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Color of Discipline: Reducing Discipline Disparities through the Use of School-Wide Discipline Programs

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THE COLOR OF DISCIPLINE:
REDUCING DISCIPLINE DISPARITIES THROUGH THE USE OF
SCHOOL-WIDE DISCIPLINE PROGRAMS

By

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I dedicate this dissertation to my children, Riley, Cara and Jace. You believed in me and cheered me on when I wanted to pursue my dream. I hope that I have shown you that anything is possible if you set a goal and work hard. I love you with all of my heart.

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ABSTRACT

Disparities in school discipline for Black students has been a problem for decades. The negative effects of exclusionary discipline have been well-documented. This problem must be addressed by educational stakeholders in order to take steps to reduce the issue and provide interventions to reduce the disproportionality. Disproportionality in discipline prevents schools from achieving the ultimate goal of fostering positive outcomes for all students. School-Wide Positive Behavioral Interventions and Support Programs have created a systems-level approach to reducing overall school discipline issues. Some studies have identified SW-PBIS programs that have been able to reduce disparities in secondary schools and increase graduation rates, however, studies of SW-PBIS and disproportionality have overlooked disparities in elementary schools. The present study contributed to the current research base by investigating elementary disparity rates and how schools are using a SW-PBIS system to lower those rates. It also identifies factors that create strong programs successful in reducing disparity rates as well as factors that hinder the success of schools with disparity problems. This qualitative analysis revealed four themes that are critical to the success of a SW-PBIS system in lowering disparity rates: training, finding the root of the negative behavior, high expectations, and support for teachers. Implications for professional development, data tracking, and measuring disproportionality in schools are discussed.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Purpose of the Study

Disproportionate discipline rates of Black students compared to other races are a widespread and longstanding problem in public education in the United States. Positive Behavior Support Programs are a systematic approach that schools across the country are implementing to improve school climate and prevent student problem behaviors across all school settings (Anderson, Freeman & Griggs, 2009). According to a nationally representative study, in 2006 Black students were more than three times likely to receive an out of school suspension than their White peers (Losen & Skiba, 2010). Black students experience increased risk for suspension for minor misbehavior and increased risk of school suspension and suspension and expulsion for the same behavior as students from other racial groups (Skiba et al., 2011). These studies find that the race of a student continues to play a part in the chances that a student will receive a suspension or expulsion. The purpose of this study is to examine what components of a School-Wide Positive Behavioral Interventions Support Program have been found to be successful in reducing disproportionate discipline rates of Black males in elementary schools in one Florida district. It examines the discipline disparities involving exclusionary discipline practices faced by Black males in 55 elementary schools in the same county. The county where this research is being conducted has currently identified 20 schools as having a disproportionate discipline problem. The purpose of this study is to explore if and how a School-Wide Positive Behavioral Interventions and Support Program lower the disparity rates of Black males and the overall disciplinary risk ratio of schools in the case study district. Risk ratios correspond to the possibility of the outcome (e.g., office discipline referrals, suspensions) for one group in

comparison to another race group (McIntosh et. al, 2014). Risk ratios are “calculated by dividing the risk index of the group of interest by the risk index of a comparison group” (McIntosh et. al, 2014). A risk ratio of 1.0 indicates that the risk for the two groups being compared is equal, however, a risk ratio that is greater than 1.0 suggests that there is evidence of overrepresentation, and a risk ratio less than 1.0 is indicative of underrepresentation (Boneshefski & Runge, 2014).

Black males have a higher suspension rate, expulsion rate, and special education rate compared to that of their non-minority peers (Skiba, 2000, Zirkel, 2004, Losen & Gillespie, 2012). These same students are under-represented in gifted programs, honors and advanced placement classes (Baldwin, 2004). This disproportionate rate creates a barrier for Black students in their educational attainment. Exclusionary discipline practices contribute to high rates of retention and lower achievement rates for Black students. These practices result in Black students falling further and further behind their non-minority, or White peers often resulting in students dropping out of school (Kewal et al., 2007).

One of the most important preventative measures to reduce school discipline issues is to implement an intervention program that occurs early in a child’s school career (Lyche, 2010). There are a number of approaches that elementary schools take to address discipline. A particularly promising approach that elementary schools have used to address behavioral and academic inequities is School-Wide Positive Behavioral Interventions and Support Programs (SW-PBIS). SW-PBIS focuses on developing positive behavior by educating students on prosocial skills and restructuring school and classroom environments in order to prevent problem behaviors from occurring (Sugai & Horner, 2009). SW-PBIS is a fairly new approach that has evolved out of applied behavior analysis (Tincani, 2007). Applied behavioral analysis (ABA) is a scientific discipline that analyzes behavior and what causes certain behaviors and how to

modify behaviors (McIntosh et al., 2014). SW-PBIS uses a real-world approach that focuses on giving students better social skills and interventions to help them act appropriately in different situations. Many districts are choosing SW-PBIS for their behavior management system because teachers and administrators are able to work with all students to help give them behavioral lessons that focus on positive ways to help students deal with social situations (Skiba, 2009).

Research on PBS shows potential to decrease not only discipline referrals but also discipline disparities. Stevens (2017), for example, provides the example of McNabb Elementary in Kentucky, a school that was seeing behavior issues increase within their school. After implementing PBS effectively for five years, they saw a decrease in referral rates of 53%. In addition to lower referral rates, the school saw an increase of 9% in the reading proficiency scores and an increase of 13% in their school math proficiency score (Ross, n.d.). Marblehead Public School district in Massachusetts also found success with SW-PBIS and lowered disparity rates in their school. Disparity rates dropped by 20% in their first two years of implementation (Stevens, 2017).

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Disproportionality of Black males when it comes to discipline is one of the most significant issues in our public education system today (Gregory, Skiba & Noguera, 2010, U.S. Government Accountability Office, 2013). Researchers have consistently shown that Black students have a significantly increased risk to receive exclusionary discipline practices, including ODR's and out of school suspensions (Gregory, Skiba & Noguera, 2010, Skiba, 2009, Bonesheski & Runge, 2014). Discipline disparity problems have been found all over the United States (McIntosh et. al., 2014). The American Academy of Pediatrics Council on School Health

(2013) provides well-documented negative effects that exclusionary discipline practices have on all students. They find a direct link from disproportionate discipline that involve exclusionary practices that contributes to students being alienated from school, academic failure, social failure, increased drop-out rates, delinquent behavior, and criminal activity (Losen & Skiba, 2010).

One way that school districts can address this issue is by identifying the rates of their discipline disparities and taking research-based steps to reduce it. Disproportionate discipline impedes educators from their overarching goal of creating positive and productive futures for every student. Researchers have found a correlation between exclusionary discipline practices (suspension and expulsion) with school dropout rates (Ekstrom et al, 1986; Felice, 1982). This data also suggests a relationship between school exclusionary practices and the juvenile justice system, known as the school to prison pipeline.

1.3 Research Questions

The questions noted below will guide the study:

- 1) Do schools that have a School-Wide Positive Behavioral Interventions and Support Program have a smaller discipline disparity rates than schools that have not?
- 2) Do the schools with longstanding SW-PBIS programs have lower disparity rates than those schools with newer programs?
- 3) What do school administrators attribute to a successful SW-PBIS program at their school?

1.4 Historical Background of the Study

In 1954, the Supreme Court made the famous ruling in the *Brown v. Board of Education* that ended legal school segregation by race. In their ruling, the justices acknowledged the detrimental effects of racial segregation for Black students, and found that the results of educational inequalities deprive students the protection of their fourteenth amendment rights (*Brown v. Board of Education*, 1954).

Even though it has been more than fifty years since this ruling, disparities in education are still faced today for Black students. Numerous studies have revealed a consistent pattern of lower academic achievement across multiple outcomes, high rates of exclusionary discipline practices, and even higher rates of placement in special education programs for Black students (Baker, Hendricks, McGowen & McKeone, 2004, Farkas, 2003, Zirkel, 2005). According to the 2007 National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), test scores for Black students were lower in reading and math compared to achievement scores for White students (NAEP, 2009). Research has also shown a disparate rate of the placement of Black students in special education programs (NAEP, 2009).

The greatest disparities from this research shows that Black students are overrepresented in most disability categories, with the greatest disparities coming from categories that are based on more subjectively-determined placement criteria such as emotional disturbance, behavioral disorders, and specific learning disabilities (Green, 2005). Studies find that students are placed in these categories at rates that are four times higher than that of White students (Losen & Orfield, 2002).

These disparities are particularly acute in the area of student behavior and discipline. Skiba's (2000) research reveals that over the past thirty years, the exclusionary discipline rates

for Black students are two to three times higher than that of their White classmates. This research also shows that Black students routinely received harsher punishments than White students for less-severe offenses. The Children's Defense Fund (1975), analyzed discipline records from the U.S. Department of Education for Civil Rights and revealed that Black students were two to three times more likely to receive a suspension than White students in grades K-12. Exclusionary discipline practices are consequences given for behavior that take students out of the learning environment. These consequences may be suspensions, expulsions, or being sent out of the room for a timeout.

Discipline disparities are commonly reported in the juvenile justice system and they are very similar to the disparities seen in the public school systems for Black students (Skiba et al., 2007). According to Poe-Yamagata and Jones (2000), Black youth going through the juvenile justice system are treated differently through each step of the process. This study showed that Black youth were overrepresented in 26 out of 29 categories of offenses, they were more likely to be “detained, expedited for formal processing, waived to adult court, given an out of home placement, and incarcerated in both juvenile and adult prisons” (Poe-Yamagata & Jones, 2000). This data provides support that exclusionary discipline practices have ties to the school-to-prison pipeline, that has shown disproportionate data towards Black youth.

Studies have shown that when students are exposed to exclusionary discipline practices, time in the classroom is reduced which results in lower academic achievement for African American students (Johns, Crowley, & Guetzloe, 2008). Any time out of the classroom is time away from classroom instruction where a student should be engaged in learning. Evidence supports that schools are disproportionately using discipline practices based on a student's race, economic status, gender, and disability category. Black students have higher rates of office

referrals, suspensions and expulsions from school (Cartledge & Kourea, 2008). Being removed from the classroom is an experience that is all too common for Black students. National data show that Black and Hispanic students are suspended more often and for longer periods of time than their White peers (Losen & Gillespie, 2012). One out of six Black students are suspended, which is three times higher than that of White students. These studies also suggest that the reason for this disparity is not because Black students have an increased rate in misbehavior, but the difference exists in the disciplinary actions by school administrators. School administrators are able to use their own discretion when giving consequences to students for behavior infractions that do not fall under the zero tolerance policies (Losen & Gillespie, 2012).

1.5 Significance of the Study

Students who are disciplined by exclusionary practices are more likely to get behind academically and as a result act out negatively more often (Skiba, 2007). In this study, I examined the disproportionality rates for Black males in elementary schools in a large Florida district, paying specific attention to the role of a Positive Behavior Support program. Previous research on SW-PBIS and disproportionality (Skiba, 2007) has shown that disproportionality rates may decrease with the implementation of a structured SW-PBIS system. The research has also shown that overall suspension, expulsion, and referral rates have also decreased as a result of this approach. The literature continues to show that implementing an early intervention program for students is the most successful way to break the cycle of repeated discipline offenders, and perhaps end the path of the school to prison pipeline (Hudson, 2011).

With this study, I seek to inform educational professionals in my district on the benefits of early SW-PBIS programs as an intervention that may impact students academically and

ultimately lead to higher student achievement. Therefore, I have focused on elementary schools in Brevard County that displayed risk ratios that were higher for Black males over their peers. Finally, to understand the practices of the successful implementers as compared with those still struggling with high disparity data, I interviewed school administrators in 25 elementary schools. The schools used in this study were chosen based on their discipline disparity data; poverty rates and location were not a factor in choosing schools to study.

1.6 Definitions of Terms

For the purpose of this study, the following terms will be defined:

School-Wide Positive Behavior Interventions and Support Program: SW-PBIS focuses on developing positive behavior by educating students on prosocial skills and restructuring school and classroom environments in order to prevent problem behaviors from occurring (Sugai & Horner, 2009). SW-PBIS uses a real-world approach that focuses on giving students better social skills and interventions to help them act appropriately in different situations.

Risk Ratio: Risk ratios represent the possibility of the outcome (e.g., office discipline referrals) for one group in relation to a comparison group (McIntosh et. al, 2014) Risk ratios are “calculated by dividing the risk index of the group of interest by the risk index of a comparison group” (McIntosh et. al, 2014). A risk ratio of 1.0 indicates that the risk for the two groups being compared is equal, however, a risk ratio that is greater than 1.0 suggests that there is evidence of overrepresentation, and a risk ratio less than 1.0 is indicative of underrepresentation (Boneshefski & Runge, 2014).

ODR: When a student does not follow the expectations, s/he may receive an Office Discipline Referral (ODR). The ODR is a communication tool between parents, teachers, students, and administration, a consequence may be given.

Exclusionary Discipline Practice: Exclusionary discipline describes school disciplinary practices that removes or excludes a student from his or her usual educational setting. Two of the most common exclusionary discipline practices at schools include suspension and expulsion.

School to Prison Pipeline: A metaphor used to describe the increasing pattern of students entering the juvenile criminal justice system as a result of harsh discipline policies adopted in school districts across the country (Hudson, 2011).

Academic Achievement: Academic success will be defined as students whose academic records reflect improvement of a “C” grade or better. This researcher agrees that academic success should be defined as the ability of a student to maintain at least a “C” grade over one school year (Brooks. 2009).

1.7 Limitations/Delimitations

There are limitations regarding the replication and assessment of this study. It is specific to one county in Florida that has a broad variety of students in enrollment. Not all schools will be assessed in this study; only schools that use a SW-PBIS program were included in the study. There were multiple factors that may contribute to the positive or negative outcomes of the implementation of the SW-PBIS program.

Another challenge in this study was developing a shared understanding of the objectives of the study by the participants. Many administrators were not proud that their school has discipline disparities for a certain race. Talking about race with educational professionals can be

a tough topic of conversation in today's society. Many deal with feelings of anxiety, guilt, defensiveness, and even anger when having conversations about the disparities that certain races experience over others (Ukpokodu, 2002).

The literature on the disproportionalities of Black students in regards to discipline is growing. Given the way in which race and racism operate, it is essential that educational researchers explore the role of race when examining the educational experiences of Black students. By studying disproportionalities and the successes and challenges of SW-PBIS, this study helps to build knowledge and capacity to schools in Brevard County and beyond.

1.8 Organization of the Study

This dissertation is organized into five chapters. Chapter I has included the introduction and purpose, background, significance, research questions and limitations of study. Chapter II gives an overview of the literature and research that is related to this study. Chapter III outlines the mixed method approach (qualitative/quantitative), methodology, collection techniques (instruments), data and analysis. Chapter IV discusses the research findings and gives an interpretation of the data provided. Chapter V presents conclusions, interpretations and recommendations for educational professionals.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

2.1 Introduction

This literature review is an examination of the disproportionalities related to discipline that Black males face while enrolled in the public school system. The implications of these disparities have a direct impact on the success of these students. The literature review also discusses other disparities that keep Black students from getting ahead. The literature review concludes with a discussion on Positive Behavior Support programs and the benefits schools have seen that are implementing them.

Historical Perspective

“Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere.” Martin Luther King Jr., Letter from
Birmingham Jail, April 16, 1963

In the late 1800’s all the way through the 1960’s, Jim Crow laws legalized segregation in the United States. These Jim Crow laws made segregation a normal way of life in the United States (Orfield, 1993). Because of desegregation, there was a distinct difference between what White students and what Black students had access to. Fairclough (2004), described school buildings assigned to Blacks as “run-down, inadequate, and in poor repair”. Schools had limited curriculum, hand-me-down materials and texts, overcrowded classrooms, inadequate transportation, unqualified teachers, and even a shorter school year (Fairclough, 2004). One reason for the shortened school year was that Black males often had poor attendance based on if a crop need to be planted or harvested during the school year (Horsford & McKenzie, 2008).

The 1954 Supreme Court ruling in the *Brown v. Board of Education* was a major turning point in America’s educational history (Zirkel, 2004). The Supreme Court ruled that state

segregation laws for students of color were unconstitutional. The ruling outlawed the “separate but equal” notion as it applied to public schooling. The justices found that segregating students had damaging effects and that denying these students was a violation of their Fourteenth Amendment rights (Brown v. Board, 1954). In 1955, the court also ordered the desegregation plans to be implemented “with all deliberate speed” (Patterson, 2001, p. XIV). Black students were to be given facilities, curriculum, qualified teachers, and educational opportunities that were equal to that of White students. Upon this ruling, districts across the United States began developing plans to combine Black and White students into one cohesive educational system (Brown v. Board, 1954). Many school districts took action to re-zone neighborhoods and create mandatory busing systems (Horsfield & McKenzie, 2008). This was met with much resistance from students, teachers, administrators and parents at these formerly all-White schools. According to Mickelson (2001), some school districts created pupil placement laws that allowed schools to choose where to place Black students. These placements were based on student academic preparation, moral character, conduct, and health. These laws caused Black students to lose the opportunity to be educated with White students even with the Brown v. Board decision. Many Black students were placed in lower level classes for students with lower academic achievement, which limited their access to the best curriculum and instruction. He (2001), identifies these practices to the current trend in the United States of placing African American students in special education programs and lower income schools by zoning. Students who are disengaged during lesson because they are bored or don’t understand, tend to act out. This leads to behavior problems and exclusionary consequences.

One of the most well-known examples of continued racism, in regards to education, after Brown, was the Little Rock Crisis. Central High School in Little Rock, Arkansas, began its

integration with nine Black teenagers. The Governor of Arkansas, Orval Faubus, brought in the National Guard to stop these students from entering the school, despite the Brown ruling. The Brown ruling stated, “School authorities have the primary responsibility for elucidating, assessing, and solving these problems” (Brown v. Board of Education, 1954, para. 2a). In the 1960’s, civil rights activists overthrew the de jure segregation in public schools. With this movement, many White parents moved their students to middle class suburban neighborhood schools and left African American students in under-resourced public schools located in inner city areas (Adams & Sanders, 2003).

Since these events, progress has been made in providing equal access to quality education for all students. To understand the current discrepancies in disciplinary data, it is helpful to turn to patterns over the last fifty years. Schools have desegregated special education laws have been created, and federal programs such as Title I have been established to regulate disparities in public education (Zirkel, 2004, Losen & Gillespie, 2012). Even after more than 60 years since Brown v. Board, however, there is a continued pattern of lower academic achievement, and higher rates of suspension and expulsion for minority students as compared to their non-minority peers (Zirkel, 2004, Losen & Gillespie, 2012). I discuss these academic disparities next.

2.2 Academic Disparities

In their study on educational disparities in the United States, Baldwin & Rahman (2009), analyze NAEP data samples from 1992 to 2007 to understand how Black Americans in public education are over-represented in special education programs and under-represented in gifted programs, and advanced placement classes. This research suggests that Black students are not gaining access to programs that push them ahead in their academics. National Achievement

measures that data back to 1969, as recorded by the NAEP, show that there is a consistent pattern of lower achievement for Blacks and other minority students in the United States (NAEP, 2016). During the 1970's and 1980's the achievement gap did decrease slightly, as Black students made gains on standardized test scores. Academically speaking, even with schools attempting to integrate all races in schools, there is a significant difference between White and other minority students (Vannerman, Hamilton, Baldwin, & Rahman, 2009). Ladson-Billings (2006) argues that what has been known as an "achievement gap" between Black and White students should be more appropriately labeled an "education debt," because educational opportunities in the United States have always been inequitable.

2.3 Achievement Gap

Addressing the achievement gap has become an imperative for the entire nation (Duncan, 2012). Minority groups, such as Black students, have shown a lower academic achievement level which limits the ability to graduate, pursue post-secondary education, and can even limit their earnings as an adult (Skiba, 2007). As societal needs are creating a growing demand for an educated people in the United States, the enduring achievement gap continues to have harmful effects on individuals and society as a whole (DOE, 2015). The causes of the achievement gap are multi-faceted and there is not an easy fix to this widespread problem. Despite this fact, the educational and political systems have an economic and moral obligation to close this gap.

At the national level, data from the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) is used to track the achievement of students across the United States. These data have been tracking the achievement gap for many years. The NAEP uses a representative sampling of students to provide information on how the nation as a whole is performing academically in

reading and math. The NAEP uses data at a group level and does not track individual student scores. Reading and math are tested to students in grades four, eight and twelve. According to NAEP data, the achievement gap was beginning to narrow in the 1970's and 1980's, but began to grow again in the 1990's when the accountability movement began to be employed in districts nationwide (NAEP, 2015).

Nationally, the 2015 National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP, 2015) test scores show African American 4th graders achievement scores in reading and math were noticeably lower than the achievement levels for White students. For example, 51% of White students were proficient in Math, while only 19% of Black students were proficient in Math. The same results were found in the Reading assessment, 48% of White students met proficiency in Reading, while only 18% of Black students met the proficiency level (National Assessment of Educational Progress, 2016). NAEP assessments choose students randomly from across the United States to get a clear picture of how the nation's students are performing.

2.4 Over-Representation in Special Education

Lower academic achievement can be one of the causes of Black students' over-representation in special education. This over-representation has been thought of as one of the most substantial issues that has faced the U.S public school system (Donovan & Cross, 2002). The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) mandates that all individuals with a disability have rights to a free appropriate public education (FAPE) and mandates non-discriminatory assessment, identification, and placement of children with disabilities. IDEA specifically states that children are not to be identified as disabled based on race or disadvantages due to their environment or linguistic differences (Donovan & Cross, 2002).

Even with these directives in place, Black students are significantly over-represented in special education. Black students are 2.41 times more likely than White students to be identified as having mental retardation, 1.13 times more likely to be labeled as learning disabled, and 1.68 times as likely to be found to have an emotional or behavioral disorder (Klingner et al., 2005). A child's race and ethnicity considerably impact the student's chances of being misidentified, misclassified, and improperly staffed into special education programs. Variables such as language, systemic biases, poverty, assessment practices, and professional development opportunities for teachers have been alluded to as factors that play a role in disproportionate representation (Losen & Orfield, 2002). Black males who are identified as having "challenging behaviors" are referred for special education services for emotional disabilities more often than White males with the same behaviors (Losen & Orfield, 2002). The U.S. Department of Education (2015) also reports that Black students are labeled as emotionally disturbed at twice the rate of their White peers, over twice as likely to receive special education services for emotional disturbances than other subgroups, and three times as likely to be labeled as intellectually disabled over their White peers (DOE, 2015). These students who face disparities are more likely to encounter a limited and less rigorous curriculum. Lower expectations for these students can lead to weakened academic opportunities (Harry & Klingner, 2006). Low income Black males receiving special education services have the highest suspension rates of any subgroup (Skiba, et al., 2003).

2.5 Under-Representation in Gifted Programs

While Black students are over-represented in special education programs in the U.S., Black students are under-represented in gifted and accelerated programs. Black students are

16.7% of the total student population in the United States, yet only 9.8% of the students in gifted programming are Black, and Black students are underrepresented by as much as 55% nationally in gifted programs according to the U.S. Department of Education (2015). The majority of students participating in gifted and talented programs in the U.S. are White (Baldwin, 2004). The National Academy of Sciences report that only 3% of Black students are identified as gifted, while 7.5% of White students are labeled as gifted (Baldwin, 2004). Another statistic that gives evidence to the under-representation in gifted programs is “Black students are only 59% as likely to receive gifted services as would be predicted if their gifted participation was proportionate to their presence in the broader student population” (Grissom, Rodriguez, & Kern, 2015). One of the major issues with under-representation of minorities in the gifted program includes confusion about how to identify gifted minority children, because these students may be under performing on typical measures, such as IQ tests or other standardized achievement tests. Strategies have been created to address this problem, some of these strategies include incorporating more culturally relevant indicators of ability (e.g., oral expressiveness for verbal ability) into identification protocols (Ford, 1996); the use of performance-based assessments (Sarouphim, 1999; VanTassel-Baska, et al., 2007); the use of nonverbal ability tests (VanTassel-Baska et al., 2007); and the use of different cutoff scores based on appropriate norming groups (Lohman, 2005).

Taken together, these studies demonstrate that inequalities persist in the education of Black students compared to White students. In the areas of academics, placement in special education, and gifted education, studies find that Black students are disproportionately represented. It is in this larger context that adults in school address behavior and disciplinary concerns. I turn to these now.

2.6 Discipline Disparities

Studies have revealed disparities in schools' use of exclusionary disciplinary practices for more than 40 years (Skiba, 2000, Zirkel, 2004, Losen & Gillespie, 2012). This research also shows that African Americans were as much as three times as likely to be suspended than that of their White classmates (Skiba, 2000). Skiba (2000) and his research team asked the question, "Are Black students engaging in higher rates of rule violations or more severe problem behaviors than other groups of student?" After analyzing referral data from middle schools in the Mid-West, they determined that that Black students are not only receiving more ODR's than other races, but are also receiving harsher consequences for behavior issues that are less severe than their classmates. The reasons for the referrals were also very different, White students were sent to the office for blatant rule violations such as smoking, out of assigned area, and vandalism; while Black students were referred to the office for subjective offenses like disrespect, off-task behavior, and excessive noise or talking. This pattern of interpreting student behavior leads to an increased likelihood of disparities in discipline.

Research reports also indicate that Black students generally score lower on standardized tests especially when they are more likely to be suspended than their White classmates (Finkel, 2010). Studies have shown that when students are exposed to constant exclusionary discipline practices, time in the classroom is reduced which results in lower academic achievement for Black students (Johns, Crowley, & Guetzloe, 2008). Evidence supports that schools are disproportionately using discipline practices based on a student's race, economic status, gender, and disability category.

Skiba (2002) and his research team from The Equity Project at Indiana University reviewed discipline data in an urban setting and the data revealed that white students are sent to

the office on disciplinary referrals much more frequently for offenses that are subjective in nature and easy to document (smoking, vandalism, skipping class, obscenities). While Black students are sent to the office on a disciplinary referral for offenses that can be seen as subjective in nature (e.g., disrespect, excessive noise, threatening behavior, and loitering.) This provides evidence that when offenses require a “judgment-call”, black students are disproportionately identified. This proves a need for teacher training in positive behavior management strategies (Skiba et al., 2002).

Other studies related to discipline disparities have revealed possible reasons for students to act out in the learning environment. Kratochwill (N.D.), discusses how students are often found misbehaving in class when they are disengaged from the lesson or do not easily understand it. He goes on to explain that disruptions in classrooms occur in relation to the teacher’s ability to provide “engaging instruction” and in managing the learning environment. As engagement in the classroom increases, misbehavior tends to decrease. When administrators are consistently using exclusionary discipline practices, students will get further and further behind. Students must be taught appropriate school behavior and social skills in order to succeed in and out of the classroom.

Black students have higher rates of office referrals, suspensions and expulsions from school (Cartledge & Kourea, 2008). Being removed from the classroom is an experience that is all too common for Black students. National data show that Black and Hispanic students are suspended more often and for longer periods of time than their White peers. One out of six Black students are suspended, which is three times higher than that of White students. This study also suggests that the reason for this disparity is not because Black students have an increased rate in misbehavior, but the difference exists in the disciplinary actions by school

administrators (Losen & Gillespie, 2012). Disproportionate rates of suspension seem to begin in elementary school where Black students are two to three times as likely to receive an out of school suspension and 50% of all Black students' experience at least one suspension in during their time in elementary school (Raffaele-Mendez & Knoff, 2003).

2.7 Approaches to School Discipline

Over the last 40 years, there have been multiple debates on how to best address disciplinary issues in schools. Schools have experimented and adopted a number of approaches. Some schools allow teachers to choose their own behavior management systems in the classroom, while other schools adopt a school-wide plan that all teachers and students are expected to follow. Districts also can play a role in defining disciplinary policy. In Brevard County, schools are given the autonomy to choose their discipline plan or program while still following the county discipline matrix. This matrix lists discipline infractions as levels and a menu of consequences that administrators can hand out. This keeps consequences for certain infractions uniform across the county.

One of the oldest forms of school discipline is corporal punishment. Corporal Punishment refers to paddling, spanking, or other forms of physical punishment used in schools. Many states have gotten rid of this type of discipline due to the harmful nature of it, however, 19 states still allow it (Gutierrez, 2016). While it is still legal in the state of Florida, it is not widely used as often times it is seen as a form of child abuse. Florida Statutes do not require schools to get parental permission prior to paddling a student, however, many school districts send home a waiver prior to the start of the school year asking for permission from parents (Statelaws,2017).

A number of schools rely on exclusionary discipline practices to address disciplinary issues. Exclusionary discipline involves removing a student from class and instructional time. This can be as simple as being sent to the office on a discipline referral, suspended, and even expelled (Skiba, 2002). Suspension removes students from the classroom and often fails to provide other “alternative education, resulting in learning deficits that can impact the student’s continued success in life” (Gutierrez, 2016).

Some schools have adopted Zero Tolerance policies that are “specific, consistent, and harsh punishments” which usually result in suspension or expulsion for students who break certain rules that violate the school code of conduct (Skiba, 2000). These policies were created as a way to maintain a safe and orderly learning environment. Most Zero Tolerance policies are defined around weapons, drugs, and violence.

A newer program that schools are adopting is the Culturally Responsive Classroom. Educators that have a good understanding of student cultures are better equipped to detect early warning signs of academic difficulty and even decode student behavior. A culturally responsive teaching approach uses student culture in all aspects of their learning (Ladson-Billings, 1995). This shows students that they are respected and valued for their cultural differences and that they are expected to succeed. This also empowers the students intellectually, emotionally and even socially. Other researchers reveal that by improving educators’ cultural ability to work with students can be a new way to intervene with academic and behavioral gaps. Researchers have also expressed how misconceptions of culturally-based behavior can lead to conflict and exclusionary discipline practices (Skiba, 2000). Culturally responsive education aims to deliver respect for all cultures while recognizing the disparities that individuals from some groups may

face (Ladson-Billings, 1995). This programs has been proposed as an approaches that offers promise in improving outcomes for minority students both academically and behaviorally.

2.8 School Wide Positive Behavioral Interventions and Support Programs

School Wide Positive Behavioral Intervention and Support Programs are yet another approach. SW-PBIS programs are gaining more popularity in public schools, in 1990 over 5,000 schools in the United States were implementing a SW-PBIS program (Sugai, 2009). Many students do not arrive at school ready to learn, issues in their personal lives can take a toll on them and those issues can make their way into the classroom. SW-PBIS is a process that if used with fidelity, can help teach students procedures and coping strategies that can help them not only do better in school, but in social settings outside of school as well (Carr et. al, 2002).

SW-PBIS was designed to reduce disruptive school behavior by using proactive discipline strategies to redirect student behavior. School stakeholders work together to create high expectations that will produce a positive and safe learning environment (Carr et. al, 2002). School use positive reinforcement throughout the day for students showing positive behavior. Teachers and staff model appropriate behaviors and social skills in all school settings. Students who have difficulty meeting these expectations will move to Tier 2 and Tier 3 behavior interventions. These interventions are individualized for students and based on student need and monitored regularly (Horner et. al, 2005).

School-Wide Positive Behavioral Interventions and Support programs have recently gained attention as a possible remedy for the growing problem of disproportionate discipline (Skiba, 2007). Disproportionality among Black students, both academically and in regards to behavior, has a variety of possible reasons, which many are out of teachers' and administrators'

control. However, one remedy that offers benefits to reducing disparities in academics and discipline is increased instructional time. Having students actively engaged in academic activities has been shown to directly positively impact academic achievement as well as student behavior. When students are consistently given exclusionary disciplinary consequences they fall further behind academically and are more likely to act out in class because they do not understand what is being taught (Skiba, 2000). Exclusionary discipline practices are consequences given for behavior that take students out of the learning environment. These consequences may be suspensions, expulsions, or even just being sent out of the room for a timeout.

Skiba (2007) researched the relationship between SW-PBIS programs and discipline disparities. His research showed that levels of disproportionality actually increased following the implementation of the program, however the overall rate of exclusionary discipline practices (suspension, expulsion) school-wide did decrease (Skiba, 2007). These studies show that exclusionary discipline practice rates have decreased school-wide with the implementation of a SW-PBIS program, however disparity rates did not decrease. Schools that have implemented components of social skills, character education, and responsive classroom management in addition to Positive Behavioral Interventions and Support programs, tend to be more equitable in distributions of referrals and consequences (Skiba, 2007). These programs have a goal to keep students in the classroom so that they can learn and reach their potential academically.

SW-PBIS research shows that exclusionary discipline practices, such as suspension or expulsion, are not effective in reducing problem behaviors. In fact, the use of suspension is linked with increased drop-out rates and juvenile incarceration (Skiba, et al., 2003). Researchers

are recommending the use of a School-Wide Positive Behavioral Interventions Supports program to reduce disproportionate disciplinary in schools (Drakeford, 2004).

SW-PBIS programs include proactive discipline strategies for defining, teaching, and supporting appropriate student behaviors and creating positive school environments. Advocates for SW-PBIS identify behavior supports in three tiers. Behavioral supports are defined as primary (school-wide), secondary (classroom), and tertiary (individual). The goal for problem behaviors are that they become less effective for students and a more positive behavior replaces the negative behavior (Skiba, 2007). Tier 1 behavior interventions can be as simple as hallway procedures or lunchroom behavior, while tier 2 and tier 3 interventions are more student specific and created around data. Rewards are often given for displaying positive and appropriate behavior. School training is necessary for all staff to understand the definitions and procedures for implementing these positive changes. Social skills training is another large piece of the program. Students are taught the appropriate ways to behave in social settings. Many teachers make the assumption that students know how to behave in different settings. This assumption can be misleading and often be the cause of many discipline referrals. Teachers need to be able to distinguish between student behavior that is a manifestation of their cultural differences with behavior that actually does warrant a discipline referral. Teachers' good classroom management skills, including teaching behavioral expectations through the use of modeling, can prevent discipline problems in the future (Skiba, 2007). As a whole, the school becomes a more positive and safe learning environment.

Studies suggest that SW-PBIS has several unique features that make it effective and long lasting. SW-PBIS defines and teaches positive school-wide behavior expectations to all students. This program establishes a steady routine in which all school staff acknowledge positive

behavior and appropriately reward students. This concept of reward routines minimizes the likelihood that negative behavior problems will accidentally be rewarded. SW-PBIS also focuses on analyzing discipline data to guide intervention efforts. If a certain intervention is not proven to be effective, the intervention will be modified to a different intervention. SW-PBIS promotes establishing a clear, consistent, and positive social culture within the school and community. This helps to reduce the challenge of discipline disparities by teaching students clear expectations for behavior and social interaction (Fallon, O’Keefe, & Sugai, 2012). This does not leave it up for the students to interpret or for teachers to assume that students already know what appropriate behavior looks like. SW-PBIS programs focus on keeping students in the classroom and learning instead of removing them from instruction (Fallon, O’Keefe, & Sugai, 2012).

2.9 Summary

Black students have faced disparities for many decades and we continue to see patterns of unfair practices still being used in schools today. Black students are overrepresented in areas related to discipline and special education than other racial categories. They are also more likely to experience grade retentions and have the second highest dropout rates at 22% (Kewal et al., 2007). Many behavioral programs exist to decrease the number of school-wide discipline problems. These programs all focus on different ways to intervene with discipline problems either before or after the incident. Schools choose a discipline program based on their needs and behavioral beliefs. With the research surrounding the school to prison pipeline and the percentage of minority adults living in poverty, suggests the potential consequences of ignoring disparities will be very harmful.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

The purpose of this study is to examine what aspects of a School-Wide Positive Behavioral Interventions and Support Program principals attribute to successful reduction of risk ratios of Black males in elementary schools. To explore this, I conducted a mixed-method analysis in which the risk ratio analysis provided the context for exploring principals' explanations and beliefs in the qualitative section (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004). Mixed-method research has been described as a third research paradigm with "pragmatism as its underlying philosophy". Pragmatism, according to researchers, should focus on the outcome with regards to methods; in other words, "research approaches should be mixed in ways that offer the best opportunities for answering important research questions" (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004, p. 16). According to Johnson and Christensen (2014), mixed-method research will take different strengths and weaknesses in a study and make it less likely to miss something or make a mistake (p. 53). The study's focus was to look at schools quantitatively that have been previously identified as having a high risk ratio for Black males, that now implement the SW-PBIS program well, and look at common practices that have made their programs successful and reduced their risk ratios. The design of this study was chosen in order to examine commonalities and differences in SW-PBS programs that have successfully reduced their risk ratios and compare them to schools that are still struggling. In this section, I discuss the design of the study, data collection, and data analysis.

3.2 Research Questions

Towards this purpose, I explored the following research questions:

- 1) Do schools that have a School-Wide Positive Behavioral Interventions and Support Program have a smaller discipline disparity rates than schools that have not?
- 2) Do the schools with longstanding SW-PBIS programs have lower disparity rates than those schools with newer programs?
- 3) What do school administrators attribute to a successful SW-PBIS program at their school?

3.3 Design of the Study

As just described, I conducted a mixed methods approach to explore my question of what aspects of a School-Wide Positive Behavioral Interventions and Support Program principals attribute to successful reduction of risk ratios of Black males in elementary schools. By using this design, I anticipated my qualitative and quantitative data to be complementary of one another and give substantial insight into decreasing discipline disparities.

I used a quantitative approach to first explore the first two research questions. Quantitative researchers hope to use their data to find common patterns and generalize broadly (Johnson & Christensen, 2014, p.55). For this study I used quantitative discipline data over a ten-year period to examine risk ratio increases and decreases across the county. By identifying the schools that have seen large decreases in risk ratios and also implement a SW-PBIS, I was able to distinguish which schools to include in the qualitative portion of the study.

A qualitative case study approach was used to answer the final research question and examine administrators' experiences with SW-PBIS and to explore their perceptions of how it

has lowered the disparity rates in their own schools. The qualitative approach is valuable in adding depth, through open-ended interview questions, to the scope of the less closely examined quantitative data school risk ratios (Patton, 2015). The decision to use this design was to obtain a broader understanding of what schools are using to decrease their risk ratios. Once the schools were identified through the quantitative analysis, qualitative interviews took place to look for possible similarities in responses to questions regarding decreasing risk ratios.

3.4 Setting

This study took place in Brevard Public Schools. Brevard Public Schools is the 48th largest school district in the United States and the 10th largest district in the state of Florida. It is home to approximately 9,000 staff members that serve over 73,000 students each year. Brevard has a total of 82 schools, 20 special centers, and ten charter schools. Charter schools and special centers are not included in the study. Brevard’s goal is to serve their community “and enhance students’ lives by delivering the highest quality education in a culture of dedication, collaboration and learning” (Brevard Public Schools, 2017). This sample of all 55 traditional elementary schools will be referred to as the general sample. No individual student information, or school name will be identified for this study.

Table 1.

Brevard County Demographics Compared to the State of Florida

Racial/Ethnic Group	District	State %
	%	
White	62.5	40.2

Table 1 continued

Racial/Ethnic Group	District %	State %
Black/African American	14.7	22.7
Hispanic/Latino	13.5	30.7
Asian	2.1	2.6
Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	0.1	0.1
Two or more races	0.2	0.3
Disabled	15.8	13.0
Economically Disadvantaged	48.2	58.4
ELL	4.4	12.4
Migrant		0.5
Female	48.5	48.7
Male	51.5	51.4
Total	100.0	100.0

3.5 Population

The population for this study was 55 elementary schools within Brevard Public Schools. Risk ratio data was pulled and analyzed for each school to identify schools that have made decreases over the last three years. I used the district database that I have administrative permissions to use. This database tracks student information such as demographics, special programs, and referral

incidents and outcomes. Reports are run monthly by the school district to determine which schools are showing evidence of a risk ratio that is higher for certain subgroups of students over others. This data was then compared to the list of elementary schools that are using a School-Wide Positive Behavioral Interventions and Support Program. Risk ratios represent the probability that an outcome will occur in relation to a comparison group (McIntosh et. al, 2014). School administrators from schools that implement the program that have seen success with lowering their risk ratio through the use of SW-PBIS and those that have not been successful lowering their risk ratio were interviewed on the implementation of their SW-PBIS program. These schools implement the program with fidelity and record data from their program to track progress and achievement.

3.6 Data Collection and Analysis

In this study, I collected school discipline data from the district student database over the years of 2007-2017. This database provided school enrollment data, demographic rates, referral rates for schools, referral rates by race, suspension rates by school, and suspension rates by race. A report was obtained from the county's student services department that gave each elementary school's risk ratio for the past ten school years. The demographic chart assisted me in gaining greater insight and perspective in analyzing schools and discipline data. The district SW-PBIS directory assisted me in identifying referral and suspension rates in SW-PBIS schools. This data allowed me to answer research question 1; Do schools that have implemented a School-Wide Positive Behavioral Interventions and Support Program have a smaller discipline disparity rate than schools that have not? I was looking for declines in risk ratio rates over the last ten years in elementary schools. I compared this data to the directory of schools that use SW-PBIS and I was

able to see if the schools that do implement the program have lower risk ratios than those that do not.

Table 2.

Elementary Schools Discipline Data Snapshot

School	Enrollment	Black Enrollment	White Enrollment	Black Male ODR's (Percentage of Referrals)	White Male ODR's (Percentage of Referrals)	Risk Ratio for Black Males (Calculation)
A	364	89	275	4 (4%)	162 (59%)	0.07 (4/59)
B	400	100	300	60 (60%)	60 (20%)	3.0 (60/20)
C	548	177	371	21 (12%)	223 (60%)	0.2 (12/60)
D	806	354	452	128 (36%)	64 (14%)	2.57 (36/14)
E	636	212	424	62 (29%)	67 (16%)	1.81 (29/16)

Turning to research question 2; Do schools with longstanding SW-PBIS programs have lower disparity rates than those schools with newer programs? I analyzed the risk ratios for SW-PBIS schools that have been in existence at the school for more than three years. They were compared to SW-PBIS schools with less than three years of implementation. Risk ratios are the most common way to measure disproportionality in schools. It is also the only measure that can be used on its own while still providing a complete picture of a group's risk (Bollmer, Bethel, Garrison-Mogren, & Braun, 2007). Risk ratios represent the likelihood of the outcomes (ex. ODR's) for one group in relation to a comparison group. Risk ratios are calculated by dividing the risk index of the group by the risk index of a comparison group.

$$\text{Risk Ratio} = \text{Risk Index for Racial Group} / \text{Risk Index for Comparison Group}$$

The risk indices for racial groups are calculated by dividing the number of referrals (from the racial group) by the total number of students in that racial group.

For example, if Black students receive 60% of ODR's (Office Discipline Referrals) and the comparison group of White students were receiving 20% of the ODR's, the risk ratio would be 3.0 ($.60/.20= 3.0$). So therefore, this risk ratio shows that Black students are three times as likely to receive an ODR than students from the White racial groups at their school.

For this study, I looked at the risk ratios for Black males in elementary schools over the last three years (2014-2015, 2015-2016 and 2016-2017) and compared them with schools that implement a SW-PBIS program. The data was pulled from the district database school by school. All student identifying information was removed prior to analysis. Therefore, specific numbers of ODR's and OSS were pulled and disaggregated by race. Risk ratios were calculated and organized into the chart listed in Figure 1. For this study, I explicitly looked at risk ratios for Black males compared with the rest of the school's population.

I then turn to the qualitative portion of my study to answer research question 3: What do school administrators attribute to a successful SW-PBIS program at their school? The qualitative part of this study gave insight into procedures and trends that these schools are using to successfully reduce their risk ratios. This part of the study provided important information on how these successful programs are implemented, and what aspects of the program can be duplicated in other schools to lower risk ratios.

3.7 Administrator Interviews

Interviews with all 25 SW-PBIS administrators were completed. Table 3 describes the administrators in years of experience. Principals that participated in the study had more time as

far as experience than assistant principals. Even though principals had more experience in the administrative position than assistant principals, six assistant principals completed the interview for their school as they were in charge of the discipline and SW-PBIS program at their school. After the interviews, two groups were formed; successful program administrators and less successful program administrators. The experiences and struggles that were discussed in the interviews are described in Chapter 4.

Table 3.

Administrator Participant Characteristics in Years

	Min.	Max	Median	Mode	<i>M</i>
Administrator Participants	1	15	4	3	4.88
Principal Participants	1	15	5	8	5.32
Assistant Principal Participants	1	6	3.5	4	3.5

3.8 Coding

An inductive coding process was used for this study. The purpose of the inductive approach is to allow research findings to emerge from the frequent or significant themes found in the data, without the restraints imposed by structured methodologies (Thomas, 2003). Interviews were conducted with an administrator from all 25 schools that implement a SW-PBIS program. All interviews were completed and coded with no identifiers. Principals were originally asked to complete the interview, however, six school interviews were completed with an assistant

principal as they were the ones who handled discipline or were the SW-PBIS contact for the school. Administrators were asked to respond to an interview that consisted of 20 open-ended questions. Administrators varied in their years of experience as well as years at their current school. Table 3 displays data describing the administrators that participated in the survey and their years of experience. Most principals had been at their current school for an average of eight years, with the longest being 15 years. Assistant Principals in this study have been at their current schools for approximately four years with the longest being six years. Four administrators revealed that this was their first year at their current school, however, all had previous experience as an administrator at another school that had a SW-PBIS program. Interviews were recorded and transcribed by a third party then coded using the Dedoose software program to look for similar themes in their responses. The transcriptionist was given the recordings and notes as well as the format for how they would be uploaded into the Dedoose program. Emerging themes developed by analyzing transcripts from the interviews that were conducted. The interview responses were analyzed to look for common themes that attributed to the reduction of risk ratios in schools. By using a computer program, such as Dedoose to assist qualitative data analysis, it ensures systematic analysis of representative instances of data. By using the recorded interview data then transcribing it using a third party, data can be objectively and comprehensibly, included into the study. These techniques can aid in problems of reliability and validity when conducting a study (Seale & Silverman, 1997).

Once interviews were transcribed and uploaded into Dedoose, they were analyzed for common themes. Themes were put into two categories, successful and less successful. The successful category consisted of data that described how successful schools lowered their disparity rates, while the less successful category described data from schools that have not been

able to lower their disparity rates. Successful programs had five themes emerge: training, data meetings, finding the root of the behavior, high expectations, and support for teachers. These codes were reflective of areas that the administrators felt contributed to the success of the program. Less successful programs also spoke on the themes that the successful programs discussed, however, less successful programs had three themes emerge that came through as negative reasons as to why their programs were not as successful lowering their risk ratios: teacher turnover, student mobility, and teacher buy-in. The themes were reflective of reasons that administrators felt that their programs were not successful at lowering their disparity rate.

3.9 Positionality

My positionality in this project is motivated by working for multiple years in Title I schools and seeing children spend more time out of the classroom due to behavior issues than in the classroom learning. My current position as a school administrator has given me experiences in student discipline and academic achievement. Prior to deciding the methods related to this study, great consideration was placed on how to ensure the validity of the data that I analyze as an employee within this school system. As the primary investigator, I am a known entity in the school district where the research will be taking place. This can be seen as an advantage in regards to the access to data I have as the investigator. A disadvantage to working in the district that I will be conducting my study in is that some administrators may not feel comfortable providing this information to me as they may fear their anonymity might be compromised. I will not be using my own school as a source of data or interviews, this allowed me to establish relationships with other school sites to measure the positive impact that SW-PBIS has had on their risk ratios. I am controlling for my potential bias by refraining from interjecting in the

interviews with my own experiences. I was able to be objective in my interviews with school administrators as an outsider of the school with internal knowledge of the community and the school system.

This mixed-method study provided valuable information on early interventions that can lower disproportionality rates in elementary schools. If a School-Wide Positive Behavioral Interventions and Support Program is implemented with fidelity in a school with disproportionate discipline, over time, risk ratios will decrease.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

4.1 Introduction

This chapter will discuss the findings from quantitative analyses and interviews with school administrators. The purpose of this research study was to examine the discipline disparity rates of Black males in elementary schools in a district, and analyze what effect a SW-PBIS program had on the overall risk ratios in these elementary schools. I began by analyzing the characteristics of the elementary schools in the district in regards to their discipline data. This data showed referral rates, Title I statuses, and enrollment data. I then analyzed risk ratios in the targeted sample to look for differences in SW-PBIS programs as well as qualitative data from school administrators on what makes their program successful versus programs that are not showing declines in their discipline disparities. As discussed earlier, discipline disparities refer to having a problem with one race receiving more referrals than another. Risk ratios refer to the actual ratios of what one race—in this case Black males-- receives over another—White males. The chapter will conclude with findings on quantitative and qualitative data based on the SW-PBIS implementation in these schools.

4.2 Establishment of the Sample

School and referral data were collected for all 55 elementary schools in the county. School-level data included total student enrollment, enrollment by race, Title I eligibility, referral rates, risk ratios, and SW-PBIS status. The risk ratios were based on Office Discipline Referrals, also referred to as ODR's that show the risk that Black males face getting a referral over a White male. A risk ratio over 1.0 shows that there is a disparity between two or more races. This study

focused on the risk ratios between White males and Black males. Table 3 describes the characteristics of the 55 elementary schools included in the general sample.

Table 4.

*School Demographics from All Elementary Schools in Brevard County, 2017 **

School	Enrollment	Title I	White Enrollment	Black Enrollment	SW-PBIS
1	625	Title I	429	196	
2	479	Title I	366	113	X
3	536		442	94	
4	708	Title I	424	284	X
5	868		642	226	
6	473	Title I	257	216	
7	531	Title I	406	85	X
8	695	Title I	330	365	
9	415		284	131	X
10	599		486	113	X
11	572		407	165	X
12	550	Title I	180	370	
13	691		454	237	
14	806	Title I	452	354	X
15	364	Title I	275	89	X
16	648		531	117	
17	501	Title I	241	260	
18	534	Title I	304	230	X
19	886	Title I	498	388	X
20	680	Title I	560	120	X
21	395		276	119	
22	438		409	29	
23	800	Title I	329	471	X
24	706		424	282	
25	688		509	183	X
26	796	Title I	494	303	X
27	520		437	83	
28	679	Title I	331	348	X
29	699	Title I	413	286	
30	929		656	273	
31	580	Title I	223	357	
32	636	Title I	424	212	X
33	631	Title I	297	334	X
34	749	Title I	84	665	X
35	627	Title I	206	421	X

Table 4 continued

School	Enrollment	Title I	White Enrollment	Black Enrollment	SW-PBIS
36	391	Title I	244	147	X
37	457		334	123	
38	729		641	84	
39	803	Title I	396	407	
40	1011		669	342	
41	730		452	278	
42	465	Title I	174	191	X
43	369		268	101	
44	805		637	168	
45	536	Title I	274	262	X
46	560	Title I	253	307	X
47	548	Title I	371	177	X
48	347		172	75	
49	818	Title I	579	239	X
50	659		498	161	
51	517		355	162	
52	726	Title I	394	332	
53	578		408	170	
54	474		373	191	
55	476		434	32	

* *high risk ratio schools bolded.*

When analyzing the risk ratios, this study looked at overall ODR's and exclusionary discipline punishments (suspensions and time out of the classroom) comparing White males to Black males. When analyzing referral rates by race, the district discipline reports were disaggregated by White male ODR's and Black male ODR's. These rates began to measure the disproportionality of White and Black males. As a whole, the elementary schools in the district had an overall average of 1.02 in 2017 for Black males receiving discipline referrals. As a district, this average does not show a disparity for Black males in elementary school. Table 4 displays the risk ratios for Black males during the ten-year span of the study. Forty-nine of the

55 schools showed a risk ratio above 1.0 at least once during the ten years of the study. Risk ratios of 1.0 revealed that there was no difference between the target group and the rest of the school population (example- Black students who receive referrals and all other students at that school). Risk ratios that are higher than 1.0 suggest that there was an overrepresentation or disparity of having a higher risk to receive a referral. For example, if Black students have a risk ratio of 2.5, that indicates that Black students are 250% more likely to receive a referral than the rest of the school's population. School 11 from the sample shows a risk ratio for Black males as 3.0 in 2014. This rate means that a Black male is three times as likely to receive an ODR over a White male at the same school.

When looking at the minority rates of the schools that have a risk ratio over 1.0, the average minority rate was 42%. When looking at the minority rate for all 55 of the elementary schools, it was only 35%. This does not support a reasoning for why those schools have a higher risk ratio.

A total of 25 schools from the general sample implemented a SW-PBIS program. These schools are referred to as the targeted sample. From these 25 schools, two groups were formed, longstanding SW-PBIS schools (3+ years) and new programs. Of these schools, 16 had longstanding programs while only nine were considered newer programs. Longstanding programs had more training, experience, and time to make adjustments to their programs than the other schools.

Table 5.

*Risk Ratios for Black Males from 2007-2017**

School	RR 2007	RR 2008	RR 2009	RR 2010	RR 2011	RR 2012	RR 2013	RR 2014	RR 2015	RR 2016	RR 2017	SW- PBIS
1	0.49	1.2	1.12	1.37	1	1	1	0.12	1.2	0.97	1	
2	0.25	1	0.3	1	1	0.67	1	0.2	0.68	0.54	0.62	X
3	1	1.2	1	0.98	1	0.89	1	0	1	0.79	1	
4	2.73	3.24	4.3	3.65	1.99	2.37	1.87	2.21	2.12	2.3	2.21	X
5	1.16	1.2	1	1	1	0.98	1	0.23	1	0.96	1	
6	1.9	2.87	2.86	1.94	1	1.64	1.87	1.71	1.76	1.82	1.74	
7	1	1.13	1	1.22	5.73	2.1	1	0.77	0.98	0.62	0.71	X
8	1.17	1.67	1	1.47	1	1.29	1	1.33	1.93	1.22	1.19	
9	1	1.29	1	1.15	1	1.12	1	0.61	0.62	0.7	0.51	X
10	1.76	2.74	4	3.37	1	1.23	1	0.37	0.35	0.33	0.43	X
11	1	0.96	1	0.87	1	0.96	1.06	3	1.27	1	1	X
12	2.17	2.09	1.29	1.32	1.26	1	1	2.01	1.97	1.79	1.98	
13	2.8	1	1	1.02	1	0.09	1	1.42	1.21	1	1	
14	2.92	2.29	1	2.77	2.18	2.98	1.65	2.55	2.7	2.4	2.55	X
15	1	2.7	0.31	1.36	1.62	1	1	0.04	0.03	0.04	0.05	X
16	2.88	3.22	4.2	3.34	1	1.2	1.19	1	1	1	1	
17	1.96	1.09	2	2.27	1.13	1.67	1	1.33	1.33	1.7	1.8	
18	1.94	1.77	1	1.22	1	1.32	1	0.99	0.96	1.02	0.99	X
19	1	1.2	1	0.92	1	1	1	0.64	0.72	0.72	0.48	X
20	0.1	1.2	1	1.13	1	0.87	1	0.23	0.33	0.19	0.17	X
21	1.69	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	0	
22	1	1	1	1	1.2	1.1	1.06	1	1	1	0	
23	0.59	1.3	1	1.32	1	1.21	1.09	0.82	0.72	0.8	0.94	X
24	2.49	2.27	1	2.33	1	1.76	2.05	0.46	1	1	1	
25	1	1.23	1	1.53	1	1.29	9.62	0.97	0.96	0.98	97	X
26	1.84	1.97	1.65	1.98	1.04	1.2	1	2.37	2.6	2.14	2.37	X
27	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	
28	1	1.34	1	1.65	1.19	1.12	0.79	2.06	1.82	2.3	2.06	X
29	3.79	3.37	2.05	3.22	1.8	1.98	1	0.94	1.23	1.34	1.78	
30	2.67	2.21	1	1.2	1.09	1	1	0.51	1	1	1	
31	0.37	2.22	2.04	2.32	1	2.34	1.22	0.75	1.23	1.17	1.09	
32	1.55	2.22	2.5	2.36	1	1.76	1.18	1.71	1.71	1.58	1.85	X
33	1	1.87	1.72	1.65	2.41	1.58	1	1.56	2.12	1.67	1.46	X

Table 5 continued

School	RR 2007	RR 2008	RR 2009	RR 2010	RR 2011	RR 2012	RR 2013	RR 2014	RR 2015	RR 2016	RR 2017	SW- PBIS
34	0.85	1.34	1	1.23	1.2	1	1	0.49	1	0.29	0.2	X
35	1.28	2.78	2.22	1.23	1	2.43	4.23	1.74	1.74	0.9	ND	X
36	1.48	3.31	5.11	4.76	2.23	2.13	1	1.2	1.2	1.35	1.2	X
37	1	1.2	1	1	1	1	1.02	1.53	1.09	1	1	
38	2.78	2.01	3.87	2.38	1	1	1	1.1	1	1	1	
39	0.96	1.88	1.99	1.87	1.28	1.67	2.01	0.46	1.79	1.23	1.34	
40	2.96	2.2	1	1	1.7	1	1.39	1.89	1	1	1	
41	5.19	2.23	1	1	1	1	1	1.74	1	1	1	
42	1.34	1.67	1.97	1.98	2.21	2.03	1.11	0.56	0.63	0.75	0.3	X
43	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0.44	0.87	1	1	
44	1	1	1	1	8.6	1.3	1	0.56	1	1	0.97	
45	1.9	1.33	1	1.43	1.91	1.13	1	1.03	1.42	1.2	0.47	X
46	1.39	1.67	1.56	1.89	1.89	1.43	1.36	1.38	1.16	1.6	1.38	X
47	1	2.33	1.18	2.54	1	1.34	1	0.18	0.35	0.1	0.1	X
48	1	1	1.51	1.28	1.85	1.4	1	0.12	1	1	1	
49	1.48	2.21	1	3.66	8.96	3.88	1	0.97	0.98	0.99	0.94	X
50	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0.02	1	1	1	
51	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	
52	1.27	1.39	1.32	1.35	1.09	1.67	1	0.62	1.21	1.42	1.18	
53	2.2	1.4	1	1	1	1	1	0.54	1	1	1	
54	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	
55	4.07	2.66	2.58	1.45	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	

**Risk Ratios over 1.0 are bolded*

4.3 Research Question 1- Do schools that have a School-Wide Positive Behavioral

Interventions and Support Program have a smaller discipline disparity rates than schools that have not?

Findings from research question one revealed that schools that have a SW-PBIS program, did not have smaller risk ratios than those schools that do not implement the program. Over the

ten-year period analyzed in this study, schools that implemented SW-PBIS had an average disparity rate of 1.41 while schools that did not implement SW-PBIS had an average risk ratio of 1.31. So in answering this research question, the simple answer is no. In 2017, 20 of the schools that did not have the program had a risk ratio over 1.0, while 18 of the 25 that did use the program have a risk ratio over 1.0. Some schools did not need to implement the program because they were not seeing the same behaviors that other schools were.

Table 5 discloses similarities and differences between schools that were using the program and those that were not. The risk ratio for a Black male at a SW-PBIS school was double the risk ratio at a non-SW-PBIS school. Twenty-two of the 25 SW-PBIS schools were labeled Title I schools while only three of those schools not using the program were Title I.

Table 6.

School Characteristics from SW-PBIS Schools and Non SW-PBIS Schools

	Enrollment	Minority Rate	Referral Rate	Risk Ratios ODR	Risk Ratio Exclusionary Punishment	Percentage of Title I Schools
SWPBIS Schools	619.04	41%	0.87	1.10	1.03	88%
Non SW-PBIS Schools	638.88	31%	0.46	0.48	0.99	46%

When looking at Title I eligibility, 30 schools in the general sample received funding through Title I. Title I provides federal financial assistance to schools with high numbers of low-income families to help ensure all students can meet the expectations of the state standards. SW-PBIS schools that were Title I had an average risk ratio of 1.45, and schools that were not Title I had an average risk ratio of 1.14, a difference of 0.31. This led me to believe that Title I schools

were having more problems with discipline disparities than non-Title I schools. Title I schools were seeing more discipline issues with an increase in risk ratios due to several factors related to poverty levels (Skiba et al., 2002).

After further research, 70% of the non-SW-PBIS schools were located in highly affluent neighborhoods. The averages of household income from these non-SW-PBIS schools ranged from \$34,000 to \$135,000, while the average income from the schools that were using a SW-PBIS program was only \$29,000. This led me to believe that schools with higher poverty levels were implementing SW-PBIS programs because they were dealing with discipline issues that non-Title I schools were not. Several studies (Skiba, 2007, Poe-Yamagata, 2000, Losen & Gillespie, 2012), have shown a clear association between high childhood poverty rates and increases in the risk of involvement in juvenile and adult crime.

4.4 Research Question 2- Do schools with longstanding SW-PBIS programs have lower disparity rates than those schools with newer programs?

This question led me to filter out schools that do not implement a SW-PBIS program, approximately 55%. Of the 25 elementary schools that do use SW-PBIS, 17 fall into the category of having a program for more than three years. For this question, I used data from the last three years of the 25 schools using the SW-PBIS program. The data from the 25 SW-PBIS schools reveals that schools that have been implementing the program for more than three years had an average risk ratio of 0.88 for Black males, which showed no risk. While schools that had been using the program for less time had an average risk ratio of 1.50 for Black males, a difference of 0.62. When analyzing the exclusionary discipline data from these two categories of programs, longstanding programs also had a much lower exclusionary rate than newer programs.

Longstanding SW-PBIS programs had an exclusionary rate 0.76 while new programs had an exclusionary rate of 1.38. Table 4 looks at the discipline data for schools with longstanding programs and those with newer programs. Minority rates from both longstanding programs and newer programs had similar minority rates, 0.38 and 0.43. This shows that both categories of school were similar in minority make-up. The Title I make-up of these schools was dissimilar. Schools with longstanding programs showed a Title I population of 97%, while only 77% of the new program schools were listed as Title I. Table 4 shows that Title I schools who had been implementing the program longer had a smaller risk ratio than those who had just begun the implementation. While the individual school data showed that some schools in the longstanding program group still showed discipline disparities for Black males, overall, findings for research question two reveal that longstanding programs had lower risk ratios than new programs.

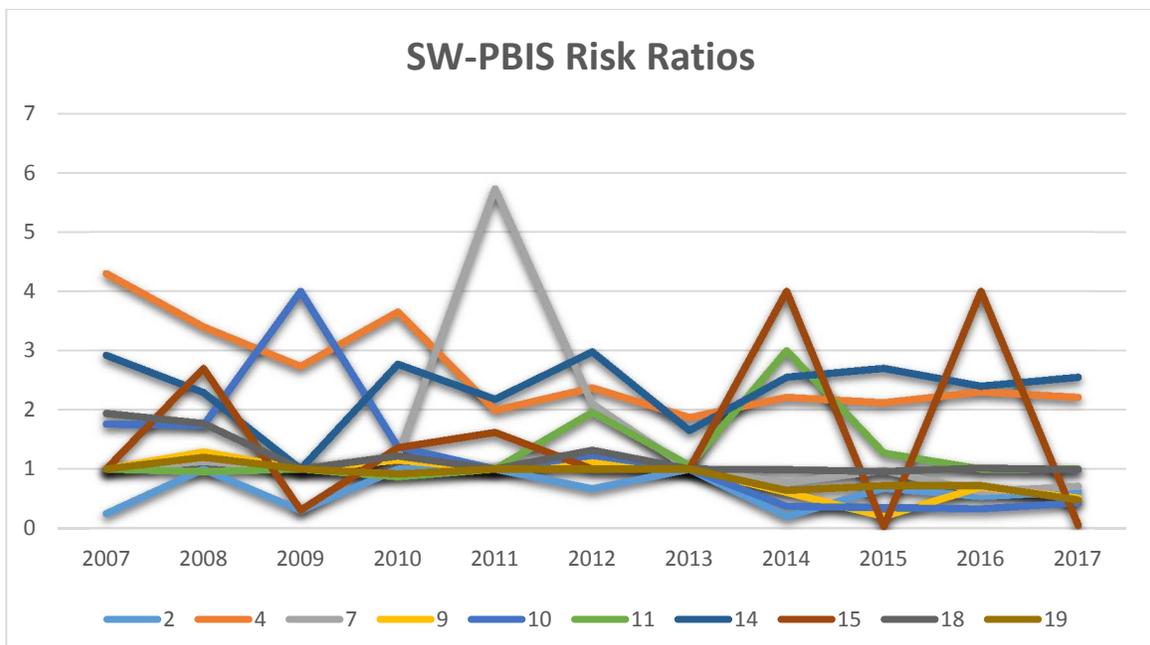


Figure 1.

Risk Ratios from SW-PBIS Schools from 2007-2017 (First Half)

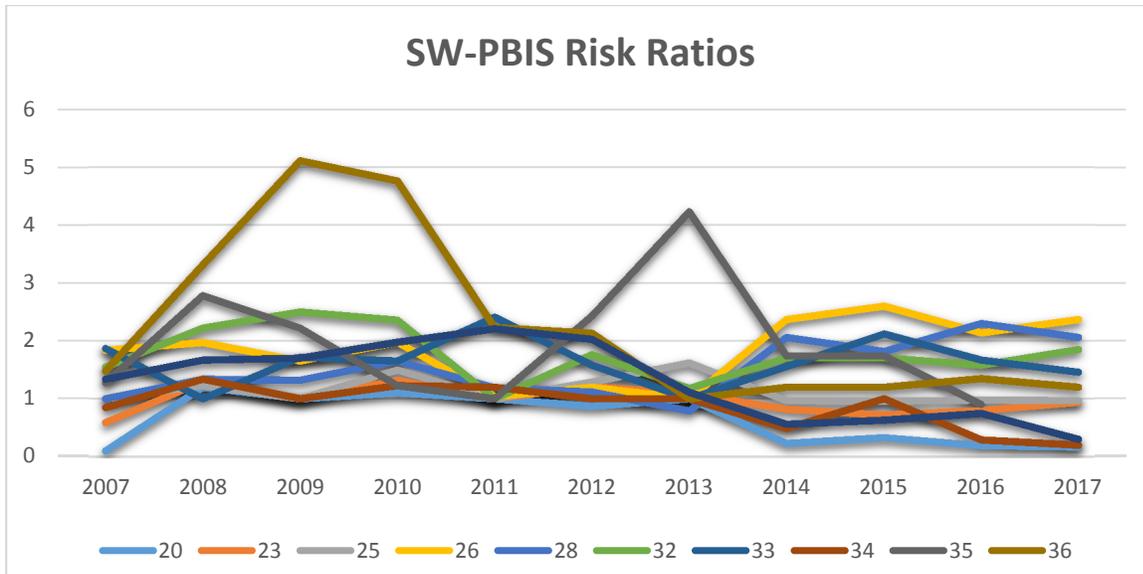


Figure 2.

Risk Ratios from SW-PBIS Schools from 2007-2017 (Second Half)

Figures 1 and 2 display the risk ratios of SW-PBIS schools over a ten-year period. Twenty-two out of the 25 SW-PBIS schools lowered their disparity rate over the course of ten years. Three of the schools, that had an increase over the ten-year period. This increase was not a steady increase for any of the schools but more of a fluctuation between the years. Overall, only these three schools increased their risk ratio for Black males during the ten-year period.

4.5 Research Question 3- What do school administrators attribute to a successful SW-PBS program at their school?

After analyzing the data, I grouped the 25 administrators into two groups; successful programs and less successful programs. For this study, I used data from three school years (2014-2015, 2015-2016, 2016-2017) to look for declines or increases in risk ratios. The

successful programs were characterized as either not having a disparity rate, or the rate has greatly reduced over the last three school years. The successful group consisted of 16 of the 25 schools and the average risk ratio for these schools was 0.62, while the less successful programs had an average risk ratio of 1.95. The majority of these successful schools, 12 out of the 16 were longstanding programs of three years or more, while five of the nine less successful schools had longstanding programs.

4.6 Successful Programs

The successful programs in this study consisted of 16 schools that had been able to lower their risk ratios as evidenced in their discipline data. While analyzing the data from the interviews, five findings emerged that administrators from all 16 successful schools discussed in reference to the success of their SW-PBIS program. These findings were; training, data meetings, finding the root of the behavior, high expectations, and support for teachers. Each finding is described in detail in the following sections.

4.6.1 Training

The first finding that emerged from the interviews related to the training that school staff received for implementing SW-PBIS. School-wide implementation of SW-PBIS is an ongoing and dynamic process that relies on the actions of the school team. These teams of peer leaders and their administrator were responsible for coordinating the design and implementation of strategies across the school. Twelve out of 16 administrators from successful programs noted that they plan at least four SW-PBIS trainings a year before school starts and then will add more to the calendar as needed throughout the school year. All 16 administrators described pre-

planning trainings to be the most meaningful. “Being able to have a full day to learn about behavior interventions and make plans for the upcoming school year, always starts us out on a positive note,” said one principal from a successful school. Another principal explained, “it’s important to start the school year with an intense training during preplanning and then follow up with regular trainings throughout the school year.” All 16 administrators from successful programs indicated that regular training was an important piece to a successful program. Thirteen administrators discussed their school PBIS teams and how they were in charge or looking at data and providing training to teachers throughout the year. They described looking for reoccurring behaviors and do school-wide trainings on how to intervene and reward the positive behavior change. New teachers to schools were given the initial introductory training by the district SW-PBIS coach each year. This experience was supported by the following account of an assistant principal,

New teachers need to see the whole picture of SW-PBIS and not see it as just a reward system for doing the right thing. The district holds a full day introductory training for new teachers to give them the basics and then they come back to see how we implement it in our schools.

As seen in figure 2, schools had various times of the year that they provided training to their staff. Successful SW-PBIS schools do an average of 5.06 trainings each school year, while less successful schools have an average of only 3.33 trainings a year. Several successful administrators expressed the need for “as needed” trainings when certain behaviors would be on the rise or certain events had an impact on the school.

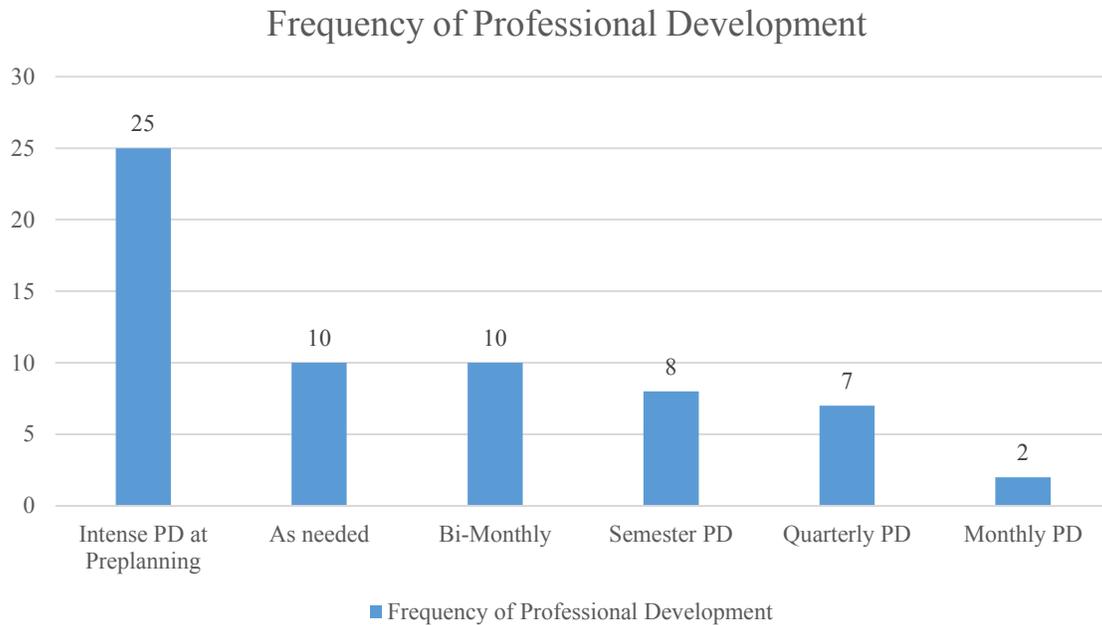


Figure 3.

Bar Graph of Administrator Responses Regarding Frequency of Professional Development for School Staff

4.6.2 Data Meetings

The next finding in this study revealed that successful SW-PBIS schools conducted regular data meetings with teachers and other stakeholders to review student and school-wide behavior data. Twelve out of the sixteen successful principals described regular SW-PBIS data meetings that focused on ODR data and planning interventions for students having difficulty. They explained that these meetings were planned in advance and required teachers to discuss discipline data, students of concern, and problem solve. One principal described his data meetings as, “a time when the PBS team and grade levels can talk about behavior problems and discuss what is working for some and how it can be adapted to work for another.” All 16 successful principals acknowledged that using the ODR data each month was their primary

indicator of whether the SW-PBIS system was successful that month or not. Ten of the successful administrators discussed the use of the University of South Florida's Response to Intervention database. Also known as RtI:b, this database logs referrals as well as, behaviors, consequences, time of problem behaviors, teachers writing referrals, and possible motivation for the behavior. RtI:b creates charts and figures that help school teams better understand the behavior data in order to problem solve and put interventions in place. One principal revealed that their SW-PBIS meetings are also used to create behavior intervention plans for "frequent fliers." These students were considered Tier 3 students because they received more than three referrals in a school year, or had more behavioral incidents (even if not written up on a referral) than the rest of their classmates. Parents were invited to help create the BIP so that all stakeholders were on the same page in order to help the student find success.

All administrators discussed the importance of relationship building between teachers and students and how teachers who took the time to build these relationships hardly ever had to write referrals. During these data meetings teachers shared ways that they had created relationships with "hard to reach" students and how they maintained those relationships even after a rough day.

4.6.3 Finding the Root of the Behavior

The third finding that came through during interview data analysis was that a factor to program success was finding the root of the behavior. Eleven of the sixteen administrators at successful SW-PBIS schools explained that finding the root of the behavior was imperative to intervening in negative behavior. One principal describes this philosophy by saying:

Students act out for many reasons. It is important to find out the reasons why the behaviors are occurring and do our best to fix that reason. If we really get to know our students and develop a positive relationship with them, it becomes easier to figure out what makes that student act out. We can put things in place to help that student before they reach the point that they lose self-control and get themselves in trouble.

Another principal described that being able to find the reason for the misbehavior was “almost as important as finding the right intervention for it.” Many administrators from this group discussed students having disrespect for one sex of a teacher over another. For example, male students disrespecting female teachers. They revealed that many of those males see the father figure at home disrespecting the mother figure and it became a learned behavior. When school administrators know where the behavior comes from, they felt they had a better chance of teaching the appropriate behavior instead. Ten administrators from successful programs used the RtI:b program to track student behavior data. One of the data fields in the program required administrators to list possible motivators to the behavior. Some of the possible motivators from the program included; avoiding adult attention, gaining peer attention, gaining an object, or avoiding a task. By using these reports, administrators had been able to speculate the root of the behavior. One principal expressed that finding out the root of the behavior “makes it easier to have meaningful conversations with the student versus just handing them a consequence for what they’ve done.” Being able to communicate with the students regarding their behaviors and what they could have done differently works with the social and emotional side of discipline in order to make the students think about their behavior.

4.6.4 High Expectations

The next finding uncovered the importance of having high expectations for all students and teachers in regards to implementation of the program and student behaviors. Each desired behavior should be observable, measurable, objective and specific. Defining behaviors in this way also makes it much easier to model them for students, so they can see concrete examples of what they're expected to do.

All 16 school administrators from successful programs spoke on school-wide expectations for students. A common idea amongst successful administrators was that when you have high expectations you usually achieved more than you set out to do. One principal who had lowered his disparity rate significantly over the last three years said, "expectations define our direction and create a sense of urgency around our mission." He felt that setting low school-wide expectations would have a negative effect on overall school culture and climate. Another principal stated, "when you expect little, you get less, but when you expect more from your students and staff, they rise above your expectations." Several principals revealed that their students could state what the school-wide expectations are, and that they do so every morning before school starts. Some were recited on the morning announcements or in morning meetings. Those daily reminders were meant to give the students a fresh start and remind them that they were capable of being successful and having a great day.

4.6.5 Support for Teachers

The final finding that came from teacher interview data was that a successful SW-PBIS program needed to have support for teachers from the school administration. In order for teachers to be successful implementing the SW-PBIS program, they needed to have the proper

tools and support from the SW-PBIS team and administrators. Successful administrators revealed that supporting teachers could be as simple as sitting in on behavior conferences with students who are acting out, sitting in on data meetings and helping to problem solve interventions, or backing them up when discipline referrals do make their way to the front office. One successful assistant principal described the support she gave to teachers in this way:

I make it a point to be at every PBIS data meeting and help teachers problem solve for student behavior. I also will meet with the teacher and parent to come up with a behavior plan for that student. It's little things like being there and being visible through the process that teachers appreciate the most.

Rewards are a big part of the SW-PBIS program. Of the 16 successful administrators, twelve revealed that they had a large role in planning incentive parties and making sure that teachers weren't spending their own money on classroom rewards. Several stated that they provided all copies related to SW-PBIS to teachers as well as attended all after school incentives so that teachers didn't have to use their own time if they don't want to. One principal from a successful program explained that she "make(s) connections with business partners who can help supply items for rewards so that it doesn't come out of teachers pockets." Other administrators said that an important piece of supporting teachers was to speak the SW-PBIS language. To be able to remind students what the school-wide expectations were and speak about the program the way the teachers do in class was a large piece of making the program a success.

4.7 Less Successful Programs

Not all schools have achieved success lowering their risk ratios through the use of SW-PBIS. The program had several components that needed to be done with fidelity in order to

achieve success lowering disparity rates. Programs that had a risk ratio over 1.0 with no reductions over the last three years were included in the group of less successful programs. The average disparity rate for this group was 1.95. The less successful schools also had the same five findings as the successful programs; training, data meetings, finding the root of the behavior, high expectations, and support for teachers. In addition to these five findings, three other findings emerged from interviews with this group of administrators. These findings could be viewed as possible outside reasons that the programs were less successful in lowering the disparity rate at their school; teacher turnover, student mobility, and teacher buy-in. To begin this section, I go over the first five findings that were reviewed in the section on successful schools and how they relate to the less successful schools, then discuss the three new findings.

4.7.1 Training

Training was the first finding that emerged from the interview data. As stated in the earlier section on training, this group of schools trains their teachers an average of 3.33 times a year, while successful programs average 5.06 trainings a year. Successful programs were providing at least two more trainings per year than less successful schools. All 25 administrators, from both successful and less successful schools emphasized that having a full day of SW-PBIS training during pre-planning was essential to start the school year. One principal from a less successful school discussed the importance of full day trainings due to the fact that he has so many new teachers each school year:

The teacher turnover rate at my school is almost 30% every year. With some teachers only staying a year, it makes it hard to get the program out of the initial stage. I feel like

I am constantly starting the program over each year because we have to do the introductory training over and over again.

Most of the administrators in this group felt that they were continuously implementing introductory level SW-PBIS trainings because each year they had so many new teachers. Those introductory trainings usually covered how the program works, strategies for data collection and analysis, and how to reward positive behaviors (www.pbis.org, 2018). Seven out of the nine less successful school administrators discussed having regular training and meetings throughout the school year with their staff. Five of the nine administrators from less successful schools revealed that they do not plan their SW-PBIS trainings in advance. They decided based on school data or events when training is needed for their staff.

4.7.2 Data Meetings

Less successful schools also discussed data meetings. This finding revealed that schools that were less successful in their reduction of risk ratios hold less data meetings than successful schools. These schools conducted SW-PBIS data meetings on average every six to eight weeks. This was about half as frequent as successful schools. All nine administrators from this group used ODR data during meetings to look for trends and frequent behavior problems taking place. When asked if they used the USF RtI: b system to analyze referral data, four out of nine said that they did use it. One principal who does not use the database revealed, “It is an extra step that I honestly don’t have time for. It takes time to enter the referrals into AS400 and then you have to enter the same data with more details into RtI:b. It just took too long and I feel like I get enough information out of the AS400 reports.”

Data meetings were not only a time to look at school-wide discipline data but also students that were on Tier 2 and Tier 3 interventions. These students were on behavior intervention plans that were tailored to their specific social, emotional and behavioral needs. None of the principals from the less successful group discussed creating Behavior Intervention Plans with parents or other stakeholders. One mentioned that his guidance counselor will create student BIP's and work with teachers on implementation.

4.7.3 Finding the Root of the Behavior

Some students have trouble communicating and often will act out their feelings in a negative way (www.pbis.org, 2018). Some students will act out because they are avoiding a task, gaining attention, or even avoiding attention, but there is always a reason behind the student's behavior. Five out of the nine administrators from the less successful group discussed the importance behind finding the root of the behavior. All nine administrators in this group emphasized the importance of positive relationships with students. One assistant principal said that it is "imperative" to have positive relationships with students if you want to get to the root of the problem. Students have to feel that they can trust you and that they care about you before they will open up about underlying issues. Even with creating positive relationships, students will still have bad days and act out. Four administrators discussed problem-solving these behaviors at SW-PBIS meetings. One assistant principal revealed that she uses the RtI:b database to log referrals and she prints the data before meetings. She said,

"I always print the frequent flier report and the possible motivator report. These reports help my team really look at the student and the behavior they are displaying. Is there a certain time of day this student is acting out? Is it always in a certain location? Then we can compare the teacher's notes and classroom data to plan interventions for that child."

4.7.4 High Expectations.

All nine of the administrators in this group discussed the importance of having high expectations for students. One principal explained that he does the morning announcements and always recites the school-wide expectations to his students. He said, “It’s a good way to start the day and to remind them what the expectations are.” This principal uses the expectations: be safe, be responsible, be respectful, and be an active learner. One principal explained that, “it isn’t that teachers necessarily have low expectations for their students, it’s just that they are not enforcing the school-wide expectations and aren’t establishing rules and procedures or responding consistently to misbehavior.” Three principals from this group mentioned that new teachers had the hardest time enforcing these expectations because they were already struggling with implementing new curriculum, classroom management, and learning their standards. Three administrators from less successful schools conveyed their frustration with teachers not fully embedding high expectations into their classrooms.

4.7.5 Support for Teachers

All nine principals from this group revealed that they provide a great deal of support to their teachers in order to make the program successful. They described their support for teachers as, sitting in on meetings, dealing with discipline, providing resources, and providing training. One principal described his role on the SW-PBIS team:

I sit in on every PBS meeting and help to problem solve with the teachers. We look at data and think of resources that can help that child. If we don’t currently have that resource, I will find a way for us to get it. I also make sure that my staff know that I will

support them with behavior as long as they are following the procedures prior to sending a student to the front office. We have to be consistent with every child.

All of these administrators discussed providing resources for rewards, attending incentive parties and socials, and problem-solving with teachers and staff as the main ways that they provided support for their teachers. Three administrators revealed that even with their support they still felt that without teacher buy-in, their programs would never be successful. One principal said, “I can give them everything that they need to succeed with PBIS, but if they don’t see a benefit to the program, they will just see it as one more thing.”

4.7.6 Teacher Turnover

Teacher turnover was a finding only present within the less successful group. This did not show up as a practice that administrators are implementing, but it did reveal itself as a factor that hindered the success of the SW-PBIS program. The proportion of all teachers leaving the profession is significantly higher in schools with higher rates of poverty; 9.8 percent annually in schools in high poverty schools versus 6.9 percent in more affluent schools (Duncan, 2017). As previously stated, the less successful group is made up entirely of Title I schools.

Most of the administrators in this group felt that when they were constantly hiring new teachers and giving the same introductory trainings, it was hard to take the program to the next level or add new components. Introductory trainings usually covered basic knowledge of SW-PBIS and basic behavior principles. Administrators stressed the importance of being able to get beyond the basic levels and move on to trainings that enhance teacher knowledge of culturally responsive implementation and problem solving facilitation.

Teacher turnover was brought up by this group on several different occasions. When asked why the principal felt like teachers were transferring to other schools, his response was “this is a hard school to work at, these are hard kids to make relationships with. When they think that they are going to have another teacher that is just going to quit in the middle of the year, they will shut down. These students have to know that you care about them.” Several of these principals revealed that they usually have two to three teachers quit in the middle of the year due to various reasons. “Mainly teachers are leaving to work at a non-Title I schools or leaving the profession altogether,” said one administrator.

4.7.7 Teacher Buy-in

The next finding that was also only evident in the less successful programs was teacher buy-in. All nine administrators from less successful programs discussed the lack of teacher buy-in and how it negatively affected their program. When you had teachers that don’t believe in the program, or just simply don’t implement it with fidelity, your trainings are a waste of time.” Six of the nine administrators from this group felt that teacher buy-in was a hurdle to the success of lowering disparity rates at their school. As stated in an earlier section, this group of schools trained their teachers an average of 3.33 times a year, while successful programs averaged 5.06 trainings a year. One principal explained that “teachers have to buy-in to the program in order for these trainings to be purposeful. When you have teachers that don’t believe in the program, or just simply don’t implement it with fidelity, your trainings are a waste of time.”

Data meetings were discussed earlier in this section as a finding that had a positive impact on lowering risk ratios. Administrators from this group felt that teacher who don’t buy into the program did not come to these meetings with the data they need to problem solve. One

principal revealed. “many times during these data meetings you realize just how many teachers are not buying into the program and not implementing it correctly in their classes. They aren’t rewarding positive behavior or enforcing those high expectations that the rest of the school is pushing.” Another principal went on to discuss that he would “have to have private meetings with teachers after a PBS meeting because they aren’t showing any investment in the program at all. I have to sit down with them and show them how bad their classroom behavior data looks in order to open their eyes.” Those one-on-one conversations with teachers about their lack of buy-in were discussed with five out of the nine less successful administrators.

4.7.8 Student Mobility

The last finding from this group was student mobility as a negative factor on the success of the program. All nine administrators from this group relayed the importance of teachers building relationships with students. Several mentioned challenges related to building these relationships. Several principals in the less successful group described it as a hurdle to lowering disparity rates. For example, one mentioned how hard it can be for teachers to build meaningful relationships with hard to reach students when students were constantly moving in and out of the school. They explained that when students were constantly moving from school to school, it can be hard for them to understand the expectations, rules and procedures. One assistant principal noted, “The students that move around the most are the hardest to get to know. One student told me that it didn’t matter what I said because he was just going to move again in a few weeks.” These administrators revealed that if the teacher couldn’t make a positive relationship with their student, finding out the reason behind the behavior was simply impossible.

It was also noted that administrators felt that high student mobility was not only hard on students, but the teachers as well. As one principal stated, “Teachers spend a lot of time training their class and getting them used to rules and procedures. When you are constantly getting new students, it’s frustrating for teachers to have to start over at all times during the year.” Many expressed how one student moving in or out of a classroom could completely change the dynamic of your classroom.

4.8 Comparison of Successful and Less Successful Schools

As previously stated, five findings emerged from both categories; training, finding the root of the behavior, data meetings, high expectations, and support for teachers. Successful programs all found these findings to be a positive factor in their successful implementation of the program. Administrators discussed that these five findings were essential to their success in lowering their risk ratios. No one finding was said to be more important than another, but most said that when these factors were used together, your program had a successful outcome. Three themes emerged from programs that were categorized as less successful; teacher turnover, teacher buy-in and student mobility. See Table 7.

Table 7.

Findings from Successful and Less Successful Schools

	Traini ng	Finding the Root of the Behavio r	High Expectatio ns	Support for Teacher s	Data Meeting s	Teacher Turnover	Teacher Buy-In	Student Mobility
Successf ul	X	X	X	X	X			
Less Successf ul	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X

Successful programs attributed professional development as a major factor in their success lowering their school disparity rate. They spent time and resources training teachers and staff members to implement the program with fidelity. Successful programs revealed that they modified parts of the program each year to better fit the needs of their students and school. Researchers have found that effective teacher professional development is clearly linked to improved student achievement, and that effective professional learning could support school-wide or system-wide change in practice (Darling et al. 2009). Successful programs reiterated how they planned trainings throughout the year that built on the last and this continued to grow their program.

Less successful programs also discussed training for their staff, however, teacher turnover and lack of teacher buy-in hindered the success of these trainings. They also disclosed that each year they had to train staff with beginning level trainings due to the amount of new teachers each year. This was the opposite of what was happening at successful schools. Instead of moving the program into the next phases, they were forced to continue the introductory trainings due to the lack of progress made during the school year due to teacher turnover. Successful programs did not mention issues with teacher turn-over.

Having high expectations for students and staff is a critical part of the SW-PBIS model. School-wide expectations must meet three specific criteria as stated earlier in the study; they must be observable, measurable, and specific. When these criteria were met, students were more likely to be able to meet them. Teachers and administrators must also model these expectations for students. If a student can see how the behavior is supposed to look, it is possible for them to be able to show that behavior themselves. Having a principal who participated in the program by modeling the expectations and used the language of SW-PBIS with staff and students was more

likely to support teachers and students in the program. This finding also showed that successful schools felt it was a critical factor to their success. Schools that were less successful in lowering their risk ratios complained that teacher buy-in created a barrier to have high-expectations school-wide. Less successful administrators revealed that teachers who were not buying into the program and implementing it with fidelity in their classrooms were also not participating in data meetings or brainstorming interventions for Tier 2 and Tier 3 students. Holding teachers accountable for proper implementation was not mentioned by principals in the less successful group. Principals from less successful programs revealed that when teachers were not buying into the program or implementing it the way it should be can ruin the success of the entire program. Students have even commented to administrators that their teachers don't do the same reward programs as other teachers and they felt left out. Some teachers have made comments to their peers and administrators that they do not agree with rewarding students for doing what they are supposed to do anyway. Principals with this problem indicated that they have had to sit down with these teachers and show them their personal behavior data compared to the rest of the school as a way to try to change that teacher's mindset.

Successful schools revealed that teachers were required to bring data to SW-PBIS meetings and help create Behavior Intervention Plans, while less successful schools did not discuss stakeholder involvement. Successful schools made it clear that their teachers had been trained on how to analyze the behavior data in order to problem solve and plan tiered interventions for their students. Less successful schools still cited the fact that their teachers hadn't been trained properly on using data or lack of teacher buy-in made data meetings a negative piece to the program. Administrators mentioned that not only do schools have to have high expectations for their students but also for their teachers and staff. When teachers were not

implementing the program the way that they have been trained for whatever reasons, they were not meeting the expectations of their principal.

Unsuccessful schools revealed student mobility as an outside factor that impeded their success with the program. Student mobility rates were not analyzed as a data point for this study. Based on the data analyzed for this study, there is no way to know if unsuccessful schools do in fact have a larger mobility rate than successful schools. This implication might be an interesting idea for a future study on student discipline.

The extensive history of disproportionate discipline has been measured in many ways (academic achievement, placement in special education, placement in gifted programs, discipline, incarceration rates, etc). Disparity rates are still just as prevalent today as they were decades ago. Systems must be put in place that involve problem identification, data collection, and the teaching of appropriate social behaviors for all students in order to repair decades of inequalities and make strides towards truly helping all students become successful

CHAPTER 5

IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICE

This study analyzed the effect that a School-Wide Positive Behavioral Support Program has on reducing disparity rates for Black males in elementary school. It also investigated the factors that school administrators attributed to lowering disparity rates through the use of SW-PBIS programs. Research from previous studies have consistently revealed disparities in the discipline data of Black students compared to their non-minority peers (Skiba, 2009, Losen, 2015, Horner & Sugai, 2009).

This chapter presents an interpretation of findings for each research questions from this study relative to existing research as presented in Chapter 2. In this chapter I will examine the quantitative data related to the reduction of risk ratios in schools that implement a SW-PBIS program and if there is a connection to previous literature. In addition, Chapter 5 summarizes the qualitative data related to successful and less successful factors in schools that implement the program. Finally, I will offer recommendations to the school district in order to lower risk ratios in elementary schools.

5.1 Factors Related to Schools with Disparity Rates

This study was guided by three research questions. The first question addressed the comparison of risk ratios in schools that use the program and those that don't. Findings from the study revealed that schools that implement a SW-PBIS program do not have a lower risk ratio than schools that do not implement the program. Title I schools make up 88% of the schools in Brevard County using a SW-PBIS program. Title I schools were a large predictor of whether schools had a risk ratio for Black males or not. These results were consistent with findings from

several previous studies. Skiba and Simmons (2005) noted that the disadvantages associated with poverty create a major impact in the discipline disparity rates of Black students in schools. Skiba (2009) argues that there are assumptions contained in a sequence linking poverty and disproportionality:

1. Minority students are disproportionately poor and hence are more likely to be exposed to a variety of sociodemographic stressors associated with poverty.
2. Factors associated with living in poverty leave children less developmentally ready for schooling and ultimately yield negative academic and behavioral outcomes.
3. Students who are low achieving or at risk for negative behavioral outcomes are more likely to be referred to, and ultimately found eligible for, special education services and discipline referrals.

These researchers also found that minority students across low sociodemographic backgrounds were at greater risk of being referred to the office for a behavior infraction (Skiba & Simmons, 2006). Findings from this study support the relationship between high poverty schools having a higher risk ratio for Black males.

5.2 Time of Implementation and Success Rates

The second question analyzed the length of time a SW-PBIS program has been in implementation and the effect it had on lowering risk ratios. Findings from this question revealed that schools that have been implementing the program longer have lower risk ratios than those within the first three years. These findings are consistent with the research from the University of South Florida (2011). Researchers there discuss that SW-PBIS is a “process, so the length of time it takes to get started is different for each school”. USF (2011) also notes that schools typically take three to five years to fully implement all three tiers of the program. While

some schools can see results in the first few months, it can take longer to change the climate of a school. Schools in this study that were categorized as longstanding programs (three or more years), had lower average risk ratios than new programs.

5.3 Factors that Promote Successful SW-PBIS Programs

Research question three analyzed data from interviews with school administrators on what SW-PBIS factors lead to the reduction of risk ratios. Data from this study revealed five findings that influence the reduction of risk ratios at SW-PBIS schools; training, finding the root of the behavior, data meetings, high expectations, and support for teachers. The following section presents an interpretation of each finding.

5.3.1 Training

Findings from this study revealed that the amount of training was a significant factor for schools lowering their risk ratios for Black males. This was consistent with prior research indicating that training in SW-PBIS leads to continual changes in a school's discipline practices (Taylor, Green & Kartub, 2000). This research also provides evidence that regular SW-PBIS training for teachers and staff can shorten the amount of time it takes to see results moving from a traditional punitive behavior system to a positive preventive approach" (Taylor, Green & Kartub, 2000). Other studies that support this finding reveal that schools who have implemented SW-PBIS trainings with fidelity and consistency experience considerable decreases in behavior issues, and increases in rewarding positive behaviors (Bradshaw et al., 2008). This study also relates to the finding of the importance of training by discussing the value of coaching teachers on behavioral problem solving. This idea was discussed with administrators in regards to

training as well as data meetings, a finding discussed later in this chapter. Alderman's 2001 research on behavior supports this finding by stating that teachers are able to implement positive behavior management systems in their classrooms effectively because they have had the proper training. This training can include discipline basics, proactive discipline, positive reinforcement, and planning behavioral interventions (Alderman, 2001).

5.3.2 Finding the Root of the Behavior

Findings from several studies were consistent with finding the root of the student's behavior as associated with lowering student discipline referrals. One of the earliest studies was done by John Watson in 1913. Watson's research was based on the theory that human behavior is determined by external factors in the environment, not genetic disposition (Watson, 1913). This research supports the finding from this study that teachers and administrators must find the cause of the student behavior in order to help the student modify that behavior. "The events that occur outside of the classroom affect how students learn, how the teacher teaches, and how students interact inside the classroom" (Tidwell, Flannery, & Lewis-Palmer, 2003).

Data related to this finding also indicated that positive relationships with students can help teachers and administrators understand students' social and emotional needs which reveals the underlying issues producing their negative behaviors. Alderman (2001), also expresses that positive relationships with students and teachers can establish more self-control being demonstrated by the students. These studies support the finding that finding the root of a student's behavior is imperative to help them modify that behavior. Once behaviors are modified, referrals will decrease thus reducing risk ratios. Research by McIntosh et al. (2008) supports the common connection between academic achievement and negative behaviors. Their

findings imply that students who demonstrate low academic performance will sometimes demonstrate negative behaviors in order to avoid unwanted academic tasks. The student exhibits negative and disruptive behaviors so that the teacher will end up writing an office discipline referral that may end up having the student removed from the learning environment. When teachers are able to detect avoidance-driven behaviors, they are more likely to find interventions that can prevent them.

5.3.3 Data Meetings

Previous literature agrees with the finding that the use of data is vital to the success of a SW-PBIS program lowering disparity rates. All successful programs discussed the importance of regular pre-planned SW-PBIS meetings. During these meetings, school-wide data is discussed to look for overall school trends, behavior issues that are on the rise, problem solve, discuss individual students on Tier 2 and Tier 3 interventions, and plan school-wide incentives. A study done by Eaker (2002) suggested that teacher data meetings regarding student behavior should be research-based, data-driven used as a process to plan, implement, and evaluate decisions. These results connected with my study because, when administrators from successful programs were interviewed, they stressed the importance of regular data meetings to problem solve, analyze and review current research in best practices for modifying behaviors. These meetings also promoted shared accountability for the school program.

5.3.4 High Expectations

School-wide expectations are a guiding component of a SW-PBIS program. Desired behaviors should be “observable, measurable, and specific” (www.pbis.org, 2018). When behavior expectations are laid out this way, it makes it easier to model them for students. By

providing concrete examples of behavioral expectations, students have a greater understanding of how they are expected to act (www.pbis.org, 2018). Findings from this study revealed that administrators from successful schools believe that consistent school-wide behavior expectations are critical to lowering disparity rates in their schools. Administrators emphasized that school-wide expectations had to be communicated with students on a daily basis. When students understood what was expected of them, they were not only likely to meet that expectation but also exceed it. Previous research on teacher expectations are consistent with this study. Research as early as the 1960's revealed that when teachers had high expectations for their students, most students would surpass those expectations and achieve more than they previously had (Rosenthal & Jacobson, 1968). Brophy (1985), has done extensive research on student outcomes in relation to teacher expectations. This research has been applied to behavior expectations as well as academics. Brophy's (1982) research supports the finding that school-wide expectations need to be uniform and consistent throughout every classroom. He stresses the idea that when there are variations in teacher expectations, it will lead to variations amongst the entire school and take away from overall culture (Brophy, 1982). This finding shows that having high expectations is not enough, the way that teachers interact with students and emphasize these expectations make it more likely that students will act according to these expectations.

5.3.5 Support for Teachers

Horner's (2012) research on support for teachers implementing SW-PBIS in their school validates the finding from this study that a key to a successful SW-PBIS program is providing support for teachers. He describes a list of "tools" that schools need to provide their teachers with in order to promote their success with implementing the program in their classrooms. These

tools include training on behavior, data analysis, reinforcer toolkits, positive reinforcement materials and other intervention strategies. These “tools” were all discussed in the interviews with successful program administrators as ways that they support their teachers and staff with implementation. Providing SW-PBIS training alone is not enough to support teachers implementing the program. Teachers need varying levels of support and resources to increase their effectiveness with SW-PBIS (Fixen, Naoom, Blase, Friedman, & Wallace, 2005). Findings from this study include supports that include, training, resources, reinforcement rewards, problem solving team collaboration, and support with discipline outside of the classroom. When these supports are given to teachers on a consistent basis, teachers are found to be more successful implementing the program.

5.4 Factors that Decrease the Success of SW-PBIS Programs

Research question three created two groups of programs; successful programs and less successful programs. Three findings were revealed that were only evident in less successful schools; teacher turn-over, teacher buy-in and student mobility. The following section correlates previous literature with each finding.

5.4.1 Teacher Turn-Over

Teacher turn-over was a finding only present in less successful programs. This finding was consistent with research from multiple studies that have shown the negative effects of teacher turnover in public schools that serve low-income students. All of the schools that were categorized as less successful are Title I schools. They have a high population of students living in poverty. This constant turnover makes it almost impossible to make sustained improvement in

schools (Allensworth et al., 2009; Ingersoll, 2001, 2004). With the constant training and retraining of new staff members throughout the year, administrators find it hard to push their SW-PBIS program to the next level or make improvements. They constantly feel that they are in the adoption stages of the program. Money and resources are used to train teachers to implement the program with fidelity in order to help all students at the school. With continual teacher turnover, administrators are having to use school funds on more initial training and replacement resources rather than continuing to keep the program moving and only make adjustments. Current research shows that in the US, nearly 30 percent of new teachers leave the profession after five years, in high poverty, high urban areas, the turnover rate is 50 percent higher (Ingersoll, 2001). Approximately 60% of this turnover results from teachers transferring between schools, while about 40% results from teachers leaving the profession (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2008). This was a reoccurring theme that administrators brought up during their interviews. Data from the interviews suggested that teachers weren't leaving the profession, but looking for a different school to work at that likely had less stressors for teachers. Regardless of why teachers are leaving these schools, the vacancies that remain leave a hole in the overall implementation of the SW-PBIS system for the school.

5.4.2 Teacher Buy-In

Teacher buy-in was a finding evidenced from interview data by administrators at less successful SW-PBIS schools. SW-PBIS is a research based program that focuses on proactive discipline strategies that are proactive in nature versus reactive. However, many times teachers voiced their negative opinions in what they felt was rewarding students for behaving how they were supposed to behave. Principals were frustrated that many veteran teachers can't get away

from punitive old school ways of discipline. They explain that it is a mind-shift that can be hard for some to adjust to. SW-PBIS can be seen as time consuming and a quick fix that won't last to those who don't buy in to the research around it. For a SW-PBIS program to be truly school-wide and successful, teachers and staff must all use the system with fidelity (PBS.org, 2018). Previous studies have identified the importance of teacher buy-in to the success of implementing new programs with success. Turnbull (2002), discusses ways to increase teacher buy-in when implementing a new program; supply adequate training and resources, support from program developers, support from school staff members, support from administrators, and teacher influence over classroom influence. These guidelines do note that teachers can have some autonomy of how things are implemented in their classroom with the understanding that changes can't compromise the fidelity of implementation (Turnbull, 2002).

5.4.3 Student Mobility

Another finding that emerged from interviews with administrators from less successful schools were high student mobility rates. Research from the Poverty and Race Research Action Council reveals that “high-poverty urban schools can have more than half of their students turn over within a single school year (Education Week, 2016). Other studies that support this finding express that more than 6.5 million students nationwide, change schools at least once in a school year, and that can be a negative effect to their social and academic development and that of their classmates (Sparks, 2018). Kewow's (2016) research on student mobility is consistent with findings from this study in that student mobility is negative to a student's school experience. “It is unclear how school-based educational programs, no matter how innovative, could successfully develop and show long-term impact” in a high-churn school, Kewow concluded. High churn

schools refers to the frequency of moves amongst students in a classroom, school, or district (Kebow, 2016). The less successful schools in the study all spoke negatively about the amount of students that move in and out of their schools during the school year and how it makes it hard for teachers and school programs to implement the program successfully when they are constantly retraining students.

5.5 Recommendations

The findings that were revealed through this research contribute to the body of literature that surrounds discipline disparities for Black males that attend a school that uses the SW-PBIS program. This research also supplies Brevard Public Schools with information regarding the implementation and effectiveness of their School-Wide Positive Behavioral Support Programs. The county can use this study as a guide to make modifications to current programs that are not finding success lowering their disparity rates. The following are recommendations for Brevard Public schools based on the findings of this study.

Research question one analyzed risk ratios at schools that use SW-PBIS and those that do not. My recommendation for Brevard is to continue to use the program with fidelity in all Title I schools. These schools were the ones that were most likely to show a disparity rate for Black males. Schools that are not Title I can also find benefits in using this program to lower school-wide discipline referral rates.

Research question two focused on the implementation time of a program and if that was a factor to lowering risk ratios. My recommendations to the district based on this data would be to provide intensive support to schools that are beginning implementation of the program. These trainings need to be designed to build capacity among staff to engage in preventative student behavior management practices. Supply training for schools and administrators in order to start

the program out on a successful path. Districts should also play a major part in monitoring school data for these newer programs to help schools problem solve and choose training for teachers based on data.

Research question three analyzed administrator perceptions of what made their programs successful or hindered their success in lowering risk ratios at their schools. This question has generated multiple recommendations for the county. The first recommendation is that the district needs to support all schools in their ongoing training with SW-PBIS. District teams need to work with administrators to plan out meaningful trainings at the beginning of the year and schedule follow-up trainings at least four times during the school year. These training need to build on from the previous training and help teachers become problem solvers when it comes to creating interventions for students. The district and schools needs to implement ongoing professional development designed to raise cultural awareness among staff members and to build capacity among staff members to utilize culturally responsive student discipline practices. Training should also focus on understanding behavior and making use of behavioral data. Teachers can collect data on students but they also need to be able to understand what that data means and what to do with it.

My next recommendation for Brevard is to work with administrators on teacher retention in Title I schools. The turnover rate for these schools is nearly double what you find in a non-Title I school. The district needs to provide incentives for teachers to stay in these high-poverty and low achievement schools. This may provide motivation for teachers with more experience and higher evaluations to want to work in schools such as these. Also, the district needs to create more effective new teacher induction programs that include classroom management and tools for

working with high poverty students. These programs can support new teachers and provide the assistance that they need to be successful in their career.

Recommendations for future research could include qualitative and quantitative research into academic achievement for students at schools that implement a SW-PBIS program.

Research could also include longevity studies that analyze students living in poverty who have participated in a SW-PBIS program throughout their school careers compared to those who did not participate in a program.

5.6 Conclusion

This study adds to the growing body of literature on the implementation of School-Wide Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports to lower the disparity rate of minority students in school. Schools have an obligation to meet the academic and social needs of students each day while complying with federal and state regulations. Many schools have had to implement programs to decrease the amount of disruptive discipline issues and protect the school learning environment (Sugai, 2009). One approach to disciplinary issues is School-Wide Positive Behavioral Interventions and Support. Research has shown that by modeling, reinforcing positive behavior, and rewarding students can create a climate in which appropriate behavior is the norm and student achievement is the main focus (Skiba, 2009). Clear, consistent behavior expectations, combined with real-time data tracking, are key components to building a safe, happy school where students and staff thrive. When students feel confident, respected, cared for and supported, disruptions and discipline incidents decline, learning increases, and academic achievement rises. I believe that all educators have this goal for the students and I believe that we

are in the profession to change the lives of our students so that they can be successful and productive members of our society.

APPENDIX A

SW-PBIS ADMINISTRATOR INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. What is your name and position at your school?
2. How long have you been a school administrator?
3. What were your experiences prior to becoming a school administrator?
4. Could you describe your school's vision and mission?
5. What are the unique characteristics of your school?
6. Could you describe your philosophy on student discipline?
7. Could you describe your schools' philosophy on student discipline?
8. What discipline incidents do you most commonly deal with at your school?
9. What consequences are most commonly given to students?
10. How long have you been utilizing a SWPBS program at your school?
11. What training were you provided with when you adopted the program? What training did teachers receive?
12. How did you get your staff on board to successfully implement SWPBS at your school?
13. How often do you provide professional development on SWPBS?
14. What aspects of the program do you find most successful in intervening with student behavior?
15. Is there any specific aspect of the program that you feel has added to the success of reducing disproportionate discipline?
16. How do you support your teachers and staff with SWPBS?
17. Is there a certain behavior/incident type that you feel SWPBS works best to intervene against? Is there a certain behavior/incident that you still deal with on a regular basis?
18. How do you know that your SWPBS program is successful at your school? What data do you use to look for increases or decreases in behavior?
19. Are there aspects of SWPBS that you have modified for your school that you think other schools could benefit from?

20. What other advice do you have for schools trying to reduce discipline disparities through the use of a SWPBS program?

APPENDIX B
IRB APPROVAL LETTER

The Florida State University
Office of the Vice President For Research
Human Subjects Committee
Tallahassee, Florida 32306-2742
(850) 644-8673, FAX (850) 644-4392

APPROVAL MEMORANDUM

Date: 8/24/2017

To: Ashley Toll

Address:

Dept.: EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP

From: Thomas L. Jacobson, Chair

Re: Use of Human Subjects in Research
The Color of Discipline

The application that you submitted to this office in regard to the use of human subjects in the proposal referenced above have been reviewed by the Secretary, the Chair, and one member of the Human Subjects Committee. Your project is determined to be **Expedited** per 45 CFR Â§ 46.110(7) and has been approved by an expedited review process.

The Human Subjects Committee has not evaluated your proposal for scientific merit, except to weigh the risk to the human participants and the aspects of the proposal related to potential risk and benefit. This approval does not replace any departmental or other approvals, which may be required.

If you submitted a proposed consent form with your application, the approved stamped consent form is attached to this approval notice. Only the stamped version of the consent form may be used in recruiting research subjects.

If the project has not been completed by 8/23/2018 you must request a renewal of approval for continuation of the project. As a courtesy, a renewal notice will be sent to you prior to your expiration date; however, it is your responsibility as the Principal Investigator to timely request renewal of your approval from the Committee.

You are advised that any change in protocol for this project must be reviewed and approved by the Committee prior to implementation of the proposed change in the protocol. A protocol change/amendment form is required to be submitted for approval by the Committee. In addition,

federal regulations require that the Principal Investigator promptly report, in writing any unanticipated problems or adverse events involving risks to research subjects or others.

By copy of this memorandum, the Chair of your department and/or your major professor is reminded that he/she is responsible for being informed concerning research projects involving human subjects in the department, and should review protocols as often as needed to insure that the project is being conducted in compliance with our institution and with DHHS regulations.

This institution has an Assurance on file with the Office for Human Research Protection. The Assurance Number is FWA00000168/IRB number IRB00000446.

Cc: **Stacey Rutledge, Advisor**
HSC No. **2017.21479**

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BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Ashley Toll is a resident of Melbourne, Florida. She completed her undergraduate studies at Florida State University in Tallahassee, Florida. She continued her education while teaching elementary school in Brevard County and earned her Master of Science degree in Educational Leadership from Nova Southeastern University. She became an assistant principal in 2011 and began teaching teacher certification courses at Eastern Florida State University. In the summer of 2015, she began her course work in the first online doctoral program at Florida State University. During this time, she earned a certificate in Program Evaluation from Florida State. She will receive her Doctoral Degree in Educational Leadership and Policy Studies from Florida State University in May of 2018. She currently serves as the principal in a Title I school.