SCHOOL-WIDE POSITIVE BEHAVIOR INTERVENTION SUPPORT IMPLEMENTATION AND ORGANIZATIONAL CHANGE: A CASE STUDY

A thesis presented by:

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Abstract

This case study focused on the three-year implementation period of School-Wide Positive Behavior Intervention Support (SWPBIS), a positive approach to discipline following the Response to Intervention (RTI) model, in a rural K-8 elementary school. The purpose of the study was to explore the perceptions of teachers and support staff’s perceptions on the implementation of SWPBIS and organizational change. The Burke-Litwin Causal Model of Change (1992) was the theory used for the analysis to explore how the SWPBIS implementation mediated with the transformative and transactional factors within a school organization. The focus of the literature review was to review the program effects of the systematic implementation of SWPBIS and how it related to teacher efficacy, school climate, student-teacher relationship, school leadership and student achievement. The research question of the study was: How did the implementation of the SWPBIS system at a small, rural K-8 school impact teacher efficacy, student-teacher relations, school climate, and student achievement as perceived by teachers and support staff? This descriptive case study attempted to explain the SWPBIS implementation through the eyes of school personnel during the implementation period. The research findings suggested that the SWPBIS implementation did influence the transformative and transactional factors of the school, as evidenced by improvement in student behavior, student referrals, teacher efficacy, and student achievement data.

Keywords: school-wide positive behavior support (SWPBIS), response to intervention (RTI), positive discipline, social emotional literacy, organizational change, school improvement, teacher efficacy, school climate
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Chapter I: Introduction

There is growing support in the literature that full implementation of a School-Wide Positive Behavior Intervention Support (SWPBIS) approach improves behavior outcomes (McIntosh, Bennett, & Price, 2011; Taylor, 2011; Hawkin, Vincent, & Schumann (2008); Lassen, Steele, & Sailor; 2006), school climate (Bradshaw, Koth, Bevans, Ialong, & Leaf, 2012; Debham, Pas, & Bradshaw, 2012), classroom ecology (Adams, Womack, Shatzer, & Caldarella, 2010; Algozzine & Algozzine, 2007: Morrison & Jones, 2006), teacher efficacy (Kelm & McIntosh, 2012; Ross & Horner, 2007), and academic achievement (Bohannon, Flannery, Malloy, & Fenning, 2009; Lassen, et al., 2006) in multiple school settings. The SWPBIS model is a systematic approach designed to increase pro-social behavior by teaching and reinforcing a clear set of behavior expectations, providing a system of rewards when the desired behavior is exhibited, and providing multi-levels of support if challenging behavior persists (Sprague & Golly, 2005). At the heart of SWPBIS is the focus on positive interactions between students and school staff, thereby, creating trust and safety in the school community.

The SWPBIS model has had a promising effect in addressing the social/emotional needs of students, while providing teachers and school staff with strategies to improve student behavior, correlating positively to increased student learning (Sprague & Golly, 2005). The SWPBIS model is research-based and emphasizes a positive discipline approach where SWPBIS practices are consistent among staff members where positive relationships can be developed and enhanced within a caring learning environment (Sprague & Golly, 2005). By providing a common vernacular and standardized practices in teaching and reinforcing the school wide behavior expectations, students will have more positive and predictable experiences that will foster learning and increase connectedness to school.
In this current era of high stakes testing and personalized learning, teachers are under siege to provide the appropriate instruction and interventions to meet the diverse learning needs of students. Meeting the state and federal targets are dependent on students’ proficiency levels on the state standards-based tests, which provide schools with their report cards by which the public judges the schools’ effectiveness. This is an uphill battle as increased demands for accountability within the structure of budget deficits and declining resources makes the challenges more daunting for schools. Teachers are charged with not only meeting the students’ academic needs, but also attending to the social and emotional learning that is pivotal to addressing the “whole child.”

Building positive relationships in the classroom produce collaborative learning experiences between teacher and student, which helped narrow the achievement gaps by creating more meaningful learning. Twenty first century learning focuses on rigor, relevance, and relationships (Ortiz, 2008) to boost critical thinking and problem solving skills within the context of a team-oriented approach. In addition, students must be able to use critical thinking and creativity to communicate and collaborate with others. A teacher’s sense of efficacy hinges on the power of such teacher-student relationships as measured through the increased levels of student engagement, classroom management techniques, and instructional strategies.

The importance of teachers’ roles, expectations, and teacher-student interactions as influential factors to improving students’ academic and behavioral outcomes within a Response to Intervention (RTI) approach has abundant support in the literature. Gaining attention in the literature is an RTI program called School-Wide Positive Behavior Intervention Support (SWPBIS). SWPBIS is a positive approach to discipline that teaches pro-social skills around school-wide behavior expectations. A token economy is established to reinforce the desired
behaviors. At the heart of it, the SWPBIS approach is based on creating positive interactions and instilling pro-social values to promote organizational health of the school, and well-being for students and school staff.

**Statement of the Problem**

Teacher efficacy is the most critical component in improving student learning which is essential to meeting both federal and state targets for testing and accountability at the elementary and secondary levels. However, public education continues to face severe budget cuts, underfunding of existing programs, and dwindling resources, creating a conundrum for school districts scrambling to meet the mandates of the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act of 2001. Schools are asked to do more with less, placing an inordinate amount of pressure on the classroom teacher.

To address this deficiency, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEIA) was reauthorized in 2004 by President George W. Bush to include the Response to Intervention (RTI) model. The RTI model emphasized the use of multi-tiered levels of interventions that are supported by scientifically based research (Sugai & Horner, 2009), and were incorporated to help schools meet the federal performance targets of Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) in reading and mathematics. The RTI approach is used in the general education setting, which is designed to reduce the high percentages of students who are placed in special education due to gaps in performance. While the performance level is focused on academics, student behavior is also an influencing factor on academic performance. The RTI model is evidenced based and provides support for the academic and behavioral spectrums. The three tiers of support are: (a) Tier 1 supports focus on a universal approach that focuses on most students, about 85-90%; (b) Tier 2 supports offer “targeted” solutions to a few students who are
at risk in a small group strategy, about 7-10%; and (c) Tier 3 supports address 3%-5% of students who require “intensive” intervention which is conducted in a one-on-one setting (Sprague & Golly, 2005, p. 30). For interventions to work, prevention of problem behavior needs to be a priority (Sprague & Golly, 2005). As an RTI program, School Wide Positive Behavior Support (SWPBIS) does incorporate the three-tiered levels of support, and is effective at meeting the goal of the RTI model of prevention.

With promising effects as demonstrated in the literature, SWPBIS improved student and teacher outcomes in the classroom which had an effect on academic achievement (Bohannon, et al., 2009; Lassen; , et al., 2006); classroom ecology (Adams, et al., 2010; Algozzine & Algozzine, 2007: Morrison & Jones, 2006); and teacher efficacy (Kelm & McIntosh, 2012; Ross, & Horner, 2007). Teachers are on the “front lines” of classroom instruction, and must meet the demands of serving the diverse learning needs of students within the scarcity of resources and the increasing regulations set forth by both Federal and State governments. However, a systematic and comprehensive approach of SWPBIS can be one solution to help impact teacher efficacy, school climate, and student achievement through the effective use of the Response to Intervention (RTI) model.

As an evidenced-based approach, SWPBIS is implemented by a leadership team, composed of multiple stakeholders. Standardized behavior expectations are established and posted in all common areas throughout the school campus. The school-wide behavior expectations are reinforced in all facets of the students’ daily lives and are taught and reinforced on the bus, in the classroom, on the playground, and at home. By having a common vernacular of behavior expectations such as respectful, responsible, cooperative, and safe behaviors while teaching pro-social skills, students experience consistent and positive interactions while at
school. These positive interactions between student and adult lead to predictable and safe experiences, fostering trust and a caring learning community.

In order to create a positive school climate, teachers need to feel competent in their delivery of instruction and their abilities to help students achieve mastery. Teachers must reconcile the learning gaps that prevail in the classroom through building teacher-student partnerships and developing collaborative learning environments with minimal disciplinary issues. Teachers play a very instrumental role in addressing the “whole child” by providing effective instruction and empathy for the well-being of the student.

The goal of this study was to investigate how the implementation of the SWPBIS structure contributed to school improvement objectives such as (1) teacher efficacy, (2) classroom management, (3) school-wide discipline, and (4) school culture. Self-efficacy was grounded in social cognitive theory (Bandura, 1977; Rotter, 1960) and was defined as one’s general beliefs about his or her own “capacity to organize and execute” (Bandura, 1977, p. 3). Existing research had shown that there were connections between low teacher efficacy and high teacher burnout which had far reaching consequences on student outcomes and staff morale (Pas, Bradshaw, & Hershfeldt, 2012), as well as financial costs to replace teachers who leave (Martin, Sass, & Schmitt, 2012). Teachers with high self-efficacy had been associated with effective instruction, proactive and positive classroom management (Woolfolk, 2007), and higher academic achievement (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2007; Wolters & Daugherty, 2007; Tschannen-Moran, Woolfolk, & Hoy, 2001). In contrast, teachers with low teacher efficacy resorted to more punitive and reactive disciplinary practices (Woolfolk, Rosoff, & Hoy, 1990). School leaders must empower and build capacity in the instructional staff by providing a positive work
climate, while providing the necessary resources, professional development, and support that will help build competency levels.

Few research studies have been conducted on teacher efficacy within the structure of a Response to Intervention (RTI) model, specifically, through the implementation of a School-Wide Positive Behavior Intervention Support (SWPBIS) approach, and this lack of research had created an opportunity to conduct an inquiry into this gap. Teachers’ feelings of professional effectiveness and the ability to handle classroom challenges were also a protective factor against job stress (Schwarzer & Hallum, 2008; Tschannen-Moran, et al., 1998). Building teacher efficacy must be made a top priority in order to serve students’ learning needs through increased time on task and effective instructional practices (Algozzine & Algozzine, 2007).

According to Barbara Frederickson (2009), the positivity ratio of four positive interactions to one corrective interaction, modeled pro-social skills and created positive exchanges that helped students become more resilient. The positive emphasis of the SWPBIS approach focused on adhering to the positivity ratio of 4 to 1 in adult and student interactions. When teachers spent less time on problem behavior, instruction and learning increased. While there is a gap in the literature regarding the examination of school indicators of disorder relative to the management of discipline problems or the use of school-based services (Pas, Bradshaw, Hershfeldt, & Leaf, 2010), incorporating an RTI philosophy with high fidelity might narrow this gap by exploring the benefits of a SWPBIS approach in its three-tiered approach to supporting student behavior.

**Significance of the Problem**

Implementing the School Wide Positive Behavior Intervention Support (SWPBIS) program at the micro level had yielded the positive results as evidenced in the literature such as increased student achievement (Bohannon, et al., 2009; Lassen, et al., 2006) and organizational
health (McIntosh, et al., 2011; Bradshaw, et al., 2008). Public school leaders have access to various resources in order to navigate through the turbulent waters of budget cuts, high stakes testing, and the excessive referrals of assessment for special education services based on behavioral issues. The RTI model was developed as a strategy for early detection in addressing the academic and social learning difficulties for all students based on individual needs, with the intent of closing the divide between general education and special education services (Sugai & Horner, 2009), as well as minimizing the need for inappropriate referrals to special education.

Addressing students’ challenging behavior through the use of a consistent, positive discipline approach such as SWPBIS offered an alternative method to addressing challenges in student behavior to the common use of punitive measures of exclusionary discipline based on the “zero tolerance” policy that has resulted in student suspensions and expulsions. With improved student behavior outcomes, this study attempted to discover the systemic impact of SWPBIS implementation on a school organization and how it influenced teacher efficacy, student-teacher relationships, school climate, and student achievement.

The democracy of the United States is dependent on the future generations of inventive thinkers and life-long learners, and educators cannot afford to delay action in meeting students’ academic and social/emotional learning needs. Schools play an integral role in providing the right balance of educational experiences, and it is the moral imperative that the citizens of the United States have the right to access high-leverage skills that are necessary to compete in the globalized economy (Ball & Forzani, 2011). The Common Core State Standards has brought the U.S. closer to having a set of national standards that will help better prepare students for college and career readiness, and most importantly, sets the course toward meaningful educational reform due to its international recognition and the pedagogical shift to teach in the framework of
21st century learning which include: creativity, critical thinking, communication, collaboration, relationships, rigor, and relevance (Retrieved from http://www.p21.org/about-us/p21-framework). Teacher efficacy is paramount in the education of all students to prepare them for college and career readiness, and to teach them pro-social skills that will provide leverage to compete globally (Gardner, 2004). Schools can provide equal access to educational resources within the Response to Intervention (RTI) model. Utilizing the SWPBIS model might level the playing field by providing support and equal access of behavior interventions to all students in order for them to learn the skills of collaboration and group problem solving that would ensure students’ success in and beyond the classroom.

**Positionality Statement**

School leaders need to build capacity in teachers through empowerment strategies, and create comprehensive professional development opportunities to support teacher efficacy. The classroom interactions between teachers and students could make or break student learning, and teachers who possessed high self-efficacy used effective instructional strategies, classroom management strategies, and utilized proactive strategies to address the learning gaps (Woolfolk, 2007). The problem of practice focused on the implementation of a School-Wide Behavior Intervention Support (SWPBIS) program and its effects on school contextual factors such as increased teacher efficacy, school climate, and academic performance within the Response to Intervention (RTI) model. The purpose of the study was to explore teachers and support staff’s perceptions on the implementation of SWPBIS and any indicators that support student learning.

As an educator, my personal philosophy is that there must be an integration of social emotional learning (SEL) and academic learning, or what Zins, Bloodworth, Weissberg, and Walberg (2007) call a “SEAL” approach. In other words, teaching and reinforcing pro-social
skills are as important as teaching reading and math. After all, schools represent social learning environments, and teaching students how to socialize appropriately can support their ability to communicate proactively and effectively, as they grow older. My belief is that educators need to be stewards of evidence-based practices to create a caring and thriving learning community. My bias is that the social emotional learning portion is more important because teaching pro-social or “people” skills is critical to building collaboration and resiliency, which are essential life skills.

My passion for SEL is drawn from the roots of my upbringing from immigrant parents who arrived in the United States after my father joined the U.S. Navy during World War II, and my family was granted citizenship. My parents taught the importance of family, community, and hard work, but my social world came crumbling down when my parents got divorced after 32 years of marriage in my 4th grade year. During fifth grade, my teacher left in the middle of the year, and in sixth grade, my teacher was very strict and really did not show much warmth to the students. Approaching junior high school, the population was large and the school was divided into three different programs: (1) A-School, (2) Regular School, and (3) Tis.

The Tis, or “IT is” program is what I chose, which was modeled after Choice Theory (Glasser, 1998). The Tis program was based on the addressing the social, emotional, and academic learning (SEAL) needs of students, and we were taught the importance of team building and how to create a strong sense of community. Each year we picked Tis teachers to become our “advisers.” Having that caring adult who we could seek advice from was priceless. The Tis program reinforced the sense of family and community that I had lost after the divorce, and it was the turning point that defined who I am as a person and an educator.

My first hand experiences as the administrator in charge of implementing the School Wide Positive Behavior Intervention Support (SWPBIS) program had deepened my knowledge
of the research behind the development of this approach. As a principal member of the original research team, my role was to coordinate and hold the monthly meetings. During those early planning meetings, the team discussed the SWPBIS principles and conceptualized the ideas into student friendly language in order to strengthen the students’ interpretation of the principles of SWPBIS. The research paradigm to which this qualitative study was conducted utilized Ponterotto’s (2005) constructivism-intepretivism as it lent itself to multiple interpretations as opposed to the positivist approach at arriving at one right answer. In order to build shared knowledge and an identity with SWPBIS, the program was branded as “The Mountain Way,” named after the school. As students connected to the behavior expectations of the Mountain Way, each could provide their own examples of the expected behaviors, which created common understanding within multiple realities.

At first, I was a bit concerned about conducting research in my own backyard as well as my own personal biases toward SWPBIS, SEAL, and my experiences in the Tis program. In addition, I was also concerned that conducting the interviews with teachers and support staff would lead to Butin’s (2010) claim of “response effect bias,” (p. 97). However, my concerns had been somewhat alleviated as I was encouraged by Maxwell’s (2005) assertions that reactivity was not such a serious threat to research, and concluded that the “…researcher is part of the world he or she studies – is a powerful and inescapable influence,” (p. 109). In addition, Maxwell (2005) cautioned the researcher to avoid leading questions.

Butin (2010) also recommended the use of open-ended questions and to “…carefully structure the interview protocol,” (p. 97), and Creswell (2013) recommended that a core set of five to seven open-ended questions are “phrased in a way that the interviewees can understand,” (p. 164). Since the researcher was the primary instrument in qualitative studies, my insider
knowledge about SWPBIS and the trusting relationships that I had with the teachers and support staff, was helpful in obtaining honest answers (positive or negative) to retrieve rich data. It was made clear to the staff members that the expectation would be an authentic assessment rather than telling me what I wanted to hear. My role was viewed as the instructional leader, trying to develop the proactive and preventative strategies that contributed to our Response to Intervention (RTI) model to meet the needs of students and teachers, and to maintain our positive school climate.

The study took place at the elementary school level, where fidelity to the SWPBIS and student population was the highest. Permission to conduct my research was obtained from the Governing School Board, and the IRB approval from the university was attained before sending out the recruitment letter to the teachers and support staff who would be the participants. In the preparation stage, I utilized Maxwell’s (2005) “researcher identity memo” (p. 39) on SWPBIS, by using the practice of reflection of my research goals, and the exploration of my assumptions and experiential knowledge. Throughout the process of the project, I communicated the purpose of the study, and conducted “member checking” and had the participants review the interview notes to confirm the interviewees’ responses.

In order to honor the oath of protecting the participants, I made it known to the teachers that participation was voluntary, and that there would be no repercussions if they chose to discontinue their participation. Using pseudonyms and a coding system protected the anonymity of the school and participants. Data collected was secured at all times and kept off campus. When constructing my final research report, I followed Creswell’s (2012) guidelines on ethical reporting in the writing process by using sensitive and specific language that was respectful to the participants, provided honest reporting regardless if it supported or refuted my research
questions, avoided plagiarism by giving credit to other people’s work, and provide copies of the final report to the participants.

**Research Question**

Teacher efficacy is the most integral part to student learning and academic achievement. Giving teachers strategies and supports to perform at higher levels to deliver the knowledge capital and skills needed by students to compete in the global economy is critical (Gardner, 2004). Due to severe budgetary restraints and draining of resources in public education, teachers and support staff were asked to do more with less, which elevated their performance anxiety, stress, and burnout levels (Martin, et al., 2012; Pas, et al. 2010). The first goal of this qualitative study was to explore the perceptions of teachers and support staff on how SWPBIS has contributed to their own sense of efficacy within the present state of funding and expectations in public education. The second goal of the study was to explore teachers and support staff’s perspectives on how SWPBIS was implemented at Mountain Springs Elementary School its impact on student learning, teacher performance, employee satisfaction, and the overall climate of the school. With this said, the main research question of the study was:

*How did the implementation of the SWPBIS system at a small, rural K-8 school impact teacher efficacy, student-teacher relations, school climate, and student achievement as perceived by teachers and support staff?*

Meeting the needs of students is certainly the top priority, but teachers’ needs are equally important. They are on the front lines fighting the battle of reconciling the “teaching and learning enterprise” (Song, Hannafin, & Hill, 2007, p. 28) through the rough terrain of outside and inside elements that affect students’ abilities and attention to learning. Teachers must not only meet the academic needs of students, but also attend to their social and emotional needs as
well. To meet such diverse challenges, teachers must be innovative and empathetic in order to persevere in this climate of resource scarcity and adversity. Teachers need the aid of the support staff to provide either the Tier 1 or Tier 2 focused interventions to support the individualized needs of the students. Through the review of the literature, investigation of best practices and effective strategies were pursued in order to analyze teacher efficacy as a protective factor to meeting both the needs and well-being of students and teachers, while building the essential collaborative skills needed for 21st century learning to form key networks within the context of the whole school. Consistently using the positivity ratio built trust and fostered nurturing environments.

There was a body of evidence in the literature that an effective Response to Intervention (RTI) program, School-Wide Positive Behavior Intervention Support (SWPBIS) had dually improved both student and teacher outcomes, and created such caring learning communities (Kelm & McIntosh, 2012; Gebbie, Ceglowski, Taylor, & Miels, 2011; Battistich, Solomon, Watson, & Schaps, 1997). SWPBIS is a positive discipline approach that is led by a leadership team that creates uniform behavior expectations, which becomes the common vernacular to provide students with consistent rules to follow at school and at home. Through the teaching of pro-social skills within a token economy of reinforcements, teachers spent less time on discipline and more time on instruction (Sprague & Golly, 2005). Another outcome of the SWPBIS approach was that office disciplinary referrals were decreased, which translated to declines in exclusionary disciplinary practices toward students and increased attendance (Vincent & Tobin, 2011; Lassen, et al., 2006). With improved behavior, attendance, and academics teachers felt better equipped to perform their jobs, leading to empowerment, accomplishing their work objectives, increasing their level of commitment to the school, and thus contributing to the
overall health of the organization (Kelm & McIntosh, 2012; Bradshaw, et al., 2008). With a strong disposition toward organizational health, teachers and students were capable of forming strong social bonds to strengthen the teacher-student learning partnership (Song, et al., 2007).

To unveil the sources of teacher efficacy and improved school climate, greater insights into school improvement and academic achievement were investigated to uncover the research-based practices that were applicable to running effective schools.

**Theoretical Framework**

This study focused on teachers’ and support staff perceptions of the impact of the School Wide Positive Behavior Intervention Support (SWPBIS) program, as implemented at Mountain Springs Elementary School on teacher efficacy, student-teacher relationships school climate, and student achievement. The level of analysis focused on the program evaluation of the School Wide Positive Behavior Support Intervention (SWPBIS) and its potential effects on self efficacy for teachers and support staff. In order to judge the program effectiveness of SWPBIS, Patton’s (2002) social construction and constructivist research criteria was applied to “…embrace subjectivity as a pathway deeper into the understanding of the human dimensions,” (Patton, 2002, p. 267), and the researcher understood one’s own background and perspectives in relation to appreciating others’ perspectives and experiences as well. For this reason, the research was conducted within a SWPBIS school where the researcher is employed.

The Burke-Litwin Causal Model of Change (1992) served as the theoretical lens with two dimensions embedded within the model: transformational and transactional factors. Transformational factors referred to external environment, mission, leadership, culture, climate, and organizational performance, and transactional factors included structure, systems, management practices, task requirements, individual needs/values, and motivation (Burke,
The Burke-Litwin (1992) model is based on open systems thinking where the subsystems interact to form feedback loops to adapt to varying contexts. Through this lens, SWPBIS was explored as it impacts the organizational factors within the inner context of the school. The upper half of the model (which also carried the most weight) referred to the transformational factors, or those factors that brought about revolutionary change. Burke (2011) defined revolutionary change as a “jolt to the system,” (p. 77), as there were internal disruptions that force organizations out of alignment and such threats created a need for change in order for the organization to survive (Burke, 2011).

In contrast, the lower half referred to the transactional factors, or day-to-day operations that bring about evolutionary change, or ongoing change through slight adjustments or minor modifications that are discrete and discontinuous (Burke, 2011). To analyze the context of the SWPBIS implementation and its impact on organizational change, the interactions within the school organization’s internal environment was explored in relation to teacher efficacy, student-teacher relationships, school climate, student achievement, and leadership (see Figure 1).
Figure 1.  Burke-Litwin Causal Model of Change
Figure 1. This organization model of change represents the open systems thinking of input, throughput and output and the mediation of transformative and transactional dimensions of the implementation of SWPBIS and impacts on the organizational performance. Adapted from “Organizational Change: Theory and Practice,” by W. Warner Burke, 2011. Copyright 2011 by Sage Publications, Inc.

According to Burke (2011), using an organizational model can be useful to help categorize, interpret data, and inform strategy, systems, and leadership practices. For the purposes of this study, a modified version of the Burke-Litwin (1992) model helped to explore the SWPBIS implementation and its impacts on organizational factors, through the analysis of the subsystems of leadership, management practices, systems, climate, motivation, individual needs/values, and individual and organizational change, which was where the analysis was focused.

Utilizing the social construction and constructivist research criteria aligns best with the case study design because the goal was to achieve deeper understanding about a specific case (a SWPBIS school) within its natural setting, and this particularity gave justice to the integrity of the unique case that is being evaluated (Patton, 2002). Furthermore, the Burke and Litwin (1992) model was useful in understanding how the implementation of SWPBIS might have impacted revolutionary change and evolutionary change, experienced at Mountain Springs Elementary School through the interactions between the transformational and transactional factors (see Figure 2).
Figure 2  Burke-Litwin Causal Model of Change  (Modified)
CHAPTER II: Literature Review

Meeting the diverse social and emotional needs of students from various cultural and economic backgrounds is a challenging task for schools, and students exposed to adverse childhood experiences were more likely to participate in risky and noncompliant behavior (Sprague & Golly, 2005). Student misbehavior and the issuance of disciplinary referrals resulting from “get tough” and “zero tolerance” policies did not resolve the issue of student misbehavior, and only resulted in exclusionary discipline such as out-of-school suspension and expulsion. It had been well documented that administrators have resorted to these types of punitive measures in dealing with discipline issues, especially since the passage of Gun-Free Schools Act of 1994 and Federal funding was made available for implementation (Krezmien, Leone, & Achilles, 2006). However, these “get tough” and “zero tolerance” policies had not been effective at deterring student misbehavior, and exclusionary discipline measures only deprived students from their education, and created a loss of connectedness to school. Warren, et al. (2006) described one of the factors that prevented the sustainability of the SWPBIS goals in a Midwestern inner-city middle school was the new “zero tolerance” policy that was being implemented that involved “…increased punishments for certain behavioral infractions without accompanying efforts at remediation, a breakdown in administrative efforts to teach behavioral expectations,”[and] “less frequent reinforcement of appropriate student behaviors through the
use of ‘positive behavioral referrals’,” (Warren, et al., 2006, pp. 193-194). Exclusionary disciplinary practices resulted in poor academic outcomes such as loss of instructional time, academic failure, high drop out rates, and a higher risk of involvement in juvenile justice systems, thus increased the flow to the school to prison pipeline and contributed to the global effects of economic and social drain (Darensbourg, Perez, & Blake, 2010).

As a positive approach to discipline, the School-Wide Positive Behavior Intervention Support (SWPBIS) program provided a viable alternative to the “zero tolerance” policies that had failed. As an evidenced-based program, SWPBIS had positive correlations to student outcomes related to decreased office disciplinary referrals (Simonsen, Britton, & Young, 2010; Bohannon, et al., 2009; Lassen, et al., 2006), less suspensions (Vincent, et al, 2012; Warren, et al. 2006), increased in student achievement (McIntosh, Bennett, & Price, 2011; Lassen, et al., 2006), improved school climate (Kelm & McIntosh, 2012; Bradshaw, et al, 2008), and higher levels of teacher efficacy (Ross, Romer, & Horner (2012); Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2007). Lassen et al. (2006) conducted a study that demonstrated that the decreased number of ODRs for middle school students in an urban school led to recapturing 659 instructional hours by preventing exclusionary practices of discipline, and transferring that time to learning and increased attendance were extremely invaluable.

For the purposes of this Literature Review, six different streams of literature will be reviewed:

1. Features and outcomes of SWPBIS program implementation
2. The relationship between teacher efficacy and other teacher and organizational factors
3. Teacher and student rapport
4. The impact of SWPBIS on school climate
5. SWPBIS implementation expectations

6. The impact of SWPBIS on student referrals, student behavior, and student achievement

**Features and Outcomes of SWPBIS Implementation**

As a positive approach to discipline, there were several features to the SWPBIS model that makes it an effective RTI program. Many studies have documented the improved behavioral outcomes for students, which is encouraging for public schools. The implementation period of SWPBIS was one to three years, and the program components were implemented both school-wide and in the classroom. There were several features of the program that were designed to enhance program fidelity such as: (a) defining school-wide expectations; (b) teaching school-wide behavior expectations; (c) school-wide reward systems; (d) active supervision of common areas; (e) using discipline referrals to diagnose school-wide and individual student needs; and (f) team-based strategy with regular meetings (Sprague & Golly, 2005, pp. 6-7).

Each school site developed a Positive Behavior Intervention Support (PBIS) team that created the behavior expectations and trained the staff. Behavior expectations or rules were posted in all the common areas and classrooms, and a system of reinforcement was developed to reward compliance (Sprague & Golly, 2005). The PBIS team had diverse membership to include major stakeholders such as an administrator, special education teacher, general education teacher, paraprofessional, and ideally a parent (Sprague & Golly, 2005). Other key features that ensured the positive behavior outcomes of a SWPBIS approach were administrator support and teaching social skills curricula (Sprague & Golly, 2005).

Specific illustrations regarding the implementation of SWPBIS and the extent to which it decreased student problem behaviors and increased academic achievement had been noted in various studies (McIntosh, et al., 2011; Taylor, 2011; Lassen et al., 2006). It is important to
discern in the data collection phase of SWPBIS, school sites analyzed the office disciplinary referrals (ODRs) and suspension rates on a yearly basis. Reports were generated from the school’s student information system, which described the offense, time of day, staff member, location of the infraction, and the issued consequences. The data collection was used to identify patterns and trends to determine appropriate interventions (Sprague & Golly, 2005). Part of the driving force of SWPBIS was its emphasis on the positive interactions between student-to-student and adult-to-student. The positivity ratio of 4 to 1, four positive exchanges to one corrective interaction increased resiliency in students (Frederickson, 2009).

Employing the universal strategy in the SWPBIS model provided consistent practices among staff, which were considered to be proactive and preventative strategies. In addition, Tier 2 and Tier 3 supports were used if students did not respond to the Tier 1 strategies, and were referred to as preventative strategies. In juvenile justice settings within the PBIS framework, secondary interventions were practices that prevented misbehavior from repeating and tertiary interventions called on the expertise of professionals such as social workers and counselors to provide more individualized treatment (Jolivette, 2010). Noting that there was a high proportion of incarcerated youth that had Emotional and Behavioral Disorders, the PBIS framework offered a menu of services across the multiple tiers to target the appropriate intervention based on the needs of the youth (Jolivette, 2010).

A big concern in schools was the disproportionality of ODRs issued to non-white students. Vincent et al. (2010) analyzed the relationship between SWPBIS implementation and disciplinary exclusionary practices for students with various ethnic backgrounds and found that “African American students received more referrals for aggression and disrespect compared to White and Asian students combined,” (p. 217), and found parallels for Hispanic American
students. Exclusionary discipline practices (out-of-school suspensions, expulsions) led to academic failure including high drop out rates (Vincent, et. al., 2010). Vincent, et al. (2010) analyzed ODR data in relation to exclusionary practices from 77 schools that were implementing SWPBIS. The results showed that “long-term exclusions decreased for Hispanic, African Americans, and White students,” (Vincent, et al., 2010, p. 226) and that in the elementary settings, reductions in disciplinary exclusions were a direct result of SWPBIS implementation in the classroom. Whereas in high school settings, the decline was attributed to the SWPBIS implementation in outside of the classroom. Fortunately, the SWPBIS framework offered the opportunity to “equalize disciplinary outcomes” (Vincent et al., 2012, p. 435) by eliminating or reducing ODRs and improving academic instruction. The use of a Tier 2 strategy called, “Check In/Check Out,” (CICO) proved to be successful in this equalization process. The CICO strategy provided the student with an adult coach whom the students checked in with at the beginning and checked out with at the end of the day. The coach and the students established daily behavior goals and the teachers assessed the students on those goals using a daily progress report (DPR), which was used in the check out process. The coach and student discussed the results of the DPR and developed strategies to address any difficulties in meeting the behavior goals. The results of the study showed that CICO was effective in reducing ODRs for all sub groups (African American, Hispanic Americans, White), as long as the intervention was issued early in the school year (Semester 1).

Using SWPBIS was effective in addressing the challenging behaviors of the students, and CICO proved to be an effective Tier 2 strategy. Another Tier 2 strategy that had good results was when a midsized suburban PBIS district decided to incorporate a curriculum around diversity called, “Courageous Conversations About Race,” (Vincent et al., 2011). The intent
was to address the disproportionate overrepresentation of Hispanic students for ODRs and exclusions, and the under representation of this same sub group in meeting state reading requirements (Vincent, et al., 2011). After implementing the specialized curriculum consistently for three years, ODRs and exclusions for Hispanic students decreased by 5% and reading scores increased by 6%.

In addition to the merits of the positive discipline approach, SWPBIS contributed to decreasing ODRs and translated to better student behavior. Trends in the literature showed interest over the past 30 years that with certainty teacher efficacy had the most impact on student learning, and “a strong sense of teacher efficacy is hypothesized to provide teachers with the continuing motivation and dynamism that are crucial to long-term commitment to teaching,” (Yeo, Ang, Chong, Huan,& Queck, 2008, p. 193). In reviewing teacher efficacy from 1998-2009, Klassen, Betts, and Gordon (2010) identified an overall increase in teacher efficacy research as well as on collective efficacy, which was built through a spirit of collaboration. However, such a spirit must be embedded within the culture of the school due in large part to the leadership of the school. The successful implementation of SWPBIS was linked the principal leadership skills, which demonstrated an increase in job satisfaction at the school site (Richter, Lewis, & Hagar, 2012). It was important for leaders to create a culture of innovation, and Robinson (2014) made an analogy of an organization being compared to a living organism. Leaders are encouraged to create and foster positive interactions through creativity, so that employees can feed off of each other in more productive ways, as opposed to acting like parasites, which kills the host (Robinson, 2014).

In the following studies where teacher efficacy were measured on the various instruments such as Tschannen-Moran and Woolfolk Hoy’s (2001) Teacher Efficacy Scale (TSES), which
measured instructional strategies, classroom management, and student engagement. Maslach and Jackson’s (1981) Burnout inventory was also utilized. In addition, teacher demographics and school contextual factors were analyzed in some of the studies to evaluate whether any relationship to teacher efficacy could be espoused. Initially, teacher efficacy was explored at the elementary and secondary levels, on both the domestic and international fronts and its impact on the teacher-student relationship. Through high fidelity to the SWPBIS principles, the pillar of positive interactions seemed to lend themselves to better bonding between teachers and students.

The School-Wide Evaluation Tool (SET; Horner et al, 2004) was used to assess SWPBIS program fidelity. High fidelity to SWPBIS must meet the criteria of 80% or higher. Hypothetically, with better teacher-student relationships, could any impact on teacher burnout, teacher retention, and teacher stress be affected? Since the implementation of SWPBIS was both school-wide and reinforced in the classroom, desired compliance to the behavior expectations were supported through a token economy, and it also appeared to have had a positive effect on school climate. Further analysis explored teacher efficacy, teacher-student relationships, school climate, and student achievement within the context of the implementation of SWPBIS program. The following focus question will guide the analysis of the literature review:

What were the program effects of the systematic implementation of School-Wide Positive Behavior Intervention (SWPBIS) as it related to teacher efficacy, student-teacher relationships, school climate, and student achievement?

The relationship between Teacher Efficacy and other Teacher and School Factors

According to Bandura (1989), “people’s beliefs in their capabilities affect how much stress and depression they experience in threatening or taxing situations, as well as their
motivation,” (p. 1177). Teachers took precautionary measures to prevent burnout and stress. In a study by Ross, et al. (2012), teacher well-being was examined within the implementation of SWPBIS program. The purpose of the study was to examine the relationship between SWPBIS and teacher well-being and the impacts on teacher efficacy and teacher burnout. The method for analyzing these relationships was comparing two groups of schools, those implementing SWPBIS with high fidelity and those that did not. Teacher well-being relied on emotional competence, and when “…teachers are reinforced for their efforts through improved academic or behavioral outcomes, their confidence and the likelihood that they will exert that effort in the future increases,” (Ross et al., 2012, p. 119). Teacher efficacy, competencies, and skills as well as school contextual factors were explored. Burnout was the repeated exposure to job stressors and were linked to three components: emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and poor working conditions. The results of the study showed a strong correlation between SWPBIS implementation and teachers perception of efficacy, burnout in the classroom, and the culture of the school. Surprisingly, none of the demographic or teaching experience indicators were effective at predicting SWPBIS practices, teacher efficacy, and burnout. Ross and Horner (2007) confirmed that there was a statistical significance on the level of SWPBIS implementation and teacher efficacy, and that this approach “…to prevention may increase teachers’ beliefs in their ability to teach, lower the demands place on them, and increase their resources for dealing with those demands,” (p. 8). In controlling for school contextual factors, there was a strong relationship between SWPBIS implementation and low socioeconomic level as “…practices of SWPBIS greatly increase their feelings of effectiveness and emotional resources they have at their disposal,” (Ross et al, 2012, p. 125). Teacher well-being in schools with low socioeconomic status had the most advantages to high fidelity in SWPBIS implementation.
The implication for practice was that the previous study supported the notion that SWPBIS implementation greatly impacted teacher efficacy in high poverty schools where resources and funding are the lowest, where there was a positive correlation between teacher efficacy and contextual variables at the various levels (Pas, et al., 2010; Rubie-Davies, Flint, & McDonald, 2012). It was not surprising that the basis of providing a continuum of support embedded within SWPBIS was beneficial to enhancement of teacher efficacy. While the majority of the school population responded to the universal support of Tier 1 (85%), there was still the 10-15% who will need the targeted and intensive supports of Tier 2 and Tier 3 interventions.

Without a doubt, constant student behavior stressors caused emotional exhaustion, or teacher burnout and could contribute to reduced teacher retention (Martin, Sass, & Schmitt, 2012). Teacher turnover had many detrimental effects such as the cost of replacement, the instability of team building, and its adverse effect on student learning. Teachers with high efficacy built rapport and enlisted collaborative relationships with their students, and counted on higher student engagement, instructional management, and personal accomplishment as results. Low teacher efficacy contributed to ineffective classroom interactions, which led to emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and lack of personal accomplishment, job dissatisfaction and the increased likelihood to leave the profession.

The purpose of the study was to analyze the antecedents to teacher stress and burnout as a preventative strategy to block burnout and the intent to leave. Data was collected from 631 teachers in three public school districts from eight school sites from elementary, middle and high schools in the southwestern region of the United States. The results showed that elementary teachers have higher job satisfaction and were less likely to leave because of student and teacher
stressors. The teachers from the middle school and high school levels scored significantly higher on instructional management, depersonalization, and intent-to-leave, but lower on student engagement, personal accomplishment, and job satisfaction. Elementary teachers scored higher on self-efficacy and lower on depersonalization compared to high school teachers. The connection between personal accomplishment and job satisfaction was fully mediated by depersonalization, while emotional exhaustion and personal accomplishment were correlated with intent-to-leave.

Analyzing the relationship between teacher efficacy and teacher burnout over time, Pas et al., (2012) examined how these factors influenced teacher demographics (gender, race), teacher experience (education, years of experience), teacher’s perceptions of the school environment (principal leadership, teacher affiliation, academic emphasis, student and parent involvement), and school-level contextual factors (organizational health, principal turnover). The study focused on Emotional Exhaustion (component of burnout), and participants in this study were 600 teachers in 31 public elementary schools in the state of Maryland. Surveys were completed at two different intervals in the school year, in the fall where the response rate was 76%, and in the spring where the response rate was 75%. The data was collected over a two-year period, and the results indicated that low teacher efficacy and burnout significantly increased over time; gender and race had no correlation to teacher efficacy and burnout; teacher preparation and education was positively correlated with higher efficacy; and organizational health was strongly associated with teacher efficacy and burnout.

It was undeniable that teacher stress, teacher burnout, and teacher turnover had a negative impact on student learning (Martin, et al, 2012; Pas, et al., 2010), and it was paramount that school principals found strategies to boost teacher retention. Hughes (2012) conducted a study
to determine the effects of teacher characteristics, school characteristics, organizational characteristics, and teacher efficacy on their effects on teacher retention. The teacher characteristics that were examined were age, family situation, gender, ethnicity, and education level and how the effects on teacher retention. Teacher efficacy also had a significant effect due to working conditions and the student-teacher relationship. School characteristics and organization characteristics that affected teacher retention included school climate, salary, student discipline problems, school leadership, facilities, resources, school poverty level, and school size (Hughes, 2012). The data was collected through surveys that were sent to teachers throughout a southern state to analyze the school and organizational characteristics as these pertain to teacher retention. Data analysis was extrapolated from a survey that was constructed by the researcher and approved by a panel of experts that included two open response items asking what factors contributed to leaving the teaching profession. In addition, the survey had questions on teacher efficacy (instruction, student motivation, classroom management, technology), and school characteristics (salary and workload, facilities, parent and student cooperation, principal support). There were 789 participants who came from a random stratified sample of 200 elementary, middle, and intermediate, junior, and high schools. Of the 789 participants, 653 stated that they would remain until retirement (83.5%). These results demonstrated a positive correlation between school characteristics (school size, SES, and standardized test scores), and years in teaching. Socio-economic level of the school also contributed to retention. Additionally, there were significant correlations between teacher retentions and organizational characteristics such as salary, workload, facilities, parent and student cooperation, and principal support. The teacher efficacy characteristics that were
measured (instruction, student motivation, classroom management, and technology) did not have a significant effect on teacher retention.

Surprisingly, there were no correlations between teacher efficacy and classroom interactions. However, there was statistical significance between teacher retention and organizational characteristics, which strengthened the concept that context matters in regard to social relationships, working conditions, and student and community engagement (Hughes, 2012; Rubie-Davies, et al., 2012).

**Teacher and Student Rapport**

It was evident from the literature that the way the teachers conducted themselves with students had a huge impact on how students behaved and contributed to the types of classroom interactions (Lewis, Romi, & Roache, 2012; Pas, et al., 2010). In Rita Pierson’s TED Talk in May 2013, she maintained that the reason why students dropped out or did not learn was due to poverty, low attendance, and negative peer influences (Retrieved from [http://www.ted.com/talks/rita_pierson_every_kid_needs_a_champion.html](http://www.ted.com/talks/rita_pierson_every_kid_needs_a_champion.html)). After spending 40 years of her life in education, Pierson asserted that the most important and undervalued attribute to student success was the aspect of human connection, or relationships, and advocated that every kid needs and champion. Furthermore, she argued that students do not learn from teachers they do not like. If students feel that the teacher “had their back,” and that the teacher was fair, then one obstacle to student learning was addressed through building positive relationships with students. In the following section, the studies focused on the personal factors that might impact teacher stress, teacher burnout, and teacher retention.

Positive outcomes for teaching and learning began with the types of teacher-student relationships and if classroom interactions were collaborative. There were many factors in
classroom interactions that contributed to teacher efficacy such as the rapport between teacher and student (Hughes, 2012; Yeo, et al., 2008); student discipline and classroom management (Demanet & Van Houtte, 2012, Pas, et al., 2010; Lewis, et al., 2012); and student learning (Rubie-Davies, et al., 2012; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2007). Positive interactions with caring adults led to trust, and Raider-Roth (2005) advocated that the relational learner needs trust with self, others, and knowledge. Trusting relationships led to positive interactions that were at the heart of the teacher-student relationship. Yeo, et al., (2008) studied the cognitive and affective factors were examined to focus on the three dimensions of teacher efficacy (instructional strategies, classroom management, and student engagement) and teacher attributes as they related to the teacher-student relationship in the context of teaching low achieving students in Singapore. After analyzing individual teachers beliefs in their own capacity to promote student learning through the Tschannen-Moran and Woolfolk Hoy’s (2001) Teacher Efficacy Scale (TSES), and Ang’s (2005) Teacher-Student Relationship scale (Satisfaction, Instrumental help, and Conflict), there was a correlation between high efficacy and years of professional service on all three dimensions. The analysis of the teacher-student relationship and specific teacher variables demonstrated a negative correlation in the area of instrumental help and advancement of age and teaching experiences. Yeo et al. (2008) confirmed that “teachers with years of experience may have perceived themselves as being able to engage the students cognitively, but not to engage them affectively in the long run,” (p. 201), and that a sense of caring must extend to meeting both the psychological and social needs. Conflict in the teacher-student relationship did inversely impact teacher efficacy in classroom management and instructional strategies, and highlights “…the importance of teacher’s relationship with students,” (p. 202) as a protective factor in student learning.
How teachers handled discipline with students can also be a protective factor and could be a bridge to positive student-teacher relationships. Lewis, et al. (2012) used 302 questionnaires that they collected to analyze teacher’s classroom management techniques in relation to handling student discipline, and explore students’ perceptions of teachers’ behavior before, during, and after exclusion took place as a disciplinary consequence based on the Developmental Management Approach (Lewis 2009, 2001). The teachers used a three-step approach prior to the exclusions (a series of warnings); during exclusion (providing an explanation for the exclusion to the offender); and after the exclusion (a post-conference for the student to reflect upon the misdeed). The data collection took place over a two-month period in seven secondary schools in Melbourne, Australia during the second half of the school year. Lewis, et al. (2012) contended “…the way teachers choose to manage a class affects students’ concentration, their attitudes toward school work, and their developing pro-social values,” (p. 870). Students appreciated teachers who were fair and created a climate of support, while using humor to get students back on task, and who did not publicly humiliate them. The results demonstrated that students perceived that 71% of the exclusions were due to teachers’ anger, and students reported that only 50% of the teachers had a post-discipline conference after the exclusion took place. This data revealed “it is now incumbent on schools to encourage teachers to provide hints, warning, and a short series of consequences prior to excluding a student from the classroom,” (Lewis, et al., 2012, p. 877). In addition, when a follow-up conversation took place, it increased the likelihood that students took more responsibility for their actions.

It was definitely problematic if a high percentage of students perceive that exclusionary discipline from teachers was stemmed from teacher anger, especially when teachers disregarded the post-discipline conference where students missed out on the opportunity for closure. The
The purpose of student discipline was punishment for breaking rules but also the consequences should act as a deterrent. However, if students believed that the discipline was issued based on an individual teacher characteristic, then it seemed that it would not be an effective deterrent to prevent future student misbehavior. In other words, this would cause friction between teacher and student and resulted in strain in the teacher-student relationship. Conflicts associated with the relationship of teacher attitudes and student misconduct were explored by Demanet and Van Houtte (2012), and they argued that teachers with low expectations hampered the educational growth of students. Their study took place in 85 Flemish secondary schools, where 11,945 students filled out questionnaires in class on the Academic Futility scale (Brookover, 1979). Through a questionnaire taken by 2,104 teachers, the study wanted to measure teacher’s beliefs using Teachable-Pupil Survey (Kornblau, 1982). The results showed a negative correlation between students who attended schools with higher teachability cultures and student misbehavior, and that academic futility was positively correlated with student misconduct. Demanet and Van Houtte (2012) stated that “…certain teacher attitudes may trigger behavioral reactions from students in class,” and “students can be expected to show disruptive behavior when they perceive that teachers have low expectations of them,” (p. 860). They used two theoretical frameworks, Cohen (1955) and Merton’s (1933) Strain Theory, and Hirschi’s (1979) Social Control Theory to explain students’ deviant behavior patterns. Strain Theory can be characterized as individuals who perceived goal blockage and relationships as strained, and would abandon legitimate paths, converted to deviant behavior, and resorted to pain-avoidance behavior. Social Control Theory explained that individuals were prone to deviancy because the social bonds to the community and others were severed. Without any ties to the community, rules would be broken leading students to a higher sense of academic futility. Academic futility
was the feeling that there was no control over the educational outcomes. This loss of hope
developed the student mindset that “…the educational system is working against them,” (p. 862),
so they acted out inappropriately to avoid the pain, and rebelled against the community that
turned their backs on them. The strained relationships between teacher and students resulted in
lower teacher expectations, which only exacerbated deviant student behaviors.

If students experienced strained relationships with teachers, and felt that their academic
efforts were futile, then it was bound to have negative effects on student learning and teacher
efficacy. It would seem that a greater understanding into the various contextual and mediating
variables could provide insights into the intricacies of teacher efficacy and its impact on student
learning. To examine the level of disorder within school and classroom environments, Pas, et al.
(2010) analyzed school contextual factors and student contextual variables through the lens of
Social Disorganization Theory (Shaw & McKay, 1942). The purpose was to identify if any
associations existed between student misbehavior and teacher efficacy/teacher burnout using a
triangulation of data of survey and various instruments. Survey data was collected from 491
general education teachers who worked in 31 public elementary schools in the state of Maryland,
consisting of 9,975 students in grades K-5. The instruments that were used for data collection
were Koth, Bradshaw, & Leaf’s (2009) Teacher Observation of Classroom Adaptation –
Checklist (TOCA-C); Hoy & Feldman’s (1987) Organizational Health Inventory (OHI); and two
subscales of teacher burnout (Maslach & Jackson, 1987), and efficacy (Hoy & Woolfolk, 1993).
The results demonstrated mixed findings in linking discipline problems with teacher efficacy and
burnout, and “…teachers with low efficacy for handling behavior concerns were 23% less likely
to refer students to the Student Study Team (SST)” (p. 21), while teachers with high burnout
were less likely to report a student who received out-of-school suspension by 32%. As this data
implied, the less efficacious teachers opted to withhold support for students and resorted more to punitive and exclusionary measures such as out-of-school suspensions. The fact that the participants failed to report such data on the survey suggested that teachers might be exhibiting burnout characteristics such as depersonalization.

**School Climate: How does SWPBIS influence the contextual factors of the school?**

According to Sprague and Golly (2005), school-wide implementation of the Positive Behavior Support Intervention Support system improved school-wide practices, classroom management effectiveness, support systems for individual students, and parent collaboration with the school. The crux to building a positive school culture was to develop a system of reinforcements that was practiced consistently among all school staff, and that student recognition of meeting the behavior expectations were made public (Sprague & Golly, 2005). Promoting a positive school culture through the adherence to the SWPBIS principles certainly contributed to an improved school climate, which increased the organizational health of a school as the subsequent studies demonstrated.

Kelm and McIntosh (2012) explored the relationship between teacher self-efficacy and the implementation of the School-Wide Positive Behavior (SWPBS) program in 28 schools in a rural school district in Western Canada and noted its effect on organizational health. Data collection stemmed from 62 teacher surveys from two schools implementing the SWPBS program and three schools not implementing SWPBS. Among the instruments used were the Teacher Sense of Self-Efficacy (TSES; Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2001), and the ecological factors were evaluated through the Organizational Health Inventory (OHI; Hoy & Feldman, 1987) which referred to: (a) institutional integrity (ability to shield teachers from external pressures); (b) the ability of the principal to influence superiors; (c) a concerned and caring
principal; (d) availability of supplies and other resources; (e) collaborative and supportive relationships among staff, and (f) sustained focus on academic achievement. The findings showed that there was statistical significance between the SWPBS schools and teacher efficacy as evidenced by Cronbach’s alpha of .92. The implications of the study were that SWPBS schools experienced decreases in student disciplinary referrals, and improved student behavior increased time on task and instruction. Teacher efficacy was positively correlated to the SWPBS implementation, and SWPBS was linked to outcomes such as high levels of academic achievement, collegial affiliation, and perceived school safety.

Similarly, the study conducted by Bradshaw, et al. (2008) explored the impact of SWPBIS and organizational health in a longitudinal study of 37 elementary schools in the state of Maryland. The implementation of the SWPBIS approach was a state initiative but for the purposes of this mixed method study, the non-SWPBIS schools refrained from implementation throughout the duration of this study, which lasted three years. There were 2,407 staff members who were surveyed about the School-wide Positive Behavior Intervention Support program (SWPBIS) that was a statewide initiative. Twenty-one schools were implementing SWPBIS, and 16 were not. The connection between SWPBIS was compared to the five features of organizational health inventory (OHI). The study demonstrated a strong correlation between the SWPBIS schools to overall organizational health, particularly significant correlations to resource influence of the principal, staff affiliation, and academic emphasis, which contributed to improving classroom management. The implications of the study were the significant correlation between SWPBIS to resource influence, and staff affiliation demonstrated the shared commitment to the students as well as the shared responsibility between the teachers and principals.
Certainly, the RTI model provided a logical structure to deliver the appropriate levels of support to address the program fidelity to the SWPBIS principles. School staff and students benefited from the logic of an RTI program, as the supports were delivered school-wide. However, school staff and students responded to different levels of support depending on their individual needs, which augmented program fidelity to the SWPBIS principles. Nunn and Jantz (2009) argued that the impact of teacher efficacy beliefs within the RTI model was that teacher success was based on the support, structure, and efficiency of controlling students’ educational progress. The purpose of the study was to identify teacher self-efficacy and how the RTI implementation process influenced it. If teachers possessed a high sense of self-efficacy, teachers believed to be a “…facilitative influence upon cognitive performance of students, which might be associated with improvement in teaching skills and concurrent elevation of self-efficacy on the part of teachers” (Nunn & Jantz, 2009, p. 600). As a result, teacher motivation increased.

There are two hypothesized mediators for RTI: RTI Implementation (RTI-IMP) and RTI Involvement (RTI-INV). The instrument in the study included Nunn’s (1998) Teacher Efficacy Beliefs and Behavior Scale (TEBBS) which include three factors: (1) Intervention Skills Efficacy (ISE), (2) Motivational Skills Efficacy (MSE), and (3) External Control Efficacy (ECE). The 429 participants in the study were K-12 teachers, administrators, and paraprofessionals who received a year-long training on RTI implementation. The TEBBS survey was given on the final day of training, representing an 88% response rate. The results showed that both RTI-INV and RTI-IMP were significantly correlated with two of the three TEBBS scales, Intervention Skills Efficacy and Motivational Skills Efficacy. However, there were no correlations to the External Control Efficacy scale, which was not surprising. External controls, or parental forces did not have any impact on RTI implementation because they were not
involved in the delivery of the intervention. However, the intervention and motivation subscales did demonstrate a positive correlation to the RTI subscales, which suggested that fidelity to the program components was key.

As the prior study indicated, program fidelity to the components of RTI implementation had positive effects for teachers in building their skills and motivation. Myers, Simonsen, and Sugai (2011) also asserted that fidelity to the RTI implementation was completely dependent on student behavior and the program’s effectiveness. The purpose of their study was to analyze the use the RTI model and the ability to provide data based decisions, while on-going support was given to maintain program fidelity. The study used the multi-tiered level of supports of RTI by providing performance feedback to teachers in the use of praise in the classroom. The relationship under analysis was the use of specific praise and the RTI approach, and the level of support was adjusted based on the teacher performance. The instrument of the study was the Horner et al.’s (2004) School-Wide Evaluation Tool (SET), which measured program fidelity within a School-Wide Positive Behavior Support program. If the SET score was at 80%, then schools were characterized to be implementing with high fidelity. The study was conducted in the northeastern region of the United States in an urban middle school with a student population of 1,050. All teachers received the SWPBIS training prior to the study. The teachers who were observed to use the six specific praise statements and maintain the positivity ratio of 4:1 (positive to negative interactions) moved in maintenance in Tier 1. The school’s SET score was 98%, and the school poverty rate was 70. The four teacher participants were selected through self-nomination and reported having a high rate of problem behaviors in their classrooms, and the teachers were all White females. If the teachers only met one of the two criteria (praise or positivity ratio), then she moved to Tier 2 intervention. If neither criterion were being met, then
she moved to Tier 3. Tier 2 interventions included meeting the researcher weekly and goals were established to help move the teachers to the maintenance phase (Tier 1). If teachers were in the Tier 3 interventions, teachers were observed, and given feedback after each observation in person and via email. If the teacher met both criteria for three consecutive observations, then she was moved to Tier 2 and would receive weekly feedback.

The results showed that one teacher was in Tier 1, one in Tier 2, and two were in Tier 3 interventions. The implication of the study was that teachers who received the appropriate level of support on the RTI continuum improved their performance. Targeted intervention was needed for teachers because “…the same level of professional development may not be appropriate for all teachers,” (Myers, et al., 2011, p. 51). Using the RTI support levels for teachers helped to maintain program fidelity.

In addition to improving teacher learning outcomes, school climate was analyzed in a study conducted by Debnam, Pas, and Bradshaw (2012), and indicated that over 14,000 schools nationwide have implemented SWPBIS as a strategy to reduce problem behavior and improve school climate. Critical to the success of SWPBIS, was utilizing the secondary and tertiary interventions when the universal intervention is not effective. As indicated, the three-tiered model was only effective if a standardized protocol intervention was in place (Hawken, Vincent, & Schumann (2008), and the evidence-based program of SWPBIS met this criteria. This study attempted to: (1) describe the types of Tier 1, 2, and 3 supports in elementary schools that had been implementing SWPBIS; (2) examined the Tier 1 and Tier 2 strategies that were being utilized within schools implementing SWPBIS with high fidelity; and (3) defined the intervention attributes of Tier 2 interventions.
The instruments in the study included the School-Wide Evaluation Tool (SET; Horner, et al., 2004) which assessed the fidelity level of SWPBIS implementation, and the Individual Student Systems Evaluation Tool (I-SSET; Lewis-Palmer, Todd, Horner, Sugai, & Sampson, 2005) developed to measure the Tier 2 and Tier 3 supports utilized by SWPBIS schools. There were 45 participating public elementary schools in the study from six school districts in the state of Maryland. The results demonstrated that 93% (42 of 45) of the schools received 80% or higher on their SET scores, and only 4% of the schools had a comprehensive form for referring students to the SST (Student Support Team) process. Ninety one percent of the schools were using Functional Behavior Assessment (FBA) for Tier 3 services. Correlations to the I-SSET demonstrated that the three schools with low SWPBIS fidelity also had lower scores on the I-SSET. As the data showed, the level of fidelity of the universal support (Tier 1) was positively correlated to the effective implementation of the Tier 2 and Tier 3 interventions, and indicated that there was a reciprocal relationship among all three tiers of support and student success.

To analyze the sustainability features of SWPBIS, Coffey and Horner (2012) collected SWPBIS program data in 117 schools across six states using the School-wide Evaluation Tool (SET). Sustainability was defined as an implementation period of a minimum of 3 years with the last 2 years as demonstrating the criterion on fidelity levels. The measures in this study included the SET and the Team Implementation Checklist (TIC), which monitored implementation and maintenance of SWPBIS. In addition, there was a sustainability survey that contained questions about the organizational features of the school.

Two hundred and fifty seven surveys were sent to PBIS team leaders and 117 were returned for a 42% response rate, with the majority coming from elementary schools. Seventy-nine identified themselves as sustainers and 38 were non-sustainers. Out of the 117 surveys that
were returned, 63 of the participants explained what helped in sustaining PBIS were leadership, teacher buy-in, funding, time to meet regularly, decision-making, and technical assistance. Among the positive influences stated, leadership was number one. The remaining 84 participants described the roadblocks to PBIS implementation.

In the next study, the obstacles to high program fidelity to the SWPBIS implementation were explored. Lohrman, Forman, Martin, and Palmieri (2008) developed an extensive qualitative study into school personnel’s resistance to implementing SWPBIS as a Tier 1 intervention. A purposeful sample and a four-part selection process, pulled from experts in the SWPBIS field. In the final selection, 14 people were selected to participate and provided technical assistance to school sites that were implementing SWPBIS. The participants varied in age, gender, race, and graduate degrees. Each participant provided the technical assistance to school sites or districts based on the schools’ needs. The data was collected over three interviews from the participants and the researchers transcribed the data verbatim assigning a particular code. The primary coder and the consensus partner verified the transcripts and coding, and a follow-up consensus discussion took place to validate the results. From the cross analysis and contextualization process, the data were organized into five sets of barrier conditions and the strategies used to promote cooperation and commitment (Lohrman, et al., 2008). The last part of the process was a two-phase member check in where participants weighed in on the report and the researchers made the necessary changes. The overall agreement rate between researcher and participant was 99%. The five types of barrier conditions that were identified:

1. Lack of administrative direction and leadership
2. Skeptical that the universal intervention is needed
3. Hopelessness about change
4. Philosophical differences

5. Staff feel disenfranchised from each other, the administrator, or the mission of the school

The strategies that overcame barriers and promoted change included: (1) spending time up front with the administrator to establish rapport and expectations; (2) sharing information and evidence by connecting to things that the school already has in place; (3) including pilot data that showed that the intervention was successful; (4) finding a contextual common ground by having on-going dialogues; and (5) making staff feel part of the intervention process and celebrate staff members’ participation in the implementation phase, and the most difficult one to overcome was philosophical differences (Lohrmann, et al., 2008). Additionally, the researchers presented the premise that if resistance was understood and anticipated, targeted strategies could be used to promote cooperation and commitment to build a case for change, and perhaps utilizing the full RTI continuum was more fruitful in dismantling some of the resistance.

**School Leadership: Does leadership matter in the implementation of SWPBIS?**

As with any new initiative being introduced at schools, the driving force to promoting and sustaining the program with the implementation of the SWPBIS was leadership (Coffey, et al., 2012). School reform needed a strong leader to drive the change, and was an important catalyst to the successful implementation of SWPBIS. Richter, et al., (2012) analyzed the relationship between principal leadership skills and implementation of SWPBIS, collecting the data from surveys and interviews to investigate. Fourteen schools that actively implemented SWPBIS for two or more years, and fifteen non-SWPBIS schools were selected based on similar demographics (comparison schools).

The results demonstrated that principals in SWPBIS schools were rated higher in effectiveness than in non-SWPBIS schools, and that job satisfaction in school-wide positive
behavior intervention support schools was reported to be 93% (Richter, et al. 2012). The study implied that high job satisfaction led to high teacher efficacy with the support from school principals. Higher SWPBIS program fidelity was also achieved from support from school leaders. One of the key features that create “buy-in” to the SWPBIS was that the program could be completely tailored to meet the needs of any school site. This customized approach made support for implementation more palatable for staff, and provided ease for the principal to help lead the change.

Key features of SWPBIS are the positive discipline approach, and having a common vernacular of behavior expectations for which all students are accountable. Using a specialized curriculum as a Tier 2 strategy did support improved student achievement and a decrease in ODRs (Vincent, et al., 2011). A social skills curriculum would certainly teach pro-social skills in depth and gave students more opportunities to access better social skills. Zins, et al., (2007) advocated that social emotional learning must be integrated with the academic learning because “…schools are social places and learning is a social process. Students do not learn alone but rather in collaboration with others, in the company of their peers, and with the support of their families,” (p. 191). Teaching pro-social skills was a major tenet of SWPBIS and can be reinforced with addition of a social skills curriculum. By teaching and reinforcing pro-social skills, collaborative practices and productive group work could be utilized the classroom. Group problem-solving and teamwork might lead to enriching learning experiences with all members of the classroom, including the teacher. Amidst a positive learning climate as an effect of SWPBIS, learning opportunities were augmented.

Battistich, et al., (1997) supported that creating a caring environment at school gave students a sense of belonging in order to create a “caring community of learners” (p. 140)
through the use of an intervention known as the “Child Development Project” (p. 138). Similar to the SWPBIS framework, the Child Development Project (CDP) was designed to teach pro-social skills to students to promote collaboration, develop social/emotional competencies, and exercise autonomy in decision-making (Battistich, et al., 1997). The results of the seven-year study demonstrated that the CDP led to favorable student outcomes such as enjoyment of class, liking for school, and concern for others. In addition, the findings suggested that a caring school community was especially advantageous to economically disadvantaged students (Battistich, et al., 1997). If students felt safe and supported, they could forge more trusting relationships with themselves and adults. The climate of mutual trust fostered a sense of community and therefore, student learning and teacher efficacy were increased.

Expanding on the use of Tier 1 strategies that offer universal support, Bradshaw, et al., (2008) conducted a study to examine the connection between Tier 1 support of SWPBIS with the five features of school organizational health: (a) resource influence, (b) staff affiliation, (c) academic emphasis, (d) collegial leadership, and (e) institutional integrity. Resource influence involved the principal’s ability to lobby for resources for the school staff. Staff affiliation was defined as warmth, positive interactions with colleagues, and a shared commitment to students. Academic emphasis referred to a strong work ethic and students’ focus on academics. Collegial leadership was defined as the principal’s capacity to lead school in a supportive and egalitarian fashion. Institutional integrity referred to protection from unreasonable community and parental influences. The data was collected from longitudinal groups of 37 public elementary schools in the state of Maryland from both rural and suburban school districts that volunteered to participate in the study. Twenty-one schools classified as “PBIS” schools were implementing SWPBIS, and the comparison schools agreed to stop implementing PBIS during the study. The PBIS schools
sent a team to attend the PBIS training, and participated in a “booster” training one year later. The instruments of the study included a demographic questionnaire, and Hoy & Feldman’s (1987) Organizational Health Inventory (OHI) for elementary schools. The data were collected in May before the training and the following May before the booster training. The surveys were mailed to the schools and distributed to the school staff. Participation was voluntary with a response rate of 80%-86% across the four-year study. The results demonstrated a strong correlation between the PBIS schools to overall organizational health, including resource influence and staff affiliation. The positive growth shown in academic emphasis might have resulted due to improved classroom management. There were no significant correlations between PBIS to collegial leadership or institutional integrity. The significant correlation between SWPBIS and resource influence and staff affiliation demonstrated the shared commitment to the students as well as the collective efficacy from the teachers and principal. Collective efficacy contributed to organizational health, teacher efficacy, and positive school climates, and implementation of SWPBIS played a large role in helping schools meet these objectives.

In addition, Song, et al., (2006) asserted that a partnership must be formed in the “shared teaching-learning enterprise” (p. 28), and presented a reconciliation model which was a collaborative strategy between teacher and student that gave teachers the opportunity to use formative assessment to identify learning gaps. The teacher was able to adapt the instructional practices to alleviate the “cognitive dissonance” (p. 38) experienced by the students. Sprague (2011) noted that within the SWPBIS framework, a prescribed 4 to 1 ratio, four positive interactions to one corrective action was the goal of adult-student interactions. The SWPBIS framework offered multiple opportunities to interact positively with students to build such
trusting relationships, which led to “learning enhancing relationships” (Raider-Roth, 2005, p. 21). Eventually students took intellectual risks, which led to more autonomous thinking and command of the knowledge. Richter et al. (2012) argued that if students are happy, learning in school, and exhibiting compliant behavior, then teachers could participate in more proactive and preventative activities that built up the positive interactions with students, which contributed to job satisfaction and teacher efficacy.

It was evident that leadership mattered, and principals set the tone and priorities that met the mission and vision of the school. If there was buy-in from leaders and staff, then goals, appropriate strategies, action steps, and tasks could be developed and implemented effectively within a system of support.

**Student Achievement: What is the impact of SWPBIS on student learning?**

As the previous sections highlighted, SWPBIS promoted positive interactions while teaching and instilling pro-social skills on school campuses. Creating a collaborative learning culture through the SWPBIS implementation seemed to also have an affect on student achievement.

To understand the factors that influence student learning, Rubie-Davies, et al. (2012) analyzed the “constructs of teacher efficacy, teacher class level expectations, and teacher goal orientation [to] recognize the individuality of teachers and point to the need to consider teacher differences when exploring student learning outcomes and social development,” (p. 286) in New Zealand public schools. Using surveys, questionnaires, and student achievement data, the results indicated that there was statistical significance between teacher efficacy in instructional strategies, classroom management, student engagement, and the socio-economic status (SES) of the school. There was also a significant correlation between teacher efficacy and teacher
education level and experience. In addition, a negative correlation was found between mastery goal orientation of the SES of the school, showing that teachers in schools with low SES had higher teaching efficacy. Another finding was that teachers who taught the younger grades had higher teacher efficacy for classroom management and student engagement than older grade levels. Furthermore in Skaalvik and Skaalvik (2007) identified that teacher efficacy was a multidimensional construct pertaining to: (1) instruction, (2) adapting education to individual students’ needs, (3) motivating students, (4) keeping discipline, (5) cooperating with colleagues and parents, and (6) coping with change and challenges, as it applied to teacher efficacy, strain factors, collective efficacy and teacher burnout in Norwegian schools. Using instruments such as Maslach et al.’s (1996) Burnout Inventory and the Norwegian Teacher Self-Efficacy Scale (NTSES), the results indicated that there was a strong correlation between teacher-efficacy and burnout, as “…individuals with low self efficacy resort to escapist modes of coping that create more strain and distress,” (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2007, p. 621). Collective efficacy was found to strongly influence teacher self-efficacy in meeting goals and persisting through challenges. Working in teams helped to raise awareness and teachers’ competencies in meeting the schools’ professional development goals. Teacher burnout correlated positively with student misbehavior, parent conflicts, conflicts with other teachers, while there was a positive correlation between teacher efficacy and developing best teaching practices.

Hawken, et al. (2008) analyzed the relationship between the RTI model and social behavior through a school-wide discipline program (Tier 1), behavior intervention programs (Tier 2), and functional behavioral assessment (Tier 3). A recommended guideline for behavioral support was based on the number of office disciplinary referrals (ODRs) received: (a) Tier 1: 0-1 ODR per year; (b) Tier 2: 2-5 ODRs per year; and (c) Tier 3: 6 or more per
Tier 2 interventions were effective if a “standardized protocol intervention” was used which was an “…evidenced-based intervention that is packaged and can be delivered systematically, using scripts to a group of students,” (pp. 214-215). However, the authors cautioned that there were challenges to Tier 3 interventions as Functional Behavior Assessments (FBA) required the knowledge from experts in the field. Extinguishing undesired behavior and reinforcing desired behavior at school were linked to student compliance. With compliance, students were able to engage in the classroom experiences, which led to happier teachers and learning students. As an evidenced-based strategy, SWPBIS seemed to offer schools the most effective strategies in meeting the teaching and learning goals by addressing challenging student behavior. If students enjoyed more positive outcomes at school, it would lead to greater school connectedness.

The implication for practice from the previous study emphasized the need that program fidelity across the RTI tiers would boost the effectiveness of the program and interventions being provided, if the appropriate intervention was delivered based on the individuals’ needs. It made sense that if students and teachers were not responding to Tier 1 support, then the progression to the next level tiers were needed to provide more targeted and intensive supports seemed logical. Fairbanks, Sugai, Guardino, and Lathrop’s (2007) study provided an analysis of ten students from second grade who were not responding to the universal Tier 1 intervention. The setting of study took place at a public elementary school in a suburban district in the northwestern region of the United States, where this school was implementing SWPBIS with high fidelity (SET score = 80%). The principal and second-grade teachers contacted the researchers due to disruptive behavior and a high incidence of office disciplinary referrals (ODRs). All students were placed in general education classes. Based on their Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills
Oral Reading Fluency (DIBELORF; Good & Kaminski, 2002) assessments, the scores in the fall ranged from 9-81 (44 words read correctly = low risk). The Tier 2 strategy, “Check In/Check Out” (CICO) was used and analyzed across five different time spans. CICO was a behavior coaching model where students “check in” at the beginning of the day to establish behavior goals around the school-wide behavior expectations, had the general education teacher rate them on their behavior goals on a daily progress report (DPR) using a Likert scale model, and “checks out” with the coach at the end of the day to monitor progress via the DPR. The primary dependent variables were the observable misbehaviors such as inappropriate physical contact, talk-outs, noncompliance, and off-task behavior. The secondary dependent variable was the DPR. Of the 10 students, four students were unresponsive to the Tier 2 CICO intervention, and were referred to Tier 3 interventions, which included a completion of a Functional Behavior Assessment (FBA) by the counselor. After completion, the Student Support Team (SST) developed a function-based individual behavior support plan that identified the setting events, antecedents, and consequences. The results showed that four of the 10 students responded to the CICO intervention and did not require Tier 3 interventions. Problem behaviors in this group were lower in the 80% criterion phase. Of the remaining six, four did require Tier 3 intervention using a FBA while the other two stayed in the Tier 2 program and served as peer controls. In the Tier 3 grouping, problem behaviors declined in the 80% criterion phase. In the control group, one of the student’s problem behaviors increased while the other demonstrated no change over time. Targeted behavioral interventions based on where the student was “at” was an effective strategy that gave students the leverage to improve academically and socially. It was not surprising that the two students in the control group who were not given the correct intervention either did not improve or the misbehavior escalated. In addressing the needs of the students, the
teacher-student relationship was strengthened and greater teacher efficacy could be achieved, and teachers felt more confident by meeting students’ learning needs.

As demonstrated by the previous studies, the systematic and comprehensive approach of implementation of a SWPBIS framework led to school improvement. According to Horner et al., (2004), “schools are reporting 20% to 60% reductions in office disciplinary referrals, improved social climate, and improved academic performance when they engaged in PBS practices” (p. 3). An increased connectedness to the school emerged as shown by a positive school climate, improved adult-student relationships, and reductions in ODRs and exclusionary practices that bring equity to minority students. Ultimately, U.S. public schools are judged on their performances on high-stakes state tests, the summative assessments giving schools their annual report cards are dependent on showing growth on states’ academic performance index and meeting the federal performance targets represented in Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP). Significant to these studies was not only the improvement in student behavior but also the increased academic achievement on standardized tests for SWPBIS schools as demonstrated in the following studies by McIntosh, et al. (2011), Lassen, et al. (2006), and Taylor (2011).

In a Canadian School District, McIntosh, et al. (2011) conducted a case study in an urban district and selected 12 schools that were implementing SWPBIS. There were 11 schools in grades K-7 and one school in grades 8-12. The total enrollment was 15,000 students and other demographic information that was provided was that the primary home language was 98%, and 16% of the students were of Aboriginal descent (McIntosh, et al., 2011). Using the research based instrument known as the School-Wide Evaluation Tool (SET), the SET measured the fidelity of implementation of the SWPBIS components, which was measured through observations and interview questions. English Language Arts scores in grades 4 and 7 were
compared with schools implementing the SWPBIS principles with high fidelity (SET score of 70+) to low fidelity (SET < 70), and most compelling was the 7th grade results, which showed increases in reading (84% to 52%), writing (79% to 48%), and math (82% to 42%) compared to SWPBIS schools with low SET scores. Similarly, Lassen et al. (2006) described increased math scores in a high poverty (80% economically disadvantaged) middle school, and discovered a positive correlation between SWPBIS implementation and increased math scores by 16% between Baseline to Year 3. Taylor’s (2011) study also focused on the middle school level, where there was a comparison of two middle schools in North Carolina, one SWPBIS school and one non-SWPBIS school, and each were identified as having similar demographics. In comparing the standardized test scores on the North Carolina End of Grade (NC EOG) tests, the results indicated increases in reading in math in grades 6, 7, and 8. Among the noteworthy data, each grade had an 18.9-point jump in ELA from Year 1 to Year 3 of SWPBIS implementation, and in math, the 6th and 7th grade scores had the highest jump of 26.6%.

Summary

The intent of this study was to evaluate the implementation of SWPBIS program at Mountain Springs Elementary School, and how it impacted teacher efficacy, student-teacher relationships, and student achievement as perceived by administrators, teachers, and support staff. Through the literature review, the breadth of the studies indicated that a relationship existed between a positive school climate, factors affecting student achievement, and the collective efficacy of teachers and principals as indicated in the literature review. SWPBIS helped to build a positive learning culture at school, which contributed to less problem behavior and academic futility, addressed individual learning needs based on the appropriate RTI tiered intervention, and created a greater sense of community by improving teacher-student
relationships, and fortifying learning experiences through better collaboration. The focus question for the literature review included:

What were the program effects of the systematic implementation of School-Wide Positive Behavior Intervention (SWPBIS) as it related to teacher efficacy, student-teacher relationships, school climate, school leadership, and student achievement?

Schools that implement SWPBIS certainly reaped the rewards of many tangible results. What was impressive about developing, teaching, and reinforcing pro-social skills was that SWPBIS was an effective RTI model, met the needs of students for academics and social and emotional learning, while creating the caring school community (Battistich et al., 1997) where all students were ready to learn. Positive and trusting relationships built resiliency in students and gave them the confidence to engage in “learning-enhancing relationships” (Raider-Roth, 2005) that inspired collaboration and independent inquiry. With increased connectedness to school and less exclusionary discipline practices, attendance was improved and students were gaining the knowledge and skills that were needed to thrive in the 21st century.

At the center of positive interactions was the teacher-student relationship that built collective efficacy between teachers and student to provide meaningful learning experiences to prepare students for the 21st century learning. School-Wide Positive Behavior Intervention Support (SWPBIS) implementation facilitated the positive interactions needed to create collaborative relationships, and the building of consistent practices that contributed to the well-being of teachers and students. The collaboration and collective efficacy contributed to the commitment of SWPBIS program fidelity, and created a positive school culture. With increased program fidelity to the SWPBIS principles, teacher efficacy, academic achievement, and school
climate were strengthened. SWPBIS became a viable strategy in sustaining overall school improvement.

**Conclusion**

The vast amount of evidence in the literature demonstrated that implementing the School-Wide Positive Intervention Support program (SWPBIS) improved school outcomes such as teacher efficacy, student achievement, and a collaborative school culture based the commonality of teaching and reinforcing behavior expectations. SWPBIS addressed student behavioral issues early on and helped to forge positive teacher-student relationships, which provided the foundations for trust, collaboration, respect, and achievement. Utilizing the tiered supports of the RTI model, the implementation of SWPBIS yielded significant results by decreasing disciplinary referrals and exclusionary practices, which improved attendance, achievement, behavior, and teacher efficacy. When teachers experienced high job satisfaction and personal accomplishment, teacher efficacy was increased (Hughes, 2012).

As evidenced in the literature review, SWPBIS was positively correlated to teacher well-being (Ross et al, 2012), organizational health (Kelm & McIntosh, 2012; Bradshaw et al., 2008;), and collective efficacy (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2007). Students and teachers formed essential partnerships, and students flourished in an environment of relational trust (Raider-Roth, 2005) with caring adults by their sides. Teachers with high efficacy understood that fostering positive relationships with students was the key to their success (Yeo, et al., 2008). Other outcomes associated with implementing SWPBIS were decreasing student misbehavior and improving classroom management (Demanet & Van Houtte, 2012; Pas, et al. 2010; Lewis, et al., 2012), lowered teacher stress and burnout (Pas, et al., 2012; Martin, et al., 2012), and increased teacher retention (Hughes, 2012).
Arming teachers with tools like the school-wide adoption of the Positive Behavior Intervention Support program provided the strategies and framework to embed into the school culture. With high fidelity to the implementation of the SWPBIS principles, a positive school climate was created where caring learning communities (Battisch et al., 1997) emerged. Executing the major tenets of SWPBIS such as teaching pro-social skills, the positivity ratio, standard behavior expectations, and reinforcement through the use of token economies, enhanced the likelihood of greater program fidelity that bolstered the teacher-student relationship and increased instruction (Kelm & McIntosh 2012; Bradshaw, et al., 2008). Safe and supportive relationships between all school staff and students greatly influenced the cognitive, psychological, social, and emotional needs of students, and were the catalysts for robust teaching and learning experiences that advanced teacher efficacy, student achievement, and collaborative school cultures.

Chapter III: Research Methods

Qualitative Research Design

The testing and accountability movement has narrowed the curriculum in today’s K-12 public schools. Caught in the middle of the political environment are public schools facing high pressure to meet federal and state mandates, and performance demands interfere with the ability for students to have robust learning experiences because teachers “teach to the test.” In addition to academic learning, meeting the social and emotional needs of students to address the “whole child” is equally important to meet achievement benchmarks. Through the process of analyzing discipline data, the researcher was concerned about the increased disciplinary referrals and decided to look at Positive Behavior Intervention Support as a model for program implementation. The purpose of this study was to assess the impact of a SWPBIS program, as
implemented at Mountain Springs Elementary on teacher efficacy, relationships between students and teachers, school climate, and student achievement. In this naturalistic inquiry (Lincoln & Guba, 1985), this study attempted to discover how and if SWPBIS implementation influenced the teachers and support staff’s perceptions about their self-efficacy. In addition, the study tried to uncover the factors that might or might not have influenced efficacy levels, understand how school climate might shape efficacy beliefs and performance, and how these factors impacted student achievement and the student-teacher relationship. The theoretical framework that was used to explore organizational change was Burke and Litwin’s (1992) Causal Model of Change, observing how the implementation of the SWPBIS contributed to the transformational and transactional factors of a school setting. Additionally, Patton’s (2002) social construction and constructivist research criteria were used to judge the quality of SWPBIS implementation as it related to organizational factors.

Qualitative research design was a good fit for the exploration of organizational change within the implementation of the School-Wide Positive Behavior Intervention Support (SWPBIS) program. More specifically, it added the human element of interaction within the organic setting of a school context where “... researchers have face-to-face interaction over time,” (Creswell, 2013, p. 45). A case study design was most appropriate since what was being studied was “fenced-in” (Merriam, 1998, p. 27) within the context of a SWPBIS school.

**Research Question**

The central question of this study was:

How did the implementation of the SWPBIS system at a small, rural K-8 school impact teacher efficacy, student-teacher relations, school climate, and student achievement as perceived by teachers and support staff?
Research Approach and Justification

The methodological approach that was most appropriate for exploring the perceptions of teachers, support staff, and administrators about the impact of SWPBIS on teacher efficacy, student-teacher relationships, school climate, and student achievement was a case study research design in order to understand a single organization that was bounded by time and space (Creswell, 2013). Creswell (2013) contended “… case study researchers study current, real-life cases that are in progress so that they can gather accurate information not lost by time,” (p. 98). Merriam (2009) described, “…case study has proven particularly useful for studying educational innovations, evaluating programs, and informing policy,” (p. 51). Yin (2014) explained that case study “…investigates a contemporary phenomenon (the “case”) in depth and within the real-world context, especially when the boundaries between the phenomenon and context may not be clearly evident,” (p. 16). Merriam (1998) argued that the overall intent of the study was equally important to the analysis, which may be descriptive, interpretive, or evaluative in nature.

Within case study research, Patton (2002) argued that program evaluation criteria must be established initially to acknowledge that the “…competing philosophical underpinnings and theoretical orientations will generate different criteria for judging quality and credibility,” (p. 266), and described the five criteria as: (a) Traditional scientific research; (b) Social construction and constructivist; (c) Artistic and evocative; (d) Critical change; and (e) Pragmatic utilitarianism. The criteria that aligned best with my case was the Social Construction and Constructivist criteria because the goal was to understand a particular case in depth as opposed to generating a hypothesis (Patton, 2002).

Research Paradigm
The constructivism-interpretivism paradigm (Ponterotto, 2005) aligned most appropriately to this case study due to its “relativist position” (p.129), which validated multiple realities as opposed to arriving at one universal truth. According to Ponterotto (2005), interpretations were formed through deep reflection and meaning was co-constructed through interactive dialogue between researcher and participants.

**Role of the Researcher**

As the primary research instrument, the researcher’s role was to co-construct the interpretation of the participants’ experiences through interactions and dialogue. The goals of the constructivist-interpretivist paradigm rested on its idiographic and emic orientations (Ponterotto, 2005) to explore and interpret the perceptions of various school staff within the social context of the SWPBIS implementation and the impact on organizational change. The researcher’s goal was to arrive at themes that explained organizational change within the context of student achievement, teacher efficacy, the student teacher relationship, and school climate as a result of the SWPBIS implementation. It was the intent of this researcher to get an insider’s perspective to focus on the lived experiences of the participants by developing conversational partners through responsive interviewing techniques to get at the core (Rubin & Rubin, 2012) of how SWPBIS impacted teacher efficacy, student-teacher relationships, school climate, and student achievement.

**Protection of Human Subjects**

Gaining trust with the participants was paramount, and accomplished by abiding to the canon of “do no harm.” The Belmont principles strengthened this concept by emphasizing ethical conduct through the treatment of respect, beneficence, and justice (NIH Office of Extramural Research, 2008) toward the participants at all times. Strict compliance to these
principles was followed throughout the course of this research study, and most importantly, IRB approval was obtained before contacting participants.

**Informed Consent**

Full disclosure of the study was reviewed, details were explained to allow participants to ask questions, and for the researcher to check for understanding. The details of the study were also provided in written format for greater clarity. Once the participants were aware and comprehended the research study’s purpose, procedures, and the participant’s role, the consent form was signed. At the start of the study and during every focus group interview session, the interview protocol (see E and F) specified that participation was voluntary and that if the participants felt uncomfortable in any way, withdrawal from the study was permitted at any time without repercussions. Butin (2013) recommended that an “opt-out” statement be included in the informed consent form (see Appendix B).

**Maximize Benefits and Minimize Risks**

The researcher explained the known risks and potential benefits to the participants, and made assurances to describe how confidentiality was maintained. The research participants’ identities were protected through the use of pseudonyms, and by securing all data collection material. In order to make the participants feel more at ease, the option to conduct interviews was offered to be conducted off site from the school campus for further protection.

**Establishing Equitable Procedures and Protocols**

The careful design of the study and applying the standards set forth by the scientific community made the study scientific, rigorous, or trustworthy (Merriam, 2009). With this in mind, the design of the study’s components were extensively planned and executed in a heedful manner in order to minimize risks, and to maximize the safety and wellbeing of the participants.
This was accomplished in the careful preparation of the research design through the establishment of fair procedures, outcomes, and practices. A “member check” protocol (see Appendix C) was implemented, so that participants could review the transcribed interview notes for clarification, and the participants would be debriefed throughout the process of the study to clarify my understanding of the content of the focus group interviews. Consent forms were signed before interviews took place, and an opt-out clause was present on the consent form itself. In addition, a reflective journal was used to ensure the reliability of the observation notes. Furthermore, cultural competence was exercised to ensure sensitivity to cultural norms, local cultures, and traditions.

**Plan for IRB Approval**

The Northeastern University guidelines and application process for the doctoral thesis proposal was followed, as well as compliance with all federal regulations and university requirements and policies. A detailed description of the research study, design, methodology, and data collection was included in the proposal, and the process and procedures of protecting the participants was specified. The IRB approved forms (see Appendices A,B,C,E,F,and G) were presented to the participants, and consent forms (see Appendix B) were signed prior to the collection of any data. The consent form included a statement that withdrawal from the study was permissible at any time without any penalty to the participants. Other protections include having a data monitoring plan, minimizing any potential risks, and reminding the participants that their participation was completely voluntary.

**Participants and Sampling Strategy**

According to Patton (2002), information-rich cases are dependent on purposeful sampling and the types of investigative questions. In order to explore teachers’ perceptions of self-
efficacy within the context of implementing School-Wide Positive Behavior Intervention Support (SWPBIS), elementary teachers were selected using criterion and convenience sampling by using the researcher’s own site since it was considered a “model” SWPBIS school in the final year of implementation. Since the researcher is the Superintendent/Principal of the district and school, focus group interviews were conducted and it was emphasized that data collected within the study would not be used toward their performance evaluations, and that participation was completely voluntary. According to Creswell (2013), “criterion sampling works well when all individuals studied represent the people who have experienced the phenomenon,” (p. 155). Criterion sampling was appropriate because the participants were bounded by time and space within the implementation of the principles of SWPBIS, and the intent of the study was to discover if teacher efficacy and organizational change were altered within this particular context. The rationale for selecting elementary teachers was because they were multiple subject teachers, and taught the same grade-level group of students for an entire school year.

**Recruitment**

Selection of the researcher’s own single K-8 elementary site to conduct the study was chosen due to the high fidelity of implementing SWPBIS, and the prospect of having one participant from each grade level to encapsulate all elementary aged students. The first step in the process was to seek approval from the Governing Board to conduct the study at the researcher’s site. After receiving Board approval, the researcher obtained IRB approval from Northeastern University. Once IRB approval was received, then the recruitment letter was disseminated to the elementary teachers and support staff (See Appendix A). The details of the research study’s purpose, duration, procedures, and protection of the participants was specified. Informed consent forms, an explanation of how confidentiality would be maintained, and a
statement that participation was voluntary was provided. Participants were not contacted until the IRB approval was granted.

Data Collection

A single case study was selected for its uniqueness to understand how and if the implementation of SWPBIS impacted organizational change. Triangulation of data was achieved by utilizing multiple sources of data to increase validation (Creswell, 2013). Semi-structured focus group interviews were conducted using an interview protocol; field observations and records review such as state assessment data, student discipline data and physical artifacts were also utilized. According to Merriam (2009), the advantages of documents are that they represent good sources of data because they are stable, easy to access, and that “…the presence of the investigator does not alter what is being studied,” (p. 155). In order to enhance the internal validity of the study, the process of member checking was implemented so that the participants had the opportunity to review the data to assess whether the researcher’s interpretations were accurate. In addition, a reflection log was kept in order to maintain the reliability of the observation notes. To document the interactions between researcher, participants, and environment, focus group interviews and field observations were used so the researcher had multiple sources to inform the interpretations, as well as the aforementioned records review. Conducting interviews at off-site locations was offered to put the participants at ease and to protect their confidentiality. On-line interviews using Google Hangout or Skype were made available as well as conducting the focus group interviews in a classroom if that increased the comfort level of the participants. The interviews were recorded using the Apple software program, Voice Memos. An observational protocol (see Appendix D) was created, appointments were scheduled in advanced, and school procedures to obtain public documents were followed.
Data Storage

All recorded materials were stored on this researcher’s personal computer and external hard drive. Transcribed notes and research materials were kept in a locked cabinet at the researcher’s home, and only the researcher had access. Maintaining confidentiality was strictly upheld through the use of pseudonyms, securing data, holding the data for five years in locked cabinets, and destroying the research materials after this time period has passed.

Data Analysis

Merriam (2009) asserted that the data collection and data analysis be conducted simultaneously because the emerging nature of qualitative research, and that “…data analysis is the process used to answer your research questions,” (p. 176). In order to make sense of the data, the analysis was conducted using Glaser and Strauss’s (1967) constant comparative method (as cited in Merriam, 2009), and Lincoln and Guba’s (1985) naturalistic inquiry. Constant Comparative Method (CCM) was a basic strategy because “…qualitative data is inductive and comparative,” (Merriam, 2009, p. 175). The CCM was a systematic approach that gives the researcher latitude to generate codes, expand on them, and to constantly compare and refine in order for the final themes to emerge. While the CCM was widely used in grounded theory designs, Merriam (2009) argued that using the CCM could also been used in other qualitative designs without generating a theory.

Interviews were transcribed by the researcher and by a transcription service, and then the researcher pursued CCM to establish multiple codes during the first cycle of coding. Analytic memos were added to the descriptions to help narrow down the codes into main conceptual categories (Saldana, 2013) during the second cycle coding phase. Next, cross-validation of all the data was used by delving into the data to arrive at more succinct themes that encompassed
the data. Using a descriptive case study (Yin, 2014), “…the purpose is to describe the phenomenon (the “case”) in its real world context,” (p. 238). Also relevant is Merriam’s particularistic case study (Merriam, 2009) within the disciplinary orientation of a historical case study, as it would be appropriate in order “to understand an event and apply knowledge to present practice means knowing the context of the event, the assumptions behind it, and perhaps the events impact on the institution or participants,” (Merriam, 1998, p. 35).

In combination with CCM, Lincoln and Guba’s (1985) naturalistic inquiry format will be used to analyze the problem, describe the context and observations, present the themes, and discuss the lessons learned (Creswell, 2013). The intent of the study was to explore the multiple factors within the bounded system of a SWPBIS school that might or might not have contributed to teacher efficacy, through the analysis of its three-year implementation period.

**Trustworthiness and Quality**

As mentioned, investigating the levels of staff efficacy within the implementation of the School-Wide Positive Behavior Intervention Support (SWPBIS) program involved a member check protocol (see Appendix C) of the transcribed interviews. Member checks are a common validation strategy that is frequently used by qualitative researchers to allow the opportunities for participants and researcher to review and verify the findings and interpretations of the researcher (Creswell, 2013). Coding and theme development attempted to honor the participants’ voice (Saldana, 2013) through verbatim accounts, and the use of rich, thick description “… provides details when describing a case or when writing about a theme,” (Creswell, 2013, p. 252).

**Threats to Validity**

To address the challenge to internal and external validity, triangulation of data using focus group interviews, field observations, participant observations, and records reviews of
assessments and discipline reports were used. Efforts to minimize researcher bias and increase rich, thick description was accomplished using the Glaser and Strauss’s (1967) Constant Comparative Method (as cited in Merriam, 2009) and Lincoln and Guba’s (1985) Naturalistic Inquiry.

According to Creswell (2013), the naturalistic research approach proposed by Lincoln and Guba (1985) used the term “trustworthiness” to describe the validity and reliability of the study. In addition, credibility, authenticity, transferability, dependability, and confirmability are more naturalistic in their descriptions, and are meant to supplant the terms of internal validity, external validity, reliability, and objectivity (as cited in Creswell, 2013). Furthermore, Creswell (2013) explained that prolonged engagement in the field established the researcher’s credibility, triangulation of data strengthened the truthworthiness of the study, and the process of auditing the data enhanced the confirmability and dependability of the findings.

In this descriptive case study, the data was analyzed by building an explanation that tried to describe the “how” or “why” something has happened (Yin, 2014). This type of analytic technique had an iterative nature, and Yin (2014) further explained that “as the case study evidence is examined, explanatory propositions are revised, and the evidence is examined once again from a new perspective in this iterative mode,” (p. 149). In addition, there is caution in this approach, and Yin (2014) expressed some drawbacks in that “…much analytic insight and sensitivity are demanded of the explanation builder,” (p. 150). To minimize threats, these suggestions were included to ensure the dependability of the findings.

Chapter IV: Research Findings

The goal of this research study was to present how the implementation of the School-Wide Positive Behavior Intervention Support (SWPBIS) program in a small, rural K-8 school
impacted school culture contributing to organizational change. The purpose of this chapter is to identify how the data, resulting from the triangulation of the focus group interviews, individual interviews, teacher observations and records reviews from Mountain Springs Elementary School had relevance to the central research question. The focus group interviews included general education teachers and support staff. Those individually interviewed included the former special education teacher who was part of the initial implementation team, as well as the project manager from the county office of education who also served as the PBIS coach for district support. Classroom observations were conducted in each one of the participant teachers’ classrooms. The records that were analyzed included state standardized test score data from 2008-2013, school accountability report cards, discipline reports from the student information system, and data documents developed for the SWPBIS implementation from 2010-2014.

This chapter is divided into five main sections, which begins with describing the goal of the study. The subsequent three sections will focus on the context of the school, the history of the program, and findings from the data through the themes that emanated from the iterative process of Yin’s (2014) explanation building technique. The final section will provide a summary of the more salient points of the research findings.

The Purpose of the Case Study

The purpose of this study was to explore the perceptions of the teachers and school staff on the SWPBIS and to investigate how the implementation of the SWPBIS structure contributed to the school improvement objectives during years 2009-2014, including improved (1) teacher efficacy, (2) classroom management, (3) school-wide discipline, and (4) school culture. Initially, the SWPBIS framework was sought out by the former special education teacher at Mountain Springs Elementary to find an evidenced-based practice to solve the issue of the
amount of disproportionate office referrals that were being issued toward students with disabilities. The timing was perfect in that the county office of education offered training and financial support due to a state grant award on the SWPBIS approach for school districts that were willing to implement. At the same time, the Mountain Springs Elementary School staff was investigating character education as an intervention to help students develop better social skills.

The Context of the Mountain Springs Elementary School

Mountain Springs Elementary School is located in the mountainous area in one of the biggest counties in California. Its rural, geographically isolated location is about 45 minutes from the nearest grocery store, mall, and movie theaters. The K-8 elementary school was built in the 1930’s, and the adjacent high school was added in the 1990’s. Prior to that, Mountain Springs students were bused to a neighboring high school about 30 miles away. Bus service is provided to 99% of its students, serving a geographic area consisting of a 15-mile radius and over 400 square miles, and operating under high deficit spending due to the economic crash in 2008 and multiple years of declining enrollment. The demographic make-up of the schools students can be found in Table 1.

Table 1

Demographics of Mountain Springs Elementary

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Percent of Total Enrollment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Black or African American</td>
<td>2.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American Indian or Alaska Native</td>
<td>28.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic or Latino</td>
<td>33.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>27.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two or More Races</td>
<td>7.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------------------------</td>
<td>------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Socioeconomically Disadvantaged</td>
<td>83.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English Language Learners</td>
<td>19.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students with Disabilities</td>
<td>14.7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It is typical in small school districts that the employees wear many hats and have dual job descriptions. Mountain Springs is no exception. Most of the school staff have double and sometimes triple job duties, which is a symptom of the school district experiencing many years of declining enrollment during the 2005-2008, and 2011-2012 school years, with several cuts being made during these lean times.

After the financial crash in the 2008-09 school year, state and federal funding was stripped even more, and the school district took double hits as it continued to face declining enrollment. During this economic turmoil, the community’s major employer steadily closed and cut jobs beginning in 2010, and eventually shut its doors in January 2012. Enrollment plummeted by 25% to an all time low in the 2011-2012 school year. The elementary school moved to combination classes due to low numbers and reduced funding. Without consistent practices, school-wide rules, and a positive framework like SWPBIS, the number of discipline referrals escalated at Mountain Springs Elementary, and administrators resorted to punitive disciplinary actions. As a result, it put stress on working parents who felt inconvenienced because they had to be home when their child was suspended, and created poor and distrustful relationships with the school. These poor relationships with students and families increased the stress levels for teachers, students, and administrators because it took the focus off of learning and instructional goals were not being met. The school climate became negative and community
relations were becoming toxic. The threshold of stress, negativity, and anxiety was reaching critical mass, and provided the fertile ground for SWPBIS to take root.

**History of the School Wide Positive Behavior Intervention Support Program**

During the 2011-12 school year, Mountain Springs Elementary School implemented the School-wide Positive Behavior Intervention Support Program (SWPBIS) in order to find strategies and practices to improve behavior outcomes for students and the climate of the school. The school signed up to participate in the training offered by the county office of education, and was selected to be in the first cohort of districts trained by the county office of education personnel. The county partnered with an accredited university that had a Positive Behavior Intervention Support (PBIS) institute, and the lead researcher was contracted to be the presenter of the PBIS training.

**County office level of support.** At the county office of education level, the goal was to develop support and interventions within the Response to Intervention (RTI) model that focused on the social and emotional learning of students. In the past, there was a grant from the state that focused on supporting the behaviors of special education students. The No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act was reauthorized in 2004 (Sugai & Horner, 2009), and RTI became a model for general education as well. More grant money from the state started to pour in to support this “RTI for all” movement. As the project manager from the county stated:

So the project that I was responsible for was the state mental health grant, which provided funding to different county offices to implement evidence-based behavioral support programs. The county office previously had been already involved in PBIS through the state technical grant, which provided dollars to support special education. So we took this model we were already using and implemented it as one of the goals for
the grant. So we looked at again, evidence-based was critical, research-based, best practice because it wasn’t about special-education it was being global, and we were looking at something that had demonstrated proof of success in general so we made the selection to expand PBIS, and opened it up to anybody in the districts.

Important in the process, was fidelity to the PBIS program’s implementation. One of the major conditions for participation was that districts had sent a leadership team of diverse stakeholders, inclusive of a general education teacher, special education teacher, administrator, paraprofessional, and parent. Critical to the membership was having an administrator as part of the team, someone who had the power to make decisions and support the implementation process. In addition, the county provided PBIS coaches who traveled to districts to offer technical support, and the project manager became the coach for Mountain Springs Elementary.

The project manager commented:

What we wanted to make sure is that in order to a ensure success, and we didn’t want excuses. So we provided a location and materials. We bought one book for every team member and those books were $100 each. We also provided lunch so they wouldn’t leave and not come back, sort of best practice of what we’ve known in the past.

In addition, the county also provided financial incentives of a $750 stipend for the team toward anything to support the implementation, such as sub costs and PBIS materials. To support the data collection component, a $500 stipend was offered and a $500 stipend for the lead person to hold meetings and develop the profile reports. Despite good intentions and providing a structure and financial incentives for successful implementation, there were still challenges to the process such as staff turnover, lack of immediate results, and competing interests such as the pressure to adopt the Common Core. The project manager expressed:
Some of the challenges have been definitely the staff turnover. We’ve lost entire teams. I would say poor leadership skills on behalf of the administrators. Here’s the other thing, when I talk to schools about this program and this is really a framework not a program, I’m not going to hand you a book and say read the book and go do it. It is a paradigm shift and we were talking about a paradigm shift, we know it takes anywhere from 5 to 7 years to change a school culture. So, if people don’t see automatic results then they start straying away because we’re about instant gratification, make this happen. A paradigm shift takes a while.

The other challenge that the project manager identified was that “PBIS is a hot topic now, and the Federal government is writing it in their documents, and districts are signing up like crazy because it is the newest trend.” Unfortunately, she expressed disappointment that less reputable agencies were providing this training and charging a huge fee. The county’s program was based on an accredited university program, where the lead researcher has a PBIS institute, and the county had brought in that lead researcher to conduct the trainings. The expectation was that PBIS would impact the school culture for adults as well, especially the teachers. Thus, an essential part to successful PBIS implementation was self-regulation for teachers. In addition, the project manager referred to PBIS as a trauma informed practice and offered the additional following insight:

When you’re looking at trauma informed practices, one of the things is, it’s all the things that create compassion fatigue for teachers, they just get tired. They get tired of seeing the kids acting up. They are tired of thinking why these kids are acting up. It’s not that they don’t care, but it’s self-preservation. PBIS cannot stand unless that foundation is strong. I know I’m going backwards, but the foundation is also caring for the adults
because, if we have broken adults were going to have, definitely broken kids. So, dovetailing with PBIS is trauma informed care for educators.

The project manager discussed the Adversity of Childhood Experiences (ACE) study, and expressed that there are many students that suffer from such traumatic experiences. The project manager also reflected on how education is a “profession of servitude.” She said that educators have to regulate and take care of one-self because “it’s the kind of profession that takes a toll,” and part of the successful implementation of PBIS is to “support the souls of the teachers.” The project manager further commented:

When I saw that PBIS was mentioned as one of those things [trauma informed practices], so, we’re addressing kids positively, we’re being clear, we’re teaching them these helpful things that are going to get them beyond the classroom but in their life.

There have been 40 teams trained in the county in the PBIS framework, all resulting in different levels of implementation with fidelity due to the previous challenges that were discussed, and one of the things that was appreciated by the project manager was that, “our county does try to maximize for all.”

**District level of support.** At Mountain Springs Elementary School, the former special education teacher conducted research into evidence-based practices to support behavior management in the spring of 2011. The identified concern focused on the large amount of disciplinary referrals that was issued to students with IEP’s, and that the discipline process was inconsistent. The special education teacher stated:

It was discipline on a whim. There didn’t appear to be a set policy that was in place.

For example, if a kid got written up for horseplay, it was arbitrary. Like maybe a kid
might get one punishment, but then another kid for the same infraction would get another punishment.

The special education teacher was looking for better ways to write behavior support plans, and conducted research by reaching out to colleagues. One such colleague mentioned that the county office of education was starting a grant-based program on PBIS, and the county was looking for districts to participate early on in the process. After receiving the information, the special education teacher commented, “I brought it to the assistant principal of Mountain Springs and it seemed like the participation was going to be a win–win. Yeah, we were actually one of the first groups that jumped in.”

The SWPBIS leadership team spent the summer of 2011 planning in order to roll out the program to the entire staff once school started. The first planning meeting was spent developing the concept of “The Mountain Way,” to make the SWPBIS principles more student-friendly, and easy to understand. Next, we developed the four behavior expectations and carved out how the program was going to be rolled out by training teachers, holding an assembly for the students, and having teachers provide time in their day to teach and reinforce the behavior expectations. One of the team members was able to contract with a graphic artist who would create the PBIS logo that would be customized to the Mountain Way concept. The leadership team selected four behavior expectations: respectful, responsible, cooperative and safe. A graphic artist was willing to develop the logo on a pro bono basis, and promotional materials were created such as Mountain Way posters and post cards using the funds issued for the implementation.

In the second planning meeting, the team members broke into groups and developed presentations based on the various stakeholders: teachers, students, and parents, and a schedule was set to deliver those presentations. As the school undertook the endeavor, data was collected
on disciplinary referrals, types of infractions, location of the incidents, and if the incidents resulted in suspensions. Based on her personal experience, the special education teacher discussed the benefits of SWPBIS stating:

Starting from back and looking forward, school climate, when you have a reduction in the number of referrals [which] was reduced over time, and the overall school climate was much better. There were fewer instances on the playground. It was kind of twofold. One, the students knew what to expect at that point because things were consistent, and then there were the other sorts of programs put in place to help students use certain skills that were taught.

It was further discussed that the improvement to school climate was evident among the paraprofessionals as the SWPBIS framework gave them specific protocols to rely on and empowered the support staff. An observation that the special education teacher expressed:

I noticed it more with the instructional aides and the other support personnel then I did with the teachers. Plus, it empowered them because before, they would have to be doing things just sort of based on the spur of the moment.

Another factor that reinforced appropriate behavior by the students was the development of a token economy system. While the special education teacher commented that such a system worked much better with younger students and with students with disabilities, the praise postcards also helped to build social capital with the parents as she stated:

I think the postcards all the way through the middle school were definitely a viable method of communicating positives to the parents, and the fact that probably the parents never heard from teachers or school unless a student was in trouble.
Once the positive system was put in place, it was expected that all students would benefit because everyone would be held to the same standards of behavior. As the special education teacher explained, “Everybody knows what should happen and there's no emotion or personality or anything like that can get in the way if it’s done with consistency.” From her perceptions after implementing SWPBIS, she stated that “it just seemed equal, more leveled” across the board, even with the students with disabilities. It also gave school staff a safety net because they saw that the school administrators as the special education teacher commented, “were handling everybody in the same way and I think that helped things stay manageable.” In other words, the feeling articulated by the special education teacher was that everyone in the school community benefited, especially the students because with this system in place, there was equal treatment in handling discipline incidents across all students.

**Impact of the Program**

Relating to the central research question of how the SWPBIS implementation impacted teacher efficacy, student teacher relationship, school climate and student achievement, the coding from the interviews was conducted using the HyperRESEARCH Qualitative Data Analysis software program. Frequency reports of the various codes provided the opportunity to cross validate the review of state assessment data and discipline reports, and teacher observations as they related with the four aspects of organizational change that are of interest to the researcher. The data analysis section is divided into three subsections: (1) document review, (2) perceptions from school staff derived from the focus group interviews and individual interviews, and (3) the classroom observations.

**Records review.** The following data was extracted from testing data from the annual Academic Performance Index (API) and other state assessments reports, discipline data from the
student information system, and SWPBIS implementation reports that were required for the grant. In this analysis, a five-year period was reviewed starting in the 2009-2010 school year for school discipline. The beginning point for state assessment data was the 2008-2009 school year because field-testing was conducted in the 2013-14 school year in preparation for the Common Core State Standards to represent a five-year period. As a result, no school districts in California have API scores for the 2013-2014 school year.

**Discipline data.** First, discipline data was reviewed by analyzing the number of office disciplinary referrals (ODRs) issued per school year compared to how many of them resulted in suspensions separated by in-school suspensions (ISS) and out of school suspensions (OSS). The first data point in the 2009-2010 school year represented two years prior to SWPBIS implementation, and the 2010-2011 year represents baseline data. While the incidence of disciplinary referrals had decreased steadily from 2009-2013, the number of suspensions was much higher in the pre-implementation years. In addition, there was an unusual spike of ODRs for the 2013-2014 school year. This data is presented in Figure 3.
Figure 3. Discipline Referrals and Suspensions.

The number of incidents that resulted in suspension was 50.4% in the 2009-2010 school year, and 95.7% in the 2010-2011 school year. However, suspensions declined in the following years after SWPBIS was implemented in the 2011-2012 school year. This trend showed a reduction in suspensions that resulted from the discipline incidents with 34.8% in 2011-2012 and 14.2% in 2012-2013. The reduction in ODRs can be contributed to increased interventions that evolved from the SWPBIS framework, and the lower suspension rates contributed to increased instructional time, because ODRs were managed around learning time.

As mentioned previously, the number of ODRs did, however, increase to the level of 123 in 2013-2014, and nearly matched the 2009-2010 figures. Upon reflection, there were several possible factors that we considered could have contributed to the increase in ODRs. Those included increased enrollment with a higher percentage of students with disabilities, and/or a reduction of bus service which led to more crowded buses with more discipline incidents. In addition, we considered that the increase in ODRs could be the result of a structural change.
during the year when the 8th grade class was moved up to the high school as a cost savings measure to save the expense of hiring a teacher due to a vacancy.

After conducting a deeper analysis of the ODRs for the 2013-2014 school year through the disaggregation of discipline data between grades K-7 and grades 8 and bus incidents, it was found that the biggest bump in ODRs during the school year in question indeed emerged from the 8th grade class and the structural change of moving them up to the high school campus for the first semester. Of the 123 ODRs that were issued school wide, the 8th grade students received 38% of the referrals, and were issued 50% of the total suspensions for 2013-2014, which is a highly disproportionate percentage of referrals and suspensions for the K-8 classes given that 8th graders only comprised 8% of the total K-8 student population. Due to a favorable budget forecast, an 8th grade teacher was hired for the second semester and the structural change of housing the 8th grade class in the high school only occurred for the first semester. Interestingly, the comparison of the number of ODRs issued from first semester to second semester were startling, as the numbers more than tripled from 11 ODRs to 34 ODRs, which demonstrated the 8th grade students having difficulty in adjusting from a departmentalized schedule and more freedom to the increased control and supervision of a self-contained classroom model.

For the 8th grade students this change back to the elementary setting had a detrimental effect on their behavior, and there were three key contributing factors that led to an increase in ODRs and suspensions. First, the 8th grade students viewed the change as unfair and were moved from a structure that they preferred. Next, the 8th grade teacher was new to the Mountain Way culture and had no training in SWPBIS, and was new to teaching in general. She relied on the 7th grade teacher and the two of them teamed up to deliver consistent homework, grading and behavior expectations policies which were more rigorous than the high school setting. Lastly,
the gender make-up comprised of 78.5% of male students who tended to rebel which led to more
defiant behavior. Considering these contributing factors, it is likely that ODRs and suspensions
increased for these reasons.

As a result of SWPBIS implementation, the SWPBIS leadership team concluded that
there were not many options for disciplinary consequences. The only options for discipline were
in-school suspensions and out of school suspensions, which showed there were weaknesses in
providing a true Response to Intervention (RTI) approach with the multi-tier levels of support.
So the team reached out to the teacher groups, and it was decided that after school detention
could be added to the continuum of disciplinary consequences in the 2011-2012 school year. In
addition, the researcher as one of the SWPBIS leadership team members, did some research into
evidenced-based strategies and found the program, “Check, Connect, Expect,” or CCE. The
program structure included the establishment of behavioral goals with individual students, daily
check in and check out times with a coach to monitor, and weekly monitoring via a behavior
report card that went home to the parents. The program was customized to fit the Mountain Way
behavior expectations. It was decided that the duration of the program would be one month, and
students who were assigned to the CCE program could focus on one behavior expectation per
week, and it was implemented in the second semester of the 2011-2012 school year. At the end
of the month, if the student gathered 75% of the points on the behavior report card, then the
student “graduated” and was exited from the program.

At the beginning of the year 2 of SWPBIS implementation (2012-2013), one of the
SWPBIS team members also created a “pre-referral” form. It was meant for the students to sit
down with the principal to discuss the misbehavior, develop strategies to change behavior, and
the pre-referral and conference would constitute as the intervention. In essence, the pre-referral
counted as a warning. For some students, getting the warning was enough of a deterrent. However, if students began to earn multiple pre-referrals then an office disciplinary referral was eventually issued. Reviewing the data for 2012-2013, suspensions were reduced by 46.97% from prior year (year 1) and by 78.26% from the baseline year.

**State assessment data.** As mentioned previously at the beginning of this section, there were no annual state assessments given in the 2013-2014 school year to provide reports for the API score due to the transition to Common Core, as California opted for field-testing instead. Therefore, to reflect a five-year period, the data started from the 2008-09 school year and ended with the 2012-2013 school year in relation to progress on the API based on the Standardized Testing and Reporting (STAR) results, as shown in Figure 4.

![Academic Performance Index (API) Scores from STAR Results](image)

*Figure 4. API Scores from STAR Results*

In the 2011-2012, the former special education teacher found another evidenced-based program to participate that was grant funded and supported by the county office of education, which focused on reading intervention. The program known as Early Reading Intervention
Academy (ERIA), and was very similar in its approach as the county’s offering of SWPBIS to county school districts. Schools had to bring teams of diverse stakeholders, including an administrator and stipends were available for program purchase, data collection, or substitute costs. In the spring of 2012, Mountain Springs purchased an on-line reading intervention program. The following year, the school purchased the reading program where students received pull out supports to help strengthen their reading fluency.

Reviewing the testing data through the analysis of the annual performance index (API) scores indicated a big jump from the 2008-2009 school year, and steady gains in academic progress continued for the subsequent school years. In order to identify the school’s progress, the state of California developed academic proficiency targets in mathematics and English, and other sub group criteria were measured on the school’s federal performance targets as represented on the Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP). Mountain Springs Elementary met their proficiency targets for mathematics in SWPBIS implementation year 1 (2011-2012) and English/Language Arts for years 1 and 2 (2012-2013) during the SWPBIS implementation period as demonstrated on the AYP results in table 2.

Table 2

<table>
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<tr>
<th>School Year</th>
<th>English/Language Arts</th>
<th>Mathematics</th>
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<td>2012-2013</td>
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</tbody>
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When analyzing the AYP results for the meeting the proficiency targets for English and Math within the five-year period, Mountain Springs Elementary did not meet its proficiency target for ELA in the 2010-2011 school year, and did not meet its proficiency target for mathematics in the 2012-2013 school year. Each year the AYP target increases to approach the 100% proficiency target that was established for the 2014-15 school year under NCLB. The increase in proficiency target from the 2008-2013 school years averaged 10.65% for each year. There were some internal challenges with district leadership during this time that caused a toxic work environment and dissension among the staff, and there was speculation about a change in leadership at the top.

Despite not making its proficiency target for mathematics in the 2012-2013 school year, Mountain Springs Elementary registered a modest gain in overall API score of six points ending with a score of 770. On a historical note, due to declining enrollment in the 2011-2012 school year, cuts to the budget came the following year when the elementary teaching staff was reduced and Mountain Springs had combination classes in the 2012-2013 school year. In the face of the challenges that occurred academically from missing its proficiency target for mathematics in the 2012-2013 school year, the discipline data for this year showed promising results as demonstrated by the lower incidence of ODRs and suspensions, notwithstanding the fact that enrollment increased by 24% in the 2012-2013 school year. While the increased enrollment was encouraging, the enrollment numbers were still short of the enrollment figures in the baseline year in the 2010-2011 school year. Fortunately, new wineries were beginning to be built in the Mountain Springs area, and because housing was extremely affordable, new families moved in that led to a positive trend in increased enrollment for the school.

**Focus Group Themes**
There were eight participants in the focus group interviews, seven teachers and one instructional aide. All participants were female and volunteered for the study by responding to the recruitment letter that was placed in the staff mailboxes. There were two focus group sessions, consisting of four participants for each that were conducted on two different days. The interviews took place on campus after school on two separate days at the end of the school year. A doodle survey was sent out to each participant to identify what day and time would work. The focus group interviews took place in one of the participants’ classrooms, with an average length of one hour.

**Impact of SWPBIS on teacher efficacy.** According to Bandura (1988), sources of self-efficacy were shaped through contextual factors and related experiences that promote mastery, vicarious experience, social persuasion, and physiological state, and “… the most effective way of developing a strong sense of self-efficacy is through success experiences,” (p. 284). In order to manage classroom environments with positive student outcomes, classroom expectations needed to be clear and articulated to the students. The classroom teachers needed to identify their classroom expectations in order to communicate them with precision to their students, which provided greater clarity and consistency (Sprague & Golly, 2005). Each teacher at Mountain Springs Elementary worked in a single grade level classroom in the 2013-14 school year, and over the past two years, the school had moved to a more inclusive environment for students with disabilities. The number of years that each teacher worked at Mountain Springs Elementary ranged from 2-13 years.

Across the two focus groups and individual interviews, three themes that emerged regarding the impact of SWPBIS on teachers’ sense of efficacy:
1. SWPBIS created consistent practices that are systematically implemented school wide that minimized negative interactions with the students;

2. SWPBIS practices supported successful behavior management by providing a framework that was efficient in handling misbehavior in the classroom; and

3. SWPBIS provided a structure for positive reinforcement for students which offered more personalized, targeted learning opportunities for students to improve their behavior.

SWPBIS created consistent practices that are systematically implemented school wide that minimized negative interactions between teachers and students and promotes productive exchanges. The first theme identified through the analysis of the focus groups was that SWPBIS minimized the negative interactions in favor of positive interactions in the classroom that translated into more time for academic instruction. The participants felt better about “getting stuff done,” because they were spending less time and energy on the student misbehavior. Having conversations with students regarding the SWPBIS behavior expectations could be taken care of quickly in a two-way conversation where misbehavior was extinguished instantly in most cases. Being able to handle a discipline issue efficiently made them feel good knowing that “you’re doing a good job” when the students are able to stop and correct their misbehavior without taking a lot of class time.

As a comprehensive framework, the SWPBIS model laid the foundation for consistent practices among school personnel and makes every member of the school community accountable to the SWPBIS principles due to the uniform behavior expectations that were being communicated. As one participant pointed out “… there was a ground floor built for me,” and prior to the SWPBIS implementation, the teachers commented that all the teachers created their
classroom systems. As one participant stated, “We all had our own system. I feel like there was no consistency across anywhere. It was just each teacher deciding in their rooms.” Another participant pointed out that after SWPBIS, “…it’s made a big difference in that we all have the same vocabulary now. Everywhere they go it’s the same versus the 900 rules that they had to try to follow.”

In addition, the SWPBIS framework gave the school community a common language around behavior expectations and those skills and behaviors transfer to the following year. As one participant said, “We have standard verbiage, The Mountain Way. Respectful, responsible, cooperative, and safe.” Another teacher stated:

They know there’s these expectations. You can ask them, “Was that respectful?” No, okay. That wasn’t a part of the Mountain Way. “How could you be respectful?” They can give examples now and it’s consistent where we can ask, “Was that safe? Was that responsible?” We can pick those characteristics and ask, “Is that a good choice?” If it wasn’t a good choice, “How could you have made it a good choice?” Using these characteristics for both the negative and positive.

Another teacher characterized the Mountain Way as helpful to the adults because “it makes consistency for staff as well as the students.” While another participant described that “every year they know when they get to Mrs. Winter’s class, you’re still going to have to follow the Mountain Way. And to Mrs. Smith’s class it’s still going to be the same.” In addition, in focus group number one, the teachers discussed the importance of giving students specificity to express themselves through the behavior expectations, which translated to social and emotional literacy. Furthermore as another participant expressed “… when you are trying to establish that atmosphere in the classroom, they push back if it’s not implemented in other classes.” A newer
teacher responded that SWPBIS made students more accountable for their behavior, and explained, “I think it gives them some accountability in class and the expectation of the behavior in class while you’re teaching with one another. My kids know what’s expected of them. They already have been exposed to it prior to me coming in.”

**SWPBIS supported successful behavior management by providing a framework that was efficient in handling misbehavior in the classroom.** The second theme identified through an analysis of the focus groups was that SWPBIS supported successful behavior management in the classroom, which in turn impacted teacher efficacy. Teachers felt that their capacity was increased because the SWPBIS system either complimented their own classroom behavior system or that they did not have to spend time in creating or recreating one for themselves. As one participant stated that “it helped me because when I came, I didn’t have any of this. I had to create my own. For me to have something more consistent except mine were more wordy. I am like this is cut and dry.”

Teachers reported that misbehavior had decreased and as a result, more time was spent on instruction. With the increased time on task the teachers felt a sense of accomplishment. Kelm and McIntosh (2012) found that teachers in SWPBIS schools reported “…greater efficacy in the classroom because less time is spent engaging in discipline, [and] thus, teachers may have more time to spend on instruction, which may increase teachers’ appraisal of teaching task and context,” (p. 144). They felt more effective at accomplishing their goals because students were in class learning as opposed to sending them to the office. As one of the participants shared, “in the classroom it’s easier. Easier to manage kiddos. You just say the rule, and say are you doing the Mountain Way or being the Mountain Way? You don’t have to go any further than that.”

Another teacher affirmed this sentiment regarding dealing with discipline issues, “it’s less
classroom time being taken.” Part of the appeal of SWPBIS is that it focuses on positive interactions with students, and one participant expressed how cumbersome it is to hound students on their misbehavior:

Lecturing is tiring. You don’t want to be at school all day, like nagging and nagging and nagging and feeling negative. So when you have that [Mountain Way] you say, “Was that being respectful?” Okay, let’s move on. Like Marsha said, it gives you more time. You’re spending less class time on discipline. So, you feel better because you got to get all the stuff done, and I didn’t have to stop and spend an hour doing this and I got to deal with it and move on.

In addition, it helped to reinforce the expected behavior and provided clarity by giving students uniform, guiding principles and concrete examples of behavior that specifies what was and what was not the Mountain Way. With increased exposure to the SWPBIS expectations, the discussions with students were succinct. As another participant articulated:

I don’t need to give an explanation for this. You don’t have to go into depth, you can be brief, like “Hey, you’re not being safe right now”. I don’t need to go in the whole reasoning why it’s not safe whatever they’re doing. They instantly are like, “Oh yeah. I’m not being safe.”

It was discussed during both focus group interviews that because of the uniformity of the behavior expectations, they become embedded in the students’ consciousness. One of the participants remarked, “I think it helps them because they have to know for next year, all the rules, so I better figure it out.” As the former special education teacher stated:

They [students] began in a way to kind of self-monitor and you carry that from the playground or the unstructured time back into the classroom. And it’s much easier for
them to get started and what they’re supposed to be doing because they’re not bringing in a lot of baggage or issues from the previous half hour when they were out on the playground. I think that’s how it goes to improving the efficacy of the instruction.

**SWPBIS provided a structure for positive reinforcement for students, which offered more personalized, targeted learning opportunities for students to improve their behavior.** The third theme identified through an analysis of the focus groups was that SWPBIS provided a structure for positive reinforcement for students, which created personalized learning that targeted individual students’ behavior needs. The teachers felt a level of pride in honoring their students’ efforts and following the Mountain Way through their use of the standardized token economy. Teachers issued Mountain Way postcards to praise students’ efforts to follow the behavior expectations, which was solely based on the individual’s behavior accomplishment through some tangible action that fits the Mountain Way. As one teacher remarked, “I think the postcard made it more personal because it’s something. I know the little kids get beyond excited about the postcard.” In addition, a student of the month ceremony is held that recognizes the Mountain Way behaviors. Since the Mountain Way permeated across the entire school community, students were able to internalize the behavior expectation. As a result, those behavior expectations transferred from unstructured areas to the classroom. As one participant explained when asked about sustainability of the program, she spoke to the token economy: “I think the standardize rewards. It gave the kids consistency and they knew what they would be rewarded in the same way and the same time. At least they could count on that.” While another participant commented about how the four Mountain Way rules are helpful “because it covers everything. And then I when they have to flip a card in my classroom, I say, “Okay, what rule did you just break?”
One of the pillars of SWPBIS is the positivity ratio, 4 to 1 that means four positive interactions to one corrective action, which helped to build resiliency in students (Fredrickson, 2009). When asked about specific actions taken to build SWPBIS in the classroom, one participant declared:

I think in my classroom, one of the big things we use is the 3 to 1 or 4 to 1 ratio. I try to be very cognizant of how I address the kids, especially at their age because they're pretty emotional. They make a judgment and they either turn you on or off compared, depending on how you treat them.

**Impact of SWPBIS on positive student-teacher relationships.** Unsupportive relationships with teachers might create a dislike and fear of school, leading to isolation and student disengagement, which could be the catalyst for anti-social behavior (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009). The student-teacher relationship helped to deter student misconduct, if students felt supported and safe at school (Demanet & Van Houtte, 2011). SWPBIS could spur effective practices within a school environment that might prevent anti-social behavior (Sprague & Golly, 2005).

An analysis of the interviews and focus groups revealed three themes in relationship to the impact of SWPBIS on student-teacher relationships:

1. SWPBIS provided a clear understanding of behavior expectations through the use of common vernacular;

2. SWPBIS created opportunities for teachers and students to have positive interactions that led to relational trust (Raider-Roth, 2005) and effective classroom management; and
3. SWPBIS developed a community of learners where peers reinforced the behavior expectations to enhance accountability and social and emotional competence through clear communication on behavior norms.

*The impact of the SWPBIS provided a clear understanding of behavior expectations through the use of common vernacular.* The first theme identified through the analysis of the focus groups was the clarity and articulation of common behavior expectations throughout the school campus. As stated in the previous section on teacher efficacy, SWPBIS provided a common language of behavior expectations so that students have a clear understanding what type of behaviors were acceptable at school, and the Mountain Way expectations provided the context. One teacher explained, “these are just small, four expectations and that’s it. That gives them a context that can drive a conversation and drive thoughts too, and make a connection to those thoughts.” Many of the teachers took the time to have class discussions to help reinforce desired behavior and to support in self-management. As one of the participants described:

I will ask them, “Is that being responsible?” And then I use a specific words or I'll say, “Why wasn't that being responsible?” And then they’ll say, “Because I wasn’t focusing on”, or “I wasn’t doing my work.” All you have to do is say that word and they know. They think about it and say, “I wasn’t being cooperative because I told them I couldn’t be in the same group as me,” and “That’s not a cooperative the thing to do.”

In addition, SWPBIS provided equity across all students because they are all held to the same standards of behavior, that uniformity provided safety and predictability, and no students were excluded from the intervention (Jones & Morrison, 2007). Class-wide positive behavior supports were in alignment with the school wide effort, it strengthened the efficacy of SWPBIS. When discussing whether SWPBIS was a valuable approach, one participant said that it was “because
As a result teachers are able to have brief, productive conversations to help students reflect upon their positive behaviors, and classroom discussions that helped the students internalize the Mountain Way behavior expectations. Equally important was reflecting on poor behavior, which gave students the opportunities to make corrections and if needed, gain more exposure to new strategies to develop new skills.

**SWPBIS created opportunities for teachers and students to have positive interactions that led to relational trust (Raider-Roth, 2005) and effective management.** The second theme in relationship to teacher-student relationships is that SWPBIS fostered trust and made students feel safe. The participants discussed how common knowledge of behavior expectations could provide safety and predictability. One participant commented, “The kids know what to expect I think more than they used to,” while another teacher stated the importance of consistency, as “it goes to routine and how everybody does better when they know what’s going on.” As one teacher put it: “I think we’ve talked about how all kids feel safe, when they know what the rules are, they know what to expect.” Maintaining those positive interactions even through corrective action helped to deescalate anti-social behavior. As one participant put it, "I'll just say it help you to focus more, more on the positive. It's not always focusing on the negative.” Some of the teachers also expressed that gentle reminders of the behavior expectations went a long way because students were not always going to have the Mountain Way in the forefront of their minds. Student reflections created good teachable moments, and built accountability on the students’ part to self-monitor and self-correct. As one participant explained:

If I hear something as I’m walking through in a collaborative area where they’re working together, I could say, If I hear something where it’s not demonstrating one of those things [behavior expectations], I could say, “Hey was that this or no? How could you have
shown that?” They’ve been exposed to it; I think that it makes them more aware. They’re not always going to be thinking in their head the Mountain Way. They’re not going to be doing that, but if you stop them and make them just take a step back and ask them about it, they know what it looks like. Then they demonstrate it once you remind them what the expectation is, then they’re able to model it on the drop of a dime because they know.

Giving the students time to reflect had been effective because it took less class time to redirect and they were aware of the behavior expectations and non-compliance. As one participant shared that “it kind of takes it to the next level,” and students were able to problem solve on their own.

Another path that was discussed that would boost the attachment to the Mountain Way behavior expectations was if teachers also modeled the Mountain Way. One participant pointed out:

I think there’s an accountability factor, but there’s also an accountability factor for us to model to them. I think it goes both ways, not just for the students because if I have a [Mountain Way poster] hanging on the wall, that’s a reminder for me that I speak to them respectfully. Is what I’m doing showing responsibility as a teacher to them.

At the monthly root beer float party, the principal awarded one of the participant teachers with a root beer float for following the Mountain Way. That participant shared that the students were somewhat amazed that the teacher got one. It caused them to discuss with each other that even the teacher has to follow the Mountain Way, and she stated, “It was interesting that they never thought of it before. Obviously, it was interesting to see how they reacted.”
SWPBIS developed a community of learners where peers reinforced the behavior expectations to enhance accountability and social and emotional competence. The third theme in relationship to student-teacher relationships was that SWPBIS sustained peer reinforcement around the behavior expectation in creating a classroom that built a collaborative community that promoted positive social skills. As one participant stated, “Their friends will help them. Here are their friends saying, ‘Are you doing the right thing? Are you being safe, are you being cooperative?’” A student responded immediately to peer correction and was more receptive to a student, and at times they tended to prompt each other. A participant retold an account when she was delivering a lesson and she saw another student whisper in a friendly manner to another student:

I saw Albert the other day tell when Wendy, “Wendy, Wendy,” she was just playing with something on her desk. I looked up and without having to say anything, and she was like “oh,” she got back to work. It wasn’t like he was trying to be mean or rude, it was more like she’s going to get in trouble because she’s not doing her work, and she was like, “okay.”

Students were able to express themselves by giving specific language via the behavior expectations, correlated to the actual behavior itself. If the classroom disruption was high, then the teachers took the opportunity to make it a class discussion. As one participant shared:

I think it gives them some accountability in class and the expectation of their behavior in class while we are teaching and learning with one another. Having like pure discussions where they know what the expectation is that they’re going to be respectful and they’re going to be responsible during teaching and learning. My kids know what’s expected of them because they have already been exposed to it prior to me coming in.
**Impact of SWPBIS on school climate.** The SWPBIS approach created a sense of shared purpose for teachers through the establishment of a safe, positive instructional environment (Kelm & McIntosh, 2012). According to Sprague and Golly (2005), the most influential factor on the success of student recognition programs was consistency among staff members at a school. Using a positive approach like SWPBIS shifted the focus to positive rather than punitive measures to address misbehavior and emphasizing the importance of recognized students who followed the SWPBIS behavior expectations, thereby reinforcing the desired behavior (Sprague & Golly, 2005). According to Bradshaw, et al. (2008), an important core feature that promoted organizational health was staff affiliation, which was defined as a “sense of warmth, positive interactions among colleagues, and a shared commitment to students,” (p. 463). SWPBIS promoted both positive interactions and collaboration among staff members.

Across the two focus groups and individual interviews, three themes that emerged regarding the impact of SWPBIS on school climate:

1. SWPBIS provided an effective and positive approach to discipline;
2. SWPBIS created a token economy that reinforced the behavior expectations; and
3. SWPBIS built opportunities for student role model and student leadership that enhanced social skills.

**SWPBIS provided an effective and positive approach to discipline.** The first theme related to school climate was that SWPBIS presented a positive approach to discipline, which resulted in less office disciplinary referrals (ODRs), consistent practices regarding discipline among staff, and the perception that equity and multiple interventions were offered to support challenging students. In reference to organizational change, implementing the SWPBIS program would be classified as a slow, developmental process known as evolutionary change (Burke,
2011) or continuous change (Weick & Quinn, 1999). Burke (2011) compared evolutionary change to the Japanese term, *kaizen*, which means “continual improvement,” (p.78). Weick and Quinn (1999) defined continuous change as “…the idea that that small continuous adjustments, created simultaneously across units, can cumulate and create substantial change,” (p. 375).

Program implementation of SWPBIS has been slow and continuous, and interventions have been adjusted to meet the SWPBIS principles based on the discipline data and yearly SWPBIS implementation rubric. As a result of this steady progress and fidelity to the SWPBIS framework, the school culture at Mountain Springs Elementary had continually improved over the three year implementation period.

Lassen et al. (2006) approximated that a student lost about 45 minutes of instructional time for each ODR, and found that 659 instructional hours were recouped after SWPBIS was implemented in the middle school in their study. Therefore, if teachers had the opportunity to intervene on misbehavior before it escalated to an ODR being issued, the SWPBIS approach could be used as a preventative strategy and gave the students the opportunity for self-correction.

According to one teacher: “When I have a sit down conversation with them, they understand what they’re doing that’s not [the Mountain Way]. We talked more about how to fix it. Like how we can fix it this behavior.” Speaking to the school climate issue another participant expressed: “I think we have less referrals, less than with that before, behavioral problems than we had before.” A participant who had been at the school for many years spoke about the harshness of the previous system:

I can state, because I've been here for 900 years, that with this [SWPBIS], it's way better then the demerit system. Because, I felt like an awful person. I felt like a horrible
teacher. We would all get together and “neh, neh, neh, neh” about it, when we were doing it because you always feel like we were slamming the kids.

**SWPBIS created a token economy that reinforced the behavior expectations.** The second theme related to school climate was having a token economy that reinforced the behavior expectations with standardized rewards, such as good news postcards and student of the month ceremonies. As one participant expressed, “I think the post card definitely made it more personal because it’s something.” One of the participants was surprised that the Mountain Way postcards had more of an effect than she thought and stated:

I didn’t think they really cared too much about the postcards that we sent. But today, when they saw the other kids walking around with their root beer floats, they looked bummed, because we talked about today that no one in the class has been given a postcard because I have not really seen anything appropriate. You should’ve seen their little faces, it was intense. And I think one of them even said, “Dang it, we have to start doing better.” And it was funny, because Susan was so upset; she was so upset because it was so distressing for her. And that was good because I didn’t realize.

**SWPBIS built opportunities for student role model and student leadership that enhanced social skills.** The third theme related to school climate was that SWPBIS developed opportunities for student role models and leadership. The older students reinforced the SWPBIS expectations by using the same vernacular as teachers and students. As one teacher commented that the high school students who were teachers’ aides in the elementary served as role models as they used the Mountain Way rules to reinforce behavior:

But I notice that kids [high school students] that go to rooms A and B, when they come down and work with the kids, he uses those words [Mountain Way behavior
expectations]. Those kids are they interact with the little ones are using the correct vernacular.

The Mountain Way had inspired two clubs, an anti-bullying club that met at lunched initiated by students, and the Mountain Boys that met after school. One of the participants stated that “the Mountain Boys, because that’s our concept, the Mountain Way. Every time we meet we have to go over the rules.” The fact that there was transferability to other activities within the school day and extended learning day spoke to the fact that students had greater opportunities to internalize the behavior expectations by personalizing their experiences and forming their own clubs. They became leaders and role models as they were willing to spread the Mountain Way message and participated on their own time.

**Summary.** SWPBIS at Mountain Springs Elementary impacted student achievement, teacher efficacy, student-teacher relationships, and school climate through its foundational framework that promoted positive interactions, specific articulation of uniform behavior expectations, and the teaching and reinforcement of pro-social skills from various stakeholders. School climate was drastically improved by the reduction of ODRs and less exclusionary discipline practices enhanced student learning by the reduction in suspensions and higher attendance rates. During this period, academic performance showed improvement each year despite declining enrollment and other budget factors. However, Mountain Springs Elementary has experienced slight increases in enrollment since the 2012-13 school year, which has sustained to the present year. In aligning the impacts from the data to how the implementation of the SWPBIS impacted the organizational factors of teacher efficacy, student-teacher relations, school climate, and student achievement, the data analysis was conducted using documents reviews, focus group and individual interviews, and teacher observations. According to Bandura
(1988), if a person was able to achieve the desired results through the successful trials in job situations, then the likelihood of a permanent transfer of those skills increased which would lead to mastery and higher competency. Teachers were able to focus on instruction as dealing with discipline took less time, and reported that they felt a sense of accomplishment. There was a perception that ODRs were being handled more consistently among the administrators, which made the consequences seem more equitable and created a more caring learning environment, where students felt safe and teachers felt effective in performing their job responsibilities.

**Teacher Observations**

The teacher observations provided the context and application of the SWPBIS principles in order to discern its impact on how effective teachers were in meeting their instructional goals and if dealing with discipline hindered teaching and learning. According to Bandura (1988), competencies were developed through modeling and stated, “human competency requires not only skills, but also self-belief in one’s capability to use those skills well,” (p. 276). As part of the analysis, the researcher observed the classroom ecology and the interactions between teachers and students. Algozzine and Algozzine (2007) found that total on-task behavior was higher in classrooms with SWPBIS, and that overall disruptions were much lower compared to non-SWPBIS schools.

There were seven observations that were conducted from the participants who were teachers. Each observation was approximately 45 minutes, and the time chosen to observe was strategically planned to follow recess to notice if the teachers had to spend much transition time refocusing students from the unstructured activity back to the classroom. The range of teaching experience among the participants is two to 13 years. All seven teachers related to their students positively and for the most part, the students were on task whether they were engaged in reading,
math centers or enrichment activities. There seemed to be mutual respect between the students and teacher that transferred into student-to-student interactions, where in one case, they held each other to the Mountain Way behavior expectations. As observations were being conducted, the researcher formed a characteristic of the participants’ teaching style that was based on the interactions between teacher and student.

**Teacher characteristic as coach.** The first participant gave the impression of being a coach. The lesson was in science and she was teaching about heart rate. The students cooperated well and transitioned from the various activities smoothly. The teacher smiled through the lesson and had an excellent rapport with the students. The teacher was effective in using a variety of activities to sustain engagement from a video, having students doing stretches and measuring heart rate, and conducting a charades activity. As a result, the teacher experienced success in delivering the lesson as evidenced by the high level of on-task behavior and minimal redirections. The sequencing activities kept the students on task and they responded respectfully to the teacher’s prompts through compliance. The student teacher relationships were positive, often referring to the students with a term of endearment such as “sweetheart.” Students responded cooperatively to the teacher’s request and encouragements. The transitions were smooth from activity to activity, and the conversations were on track during partner work. There was an instance of side conversations that were going on, but the teacher did not make a big deal about it, and commented, “I hear side conversations, I’ll wait,” and the side conversations stopped. The students were actively engaged and the teacher had the attention of the class. The teacher did not have to raise her voice at all. The students had respect for the teacher’s authority and the classroom ecology had a team atmosphere, as the students seemed to be engaged and enjoyed what they were doing.
Teacher characteristic as commander-in-chief. At the start, there was a bit of disorder as the class was waiting for the laptop cart to be delivered to do their group presentations as students were sitting in pods. The teacher had the instructions for the activity on the screen and was explaining the expectations. When she finished reviewing the directions, the students were on task working on the group project. The teacher was authoritative with her redirections, and would lighten up her tone once compliance was maintained. Students had high respect for the teacher as they complied with her request promptly and seemed to understand what was expected of them. The teacher implemented effective classroom management skills through the proper set up of the lesson, and checked for understanding through probing questions as she monitored the student groups by checking in with the groups. The interactions were productive because she was able to help them problem solve, which created successful interactions between teacher and students to support teaching and learning. The groups continued to work independently as they waited for the teacher’s feedback. They were genuinely focused on the task at hand and working cooperatively for the most part.

At times when the class got too loud, the teacher would use a countdown, 3, 2, 1… to get the students’ attention, and again, the teacher was effective in gaining student compliance to her request. The teacher had a no nonsense approach and students seemed to comply with her request, and she did so in a very commanding manner. The teacher’s interactions with students were a blending of firmness and humor, while holding them accountable to their task. The student-teacher exchanges were respectful and appropriate, and the definite impression was that she was in charge. At one point she stated when the classroom began to get a little disruptive, “You only have two hours to finish this today. If you don’t, I won’t feel sorry for you.” The student-teacher relationship was friendly but that the teacher certainly meant business.
In one instance, a power struggle was ensuing in one of the group over the tasks being distributed evenly. The teacher responded by saying firmly, “Look, we’ve talked about working with others.” The group members responded by assuring each other that they would all get a turn. The classroom ecology promoted pro-social skills as students were engaged in cooperative learning and group problem solving.

**Teacher characteristic as mama bear.** The students were working in centers, and participated in reading, writing, and spelling activities. Four groups worked independently, and one group worked with the teacher reading a story. The teacher was managing her reading group while monitoring the other students and their centers, and students were on-task and following the teacher’s directions. The teacher was successful in engaging and re-engaging students, which was observed through the students’ compliance to her requests. Teaching and learning was enhanced as students did redirect themselves and demonstrated on-task behavior. The teacher checked in with the other students at the separate centers to redirect, gave prompts or had them come to her table to show their work if they appeared to be off-task. The student-teacher interactions were positive, and the teacher seemed to have much affection, and was very protective of them as well.

At rotation switch, she helped guide them to their centers and her corrections to the students were handled with care and concern. She spoke to the students in a soft, nurturing voice, but gave stern warnings when necessary. During one of the rotation, she said, “I like how you use the pictures. Good job,” when she was speaking to her own group. Next she stated, “Ivan, move away from him,” as she noticed him messing around with another student trying to do his work. To another center group she explained, “Carpet people, are you using her two inch voices?” They complied and started whispering. However, the transitions to the next activities
were not as smooth. The teachers had to give many prompts and had to walk around to help them set up for the next activity. However, once the students were in their centers they were engaged and on-task for the most part. There was an exchange with three students who were beginning to be loud and off-task. The teacher responded, “William come sit by me.” William told the teacher, “Rebecca is not following the Mountain Way.” The teacher turned to Rebecca and said, “We had a talk and you’re not following the Mountain Way.” Rebecca replied, “I know,” and came to sit next to the teacher without being prompted.

**Teacher characteristic as community builder.** The classroom ecology was very kinesthetic. The teacher was effective in using brain-based teaching, a technique of using words with hand gestures, delivered in a call and response method, and managed her class in a very nurturing way. The teacher’s mannerisms were very theatrical and energetic. The students were in reading group centers on this day, and this was the first time they had ever tried it. The teacher had the students practice for a week as she reviewed the expectations and activities to prepare them for their center work. There were five groups working independently, and one group working with the teacher. To get their attention, the teacher began with a prompt, “Class class!” The students responded, “Yes, yes!” The teacher had the students get into their centers and instructed them to begin, which they complied. The interactions between teacher and students were positive as the students were cooperating with prompts and directions. The students also seemed to know what they needed to do in each center and were on task.

The classroom ecology definitely had the feel of a classroom community, and it was evident that the teacher was effective in building it. She held class meetings at the meeting spot (designated area in the room) between rotations. The purpose was for the students to regroup and reflect on the center work as a class. The student-teacher relationships were very positive as
evidenced by her calm and encouraging demeanor, and the students’ genuine respect for her as they cooperated with her requests without resistance. From the meeting spot, the teacher reviewed the behavior expectations that were to be exhibited in the centers that were written on a chart that she instructed to read to themselves. The teacher had the students reflect upon their behavior. The teachers asked the students, “Let’s talk about what we did really well.” The students responded by saying, “We stayed in our spot.” “We worked the whole time.” “We were using our red voices (quiet), but we were using our big yellow voices (can speak on topic and not disruptive).” “Sometimes we have to use the yellow voices.” The teacher was positively reinforcing students who were following the behavior expectations.

However, there was one student whose behavior was challenging, and the teacher tried to hold the one student accountable by encouraging him when to make better choices. The teacher had to give several prompts and redirections to this particular student: “Bobby, rule number four.” The students respond chorally, “Make the right choices.” After meeting time, the students reported to their next center, and Bobby was off-task again. The teacher was direct and stated, “Bobby, your bottom needs to be in the chair. I have asked you two times. I need you to make smart choices and I know you can.” Bobby listened to the teacher and complied for a few minutes. Bobby continued to be disruptive in his group, and the teacher stated, “Bobby, I need to see you.” The teacher took Bobby aside privately encouraged him to make the right choices and reminded him that he’s losing group points. She informed him he was going to the neighbor teacher’s room until he could make the right choices. It appeared as though the students definitely had internalized the classroom expectations and had buy-in because they were able to recite the rules. The meeting time between rotations helped to ground the expectations with
specific behaviors during the center times, and provided the opportunity for self-reflection and self-regulation.

**Teacher characteristic as cruise director.** The teacher had her class in small groups and in centers, working on math and writing. The teacher worked with one group, another group was working with a parent volunteer, and two groups were working independently. The teacher was effective at managing the groups, and she gave gentle reminders to redirect them. In her group, she was providing math instruction, “How many yellow circles are there? What color is greater? What does greater mean?” Students responded, “More or greater.” The teacher had to redirect one student in her group by saying, “Arthur, you’re not keeping up with us.” Arthur quickly did a reset and rejoined the group. Another student came over to get her writing checked, while another student started bothering another in one of the centers. The teacher said, “David, you have five seconds to get a book and read, or you will lose another event for tomorrow.” David complied.

At the end of each rotation, she rang a bell and had the students stand behind their chairs. The teacher told Michelle who had left to use the restroom that she had to stay in her current center since she missed the whole instruction. Much like an activity director, the teacher had to multitask and make sure the students were working in their centers. However, she had to continue to stop and monitor the rest of the students and gave appropriate feedback along the way. The teacher did a good job of managing the social and technical side of the students and center activities, while remaining positive and calm in her interactions with the students. Her tone was pleasant, but firm when needed. The teacher gave affirmations for good behavior while trying to redirect the students in a firm and direct way by explaining what they were doing wrong.
In one center, Frank started throwing crayons and running around the classroom. Then he proceeded to call another student a mean name. The teacher separated him from the group, and told him he had five seconds to get to his number chart. Then the teacher told Seth to push in his chair and sit closer to the table, but he said he didn’t want to sit next to Allen because he just he pulled his hair. Allen stated, “I said I was sorry.” The teacher said, “Allen, I’m happy that you said you’re sorry, but you need to stop pulling hair.” Despite the disruptive behavior especially during rotations, she remained calm and matter-of-fact. The teacher kept the students accountable by making sure they settled into their centers and began their tasks. The teacher appropriately monitored and provided the students with the prompts using a mixture of positive comments, as well as stating the consequences for noncompliance and referred to the classroom behavior chart when needed.

**Teacher characteristic as facilitator.** Students were working independently and seated in pods working on a journalism project. The teacher conducted one-on-one interviews with students while reviewing their news article ideas. Students were on-task and focused on their projects. The teacher appeared was effective in setting up the lesson expectations, and there was an apparent feeling that the students had a shared knowledge of what was expected of them. As she met with individual students, she monitored the room and gave a few students some prompting and redirecting to get back on task. The student-teacher interactions were respectful and jovial. She had a good rapport with students as they responded by being compliant to her requests.

Even when they got distracted at times, one simple reminder from the teacher put them back on task. She was helpful and was effective at relating to the students. In one such interaction, a male student came in from an adjoining room and told a group, “George and me
want to know…” Another student responded by correcting his grammar by saying, “You mean, George and I…” The teacher could sense that the male student was somewhat annoyed by the correction. The teacher stated in a joking manner, “Just trying to help so that you can speak properly to impress the ladies.” The male student and others around chuckled, and his annoyance dissipated. The students were working on their laptops, were engaged in writing their articles, and were researching topics on the Internet. Individual students were discussing their ideas with the teacher or others. The teacher was approachable, there was collaboration in the student-teacher interactions, and respect was reciprocal.

**Teacher characteristic as efficiency expert.** The teacher delivered a language arts lesson through vocabulary study. The students were seated in rows of tables and the teacher had the word “different” on the screen. The teacher initiated a clapping gesture, and the students mirrored the pattern back, which is their cue to be focused and stop talking. The teacher was effective in using multi-modality strategies through movement, music, writing, and peer conversations to reinforce vocabulary terms. The teacher said, “Different means…” and told the students to go share their thoughts with their classmates for a couple minutes. She played a tune from a TV show as a cue to get up and discuss. As the song faded, the students returned to their seats. She then restarted the lesson by defining what different actually meant. The teacher said, “Different means not the same” and gave two examples. She had asked one student to give an example, but multiple classmates began talking and interrupted the student. The teacher said, “Hold on, I don’t have people listening to you,” then the side conversations stopped. The teacher continued by telling them to share the definition, “Different means not the same” and then instructed them to give a sentence example. She played the get up and discuss music again, and
the students complied with the instructions. The students wanted to interact with me, and I
complied with their requests.

After each person shared their definition and sentence example, they put one hand on the
shoulder of their partner and said, “Good job, you.” The music faded and the students returned
back to their seats. The teacher thanked them for remembering to say, “Good job, you,” and
reminded them pat themselves on the shoulder and say, “Good job, me.” The student
expectations were clear and followed, and the student and teacher interactions were positive.
The teacher was well organized in her execution of the lesson, which kept the flow of the activity
going. She approached students calmly and presented facts to get students to comply when
misbehavior occurred. Furthermore, she gave individual feedback to students when they
followed the directions appropriately. She stated in one exchange, “Good job, Henry and Mary,
I heard you say, ‘Good job, you’! Now go clip up,” referring to her behavior management
system. Right then another student start to act silly, and the teacher said, “Jerry, go clip down.”
The student complied. When a student used the vocabulary word in a full sentence, the teacher
said, “Can I get a woot, woot?” (With her hands raised in the air). The students emulated the
teacher and said, “Woot, woot” with the hand gestures.

There was one exchange that required corrective action when the teacher noticed that the
student was missing the eraser for his whiteboard, she stopped the lesson to discuss. The teacher
said, “We need to talk about people playing with your erasers? Who bought them?” The
students responded, “You.” The teacher explained, “I’m getting upset that they are getting lost.
Please put them in your pencil box.” Her tone is calm and presented in a non-emotional way.
She continued, “If you do not put them away, you will lose 10 minutes of recess. Got it?” The
students repeated, “Got it.” Then she checked for understanding by saying, “If you don’t put
your erasers away, what will you lose?” The students replied, “10 minutes of recess.” The students were very engaged because the teacher had planned a lot of movement and discussion in her lesson. Students responded to the music appropriately, and the students who were called out for misbehavior, quickly complied with the teacher’s request. Students were also taught good collaboration and social skills.

**Summary.** From the teacher observations, it seemed as if SWPBIS did provide an appropriate framework to help teachers stick with their lesson objectives, and were able to extinguishing minor disruptions quickly through redirection and positive interactions with students. Morrison and Jones (2006) found that class-wide behavior supports are more effective than individual supports because it targets more students, is inclusive of all students in the intervention, and it maximizes efforts toward early intervention which fits in with the “RTI for all” movement. The teachers used clear directives, communicated expectations and consequences with clarity, and used positive and corrective reinforcement to hold students accountable for managing their own behavior. When misbehavior did occur, the teachers handled discipline directly, courteously, and expeditiously without deviating too much from their instruction. The teachers were able to get through their lessons in the time allotted by maximizing time on task, and promoting classroom ecologies that cultivated cooperation, collaboration, and respect.

**Summary of Findings**

During the first two years of implementing SWPBIS, Mountain Springs Elementary experienced a reduction of office disciplinary referrals by 40-45%, and experienced a 14 point jump on its state-wide Academic Performance Index (API) scores from baseline to year 2 implementation as reported. During the baseline year (2010-2011) and the year prior, the school
had an inordinate amount of disciplinary referrals disproportionately issued toward special education students. The former special education teacher sought to find evidenced-based practices that would solve the problem of “discipline on a whim,” and created a culture of consistency to provide the structure needed to enhance the RTI approach of leveled support. The county office of education delivered with the offering of the School-wide Positive Behavior Intervention Support program, and provided trainings to district teams by bringing in a lead researcher in the field of SWPBIS to present, while also providing stipends to help with implementation costs.

In aligning the impacts from the data to how the implementation of SWPBIS impacted the organizational factors, it was determined that the implementation of SWPBIS represented Weick and Quinn’s (1999) definition of continuous change, as the process was slow and steady which led to kaizen (continuous improvement) in the areas of teacher efficacy, student-teacher relations, school climate, and student achievement as reflected in the data analysis using documents reviews, focus group and individual interviews, and teacher observations.

**Document review evidence.** Student achievement and school climate at Mountain Springs Elementary did improve after the implementation of SWPBIS. The state assessment data provided evidence that during the implementation period of SWPBIS, growth was achieved on the API scores over the three-year period. During this same time, reading interventions were implemented as the staff attended the ERIA training, which resulted in the purchasing of intervention software that might have also contributed to the academic gains in English/Language Arts. In addition, proficiency targets were met in English/Language Arts for all three years after SWPBIS implementation, and in mathematics for two of the three years. The discipline data also revealed that office disciplinary were on the decline from baseline to year
two of SWPBIS implementation in the range of 29.7%-46.9%, and suspensions declined from 90 in baseline year to nine for year three or a 90% reduction. The evidence presented in the discipline data was that the reduction in suspensions translated to students being in school, not excluded from the instruction, which provided more teaching and learning opportunities. Minimizing punitive discipline measures such as suspensions might have also contributed to growing API scores.

**Focus group and individual interviews evidence.** Teacher efficacy and the student teacher relationship had been greatly enhanced due to the positive interactions. After using Yin’s (2014) analytic technique of explanation building to through the interviews, this iterative process helped to refine the coding to very specific themes using axial coding. Axial coding helped to identify the dominant codes and helped to reorganize the data while eliminating or restructuring the less important codes (Saldana, 2013). The individual interviews aligned to the program fidelity aspects of SWPBIS principles, where themes emerged such as leadership, consistency, and empowerment for all stakeholders including students, teachers, and support staff. The focus group interviews made clear connections that the foundation that the SWPBIS principles led to systemic change that was based on positive discipline and positive interactions, thereby helping to build positive relationships with students. Students were able to internalize the behavior expectations and it was positively reinforced through a common language, consistent practices among staff, and through a token economy. In the focus group interviews, teacher participants reinforced how SWPBIS was very efficient in correcting misbehavior, and that it did not take long to give students simple verbal reminders on how to follow the Mountain Way. Since the teachers were not spending excessive energy lecturing the students on correcting
misbehaviors, the teachers reported that they had more time to teach and felt a better sense of accomplishment.

**Teacher observation evidence.** One of the core benefits from the implementation of SWPBIS is that it taught pro-social skills to the students, within the organizational context of uniform behavior expectations and a token economy. In analyzing the teacher observations, each participant extended the teaching of pro-social skills in their classrooms through the use of partner and group work. There were similarities among the participants in that they all demonstrated high levels of effectiveness in meeting their lesson objectives, while maintaining positive interactions with students with classroom ecologies that built mutual trust and a caring classroom environment. It was evident that students knew what the behavior expectations were, and what was expected of them throughout the classroom activities. Even though most of the students behaved responsibly, there were a few instances of misbehavior. The teachers addressed the misbehavior immediately using firmness, kindness, and humor by stating the facts and expectations and most of all, not dwelling on it. The corrective action taken by the participants were brief and handled in a positive manner where it did not seem punitive. In the case when the student had to go to the neighboring teacher’s classroom after several prompts, the teacher kept referring to the bad choices he was making rather than making him feel like a bad person. Teachers who had social and emotional competence had high social awareness and were able to manage their emotions and relationships with others, especially when facing challenging behavior (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009). In each observation, the classroom and activity expectations were clear, teacher participants gave prompts and redirections when providing corrective feedback to students, and no power struggles emanated from the exchanges. There were no instances in the observations where the teachers had to raise their voices, and they were
able to maintain calm and respectful interactions and preserved the students’ dignity when correcting misbehavior.

**Chapter V: Discussion of Research Findings**

In order for the United States to compete in the globalized economy, public schools must teach high leverage skills that focus on both academics and pro-social skills (Ball & Forzani, 2011). With the advent of Common Core State Standards, pre-collegiate education in the 21st-century is rooted within a system of globalization, which brings the domains of difference and complexity across the educational systems worldwide (Orozco & Qin-Hilliard, 2004). Gardner (2004) proposed that students in the era of globalization must possess a new set of skills and understanding to be successful, which include: (a) Understanding of the global system; (b) capacity to think analytically and creatively within disciplines; (c) ability to tackle problems and issues that do not respect disciplinary boundaries; (d) knowledge of an ability to interact civilly and productively with individuals from quite different cultural backgrounds – both within one’s own society and across the planet; (e) knowledge of an respect for one’s own cultural traditions; (f) fostering of hybrid or blended identities; and (g) fostering of tolerance. Gardner’s (2004) skills and understandings emphasized the balance between academic and social emotional learning, and provided a strategy to ensure mastery. Important to the process was providing the tiered levels of support in a Response to Intervention (RTI) approach that promoted both the academic and social skills. The SWPBIS framework based on the RTI model and provided universal access to core learning as well as enhancing good people skills.

In addressing academic learning, the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) provided the rigor and relevance needed to promote academic proficiencies necessary to attain college and career readiness with a focus on their relevance in the real world. The CCSS era centered on
teachers being able to provide the appropriate pedagogy and learning experiences to students within the context of real world applications, building capacity of high leverage practices that strengthened instruction (Ball & Forzani, 2011). In addition, for students to access Gardner’s (2004) skills and understandings to compete in the globalized economy, teachers needed to provide opportunities to develop habits of mind such as metacognition, flexible thinking, striving for accuracy and precision, and question posing and problem solving within an academic context (Costa & Kallick, 2008).

In order to boost social emotional literacy, teachers taught and reinforced pro-social skills, and having a SWPBIS program that is embedded within the school system provided the structure and framework that helped guide behavior. From this research study, the common vernacular of behavior expectations and the focus on the positivity ratio within the school culture helped to promote relationship building, less exclusionary discipline practices, increased time on task, and reinforced appropriate behavior that builds resiliency and self-monitoring. Upgrading the skills of teachers through increased professional development and effective RTI strategies provided opportunities to build a high sense of self-efficacy to meet the mandate of the CCSS and manage behavior in classrooms more efficiently.

As articulated in the problem statement, teacher efficacy was identified as the most critical component in improving student learning. Competing factors might contribute to efficacy challenges within the context of new educational reforms, dwindling resources, fewer qualified staff, and less time (Sugai & Horner, 2006). One of the issues that the county coach communicated was that the SWPBIS implementation team lost some of its fidelity due to staff turnover, especially with those in the leadership positions, as well as competing interests such as the CCSS and a new funding model in California. However, the benefit of having a leadership
team did help to sustain SWPBIS on the Mountain Springs Elementary campus because most of the members of the original implementation team are still present. The SWPBIS framework was based on three main tenets: (a) prevention, (b) theoretically-sound and evidence-based practice, and (c) systems implementation (Sugai & Horner, 2006). With the reauthorization of NCLB in 2004, SWPBIS became an RTI-based program that was used in the general education setting to support all students (Sugai & Horner, 2009).

At Mountain Springs Elementary, the implementation of SWPBIS was meant to be a solution to the disproportionality of discipline referrals issued to students with disabilities. With the soaring number of office discipline referrals (ODRs), a new comprehensive strategy was needed. Without a systematic process, the administrators were not consistent and as the former special education teacher stated, it was “discipline on a whim” and consequences were arbitrary. The county office of education offered the training and financial support to promote the implementation efforts, and Mountain Springs Elementary experienced significant improvement. Mountain Springs’ API (Academic Performance Index) score went up, behavior improved and the number of ODRs and suspensions decreased, along with the severity of the types of disciplinary infractions. As an effective RTI program, SWPBIS served as a protective factor and preventative strategy for all stakeholders, minimizing challenging behaviors and disorder in the school.

SWPBIS supported the management of discipline, since addressing disruptive behavior between teacher and students required little time to address and resolve. In addition, other students reinforced the behavioral expectations through peer correction. And students responded by extinguishing misbehavior and self-correction through the simple prompting of teachers and in some cases other students, reminding them that they should follow the “Mountain Way.” As a
systems wide approach, SWPBIS helped Mountain Elementary teachers bring the focus back to learning through effective behavior management, built on shared knowledge and collective responsibility that carried over to subsequent school years.

**Discussion of the Major Findings**

From the focus group interviews, individual interviews, school documents, and state reports, there were numerous themes that emerged. Across the focus group and individual interviews, there were six main themes that emanated as represented in Table 3.

Table 3

*Major Themes Identified by school staff, original implementer and county coach*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Implementation of SWPBIS created consistency in disciplinary practice across the staff through systematic implementation of SWPBIS school-wide, applying a structured framework for discipline.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The implementation of SWPBIS enhanced relationships between school staff and students due to its emphasis on positive interactions.</td>
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<tr>
<td>The implementation of SWPBIS provided leveled support of more equitable disciplinary actions.</td>
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<tr>
<td>The implementation of SWPBIS strengthened sustainability of disciplinary practices through the use of a token economy and positive reinforcement.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SWPBIS fostered better communication across school staff and students through use of a common vernacular and behavior expectations.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SWPBIS enhanced social skills and gave students the opportunity to be role models and student leaders through peer reinforcement.</td>
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Implementation of SWPBIS created consistency in disciplinary practice across the staff through the systematic implementation of SWPBIS school wide, applying a structured framework for discipline. As an evidenced-based practice, the county office of education provided training to school districts and Mountain Springs Elementary was part of the first cohort to implement the SWPBIS approach. The county coach shared that the critical factors in
implementing SWPBIS with fidelity were leadership and planning, and stated, “once the teams get identified and go through the training, they should plan out their monthly meetings from here to the end of the school year.” Mountain Springs Elementary sent a leadership team to the two-day training. The leadership team took the SWPBIS principles and applied them to the Mountain Springs school culture by customizing the approach to meet the needs of the school. The leadership team filled out the necessary reports and held meetings as required by the grant, and utilized the stipend monies to purchase materials to implement the program. Part of the implementation success of SWPBIS at Mountain Springs was having the visual representation, as postcards and posters were printed and were visible in every classroom and common area. The leadership team developed the concept of the Mountain Way logo and graphics, and worked with a graphic artist who did not charge the school for her work.

Another important factor that the county coach described was having the SWPBIS principles as part of the “staff consciousness” at all times, and one idea was to speak about the Mountain Way at all staff meetings. In fact, the principal handed out the “Mountain Way” postcards and allowed time for the teachers to fill them out. In addition, the former special education teacher explained that the support staff “welcomed the idea” of following the SWPBIS principles because they could use the system with every student and “they became much more consistent and that was a really good thing.”

Prior to SWPBIS, the Mountain Springs staff was looking for a solution to deal with challenging behavior and disciplinary issues, and was currently reviewing programs that focused on character education. SWPBIS helped simplify the behavior expectations down to four simple rules to follow and became the common language for teaching pro-social skills and the means for corrective discipline, which promoted more consistency across the staff. With its positive
approach to discipline, school staff had the opportunity to build positive relationships with students while teaching good character traits within their social interactions. As one teacher expressed, “it makes consistency for staff as well as students.”

The implementation of SWPBIS enhanced relationships between school staff and students due to its emphasis on positive interactions. As most of the school staff had reported, relating with students in more positive ways made them feel good and more effective as teachers because as one teacher stated, “Nagging is tiresome.” In addition, teachers were able to extinguish misbehavior instantly through a quick verbal prompt by referencing the Mountain Way. For the most part, the students were able to self-correct their misbehavior immediately which minimized loss of instruction while increasing time on task. This was evident by the decrease in office disciplinary referrals in years 1 and 2 of implementation, as well as the decrease in suspensions over the three-year implementation period. There was a sense amongst the teachers that the school-wide approach of the Mountain Way expectations reinforced their own classroom management systems, and helped students stay accountable to the universal behavior expectations.

The implementation of SWPBIS provided leveled support of more equitable disciplinary actions. As the former special education teacher and original implementer reported, prior to SWPBIS it was “discipline on a whim.” The disciplinary consequences issued by administration were arbitrary and inconsistent. This lack of consistency led to poor relations with parents because there was this sense of injustice that students were treated differently. As the former special education teacher also expressed: “It’s not only beneficial for the students and the staff but it’s also beneficial for the teachers… I mean, the parents and community.” With the implementation of the SWPBIS, the pre-referral process was implemented which served as an
opportunity for the principal to have conversations with students about misbehavior and gave them the opportunity to reflect on their actions and found solutions to correct. With some students, having that one conversation turned it around. With others, there were other interventions that took place to help students develop the skills to change their behavior. One of the strategies that has evolved from SWPBIS is the emphasis on restorative justice techniques where the student is asked to reflect on “how are you going to make things right with the person you have harmed,” with the goal of reintegrating students back into the school community rather than banishing them into the external world through suspension.

The implementation of SWPBIS strengthened the sustainability through the use of a token economy and positive reinforcement. While having a common vernacular and consistency amongst staff to the SWPBIS principles, students were recognized if the Mountain Way was being followed at the student of the month assemblies or by mailing the Mountain Way postcards home. Teachers sent praise postcards where they wrote notes to the students and gave them specific examples of how they followed the Mountain Way. The postcard earned them an ice cream party with the principal, and the student of the month assembly focused on awarding the students with stand-out behavior based on following the Mountain Way. Using positive reinforcement while reiterating the behavior expectations during unstructured time also helped to diminish misbehavior, so rather than saying “Don’t run in the halls,” students were more responsive to, “I need you to be safe, walk please.”

SWPBIS fostered better communication across school staff and students through use of a common vernacular and behavior expectations. Having a common language to reinforce appropriate behavior helps to build a safe, predictable environment. Enhanced communication between members of a school community not only led to positive relations, but
to trust and connection to the school. Utilizing the SWPBIS principles empowered both the staff and students, which led to better school connectedness and positive feelings about Mountain Springs Elementary. As one teacher expressed that the Mountain Way language was “getting through and sticking” because the older students were also using the language with the younger students” to reinforce the behavior expectations. The Mountain Way behavior expectations built a system of accountability that developed a caring learning environment. Students were able to develop Gardner’s (2004) knowledge and skills that focused on social relationships, and learned how to interact civilly and productively with others from different backgrounds, while fostering blended identities and tolerance that boost emotional intelligence. One teacher described that she stopped other students in the hallways if they are not following Mountain Way because “they have been exposed to it and are more aware.” She further explained that she had the students stop, reflect, and discuss the implications of their misbehavior, and “they demonstrate it once you remind them what the expectation is.”

**SWPBIS enhanced social skills and gave students the opportunity to be role models and student leadership through peer reinforcement.** As students had experienced the culture of the Mountain Way over the passed three years, students had been given specificity in communication when relating socially to other students. As one teacher stated, “You teach them how to talk to each other and then it can really be effective.” The SWPBIS principles had also carried over into two student clubs, a lunch time anti-bullying club, and the “Mountain Boys” after school club were formed that provided leadership opportunities and reinforced the uniform behavior expectations. Furthermore, it was evident that students who had participated, internalized the Mountain Way and applied it to other aspects of their school life. In essence, they had become the enforcers of the common behavior expectations. It was also noted by some
of the teachers’ comments that the high school students from the adjacent campus who were classroom aides and after school program aides on the elementary campus, followed the Mountain Way principles to be good role models and used the same language in their interactions with the younger students.

**Discussions of the Findings in Relation to the Theoretical Framework**

The theoretical lens that was used to inform the case study was a modified version of the Burke-Litwin Causal Model of Change (1992), where the inner context of the organization factors was under examination. To judge the quality and credibility of this study, Patton’s (2002) social construction and constructivist research criteria were also employed. The aim of the constructivist approach was to avoid arriving at one single truth or linear prediction, and to garner multiple perspectives through a naturalistic inquiry and constructing fair representations (Patton, 2002).

According to Burke (2011), organizational change is systemic, and the target for change was not the individual but the culture itself. In this case study, the underlying need for change was due to a poor school climate where administrators and school staff lacked a unified approach for dealing with discipline, which only created instability for students due to the unfair treatment in issuing disciplinary consequences and exclusionary consequences. In the interview with the county coach, she referred to SWPBIS as trauma-informed care and referenced the Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE) study. According to Sprague (2011), the higher the ACE score (number of adverse experiences that a child goes through), the child had a higher propensity to participate in risky behavior. Obviously, those adverse experiences followed students when they came to school, and might impede learning and caused students to demonstrate challenging
behavior. SWPBIS provided doses of positive interactions as well as consistent and reliable disciplinary practices, which in turn, provided predictability and created a safety net for students.

Implementing SWPBIS at Mountain Springs Elementary aligned with Van de Ven and Poole’s (1995) teleological theory because the process of change was purposeful, ongoing and adaptive. According to Burke (2011), any human organization functioned as an open system due to its interdependence on the environment, to which it existed and the cycle of interactions to which the organization extracted energy for survival. Human energy can be productive in meeting the organizational goals if interactions are symbiotic. Focusing on the factors that contributed to organizational change, the Burke-Litwin Causal Model of Change (1992) explored how the SWPBS program impacted organizational factors within the subsystems of leadership, management practices, systems, climate, motivation, individual needs/values, and individual and organizational performance.

**Leadership.** SWPBIS was implemented by a leadership team comprised of multiple stakeholders: administrator, general education teacher, special education teacher, parent, and paraprofessional in order to increase the fidelity of the program. The county coach expressed that any program “lives and dies by the administrator,” and that program implementation had failed because well-intentioned counselors or teachers did not have the decision making power to make it stick. In addition, since the multiple stakeholders attended the trainings together, the program implementation survived any staff turnover and in this case, the departure of the special education teacher. As a result of the pre-planning and the adaptation of the program, SWPBIS achieved fidelity and sustainability because it responded to the needs of students and arguably, met the needs of teachers as well as served as indicators of an effective RTI program. It would
seem plausible that the SWPBIS provided leadership opportunities to students and school staff, and school leaders who modeled collaboration for students.

**Organizational culture.** As a result of positive interactions, teachers reported a sense of accomplishment and that misbehavior could be quickly extinguished with a simple verbal prompt. Fortunately, teachers could refrain from “nagging” which make them feel better that they were not always focusing on the negative. In addition, SWPBIS helped school staff develop and maintain effective and consistent practices that certainly improved school culture as a whole. As noted, prior to the SWPBIS implementation, the teachers stated that there was inconsistency in handling discipline and it helped to boost a “communities of practice” approach. Thus, the practice of positive interactions was effective in creating more supportive relationships across the board. All members of the school community could then in actuality be accountable to each other in meeting and modeling the Mountain Way behavior expectations, ultimately contributing to a safer learning environment.

**Systems.** As a comprehensive, systematic approach, the implementation of SWPBIS provided a framework that was flexible enough to adapt to meet the unique needs of this school setting. Since the researcher was part of the original leadership team, the team met regularly to analyze discipline data and compared its progress using a Positive Behavior Intervention Support (PBIS) implementation rubric to identify deficiencies. Plans were consistently developed to address those deficiencies, which provided opportunities to upgrade the policies and procedures that supported program fidelity. There were two areas that the leadership team thought were important to focus on: offering an intervention for Tier 2 support for students with frequent infractions using the Check, Connect, Expect (CCE) program, and the challenge of involving parents in the SWPBIS implementation process.
Management practices. Having an effective RTI program such as SWPBIS certainly made operations more efficient from an administrator’s position. The SWPBIS was a preventative strategy that helped improve the discipline process. As a result, it was reported by several of the teachers that misbehavior was curbed immediately with a quick verbal prompt. Overall, ODRs decreased in addition the types of infractions lessened in severity, as more of them were minor incidents as opposed to the major incidents that would require suspension in most cases. Therefore, administrators and teachers were able to spend more time on proactive strategies, classroom instruction, and interacting with students positively as opposed to reactionary measures.

Work climate. Work climate referred to the collective perceptions within the work unit in regard to efficient operations, clear expectations, decision-making involvement, support, and how their performance is recognized (Burke, 2011). As supported by the focus group interviews, having a positive work environment might be a protective factor in preventing burnout and job stress (Schwarzer & Hallum, 2008; Tschannen-Moran, et al., 1998). Within the context of SWPBIS, the implementation process had been efficient and had not been a time demand according to the teachers and support staff. In addition, the Mountain Way expectations were clear and easily articulated, and provided a consistent framework for administration, teachers, and students to have a conversation around compliance to behavioral expectations within a shared understanding. SWPBIS was not a scripted intervention protocol. Its flexibility and adaptability gave the school staff the guided autonomy over the interactions with the students and helped to develop effective strategies for students to internalize expectations. As one of the primary teachers put it, “it’s ingrained down here,” and the students had awareness and knowledge around conduct expectations. The teachers reiterated that it was easy to
implement SWPBIS and that it actually improved how they related to students due to its positive nature.

**Motivation.** Defining motivation, Burke (2011) discussed that in a work environment that there needs to be a job-person match that is congruent with the goals and values of the organization with the goals and needs of the individual worker. Burke (2011) referenced the language from McClelland (1961) describing motivation as the need to achieve, affiliate with others, and to have some sense of power. Bandura’s Social Cognitive theory (1988) described motivation in a triadic reciprocal causation model, where interactions among behavior, cognitive, and environmental elements are the influencing factors that develop personal competencies through mastery modeling, increased self-efficacy, and self-motivation through goal systems. As the teachers in the study expressed, the SWPBIS behavior expectations were internalized by students, which then led to mastery of student behavior through observation and social interactions which helped teachers master instructional goals. As a result, teachers felt good about their accomplishments and relatedness that they felt through the development of resulting positive interactions. Bandura (1988) contended the sources of perceived self-efficacy were derived from four factors: mastery of experiences (successful experience); vicarious experience (acquiring new skills); social persuasion (realistic encouragement); and physiological state (reducing stress). Teachers and support staff who shared their successes in implementing SWPBIS reported that they were encouraged by the increased time on task as well as feeling better about the increased rapport with students.

**Individual needs/values.** In addition to mastery modeling and self directed success, people’s beliefs about their abilities influenced their decision-making, the effort expended on a task, and how to persevere through challenges (Bandura, 1988). Efficacy beliefs can also be
described using Self Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 1985) where individuals must have three innate psychological needs met within a social context to experience optimal growth and well-being, which are competence, autonomy, and relatedness. There is also a distinction between autonomous motivation (intrinsic) and controlled (extrinsic) motivation, and it is argued that a combination of both can be effective depending on the situation and individual differences (Deci & Ryan, 2008). The internalization of the behavior expectations and the positive reinforcement experienced school wide could be viewed as examples of the blending of autonomous and controlled motivation. SWPBIS targeted changed systemically at the heart of school culture. Through the implementation process, it was observed that individual and group norms were developed that led to more a cohesion and a positive school climate (Burke, 2011).

**Individual and organizational performance.** Organizations were characterized as open systems, where input and throughput interactions led to output, or the results (Burke, 2011). As indicated through analysis of state assessment and discipline data, the academic performance index increased gradually from baseline through year three by 3.3%, while ODRS, suspensions and the severity of disciplinary infractions decreased. With improved test scores and school climate, the school organization achieved its goals of school improvement. According to Self Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 1985), psychological health contributed to optimal growth of individuals to function efficiently that built collective efficacy. Positive school outcomes appeared to improve relationships with parents. As the former special education teacher noted that “discipline was more leveled” and was managed more effectively, which enhanced relations with parents and increased the positive perceptions of the school.

**Summary.** Through the systematic implementation of the SWPBIS, starting from the planning of the leadership team, support from the county office, and the resources that were
purchased helped Mountain Springs implement with fidelity. Fortunately, there was minimal turnover during the implementation period because SWPBIS was maintained. Through the dynamic and positive interactions between adults and students at Mountain Springs Elementary, SWPBIS led to organizational changes that were mediated by the transformational and transactional factors that were at work synergistically through the process of input, throughput and output.

**Discussion of the Findings in Relation to the Literature Review**

As discussed in chapter 2, literature review focused on six different streams of literature that included:

1. Features and outcomes of SWPBIS program implementation
2. The relationship between teacher efficacy and other teacher and organizational factors
3. Teacher and student rapport
4. The impact of SWPBIS on school climate
5. SWPBIS implementation expectations
6. The impact of SWPBIS on student referrals, student behavior, and student achievement

The foundational focus question for the literature review section was:

What were the program effects of the systematic implementation of the School-wide Positive Behavior Intervention Support (SWPBIS) program as it relates to teacher efficacy, student-teacher relationships, school climate, school leadership, and student achievement?

**Features and outcomes of SWPBIS program implementation.** The implementation SWPBIS was systematic and the procedures were followed as guided through the extensive
training sponsored by the county office. Mountain Springs implemented SWPBIS over a three-year period, and is now currently in year 4. The program continues to be embedded within the school’s culture. As a universal strategy, SWPBIS provided opportunities for consistent disciplinary practices, while focusing on proactive interventions and prevention. SWPBIS had similar results to “equalize discipline outcomes” (Vincent et al., 2012, p. 435) with all students at Mountain Springs Elementary, including students with disabilities. As a systematized program, SWPBIS helped school staff handle discipline more equally, and created the fair treatment of the students school-wide. With full of knowledge that not all students responded to Tier 1 interventions within the RTI model, the leadership team recognized a gap in its Tier 2 strategies. As the selected Tier 2 program, the Check, Expect, Connect (CCE) program has helped Mountain Springs Elementary students self-regulate and correct their misbehaviors though goal setting, coaching support, and communication with parents. As the principal at the school, there had been times when students have recognized the value and the need of the CCE program, and had requested on their own to repeat the program as a refresher. The feedback from parents on the CCE program had been very positive and had improved the home-school relationships because of its supportive nature rather than punitive through the implementation of SWPBIS.

Research findings demonstrated that Mountain Springs Elementary did experience a decrease of 40-45% in ODRs in the first two years, which meant that challenging behaviors were minimized. With a decline in ODRs, students were in class learning. The SWPBIS school in this study demonstrated significant increases in organizational health, and academic emphasis increased as discipline issued decreased which mirrored the findings in the study conducted by Bradshaw, et al. (2008). High levels of teacher efficacy positively contributed to student learning when using a systematic protocol (Chong & Kong, 2012) of SWPBIS was implemented.
Students in schools with higher teacher collaboration demonstrated less school misconduct (Demanet & Van Houtte, 2012). The teachers at Mountain Springs Elementary worked collaboratively and when it came to the Mountain Way behavior expectations, they consistently delivered positive reinforcement. For corrective action, the teachers stated that they used written form of a behavior log that helped students reflect and self-regulate.

There was one surprising revelation in year 3, however, when the ODRs had a significant increase. As stated, there were many external and internal system factors that could have contributed to the increase. As mentioned in Chapter 4, this could have been the result of increased enrollment and consolidated bus routes. However, the types of discipline issues were assessed as minor incidents and therefore, suspension rates remained low.

The Relationship between Teacher Efficacy and Other Teacher and Organizational Factors. Throughout the literature review, teacher efficacy was measured using the Teachers’ Sense of Efficacy Scale (TSES; Tschannen–Moran & Woolfolk Hoy, 2001), which measured instructional management, classroom management, and student engagement. Highly efficacious teachers scored high on the three scale dimensions and were successful in mastery goal orientation (Rubie-Davies, et al. 2012). Experienced teachers with 15 or more years of teaching also had higher scores in all three dimensions, with the highest score in classroom management (Yeo, et al., 2008). As the classroom observations indicated, all the teachers possessed high efficacy in all three dimensions as instruction, classroom management and student engagement their performance was not impaired by prolonged, challenging student behavior due to implementing the SWPBIS strategies.

According to Bandura (1977), self-efficacy was the belief in one’s ability to achieve objectives and goals to influence positive outcomes. School context and teacher characteristics
predicted teachers’ beliefs, and teacher efficacy was strongly influenced by collective efficacy in meeting goals and persevering through challenges (Rubie-Davies, et al., 2012). Teachers at Mountain Springs Elementary reported that they were confident in their abilities in meeting their instructional goals, which matched the findings in the Kelm and McIntosh (2012) study. Teachers reported higher levels of self-efficacy and felt confident in their teaching abilities due to improved student behavior, and therefore, it can be proposed that the implementation of SWPBIS positively contributed to academic achievement, on task behavior, perceived school safety, and collegial affiliation (Kelm & McIntosh, 2012). Teachers at Mountain Springs Elementary reported that SWPBIS supported their own classroom management styles and preferences, and that having four uniform behavior expectations that were vertically articulated at each grade level, helped build a strong foundation that was embedded within the students’ developmental abilities.

**Teacher and student rapport.** As the previous section explained, teacher efficacy was measured using three dimensions: instructional management, behavior management, and student engagement. In order to promote student learning, teachers needed to create trustful relationships in the classroom, especially between students and teachers that provided a safety net. Utilizing the SWPBIS model reinforced safety and support, making it easier to build positive rapport. If relationships were built around the positivity ratio and simple, uniform behavior expectations as prescribed by SWPBIS, then the students were more likely to feel supported. If the students perceived the teachers to be unfair and inconsistent in how they treat students, they acted out because they did not feel cared for, and were more likely to disconnect from school (Demanet & Van Houtte, 2012). Furthermore, students fed off of the attitudes of teachers and if they felt that discipline was issued because of an individual characteristic of a
teacher, defiance increased and led to poor relationships between teacher and student (Lewis, et al., 2012). If students felt that teachers treat them unfairly, then it puts tension on the teacher and student relationship. The Mountain Way program built equity for students because every student was held to the same behavior expectations, which promoted fairness. In the classroom observations, the teachers referred to the Mountain Way and used the same vernacular as a proactive and reactive strategy to ensure students were in adherence. The reminders were quick and students were then allowed to self-correct. In addition, the teachers adopted the Mountain Way behavior expectations as their classroom rules, which in turn supported their own classroom management strategies. As a result, the students were exposed to the behavior expectations in multiple settings over an extended period time, which allowed for the opportunity for students to internalize the elements of SWPBIS.

**The impact of SWPBIS on school climate.** As the review of the discipline data indicated, the implementation of SWPBIS at Mountain Springs Elementary improved school climate due to less office disciplinary referrals (ODRs) and out-of-school suspensions. As a result, students were not excluded from the school setting. The SWPBIS approach did reduce problem behavior and improved academics, staff affiliations, collective efficacy, and school climate at Mountain Springs as indicated in several studies (Debham et al., 2012; Kelm, et al., 2012; Bradshaw et al., 2008). With the deliberate application of the positivity ratio of 4:1 (Frederickson, 2009), teaching and learning was increased due to minimal disruptions, and the student-teacher relationships improved as evidenced in the classroom observations.

As an effective RTI approach, SWPBIS created opportunities to offer varying levels of support using the three-tiered systems focused on universal, targeted, and intensive interventions, and that teacher efficacy beliefs within the RTI model was dependent on the support, structure,
and efficiency of contributing to the students’ educational progress (Nunn & Jantz, 2009). Important to program fidelity was having a structured program, training, and the amount of allocated resources from the county office that helped Mountain Springs Elementary implement SWPBIS with high fidelity. Having buy-in from multiple stakeholders and implementing using a leadership team, helped to sustain SWPBIS throughout the three-year implementation period at Mountain Springs Elementary, even with a departure of a few of the original members of the leadership team. In reviewing the components of measuring program fidelity of SWPBIS, the School-Wide Evaluation Tool (SET; Horner, et al., 2004) included the dimensions of leadership, teacher buy-in, funding, time to meet regularly, and technical support. Among all the indicators, leadership was considered to be the most important (Coffey & Horner, 2012), and increased job satisfaction and high marks for principal effectiveness was reported in PBIS schools (Richter, et al., 2012). SWPBIS created a caring learning environment as reported by the participants that focused on social emotional learning, and promoted a climate of collaboration, pro-social interactions, and concern for others (Zins, et al., 2007; Song, et al., 2006; Battistich, et al. 1997).

**The impact of SWPBIS on student achievement.** Taking the focus off of punitive discipline and rechanneling it into a positive approach like SWPBIS provided, school climate and academic achievement from state testing were improved at Mountain Springs Elementary as evidenced by the API scores and the decreased number of office disciplinary referrals, suspensions, and severity of the infractions. In addressing the learning needs of the students, the social emotional and academic learning (SEAL) approach was targeted and provided appropriate supports to enhance social interactions present in schools (Zins, et al., 2007), while addressing the well-being of the “whole child.” Relating to students in an appropriate manner while handling misbehavior required great diplomacy and care. If the teacher mismanaged the
exchange, the situation might escalate in intensity and the repercussions could cause irreparable damage to the student-teacher relationship. If teacher support was perceived to be low, it was likely to cause more deviant behavior and strained relations (Demanet & Van Houtte, 2012). Building positive relationships between teachers and students and providing opportunities for students to develop pro-social skills were very important life skills. The effectiveness of SWPBIS as an RTI approach provided the necessary support at Mountain Springs Elementary where the student responded to the Tier 1 and in some cases requested on their own, a refresher on the Tier 2 program, Check, Connect, Expect. By providing the multi-tiered level of support of the RTI model, it guided students toward successful social interactions that mitigated the problem behaviors by teaching them new strategies to self-monitor and self-correct (Fairbanks, et al., 2007). Hawkins, et al., (2008) provided a recommended guideline for behavioral support based on the number of office disciplinary referrals across the RTI levels. If the RTI approach is used in implementing the SWPBIS with fidelity within the recommended guidelines, then schools can expect ODRs to fall in the range of 20-60% (Horner, et al. 2004), while academic gains in both math and English/Language Arts are likely to occur (McIntosh, et al., 2011; Taylor, 2011; Lassen, et al., 2006) for schools that implemented SWPBIS over a three-year period.

**Implications of the Study**

SWPBIS is an evidenced-based approach that was guided by the public health framework, with its emphasis on prevention of problem behavior and providing targeted intervention support for students when they do not respond to Tier 1 universal supports (Sugai & Horner, 2004). The implementation of SWPBIS might be an effective strategy if implemented with fidelity, using the communities of practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991) approach to provide continuous change and collaboration as “best practices”, and maximize school improvement
efforts (Takahashi, 2011). The principal or lead administrator needs to invest in training and ongoing technical support to produce organizational health (Bradshaw, et al., 2008) as a prevention strategy to diminish academic futility (Demanet & Van Houtte, 2012), reduce teacher burnout (Ross, et al., 2012), provide professional development in affective strategies to enhance the student-teacher relationship (Yeo, et al., 2008) and promote social emotional learning (Zins, et al., 2007).

The county office has continued to support Mountain Springs Elementary with technical and financial support, and will endure for another five years with the announcement that a new mental health grant from the state has been approved. This year, in the fourth year of SWPBIS, the county office has provided Mountain Springs’ staff with training in restorative justice practices. In order for this program to be fully sustained, the county will provide financial support and staff training on trauma informed care practices in year 5, utilizing the new state mental health grant to help refine the SWPBIS practices and maintain program fidelity.

**Limitations**

While this present study demonstrated promising results, there were limitations that existed. First, the study was limited to a single case, Mountain Springs Elementary, with a small sample size of teachers and support personnel. Secondly, no students or parents were included in the study, which may have provided more insights from the perspectives of other stakeholders groups on the SWPBIS implementation or an entirely different perspective. The teachers who participated in the study already possessed high levels efficacy, which was known by the researcher from personal experiences as the administrator and former member of the teaching staff. They all had prolonged teaching experience, and in some cases, in multiple settings and might have been exposed to the SWPBIS principles in other schools. Therefore, generalizability
of the results cannot apply beyond the scope of this setting. A fourth limitation to note was that the School-wide Evaluation Tool (SET, Horner, et al., 2004) instrument was not used to measure the exact fidelity components of SWPBIS. A fifth limitation worth mentioning is that the researcher is also the administrator at the school collecting the data on SWPBIS, and the perspectives are subjective as opposed to being from an outside observer.

**Future Studies**

This descriptive case study attempted to explain the implementation of the SWPBIS at a small, rural school during the three-year implementation, and the impacts on organizational change, focusing on experiences and perceptions from teachers and the original implementation team. To expand upon this work, one of the areas of interest that has emerged is conducting a quantitative or mixed methods study on the staff attendance. Since the implementation of SWPBIS, Mountain Springs has experienced minimal staff turnover since its inception. Another future study that may be conducted could be a qualitative or mixed methods design to look at the collective ownership and accountability of the school community, and how home and school connections have been impacted as a result of SWPBIS. Perhaps using the lens of the Distributed Leadership framework would a good source since “…leadership is an organizational quality, rather than an individual attribute,” (Spillane, 2005). This potential study could expand upon the work of how distributed leadership impacted teachers’ organizational commitment (Hulpia & Devos, 2010), but include a more macro view that includes students and parents commitment to the school. A third option is to extend the current study and create a longitudinal study at Mountain Springs in year six of SWPBIS to include more stakeholders and validate the initial findings. Year six would be a good benchmark so that the school has the opportunity to fully implement restorative justice and trauma informed care practices, and would include
students and parents in a mixed methods approach. Instruments such as the SET (Horner, et al., 2004), the Teacher’s Sense of Efficacy Scale (TSES: Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2001) and Organizational Health Inventory (OHI: Hoy & Feldman, 1987) to measure SWPBIS program fidelity, teacher efficacy and organizational health. Surveys, questionnaires, focus group and individual interviews could be utilized for the multiple stakeholders. A fourth option for a future study that could expand upon the current study and to conduct a multiple case study to explore the successes and challenges in implementing SWPBIS among the first cohort of school districts that received the initial training from the county office of education to have a comparison of progress and program fidelity to the SWPBIS implementation.

Conclusion

This study was a descriptive case study that attempted to describe the “how” and “why” the implementation of SWPBIS impacted organizational change within real life context of Mountain Springs Elementary (Yin, 2014). The results were encouraging in demonstrating that the implementation of SWPBIS at Mountain Springs Elementary was successful and done with high fidelity, and the perceived outcomes from the participants and document reviews supported these findings. In thinking about an analogy that would explain the implementation of SWPBIS, the adage that “it takes a village to raise a child,” came to mind. While the positive social interactions may require varying levels of support to address the behavioral needs of students using the RTI model, the infrastructure needs to be in tact in order for the group norms of the Mountain Way expectations to permeate, and create a culture of safety for all members of the school community to flourish. As a systematic and comprehensive approach, the implementation of SWPBIS provided the physical infrastructure to lay down the “firm ground,” in order to reinforce program fidelity. As the findings indicated, SWPBIS served as a constructive
framework that built and strengthened positive interactions that contributed to the collective
efficacy of the school community, a caring learning environment, and stakeholder empowerment.

Reflecting on the results of the study, the SWPBIS implementation impacted teacher
efficacy, student-teacher relationships, school climate, and student achievement through
consistent, incremental changes that became embedded within the school culture. The
“Mountain Way” has become the way of life for students on the Mountain Springs Elementary
campus. Through the open systems interactions of transformational and transactional practices,
the implementation of SWPBIS helped shape the identity of the school. Most likely, the
SWPBIS implementation contributed to the congruence of the three psychological needs of
competency, autonomy, relatedness, along with mindfulness which refers to the increased
attention to one’s immediate surroundings and the internal processes of the individual
simultaneously (Deci & Ryan, 2008), or being “in tune” with the moment. As a result, SWPBIS
was operationalized in this setting, and the students seemed happier based on the teachers’
shared perceptions, classroom observations, and school climate data.

Personal Reflection

From the first course at the start of my doctoral journey, we were encouraged to develop
a problem of practice that evolved from our every day work to apply to the scholar-practitioner
lens as a potential research topic. Initially my focus on School Wide Positive Behavior
Intervention Support (SWPBIS) Implementation was a bit narrow, as I was looking at the
impacts on student achievement since I was still a classroom teacher when I began the
Northeastern University program. Once I became the Superintendent/Principal of the school, my
micro-perspective expanded to a more macro lens in analyzing organizational factors and
utilizing systems thinking.
Making the SWPBIS behavior expectations more personalized by rebranding them as the “The Mountain Way” really put the common vernacular and framework into student friendly language. The behavior expectations not only became part of the cultural identity of the school, but it also blended with the students’ individual identities, as they were able to internalize the behavior expectations and live the Mountain Way. By conducting this research study, it is more apparent to me that SWPBIS is a paradigm shift, and it was one that I could embrace so easily because of my strong beliefs in social emotional literacy. In order to implement SWPBIS with high fidelity, it is important to receive principal support, teacher buy-in, and technical and financial support from the county office of education. In addition, having the leadership team of multiple stakeholders to lead the change through a distributed leadership model also enhanced fidelity to SWPBIS implementation.

There were several articles in the literature review that referenced how SWPBIS implementation was effective in schools with low-socioeconomic status because this is where resources are scarce. What I gained the most by conducting this research is the affirmation that SWPBIS implementation created equity and leveled the playing field for all stakeholders, which led to our school community’s collective efficacy. Instructional time was captured due to less exclusionary discipline, and the positive interactions using the Mountain Way vernacular were reinforced by staff, students, and the culture itself through the use of regular discussions and a collective response to student behavior. As the SWPBIS framework became embedded in the school culture, my research identified that collective implementation of SWPBIS contributed to a great number of improvements for our school. It created:

- increased students’ and teachers’ focused time on instruction,
- a greater sense of accomplishment for teachers,
- administrators spending more time on proactive and positive interactions with students rather than punitive reactions
- improved home-school relationships since SWPBIS is a positive disciplinary approach,
- paraprofessionals that felt more empowered, and
- students’ capacities in acquiring pro-social skills increased.

Teaching pro-social skills are essential life skills, and helping students gain competence in social interactions is invaluable. I am even more convinced that non-cognitive skills are just as if not more important than cognitive skills in order to prepare students for a globalized economy.

I would like to further comment about token economies and intrinsic motivation. At Mountain Springs Elementary, teachers commented that the standardized rewards – the praise postcards and student of the month ceremonies – were helpful in reinforcing the Mountain Way behavior expectations. However, I wondered if the Mountain Springs students followed the Mountain Way to earn the postcard or if intrinsic motivation of performing well and meeting the standard was the contributing factor. My personal opinion is that it was the ongoing interactions and cultural expectations of acting responsibly and positively that reinforced students’ behaviors and not the few tokens or extrinsic benefits we rewarded them with.

Deci, Koestner, and Ryan (2001) conducted an meta-analysis of 128 experiments of intrinsic motivation and tested the merits of cognitive evaluation theory (CET; Deci & Ryan, 1980), which described the effects on intrinsic motivation based on external events as it influenced individuals’ perceptions on competence and self-determination. According to CET, events that decreased perceived determination and competence would diminish internal motivation that was attributed to an external locus of control, while events that increased competence and accompanied by increased self-determination would increase intrinsic
motivation due to a perceived internal locus of control (Deci, et al., 2001). In addition, the types of rewards that were analyzed within the interpersonal context, or social ambience of the setting, were categorized as informational or controlling. Lastly, there were seven types of rewards that were analyzed: (1) verbal rewards; (2) tangible rewards; (3) task-noncontingent rewards; (4) task-contingent rewards; (5) engagement-contingent rewards; (6) completion-contingent rewards; and (7) performance-contingent rewards.

The results demonstrated that verbal (positive feedback) and performance-contingent rewards boosted intrinsic motivation whereas tangible, engagement-contingent, completion-contingent, and task-contingent rewards undermined intrinsic rewards. There was no evidence on task-noncontingent rewards. However, if the verbal and performance-contingent rewards were delivered within an interactive context that was demanding or controlling than it had an adverse effect on intrinsic motivation. Interesting, if the unexpected tangible reward is given after the task has been completed then it did not negatively impact intrinsic motivation because the reward was not the reason for doing the task. For the purposes of this discussion, the standardized rewards utilized at Mountain Springs Elementary matched the performance-contingent reward type within an informational interactive context. A certain standard must be met by following the Mountain Way along with an accompanied activity that was worthy of student recognition by the teacher. As a result, intrinsic motivation was facilitated by the teaching and learning of pro-social skills within a positive interactional context where students could internalize the behavior expectations. The SWPBIS implementation at Mountain Springs Elementary gave teachers the tools to reach students and build positive rapport, where it became an effective “communities of practice” (Lave & Wenger, 1991) approach that built collaboration
and served as a mechanism for slow, incremental cultural change that led to positive outcomes for all stakeholders.

As a result of conducting this research, it has solidified my thinking about the positivity ratio (Frederickson, 2009), the value of building pro-social skills (Sprague & Golly, 2005), and the importance of relational trust (Raider-Roth, 2004) with students in order to improve their social emotional and academic learning within a climate of support. Students in poverty experience a high degree of Adverse Childhood Experience (ACE) scores and suffer from much trauma and loss, and it is important as an educator to be empathic and cognizant of the harsh realities of their home lives and how that affects their psyches at school. Being empathic does not mean making excuses. There still needs to be an accountability factor to allow for students to take responsibility for misbehavior, but it can be done with support and teaching students new strategies to build pro-social skills to help them improve their behavior. In other words, the approach does not have to always be punitive, and the main take away for me is that SWPBIS is an effective intervention as a positive approach to discipline and meets the evidenced-based criteria in the Response to Intervention (RTI) model that boosts the collective efficacy of the school.

As I have transitioned into the identity of educator and scholar-practitioner, I have learned to embrace inquiry, incorporate systems thinking, be more sensitive to preconceived notions and possible bias, and take into account research with peripheral vision, acknowledging that there may be paradoxes and outliers in the process. Making connections between theory and practice supports the notion that the Scholar-Practitioner’s work is constantly evolving, and that theory can lead to better practices that can improve school culture and the experiences of school stakeholders. I have also realized that revolutionary change is necessary to disrupt the status
quo, or as Burke (2011) stated, “jolts the system,” (p. 77), while evolutionary change helps with program fidelity to allow for feedback loops and adaptation to occur through minor adjustments.

SWPBIS transformed the school culture as the Mountain Way behavior expectations were embedded into the culture because they were clear and teachers and students had regular conversations about following and being the Mountain Way. What I was able to document through this investigation, as I surmised from my observations, is that over the three-year implementation period, students were able to internalize the behavior expectations, school staff reinforced them, and the change was effective because the leadership team used a distributed leadership model to lead “the way.”
Reference


Darensbourg, A., Perez, E., & Blake, J. J. (2010). Overrepresentation of African American males in exclusionary discipline: The role of school-based mental health professional in


doi:10.1007/s10864-006-9005-y


Robinson, K. “Leading a Culture of Innovation.” Presentation at the Spotlight on Education Series at the University of San Diego, San Diego, CA, January 16, 2014.


Appendix A: Recruitment Letter

April XX, 2014

Dear Teachers and Instructional Aides

As you may know, I am a doctoral student at Northeastern University (NEU) and I am working on my dissertation. I have received approval from the Governing Board, and the NEU Internal Review Board to conduct my research study at the Elementary School from April – June 2014, and I would like to know if you would be interested in participating in the study. Your participation is completely voluntary, and if you decide to participate, you may opt out of the study at any time.

The title of the research study is School-Wide Positive Behavior Support and Organizational Change. The purpose of the study is to explore the perceptions of teachers and instructional aides on how the School-Wide Positive Behavior Intervention Support (SWPBIS) has impacted teacher efficacy, student-teacher relationship, school climate, and student achievement. Data collection will include focus group interviews, observations, and records review of state assessments, discipline, and profile reports of the SWPBIS implementations. There will be one focus group interviews, and each interview will take approximate 1-2 hours minutes. In addition, one 30-45 minute classroom observation will be conducted for each teacher participant.

Your participation is meaningful to the success of the research study, as we have the opportunity to reflect and evaluate how SWPBIS has shaped our school organization, as well as the opportunity to contribute to the literature to share best practices that may be helpful to other schools.

I want you to know that confidentiality will be strictly adhered to, and pseudonyms will be used to protect the anonymity of the participants. In addition, the data collected in this process will be only be used toward the research study, and will not be used toward employee evaluations.

If you are interested in participating, please email me at brown.m@husky.neu.edu. Thank you for your attention and consideration.

Best,

Melissa A. Brown

Doctoral Candidate 2015

Northeastern University
Appendix B: Signed Informed Consent Document

Northeastern University, College of Professional Studies

Investigator Name: Principal Investigator-Dr. Chris Unger

Student Researcher-Melissa A. Brown

Title of Project: School-Wide Positive Behavior Intervention Support and Organizational Change

Informed Consent to Participate in a Research Study

Why am I being asked to take part in this research study?

You have been asked to participate since you expressed an initial interest in participating from a request letter sent in April 2014, and for your experience associated with the implementation of School-Wide Positive Behavior Support at the school site.

Why is this research study being done?

The purpose of the study is to explore the perceptions of teachers and instructional aides on how the School-Wide Positive Behavior Intervention Support (SWPBIS) has impacted teacher efficacy, student-teacher relationship, school climate, and student achievement. The procedure will be a single case study conducted at the SWPBIS school in its third year of implementation.

What will I be asked to do?

The researcher will be looking for you to participate in the following ways:

1. Participate in an interview session that will be audio taped

or

2. Participate in a focus group session that will be audio taped
3. Participate in an ember check process to verify the contents of the interviews and interpretations of the researcher.
4. Allow researcher to conduct one classroom observation with teacher participants.

Your participation is voluntary, and you can opt out at any time.

Where will this take place and how long will it take?

Individual interviews will take approximately 45 minutes each. The focus group session will last approximately one to two hours. Interviews will take place in a conference room or classroom at Mountain Springs Elementary School, Skype, Google Hangout, telephone, or an alternative site for the convenience of the participants.

Will there be any risk or discomfort to me?

There are no significant risks involved in being a participant in this study.
Will there be any risk or discomfort to me?

There are no significant risks involved in being a participant in this study.

Will I benefit by being in this research?

There are no direct benefits for your participation in the study. However, the information learned from the study may provide valuable insights for other school personnel who want to implement SWPBIS at their sites. Your participation and experiences could potentially assist in providing strategies to underperforming schools.

Who will see the information about me?

Your part in the study will be completely confidential. Pseudonyms will be used for all study participants. Only the researcher will be aware of the participants’ identities. No reports or publications will use information that can identify you in any way.

As a focus group and individual participant, your part will be confidential. The other participants in your focus group will hear your ideas, but confidentiality will be discussed with all the participants. The data collected for this study will be kept by the researcher, including audiotapes, and will not be shared with others. Only first names will be used during focus group and sessions and in transcriptions. All audio tapes will be destroyed following transcription.

In rare instances, authorized people may request to see research information about you and other people in this study. This is done only to be sure that research is done properly. The researcher would only permit people who are authorized by organizations such as Northeastern University to see this information. No identifying information will ever be shared with people at the School District.

If you do not want to take part in the study, what choices do I have?

You are not required to take part in the study. If you do not want to participate, you do not have to sign this form.

Can I stop my participation in this study?

Participation in this study is voluntary, and your participation or non-participation will not in any way affect other relationships (e.g., employer, school, etc.). You may discontinue your participation in this research program at any time without penalty or costs of any nature, character, or kind.

Who can I contact if I have questions or problems?

Melissa A. Brown
Mountain Springs USD
Mountain Springs Elementary School
Home # (760) 484-3809
Christopher Unger, Ed.D.
College of Professional Studies
Northeastern University
Cell # 857-272-8941
Who can I contact about my rights as a participant?

If you have any questions about your rights as a participant, you may contact Nan C. Regina, Director, Human Subject Research Protection, 960 Renaissance Park, Northeastern University, Boston, MA 02115. Tel: 617-373-4588, Email: nregina@neu.edu. If may call anonymously if you wish.

Will I be paid for my participation?

There is no compensation for participation in this study.

Will it cost me anything to participate?

There is no cost to participate in this study.

I have read, understood, and had the opportunity to ask questions regarding this consent form. I fully understand the nature and character of my involvement in this research program as a participant and the potential risks. I agree to participate in this study on a voluntary basis, and understand that I can depart from the research study at any time.

________________________________________
Research Participant (Printed Name)

________________________________________
Research Participant (Signature)          Date
Appendix C: Member Check Form

Date of interview:

Interviewer:

Interviewee:

The researcher has reviewed the findings from the focus interviews with the interviewee, and I attest to the following statements (check boxes that apply and initial):

☐ I have verified the accuracy of the report
☐ I agree that the description is complete and realistic
☐ I agree that the themes are accuracy
☐ I agree that the interpretations are fair and representative
☐ I do not agree with the description, themes, and/or interpretations and I make the following suggestions (see comments below)

______________________________________________

Comments:

__________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________
Appendix D: Observational Protocol

Length of Activity:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Descriptive Notes</th>
<th>Reflective Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>General:</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. What is the classroom ecology of PBIS schools?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Is learning enhanced in a PBIS classroom?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix E

Focus Group Interview Protocol – Teachers/Support Staff

Time of interview:

Date:

Interviewer: Melissa Brown

Interviewees: (Teachers, support staff)

The purpose of the study is to explore the perceptions of teachers and instructional aides on how the School-Wide Positive Behavior Intervention Support (SWPBIS) has impacted teacher efficacy, student-teacher relationship, school climate, and student achievement. Data collection will include focus group interviews with teachers and instructional aides, observations, and records review of state assessments, discipline, and profile reports of the SWPBIS implementations. There will be one focus group interviews, and each interview will take approximate 60-120 minutes.

Part I: Introductory Question Objectives (10-15 minutes). Build rapport, describe the study, answer any questions (under typical circumstances an informed consent for would be reviewed and signed here).

Introductory Protocol

You have been selected to speak with me today because your have been identified as someone who has a great deal to share about the experience and observations of implementing SWPBIS at your school. My research project focuses on the perceptions of teachers, school staff, implementation team, and COE personnel on the impacts of SWPBIS on organizational change. Through this study I hope to gain more insight into how the SWPBIS can be an effective strategy for underperforming schools.

Because your responses are important and I want to make sure I capture everything you say, I would like to audio tape our conversation today. Do I have your permission to record this interview? [if yes, thank the participant and turn on the recording equipment]. I will also be taking written notes during the interview. I can assure you that all responses will be confidential and only a pseudonym will be used when quoting from the transcripts. The tapes will be transcribed by a transcriptionist, but the pseudonyms will be used to label the tapes. I will be the only on privy to transcripts ad information ad the tapes will be destroyed after they are transcribed.

To meet our human subjects requirements at the university, you must sign the form I have with me [see Appendix B]. Essentially, this document states that: (1) all information will be held
confidential (2) your participation is voluntary and you may stop at any time if you feel uncomfortable, and (3) we do not intend to inflict any harm. Do you have any questions about the interview process or this for?

We have planned this interview to last about 1-2 hours. During this time, I have several questions that I would like to cover. If time begins to run short, it may be necessary to interrupt you in order to push ahead and complete this line of questioning. Do you have any questions at this time?

**Part II:** Objectives (45-105 minutes): Obtain the participants' insights, in his/her own words, into their experiences in implementing SWPBIS and the contributions to teacher efficacy, student-teacher relationships, school climate, and student achievement.

Prefatory statement: I would like to hear about your experiences in your own words. To do this, I am going to ask you some questions about the key experiences or observations that you have encountered during the program implementation and your perspective at various times. Your responses may include both academic and non-academic elements as appropriate.

Questions:

1. What did the school characteristics look like before SWPBIS?

2. How have these characteristics changed after implementing SWPBIS?

3. How have you implemented SWPBIS in your classroom?

4. What have been the benefits of SWPBIS that you have personally experienced?
   a. How has PBIS impacted your teaching/instruction?
   b. How has PBIS impacted your relationships with your students?
   c. How has PBIS impacted your classroom interactions?
   d. How has PBIS impacted your self-efficacy?
   e. How has PBIS impacted school climate?

5. What are the challenges of SWPBIS?
   Prompt: Were you able to overcome the challenges?

6. What are the successes that you have experienced with implementing SWPBIS?
   Prompt: Has there been any effects on your work climate?

7. Do you think that SWPBIS is a valuable approach to school improvement? Why or why not?
Appendix F

Interview Protocol – Original Implementation Team

Time of interview:

Date:

Interviewer: Melissa Brown

Interviewees: (PBIS initial implementation team)

The purpose of the study is to explore the perceptions of teachers and instructional aides on how the School-Wide Positive Behavior Intervention Support (SWPBIS) has impacted teacher efficacy, student-teacher relationship, school climate, and student achievement. Data collection will include focus group interviews with teachers and instructional aides, observations, and records review of state assessments, discipline, and profile reports of the SWPBIS implementations. There will be two focus group interviews, and each interview will take approximate 60-120 minutes.

Part I: Introductory Question Objectives (10-15 minutes). Build rapport, describe the study, answer any questions (under typical circumstances an informed consent for would be reviewed and signed here).

Introductory Protocol

You have been selected to speak with me today because your have been identified as someone who has a great deal to share about the experience and observations of implementing SWPBIS at your school. My research project focuses on the perceptions of teachers, school staff, implementation team, and COE personnel on the impacts of SWPBIS on organizational change. Through this study I hope to gain more insight into how the SWPBIS can be an effective strategy for underperforming schools.

Because your responses are important and I want to make sure I capture everything you say, I would like to audio tape our conversation today. Do I have your permission to record this interview? [if yes, thank the participant and turn on the recording equipment]. I will also be taking written notes during the interview. I can assure you that all responses will be confidential and only a pseudonym will be used when quoting from the transcripts. The tapes will be transcribed by a transcriptionist, but the pseudonyms will be used to label the tapes. I will be the only on privy to transcripts ad information ad the tapes will be destroyed after they are transcribed.

To meet our human subjects requirements at the university, you must sign the form I have with me [see Appendix B]. Essentially, this document states that: (1) all information will be held
confidential (2) your participation is voluntary and you ay stop at any tie if you feel uncomfortable, and (3) we do not intend to inflict any harm. Do you have any questions about the interview process or this for?

We have planned this interview to last about 1-2 hours. During this tie, I have several questions that I would like to cover. If time begins to run short, it may be necessary to interrupt you in order to push ahead and complete this line of questioning. Do you have any questions at this time?

**Part II:** Objectives (45-105 minutes): Obtain the participants insights, in his/her own words, into their experiences in implementing SWPBIS and the contributions to teacher efficacy, student-teacher relationships, school climate, and student achievement.

Prefatory statement: I would like to hear about your experiences in your own words. To do this, I am going to ask you sue questions about the key experiences or observations that you have encountered during the program implementation and your perspective at various ties. Your responses ay include both academic and non-academic elements as appropriate.

Questions:

1. What did the school characteristics look like before SWPBIS?

2. Why did you decide to bring SWPBIS to the school site?

3. How have these characteristics changed after implementing SWPBIS?

4. What have been the benefits of SWPBIS that you have personally experienced?
   a. How has PBIS impacted your teaching/instruction?
   b. How has PBIS impacted your relationships with your students?
   c. How has PBIS impacted your classroom interactions?
   d. How has PBIS impacted your self-efficacy?
   e. How has PBIS impacted school climate?

5. What are the challenges of SWPBIS?

6. Do you think that SWPBIS is a valuable approach to school improvement? Why or why not?
Appendix G

Interview Protocol-COE Program Specialist

Time of interview:

Date:

Interviewer: Melissa Brown

Interviewees: (PBIS initial implementation teams.

The purpose of the study is to explore the perceptions of teachers and instructional aides on how the School-Wide Positive Behavior Intervention Support (SWPBIS) has impacted teacher efficacy, student-teacher relationship, school climate, and student achievement. Data collection will include focus group interviews with teachers and instructional aides, observations, and records review of state assessments, discipline, and profile reports of the SWPBIS implementations. There will be two focus group interviews, and each interview will take approximate 45-60 minutes.

Part I: Introductory Question Objectives (10-15 minutes). Build rapport, describe the study, answer any questions (under typical circumstances an informed consent for would be reviewed and signed here).

Introductory Protocol

You have been selected to speak with me today because your have been identified as someone who has a great deal to share about the experience and observations of implementing SWPBIS at your school. My research project focuses on the perceptions of teachers, school staff, implementation team, and COE personnel on the impacts of SWPBIS on organizational change. Through this study I hope to gain more insight into how the SWPBIS can be an effective strategy for underperforming schools.

Because your responses are important and I want to make sure I capture everything you say, I would like to audio tape our conversation today. Do I have your permission to record this interview? [If yes, thank the participant and turn on the recording equipment]. I will also be taking written notes during the interview. I can assure you that all responses will be confidential and only a pseudonym will be used when quoting from the transcripts. The tapes will be transcribed by a transcriptionist, but the pseudonyms will be used to label the tapes. I will be the only on privy to transcripts ad information ad the tapes will be destroyed after they are transcribed.
To meet our human subjects requirements at the university, you must sign the form I have with me [see Appendix B]. Essentially, this document states that: (1) all information will be held confidential (2) your participation is voluntary and you may stop at any time if you feel uncomfortable, and (3) we do not intend to inflict any harm. Do you have any questions about the interview process or this form?

We have planned this interview to last about 1-2 hours. During this time, I have several questions that I would like to cover. If time begins to run short, it may be necessary to interrupt you in order to push ahead and complete this line of questioning. Do you have any questions at this time?

Part II: Objectives (45-105 minutes): Obtain the participants insights, in his/her own words, into their experiences in implementing SWPBIS and the contributions to teacher efficacy, student-teacher relationships, school climate, and student achievement.

Prefatory statement: I would like to hear about your experiences in your own words. To do this, I am going to ask you sue questions about the key experiences or observations that you have encountered during the program implementation and your perspective at various times. Your responses may include both academic and non-academic elements as appropriate.

Questions:

1. How did the COE determine that SWPBIS program would be offered to districts? Please describe the selection process.

2. What is the percentage of districts that have implemented SWPBIS? Do you feel that the percentage reflects a cross-section of districts within the county that are implementing SWPBIS?

3. Please describe some of the challenges you have encountered in bringing SWPBIS to COE?

4. In your observations what are the critical factors to implementing SWPBIS successfully?

5. What have been the challenges of implementing SWPBIS that you have observed?

6. How do you help just districts implement with fidelity and maintain the SWPBIS principles?