & Davis, 2000). The character program (Brown, 2010) is based on this theory.

Vale and Coe (2006) of the Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory conducted an evaluation of the evaluated program. The purpose of the study was to begin to design tools and methods for future research on the program (Vale & Coe, 2006, p.2). A sample of five schools participated in the study. Even within the small sampling there was variability in the participating schools’ levels of consistency in applying the program. The study consisted of conducting and evaluating surveys and interviews of key teachers and administrators.

One finding in that study supported the need for ongoing staff training. Participants in schools that support the implementation of this character program reported satisfaction in the training (Vale & Coe, 2006). Of the participants, 85% agreed that the topics covered during training were important. Many features of the program were rated as being easy to implement
consistently. Staff who reported success with the program strongly agreed that they implemented the program with fidelity due to the ease of implementation. Slightly over 87% of the participants reported establishing the school rule and 85% reported establishing classroom expectations as being very easy to implement. Overall, the greatest concern regarding ease of implementation had to do with sending a note home when a student does not “make her/his day” successfully and following through with further communication if the note does not return. Only 43.7% of participants agreed or strongly agreed that these components were not followed as intended due to the ease of implementation (Val & Coe, 2006).

Another study conducted in the Wenatchee School District (Schleif, 2010) reported positive effects of the character program; however, not everyone was in agreement with the overall philosophy of this type of program. This study was conducted after parents protested to eliminate the program from the school district (Schleif, 2010). The protesting parents believed that this program eroded the self-esteem of the students. The district added seven questions to its annual survey of parents and staff. It asked whether the program was fair, reasonable and helped kids take responsibility for their learning and behavior. More than 1,900 parents and 300 teachers responded. For most questions, about 20% of parents expressed discontent with the program in comparison to 4-7% of teachers. When asked if the program was properly implemented and executed with regularity, the results showed a decline in teacher agreement. In that district, the school board unanimously voted to keep the character program in their schools (Schleif, 2010).

In other references on that character program, a similar theme was seen, in which parents spoke out against the program. In Stratford, Connecticut, the school district had to address parent concerns over the behavioral program. Once the district piloted the program in a school
for a year, the school staff decided to implement this program in three other schools. Here again the school’s faculty and staff saw a decrease in behavioral concerns and office referrals (Bagley, 2011). Although a formal study was not conducted, within one year, the schools that piloted the program reported that office referrals decreased by 50% from the year before. The parents described the techniques of the program as “‘punitive’ and ‘demeaning’” (Bagley, 2012, para. 2). In an attempt to address the differing views between school-based staff and the parent population, the assistant superintendent encouraged parents who were concerned about the program to visit the schools in order to see the program firsthand.

Sugai, Flannery, and Bohanon (2004) report that a positive behavior support theory of action has rarely been implemented in middle school and high school settings. However, Morrissey and colleagues (2010) more recently suggested that this is changing due to the need to avoid exclusionary practices that preclude students from participating in the general education environment. Traditionally, behavioral interventions within the school setting have been primarily reactive measures which often lead to suspension or expulsion (Christenson, & Thurlow, 2004; Netzel & Eber, 2003; Sprague & Walker, 2005). Studies have shown that suspended students are more likely to drop out of school (Gregory et al., 2011; Sprague et al, 2008). The National Center for Educational Statistics (2009), based on a survey of high school sophomores in 2002 who dropped out of school, revealed that 22% of males said they were suspended from school, and 15% of them said they were expelled (Dalton, Glennie, & Ingels, 2009). School disciplinary practices can make problems worse. Suspension, expulsion and dropping-out are not socially valuable options for solving behavioral problems in schools (Sprague et al, 2008). These options provide only short-term solutions for schools but lead to greater societal challenges, which often include criminal behavior (Dalton et al., 2009).
Implementing a positive school climate that addresses social and emotional needs early on in a child’s education may be a proactive long-term solution against having to carry out measures that are more punitive.

After reviewing the literature regarding Lev Vygotsky’s views on the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) (1978), the importance of fidelity of program implementation, adolescence and self-regulation, and reviews within other school systems, justification for the importance of conducting research regarding the positive behavior support program in a middle school in the Northeastern United States became more relevant. Although there are other programs and methods for addressing positive behavioral supports, the positive behavior support program was already in use in the school where the research study was conducted, and appears to complement the philosophies of the forbearers who supported the concepts of the regulations behind positive behavior support.
Chapter III: Research Design

Research Questions

This research study examined the effectiveness of the positive behavior support program in improving overall student behavior in the school environment. The research was designed to understand the influence this specific program has on the school environment as assessed using office discipline referrals. Faculty perception was also evaluated regarding the intention that the program provides students with positive behavior growth. The need to implement a school-wide behavior support model for addressing the behavioral education of children is at the forefront of educational mandates concerning problem behaviors. Therefore, the questions addressed in this study were:

1). To what extent did the application of the positive behavior support program impact behavioral performance of middle school students at a northeastern, United States public school?

2). What were the perceptions of the staff regarding the impact of the positive behavior support program on students’ behavior?

Research Approach

The researcher chose an evaluation research design due to its appropriateness to bring about an understanding of the research problem (Weiss, 1998) of the program within day-to-day context. An important reason for conducting evaluation research is to find out what transpires when implementing a program of this nature (Weiss, 1998). The hope of this evaluation research was to identify effective and ineffective practices in bringing about positive change. This study
includes an evaluation of pre- and post-office discipline referrals and a staff survey using both a Likert-type scale and open-ended responses.

The office discipline referral system provides quantitative data of the extent to which the application of this program impacts behavioral performance; the survey provided not only quantitative data, but also a rich qualitative understanding of faculty perceptions of this program. Since office discipline referrals are reflective of the behavioral functioning of students directly involved in the initiative and is a politically-mandated requirement for personnel to maintain, the data should be a reliable source related to the evaluation of the school-wide effort to improve behavior. The evaluator looked at historical data as a means to compare pre-study results to post-study results (Weiss, 1998).

In addition to pre- and post-study office discipline referrals, the Likert-type scale survey (Fraenkel, Wallen, & Hyun 2009) (see Appendix E Part One) allowed for staff attitudes to be evaluated regarding the role the program has on positive behavioral growth of adolescents in this middle school. A Likert-type scale is often used to evaluate attitudinal data (Edwards, 1997). This form of rating scale allows data to have a value. Cronbach’s alpha (Fraenkel, Wallen, & Hyun, 2009) was used as a measure of testing internal consistency reliability for the Likert-type scale. Set anchor points that correspond with a numerical value indicate a range of responses. A table will display an item analysis of the five-point Likert-type scale results. The researcher, a team of staff members knowledgeable about the character program, and the Program developer, Earl Brown, developed this survey.

Finally, the survey contained a comment box following each rated question where participants were invited to explain or provide additional information with regard to each of their responses. Additional open-ended written responses (Appendix E, Part Two) were used to gain
staff input regarding this program. The advantage of this written response was that it provided the respondent time to think about her or his individual response and to provide the examiner a deeper understanding of the rating (Weiss, 1998).

**Triangulation.** This research design allowed for a triangulation of data regarding evaluation of office behavioral referrals and perception of the implementation of the program. Weiss (1998) states that among the most common sources of data collected in evaluation studies are existing accounts of program records and written questionnaires. Reviewing pertinent documents and surveying key stakeholders directly related to the initiative provided data used to evaluate the program.

**Site and Participants**

This study took place in a northeastern middle school in the United States. It has a student population of approximately 563 sixth, seventh, and eighth graders. The school is a Title I school due to the number of students who meet the criteria of low socio-economic status.

The chart below outlines the school of study’s student profile.

Table 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Needs Indicators</th>
<th>Number in School</th>
<th>Percent in School</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Students Eligible for Free/Reduced-Price Meals</td>
<td>154</td>
<td>26.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students Who Are Not Fluent in English</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students with Disabilities</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>14.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This profile was produced by the Connecticut State Department of Education in accordance with CT General Statutes 10-220(c). Profiles and additional education data, including longitudinal data, are available on the internet at [www.sde.ct.gov](http://www.sde.ct.gov).
Office disciplinary referrals provided the overall school-wide data that were used as the basis for comparison to the program data pre- and post-study. The names and other identifiers of specific students were not included. The behavioral referrals are reflective of the overall number of students referred to the office for disciplinary reasons. These records were maintained for the sole purpose of gathering pre- and post-office referral data for comparison.

Although this program is a planned school-wide initiative, the sample group for the purpose of the study consisted of 61 staff members. The participation rate was high with 58 out of 61 certified staff members participating. Due to this high participation rate, the results are likely to be valued with a high level of confidence. Faculty members who work at the school were invited to participate in the study voluntarily. Of the volunteers, those who completed the survey were included as part of the study. Surveys that were started but not completed were omitted from the study. Consent to participate was determined by the completion and submission of the research survey which contained a statement that completion of the survey constituted consent to participate.

Staff members were invited to participate in the study through a letter of introduction (see Appendix C) that explained the purpose of the study and requested their voluntary participation. Incentives were not offered to staff who participated in the study. In order to ensure the confidentiality of the participants, volunteer faculty did not include their names, and an impartial person distributed and collected the surveys.
Data Analysis

The first research question was designed to ascertain whether or not the application of the Program (Brown, 2010) is followed by a positive change in the behavioral performance of students at a northeastern United States middle school as measured by office discipline referrals. This component of the results provided quantitative data.

Research question two was designed to identify stakeholder perceptions and core beliefs about programs and initiatives that are vital to the efficacy of implementation (Horner et al., 2010; Sprague et al., 2009). This study included a survey of faculty to evaluate the perceptions regarding the program as promoting positive behavioral growth. This survey provided quantitative and qualitative responses.

Research Instruments

The researcher used a variety of tools to collect data. At the conclusion of the study, quantitative data of office disciplinary referrals from previous years were compared to that of the current year. A committee of staff members developed a survey and used this survey to evaluate Likert-type scale quantitative and open-ended qualitative perceptions regarding the effectiveness of the program as a positive behavioral support model.

Generalizability

The researcher examined the Program within the context of a single school. Findings from this study may be relevant to other schools with similar demographics that are considering the implementation of this program. Also, demographic information may be a relevant factor when considering the external validity of the study. Participants included all faculty members willing to participate in the study, providing for the research to reflect the school community.
Protection of Human Subjects

Ethical considerations. Ethical considerations were important in this study due to three important factors. One factor is that faculty may have felt obligated to participate in the study because their administrator facilitated the study. Another factor is that if staff members think they are not adequately skilled in the use of the program, they may have felt uneasy or embarrassed. Finally, if they have had limited success in changing the behavior of their students, they may perceive this lack of success as a shortcoming of the program rather than other factors worth evaluating.

To satisfy these important ethical considerations, the letter of introduction sent to the faculty clearly stated: (a) Participants will give informed consent of voluntary participation by virtue of their completion and submission of the survey, (b) participation is strictly optional and should not be considered if the faculty member feels threatened or in any way uncomfortable, and (c) participation will not in any way affect their professional status. Records of office disciplinary referrals did not include names of students or other identifiers that would otherwise detect specific students.

Research Sequence

The chronological research sequence was as follows:

1. The researcher sent a request for full participation to the entire faculty of the school of study based on willingness to participate.

2. An impartial person distributed a survey.

3. The researcher collected baseline data from the previous year’s office discipline referral records.

4. The researcher measured the number of office disciplinary referrals post study.
5. The researcher examined the convergence of office referral data and faculty perception data to understand results.

6. The researcher analyzed results, including the use of Cronbach’s alpha (Fraenkel, Wallen, & Hyun 2009), to measure internal consistency reliability for the Likert-type scale.

Limitations

There are benefits and limitations to conducting research within one’s place of employment. First, volunteers who are willing to participate may be less likely to produce unbiased results, as these teachers may be willing to participate due to their confidence with implementation or their commitment to seeing the program work. If the study includes only those who are confident with implementation, there is risk that the result will not reflect that of the majority of providers. Secondly, there is the potential for researcher bias. If the researcher has preconceived ideas about the effectiveness of the program, they may impose these biases on the results. In an effort to reduce bias in participants, the researcher was not present during the completion or collection of the surveys. Additionally, the surveys did not require staff identification and were provided electronically so that faculty members could have typed responses in the event they were concerned that their handwriting would be recognizable. In an effort to reduce researcher bias, the data and the results were qualified by an outside evaluator knowledgeable of data analysis.

Conclusion

This evaluation of the program was intended to determine its effectiveness as a Tier I Response to Intervention positive behavior support. The evaluation of the Program provided data upon which to draw when making decisions in the future regarding implementation of the program and to make changes suggested by the findings.
The researcher presented findings based on pre and post-study data of office discipline referrals and a survey with comment response boxes to evaluate the perceptions of key stakeholders, who were evaluated to determine overall change in school discipline.
Chapter IV: Report of Research Findings

The purpose of this study was to examine the effectiveness of the positive behavior support program in improving overall student behavior in a middle school in the northeastern United States and to determine whether or not participants in the research study perceived the program as an effective school-wide positive behavior support model. This research was designed to understand the influence that the program being used had on the school environment as evaluated through using the office discipline referral system and participant perception. This chapter summarizes the results that emerged from an analysis of the disciplinary referrals and the findings of a survey of participant perceptions. The participants were fifty-nine certified middle school faculty members who voluntarily completed a survey regarding the evaluated program as an effective method of implementing school-wide positive behavior support. Additionally, a comparison of office disciplinary referrals from the year prior to the onset of the program implementation to those collected during this research were evaluated in an effort to determine how they differ.

The survey questions (see Appendix E) were designed to evaluate each aspect of the program in this research (Brown, 2010) to determine the effectiveness of specific components as positive behavior supports to students. A comment section was included after each question, allowing the participant to provide an explanation if they chose to do so. Part two of the survey was created to develop an understanding of the participants’ overall knowledge of the program, recommendations to implement in other schools, resources and suggestions for improving the implementation, and a question that allowed for the participant to share any personal comments regarding the Program or positive behavior support systems.
Study Context

Participant perceptions of the program were examined in order to understand if the implemented program is in fact perceived to fit the school-wide positive behavior support model. The framework of the program was designed with the intention that all members implement it throughout the school environment in a consistent and commonly understood manner. The school involved in the study adopted this program in 2004 in an effort to collaboratively improve overall student behavior. A co-founder of the character program presented the philosophy and procedures to the staff in two days of training in 2004 before staff members were asked if they wished to participate. Since that time, a significant staff turnover has taken place and only a few school-wide refresher trainings have been implemented (Finn, personal communication, March 3, 2013). New staff training takes place each school year by a school-based administrator or a trained staff member.

The compiled office disciplinary referrals and survey results were evaluated. Fifty-nine of the potential 61 faculty members participated. The following information contains the results of the referral data and participant surveys.

Office Disciplinary Data

In an effort to determine in what ways they differ, a comparison was made between office disciplinary referrals from prior years, beginning in 2004, and those collected during this research. Analysis of data revealed significant changes in student office referrals pre and post program implementation. Using the school-wide data collection system, PowerSchool, the referral data were gathered by the assistant principal. The number of times a student was sent to the office for disciplinary matters was tracked and recorded by office staff. The types of
offenses varied. Table 2 presents the actual number of students who were referred to the office; these numbers were categorized by specific offensives.

Table 2
Office Discipline Referrals

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<tr>
<td>Unprepared for class</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>20</td>
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<td>14</td>
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<td>36</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>22</td>
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<tr>
<td>Interfering w/ teaching and learning</td>
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<td>61</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>121</td>
<td>137</td>
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<tr>
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<td>22</td>
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<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cutting class</td>
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<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creating an unsafe condition</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intimidation/ harassment (racial, bullying, threatening, sexual)</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vandalism</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theft/extortion</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drugs/alcohol</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weapons (including laser pointers)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Obscenity/profanity</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>21</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>510</td>
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<td>126*</td>
<td>128*</td>
<td>126*</td>
<td>189*</td>
<td>188*</td>
<td>190*</td>
<td>224*</td>
<td>240*</td>
<td>244*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N=</td>
<td>508</td>
<td>512</td>
<td>505</td>
<td>479</td>
<td>489</td>
<td>559</td>
<td>573</td>
<td>563</td>
<td>571</td>
<td>583</td>
<td>565</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Step 4 referrals (Step 4s include: Students who progressed through Steps 1-4 and automatic Step 4s)

Students referred to the office for a Step 4 offense include students who progressed through the Step process 1-4 and those who chose an automatic Step 4. Students may be referred to the office for a number of infractions displayed by the student and is based on whether the staff
member deemed the need for administrative intervention. These infractions were categorized by
the school administration.

**Office referral offensives:**

- Unprepared for class
- Interfering with teaching and learning
- Insubordination, cutting class
- Creating an unsafe condition
- Intimidation/harassment (racial, bullying, threatening, sexual)
- Vandalism
- Theft/extortion
- Drugs/alcohol
- Weapons (including laser pointers)
- Obscenity/profanity.

Students choose an immediate Step 4 or qualify for Step 5 (suspension) if they exhibit the
following behaviors (Parent/Student Handbook p.6).

**step 4 offensives:**

- Cutting class
- Physical contact (fighting, assault)
- Intimidation/harassment (racial, bullying, threatening, sexual)
- Vandalism
- Theft/extortion
- Drugs/alcohol
- Weapons (including laser pointers)
• Obscenity/profanity
• Creating an unsafe condition

These office referrals were categorized, charted and tallied by administration. The table below (Table 3) shows the number of occurrences for several different categories of student behavioral infractions. The following chart contains t-test evaluation results of behavioral referrals from 2003 (pre-Character program) to 2013 Step 4 referrals (post study). The column labeled “2003 Pre-Character program” is a total of all infractions from previous years up to and including 2003. There are 10 subsequent columns spanning a 10-year period from 2004 until 2013 labeled by specific year. The data are used to answer the question, “did the program make a difference in student behavior over the 10 year period that it was implemented?”

Table 3
Office Disciplinary Referral (T-Test evaluation)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Unprepared for class</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interfering w/teaching and learning</td>
<td>312</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>121</td>
<td>137</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Insubordination</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cutting Class</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creating an unsafe condition</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intimidation/Harassment (racial, bullying)</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>24.8</td>
<td>7.10</td>
<td>17.02</td>
<td>84.7</td>
<td>27.46</td>
<td>26.17</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>8.33</td>
<td>6.836</td>
<td>2.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The following are the findings of the office disciplinary referrals. To answer the question, the data were looked at in two different groups. The 2003 “Pre-Character program” data were used as a baseline—a before treatment collection of data. The collected data from the following ten years after the character program had been implemented were evaluated to determine if there was significant change.

The statistic used in this real world scenario was a t-statistic. To use this test, the following conditions needed to be met. The first condition was that the sample should be an SRS, a simple random sample, where the students were randomized by teacher and year. The second condition to be met was that the data needed to be somewhat normal - unimodal and somewhat symmetric. The t-test itself is a robust test in that it will yield accurate results even if there are mild departures from the assumptions. The t-statistic is computed as follows:
\[ t = \frac{\bar{x} - \mu}{\frac{s}{\sqrt{n}}} \]

In this formula, \( t \) represents the t-statistic value. \( \bar{x} \) is the 10 year average for each category of student infraction. \( \mu \) is the value of the 2003 “Pre-Character program” column of data in the same category as \( \bar{x} \). \( s \) is the sample standard deviation for the specific 10 year behavioral category associated with the given \( \bar{x} \). For the work here, \( n = 10 \) since 10 years of data were collected. As such, the t-statistic has 9 degrees of freedom (There are always \( n - 1 \) degrees of freedom). The t-statistic calculated for each category is in the column labeled t-stat and the associated “p-value” is in the column labeled t-dist.

The results of the testing should be viewed by hypothesis testing. The null hypothesis would be that the true \( \mu \) is defined as the value from the 2003 “Pre-Character program” in any given category. The alternate hypothesis is that \( \mu \) is actually less than the value in the 2003 “Pre-Character program”. The industry standard of an alpha level of 5% before computing the t-statistics with the given data was assumed. Significant results occur for any categories yielding percentage values less than 5%. The values compared to the 5% are the t-dist column values, which are the “p-values” associated with the given t-statistic.

Below is a table illustrating the number of office referrals as compared to the total student population (Table 4). Percentages were calculated in an effort to assess if the intervention meets the needs of 80% of the population.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 4</th>
<th>Office referrals compared to student population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pre-Program</td>
<td>2003</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Perception of the Program Survey Results: Part I

Results of the survey (see Table 5) of participants in this study revealed that the contributors deemed the program a viable school-wide positive behavior support model. Below is a chart outlining the overall findings of the Likert-type survey questions reporting participants’ perception of the program as promoting positive behavioral growth. These findings will be discussed in Chapter 5.

Table 5

*See Appendix E for complete question

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question #</th>
<th>Question focus *</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Undecided</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Total Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>expectations stated start</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>expectation stated throughout</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>STEPS</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>“Steps” in a private non-judgmental</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Points</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Concerns</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The following table represents the number of participants who responded to the open-ended questions of the survey. Responses were categorized into four groups: those deemed Favorable (Strongly Agree or Agree), Undecided, or Unfavorable (Strongly Disagree or Disagree) based on the Likert-type rating, and the number of respondents who did not provide a written response.

Table 6

*Survey Questions and Responses tallied (*See complete questions Appendix E*)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question #</th>
<th>Question focus *</th>
<th>Comments with Favorable ratings of Agree and Strongly agree</th>
<th>Comments with a rating of undecided</th>
<th>Comments with Unfavorable ratings based on Strongly Disagree and Disagree</th>
<th>No Comment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>expectations stated start</td>
<td>20/39</td>
<td>0/39</td>
<td>1/39</td>
<td>39/59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>expectation stated throughout</td>
<td>11/14</td>
<td>3/14</td>
<td>0/14</td>
<td>45/59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>STEPS</td>
<td>14/20</td>
<td>4/20</td>
<td>2/20</td>
<td>39/59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>“Steps” in a private non-judgmental</td>
<td>12/16</td>
<td>3/16</td>
<td>1/16</td>
<td>43/59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Points</td>
<td>8/20</td>
<td>7/20</td>
<td>5/20</td>
<td>38/58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Concerns</td>
<td>8/16</td>
<td>2/16</td>
<td>7/16</td>
<td>43/59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>school-wide effort</td>
<td>18/22</td>
<td>2/22</td>
<td>2/22</td>
<td>37/59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>supported by the majority</td>
<td>3/13</td>
<td>6/13</td>
<td>4/13</td>
<td>46/59</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The next section is organized question by question (see Appendix E for the complete survey instrument) and contains detailed data description for Table 5 and 6.

**Question #1.** The first question of the survey evaluated whether participants perceived that stating the expectations at the start of class supported positive student growth. This expectation is stated using program language. For example, a teacher might say, “in order for you to earn your points this period, you must do what is expected without interfering with the learning, safety, or wellbeing of others. Today, you will follow cooperative group expectations to solve algebraic equations.” The teacher is referring to the fundamental rule that “no one has the right to interfere with the learning, safety, or wellbeing of others” (Brown, 2010, p. 7) as a point of reference. Using the term “points” incorporates the program language and the remaining portion supports behavioral and academic expectations. This commonly understood procedure was rated by fourteen out of fifty-nine participants as strongly agreeing and by thirty-six as agreeing. This equates to 85% of the participants indicating support for this aspect of the program. Of the remaining nine respondents, eight were undecided and one disagreed. There were not any participants who strongly disagreed.

Thirty-nine out of fifty-nine responders (66%) did not complete the comment section for this question of the survey. Of those who did comment, twenty out of the twenty-one supported the procedure of stating expectations at the start of each class.

**Favorable comments/stating expectations:**

- “allowed students to begin class focused and ready to go”
“knowing what they need to do for the remaining of the period.”

“It serves as a reminder. At this age many of the students benefit from that.”

“Stating objectives at the beginning of the class is supported by administration as a best practice.”

“Positive start to class.”

“Stating expectations at the beginning of class makes it clear to students about what a model student should be doing and learning during the course of the period.”

“This age population needs reminders.”

“It provides a consistent reminder for students during initiation.”

“It helps to remind students what the expectation is.”

“It serves as a reminder to students.”

“It is a reminder. At this age many of the student’s benefit from that.”

“Reminds students of task at hand.”

“Although it can seem tedious, doing this is beneficial to set the tone for the class, especially for particular students who need reminders very clearly stated from period to period to help them transition successfully.”

“It does (provides positive behavioral growth) for those students who have not become desensitized to the program.”

“Kids remain engaged and focused when expectations are clear.”

“This allows for students to begin class focused, and ready to go- knowing what they need to do for the remainder of the class.”

“It is easy to remember the one school rule.”
• “This is very effective once students get used to listening and paying attention to this aspect of the program.”

• “Can be tied into academic objectives.”

• “Stated expectations help kids to know and understand what is expected. It also helps them to reflect at the end of class to see if they meet those expectations.”

The one participant who indicated disagreement, commented that he/she did not believe that stating expectations that include the rule “no one has the right to interfere with the learning, safety, or wellbeing of others” (Brown, 2010, p. 7) is “a positive way to begin discourse.”

**Question #2.** The second question required participants to judge the value of restating the expectation throughout the class period. Of the fifty-nine participants, eight responses (14%) supported a rating of strongly agree, while twenty-eight agreed (49%) and twenty-two (37%) were undecided. One participant disagreed and none of the participants strongly disagreed.

Fifteen of the fifty-nine participants (25%) provided a written response. Favorable written responses, based on their rating, totaled 11 out of 14, while undecided written comments totaled 3 out of 14 and unfavorable written responses were left with no comment explaining their position.

**Favorable comments/restating expectations:**

• “This allows students to stay focused, and on task”

• “Students need to know expectations”

• “It reminds students”

• “This helps focus students as they work”

• “For most students”

• “continuity”
• “Only when the teacher feels it is necessary, but it is nice to have this “anchor” to refer back to as needed.”
• “Keeps students focused.”
• “Helps remind students and guide them toward what’s expected as well as away from where they may be headed.”
• “Restating expectations throughout the class period refocuses students and reminds them what the teacher is looking for. It also helps students understand why they are learning what they are learning.”
• “…it is nice to have this ‘anchor’ to refer back to.”

 Undecided comments/restating expectations:
• “This practice is helpful but not always realistic.”
• “Sometimes, only because it depends on the student and their motivation.”
• “I have not stated it throughout day.”

Recorded comments suggested that the participant either did not practice restating expectations throughout class or felt that it was “an unrealistic expectation to stop instruction to remind students of this.” The forty-five out of fifty-nine (76%) of the undecided participants did not include a comment.

 Question #3. The objective of the third question was to gauge the value of granting a student time-out through the step process. As described in the manual (Brown, 2010), steps are used to allow a student time away from the immediate learning environment, but not out of the classroom, to reflect on how their interfering behavior affected the learning, safety or wellbeing of others. Steps are considered a consequence of the action rather than a punishment. If implemented correctly, the staff member informs the student of the behavior that caused the
choice he or she made to interfere, while allowing her or him time to reflect on the incident. After a short period of quiet reflection, the student is asked what the behavior was that caused her or him to choose the particular step. If interfering behaviors persist while on a step, additional steps follow which potentially lead to the student calling a parent for further behavioral support. The intended process is to guide students in realizing what it was that caused the interference with the ultimate goal of preventing it from happening again.

Forty-one out of the fifty-nine (69%) participants rated this process as agreeing that it supports positive behavior growth. In addition, 12 participants responded that they strongly agreed, five were undecided, one disagreed and zero strongly disagreed.

*Favorable comments/steps:*

- “Steps allow inappropriate behaviors to stop immediately. Students know that if they continue any behaviors during step, they will progress. Behaviors usually stop by Step 1.”
- “This is one of the most effective parts of this program if used with fidelity across settings within the school.”
- “Teaching the students to take accountability for their actions is important.”
- “When the “Step” process is done correctly it supports positive behavior growth. It is sometimes hard to use it effectively, but when it first started it worked well.”
- “Some students need to learn appropriate behavior. This promotes their understanding.”
- “Yes, it reminds students about appropriate behavior. This is an important life skill.”
- “This is one of the most effective parts of this program if used with fidelity.”
• “For the students who “buy into” the program the Step process does support positive behavioral growth.”

• “It helps give the student a chance to reflect and rein themselves in.”

• “Steps permit students time for self-reflection. While I have no data on recurring behaviors, I have seen a reduction in repeated behaviors after a student chooses step.”

• “At the sixth grade level, most students are not mature enough to self-monitor and need a gentle reminder regarding behavior. I believe the step process does so efficiently and effectively.”

• “Students respond more positively when they realize that the “step” process is not a punishment but rather a chance to get refocused.”

• “As a teacher, I like having a foolproof, very specific tool to use when kids don’t follow the rule. It’s a “no-brainer.” However, sometimes I question the impact it has on students, particularly the older students (8th grade). It must be done with fidelity to be most effective, and it is very hard to do so when we are all human. Often it is easier to just say “Quiet down” than to go through the Step process, although that undermines the program.”

• “Steps (time-out) permits students self-reflection while I have no data on recurring behaviors, I have seen a reduction in repeated behaviors after a student chooses step.”

Undecided comments/steps:

• “By 8th grade students aren’t vested.”
• “I’ve seen it work for some. Some are frequent flyers and don’t seem to be phased by being removed. It can also serve as negative attention and they (students) enjoy that.”

• “I think there are some kids who it doesn’t bother and who continue to misbehave.”

• “Students, toward the end of the year get/earn step for the attention of the class.”

There were two written comments that indicated that the respondents disagree with the Step intervention portion of the program.

**Unfavorable comments/steps:**

• “For some students the step does not mean anything. It is not currently being used the way it was originally intended.”

• “not for 8th grade”

**Question #4.** Question four differed from question three in evaluating the participants’ perception of implementing the step procedure in a private, non-judgmental manner. Brown (2010) supports the idea that treating students with dignity while teaching them to be responsible citizens is an important part of providing guidance. A greater number of staff supported this method as strongly agreeing that the procedure supports positive behavioral growth over implementing steps in a more public manner while possibly showing emotion of disapproval. Of the participants, twenty-eight out of fifty-nine (47%) strongly agreed, twenty-three agreed (39%), five (8%) were undecided, three disagreed and zero strongly disagreed.

Once again, participants were invited to explain or comment on their rating. There was a preponderance of support (84%) indicating that implementing the step procedure in a private and non-judgmental manner does support positive behavioral growth. Out of the 15 written
responses, 12 fell in the category of a favorable judgment based on their Likert-like rating. Those comments were recorded, as written.

**Favorable comments/steps:**

- “Students must take ownership of their own behavior.”
- “Private, non-judgmental is very important.”
- “Private is critical”
- “In middle school, students are very conscious of the way others see them and feel about them. Using the steps privately and quietly allows students to focus on their own behavior without too much concern for others around them.”
- “Absolutely! It eliminates the escalation of argument between a student and adult.”
- “Yes, because it makes it non-confrontational if done correctly.”
- “It helps students to decide where they stand on their actions.”
- “Makes for positive growth for the individual.”
- “Yes, because this avoids kids feeling singled out/embarrassed or becoming defensive, and it removes the emotion from the situation.”
- “Yes, but it is difficult to teach-walk over quietly/privately speak to student- then continue to teach. The “flow” is difficult depending on proximity to student off-task.”
- “Leaves the emotion out of the equation.”
- “It helps the student recognize the behavior that earned them step.”

Three participants who were undecided and provided a comment stated:
• “It can be disruptive to privately give steps and take students off of step, sometime the disruption/private interaction is more noticeable to students.”
• “Initially, I thought yes because it reduces embarrassment, however, a little embarrassment can go a long way toward effecting behavioral change.”
• “At times, with certain personalities.”

One participant who disagreed specified that, “Non-judgmental is easy- private is not-kids are removed from “goings on” of class community to reflect.”

**Question #5.** The procedure involving the implementation of points as a positive behavior support was evaluated in question five. The purpose of implementing points as part of this character program is to provide all members of the school community with the opportunity and structure to self-evaluate. This evaluation is based on behavior centered on the expectations stated at the beginning of class and reinforced throughout the lesson. If the participant, including the adults, did what was expected to the best of their ability, they can earn full points. In order to demonstrate positive behavior, the partaker must have earned the number of points predetermined as a school-wide decision. If someone did not meet expectations a reflection sheet is filled out stating the challenging behavior and the sheet is sent home to be signed by an adult in the home. The reflection sheet is intended to serve as an opportunity to discuss the matter in the hopes of learning from the mistake.

Although, twenty-three participants agreed (40%) and nine strongly agreed (16%), fourteen out of fifty-eight disagreed (24%) and two strongly disagreed (3%) that the points policy provides a structure for positive growth. Ten participants were undecided and one responder did not rate this question. This finding shows that forty-four percent of the fifty-eight participants have some degree of concern as to the benefits of Points. Additionally, raters
reporting strong agreement for incorporating points at the end of class had a high number of comments.

**Favorable comments/points:**

- “Points also serve as a positive academic closure.”
- The Points process has its merits. At the beginning of the year, there are students who have a difficult time being honest about their behavior. However, over the course of the year, most of these same students will take responsibility for their behavior, even if it is by reducing their points for the period by one or two (points). One extremely important thing is that the teacher do points first and model an honest process. For example, if I feel that I have not done everything I could possibly do during the period to improve student learning, I may take off several points. If I allow a student to go on Step for talking but warn another student, I’m being inconsistent, address this in my points, and state out loud to the class why I gave myself the points I did. In fact, my last period class has seen me not “make my day” several times this year due to the accumulation of these lost points. I believe it’s important for the kids to see an adult taking responsibility for her/his behavior.
- “For some students Points do not matter, but for most, it is my experience that it matters and they “own” their behavior.”
- “This is true when the Points process is completed consistently and appropriately.”
• “It (Points) encourages self-reflection, however, mostly it is now just a procedure at the end of class and the meaning associated with the process has diminished over the years.”

• “Points are good because they act as reinforcers.”

• “Students are accountable for their own behavior.”

• “Students are not really fully reflective, and there never seems to be enough time to truly take the time to call attention to this.”

Seven written responses were added by participants who were undecided regarding the process of awarding points are as follows:

**Undecided commented/points:**

• “I think that kids don’t strive for a 50. Getting a 48/49 is good enough.”

• “Some students truly reflect; others go through the motions.”

• “If the process is followed and students take points for the entire day and teachers follow through with program slips behavioral growth is supported.”

• “Student do not appear to care about the points because there is nothing tangible attached to them.”

• “By 8th grade I am not sure, need another reward system.”

• “I try to remind students it is a reflection on their own behavior and expectations.”

• “I do not believe points are effective any longer as many teachers do not do them with their classes.”
Unfavorable comments/points:

- “This portion is widely conducted without fidelity. By the time children arrive in 8th grade, they don’t truly reflect upon and assess their behavior. Points are perfunctory.”
- “Students tend to elevate their points, even after inappropriate behaviors.”
- “Most kids rote report (most unrealistic about the effect of) behavior on points. It can also be topics of contention during concerns; kids often use it to work out interpersonal issues.”
- “I generally don’t feel that students at the middle school level care whether they “make their day”. It seems that it would work better in elementary school. Also, the follow-up process with slip is cumbersome and time-consuming when teachers have so much other academic tasks to worry about.”
- “This is true when the “points” process is completed consistently and appropriately. Points are a joke at times. Many students do not honestly assess themselves.”

Question #6. The act of addressing concerns within the structure of the program was the focus of question six. Concerns are addressed with the intention of guiding an individual who has not taken responsibility for interfering behavior as a means to resolve conflicts and to help the offender gain an awareness and understanding from which they may grow developmentally. A concern can be addressed with any individuals in the room who caused the interference by the individual directly affected by the behavior but that was not accounted for during points. The comment must be specific to the concern, directed toward the individual involved and be made in a respectful tone. If the intention is to attempt to “get someone in trouble”, the adult in charge is
expected to end the process. Twenty-two participants (37%) rated addressing concerns as not supporting (disagree) positive behavior growth. Three additional responses indicated a strong disagreement. Fifteen out of the fifty-nine respondents (25%) were undecided while thirteen agreed (22%) and only six strongly agreed (10%).

Sixteen out of the fifty-nine (27%) responders to the survey provided written feedback. Of the written responses, eight out of sixteen provided a written comment that fell in the favorable category, two out of sixteen were undecided and seven out of sixteen were unfavorable. The following comments were rated by the participant:

**Favorable comments/concerns:**

- “Yes, this allows other students to have recourse when they feel they were mistreated by a peer in a controlled supported manner.”
- “This part allows students to address each other directly and learn the difference between tattling and what is really a concern. It gives them the power over a situation that otherwise is at the mercy of the teacher. Again, must be done correctly.”
- (Concerns) Helps most students to revisit their action(s) that occurred in class.”
- “Students are more honest and accountable when adjusting their points when they are given the opportunity to do so.”
- “This (Concerns) is very important. It is difficult for students this age to have a concern for a peer. The conflict-resolution is important.”
- “I feel it is important to let the students have a voice in the process.”
- “I think this is the best part.”
• “Concerns” is effective when teachers take control as soon as kids start making a joke of concerns.”

*Undecided comments/concerns:*

• “My students rarely say anything here.”

• “I think this part is important because it allows other students to point out issues that may have missed. However, some students have a hard time saying “Yes, I accept the points,” “No, I don’t.” Instead, they say, “No, I didn’t.” “Yes, you did.” For two classes, I decided that they were not allowed to do concerns in front of the class and instead had the two students do it in front of me at the end of class.”

*Unfavorable comments/concerns:*

• “Too often, students are quick to accuse other students of silly, irrelevant behaviors that have nothing to do with the program.”

• “Students rarely concern one another and often don’t do it correctly.”

• “I feel that it wastes time. One student concerns another, then that student concerns back.”

• “Developmental - all students are not ready for this skill set. Also, it can cause conflict.”

• “Some students make a joke of the process and concern each other for the wrong reason. If done correctly it should teach the students a positive way to mediate the issues.”

• “Kids concern when there is not a reason to. It’s done in a bullying fashion.”

• “Students often use this time for concerns to “pick on” other students.”
**Question #7.** Question seven attempted to evaluate participant perspectives regarding the effect following the program has on students as a School-wide Positive Support model. The overall ratings were favorable. Eighty-six percent of the participants supported the effort as a School-wide Positive Support model. Thirty-three of the fifty-nine participants (66%) agreed with the effort, and an additional eighteen strongly agreed. Only three strongly disagreed, one disagreed and four were undecided.

Of the sixty-one favorable responses, twenty provided a written comment.

*Favorable comments/SWPBS:*

- “Consistent expectations form a cohesive community for behaviors.”
- “Yes, but it is implemented inconsistently.”
- “When and if all staff participate it creates a unified effort and consistent expectations across environments.”
- “As long as there is consistency.”
- “Consistent use holds everyone accountable!”
- “Everyone is on the same page.”
- “All students and teachers are involved helping to promote a teacher/learner community.”
- “Yes, when it is a school-wide effort.”
- “If the process is not followed school-wide the program loses its power; consistency is important.”
- “It would if implemented with fidelity, but it is not and has never really been since its inception.”
• “It would never work if it was not school-wide. Expectations have to be consistent throughout the school.”

• “Keeps all staff together. No one interferes when a student is on step- universal understanding.”

• “It was once a school-wide effort and was quite successful.”

• “If it is used with fidelity.”

• “Consistency is a key factor in making a plan successful.”

• “If everyone is on board it makes the school run smooth.”

• “It follows the students to their next grade.”

• “I wholeheartedly believe that if the program was done with fidelity by the entire school staff, we would have some of the most respectful students and learning overall world increase.”

**Undecided comments/SWPBS:**

• “If the entire staff uses the program, it supports positive behavioral growth.”

• “Benefit to be a community all on the same page.”

**Unfavorable comments/SWPBS:**

• “Anything that is unified and consistent is usually a positive growth of some sort.”

• “I do not believe it is constantly implemented school wide.”

**Question #8.** Question eight evaluated the perception participants had on whether the program is supported by the majority of the school community. Nineteen participants perceived the program to be supported by the majority and two strongly agreed that it was a supported
program. Responses that included a comment in support of the majority of the staff implementing the program were as follows.

**Favorable comments/support:**

- “A little more work for teachers, but the “payoff” is worth the effort.”
- “The steps are implemented more consistently than the points.”
- “some people do not follow Steps beginning with One and providing the structure to progress through Two and Three before going to Step Four.”

Twenty-two participants were undecided. Three out of 13 written responses were in the category of undecided. The comments are as follows:

**Undecided comments/support:**

- “Not sure”
- “I am not sure about this due to different levels of enforcement.”
- “Cannot comment. Do not know.”
- “Don’t know if all staff members are following the program exactly.”
- “I think philosophically it is supported, but the people have gotten lazy about following the program.”
- “I don’t believe that the majority of teachers are doing the program. Some teachers are very vocal about the fact that they do not believe in the program and state so in front of the kids. I think this undermines the program for those of us who do use it.”

**Unfavorable comments/support:**

- “Hard to tell, but it seems many don’t like it.”
- “No, but it doesn’t matter. For it to work it needs to be unanimous.”
“I don’t feel that the majority of the school community uses it effectively.”
“New teachers don’t use it and veteran teachers have abandoned it.”

**Question #9.** This question evaluated the faculty member’s perception of the philosophy of the program as contributing to positive behavioral growth. 100% of participants agreed or strongly agreed that the belief system that the character program was founded on supporting positive behavioral growth.

Participants providing an explanatory response reiterated the value of implementing the program with fidelity and consistency across settings. There were no undecided, disagree or strongly disagree ratings thereby eliminating related written commentary.

**Favorable comments/philosophy:**

- “Yes, it is intended to provide for all members of the community through a non-judgmental belief system of support.”
- “Of course no one should have the right to interfere with one’s safety, learning and wellbeing.”
- “I believe the philosophy has two major components that directly align itself with education: behavior and learning.”
- “All community members have the opportunity to be responsible for the consequences of their behavior- both good and bad.”
- “The philosophy is a good one, but the program should be revamped for 8th graders. They are no longer interested. Their mind set is to shut everything off regarding the program.”
- “No one has the right to interfere with progress of group- facilitates community and ownership.”
• “Yes, students stay in room, therefore learning is taking place.”
• “The philosophy supports positive behavior growth if the program is followed consistently.”
• “Yes, the concepts make sense even if they are somewhat contrived.”
• “Yes, as it applies to all members of the learning community.”
• “Yes, this is true, if implemented with fidelity, continuity, and consistency as presented by the teacher.”

**Question #10.** Question 10 seeks to understand the faculty’s perception of ease of implementation. This question is important as research suggests that a program is most likely to be followed through with, and implemented with fidelity, if it is easy to implement (Val & Coe, 2006). One responder indicated that they strongly disagreed and ten indicated they disagreed that the program was easy to implement. Zero participants were undecided, thirty-four agreed and fourteen strongly agreed that it is easy to implement.

**Favorable comments/ease:**

• “Once modeled it is easy to follow. Unfortunately, it is the adult behavior of keeping up with it that interferes with its progress.”
• “If done with fidelity. The whole school community benefits by providing consist support and continuity of implementation.”
• “The program is not easy to implement initially. It requires extra effort on the part of the teacher with daily recordkeeping of points in each class. However, I believe that the Points and Steps are necessary elements to the success of the students.”
• “time consuming at times- Interrupting class time is a negative”
• “It is very clear and administrators give many opportunities to train staff.”
• “With full support of staff and administration.”
• “for those who have had the proper training to promote consistency.”
• “Given solid training- it does not take a lot of time. It affords sound instructional habits.”
• “Very easy to follow.”
• “If everyone is doing it.”

Undecided comments/ease:
• “For the most part it is easy once you are used to it. The office referral slips going home is the biggest problem logistically (who collects it? When? Follow-up when they are not returned? Use the data on number of slips per child to target kids needing a closer look by the student assistance team?).”
• “sometimes, Points interrupts closure.”

Participants who indicated and commented on that they strongly disagreed or disagreed that the program was easy to implement provided the following commentary.

Unfavorable comments/ease:
• “NO, it’s a pain in the butt.”
• “You need to be trained for specific situations.”
• “For an entire school to be taught how to employ the system and have all staff use it correctly takes time and effort. It can be implemented anywhere but positive results will take time.”
• “I think there should be a school-wide assembly every fall to review the program; there is not sufficient class time to do so.”
• “Not if you do it correctly.

*Cronbach’s alpha analysis of question.* The calculation below served to show inter-reliability of the participant survey using a *Cronbach’s alpha* analysis.

Table 7

*T-Test Data Table*

<table>
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<table>
<thead>
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The calculation above shows a *Cronbach’s alpha* value of 0.852393. It is important to note that a value higher than 0.8, such as the one found, indicates good reliability (Fraenkel, Wallen, & Hyun 2009).

For Table 7, a *Cronbach’s alpha* coefficient was calculated to look at the reliability of the staff survey. The second table is reflective of the ratings assigned by the staff regarding the program. The survey conducted used a five point Likert-type scale, making the *Cronbach’s*
alpha an appropriate coefficient of reliability for this scenario. The Cronbach’s alpha statistic is calculated using the following formula:

\[
\alpha = K \left( 1 - \frac{1}{K-1} \sum_{i=1}^{K} \frac{\sigma_{y_i}^2}{\sigma_x^2} \right)
\]

In this calculation, K represents the number of questions. \( \sigma_{y_i}^2 \) represents the variance of each question, and the calculation of alpha uses the sum of the variances as noted. \( \sigma_x^2 \) represents the variance of the individual teacher responses. For the results of the survey on the program, \( \alpha = 0.8524 \). The value of these results indicates good reliability since \( \alpha > 0.7 \). In the theory of statistics, good reliability translates to good replication. Good replication means this instrument would yield similar results if it was given to a different staff under the same conditions as those used to implement the program.

**Perception of the Program Survey Results: Part II**

The second part of the Faculty Survey was designed to evaluate the faculty’s perceptions of how they obtained training and knowledge of the program. It also sought to determine if they would recommend the program in other schools. Finally, and critical to any program review, was the attempt to gather additional information that could lead to improving the program if it was determined to be an effective behavioral support model. After identifying repeating words or ideas, responses were coded into categorized. These categories were evaluated to determine emerging themes.

**Question #11.** The first question was responded to in a yes/no fashion. The researcher divided the responses up into three categories:
- Yes- the participant was formally “Brown” trained during initial training (start-up with an external trainer from the program)
- Yes- the participant was trained by in-house administrators/colleagues
- No- the participant was not formally trained

Table 8

*Formal versus Informal Training*

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Yes, initial “Brown” training</th>
<th>Yes, administrator/colleague training</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Formally trained</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>31</td>
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</table>

The first set of “yes” responses to "I have been formally trained” reported having participated in the two-day start up training delivered by the co-founder of the program. Four of those respondents indicated that they also participated in school based professional development that involved refresher training of the program but that refresher trainings have not taken place for veteran staff in several years. The second set of “yes” responders indicated that they felt that they had formal training; however, either an administrator or a colleague delivered this training when staff first was hired to work at the school. The third set, indicating a response of “no,” stated that the information they obtained about the program was either provided to them by a team teacher (6), “learned from watching other teachers in the school apply the program” (4), or reviewed at a faculty meeting (3). The information obtained from this question is helpful in determining the perspective the responders are coming from.
**Question #12.** Subsequent questions were further evaluated from the perspective of faculty based on how they self-reported their level of training. Participants were asked whether they would recommend the implementation of the program to other schools.

Table 9

*Level of training*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Would recommend to other schools</th>
<th>Yes, initial “Brown” training</th>
<th>Yes, administrator/colleague training</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>12 Yes</td>
<td>29 Yes</td>
<td>11 Yes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 No</td>
<td>2 No</td>
<td>2 No</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The first set of “yes” respondents (12), in the category of “Brown” trained, positively agreed that they would recommend the implementation of the program in other schools.

*Favorable comments from participants who were initially “Brown” trained:*

- “The program supports the idea of teaching, guiding and supporting rather than imposing punitive consequences and punishment. It takes the subjectivity and emotion out of dealing with challenging students. This program is an effective tier I intervention within a Response to Intervention framework.”
- “Sets school-wide expectations and consequences making the discipline aspect less subjective.”
- “It is important to implement with fidelity and it is important to be a school-wide effort.”
- “Implemented alone in one or two classrooms would not work, but I recommend it as a SWPBS (School-wide Positive Behavior Support) model.”
- “The program affords learning communities. Many benefit when implemented and supported consistently: students self-awareness, student accountability,
purposeful focus for both students and teachers, and lastly fewer discipline issues.”

- “The staff should be asked for 100% willingness to implement, without that it would be a challenge to work effectively.”

Of the three responses from initially trained participants indicating that they would not recommend the program, responses included:

- “This system would work beautifully in a small school with limited staff. It is not implemented with fidelity with a staff this size”
- “No, I do not believe it is possible to achieve the fidelity of implementation necessary for the program to work. Several have tried here, none succeeded.”
- “No, there does need to be consistency and the program has fallen/morphed into what it did not start as. As time goes by it changes.”

**Question #13.** Question thirteen attempted to determine resources faculty identified as being supportive in implementing the program. Twenty-four out of 59 responders provided a written response to this question. Nine responders requesting areas in need of support for implementing the program, looked at training:

The responses are recorded as follows:

- “If (there is) full support from staff and administration, it can be successful.”
- “All new staff and newly arriving students (e.g. 6th graders) should participate in refresher training each year.”
- “Updated for all staff training.”
- “Training of newer teachers and staff to foster greater consistency.”
• “School-wide assembly at the start of each school year as a means to rally the
staff and students together in a supportive model of accountability.”
• “Continue a yearly review.”
• “Re-training periodically”
• “All staff (including paraprofessionals) should be trained.”
• “Formal training!”

Additional comments that ensued from question thirteen requesting areas in need of
support for implementing the program, looked at procedural provisions:

• “More strategies for addressing “specific situations.””
• “None, I would take what works from the program such as Steps and Concern,
re-institute after-school detentions, and use a hybrid of pre and post strategies.”
• “If students are willingly (intentionally) choosing Step 4s there needs to be some
type of consequence above and beyond parents being called.”
• “more positive rewards for good behavior”
• “Modeling- follow through consequences.”
• “More support when it comes to a Step 4. I feel like teachers question
themselves as to whether it (the behavior) is a (an automatic) Step 4 or not.”
• “I would like to revisit the “Step 4” process. Parents need to work and it is often
difficult for them to come in.”
• “We need a dedicated “Step 4” room and monitor.”
• “small posters in each room with the procedural stages of the program”
• “clear, consistent steps for what to do when a child does not make her or his day”
• “A walkie-talkie for unusually misbehaved students.”
• “I think it would be good to have a list of the steps available on the classroom walls as a reference for teachers and subs who don’t use it often”
• “Still feel like the RBI model not fully implemented. This does not work for kids with behaviors that frequently occur- I saw a handful of kids that the program did not seem to change their behavior.”

Further comments from question thirteen requesting areas in need of support for implementing the program, looked at providing consistency:

• “All teachers in the school using the program helps it to have meaning and significance.”
• “I would only ask for consistency among staff, administration, and support from parents.”

**Question #14.** In order to ascertain the participants’ thoughts on how the implementation can be more valuable to students as a positive behavior support, question fourteen was posed. Three predominant themes came out of this question. One was the consistency of implementing the program school-wide, another was the implementation of a reward system and, finally, staff supported an increase in parental involvement.

In respect to the responses for what would make the program more valuable to students as a positive behavior support, 14 out of the twenty-seven responses indicated support for the idea that consistent implementation was imperative. Responses which included the theme of consistency included:

• “If all teachers in the school participated (the program would be more valuable to students).”
• “Follow through”
“Faithful implementation by staff.

“Consistency (2)”

“Total 100% staff participation”

“All staff should implement the program and be consistent in its use.”

“Consistency in its use throughout the building, consistency in follow-through in treating “Step 4” offenses”

“Use of consistently throughout the building by all staff.”

“If it were implemented with integrity and was implemented school-wide.”

“The program would be more valuable if the Point system and office referral slips were sent home to parents consistently.”

“If all teachers in the school participated.”

“All teachers need to be consistent in what causes each step.”

Parental involvement was another reoccurring subject in regard to making the program more valuable to students. The following is a recording of these responses:

“The program would be more valuable if the point system and office referral slips are sent home to parents consistently.”

“The students need to take more ownership of the consequences associated with the “RULE.” At times, the students and their parents don’t value the steps until they (the students) receive a Step 4.”

“Step 4 conferences wherein students complete a plan of action form with parents and teacher to outline improvements for behavior” would make the program more valuable.

“The parents need to be educated in the program”

“Increased implementation of parent conferences is imperative.”
The third point that was a reoccurring idea deviated from the philosophy of instilling intrinsic responsibility on the student, but the comments supported the impression that rewards would make the program more valuable. Written responses are as follows:

- “Students who have not been on steps during the trimester should receive recognition at an academic rewards ceremony.”
- “Single groups of students out for positive behavior by giving them an ice cream assembly.”
- “Rewarding students who are honest with their points and really care about their behavior and academics.”
- “Perhaps some rewards or consequences? Or would that go against the intrinsic motivation the program is trying to instill? Hard to say.”
- “I believe in using both rewards and consequences.”
- “Recognizing students who maintain appropriate behavior.”

Other non-categorical comments included:

- “We should revive the “peer mediation” model. We had peers trained as Natural Helpers and they helped mediate conflicts.”
- “The program would be more valuable, if we taught the kids “how to advocate for themselves in a positive manner and how to critique and accept critiques.”
- “I believe our school needs to have more positive messages posted in high travel areas – motivational, character development, and the rule- this should be worded in a more positive manner.”
- “Students should have a reflection sheet that they would have to use for the year as a way for students to see when they have had “more than one indiscretion.”
- “The program would be more positive if implemented with a smaller staff.”

**Question #15.** This survey question for Part Two was intentionally designed to allow the participants an opportunity to reflect on the program and/or positive behavioral support systems without the influence of the researchers' question. This question was intended to provide participants with the opportunity to express thoughts and ideas that may have been inadvertently excluded by the researcher. This question asked: “What other comments would you like to make regarding the program and/or Positive Behavioral Support systems?” Only fifteen of the fifty-nine (25%) submissions included a response to this question. These responses could be generalized into two categories; in favor of the Character program and not in favor of the program. The majority of the responses spoke favorably of the program but reiterated the need for improved implementation.

Although question fifteen attempted to solicit an open-ended opportunity to provide independent thinking about the program and/or behavioral support in general, comments seemed to remain on the same path carried throughout the survey. These comments are recorded as follows:

- “When it was first implemented and all teachers were trained and participated it worked! Presently not all teachers are trained, nor are all teachers participating. As a result, students do not take it seriously.”

- “The philosophy was very exciting to me as a new teacher when it was first introduced. However, it is not followed as intended by the authors; it is not followed with fidelity by teachers and administrators- It has become so watered down-. The examples of poor behavior among the student body is becoming more and more evident throughout the school environment.”
- “I think it is great that our school has the students take ownership for their behaviors, no other middle school does that.”
- “It can and does work so long as the program is applied consistently and completely, in coordination with the parents, for all students.”
- “I like it because it provides consistency throughout the building.”
- “I’ve been in many schools without a behavior plan. I like the consistency and documentation (Points). I also like the self-reflection during the Points process.”
- “My classroom management is much better now with it than it ever was without it.”
- “It only helps maintain good behavior and learning.”
- “I am glad to have this program”
- “Too many times we have to deviate and use “common sense” from the rules of the program. If we are deviating too much, is it time to modify the program or look at other options?”
- “Wonderful positive behavioral support system”
- “They are good reminders to students of the realistic behavioral expectations in school and ultimately in society.”
- “Reward good behavior more often.”
- “It is better to have the program stay than go. It is better to keep students in class for learning rather than go to the office unless needed.”
- “I do not think a system of this type can work with such a large and divergent staff.”

Responses to this questions also expressed support for the program. Comments such as:

- “Students should receive academic and behavior specific praise.”
In conclusion, the positive behavior support program, that was evaluated, showed it did have a statistical impact on the behavior of the middle school students in this setting. This was shown using a t-statistical test comparing office referral data before and after the character program was implemented. The Likert-scale was assessed using Cronbach’s alpha, which informed that the survey indicated good reliability. This means that, if the survey were given at another time under the same conditions, the result would be the same. Lastly, the open-ended responses were assessed using thematic coding. This revealed a reoccurring theme of the need for program training and ongoing training. When one looks beyond the statistical evidence, this research can further be evaluated with the distinctions discussed in the next chapter.

Chapter V: Discussion of Research Findings

Implications for Educational Practice

Supporting social, emotional, and behavioral concerns at the appropriate developmental stage of a child’s growth is critical when considering the needs of students. Staff must work together in a collaborative effort to support children through the trials and tribulations of growing up. Federal mandates such as Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) (1997), No Child Left Behind (NCLB) (2001), and even laws regulating school safety climate (Public Act 11-232), demand that staff consider the academic and behavioral needs of all students. Legislation put the responsibility on school staff for providing the structure for school-wide positive behavior support systems (IDEA, 1997). As school staff and faculty, we have been asked to ensure that all students are supported using positive behavioral support measures beginning with Tier I school-wide intervention (NCLB, 2001). This mandate is supported through the Response to Intervention framework that demands that children are provided varying
levels of support to address their needs. The majority of research concerning positive behavior support in schools has been centered around elementary children’s needs however; middle school children require a different approach to supporting their unique behavior challenges as they discover who they are (Vygotsky, 1978).

The main audience for the study will most likely be other educators. Exploration of school-wide positive behavior support programs used at the secondary level is lacking (Horner et al., 2010). Finding a system for behavior and character development is no easy task. This research will contribute to both the theory regarding and potential practices demanded of school systems to support students with behavior as well as academically.

Through the lens of developmental theory and control theory, this study described the different ways this program theoretically meets the intent of the federal mandate for supporting students’ developmental growth. Developmental theory, specifically Vygotsky’s zone of proximal development (1978), provided insight into what attributes are important to consider when guiding students in their development. Additionally, control theory, as explored through Bandura’s (1997) locus of control, provided an analytical lens in which to consider the value of the program as a model of school-wide positive behavior support.

The intent of this character program is to organize a system of guided support, which allows a child to interact with their environment and learn within that context (Vygotsky, 1997). Furthermore, cultivating the awareness that our actions are within our control (Bandura, 1997) is a critical aspect of behavioral development and is supported within the constructs of the behavioral program. It is through both perspectives, developmental theory and control theory, that this researcher gained a better appreciation of the implementation of behavior support interventions.
**Benefits of the Program**

There are many potential benefits associated with a well-managed classroom (Sailor, et al., 2008). Behavior management can be one of the most challenging aspects of educating middle school children. Sailor et al. (2008) report that school-wide positive behavior support is a framework designed to provide the structures for effective and efficient learning environments. A positive school climate includes positive teacher-to-student relations, student-to-student relations, the extent to which students are included in decision making, and the extent to which staff provide clear, consistent, and fair rules and regulations (Way, Reddy, & Rhodes, 2007). Fuchs and Fuchs (2006) suggest that integrating social and emotional development within the core curriculum is crucial. Sugai and Horner (2006) advocate for creating consistency throughout the school environment. Throughout the literature, studies reported the need for structures that support positive behavioral growth.

The following questions were researched to determine the effect the program had on student behavior as a positive behavior support model:

5) *To what extent* did the application of the positive behavior support program *impact* behavioral performance of middle school students at a northeastern, United States public school?

6) What were the perceptions of the staff regarding the impact of the positive behavior support program on students’ behavior?

The compiled office disciplinary referrals and survey question results served as tools to evaluate the efficacy of the program. Through analysis of the referrals and the survey, in which fifty-nine of the potential sixty-one (97%) faculty members participated, several themes emerged. These
themes helped to gauge present levels of program effectiveness and to characterize participant perceptions. Discipline referral data suggests that when the program was first implemented, with 100% buy in of faculty, overall behavior appeared to significantly improve. However, in recent years office referrals were on the incline. The themes that emerged through the survey were that overall participants value the program as a positive behavior support model, but that there were concerns expressed regarding the ease and the fidelity of implementation. The findings of this evaluation are discussed in further detail in this chapter.

**Summary of Office Disciplinary Referral Findings**

It was revealed through data analysis that significant changes in student office referrals existed pre- and post-program implementation. It was also evident that office referrals gradually increased in the last three years and that an anomaly occurred between the years 2008 and 2010. In addition, the data from these referrals were at an all-time low during the first four years of implementation. This evidence suggests that the intervention, when first instituted, had its greatest impact.

The results of the office disciplinary referrals charted over the last ten years indicate that the program may have had a positive effect on overall behavior at the onset of the program and for the next three years. Office referrals began to increase after the fourth year of the program. This suggests that when the program was fresh and there was well-trained staff, the intervention was likely effective. The results of the t-statistic testing provided insight on the reliability of the data. The results are as follows: Unprepared for class, interfering with teaching and learning, insubordination, cutting class, intimidation, vandalism, theft/extortion, and drugs/alcohol all produced values close to or at 0%. This means the null hypothesis will be rejected in those cases and that data supplies evidence towards the alternate hypothesis. In this case, the character
program made significant progress in these categories. In the categories of obscenity/profanity, weapons, and creating an unsafe condition, the percentage values were at 5% or larger. In these cases, the null hypothesis fails to be rejected. In these three cases, the program being evaluated appeared to have little or no effect on those student behaviors. A more in depth understanding of student population and actual incidence may have provided enough information to understand these results; however, this information is not available for this research.

When looked at more closely, the results, while indicating that the program had little or no effect on those student behaviors, shows that weapons were not of concern before or during the implementation of the program. As for creating an unsafe condition, year one of implementation had a significant decrease from 23 infractions in 2003, pre-program, to nine in 2004, the first year of implementation. Results in the category of obscenity/profanity indicated a decrease in the initial years. This offense had 18 referrals pre-implementations (2003) and then 8 (2004), 5 (2005), and 11 (2006) referrals for the first three years following. When looking at year-to-year evidence of behavioral change for these infractions, there appears to be need for only slight improvement. The null hypothesis fails to be rejected because of comparing other infractions to that of the overall years in question.

The percentages reported in Table 4 only begin to tell the story of office referrals. It is important to know that the percentage indicated was reflective of the total number of referrals and does not take into account repeat offenders. For example, one student may accumulate as many as 20 referrals. One student might account for 20% of the referrals of 200 students, therefore, additional information would be required to ascertain the true meaning of the results but for the purpose of this study, it is helpful to evaluate at least an approximation of effectiveness.
It is for this reason the information gathered from the office disciplinary referrals are inconclusive with regards to understanding if the implementation of school-wide positive behavior supports meets the behavioral needs of at least 80% of the student population (NCLB, 2001). Further information, which is not available, would be needed to determine what the status of the program was at this time of apparent success. Survey questions evaluated during this study indicate that there has been a steady decline of implementation, training, and fidelity over the last several years. Participants also expressed an understanding that the program has been compromised in many ways over the years.

Summary of Perception Findings

The discussion for this section is presented according to the order in which survey questions were presented. Themes were derived from ratings and participant comments using reoccurring words or ideas that became apparent to the evaluator. A high number of participants contributed to this study providing for a cross grade level perspective.

Survey questions were developed because perceptions of the staff regarding the impact the program has on student behavior development is relevant. Therefore, a Likert-type survey of participant perceptions was conducted. Cronbach’s alpha analysis on the findings of the Likert-type scale survey demonstrated good reliability. The Cronbach’s alpha value for this survey was 0.852393. As stated earlier a value higher than 0.8 indicates good reliability.

An interesting feature found in the survey (Table 7) is the variance for each survey question. A lower variance means more of the staff rated a question the same way, whereas a higher variance means the staff’s ratings were much more diverse. According to the chart, the philosophy question had the lowest variance, so it can be concluded that most staff agreed with the philosophy of the program. On the other hand, the question regarding the process of voicing
concerns had the highest variance, demonstrating that the staff members were in the most disagreement with one another about this question.

There appears to be a correlation between the findings of the office discipline referrals and written feedback from the perception survey. Responses in the survey indicated that the program had been more effective when implemented as intended. One respondent stated, “When the program was first implemented with 100% of the staff agreeing to try the program, it really worked. In more recent years staff has lost interest and students no longer seem to value the process when it is implemented.” The following section is a more in-depth discussion of the findings of the survey.

**Results and Discussion of Research Questions**

The first ten questions of the survey asked participants to rate these items based on a scale of one through five; one being strongly disagree, two being disagree, three undecided, four agree and five strongly agree. Each of these items provided the participant an opportunity to explain or provide a comment based on the statement posed. *Cronbach’s alpha* coefficient was calculated to look at the reliability of the perception survey responses. As stated in the results section, it was determined through this calculation that there is good reliability indicating that the survey can be replicated with similar results.

The remaining five questions were designed to ascertain an understanding of the participants’ overall knowledge of the character program, recommendations to implement in other schools, resources and suggestions for improving the implementation, and a question that allowed the participant to share any personal comments regarding the program as an effective positive behavior support.
**Expectations and restating expectation.** The first survey question looked to determine the extent to which participants perceived that stating expectations at the beginning of class has on positive student growth. Eighty-five percent of the participants rated this aspect of the program as supporting positive student growth. The theme that emerged from the comments provided indicating support, expressed belief that stating expectations at the start of class serves as a reminder about behavioral and academic objectives. One comment indicated that this aspect of the program is seen by some participants as developmentally appropriate. This question was expressed as follows: “It is a reminder. At this age many of the student’s benefit from that.” Other comments supporting the idea of stating expectations at the beginning of class had to do with merrily expressing to the students how to behave and what the academic expectations are.

One respondent out of the fifty-nine indicated disagreement, whose opposing comment focused on the universal rule, “No one has the right to interfere with the learning, safety, or well-being of others.” This participant felt that this statement “is not exactly a positive way to begin discourse.” Since the one universal rule used in a school system can be developed and adopted by the staff, it may be valuable to revisit how the universal rule is being stated. Can this statement be expressed in a more positive manner? This question may be posed to the stakeholders and, through discussion, a new statement holding the same intent may be shaped. Finally, behavioral expectations may need to be looked at more specifically. To avoid the ambiguity regarding the stating of this particular rule, perhaps stating expectations should be more specific such as, “We are going to the library. Since classes are going on, we must be quiet in the hallways.”
Survey question two looked to determine if restating the expectations throughout the class period supports positive behavior growth. The results of this question revealed that 61% of the participants rated this practice as supporting positive student growth versus the 85% who supported the practice at the start of class. Those who were undecided on question one equaled 14% while 32% of the participants were undecided for question two. The comments indicating support reported similar themes as in question one. Participants valued the need to remind students of expectations as it provides them with the structure to “keep students focused.” One participant stated that, “…it is nice to have this anchor to refer back to as needed.”

**Steps: private and non-judgmental.** The results from this question suggest that the majority of the faculty believe that the step process contributes to positive behavioral support when implemented as intended. Ninety percent of the participants agreed or strongly agreed that the step process supports positive behavior growth. This finding confirms that this aspect of the program, from the perspective of the participants, matches that of the literature as it relates to instilling in students that outcomes are primarily the result of one’s own behavior or actions (Trevino & Nelson, 2010).

The step process involves a “request” by the student for support in following expectations and getting their behavior under control (Brown, 2003). Results of this research indicate faculty member support for the behavior program as a structure for positive behavioral intervention because it involves students accepting responsibility and taking control of their own behavior. Choosing a step is a procedure designed to be understood by students as a choice they make based on their actions. The message is such that students are in control of their behavior; they choose their actions. This aspect of the program is supported in the literature in that it states that
individuals who have a tendency toward an internal locus of control are more likely to make ethical behavior choices (Trevino & Nelson, 2010).

The idea that the student’s behavior is within their control is supported and the student is reminded of this each time they are addressed while on one of the steps. One staff member stated that it was the most effective part of the program. Another stated that, “Teaching the students to take accountability for their actions is important.” Through the process of steps, the student is addressed privately, in a non-judgmental manner in a way that aims to provide the child corrective feedback. Eighty-six percent of the participants rated implementing steps in a non-judgmental manner as being an important part of the program, while 8% were undecided, and 6% disagreed. Survey results showed that staff valued this process as indicated in the following comment: “Some students need to learn appropriate behavior. This promotes their understanding.” The literature supports this thinking of providing feedback that is specific, matter of fact and non-judgmental (Bowen et al., 2004).

Understanding the developmental uniqueness of adolescents can help adults guide students to an autonomous level of positive decision-making (Shute, 2011). At least one participant believes that “At the sixth grade level, most students are not mature enough to self-monitor and need a gentle reminder regarding behavior.” Although the majority of respondents supported the step process, including implementing it in a non-judgmental manner, two staff members questioned the impact it has on students, particularly the older students (8th graders).

**Points.** Another aspect of the program evaluated was the process of allocating points. This process requires all members of the community to reflect on their learning and behavior during the designated period. This aspect of the program is supported in the literature as it identified the need for students to have a voice and be reflective upon the choices they make
(Karten, 2009). Through this procedure, participants assign themselves points based on whether they did what was expected to the best of their ability. Themes that emerged from the written response of the survey indicate that, although students can have a difficult time being honest about their behavior, this process encourages self-reflection and self-accountability. An added contribution to this practice is that the instructor begins the process by modeling their own points and stating how they earned their points and what may have contributed to not earning full points. The fact that staff members recognize that they are social agents, and therefore primary role models to this impressionable group of people (Caissy, 2002), is a benefit of this program. The honest self-reflection of assigning points begins with the adult.

This study revealed a significant amount of variability in responses regarding the positive support the points procedure provides the students. Based on anecdotal responses, staff expressed a range of reasons regarding the developmental readiness of the students to be truthful and reflective to the time consuming aspect of each student evaluating points and the need to follow up the next day with office referral slips when a student did not “make their day.” This issue brings concern that the ease of implementation may be problematic. On the upside, not only does the step process guide students with regard to individual choice making but also, the points process fosters the idea of demonstrating where a child is in relationship to locus of control (Glasser, 1986). When an individual takes responsibility for her or his actions, they are demonstrating internal locus of control. The participant believes that outcomes are primarily the result of one’s own behavior or actions (Trevino & Nelson, 2010). Whereas the student who does not take responsibility defends through the concern process expressing that the behavior was misinterpreted by others or that they are of the belief that their behavior was influenced by
external controls. This aspect of the program is supported in the literature regarding permitting students to have a voice (Karten, 2009).

The process of each member of the community assigning points to themselves helps the adult understand the student’s zone of proximal development (Vygotsky, 1978) and in turn will have a better idea as to how to guide the student. Bandura (1997) highlights the thinking that students need to understand that they are in control of their own behavior. Lickona (2004) states, “We create our character by the choices we make” (p. 200). This process empowers the student to understand that they are in control of their choices. This guiding process will assist a child in taking responsible action. Supporting the acquisition of an internal locus of control is critical to behavioral development. It is through this process that the adults can orchestrate a child’s learning.

Overall, faculty comments related to the idea that points do not support positive behavioral growth; this creates concern that in some environments students are not provided the appropriate level of support and guidance from adults during this portion of the program. Faculty expressed concern that all staff need to be well trained and oriented to the program and that a program such as this needs full support of the community.

**Concerns.** In this research study, data revealed that, although a number of survey respondents did not support the developmental readiness of middle school students to take on the responsibilities of guiding each other through the concerns procedure, others agreed it does support students and stated that concerns provides a time for students to work out their differences in a structured environment. Using the Cronbach’s alpha calculations, the ratings for the concerns portion of this survey indicated the highest variance as compared to other survey
questions. This means that the staff had the greatest level of disagreement with the aspect of whether or not concerns support positive behavioral growth.

Overall themes that arose in the category of favorable comments had to do with student ownership and responsibility. One staff member recognized the challenges students can have with resolving conflicts and reported that this aspect of the program allows time within the class period to guide students through conflict-resolution. The following comment supports this idea: “This part allows students to address each other directly and learn the difference between tattling and what is really a concern. It gives them power over a situation that otherwise is at the mercy of the teacher.”

Themes that emerged in the unfavorable category were that students use the process to be silly or to be mean to each other. These findings of the data collected from the survey, and from some of the anecdotal responses to this question regarding concerns, bring cause for worry. This concern stems from the fact that some staff members believe that the process can be used by some students as an opportunity to dominate others. This discovery calls for the need for careful attention regarding the appropriate supports and for ensuring that program procedures are implemented as intended (Brown, 2010). This aspect of the program may require the greatest amount of teacher training or retraining as it relates to developmental appropriate guidance through conflict-resolutions.

**School-wide effort supported by the majority.** This research study revealed through question seven that the majority of the participants support the ideas that the character program as a school-wide effort contributes to positive behavioral growth. However, a related second survey question (#8) revealed that a significant number of responses indicate a lack of support in implementing the program school-wide. This contradiction poses the question as to why
participants believe that the effort, when implemented school-wide, contributes to positive behavioral growth, yet is not believed to be implemented with fidelity school-wide. Fidelity of any initiative is a critical component of measuring its effectiveness (Foorman & Moats, 2004). The perceptions of the individual staff members, with regard to their peers who support the program, shows the majority of the staff, by a very small margin, are unsure if their colleagues support the program. This might explain the notion that there is a lack of consistency in implementation among members of the school. As one respondent contributed, “I don’t believe that the majority of teachers are doing the program.” Another response suggested that, “Some teachers are very vocal about the fact that they do not believe in the program and state so in front of the kids. I think this undermines the program for those of us who do use it.” This idea of across school consistency is relevant because if, in fact, the sentiment is that members of the school are not consistent, one may begin to feel that there is no need to adhere to the character program. On the same note, another participant stated that students might not take the program seriously and therefore not follow it as intended. Another faculty member wrote, “No, but it doesn’t matter. For the program to work it needs to be unanimous.” Creating consistency benefits the children and the staff at the school (Sugai & Horner, 2006).

Results of this survey question raise cause for concern regarding the true school-wide implementation of this program. The intent of the federal mandates is for behavioral interventions to be supported as a school-wide effort. Even if the program is deemed a viable positive support model, the school community at large must support the program itself. The results of this research provided by faculty participants suggest that if this program is to be continued, it should be introduced to the staff with full training and that all members must
participate in the effort. At least one participant in the study emphasized the need to provide training each start of the school year as a refresher.

**Philosophy.** In order to discover if this program merits implementation, it is additionally important to understand if the underlying philosophy supports the thinking behind the federal mandates of implementing school-wide behavior support for all students. The most critical statement regarding the intended purpose of the Character program, in the eyes of the researcher, is contained in question nine. An interesting feature of the Cronbach’s alpha calculation is that it provides information regarding the variance of each question as it relates to individual responses. This analysis revealed a low variance with respect to the question, “The Character program supports positive behavioral growth.” This demonstrates that a high number of participants were in agreement with the philosophy of the program.

The feedback showed that 100% of participants agree that philosophically, this Character program, when implemented as a school-wide effort, supports the development of positive student behavior. These results further suggest a strong correlation between the character program philosophy and promoting positive behavioral growth. Sprague and colleagues (2008) report that 80% of the staff must want and believe in the change effort for the desired transformation to come to fruition. Staff must believe in the intervention and support its implementation (Zumda et al., 2004). When the character program was first introduced to this staff, 100% agreed to try the program. It has been 10 years and a significant staff turnover since that time. In light of the results of question seven and the overwhelming favorable response to question nine, that from a philosophical perspective the program is thought to positively support adolescent behavioral development, strongly suggests this program is a viable intervention
choice. When drawing a conclusion from these discoveries, there is no question that the philosophy behind the program design clearly demonstrates backing the thinking of the creator.

One limitation to this survey question is that it is not clear what the participants’ understanding of positive behavior support should look like. Horner and colleagues (2010) define components of a multi-system approach to positive behavior support:

- There must be clear expectations of positive behaviors provided to all members of the community.
- There must be a clear understanding of problem behaviors and consequences.
- Planned instructional strategies for acceptable behaviors should be outlined.
- A motivational system must be in place.
- Staff must be committed to stick with the intervention.
- Ongoing training for staff needs to be conducted.
- A system for measuring and monitoring effectiveness of intervention should be in place.

It is not clear as to what understanding staff members have regarding establishing clear expectations and the ability to provide developmentally appropriate positive behavior supports. It cannot be assumed that all faculty members have a shared understanding of what students need regarding behavioral support. Further analysis of this understanding would give the ratings of this question more value. Clearly, the findings of the question support the need to continue exploring the implementation of the program.

**Ease of implementation.** Two issues to consider when evaluating interventions are the evidence of effectiveness in a school setting and how teachers can integrate the intervention into their daily routine (Horner et al., 2010). The success of a program is partially contingent on
proper implementation. The easier a program is to implement, the greater the likelihood it will be employed as intended (Vale & Cole, 2006). Question 10 attempted to ascertain participants’ perspective on this as it relates to the character program.

Overall, 81% of the responses indicated agreement or strong agreement that the program is easy to implement. The theme that emerged from the comment section was that despite many participants indicating this process was time consuming, when implemented with fidelity and with the proper training, it promotes consistency and is easy to follow. One conclusion drawn from the comments provided is that proper training and consistent support throughout the school was essential.

On the contrary, in this study 11 respondents (19%) disagreed at some level that the program was not easy to implement. Yet, in a similar study, staff reported success with the program primarily due to its ease of implementation (Vale & Coe, 2006). Despite the forty-eight positive responses regarding ease of implementation, it is worthwhile to understand what aspect(s) of the program caused 19% of the participants to indicate that they feel the program was not easy to implement. Written responses suggested that proper and ongoing training would lead to making the program easier to carry out. This sentiment was also apparent in the favorable comment sections. Additional unfavorable comments continued to support this theme of proper on-going training and the need for it to be a school-wide effort.

**Open-ended responses.** Proper training is critical to the integrity of any intervention. Interestingly, a greater percentage of faculty, those who received their character training from school-based personnel rather than program trainers, indicated in this study that they would recommend this program to be used in other schools. This variation in responses may be due to the gap between training and current implementation in the school. Initial training, booster
training, ongoing training and phone support are important when implementing interventions (Solomon et al., 2008). Comment provided for question 11 regarding training are indicative of a desire to continue the program and an ongoing necessity to implement the program with fidelity. Participants further suggest that this ongoing training is a critical aspect of sustainability and motivation. Although provisions have been made at the school of study to train new staff, little evidence shows the ongoing training for veteran staff has been in place for many years. The findings from this question suggest that it is possible that the initial staff has lost motivation due to the lack of systematic booster training and support.

In an effort to determine supports faculty would like in order to continue implementation, findings from question 13 continued to carry a theme of the need for, (at the most) full program training and (at the least) booster training to breathe new life into the program and to ensure that each aspect of the program is followed as intended. Other comments showing support included looking at how to better serve families with regard to the Step Four process, which requires a parent to come to school to provide additional support to their child. Step Four is deemed serious enough to exclude the student from classes until a parent is able to come to school and address the child’s behavior. Other supports suggested by the participants were program revisions, which included the use of a reward system in conjunction with the character program. These comments reflect a change in the integrity of implementation of the designed program.

The program design is based on the belief system that the reward is intrinsic and not having a physical substance; however, the hybrid suggestion does not go against the idea that even the program needs to be developed based on the needs of the specific environment. With that said, it may be valuable to weigh whether the program can have a reward system and still maintain the overall philosophical aspects of the program in support of students’ positive
behavioral growth. Another research finding suggested that parental involvement would make the program more valuable to students. Parental involvement is an integral aspect of the program design. The participants’ statements regarding parental involvement further lead to the suggestion that proper training and fidelity of implementation should be corrected if the program is to continue.

Fidelity of implementation is a reoccurring theme in this study. Overall, findings suggested that faculty had limited opportunities for refresher training therefore, did not have sufficient support to facilitate the intervention with fidelity. However, findings from question seven also showed that 86% of participants support the idea that the character program is a positive behavioral intervention.

This study revealed that the majority of the participants support the idea that this program affords the educator a framework for a well-managed classroom that leads to a more effective and efficient learning environment. This structure further provides the format for clear, consistent and fair rules and regulations across the school setting. The findings show that the every participant supports the idea that the character program, from a philosophical standpoint, provides staff the structure for positive behavioral growth when guiding middle school children through behavioral choices. Furthermore, office disciplinary referral data support the suggestion that the character program, when implemented in its early stages (from 2004 to about 2007), may have had a positive influence on student behavior. However, a significant number of staff reflected the opinion that the program implementation has lost its appeal.

Despite a high rating of philosophical support, other evidence supports concerns regarding components of implementation. The findings of the concerns component of the program showed that 68% of the respondents strongly disagreed, disagreed or were undecided as
to whether this aspect of the program contributed to positive behavioral growth of students. Additionally, 11 staff (19%) expressed strong disagreement or disagreement that the program is easy to implement. This factor may be due to a lack of sufficient training.

**Summary of Findings**

Office discipline referral data suggest that when the program was first implemented, with 100% buy in of faculty, overall behavior appeared to significantly improve. Nevertheless, in recent years, office referrals are on the incline. Furthermore, there appears to be a disconnect between support for the philosophy of the program as a positive behavior support and the actual implementation. When attempting to answer the question, “To what extent did the application of the character program impact behavioral performance of middle school students at a northeastern, United States public school?” many factors were considered. Without additional information regarding specific student referral, specific information regarding student population, the rate of one teacher referring the same student over another, and other possible gaps in knowledge, the results of this query remain inconclusive. Overall, however, there is suggestion that there was a positive impact on student behavior.

The second research question, “What are the perceptions of the staff regarding the impact of the character program on student behavior?” also cannot be summed up through simple analysis. The survey data revealed that while all the faculty participants agreed that the character program supports positive behavioral growth as a school-wide positive behavior model, the question remains as to how to increase participation and to determine specific areas in need of improvement. In response to the criteria found through the literature review for sustaining any change, there requires at least 80% of the staff to want or believe in the change effort (Sprague et al., 2008). This program, when first implemented, was supported by 100% of the staff. In
addition to the need for staff to believe in the change, ongoing training (Bradshaw et al., 2008) is necessary for sustainability. Since its implementation, there has been a significant staff turnover. Present staff members have indicated, overall, that participants valued the character program as a positive behavior support model, but that there are concerns regarding the ease and fidelity of implementation. This point leads us to another issue that came about in the literature review: In order for evidenced based practices to be effective, the program must be easy to integrate in the environment for which it is intended (Horner et al., 2010).

Using the theoretical framework to evaluate the various aspects of the program, evidence suggests that from the perspective of development (Vygotsky, 1978; Good, 2008) and control (Bandura, 1997; Glasser, 1986) theory, the program is a viable school-wide positive behavior support program. Staff members supported the idea that students need guidance that is developmentally appropriate and that teaching them that behavior is within one’s own control is beneficial.

From the data, recommendations can be made for future studies on evaluating this program in other settings and using other research design methods.

**Delimitations and Limitations of the Study**

This program evaluation was limited to one middle school located in a suburban community. The data collected from survey ratings and open-ended questions as well as office discipline referrals reveal only the perception of participants at a middle school in the northeastern U.S., and an individual faculty member’s reasons for sending a student to the office. Therefore, the results cannot be generalized to all schools in all districts. Many factors influence a teacher’s perception of a program, including but not limited to the level, intensity and frequency of proper training. Furthermore, any school-wide effort’s success is contingent on the
support of all of its stakeholders: colleagues, administrators, parents and students. This study evaluated the perception of teachers only.

Office discipline data were compiled to reflect overall Step 4 referrals and do not delineate environment, referring staff member, or specific students and specific issues. Additionally, there was a deviation in the data between the years 2004-2008 to that of subsequent years, in which the data shows a steady increase in office referrals. Appreciating this aberration would require a deep understanding about what occurred during this period of time. Some factors that must be considered as having had an impact on this may be staff turnover, administrative turnover and overall loss of focus on the program or study. Identifying the exact cause cannot be determined from this study. There is no doubt that better understanding of causation would take additional information and further analysis.

**Recommendations for Further Study**

A thorough examination of this study provides insight into relevant future research. The relationship between student behavioral success rates, the program, and the implementation of school-wide positive behavior support within a Response to Intervention framework may likely be due to the climate in which the staff provide students the guidance to construct meaningful choices regarding their own behavioral performance. Therefore, the researcher suggests that this study be replicated in a variety of demographic settings and with a variety of subgroups such as students identified as severely emotionally disturbed, students identified as autistic, and other specific student populations. Conducting this study in schools with different demographics may help to determine generalizability in a variety of settings. This could be done to evaluate a more widely spread application of this specific program as a model for school-wide positive behavior support.
Additionally, academic achievement of students who are participants in the character program can also be explored to determine if this program has a positive effect on student learning. The behavioral and instructional implications as it affects Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) outcomes, as measured through federal mandates (NCLB), and the concern for safe school climates (Public Act No. 11-232) are considerable. Another aspect in need of further analysis would be to determine if implementing a reward system in conjunction with the character program is a viable suggestion. The question would seek to determine if deviating from the design of the program in this way would compromise the intent and behavioral outcome of students.

Conducting surveys that would include an analysis of student subgroup surveys, parent survey, and non-certified staff survey would help to determine if these groups perceive the program the same ways as the certified staff. In addition, grade level comparison of results may further assist in pinpointing specific perception of developmental appropriateness and areas in need of attention. An in-depth study of disciplinary referrals may benefit in assessing the impact the program has on meeting the needs of at least 80% of the student population’s behavioral needs to determine if this intervention is an effective Tier I intervention within the Response to Intervention framework (Netzel & Eber, 2003). This assessment can be accomplished by having a better understanding as to the number of referrals an individual student had on overall referral and what that individual’s specific offense was.

Each recommendation above may be applied to the study of any positive behavior support model. The theoretical frameworks, developmental and control theory provide a lens for which to seek programs that may meet the intent of federal mandates. Developmental theory contributes to an understanding of what attributes in a program are important to consider when
guiding children. Control theory assists in considering the value of a program. Horner and colleagues state the importance of establishing clear expectations that are provided to all members of the community. In addition, it is equally critical that staff is committed to sticking to the intervention and is sustained with ongoing training. These suggestions were found in the study to have equal value when providing positive behavior support within a multi-system approach.
References


Implementation of school-wide positive behavioral interventions and supports (PBIS) in


Brown, E. (2010). Make Your Day Citizenship Program. MYD, Inc. As retrieved at

http://www.makeyourday.com/aboutmyd/philosophy.html


Appendices

Appendix A-Permission to Conduct Study

May 3, 2013

Mr. Vince Scarpetti
Principal, [Redacted] Middle School

Dear Vince,

It would be my pleasure to grant you approval and permission to conduct a research study on positive behavioral support systems within the middle school population in the [Redacted] Public Schools.

I understand that this is part of your doctoral studies through Northeastern University in Massachusetts.

Sincerely,

[Redacted]

Assistant Superintendent
Appendix B - IRB approval

Northeastern

NOTIFICATION OF IRB ACTION

Date: May 20, 2013
IRB #: CPS13-05-03

Principal Investigator(s): Carolyn Bair
Vince Scarpetti

Department: Doctor of Education Program
College of Professional Studies

Address: 20 Belvidere
Northeastern University

Title of Project: School-wide Positive Behavioral Supports within a Tier 1
Response to Intervention Framework

Participating Sites: School District Superintendent’s Permission Letter on file

DHIS Review Category: Expedited #7

Informed Consents: One (1) unsigned consent form

Monitoring Interval: 12 months

APPROVAL EXPIRATION DATE: MAY 19, 2014

Investigator’s Responsibilities:
1. The informed consent form bearing the IRB approval stamp must be used when
recruiting participants into the study.
2. The investigator must notify IRB immediately of unexpected adverse reactions, or new
information that may alter our perception of the benefit-risk ratio.
3. Study procedures and files are subject to audit any time.
4. Any modifications of the protocol or the informed consent as the study progresses must
be reviewed and approved by this committee prior to being instituted.
5. Continuing Review Approval for the proposal should be requested at least one month
prior to the expiration date above.
6. This approval applies to the protection of human subjects only. It does not apply to any
other university approvals that may be necessary.

C. Randall Colvin, Ph.D., Chair
Northeastern University Institutional Review Board

Nan C. Regina, Director
Human Subject Research Protection

Northeastern University FWA #4630
Appendix C - Letter of Introduction

Dear Staff Member:

I am currently a student in Northeastern University's Doctoral program in Education. As part of my coursework in the program I need to conduct a research project. The purpose of the research is to evaluate the Make Your Day program as a Tier I Positive Behavioral Support system. I am requesting your consent for participation.

The study consists of asking you, the staff member, questions regarding the implementation of the Make Your Day program as a Positive Behavioral Support model. Participation in this survey is voluntary. Your response will be anonymous. Names will not be recorded anywhere on the survey. Surveys will be distributed, collected and placed in a sealed envelope by an impartial person. The completion and submission of the survey indicates your consent to participate. The full scope of the project will be explained in further detail. Only members of the research staff will have access to information obtained from the surveys. At the conclusion of the study, responses will be reported as group results only.

Again, participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not be used for teacher evaluation purposes. Your participation in this study will not affect your professional status or lead to the loss of any benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. Even if you begin the survey, you are free to refuse to participate at any time. You are not waiving any legal claims, rights, or remedies because of your participation in this research study.

Should you have any questions or desire further information, please call me or email me at 203-783-3553 and scarpetti.v@husky.neu.edu. Please complete the bottom portion and return it in the envelope provided to West Shore Middle School Attention: Vince Scarpetti.

If you have any questions about your rights as a research subject, you may contact Nan C. Reina, Director of Human Subject Research Protection, 960 Renaissance Park, Northeastern University, Boston, MA 02115-5000 or by phone 1-617-373-4588 or by e-mail at n.reina@neu.edu. This study (IRB # ) was approved by the IRB on .......

Sincerely,

[Signature]

Vince Scarpetti
Principal
West Shore Middle School

APPROVED

[Signature]

NURRB

VALID: 8/14/15

THROUGH: 5/14/19
Appendix D- Unsigned Consent

Northeastern University, Department of: Educational Studies
Name of Investigator(s): Carolyn Bair, Principal Investigator, and Vince Scarpetti, Student Researcher.
Title of Project: School-Wide Positive Behavioral Support Within a Tier I Response to Intervention Framework

Request to Participate in Research
We would like to invite you to take part in a research project. The purpose of this research is to evaluate the Make Your Day Program as a Positive Behavioral Support model to determine areas of need.

You must be at least 18 years old to be in this research project. The study will take place at Middle School and will take about 30 minutes to complete. If you decide to take part in this study, we will ask you to fill out a survey and a series of questions to discuss your thoughts and opinions about the Make Your Day program as a Positive Behavioral Support model.

There are no foreseeable risks or discomforts to you for taking part in this study.

There are no direct benefits to you for participating in the study. However, your answers may help us to learn more about the strengths and weaknesses of the Make Your Day program as a Positive Behavioral Support model.

Your part in this study is anonymous. That means no one will know if you took part in this study and no one, including the researcher, will know what your answers are. Any reports or publications based on this research will use only group data and will not identify you or any individual as being of this project.

The decision to participate in this research project is up to you. You do not have to participate and you can refuse to answer any question. Even if you begin the study, you may withdraw at any time. You will not be paid for your participation in this study.

If you have any questions about this study, please feel free to contact Vince Scarpetti at scarpetti.v@husky.neu.edu or 203-783-3553, the person mainly responsible for the research. You can also contact Carolyn Bair at c.bair@neu.edu or 617-390-4197, the Principal Investigator.

If you have any questions about your rights in this research, you may contact Nan C. Regina, Director, Human Subject Research Protection, 960 Renaissance Park, Northeastern University, Boston, MA 02115. Tel: 617.373.4588, Email: n.regina@neu.edu. You may call anonymously if you wish. You may keep this form for yourself.

Thank you,
Vince Scarpetti

APPROVED
NU IRB No. 0617-05-02
VALID 2-28-13
THROUGH 5-14-15
Appendix E- Faculty Survey

Faculty Survey

Part One

Grade level(s) you are directly involved with: 6th 7th 8th

Please rate the following items based on your personal experience with the new character program and its impact on students’ positive behavioral growth.

1. Strongly Disagree
2. Disagree
3. Undecided
4. Agree
5. Strongly Agree

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Expectations stated at the start of each class supports positive behavioral growth.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Explain/Comment:
_____________________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________________

2. Expectations stated throughout the class period supports positive behavioral growth.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2. Expectations stated throughout the class period supports positive behavioral growth.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Explain/Comment:
_____________________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________________

3. The “Step” process supports positive behavioral growth.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3. The “Step” process supports positive behavioral growth.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Explain/comment:
_____________________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________________

4. Implementing “Steps” in a private non-judgmental manner supports positive behavioral growth.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4. Implementing “Steps” in a private non-judgmental manner supports positive behavioral growth.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Explain/comment:
_____________________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________________
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Items</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5. The <strong>Points</strong> process of the program supports positive behavioral growth.</td>
<td>![1 2 3 4 5]</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Explain/Comment:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. The <strong>Concern</strong> process of the program supports positive behavioral growth.</td>
<td>![1 2 3 4 5]</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Explain/Comment:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Following the implementation of the program as a <strong>school-wide effort</strong> supports positive behavioral growth.</td>
<td>![1 2 3 4 5]</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Explain/Comment:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. The program is <strong>supported by the majority</strong> of the members of the school community.</td>
<td>![1 2 3 4 5]</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Explain/Comment:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. The program’s <strong>philosophy</strong> supports positive behavioral growth.</td>
<td>![1 2 3 4 5]</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Explain/comment:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. The program is <strong>easy to implement</strong>.</td>
<td>![1 2 3 4 5]</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Explain/Comment:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Faculty Survey

Part Two
Additional Questions

11. Have you been formally trained in this program? ____Yes ___No.

How did you obtain your knowledge of this program and how to implement it?

_____________________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________________

12. Would you recommend the implementation of the program to other schools?

Why or why not?

_____________________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________________

13. What additional resources or supports would you like to have in implementing the program?

_____________________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________________

14. What would make the implementation of the program more valuable to students as a Positive Behavioral Support model?

_____________________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________________

15. What other comments would you like to make regarding this program and/or Positive Behavioral Support systems?

_____________________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________________

Appendix F- Permission to Use Copyrighted Material

November 12, 2011

Hello Earl and Cheryl Brown,

My name is Vince Scarpetti and I am currently working on a dissertation regarding school-wide positive behavior support. The focus of my research is on the effectiveness of the program you created in a suburban middle school as a means to provide staff and students with a school-wide positive tier I intervention framework. The purpose of this letter is to request permission to include the training manual in my paper. The purpose of including this manual is to assist the reader in understanding the philosophy, practices and procedures of the program as you intended it to be understood. Additionally, as part of determining the effectiveness of such a program it is critical to determine if it is being implemented with fidelity. Therefore, I am developing a fidelity checklist to be used as an observational tool. After I have drafted this, would you be willing to look it over and give me your feedback?

Respectfully,

Vince Scarpetti

Earl and Cheryl Brown responded on November 14, 2011 granting their permission to include the training manual and to assist in the development of the integrity checklist.

I'm sending a zipped copy of the manual because the district filter rejected the previous send. Please let me know that you received this and that you were able to open it.

Earl & Cheryl

866-693-7837
Appendix F- Certificate of Completion

Certificate of Completion

The National Institutes of Health (NIH) Office of Extramural Research certifies that Vince Scarpetti successfully completed the NIH Web-based training course “Protecting Human Research Participants”.

Date of completion: 08/24/2010

Certification Number: 493615