

THE IMPACT OF SCHOOL-WIDE POSITIVE BEHAVIOR SUPPORT ON NUMBER OF  
OFFICE DISCIPLINE REFERRALS AND THE FINANCIAL IMPACT ON  
THE ALLOCATION OF FUNDS IN BOTH HIGH AND LOW  
SOCIOECONOMIC STATUS SCHOOL SETTINGS

By

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To my family for their endless support

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The purpose of this study was to determine the effect of participation in School-Wide Positive Behavior Support on the number of office discipline referrals written and the financial impact it had on the allocation of funds in both high and low socioeconomic status schools in the selected school district. The top 10 percent of elementary schools with low and high socioeconomic status, as determined by the percentage of students who received a free or reduced-cost lunch, were chosen to participate in the study. The impact of school-wide positive support in regard to various demographic factors, such as race/ethnicity and gender, also was determined.

The methodology involved a post-hoc data analysis of the relationship between the implementation of the School-Wide Positive Behavior Support strategy and the number of office discipline referrals at the identified schools. Data were collected from three Title I schools in the 2003-2004 school year, prior to the implementation of School-Wide Positive Behavior Support implementation, and from three Title I schools in the 2004-2005 school year, after implementation. Also included were data from three non-Title I schools in the 2004-2005 school year, prior to implementation of the School-

Wide Positive Behavior Support strategy, and from three non-Title I schools in the 2005-2006 school, after implementation. The analysis involved a search for patterns and relationships between the implementation of the School-Wide Positive Behavior Support strategy and the number of office discipline referrals at the designated schools and by demographic sub-groups.

It was hoped that the results of this study would be used to guide the district's decision-making process in regard to the allocation of funds to the highest-need schools to enable them to meet the mandates of Title IV of the *No Child Left Behind Act* of 2001. These mandates indicate that a school district must provide resources to support the goal of creating a safe and drug-free learning atmosphere for all schools as a means to foster academic growth for all students.

## CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

### **Background**

A quality education is considered by many to be the gateway to living the American dream. Research has identified a significant correlation between the quality of the school that delivers this education and the future potential earnings of the student receiving that education.<sup>1</sup> Nevertheless, in 1998, almost half of grade four students in the state of Florida, which is considered to deliver an excellent education, could not read.<sup>2</sup> The legislature of the state of Florida has attempted to improve the levels of reading proficiency by passing the Third Grade Retention Law, which requires students in grade three to meet a certain level of proficiency on the Florida Comprehensive Achievement Test to be promoted to grade four.<sup>3</sup> Students in grade three who did not meet the minimum level of proficiency would be required to successfully complete summer school in order to advance to grade four.<sup>4</sup> This proficiency requirement eliminated the concept of “social promotion,” or moving a student to the next grade based solely on age. The Florida statute is titled “Public school student progression; remedial instruction; reporting requirements.”<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Card, David, and Krueger, Alan B. “Does School Quality Matter? Returns to Education and the Characteristics of Public Schools in the United States,” *The Journal of Political Economy*, 1992: 1–40.

<sup>2</sup> Sheida White, “1998 Reading Results for Low-Performing Students,” *The National Center for Educational Statistics*, 2000:1-4.

<sup>3</sup> Florida Statute, § 1008.25.

<sup>4</sup> McGill-Franzen, Anne, Solic, Katie, Zeig, Jacqueline Love and Zmach, Courtney. “The Confluence of Two Policy Mandates: Core Reading Programs and Third-Grade Retention in Florida,” *The Elementary School Journal*, 2006: 67-91.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

Proficiency is determined by the Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test in Reading.<sup>6</sup> On this test, students must receive a score of at least 2, on a scale of 1-5, to be promoted to grade four. Students who do not achieve at least a 2 are provided with a progress monitoring plan to identify specific needs to be met to be reading independently by the end of grade three.<sup>7</sup> If students do not meet these requirements by the end of grade three, they have the opportunity to go to summer school.<sup>8</sup> If the requirements are not met in summer school, they must repeat grade three.<sup>9</sup>

The Florida Legislature identified certain circumstances that would allow a student to be exempt from the Grade Three Retention Law. These circumstances were referred to as the Good Cause Exemptions.<sup>10</sup> Good Cause Exemptions allow a school district to exempt students from mandatory retention. Exemptions include an English Language Learner who had less than two years of instruction in English; a student with a disability whose individual educational plan indicated that participation in the state assessments was not appropriate; a student who performs at an acceptable level on an alternate standardized assessment approved by the state; a student who, through a portfolio, is able to demonstrate that he or she is at a reading level equivalent to Florida Comprehensive Achievement Test level two on a 5-point scoring rubric; a student with a disability who has an individual education plan or a Section 504 plan, who has been

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<sup>6</sup> Valerie Wright, "Preparing Students for High-Stakes Testing in Florida: An Interactive Website," *Florida Journal of Educational Research*, 1999: 79-94.

<sup>7</sup> Florida Statute, § 1011.62.

<sup>8</sup> Florida Statute, § 1008.25.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> McGill-Franzen, Anne, Solic, Katie, Zeig, Jacqueline Love and Zmach, Courtney. "The Confluence of Two Policy Mandates: Core Reading Programs and Third-Grade Retention in Florida," *The Elementary School Journal*, 2006: 67-91.

receiving intensive reading support for at least two years, and who was retained once in a previous year; and a student without a disability who has received intensive reading for at least two years and has been retained twice in the previous years.<sup>11</sup> A student with such an exemption could be promoted to grade four.

The ability of students to learn can be affected by many outside factors, such as language barriers and parent involvement.<sup>12</sup> These factors can ultimately lead to behavior issues in the school setting.<sup>13</sup> Additional factors that contribute to these poor student results may be associated with socioeconomic status of the family, low expectations from parents, and lack of accountability of the student, as well as the student's behavioral concerns.<sup>14</sup> Research that deals specifically with low socioeconomic status of families suggests that, as these students progress through their grade levels, their grade point average will decrease.<sup>15</sup> A further study stated that students in low socioeconomic status families displayed significant correlations between support at home and academic achievement.<sup>16</sup> Federal and state regulations and laws

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<sup>11</sup> Florida Statute, § 1008.25.

<sup>12</sup> Sandra L. Christenson, Theresa Rounds, and Deborah Gorney, "Family Factors and Student Achievement: An Avenue to Increase Student Success," *Journal of School Psychology Quarterly*, 1992: 178-206.

<sup>13</sup> Judith Rich Harris, "*No Two Alike*." New York: W.W. Norton, 2006.

<sup>14</sup> C. Leroy and B. Symes, "Teacher's Perspectives on the Family Backgrounds of Children at Risk," *McGill Journal of Education*, 2001: 36, 45–60.

<sup>15</sup> Brody, Gene, Fauber, Robert, Foreman, Rex and Long, Nicholas. "Home Predictors of Young Adolescents School Behavior and Academic Performance," *Child Development*, 1986: 1528–1533.

<sup>16</sup> Michele Kilpatrick Demaray and Christine Keeres Malecki, "Social Support as a Buffer in the Relationship between Socioeconomic Status and Academic Performance," *School Psychology Quarterly*, 2006: 375-395.

address this issue by providing support to school districts in the form of Title I to meet the needs of these identified students.<sup>17</sup>

The *No Child Left Behind Act* of 2001 (NCLB) was proposed by President George W. Bush in 2001.<sup>18</sup> This Act funds many programs to improve academic performance in all schools by increasing the accountability standards. The NCLB addresses issues that range from student achievement and quality teachers in every classroom to funding and school choice for students who live in a zone of low-performing schools.<sup>19</sup> In addition, the legislation provides parents with more options when choosing the best school for their child.<sup>20</sup> Finally, the intent of the NCLB is to ensure that students meet their full potential as well as meet established academic standards across the subject areas,<sup>21</sup> particularly Science and Math.<sup>22</sup>

The funding for the *No Child Left Behind Act* of 2001 is divided among its various programs,<sup>23</sup> including Title I-Part A, Title I-Part D, Title II-Part A, Title II-Part D, and Title IV.<sup>24</sup> Title I-Part A affects disadvantaged students by providing funding to districts to

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<sup>17</sup> No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, 20 U.S.C. § 6319.

<sup>18</sup> Suzanne Heath, Pamela Wright, and Peter W. D. Wright, *Wrights Law: No Child Left Behind*, Hartfield, VA: Harbor House Law Press, 2003.

<sup>19</sup> M. Yell and E. Drasgow, *No Child Left Behind: A Guide for Professionals*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson/Merrill/Prentice Hall, 2005.

<sup>20</sup> No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, 20 U.S.C. § 6319.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> Jeanne H. Ballantine and Joan Z. Spade, *Schools and Society—A Sociological Approach to Education*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2008.

<sup>23</sup> Stephanie Mencimer, "Children Left Behind," *The American Prospect*, accessed November 3, 2002: <http://search.proquest.com/docview/201121311?accountid=10920>.

<sup>24</sup> No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, 20 U.S.C. § 6319.

ensure that “highly qualified” teachers are instructing these students.<sup>25</sup> Title I-Part D provides funding for students, in need of more academic and behavioral support than a traditional school setting could provide, to attend youth institutions, day programs, and correctional facilities.<sup>26</sup> To maximize teacher and administrator quality at the school setting, Title II-Part A provides funds to recruit and retain high-quality professional staff and to provide continuous staff development.<sup>27</sup> Title II-Part D states that technology utilization in the school setting will support the learning process by providing additional resources for both teachers and students.<sup>28</sup> Finally, Title IV, the Safe and Drug-Free Schools and Communities Act, fosters academic growth for all students by providing funds to create a safe and drug-free learning atmosphere in all schools.<sup>29</sup>

In an effort to increase the levels of academic achievement in the school setting, while satisfying the regulations under NCLB, many schools have focused on creating a school climate conducive to learning. One important area that schools are concentrating on is appropriate student behavior in the school setting. Schools across the country have employed a variety of strategies to address undesired student behavior, including models designed to modify behavior. Behavior modification, as defined by Merriam-Webster, addresses empirically demonstrated behavior change

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<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

<sup>26</sup> Robert D. Barr and William H. Parrett, “Saving Our Students, Saving Our Schools: *50 Proven Strategies for Revitalizing At-Risk Students and Low-Performing Schools*,” Glenview, Illinois: Sky Light Professional Development, 2003: 474.

<sup>27</sup> No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, 20 U.S.C. § 6319.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

<sup>29</sup> Denise D. Hallfors, Melinda Pankratz, and Shane Hartman, “Does Federal Policy Support the Use of Scientific Evidence in School-Based Prevention Programs?” *Prevention Science*, 2005: 75-81.

techniques to increase or decrease the frequency of an identified behavior.<sup>30</sup> Following are examples of these behavior modification strategies.

Assertive Discipline, a model developed in 1976 by social worker Lee Canter, is a strategy used by classroom teachers. This model supports the idea of maintaining clear expectations in the classroom while providing positive reinforcement to the students who follow those expectations and providing consequences to students who consistently break the established rules.<sup>31</sup>

Effective Momentum also is a behavior management technique used by teachers. This strategy stresses the importance of the teacher to keep classroom instruction going while addressing problem behaviors in the classroom.<sup>32</sup>

Contingency Management is an approach that emphasizes behavior as a function directly correlated to the consequence of that behavior. When students learn that a certain behavior that they exhibit will result in a positive reinforcement, that identified behavior will become more desirable to the student. In this model, students will learn how to replace negative outcomes with positive outcomes by being exposed to more positive reinforcements while focusing on the elimination of negative reinforcements in the classroom setting.<sup>33</sup>

The Logical Consequences model is a strategy used by teachers to help students identify their own behavioral motivations. Once students are able to connect with their

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<sup>30</sup> Merriam-Webster Dictionary, accessed October 30, 2012, <http://www.meriam-webster.com/>.

<sup>31</sup> Lee Canter and Marlene Canter, *Assertive Discipline for Parents*, New York: Canter and Associates, 1985.

<sup>32</sup> Edward Wynne, *An Overview of Major Discipline Programs in Public Schools since 1960 (Reality Therapy, Group Management, Assertive Discipline, Teacher Effectiveness, Jacob Kounin)*, The University of Oklahoma, 1985, accessed September 3, 2012, <http://search.proquest.com/docview/>.

<sup>33</sup> Spencer J. Salend, "Contingency Management," *Academic Therapy*, 1987: 245-253.

unconscious needs, they are more likely to express those needs to the teacher. Teachers who are able to provide students with choices based on those identified needs will increase the chances of students' displaying the expected behaviors in the classroom setting while limiting the inappropriate behaviors. Teachers who use this strategy discover that choices offered to the students will assist them with controlling their own behavior.<sup>34</sup>

Reality Therapy is a strategy based on the idea that students can manage their own behavior. Teachers who employ this technique will review with students a variety of consequences associated with inappropriate behaviors as a means to help them understand outcomes of their actions. The goal is to be proactive, not reactive, when addressing inappropriate student behaviors in the classroom setting.<sup>35</sup>

The Love and Logic model is a strategy used to assist students in self-control. The objective is to provide students with opportunities to be responsible and to empower them to make their own decisions while exposing them to the natural consequences of those decisions. When students make a mistake, teachers are empathetic toward the students by addressing their frustrations and disappointment without resorting to actions that will affect students in a negative way. The Love and Logic Model is a "win-win" for both the teacher and student. The teacher addresses

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<sup>34</sup> Rudolf Dreikurs and Loren Grey, *Logical Consequences: A New Approach to Discipline*. New York: Plume, 1968.

<sup>35</sup> Robert E. Wubbolding, *Reality Therapy for the 21st Century*. Philadelphia: Brunner-Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2000.

inappropriate behaviors in a positive way, and the students learn how to solve problems and acquire the tools needed to be successful in the classroom setting.<sup>36</sup>

The Ginott model is a strategy that focuses on positive communication between the teacher and the student. Positive communication by the teacher improves how a student feels about him or herself. Positive communication avoids criticism and shows that the teacher is trying to understand students' feelings. Teachers who use this model are encouraged to foster student independence and to assist students with taking responsibility for their actions in the classroom setting. These goals are accomplished when the teacher establishes two-way communications with the student and is able to reason with the student. Successful implementation of the Ginott Model will ultimately increase positive classroom discipline by creating a positive relationship between the teacher and the student.<sup>37</sup>

The Kounin model is another strategy used by classroom teachers. This strategy focuses on the idea that any action that the teacher takes, both positive and negative, has a direct influence on the students. Teachers who display "withitness" must be able to monitor student behavior and engagement while, at the same time, to deliver a planned lesson. In addition, students who are engaged in the classroom lessons and activities tend to display a positive attitude toward both the teacher and other classmates.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> Foster W. Cline, Jim Fay, and Bob Sornson, *Meeting the Challenge: Using Love and Logic to Help Children Develop Attention and Behavior Skills*. Topeka, KS: The Love and Logic Press, 2000.

<sup>37</sup> Robert J. MacKenzie, *Setting Limits in the Classroom: How to Move Beyond the Dance of Discipline in Today's Classrooms*, Roseville, CA: Prima Pub., 2003.

<sup>38</sup> Jacob S. Kounin, *Classrooms: Individuals or Behavior Settings?* Bloomington, IN: School of Education, Indiana University, 1983.

The Jones model is a classroom management technique that emphasizes the physical presence of the teacher. In this model, the teacher achieves classroom control through verbal and nonverbal cues. Techniques include stopping instruction, starring, and close proximity to a student. The objective for these techniques is to stop students from misbehaving.<sup>39</sup>

The Character Education model is a strategy that promotes values and ethics and supports the idea that a direct relationship exists between character education and student achievement.<sup>40</sup> A caring school community is a major part of the success of this model.

The School-Wide Positive Behavior Support model is a strategy that uses positive interventions and systems to change an identified behavior.<sup>41</sup> The original intention of School-Wide Positive Behavior Support was to offer a way to address extreme behaviors in students with severe disabilities.<sup>42</sup> However, as the need to expand support beyond students with disabilities to all students grew, the ability to ascertain indicators to address undesired behaviors among identified students school-wide became paramount. In 1999, a group of researchers established a center for Positive Behavioral Interventions and support with the backing of a grant of nearly \$600,000

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<sup>39</sup> Fredric H., Jones, Patrick Jones, and Jo Lynne Talbott, *Tools for Teaching: Discipline, Instruction, Motivation*. Santa Cruz, CA: F.H. Jones & Associates, 2007.

<sup>40</sup> Cami Berry et al., "Implementation of a School-Wide Adolescent Character Education and Prevention Program: Evaluating the Relationships between Principal Support, Faculty Implementation, and Student Outcomes," *Journal of Research in Character Education*, 2001: 71.

<sup>41</sup> J. C. Gagnon, C. M. Nelson, and T. Scott, "School-Wide Systems of Positive Behavior Support: A Framework for Reducing School Crime and Violence," *Journal of Behavior Analysis of Offender and Victim-Treatment and Prevention*, 2008: 259-272.

<sup>42</sup> Robert Horner and George Sugai, "Applying Positive Behavior Support and Functional Behavioral Assessment in Schools," *Journal of Positive Behavior Interventions*, 2000: 131-143.

dollars from a partnership between the United States Department of Education's Office of Special Education Programs and the Office of Safe and Drug-Free Schools.<sup>43</sup> These researchers determined that assessment of school-wide office discipline referral data should be done before positive interventions could be established.<sup>44</sup> Office discipline referral data are collected using the School-Wide Information System (SWIS). SWIS is a standardized computer database used to collect office discipline referrals.<sup>45</sup> SWIS has the ability to electronically record and organize office discipline referrals into categories to provide important data on amount and types of referrals collected. School-Wide Information System is currently being used in almost 9,000 schools across the world, including Australia, Canada, Iceland, New Zealand, and the United States.<sup>46</sup>

The Individual with Disabilities Education Act of 1997 recommended that the School-Wide Positive Behavior Support Model was the best form of intervention for students with disabilities who display behaviors that are problematic or challenging.<sup>47</sup> Further, the U.S. government funded a program at the University of Kansas that uses School-Wide Positive Behavior Support strategies with children who are disabled and

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<sup>43</sup> *School-Wide Positive Behavior Support*. University of South Florida, accessed November 1, 2012, <http://flpbs.fmhi.usf.edu>

<sup>44</sup> T. J. Lewis and George Sugai, "Effective Behavior Support: A Systems Approach to Proactive Schoolwide Management," *Focus on Exceptional Children*, 1999: 24-47.

<sup>45</sup> Boland, Joseph B., Horner, Robert H., Irvin, Larry K., Lewis-Palmer, Teri, Sugai, George, and Todd, Anne W. "Using Office Discipline Referral Data for Decision Making about Student Behavior in Elementary and Middle Schools: An Empirical Evaluation of Validity," *Journal of Positive Behavior Interventions*, 2006: 10-23.

<sup>46</sup> School Wide Information Database information obtained from the Identified website, accessed October 30, 2012: <http://swis.org>.

<sup>47</sup> T. M. Scott, "Making Behavior Intervention Planning Decisions in a Schoolwide System of Positive Behavior Support," *Focus on Exceptional Children*, 2003: 1-18.

who display challenging behaviors in the school setting.<sup>48</sup> Based on the endorsement earned by this model, researchers sought to expand this model to all students who might benefit from this type of support.

The identified school district implemented School-Wide Positive Behavior Support as the strategy to support behavior modification. As a result, the researcher focused on this strategy throughout the study. The focus, likewise, was geared toward the impact that School-Wide Positive Behavior Support had on office discipline referrals as opposed to determining whether the model was the best strategy to support behavior modification available to the identified school district. The identified school district also allocated funds to assign each elementary school one full-time position of Safe School Assistant. The main responsibility of the Safe School Assistant was to work with students who were displaying behaviors that violated the discipline policy adopted by the identified school district. With support from the Safe School Assistant, these students were able to function in the normal school setting. The average salary for this position was \$31,518.00 dollars. The identified district had twenty nine elementary schools, for a total cost of \$914,022 dollars per year.<sup>49</sup>

The identified school district similarly allocated funds to support nine different alternative school programs within the district. These programs were designed to meet the needs of students who displayed behaviors that violated the discipline policy adopted by the district and were not able to remain in the normal school setting. These

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<sup>48</sup> Beach Center on Disability. University of Kansas, accessed November 4, 2012, <http://www.beachcenter.org/>.

<sup>49</sup> Budget department of the selected district, accessed on September 14, 2012, <http://collierschools.com>.

nine alternative school settings cost the identified school district approximately \$5,560,342 dollars per year.<sup>50</sup>

### **Inception of School-Wide Positive Behavior Support**

School-Wide Positive Behavior Support is a research-based program that is used to change a child's behaviors based on humanistic values and research.<sup>51</sup> The Positive Behavior for Effective Schools Act of 2007 was an amendment to the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, which gave educational agencies opportunities to use early intervention programs such as School-Wide Positive Behavior Supports to address inappropriate behaviors in the school setting.<sup>52</sup> School-Wide Positive Behavior Support offers educators and parents who are dealing with challenging behaviors the strategies to teach a child new skills to replace the undesired behaviors.<sup>53</sup>

School-Wide Positive Behavior Support is an approach that considers all the factors that affect a child's behavior. Through the use of this approach, a teacher has the ability to address a variety of behaviors, ranging from tantrums and aggression to bullying and repetitive behaviors that have a negative impact on the school setting.<sup>54</sup> School-Wide Positive Behavior Support was developed to assist with students who

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<sup>50</sup> Budget department of the selected district, accessed on September 14, 2012, <http://collierschools.com>.

<sup>51</sup> Cathy F. Telzrow, "IDEA Amendments of 1997: Promise or Pitfall for Special Education Reform?" *Journal of School Psychology*, 1999: 7-28.

<sup>52</sup> Anthony Biglan, Julie C. Rusby, and Jeffrey R. Sprague, "Evaluation of a Comprehensive Behavior Management Program to Improve School-Wide Positive Behavior Support," *Education and Treatment of Children*, 2001: 448-480.

<sup>53</sup> Robert Horner and George Sugai, "Applying Positive Behavior Support and Functional Behavioral Assessment in Schools," *Journal of Positive Behavior Interventions*, 2000: 131-143.

<sup>54</sup> T. J. Lewis and George Sugai, "Effective Behavior Support: A Systems Approach to Proactive Schoolwide Management," *Focus on Exceptional Children*, 1999: 24-47.

displayed extreme behaviors, including self-injury and aggression.<sup>55</sup> This model uses strategies in a proactive approach to address these challenging behaviors displayed by students.<sup>56</sup> The School-Wide Positive Behavior Support Model has been gaining momentum across the nation, as the use of it has proven an ability to reduce undesirable behaviors in the school setting.<sup>57</sup>

### **Implementation of School-Wide Positive Behavior Support**

Educators who implement a School-Wide Positive Behavior Support program must recognize the relationship between academic achievement and student behavior. Students who struggle with the academic curriculum tend to show increased levels of inappropriate behaviors in the school setting, which, generally, are an avoidance strategy used by the students to cope with academic pressure they may feel.<sup>58</sup> To address this issue school-wide, faculty and staff must have a shared belief that a change is needed.<sup>59</sup> This shared belief must be followed by a commitment to use the School-Wide Positive Behavior Support strategy by at least 80 percent of the staff and to have active involvement by site based and district-level administration in the implementation and monitoring of the School-Wide Positive Behavior Support

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<sup>55</sup> Anthony Biglan, Julie C. Rusby, and Jeffrey R. Sprague, "Evaluation of a Comprehensive Behavior Management Program to Improve School-Wide Positive Behavior Support," *Education and Treatment of Children*, 2001: 448-480.

<sup>56</sup> Carr, E., G. Dunlap, R. Horner, A. Turnbull, W. Sailor, J. Anderson, R. Albin, L. Koegel, and L. Fox. "Positive Behavior Support: Evolution of an Applied Science," *Journal of Positive Behavior Interventions*, 2002: 4-16.

<sup>57</sup> Lewis, T. J., S. Hudson, M. Richter, and N. Johnson. "Scientifically Supported Practices in Emotional and Behavioral Disorders: A Proposed Approach and Brief Review of Current Practices," *Behavior Disorders*, 2004: 247-259.

<sup>58</sup> Karen Elfner Childs, Rachel Cohen, and Don Kincaid, "Measuring School-Wide Behavior Support Implementation: Development and Validation of the Benchmarks of Quality," *Journal of Positive Behavior Interventions*, 2007: 203-213.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid.

strategy.<sup>60</sup> A commitment of at least three years is the recommended amount of time required to successfully implement this strategy as well as for the data management system to track and monitor the amount and types of office discipline referrals written.<sup>61</sup> Finally, a school-based team comprised of faculty and staff is formed and meets on a monthly basis.<sup>62</sup> The goal of this team is to discuss topics directly related to the School-Wide Positive Behavior Support strategy. Recommendations and decisions from the team are then shared with the entire school.<sup>63</sup>

The School-Wide Positive Behavior Support strategy contains four critical elements: (a) outcomes, (b) data, (c) systems, and (d) practices.<sup>64</sup> Outcomes are goals that can be measured by using office discipline referral data; the data collected is used to determine where priorities lie in relation to the overall climate of the school.<sup>65</sup> Systems are the structures put in place to support the implementation of School-Wide Positive Behavior Support, whereas the practices are used by faculty and staff when implementing the School-Wide Positive Behavior Support strategy.<sup>66</sup> The School-Wide Positive Behavior Support team monitors referral data and brings the results and recommendations to their monthly meeting. Recommendations for improvement

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<sup>60</sup> Ibid.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid.

<sup>63</sup> Karen Elfner Childs, Rachel Cohen, and Don Kincaid, "Measuring School-Wide Behavior Support Implementation: Development and Validation of the Benchmarks of Quality," *Journal of Positive Behavior Interventions*, 2007: 203-213.

<sup>64</sup> Robert Horner and George Sugai, "Applying Positive Behavior Support and Functional Behavioral Assessment in Schools," *Journal of Positive Behavior Interventions*, 2000: 131-143.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid.

regarding the effectiveness of School-Wide Positive Behavior Support implementation are made during the monthly meeting. These recommendations are shared with the entire staff throughout the school year.

School-Wide Positive Behavior Support can be applied at a school-wide level, a classroom level, and an individual level. Administrators and educators can implement intervention strategies at school-wide and classroom levels that become more frequent and individualized to address the undesirable behaviors.<sup>67</sup> At the school-wide level, this strategy relies on accurate and reliable discipline referral data to learn and understand better the behaviors that occur across the school setting. Analysis of this referral data allows an identified group, referred to as the School-Wide Positive Behavior Support Team, to identify problem areas and research interventions that will correct the problems.<sup>68</sup> Findings from the team are communicated to all stakeholders associated with the school.<sup>69</sup> Effective implementation of this strategy at the school-wide level should have an impact on at least 80 percent of the total student population, including students who did not exhibit behavioral problems.<sup>70</sup>

When addressing the classroom level, users of the School-Wide Positive Behavior Support strategy target a specific group of students who are not responding at

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<sup>67</sup> L. Eber and T. Scott, "Functional Assessment and Wraparound as Systematic School Processes: Primary, Secondary, and Tertiary System Examples," *Journal of Positive Behavior Interventions*, 2003: 131-143.

<sup>68</sup> Boland, Joseph B., Horner, Robert H., Irvin, Larry K., Lewis-Palmer, Teri, Sugai, George, and Todd, Anne W. "Using Office Discipline Referral Data for Decision Making about Student Behavior in Elementary and Middle Schools: An Empirical Evaluation of Validity," *Journal of Positive Behavior Interventions*, 2006: 10-23.

<sup>69</sup> Robert Horner and George Sugai, "Applying Positive Behavior Support and Functional Behavioral Assessment in Schools," *Journal of Positive Behavior Interventions*, 2000: 131-143.

<sup>70</sup> T. Scott, "A Schoolwide Example of Positive Behavior Support," *Journal of Positive Behavior Interventions*, 2001: 88-94.

the school-wide level. These students tend to need more specialized and direct support to address the undesired behaviors. This targeted group makes up approximately 15 percent of the student population.<sup>71</sup>

Finally, School-Wide Positive Behavior Support contains more advanced strategies to address those students who have not responded to support at either the school-wide or classroom levels. A team of professionals, including classroom teachers, support staff, and appropriate community members, meet to discuss these strategies that will assist in creating a behavior plan that will help meet the needs of this 5 percent of the student population.<sup>72</sup>

### **Purpose**

The purpose of this analysis was to determine the effectiveness of participating in a School-Wide Positive Behavior Support<sup>73</sup> program school-wide as determined by the number of office discipline referrals written in both high and low socioeconomic status<sup>74</sup> school settings in the selected school district. Further, to establish which schools to use in this study, the researcher identified the top 10 percent of elementary schools with the lowest socioeconomic status as determined by the free and reduced-lunch percentage, as well as the top 10 percent of elementary schools with the highest socioeconomic status as determined by the free and reduced-lunch percentage provided by the school

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<sup>71</sup> L. Eber and T. Scott, "Functional Assessment and Wraparound as Systematic School Processes: Primary, Secondary, and Tertiary System Examples," *Journal of Positive Behavior Interventions*, 2003: 131-143.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid.

<sup>73</sup> Positive Behavior Support (PBS) is a term used to describe the application of evidence-based strategies and systems to assist schools to increase academic performance, increase safety, decrease problem behavior, and establish positive school cultures.

<sup>74</sup> Robert H. Bradley and Robert F. Corwyn, "Socioeconomic Status and Child Development," *Annual Review of Psychology*, 2002: 371-399.

district. In addition to the socioeconomic status of students, various sub-groups were examined, including gender, race, ESE,<sup>75</sup> and ELL,<sup>76</sup> to determine whether specific groups had better responses to this program. Finally, the results of the study could guide the decision-making process on how to allocate funding throughout the identified district based on how effective the schools are utilizing the School-Wide Positive Behavior Support program as a strategy to address challenging behaviors.

### **Method of Study**

This study was designed as a post-hoc data analysis of the relationship between the School-Wide Positive Behavior Support strategy and the number of discipline referrals written at the identified schools.<sup>77</sup> Data were collected and analyzed for the school year before implementation and the school year after implementation of the School-Wide Positive Behavior Support strategy. To maintain consistency, the researcher identified three Title I schools that represented the lowest Socioeconomic Status that implemented School-Wide Positive Behavior Support during the same school year as well as three non-Title I schools that represented the highest Socioeconomic Status that implemented School-Wide Positive Behavior Support during the same year. This would ensure all schools involved received the same materials and training at the same time.

The identified district did not implement School-Wide Positive Behavior Support at all schools simultaneously. However, the three identified Title I schools implemented School-Wide Positive Behavior Support during the 2004-2005 school year, while the

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<sup>75</sup> ESE is a term used to describe students who have specific learning disabilities.

<sup>76</sup> ELL is a term used to describe students whose native language is not English.

<sup>77</sup> Schuyler W. Huck, *Reading Statistics and Research*, Knoxville, TN: Pearson Education, 2008.

three identified non-Title I schools implemented School-Wide Positive Behavior Support during the 2005-2006 school year. These schools represent the only two clusters of three schools in the identified categories that implemented School-Wide Positive Behavior Support in the same school year. In addition, this post-hoc data analysis was conducted to search for patterns and relationships between the School-Wide Positive Behavior Support model and the number of referrals written at the designated schools and within the designated sub-groups.

Through this study, the researcher analyzed the number of referrals documented over the two-year span at each of the identified schools. In addition, information collected from this study provided district administrators and Board of Education members with valuable information on the effectiveness of implementing this model, as well as determined its efficacy at both high and low socioeconomic school settings.

### **Research Questions**

To accurately assess the impact of implementing the School-Wide Positive Behavior Support strategy at each of the schools in the selected school district, as well as the financial impact of implementing this strategy on allocation of school funds, the researcher addressed the following research questions: (a) What is the relationship between the number of referrals and the socioeconomic status of the school when compared by sub-groups pre- and post-School-Wide Positive Behavior Support implementation?; (b) How could the results guide the district's allocation of funds to meet the needs of Title IV? Title IV, as defined by NCLB, requires the district to provide resources to support the goal of creating a safe and drug-free learning atmosphere for all schools to foster academic growth for all students.

To address these questions, the researcher reviewed the history of discipline in the school setting, as well as factors that have influenced the need for educators to focus more on the growing issue of undesired behaviors by students in the school setting. The following null hypotheses guided this research:  $H_{o1}$ : There were no statistically significant relationships between implementing School-Wide Positive Behavior Support for Title I schools and number of referrals.<sup>78</sup>  $H_{o2}$ : There were no statistically significant relationships between implementing School-Wide Positive Behavior Support for non-Title I schools and number of referrals.

### **Limitations of the Study**

The researcher examined a strategy implemented by the identified school district to address the increasing demands by state and federal governments to create a safe and secure school environment for all students. The primary focus was on the impact of the School-Wide Positive Behavior Support program and its effect on the number of office discipline referrals written. This study was limited to specific elementary schools within the selected school district.

The top 10 percent and the bottom 10 percent of schools was selected based on socioeconomic status. These specific elementary schools in the selected school district were examined to determine whether the impact of implementing School-Wide Positive Behavior Support as measured by number of office discipline referrals was evident at each of the schools. Specific sub-groups also were analyzed to determine whether School-Wide Positive Behavior Support had a greater impact on one sub-group over another sub-group.

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<sup>78</sup>  $H_o$  is another way to represent the null hypothesis.

## Summary

The School-Wide Positive Behavior Support strategy was adopted by the selected school district to meet the needs of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001. One of the sections of the NCLB, referred to as Title IV, required school districts to implement procedures to create a safe and drug-free learning atmosphere for all schools to foster academic growth for all students.<sup>79</sup> A directive from the identified school district required all elementary schools to implement the School-Wide Positive Behavior Support strategy over a five-year period (Appendix A). Professional training and staff development were provided by the district during the implementation period.

The purpose of this study was to examine the relationship between the School-Wide Positive Behavior Support strategy and the number of office discipline referrals at each of the identified Title I and non-Title I schools. It also examined the School-Wide Positive Behavior Support strategy's financial impact on the designated district.

School-Wide Positive Behavior Support is a research-based strategy that addresses behavior modification within the school setting.<sup>80</sup> The identified school district has decided to adopt and implement this specific strategy across the school district. Accordingly, the researcher has identified specific elementary schools in the selected school district, based on socioeconomic status. 10 percent of the elementary schools with the highest socioeconomic status and 10 percent of the elementary schools with the lowest socioeconomic status were chosen for this study.

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<sup>79</sup> No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, 20 U.S.C. § 6319.

<sup>80</sup> Hudson, T. J., N. Johnson, T. Lewis, and S. Richter. "Scientifically Supported Practices in Emotional and Behavioral Disorders: A Proposed Approach and Brief Review of Current Practices," *Behavior Disorders*, 2004: 247–259.

Office discipline referrals were analyzed for the selected schools before implementation of the School-Wide Positive Behavior Support strategy and after the implementation of the School-Wide Positive Behavior Support strategy to determine whether a change occurred in the number of office discipline referrals written. Office discipline referrals were used as the vehicle to document challenging behaviors and assist with making decisions on how to address these behaviors.<sup>81</sup>

Results from this study could also guide the decision-making process on funding allocation throughout the identified district based on the effectiveness of the School-Wide Positive Behavior Support program. The district is currently allocating funds to address discipline issues in the school setting by assigning a Safe School Assistant to each elementary school. The main responsibility of the Safe School Assistant is to work with students who are displaying behaviors that violate the discipline policy adopted by the identified school district. These students are still able to function in the normal school setting with support from the Safe School Assistant. The identified school district also allocated funds to support nine different alternative school programs within the district. These programs are designed to meet the needs of students who have displayed behaviors that violate the discipline policy adopted by the district and are not able to remain in the normal school setting.<sup>82</sup> If the results of this study could demonstrate that the strategy implemented to modify undesired behaviors had a

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<sup>81</sup> Boland, Joseph B., Robert H. Horner, Larry K. Irvin, Teri Lewis-Palmer, George Sugai, and Anne W. Todd. "A Research Instrument for assessing School-Wide Positive Behavior Support," *Journal of Positive Behavior Interventions*, 2004: 3–12.

<sup>82</sup> Information accessed from the budget department of the selected district on September 14, 2012, <http://collierschools.com>.

positive impact, a potential financial savings could be achieved from the \$6.5 million dollars currently being allocated.<sup>83</sup>

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<sup>83</sup> Ibid.

## CHAPTER 2 REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

### **Parameters of Literature Review**

This review of literature focuses on the issues that surround the school climate, specifically discipline, and approaches taken to decrease discipline issues while improving the school climate in both high and low socioeconomic status school settings. In addition, the literature review explores how resources were allocated, based on the socioeconomic status of the school. To effectively address those discipline issues, it was important to first understand the history of school violence, as well as discipline procedures and practices implemented to combat this increasing problem.

The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001<sup>1</sup> was enacted to improve outcomes in education, and school districts were required to have systems in place to meet the needs of the many sections addressed in NCLB. This research study focused on the safe-schools section of NCLB. To that end, the School-Wide Positive Behavior Support strategy was being used in school systems to promote a safe school environment.<sup>2</sup> The objective of this strategy is to teach students how to make better choices. As students learned how to make better choices, their undesirable behaviors should decrease, ultimately improving the overall atmosphere of the school. This literature review identified the goals of the School-Wide Positive Behavior Support program and how it could be implemented school-wide. It addressed the impact that the program could have on the climate of the school setting, which ultimately affects the levels of student development and achievement within the school setting. In addition, this review

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<sup>1</sup> No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, 20 U.S.C. § 6319.

<sup>2</sup> "What is Positive Behavior Support?" University of South Florida, accessed May 19, 2012, <http://flpbs.fmhi.usf.edu>.

attempted to identify how funds were being distributed among schools to create a safe and positive learning environment for all students to be successful academically.

### **History of Discipline**

Discipline issues in the school setting have made dramatic changes since the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. In the 1950s, school officials were dealing with issues such as students' talking out of turn and running in the halls, and the occasional cigarette in the school bathroom. In the 1970s, they were contending with the concept of uniforms in the school setting.<sup>3</sup> Gang activity was the focus of school administrators in the 1980s, while the late 1980s through the early 1990s saw violence in the schools, isolated mainly in the inner-city schools, which were plagued with poverty, poor school funding, and a high minority rate.<sup>4</sup> In 1995, however, school violence spread to suburban and rural settings. Issues that triggered this violence included bullying, peer pressure, and labeling of certain students as "outcasts."<sup>5</sup>

The term "school violence" was used widely to describe violent and aggressive acts on school campuses.<sup>6</sup> To address this issue properly, researchers needed to define the terms "school violence" and "violence in schools."<sup>7</sup> According to Watkinson and Epp, violence in schools occurs when the school is identified as a physical location

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<sup>3</sup> Michael Furlong and Gale Morrison, "The School in School Violence: Definitions and Facts," *The Journal of Emotional and Behavioral Disorders*, 2000: 71-82.

<sup>4</sup> R. Curtis, "The Improbable Transformation of Inner-City Neighborhoods: Crime, Violence, Drugs, and Youth in the 1990s," *The Journal of Criminal Law & Criminology*, 1998: 1233-1276.

<sup>5</sup> Michael Furlong and Gale Morrison, "The School in School Violence: Definitions and Facts," *The Journal of Emotional and Behavioral Disorders*, 2000: 71-82.

<sup>6</sup> Eber, Lucille, Carl R. Smith, Terrance M. Scott, and George Sugai. "Wraparound and Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports in Schools," *Journal of Emotional and Behavioral Disorders*, 2002: 171-181.

<sup>7</sup> Henry Stuart, "What is School Violence? An Integrated Definition," *American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 2000: 16-29.

for violence that stems from conflicts that occur in the community and are brought to the school setting.<sup>8</sup> School violence, in comparison, occurs when the school is viewed as the system that causes the problems that a student experiences.<sup>9</sup> Researchers have identified inner-city schools as places where violence is most common and which is directly related to the community whose culture, norms, and values support the use of violence to resolve conflicts.<sup>10</sup> Devine described schools in which the culture of violence has infiltrated every aspect of the school setting, and, as a result, teachers have defined their role strictly as teaching within the classroom walls.<sup>11</sup> Watkinson and Epp noted:

School violence is an important component of the daily lives of children in schools . . . It affects where they walk, how they dress, where they go and who their friends are. As long as teachers treat violence at arms' length, as something that is someone else's problem; they will continue to neglect the opportunity to intervene in a crucial aspect of the children's lives. By ignoring school violence, the name-calling, the shoving, the fighting, the harassment, they are condoning it. Children see teachers walking by, pretending not to notice, and they learn that the way we treat others, the way we interact on the street or on the playground, is nobody's business but our own. Teachers must talk about violence, they must recognize it, examine it, dissect it and let children see and understand its secrets and its sources. Without this examination, it remains an ugly secret that society cannot understand or control.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Ailsa M. Watkinson and Juanita Ross Epp, "Critical Factors in the Formation of Character and Community in American Life," Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1997.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> Robert Horner and George Sugai, "The Evolution of Discipline Practices: School-Wide Positive Behavior Supports," *Child and Family Behavior Therapy*, 2002: 23-50.

<sup>11</sup> John Devine, *The Culture of Violence in Inner-City Schools*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996.

<sup>12</sup> Ailsa M. Watkinson and Juanita Ross Epp, *Critical Factors in the Formation of Character and Community in American Life*, Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1997.

As tensions increased about the roles that educators play in violent situations, it was important to go back to how school violence was defined. If educators considered the definition of school violence instead of violent acts that occur in schools, they would be better able to focus their attention on the role that school plays as a physical, educational, and social environment where violence occurs between students.<sup>13</sup> As researchers attempted to make a connection between violence in the schools and the responsibility of the school itself to address the violence, it became very clear that both have a relationship that cannot be separated or pushed onto another agency to address.<sup>14</sup> Watkinson and Epp made this connection with the term “systemic violence.”<sup>15</sup> In the school setting, systemic violence referred to any rule or procedure created by the school that affected student learning in a negative way. This ultimately placed a student in a negative situation that could result in that student being hurt physically and/or mentally.

Examples related to the concept of systemic violence were exclusionary practices, overly competitive learning environments, toleration of abuse, school disciplinary policies rooted in exclusion, and punishment and discriminatory guidance policies.<sup>16</sup> To better understand systemic violence in the school setting, perceptions of what violence in the school means needs to be clarified. For many years, researchers who explored the issues of violence in the school setting were in non-academic, often medical, fields and

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<sup>13</sup> Furlong, Michael, and Gale Morrison. "The School in School Violence: Definitions and Facts," *Journal of Emotional and Behavioral Disorders*, 2000: 71–82.

<sup>14</sup> Devine, John. "The Culture of Violence in Inner-City Schools," University of Chicago Press, 1996.

<sup>15</sup> Watkinson, Ailsa M., and Juanita Ross Epp. *Critical Factors in the Formation of Character and Community in American Life*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1997.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

addressed specific violent issues that affected youths in the United States. As researchers from outside the school setting started to work collaboratively with educators to address violence in the school setting, data were obtained. Enough data have been collected over the last two decades to support this collaborative approach to addressing violence in the school setting.<sup>17</sup>

Data found in the annual school safety reports created by school districts across the nation were analyzed by researchers to further understand school violence.<sup>18</sup> The report contained categories that included non-fatal student victimization, violence and crime at schools, violent deaths at schools, and non-fatal teacher victimization at schools.<sup>19</sup> Subsequently, researchers compared these categories in both the school setting and other settings and discovered that schools are the safest public setting for children and adolescents.<sup>20</sup> However, even though research showed that schools were considered to be safe places for children compared to other, non-academic settings, it was important to identify factors that fostered the violence that occurred in the school setting. One of the most telling factors was gender, specifically, males. In a study conducted between 1993 and 1995, it was discovered that nine out of ten deaths involved a male as both the perpetrator and the victim. Another important factor was

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<sup>17</sup> Watkinson, Ailsa M., and Juanita Ross Epp. *Critical Factors in the Formation of Character and Community in American Life*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1997.

<sup>18</sup> Kaufman, P., Chen, X., S. P. Choy, J. K. Fleury, A. K. Miller, S. A. Ruddy, K. A. Chandler, M. R. Rand, P. Klaus, and M. G. Planty. *Indicators of School Crime and Safety*. Statistical Analysis, Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education, and U.S. Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2000.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> Irwin A. Hyman and Donna C. Perone, "The Other Side of School Violence: Educator Policies and Practices that May Contribute to Student Misbehavior," *Journal of School Psychology*, 1998: 7-27.

student age. The level of violence varied based on the age of the student, with the severity of the type of violent act increasing with an increase in student age.<sup>21</sup>

Elementary level students use non-physical bullying as their main form of aggressive behavior, while middle level students engaged in physical contact as their mode of aggression. High school students are more likely to bring weapons to school as well as be involved in drug use.<sup>22</sup> Racial and ethnic identification was another element that determined level of violence. Researchers have discovered a national trend with African American students' being involved more often with violent acts than were Hispanic students.<sup>23</sup>

Cornell and Loper discovered that students who held beliefs that favored physical force as a way of solving problems were more likely to be involved as the perpetrator, while students who were disconnected from both peers and school personnel fit the category of victim in school violence situations.<sup>24</sup> Finally, students who reported frequent substance abuse in the school setting were more likely to commit aggressive acts toward other students.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Callie Marie Rennison, *Criminal Victimization 1999. Changes 1998-1999 with Trends 1993-99*, Statistical Analysis, Washington, DC: Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2000.

<sup>22</sup> George M. Batsche and Howard M. Knoff, "Bullies and their Victims: Understanding a Pervasive Problem in the Schools," *School Psychology Review*, 1994: 165-175.

<sup>23</sup> Chandler, Kathryn A., Christopher D. Chapman, Michael R. Rand, and Bruce M. Taylor. Students' Reports of School Crime. Statistical Analysis, Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education and Justice, 1998.

<sup>24</sup> Dewey G. Cornell and Ann B. Loper, "Assessment of Violence and Other High-Risk Behaviors with a School Survey," *School Psychology Review*, 1998: 317-330.

<sup>25</sup> Rolf Loeber, Magda Stouthamer-Loeber, and Welmoeet B. Van Kammen, "Substance Use and its Relationship to Conduct Problems and Delinquency in Young Boys," *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, 1991: 399-413.

Equally important to understanding the reported violent behavior documented by many researchers over the past few decades understands why students are committing these violent acts. Lockwood discovered through many interviews with students that most of the violent acts had a common theme. The theme included the perception by the perpetrator that they or others were the victims and their actions were justified as retaliation. Lockwood continues by saying that, in addition to the students' feeling that their actions were justified, they also felt strongly that this retaliation was part of their value system.<sup>26</sup>

### **Socioeconomic Status**

School violence in the school setting is not the only factor that has affected students' ability to succeed academically. The socioeconomic status of a student also plays an important role.<sup>27</sup> Numerous research studies have discovered that students who come from a low socioeconomic household have lower school readiness than do students from high-socioeconomic households.<sup>28</sup> According to one study, the socioeconomic measures of a student have consistently shown a direct effect on his or her academic success.<sup>29</sup> In another study, the independent factor of socioeconomic

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<sup>26</sup> Daniel Lockwood, *Violence among Middle School and High School Students: Analysis and Implications for Prevention*, Statistical Analysis, National Institute of Justice, Savannah: 1997.

<sup>27</sup> Socio-Economic Status (SES) is an economic and sociological combined total measure of a person's work experience and of an individual's or family's economic and social position in relation to others, based on income, education, and occupation.

<sup>28</sup> Collins, M., E. G. Hausken, J. West, and N. Zill. "Approaching Kindergarten: A Look at Preschoolers in the United States," National Center of Education, Washington, DC: 1995.

<sup>29</sup> Douglas J. Lamdin, "Evidence of Student Attendance as an Independent Variable in Education Production Functions," *The Journal of Educational Research*, 1996: 155-162.

status of a student was significantly related to achievement scores; the study further stated that poverty is the common factor that links most troubled schools.<sup>30</sup>

One researcher has made the connection between low socioeconomic status and problem behaviors in the school setting as well as poor academic performance.<sup>31</sup>

Another researcher has discovered that violent peer groups are more commonly found in lower socioeconomic status clusters, which tend to favor violent actions to resolve conflicts; these violent behaviors would often carry into the school setting.<sup>32</sup> Students who are exposed to these violent behaviors over a long period of time will find that these behaviors become habit forming and could occur in their view as an acceptable way to act in the school setting.<sup>33</sup>

The link between socioeconomic disadvantage and children's socio-emotional functioning appears to be facilitated partly by harsh, inconsistent parenting and elevated exposure to acute and chronic stressors.<sup>34</sup> Children who grow up in families under socioeconomic stress may be poorly supervised and often gain independence too early.<sup>35</sup> Unsupervised adolescents are more likely to smoke cigarettes, drink alcohol,

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<sup>30</sup> Irina Soderstrom and Alice Sutton, "Predicting Elementary and Secondary School Achievement with School-Related and Demographic Factors," *The Journal of Educational Research*, 1999: 330-338.

<sup>31</sup> Conger, K. J., R. D. Conger, G. H. Elder, F. O. Lorenz, R. L. Simons, and L. B. Whitbeck. "Family Economic Stress and Adjustment of Early Adolescent Girls," *Developmental Psychology*, 1993: 206-219.

<sup>32</sup> Karen Heimer, "Socioeconomic Status, Subcultural Definitions, and Violent Delinquency," *Social Forces*, 1997: 799-833.

<sup>33</sup> Karen Heimer, "Gender, Interaction, and Delinquency: Testing a Theory of Differential Social Control," *Social Psychology Quarterly*, 1996: 39-61.

<sup>34</sup> Vonnie C. McLoyd, "Socioeconomic Disadvantage and Child Development," *American Psychologist*, 1998: 185-204.

<sup>35</sup> Bushwall, P. L., S. J. Carlsmith, S. M. Dornbusch, R. T. Gross, A. H. Hastorf, A. H. Leiderman, and H. Ritter. "Single Parents, Extended Households, and the Control of Adolescents," *Child Development*, 1985: 326-341.

use drugs, report depressed moods, and engage in risky behaviors than are supervised children.<sup>36</sup> Low family income has been associated with early sexual activity, cigarette smoking, adolescent pregnancy, and delinquency.<sup>37</sup> High-poverty neighborhoods are more likely to be physically deteriorated and to have more crime and street violence, greater availability of illegal drugs, and more negative peer influences and adult role models.<sup>38</sup> These characteristics of high-poverty neighborhoods may have deleterious consequences for the cognitive functioning, socialization, physical health, emotional functioning, and academic achievement of children and adolescents.<sup>39</sup> Not surprisingly, low-income adolescents have reduced achievement motivation and a much higher risk of educational failure.<sup>40</sup>

One researcher has found that, in addition to the socioeconomic status of individuals, difficult behaviors can be connected to specific sub-group categories. Male students are more likely to have discipline referrals than are female students, while African-American students are more likely to get discipline referrals and be suspended than are any other ethnic group. The researcher also stated that students who receive special education services are more likely to be suspended than are students who do

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<sup>36</sup> Dent, C. W., B. R. Flay, B. Radziszewska, and J. L. Richardson. "After-school Care of Adolescents and Substance Use, Risk Taking, Depressed Mood and Academic Achievement," *Pediatrics*, 1993: 32–38.

<sup>37</sup> Bearinger, L. H., T. Beuhring, R. W. Blum, M. D. Resnick, M. L. Shew, and R. E. Sieving. "The Effects of Race/Ethnicity, Income, and Family Structure on Adolescent Risk Behaviors," *American Journal of Public Health*, 1993: 1879–1884.

<sup>38</sup> McLoyd, Vonnie, C. "Socioeconomic Disadvantage and Child Development," *American Psychologist*, 1998: 185–204.

<sup>39</sup> I. G. Ellen and M. A. Turner, "Does Neighborhood Matter?" *Housing Policy Debate*, 1997: 833-866.

<sup>40</sup> G. F. Schultz, "Socioeconomic Advantage and Achievement Motivation: Important Mediators of Academic Performance in Minority Children in Urban Schools," *Journal of Urban Review*, 1993: 221-232.

not receive these services.<sup>41</sup> In addition, children from more affluent neighborhoods with more community resources are less likely to engage in acts of juvenile delinquency.<sup>42</sup> In addition, previous research shows that neighborhood disadvantage is one pathway whereby poverty leads to psychological problems, especially delinquency.<sup>43</sup> Socioeconomic status and student achievement have had a strong correlation for many decades; as early as 1966, the Coleman Report stated that socioeconomic status is the best predictor of school success.<sup>44</sup>

### **No Child Left Behind**

The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 was proposed by President George W. Bush.<sup>45</sup> This Act funds many programs to improve academic performance in all schools by increasing accountability standards. In addition, the legislation provides parents with more options in choosing the best school for their child. Finally, NCLB places a large emphasis on core subject improvement, particularly in the areas of Science and Math. As NCLB states, no child will be left behind academically.<sup>46</sup> As a result of this goal, the

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<sup>41</sup> Lisa Santiso, *Variables Impacting School Discipline Referrals*, Texas Woman's University, 2011, accessed on November 9, 2012, <http://search.proquest.com/docview/924429518?accountid=10920>

<sup>42</sup> Brooks-Gunn, J., G. J. Duncan, P. K. Klebanov, and N. Sealand. "Do Neighborhoods Influence Child and Adolescent Development?" *American Journal of Sociology*, 1997: 353–395.

<sup>43</sup> B. K. Alter, N. G. Guerra, and P. H. Tolan, "Neighborhood Disadvantage, Stressful Life Events, and Adjustments in Urban Elementary School Children," *Journal of Clinical Child Psychology*, 1994: 391-400.

<sup>44</sup> Campbell, E. Q., J. S. Coleman, C. J. Hobson, C. J. McPartland, J. Mood, F. D. Weinfeld, and R. L. York. "Equality of Educational Opportunities, 2 Volumes," OE-38001: Superintendent of Documents Catalog No. FS 5.238:38001, Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1996.

<sup>45</sup> No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, 20 U.S.C. § 6319.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*

intent of NCLB is to ensure that all students meet their full potential as well as meet established academic standards across the subject areas.<sup>47</sup>

The funding for the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 is divided among its various programs, including Title I-Part A, Title I-Part D, Title II-Part A, Title II-Part D, and Title IV.<sup>48</sup> Title IV directly supports the essential question asked in this research study and provides resources to support the goal of creating a safe and drug-free learning atmosphere for all schools to foster academic growth for all students.<sup>49</sup>

The Safe and Drug-Free Schools and Communities Act is another resource that supports NCLB.<sup>50</sup> The Safe and Drug-Free Schools and Communities Act is the largest single source of federal alcohol, tobacco, and other drug-prevention funding for schools in the country. It affects essentially every school district in the nation and provides approximately 70 percent of the school-based prevention budget.<sup>51</sup>

New federal policies have increasingly emphasized the use of “evidence-based” programs in schools. In 1999, the Office of National Drug Control Policy developed goals and objectives that included the provision of drug-prevention programs and policies that were based on scientific evidence of effectiveness.<sup>52</sup> Both the Department of Education and the Department of Health and Human Services were designated as

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<sup>47</sup> Ibid.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

<sup>50</sup> Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1994, Title IV, § 41114116, 20 U.S.C. 71117116.

<sup>51</sup> Scott Cross and Irene Hantman, “Progress in Prevention: Report on the National Study of Local Education Agency Activities under the Safe and Drug Free Schools and Communities Act,” *Research, Jessup: ED Pubs, U.S. Department of Education*, 2000.

<sup>52</sup> D. M. Gorman, “Defining and Operationalizing Research-Based Prevention,” *The US Department of Education’s Safe, Disciplined and Drug-Free Schools Exemplary Programs, Evaluation and Program Planning*, 2002: 295-302.

the reporting agencies for these goals and objectives. The Education Department had previously established a rule called “The Principles of Effectiveness,” which required school districts to: (a) conduct a needs assessment; (b) establish measurable goals and objectives; (c) implement research-based prevention programs; and (d) evaluate progress toward the identified goals and objectives.<sup>53</sup> Compliance by the school districts was monitored by The Safe and Drug-Free Schools and Communities Act state offices, which had the authority to deny funding for failure to implement the Principles.<sup>54</sup> The Principles were later assembled into law through the NCLB.<sup>55</sup> According to the NCLB, school districts must select programs with research evidence of effectiveness or apply for a waiver as a condition of their Safe and Drug-Free Schools and Communities Act funding.<sup>56</sup>

### **School-Wide Positive Behavior Support**

School-Wide Positive Behavior Support is one of many strategies available that are research-based. These strategies attempt to change a child’s undesired behaviors based on approaches that have been proven to meet a desired effect.<sup>57</sup> School-Wide Positive Behavior Support strategies offer educators and parents who are dealing with

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<sup>53</sup> United States Department of Education, *Notice of Final Principles of Effectiveness*, Federal Register, 1998: 29902-29906.

<sup>54</sup> Crosse, Scott, and Irene Hantman. *Progress in Prevention: Report on the National Study of Local Education Agency Activities under the Safe and Drug Free Schools and Communities Act*. Research, Jessup: ED Pubs, U.S. Department of Education, 2000.

<sup>55</sup> No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, 20 U.S.C. § 6319.

<sup>56</sup> Yell, M. L., and E. Drasgow. *No Child Left Behind: A Guide for Professionals*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson/Merrill/Prentice Hall, 2005.

<sup>57</sup> “What is Positive Behavior Support?” University of South Florida, accessed May 19, 2012, <http://flpbs.fmhi.usf.edu>.

challenging behaviors the tools to teach the child new skills to replace the undesired behaviors.<sup>58</sup>

School-Wide Positive Behavior Support is an approach that considers all the factors that affect a child's behavior. Through the use of this strategy, a teacher has the ability to address a variety of undesired behaviors, which have a negative impact on the school setting.<sup>59</sup> School-Wide Positive Behavior Support was developed to assist with students who displayed extreme behaviors.<sup>60</sup>

School-Wide Positive Behavior Support can be implemented on several levels, including school-wide, classroom, and individually. On a school-wide level, School-Wide Positive Behavior Support relies on accurate and reliable discipline referral data to learn and understand better the behaviors that occur across the school setting, while analysis of this referral data allows an identified school team, such as the School-Wide Positive Behavior Support Team, to identify problem areas and research interventions that will correct the problems.<sup>61</sup> These interventions could include rewards for students who display appropriate behaviors. The findings from the School-Wide Positive Behavior Support Team are then communicated to all stakeholders associated with the school.<sup>62</sup> School-Wide Positive Behavior Support methods are research based and

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<sup>58</sup> B. Simonsen and G. Sugai, *School-Wide Positive Behavior Support: A Systems-Level Application of Behavioral Principles*, Washington, DC: American Psychological Association, 2009.

<sup>59</sup> "What is Positive Behavior Support?" University of South Florida, accessed May 19, 2012, <http://flpbs.fmhi.usf.edu>.

<sup>60</sup> Derby, K. M., W. W. Fisher, G. P. Hanley, K. Hilker, and C. C. Piazza. "A Preliminary Procedure for Predicting the Positive and Negative Effects of Reinforcement-based Procedures," *Journal of Applied Behavior Analysis*, 1996: 137–152.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid.

<sup>62</sup> George, Michael P., Joseph J. Schaffer, and George P. White. "Implementing School-Wide Behavior Change: Lessons from the Field," *Psychology in the Schools*, 2007: 41–51.

proven to significantly reduce the occurrence of problem behaviors in the school, resulting in a more positive school climate and increased academic success.<sup>63</sup> School-Wide Positive Behavior Support parallels the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), which advocates the use of positive behavior interventions and school-based disciplinary strategies that reduce or eliminate the need to use suspension and expulsion as disciplinary options.<sup>64</sup> School-Wide Positive Behavior Support is currently being implemented in 78 percent of the school districts in the state of Florida.<sup>65</sup>

### **School-Wide Positive Behavior Support Implementation**

Schools who use the School-Wide Positive Behavior Support strategy must understand the correlation between student behavior and academic success. Students who have difficulties with the academic curriculum tend to become frustrated, resulting in an increase of undesired behaviors in the school setting.<sup>66</sup> Undesired behaviors are addressed in the school setting when the faculty and staff agree that these behaviors need to be modified.<sup>67</sup> Finally, a school-based team comprised of faculty and staff is formed and meets on a monthly basis. The goal for this team is to discuss topics directly

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<sup>63</sup> Horner, Robert, and George Sugai. "Applying Positive Behavior Support and Functional Behavioral Assessment in Schools," *Journal of Positive Behavior Interventions*, 2000: 131–143.

<sup>64</sup> Reece L. Peterson and Russell J. Skiba, "School Discipline at a Crossroads: From Zero Tolerance to Early Response," *Council of Exceptional Children*, 2000: 335-346.

<sup>65</sup> Positive Behavior Support, University of South Florida, accessed February 6, 2013, [fpbs.fmhi.usf.edu](http://fpbs.fmhi.usf.edu).

<sup>66</sup> C. J. Liaupsin, C. M. Nelson, and T. M. Scott, "Effective Instruction: The Forgotten Component in Preventing School Violence," *Education & Treatment of Children*, 2001: 309-322.

<sup>67</sup> R. J. Garmston, *The Adaptive School: A Sourcebook for Developing Collaborative Groups*, Norwood, MA: Christopher-Gordon Publishers, 1999.

related to the School-Wide Positive Behavior Support strategy. Recommendations and decisions from the team are then shared with the entire school.<sup>68</sup>

The School-Wide Positive Behavior Support strategy is only effective when all components are included including the outcomes of the program, data collected by faculty and staff, best practices on implementing the program and the systems established that best utilize the program.<sup>69</sup> As discussed in Chapter One, outcomes are goals that can be measured using discipline referral data; data collected were used to determine where priorities lie in relation to the overall climate of the school.<sup>70</sup> Systems are the structures put in place to support the implementation of School-Wide Positive Behavior Support strategy, whereas the practices are referred to as the interventions being used by faculty and staff when implementing the School-Wide Positive Behavior Support strategy.<sup>71</sup> The School-Wide Positive Behavior Support Team monitors referral data and brings results and recommendations to the monthly meeting. Recommendations for improvement of the effectiveness of the School-Wide Behavior Support Strategy implementation are made during the monthly meeting. These recommendations are shared with the entire staff each month.

### **Effectiveness of Implementing School-Wide Positive Behavior Support**

Research on the effectiveness of implementing School-Wide Positive Behavior Support concentrates on the data collected from office discipline referrals to determine

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<sup>68</sup> Childs, Karen Elfner, Rachel Cohen, and Don Kincaid. "Measuring School-Wide Behavior Support Implementation: Development and Validation of the Benchmarks of Quality." *Journal of Positive Behavior Interventions*, 2007: 203–213.

<sup>69</sup> Horner, Robert, and George Sugai. "Applying Positive Behavior Support and Functional Behavioral Assessment in Schools," *Journal of Positive Behavior Interventions*, 2000: 131–143.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid.

the impact the program is having on the school setting. Discipline referral data have a direct correlation to student behavior.<sup>72</sup>

Researchers identified one middle school of approximately 500 students located in Oregon who had the opportunity to implement the School-Wide Positive Behavior Support Model school-wide. Results of implementing the School-Wide Positive Behavior Support Model school-wide showed a 68 percent decrease in office discipline referrals over the first five years of implementation.<sup>73</sup> A further example showed a school of approximately 500 students in an inner city of Kentucky that implemented the School-Wide Positive Behavior Support Model school-wide. Results indicated that 61 percent of the students spent less time in the office as a result of the decrease of office discipline referrals, providing students with more opportunities to attend class and be exposed to learning opportunities.<sup>74</sup> An additional study looked at a small suburban elementary school that implemented a Positive Behavior Program in specific locations of the campus, including the cafeteria, playground, and hallway transitions. Results concluded that the program was effective in reducing problem behaviors in the designated areas after implementation of the School-Wide Positive Behavior Support Program.<sup>75</sup>

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<sup>72</sup> Susan B. Barrett and Terrance M. Scott, "Using Staff and Student Time Engaged in Disciplinary Procedures to Evaluate the Impact of School-Wide PBS," *Journal of Positive Behavior Interventions*, 2004: 21-27.

<sup>73</sup> D. T. Kartub and S. J. Taylor-Green, "Durable Implementation of School-Wide Behavior Support: The High Five Program," *Journal of Behavior Interventions*, 2000: 233-235.

<sup>74</sup> Scott, T. "A School-Wide Example of Positive Behavior Support," *Journal of Positive Behavior Interventions*, 2001: 88-94.

<sup>75</sup> L. Garrison-Harrell and T. J. Lewis, "Effective Behavior Support: Designing Setting Specific Interventions," *Effective School Practices*, 1999: 38-46.

The final example concerns two middle schools, one that implemented an intervention program school-wide and one that did not. Findings after one year showed that the middle school that established an intervention program decreased office discipline referrals by 50 percent, while the middle school with no intervention program revealed a 12 percent increase in office discipline referrals.<sup>76</sup>

Research has shown that the implementation of a School-Wide Positive Behavior Support strategy in the school setting will reduce the overall number of office discipline referrals.<sup>77</sup> This study compared the socioeconomic status of schools to determine whether this strategy has an impact on specific students regarding the number of office discipline referrals. This study also looked at specific sub-group categories in the identified schools to determine the impact of the School-Wide Positive Behavior Support strategy on each group. Finally, this study recognized how the identified school district was allocating funds to address the expectations of Title IV of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001.<sup>78</sup>

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<sup>76</sup> G. Colvin, E. J. Kameenui, and G. Sugai, "Reconceptualizing Behavior Management and School-wide Discipline in General Education," *Education and Treatment of Children*, 1993: 361-381.

<sup>77</sup> Hudson, T. J., N. Johnson, T. Lewis, and S. Richter. "Scientifically Supported Practices in Emotional and Behavioral Disorders: A Proposed Approach and Brief Review of Current Practices," *Behavior Disorders*, 2004: 247–259.

<sup>78</sup> No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, 20 U.S.C. § 6319.

## CHAPTER 3 RESEARCH DESIGN

### **Parameters of Research Design**

This chapter presented the research design and methodology used in the study. The chapter included the theoretical framework as it related to the design of the study, research methodology, participants, access and entry, variables, instrumentation, validity and reliability of the School-Wide Positive Behavior Support strategy, assumptions, and limitations. The chapter concluded with a summary.

### **Theoretical Framework for Data Collection and Analysis**

The theoretical framework for this study was a post-hoc data analysis. Post-hoc data analysis is a method used by researchers when analyzing data after a practice has concluded, with the intention of finding patterns in data that were not specified prior to the study.<sup>1</sup> Patterns were identified when the researcher analyzed sub-groups of a sampled population to ascertain previously undetected relationships.<sup>2</sup>

This study focused on the impact of the School-Wide Positive Behavior Support strategy on the number of office discipline referrals and the financial impact the strategy has on both high and low socioeconomic status school settings. The researcher collected and analyzed office discipline referral data, pre- and post-implementation of the School-Wide Positive Behavior Support strategy, using sub-group categories identified by the Florida Department of Education (Appendix B).<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Huck, Schuyler W. *Reading Statistics and Research*. Knoxville, TN: Pearson Education, 2008.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Florida Department of Education. *"Critical Information for Parents of Third Graders,"* accessed July 23, 2011, [Justreadflorida.com](http://Justreadflorida.com)

## Research Methodology

The researcher used descriptive statistics to calculate percentages of office discipline referrals received pre- and post-implementation of the School-Wide Positive Behavior Support's strategy. The office discipline referrals of students from both high and low socioeconomic status schools were analyzed and categorized by student demographic information, including gender and race. This post-hoc data analysis included the student referral data from the 2002-2003 school year, before School-Wide Positive Behavior Support implementation at the three Title I schools, and the 2003-2004 school year, after School-Wide Positive Behavior Support implementation at the three Title I Schools. Comparison data included the 2004-2005 school year, before School-Wide Positive Behavior Support implementation at the three non-Title I schools, and the 2005-2006 school year, after School-Wide Positive Behavior Support implementation at the three non-Title I schools. A level of significance of .05 was used, and all tests were two-sided. All analyses were performed using a current statistics program, SAS 9.3.<sup>4</sup>

Research Question One required comparison group testing for both Title I and non-Title I schools. Chi-square tests<sup>5</sup> were used for the binary variables (T-Male before School-Wide Positive Behavior Support implementation versus T-Male after implementation of School-Wide Positive Behavior Support). Female and race subgroups were analyzed similar to the analysis of the male population. For the binary

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<sup>4</sup> SAS stands for Statistical Analysis System, an integrated system of software that enables a programmer to perform a variety of tasks, including statistical analysis.

<sup>5</sup> Chi-square test uses the chi-square statistic to test the fit between a theoretical frequency distribution and a frequency distribution of observed data.

variables, the null hypothesis<sup>6</sup> was written as  $H_0: \Pi_T = \Pi_N$ .  $\Pi$  equals the Male, Female, and race sub-groups (T = Title I School and N = non-Title I School). Next, categorical groups were compared using chi-square tests. For the categorical groups, the test of the hypothesis was written as  $H_{01}$ : School-Wide Positive Behavior Support strategy and number of office discipline referrals written at Title I schools are not related; and  $H_{a1}$ : School-Wide Positive Behavior Support strategy and number of office discipline referrals written at Title I schools are related. The Equation for Title I schools was written as  $Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1 (\text{African American}) + \beta_2 (\text{Haitian}) + \beta_3 (\text{Hispanic}) + \beta_4 (\text{Multi-Racial}) + \beta_5 (\text{Caucasian}) + \beta_6 (\text{Male}) + \beta_7 (\text{Female})$ , and the null hypothesis was written as  $H_{01}: \beta = 0$ . In this research question, Y = overall number of office discipline referrals during the 2003-2004 Title I school year. The Wilcoxon Rank Sum test was used to analyze data from Title I schools for research question one.<sup>7</sup> The same process described for Title I schools was used for non-Title I schools. Chi-square tests were used for the binary variables (N-Male before School-Wide Positive Behavior Support implementation versus N-Male after School-Wide Positive Behavior Support implementation). Female as well as race sub-groups were analyzed similar to the analysis of the male population. For the binary variables, the null hypothesis was written as  $H_{02}: \Pi_T = \Pi_N$ .  $\Pi$  School-Wide Positive Behavior Support and number of office discipline referrals written at Non-Title I schools are not equal to the Male, Female, and race sub-groups (T = Title I School and N = non-Title I School). Next, categorical groups were compared using chi-square tests. For the categorical groups, the test of the hypothesis was written as  $H_{02}$ :

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<sup>6</sup> Null hypothesis is used in statistics that proposes no statistical significance exists in a set of observations.

<sup>7</sup> Wilcoxon rank sum test calculates the difference between each set of pairs and analyzes those differences.

School-Wide Positive Behavior Support strategy and number of office discipline referrals written at non-Title I schools are not related; and  $H_{a2}$ : School-Wide Positive Behavior Support strategy and number of office discipline referrals written at non-Title I schools are related. The Equation for non-Title I schools was written as  $Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1$  (African American) +  $\beta_2$  (Haitian) +  $\beta_3$  (Hispanic) +  $\beta_4$  (Multi-Racial) +  $\beta_5$  (Caucasian) +  $\beta_6$  (Male) +  $\beta_7$  (Female), and the null hypotheses can be written as  $H_{o2}: \beta = 0$ . In this research question,  $Y$  = overall number of office discipline referrals during the 2005-2006 Title I school year, after implementation of the School-Wide Positive Behavior Support strategy. The Wilcoxon Rank Sum test was also used with non-Title I schools to analyze data for research question one.

Research Question Two identified possible funding sources in the school district used for the purposes of meeting the Title IV requirements. These identified funding sources could be considered to be reallocated to meet the needs of Title IV. Title IV, as defined by NCLB, requires the district to provide resources to support the goal of creating a safe and drug-free learning atmosphere for all schools to foster academic growth for all students.

### **Participants**

The population targeted for this study included elementary school students in Grades 3-5 in both Title I and non-Title I schools who were exposed to the introduction of the School-Wide Positive Behavior Support strategy adopted by the school district. The identified school district was comprised of twenty nine elementary schools (Pre-K–5), ten middle schools (6–8), eight high schools (9–12), and four charter schools. The district had approximately 50 percent of students who qualified for the free or reduced-lunch program; with all students' qualifying for free breakfast every day.

## **Access and Entry**

The researcher completed the request form for the University of Florida to collect data for the study (Appendix C). Permission was granted from the institution. Permission was also granted from the selected school district. The researcher identified the top 10 percent of schools with the highest socioeconomic status as well as the top 10 percent of schools with the lowest socioeconomic status. Schools also were identified based on when they first implemented the School-Wide Positive Behavior Support Program to maintain the same starting point for both groups of socioeconomic status schools. The information was sorted by sub-groups, and the results were printed in a spreadsheet format as well as represented in a chart. This chart presented the data organized in a form that assisted with analyzing the results of the study.

## **Variables of the Study**

Data collected for this study included the number of office discipline referrals written at both Title I and non-Title I schools for identified sub-groups. These data were collected for two consecutive years, both pre- and post-implementation of the School-Wide Positive Behavior Support strategy. Student demographic variables included socioeconomic status, gender, and race at each of the identified schools.

## **Instrumentation**

Referrals written and stored on the district's computer server in a program known as the "TERMS" database were collected. The analysis of these referrals by sub-groups, using a quantitative approach, was conducted. The number of office discipline referrals in each of the sub-group categories for both high and low socioeconomic status schools were recorded in a spreadsheet for analysis. Analysis of data was completed by the statistics program SAS 9.3. Office discipline referrals written at the

three Title I schools from the 2002-2003 school year, before School-Wide Positive Behavior Support implementation, and office discipline referrals written at the three Title I schools from the 2003-2004 school year, after School-Wide Positive Behavior Support implementation, were analyzed to determine whether the implementation of the School-Wide Positive Behavior Support strategy had an impact on the number of office discipline referrals written at the Title I schools.

Analysis was also conducted on office discipline referrals written at the three non-Title I schools from the 2004-2005 school year, before School-Wide Positive Behavior Support implementation, and office discipline referrals written at the three non-Title I schools from the 2005-2006 school year, after School-Wide Positive Behavior Support implementation. This was done to determine whether the implementation of the School-Wide Positive Behavior Support strategy had an impact on the number of office discipline referrals written at the non-Title I schools.

### **Validity and Reliability of the School-Wide Positive Behavior Support Strategy**

The School-Wide Evaluation Tool (SET) is a research instrument used to assess the effect of the School-Wide Positive Behavior Support strategy on the overall climate of the school setting.<sup>8</sup> The School-Wide Evaluation Tool has twenty eight items arranged into seven categories that correlate to the seven key features of the School-Wide Positive Behavior Support Program.<sup>9</sup> These features include the facts that (a) school-wide behavioral expectations are defined; (b) these expectations are taught to all

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<sup>8</sup> Boland, Joseph B., Robert H. Horner, Larry K. Irvin, Teri Lewis-Palmer, George Sugai, and Anne W. Todd. "A Research Instrument for assessing School-Wide Positive Behavior Support," *Journal of Positive Behavior Interventions*, 2004: 3–12.

<sup>9</sup> Childs, Karen Elfner, Rachel Cohen, and Don Kincaid. "Measuring School-Wide Behavior Support Implementation: Development and Validation of the Benchmarks of Quality," *Journal of Positive Behavior Interventions*, 2007: 203–213.

children in the school; (c) rewards are provided for meeting the expectations; (d) a consistently implemented continuum of consequences for problem behavior is put into place; (e) problem behavior patterns are monitored, and the information is used for ongoing decision making; (f) an administrator actively supports and is involved in the effort; and (g) the school district provides support to the school in the form of functional policies, staff training opportunities, and data collection options.<sup>10</sup> The School-Wide Evaluation Tool uses a scoring guide that allocates a value of 0, 1, or 2 (0=not implemented, 1=partially implemented, 2=fully implemented) for each of the twenty eight items.<sup>11</sup> The Reliability of the School-Wide Evaluation Tool was evaluated using a variety of correlational analyses that involved test-retest and internal consistency of the School-Wide Evaluation Tool scores as well as inter-observer agreement percentages.<sup>12</sup>

The correlational analysis was conducted using the Pearson product–moment correlations<sup>13</sup> as well as the Cronbach’s coefficient alpha internal consistency index on all scores from the School-Wide Evaluation Tool. The results showed an alpha of 0.96,

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<sup>10</sup> Stephen R. Lassen, Wayne Sailor, and Michael M. Steele, “The Relationship of School-Wide Positive Behavior Support to Academic Achievement in an Urban Middle School,” *Psychology in Schools*, June 9, 2006: 701-71.

<sup>11</sup> D. Chaney, S. Stage, and B. Walker, “The Validity and Reliability of the Self-Assessment and Program Review: Assessing School Progress in School Wide Positive Behavior Support,” *Journal of Positive Behavior Interventions*, 2009: 94-104.

<sup>12</sup> Boland, Joseph B., Robert H. Horner, Larry K. Irvin, Teri Lewis-Palmer, George Sugai, and Anne W. Todd. “A Research Instrument for assessing School-Wide Positive Behavior Support,” *Journal of Positive Behavior Interventions*, 2004: 3–12.

<sup>13</sup> Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient is a measure of the correlation or linear dependence between two variables *X* and *Y*, giving a value between +1 and -1 inclusive. It is mainly used to measure the strength of linear dependence between two variables.

which exceeds the standard reliability of an instrument used to conduct research.<sup>14</sup> The test-retest reliability of the School-Wide Evaluation Tool was conducted in eight elementary schools in the Pacific Northwest, with results averaging 97.30 percent reliable.<sup>15</sup> The reliability of the School-Wide Evaluation Tool using inter-observer agreement was tested in seventeen elementary schools, with a result of 99.00 percent reliable.<sup>16</sup> The validity of the School-Wide Evaluation Tool was determined by comparing correlated scores from both the School-Wide Evaluation Tool and the Effective Behavior Support Self-Assessment Survey (EBSSAS); a tool also used to measure implementation of School-Wide Positive Behavior Support).<sup>17</sup> Five middle schools and twenty six elementary schools located in Oregon and Hawaii were used in this analysis. The results of this correlational analysis using the Pearson correlation coefficient,  $r = .75$  ( $p \leq .01$ ),<sup>18</sup> yielded the median of the results at  $r = .65$ , which indicated a sufficient empirical relationship.<sup>19</sup> The identified school district used a standardized form as part of the School-Wide Positive Behavior Support strategy (Appendix D).

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<sup>14</sup> Cronbach's coefficient alpha internal consistency index is a coefficient of reliability used to measure the internal consistency or reliability of a psychometric test score for a sample of examinees.

<sup>15</sup> Boland, Joseph B., Robert H. Horner, Larry K. Irvin, Teri Lewis-Palmer, George Sugai, and Anne W. Todd. "A Research Instrument for assessing School-Wide Positive Behavior Support," *Journal of Positive Behavior Interventions*, 2004: 3–12.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> Boland, Joseph B., Robert H. Horner, Larry K. Irvin, Teri Lewis-Palmer, George Sugai, and Anne W. Todd. "A Research Instrument for assessing School-Wide Positive Behavior Support," *Journal of Positive Behavior Interventions*, 2004: 3–12.

<sup>18</sup> Pearson correlation coefficient is a measure of the relationship between mean values often denoted by a  $p$  or  $r$ , which measures the degree of correlation. The Pearson correlation coefficient is sensitive only to a linear relationship between two variables.

<sup>19</sup> Boland, Joseph B., Robert H. Horner, Larry K. Irvin, Teri Lewis-Palmer, George Sugai, and Anne W. Todd. "A Research Instrument for assessing School-Wide Positive Behavior Support," *Journal of Positive Behavior Interventions*, 2004: 3–12.

## **Assumptions and Limitations**

For this research, numerous assumptions were made. The first assumption made was that the identified schools, both Title I and non-Title I, implemented the School-Wide Positive Behavior Support strategy with fidelity. The next assumption stated that all schools identified received the same training on how to effectively implement and use this strategy. The researcher assumed that all the teachers assigned to the identified schools received the same training and support throughout the school year. It also was assumed that, because the district mandated every school to implement the School-Wide Positive Behavior Support strategy, all students would be exposed to the same expectations as well as have access to similar resources and materials. Another assumption involved all staff members' having the same training on how to complete an office discipline referral. Finally, it was assumed that the office discipline referrals documented in the district's database had been recorded accurately and consistently among all the selected schools.

Limitations for this research included lack of consistency among schools that implemented the School-Wide Positive Behavior Support strategy. The selected district gave schools the opportunity to phase in the required School-Wide Positive Behavior Support strategy over a designated period of time. As a result, the researcher could not identify three Title I schools and three non-Title I schools that implemented the School-Wide Positive Behavior Support strategy in the same academic school year. This created the potential problem of teachers' receiving training at different times and from different presenters. The researcher was able to identify three Title I schools that implemented the School-Wide Positive Behavior Support strategy during the 2004-2005

school year as well as three non-Title I schools that implemented the School-Wide Positive Behavior Support strategy during the 2005-2006 school year.

### **Summary**

The idea of implementing the School-Wide Positive Behavior Support strategy in the identified school district was that students exposed to this strategy would be taught appropriate behavior in the educational setting. The student would be remunerated with a positive reward who displayed this appropriate behavior. In addition, when students displayed inappropriate behavior, they would be taught alternate ways to act. The purpose of this post-hoc data analysis was to determine whether, as a result of the School-Wide Positive Behavior Support strategy's being implemented school-wide, the number of office discipline referrals written throughout the school year would decrease, increase, or remain the same. Data collected before and after implementation of the School Wide Positive Behavioral Support strategy were used to determine this.

The research also looked at the various sub-groups of students identified by the state to determine whether implementation of the School-Wide Positive Behavior Support strategy had an impact on the number of office discipline referrals written for each identified group. Sub-groups included socioeconomic status, gender, and race. Students in Title I schools were compared to students in non-Title I schools to determine whether implementing the School-Wide Positive Behavior Support strategy had a greater effect on Title I versus non-Title I schools. The identified school district, as part of the requirements of implementing this strategy, completed a year-end form to assess the effectiveness of the strategy (Appendix E).

Results of this study would also guide the designated school district with allocation of funds to support the concept of creating a safe environment for all students that

would meet the needs of Title IV. Title IV, as defined by NCLB, requires the district to provide resources to support the goal of creating a safe and drug-free learning atmosphere for all schools to foster academic growth for all students.

Areas for consideration could include the current allocation of funds to provide a Safe School Aide at each of the schools at a cost of almost \$1 million dollars annually, as well as the budget established to support the alternative school programs currently established in the district, which allocates funds of almost \$5.5 million dollars annually, for a total cost of approximately \$6.5 million dollars per year.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Information accessed from the budget department of the selected district on November 08, 2012, <http://collierschools.com>.

## CHAPTER 4 OBSERVATIONS

This chapter presented the results of the research study. The purpose of this data collection was to evaluate the influence of the School-Wide Positive Behavior Support strategy on the number of office discipline referrals written at both Title I and non-Title I elementary schools. Data were collected at elementary schools according to socioeconomic status. The top 10 percent of elementary schools with the lowest socioeconomic status as determined by the free and reduced-lunch percentage, as well as the top 10 percent of elementary schools with the highest socioeconomic status as determined by the free and reduced-lunch percentage provided by the identified school district, were identified. The number of office discipline referrals pre- and post-School-Wide Positive Behavior Support implementation were compared to determine whether a change in the number of office discipline referrals written was observed pre- and post-School-Wide Positive Behavior Support implementation.

The results of the data collected as well as the analysis of the designated data for the following questions were addressed:

1. What was the relationship between number of office discipline referrals at each of the identified Title I schools during the 2002-2003 school year, before implementation of the Positive Behavioral Support strategy, and the 2003-2004 school year, after implementation of the Positive Behavioral Support strategy?
2. What was the relationship between number of office discipline referrals at each of the identified Non-Title I schools during the 2004-2005 school year, before implementation of the Positive Behavioral Support strategy, and the 2005-2006 school year, after implementation of the Positive Behavioral Support strategy?

3. What was the financial impact on the allocation of funds, in both high and low socioeconomic status school settings, of the effectiveness of the implementation of the School-Wide Positive Behavior Support strategy?

### **Descriptive Analysis**

The sample group in this study included students in six schools in the designated school district in Kindergarten to Grade five. The average enrollment for each school was approximately 719 students. All students in the targeted grades were included in the sample group as well as in the study results. The majority of the analysis was in descriptive form due to the *p*-value of the overall results' not representing a statistical significance in either the Title I or Non-Title I schools.

### **Data Analysis**

Research Question One addressed the three selected Title I schools: What was the relationship between number of office discipline referrals at each of the identified Title I schools during the 2002-2003 school year, before implementation of the School-Wide Positive Behavior Support strategy, and the 2003-2004 school year, after implementation of the School-Wide Positive Behavior Support strategy (Appendix B)? To address this question, the researcher performed the Wilcoxon Rank Sum procedure to determine whether the implementation of the School-Wide Positive Behavior Support strategy had a statistical significance on the identified sub-groups within each of the three Title I schools.<sup>1</sup>

The corresponding null hypothesis,  $H_{01}$ , was established to test the first research question: There will be no statistically significant relationship between the

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<sup>1</sup> Huck, Schuyler W. Reading Statistics and Research. Knoxville, TN: Pearson Education, 2008.

implementation of the School-Wide Positive Behavior Support strategy in Title I schools and the number of office discipline referrals written. The percentages of office discipline referrals in each identified sub-group were found to be not statistically significant for the variables, with an overall average  $p$ -value of 0.50. Due to the levels of significance falling at or above a  $p$ -value of 0.50, the results show that it was necessary to fail to reject the null hypothesis for the variables related to the three Title I schools.

Research Question 1 also addressed the three non-Title I schools: What was the relationship between number of office discipline referrals at each of the identified non-Title I schools during the 2004-2005 school year, before implementation of the School-Wide Positive Behavior Support strategy, and the 2005-2006 school year, after implementation of the School-Wide Positive Behavior Support strategy (Appendix B)? The null hypothesis,  $H_{02}$ , was established to test this research question: There will be no statistically significant relationship between the implementation of School-Wide Positive Behavior Support for non-Title I schools and the number of office discipline referrals written. To address this question, the researcher again performed the Wilcoxon Rank Sum procedure to determine whether School-Wide Positive Behavior Support implementation had a statistical significance on the identified sub-groups within each of the three non-Title I schools.

The percentages of office discipline referrals in each identified sub-group were found to be not statistically significant for the variables with an overall average  $p$ -value of 0.50. Due to the levels of significance falling at or above a  $p$ -Value of 0.50, the results show that it was necessary to fail to reject the null hypothesis for the variables related to the three non-Title I schools.

To determine whether or not the implementation of the School-Wide Positive Behavior Support strategy was cost effective to the identified school district, the researcher analyzed data over a five year period incorporating the years identified in the study. The goal was to examine how the identified district was allocating funds to programs that had a correlation to the implementation of the School-Wide Positive Behavior Support strategy.

The researcher first looked at student enrollment at the established alternative schools over a five year period starting with the 2002-2003 school year and ending with the 2006-2007 school year. As presented in Table 4-1, student enrollment almost doubled over the five year span starting with 385 students in the 2002-2003 school year and ending with 690 students during the 2006-2007 school year. The 2005-2006 school year, yielded the highest number of students with a 767 enrollment figure.

The researcher examined the staff enrollment of the alternative schools over the five year period to determine whether a potential cost savings for the district was apparent. As displayed in Table 4-2, staff enrollment increased by almost 25.00 percent from 76.60 positions in the 2002-2003 school year to 104.39 positions in the 2006-2007 school year. The 2006-2007 school year, generated the highest number of positions at 104.39.

In an effort to establish a cost savings related to the implementation of the School-Wide Positive Behavior Support strategy, the researcher examined the allocation of Safe School Assistants over the identified five year period. Table 4-3 shows a slight increase in Safe School Aides allocated to schools starting with 29.00 aides in the 2002-2003 school year, and increasing to 31.50 aides during the 2006-2007 school year.

## Summary

The findings showed that a statistical significance was not observed when measuring the  $p$ -value of the three Title I schools as well as the three non-Title I schools in this study. The Wilcoxon Rank Sum procedure, which compares two different variables in a small sample population, was used to check the overall difference between two sets of variables in a small sample population. This established the  $p$ -values for the variables.

In addition to looking at the effectiveness of implementing the School-Wide Positive Behavior Support strategy, the researcher also looked at the potential cost effectiveness of successfully implementing this strategy related to how funds were distributed district wide.

The researcher revealed that the identified school district allocated funds to support nine different alternative school programs within the district. These programs were designed to meet the needs of students who displayed behaviors that violated the discipline policy adopted by the district and were not able to remain in the normal school setting. When analyzing Table 4-1, it could be suggested that due to the enrollment increasing from 385 students during the 2002-2003 school year to 690 students during the 2006-2007 school year that a cost savings for the identified school district was not attained when implementing the School-Wide Positive Behavior Support strategy.

Table 4-2 supports the idea of a lack of cost effectiveness when looking at the staff enrollment of the alternative schools over the five year period. Staff increased 25.00 percent over the five year period starting with 76.60 staff members during the 2002-2003 school year and ending with 104.39 staff members during the 2006-2007 school year.

The researcher also revealed that the identified school district allocated funds to address discipline issues in the school setting by assigning each elementary school one full-time Safe School Assistant. With support from the Safe School Assistant, students who displayed undesired behaviors were able to function in the normal school setting. Based on the results of Table 4-3, it could be suggested that due to the increase of Safe School Assistants from the 2002-2003 school year to the 2006-2007 school year, that the implementation of the School-Wide Positive Behavior Support strategy was not cost effective to the identified school district when looking at the Safe School Assistant allocations and the correlation between these allocations and the implementation of the School-Wide Positive Behavior Support strategy in the identified school district.

## CHAPTER 5 CONCLUSIONS

The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 was created to ensure that all students received a high-quality education while holding school districts accountable to accomplish this significant task.<sup>1</sup> An important element of NCLB was the section referred to as Title IV, which provides resources to support the goal of creating a safe and drug-free learning atmosphere for all schools to foster academic growth for all students.<sup>2</sup> The selected school district has implemented a strategy titled School-Wide Positive Behavioral Support to address the requirements of Title IV under NCLB.

This study examined the relationship between the implementation of the School-Wide Positive Behavioral Support strategy and the number of office discipline referrals that elementary school students received at both Title I and non-Title I schools in the identified school district. In addition, specific sub-groups were identified to determine how the School-Wide Positive Behavioral Support strategy affected each of them. Sub-groups included the African American population, the Haitian population, the Hispanic population, the Multi-Racial population, the White population, the Male population, and, finally, the Female population. The top 10 percent of schools with the highest socioeconomic status and the top 10 percent of schools with the lowest socioeconomic status were identified, resulting in a total six schools that were studied. Three of the six schools were identified as Title I schools, and the remaining three were identified as non-Title I schools.

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<sup>1</sup> No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, 20 U.S.C. § 6319.

<sup>2</sup> Hallfors, Denise D., Shane Hartman, and Melinda Pankratz. "Does Federal Policy Support the Use of Scientific Evidence in School-based Prevention Programs?" *Prevention Science*, 2005: 75–81.

## Summary of Results

The study was conducted based on the following questions: What were the predictors of office discipline referrals at each of the identified Title I schools during the 2002-2003 and 2003-2004 school years? What were the predictors of office discipline referrals at each of the identified non-Title I schools during the 2004-2005 and 2005-2006 school years? What was the relationship between the number of office discipline referrals and the socioeconomic status of the school when compared by sub-groups pre- and post-School-Wide Positive Behavior Support implementation? How could the results guide the district's allocation of funds to meet the needs of Title IV as well as determine if the implementation of the School Wide Positive strategy was cost effective to the identified district? Title IV, as defined by NCLB, requires the district to provide resources to support the goal of creating a safe and drug-free learning atmosphere for all schools to foster academic growth for all students.

Research Question 1 (Title I): What were the predictors of office discipline referrals at each of the identified Title I schools during the 2002-2003 and 2003-2004 school years? The null hypothesis associated with this research question was  $H_{01}$ : There was no statistically significant relationship between implementation of the School-Wide Positive Behavior Support strategy in Title I schools and the number of office discipline referrals documented. When analyzing all the variables associated with the three Title I schools, it was determined that, based on the  $p$ -values' falling above 0.05, the relationship was not statistically significant, requiring the researcher to fail to reject the null hypothesis for Title I schools.

Research Question 1 (non-Title I): What were the predictors of office discipline referrals at each of the identified non-Title I schools during the 2004-2005 and 2005-

2006 school years? The null hypothesis associated with this research question was  $H_{02}$ : There was no statistically significant relationship between implementation of the School-Wide Positive Behavior Support strategy in non-Title I schools and the number of office discipline referrals documented. Similar to the Title I schools, analysis of all the variables associated with the three non-Title I schools revealed that, based on the  $p$ -values' falling above 0.05, the relationship was not statistically significant, requiring the researcher to fail to reject the null hypothesis for non-Title I schools.

Research Question Two: How could the results guide the district's allocation of funds to meet the needs of Title IV as well as determine if the implementation of the School Wide Positive strategy was cost effective to the identified district? According to the results of Table 4-1, the district was allocating funds to meet the needs of Title IV by implementing alternative school programs that support creating a safe school environment. Due to the student enrollment of these alternative schools nearly doubling over the five year period, it could be suggested that the district was increasing funds to meet the needs of this growing population of students. This would indicate that a cost savings did not exist during this five year period when implementing the School-Wide Positive Behavior Support strategy based on the increased enrollment at the alternative school sites.

A correlation could also be made when analyzing the results of Table 4-2, which showed a 25.0 percent increase in staff who were assigned to these alternative school sites. This increase would likewise suggest that a cost savings did not exist during the five year period when the School-Wide Positive Behavior Support strategy was implemented based on the increased staff enrollment at the alternative school sites.

Finally, when interpreting the data in Table 4-3, an increase in Safe School Assistants over the five year period may possibly suggest a lack of cost savings to the identified school district when implementing the School-Wide Positive Behavior Support strategy.

### **Limitations of the Study**

The sample population in this study consisted of six schools in an average-sized district in Florida. The six schools within the designated district represented 10 percent of the Title I schools as well as 10 percent of the non-Title I schools. One potential limitation of this study was the change in student population from the 2002-2003 school year to the 2003-2004 school year in the identified Title I schools as well as the change in student population from the 2004-2005 school year to the 2005-2006 school year in the identified non-Title I schools. Factors that affected student population could include school choice as well as movement of the migrant student population in and out of the designated school district.<sup>3</sup> Discipline codes identified could have varied from school to school based on the training the instructional staff received, resulting in another potential limitation to the study. An example of this could include a student who is talking in class. If a referral was written, it could be considered a disruption of class referral or a rules violation (minor) referral. Either category would be correct, according to the description of the category. As a result, referrals could have been coded differently from staff member to staff member and from school to school. Finally, teacher retention could be a limitation of this study. Because the study compared two

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<sup>3</sup> Booker, Kevin, Brian Gill, J.R. Lockwood III, Paula Razquin, and Ron Zimmer. State and Local Implementation of the No Child Left Behind Act: Volume I-Title I School Choice, Supplemental Educational Services and Student Achievement. Ed.D. Dissertation, Jessup: United States Department of Education: Education Publication Center, 2007.

different school years, turnover of staff could be a factor. Teachers new to the school could have been trained differently on how to write referrals as well as how to implement and interpret the School-Wide Positive Behavioral Support strategy.

### **Implications**

Findings related to this study could be useful when determining how to appropriately allocate funds across the district to meet the requirements of the NCLB. Specifically, Title IV, as described previously in this study, provides resources to support the goal of creating a safe and drug-free learning atmosphere for all schools to foster academic growth for all students.<sup>4</sup>

Implementing the School-Wide Positive Behavioral Support strategy at both the Title I schools and non-Title I schools in the designated school district had no effect based on the levels of significance falling at or above a *p*-value of 0.50. It could then be suggested that this strategy adopted by the identified school district to eliminate undesired student behaviors at the school settings was not effective.

Data documented in Table 4-1 and Table 4-2, showed an increase in student enrollment and staff enrollment over a five year period, resulting in an increase in funding to support these programs. It could be suggested that these increases directly correlated to the ineffectiveness of implementing the School-Wide Positive Behavior Support strategy over the same five year period.

Table 4-3 displayed information that also showed an increase in the allocation of Safe School Assistants over the same five year period. Based on this increase, and the correlation between the Safe School Assistants and the School-Wide Positive Behavior

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<sup>4</sup> Hallfors, Denise D., Shane Hartman, and Melinda Pankratz. "Does Federal Policy Support the Use of Scientific Evidence in School-based Prevention Programs?" *Prevention Science*, 2005: 75–81.

Support strategy that this strategy was not effective ultimately causing the district to allocate more funds to support the Safe School Assistant positions.

### **Recommendations**

This study concentrated on the impact of implementing the School-Wide Positive Behavior Support strategy in one school district in the state of Florida. In addition, it focused on the top 10 percent of elementary schools with the highest socioeconomic status populations and the top 10 percent of elementary schools with the lowest socioeconomic status populations. Duplicating this study using all of the elementary schools in a designated district would potentially yield different results, provided the schools involved implemented the School-Wide Positive Behavior Support strategy simultaneously. Additional research studies on this topic could include quantitative research on the makeup of the student population that is being compared pre- and post-School-Wide Positive Behavior Support implementation to determine whether the researcher is comparing results using the same makeup of students as well as the same percentage of students who attend the designated schools. In addition, quantitative research could be conducted to determine whether the same teacher is present pre- and post-School-Wide Positive Behavior Support implementation to ensure consistency among staff that is writing office discipline referrals. Finally, qualitative research could be conducted to determine how well the staff has accepted this strategy as well as the level of participation of staff involved. This could assist the researcher with determining whether the strategy is being implemented with fidelity across all schools in the designated school districts.

## **Conclusions**

The purpose of this study was to determine whether implementing the School-Wide Positive Behavior Support strategy would affect the number of office discipline referrals that the teachers were completing. The study looked at both Title I and non-Title I schools to determine whether one type of school, based on socioeconomic status, responded better than another. The top 10 percent of schools with the lowest socioeconomic status (Title I) and the top 10 percent of schools with highest socioeconomic status (non-Title I) were chosen for the study.

The number of office discipline referrals pre- and post- School-Wide Positive Behavior Support implementation were compared to determine whether a change in the number of office discipline referrals written was observed pre- and post- School-Wide Positive Behavior Support implementation.

To determine whether or not the implementation of the School-Wide Positive Behavior Support strategy was cost effective to the identified school district, the researcher looked at data over a five year period incorporating the years identified in the study. The goal was to examine how the identified district was allocating funds to programs that had a correlation to the implementation of the School-Wide Positive Behavior Support strategy.

The researcher first looked at student enrollment of the nine alternative schools starting with the 2002-2003 school year and ending with the 2006-2007 school year. According to Table 4-1, student enrollment almost doubled over the five year span starting with 385 students in the 2002-2003 school year and ending with 690 students during the 2006-2007 school year.

The researcher examined the staff enrollment of the nine alternative schools to determine whether a potential cost savings for the district was present. Table 4-2 shows that staff enrollment increased by almost 25 percent from 76.60 positions in the 2002-2003 school year to 104.39 positions in the 2006-2007 school year.

In an effort to establish a cost savings related to the implementation of the School-Wide Positive Behavior Support strategy, the researcher examined the allocation of Safe School Assistants over the identified five year period. Table 4-3 displayed a slight increase in Safe School Aides allocated to schools starting with 29.00 in the 2002-2003 school year, and increasing to 31.50 in the 2006-2007 school year.

Data located in Table 4-1, 4-2 and 4-3, unanimously suggested that the implementation of the School-Wide Positive Behavior Support strategy had no cost effective value to the identified school district when looking at how funds were allocated to support both the alternative school programs and the Safe School Assistant positions. This could also be validated when looking at the levels of significance falling at or above a *p*-value of 0.50 when analyzing the impact of the School-Wide Positive Behavior Support strategy on the number of discipline referrals written at both Title I and non-Title I schools in the identified school district.

It is important to note that the study was not suggesting that the implementation of the School-Wide Positive Behavior Support strategy was not effective based on the data obtained. The study did however try to identify a positive impact if any the strategy had on office discipline referrals written in a variety of school settings. It is also imperative to remember that the study investigated a one year snapshot of data only. It could be

proposed that a different outcome may possibly occur when analyzing data over a longer period of time.

It could also be suggested notwithstanding, that a greater increase in office discipline referrals might have been incurred by the selected school district if the School-Wide Positive Behavior Support strategy was not implemented in the selected school district.

Table 4-1. Alternative Schools Student Enrollment

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School Year	Number of Students
2002-2003	385
2003-2004	541
2004-2005	636
2005-2006	767
2006-2007	690

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Table 4-2. Alternative Schools Staff Enrollment

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School Year	Number of Staff
2002-2003	76.6
2003-2004	107
2004-2005	101.7
2005-2006	100.53
2006-2007	104.39

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Table 4-3. Safe School Assistants

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School Year	Number of Safe School Assistants
2002-2003	29
2003-2004	28
2004-2005	30.2
2005-2006	30
2006-2007	31.5

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APPENDIX A  
SCHOOL-WIDE POSITIVE BEHAVIOR SUPPORT IMPLEMENTATION

Description of Data: The information below is part of the Superintendent of Schools' strategic plan. Section 1b is the directive by the Superintendent for School-Wide Positive Behavior Support implementation.

**The Selected School District  
FY11-FY13 Strategic Plan**

**Goal: To provide a safe, caring, rigorous learning environment, for a diverse student body, that offers multiple opportunities for success and supports student achievement and development.**

**QUALITY LEARNING EXPERIENCES**

**Objective 1: Create and maintain a safe, caring learning environment with minimal disruptions where all students have a sense of belonging, and are respected and accepted by teachers, peers and the community.**

Year 1 (2011) Indicator	Year 1 (2011) Baseline Data	Year 2 (2012) Target	Year 3 (2013) Indicator												
1a. Number of students who indicate that they have a sense of belonging and they are accepted and respected by teachers, peers, and the community (Gallup Student Poll results and baseline data).  *Based on student response of "4" or "5" on a five-point Likert scale	<table border="0"> <tr> <td style="text-align: right;">Item</td> <td style="text-align: left;">% of Students</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Caring Adult</td> <td>94%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Feel Safe</td> <td>75%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Received Recognition/ Praise</td> <td>56%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>School Commitment to students</td> <td>68%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Treated with Respect</td> <td>66%</td> </tr> </table>	Item	% of Students	Caring Adult	94%	Feel Safe	75%	Received Recognition/ Praise	56%	School Commitment to students	68%	Treated with Respect	66%	Increase percentage of students responding with a 4 or 5 on a five-point Likert Scale in 3 of the 5 categories.	Increase the percentage of students responding with a 4 or 5 on a five-point Likert Scale in 4 of the 5 categories based on FY11 data.
Item	% of Students														
Caring Adult	94%														
Feel Safe	75%														
Received Recognition/ Praise	56%														
School Commitment to students	68%														
Treated with Respect	66%														
1b. Number of School-Wide Positive Behavior Support (PBS) schools: 100% Discipline referral baseline data to be calculated in Summer 2011	100% of Collier County Public Schools are PBS schools. 90% have achieved model school status as calculated in October 2010. 22% of all students had one or more referrals.	Increase the number of schools eligible for model school status by 2%.  Decrease by 1%.	Maintain number of Positive Behavior Support (PBS) Model Schools.  Decrease in discipline referrals.												

APPENDIX B  
SUB-GROUP OFFICE DISCIPLINE REFERRAL RESULTS

Sub-Group: African American Population

	All Mean	Non-Title I Mean	Title I Mean
B African American AZ	01.83	01.00	002.67
A African American AZ	00.67	00.00	001.33
B African American BV	19.17	04.67	033.67
A African American BV	08.33	08.33	008.33
B African American DC	03.50	03.33	003.67
A African American DC	03.00	03.33	002.67
B African American RV	51.17	08.33	094.00
A African American RV	09.83	06.00	013.67
B African American TSP	67.67	27.00	108.33
A African American TSP	53.00	30.67	075.33

**Key:**

- All = All students in the six identified schools
- Non-Title I = All students in the three Non-Title I schools (A, B, D)
- Title I = All students in the three Title I schools (E, F, G)
- Mean = The Mean is the arithmetic average
- B = The Number of Referrals written before Positive Behavioral Support Implementation
- A = The Number of Referrals written after Positive Behavioral Support Implementation
- AZ = Discipline referral code representing the infraction *“Abusive Behavior”*
- BV = Discipline referral code representing the infraction *“Bus Violation”*
- DC = Discipline referral code representing the infraction *“Disruption of Class”*
- RV = Discipline referral code representing the infraction *“Rules Violation (minor)”*
- TSP = Total Student Population in the school of the identified Sub-Group

Sub-Group: Haitian Population

	All Mean	Non-Title I Mean	Title I Mean
B Haitian AZ	01.00	00.33	01.67
A Haitian AZ	00.33	00.00	00.67
B Haitian BV	02.83	02.00	03.67
A Haitian BV	02.00	02.00	02.00
B Haitian DC	03.00	00.33	05.67
A Haitian DC	02.17	01.67	02.67
B Haitian RV	12.83	03.67	22.00
A Haitian RV	03.83	01.00	06.67
B Haitian TSP	30.17	09.33	51.33
A Haitian TSP	38.00	11.33	64.67

**Key:**

- All = All students in the six identified schools
- Non-Title I = All students in the three Non-Title I schools (A, B, D)
- Title I = All students in the three Title I schools (E, F, G)
- Mean = The Mean is the arithmetic average
- B = The Number of Referrals written before Positive Behavioral Support Implementation
- A = The Number of Referrals written after Positive Behavioral Support Implementation
- AZ = Discipline referral code representing the infraction “*Abusive Behavior*”
- BV = Discipline referral code representing the infraction “*Bus Violation*”
- DC = Discipline referral code representing the infraction “*Disruption of Class*”
- RV = Discipline referral code representing the infraction “*Rules Violation (minor)*”
- TSP = Total Student Population in the school of the identified Sub-Group

Sub-Group: Hispanic Population

	All Mean	Non-Title I Mean	Title I Mean
B Hispanic AZ	004.67	005.00	004.33
A Hispanic AZ	004.50	007.00	002.00
B Hispanic BV	019.00	026.33	011.67
A Hispanic BV	015.83	022.33	009.33
B Hispanic DC	015.17	022.33	008.00
A Hispanic DC	011.17	019.67	002.33
B Hispanic RV	051.50	026.33	076.67
A Hispanic RV	027.17	020.00	034.33
B Hispanic TSP	285.50	250.33	321.00
A Hispanic TSP	275.67	289.00	262.33

**Key:**

- All = All students in the six identified schools
- Non-Title I = All students in the three Non-Title I schools (A, B, D)
- Title I = All students in the three Title I schools (E, F, G)
- Mean = The Mean is the arithmetic average
- B = The Number of Referrals written before Positive Behavioral Support Implementation
- A = The Number of Referrals written after Positive Behavioral Support Implementation
- AZ = Discipline referral code representing the infraction "*Abusive Behavior*"
- BV = Discipline referral code representing the infraction "*Bus Violation*"
- DC = Discipline referral code representing the infraction "*Disruption of Class*"
- RV = Discipline referral code representing the infraction "*Rules Violation (minor)*"
- TSP = Total Student Population in the school of the identified Sub-Group

Sub-Group: Multi-Racial Population

	All Mean	Non-Title I Mean	Title I Mean
B Multi-Racial AZ	0.50	0.00	1.00
A Multi-Racial AZ	0.50	0.67	0.33
B Multi-Racial BV	1.00	2.00	0.00
A Multi-Racial BV	3.00	4.00	2.00
B Multi-Racial DC	3.00	1.33	4.67
A Multi-Racial DC	2.00	3.33	0.67
B Multi-Racial RV	7.83	3.67	22.00
A Multi-Racial RV	3.83	1.67	12.00
B Multi-Racial TSP	20.67	20.67	20.67
A Multi-Racial TSP	23.50	25.67	21.33

**Key:**

- All = All students in the six identified schools
- Non-Title I = All students in the three Non-Title I schools (A, B, D)
- Title I = All students in the three Title I schools (E, F, G)
- Mean = The Mean is the arithmetic average
- B = The Number of Referrals written before Positive Behavioral Support Implementation
- A = The Number of Referrals written after Positive Behavioral Support Implementation
- AZ = Discipline referral code representing the infraction "*Abusive Behavior*"
- BV = Discipline referral code representing the infraction "*Bus Violation*"
- DC = Discipline referral code representing the infraction "*Disruption of Class*"
- RV = Discipline referral code representing the infraction "*Rules Violation (minor)*"
- TSP = Total Student Population in the school of the identified Sub-Group

Sub-Group: White Population

	All Mean	Non-Title I Mean	Title I Mean
B White AZ	004.50	004.67	004.33
A White AZ	005.33	009.67	001.00
B White BV	033.17	042.67	023.67
A White BV	020.67	038.00	003.33
B White DC	028.50	038.33	018.67
A White DC	013.17	021.67	004.67
B White RV	083.50	070.33	096.67
A White RV	037.50	056.00	019.00
B White TSP	344.50	492.00	197.00
A White TSP	295.33	469.00	121.67

**Key:**

- All = All students in the six identified schools
- Non-Title I = All students in the three Non-Title I schools (A, B, D)
- Title I = All students in the three Title I schools (E, F, G)
- Mean = The Mean is the arithmetic average
- B = The Number of Referrals written before Positive Behavioral Support Implementation
- A = The Number of Referrals written after Positive Behavioral Support Implementation
- AZ = Discipline referral code representing the infraction "*Abusive Behavior*"
- BV = Discipline referral code representing the infraction "*Bus Violation*"
- DC = Discipline referral code representing the infraction "*Disruption of Class*"
- RV = Discipline referral code representing the infraction "*Rules Violation (minor)*"
- TSP = Total Student Population in the school of the identified Sub-Group

### Sub-Group: Male Population

	All Mean	Non-Title I Mean	Title I Mean
B Male AZ	009.00	008.00	010.00
A Male AZ	009.17	014.00	004.33
B Male BV	066.33	063.00	069.67
A Male BV	038.50	055.33	021.67
B Male DC	032.67	031.67	033.67
A Male DC	027.83	044.33	011.33
B Male RV	171.33	085.33	257.33
A Male RV	071.67	071.67	071.67
B Male TSP	394.83	423.67	366.00
A Male TSP	357.50	437.33	277.67

### Key:

All =	All students in the six identified schools
Non-Title I =	All students in the three Non-Title I schools (A, B, D)
Title I =	All students in the three Title I schools (E, F, G)
Mean =	The Mean is the arithmetic average
B =	The Number of Referrals written before Positive Behavioral Support Implementation
A =	The Number of Referrals written after Positive Behavioral Support Implementation
AZ =	Discipline referral code representing the infraction <i>"Abusive Behavior"</i>
BV =	Discipline referral code representing the infraction <i>"Bus Violation"</i>
DC =	Discipline referral code representing the infraction <i>"Disruption of Class"</i>
RV =	Discipline referral code representing the infraction <i>"Rules Violation (minor)"</i>
TSP =	Total Student Population in the school of the identified Sub-Group

Sub-Group: Female Population

	All Mean	Non-Title I Mean	Title I Mean
B Female AZ	003.50	003.00	004.00
A Female AZ	002.17	003.33	001.00
B Female BV	008.83	014.67	003.00
A Female BV	003.33	019.33	011.33
B Female DC	019.33	032.00	006.67
A Female DC	003.50	005.33	001.67
B Female RV	035.50	027.00	044.00
A Female RV	010.33	013.00	007.67
B Female TSP	353.67	375.33	332.00
A Female TSP	328.00	388.33	267.67

**Key:**

- All = All students in the six identified schools
- Non-Title I = All students in the three Non-Title I schools (A, B, D)
- Title I = All students in the three Title I schools (E, F, G)
- Mean = The Mean is the arithmetic average
- B = The Number of Referrals written before Positive Behavioral Support Implementation
- A = The Number of Referrals written after Positive Behavioral Support Implementation
- AZ = Discipline referral code representing the infraction *“Abusive Behavior”*
- BV = Discipline referral code representing the infraction *“Bus Violation”*
- DC = Discipline referral code representing the infraction *“Disruption of Class”*
- RV = Discipline referral code representing the infraction *“Rules Violation (minor)”*
- TSP = Total Student Population in the school of the identified Sub-Group

APPENDIX C  
UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD APPROVAL



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January 12, 2012

TO: Sean Christopher Kinsley  
[Redacted]

FROM: Ira S. Fischler, PhD; Chair *IF*  
University of Florida  
Institutional Review Board 02

SUBJECT: **Exemption of Protocol #2011-U-1201**  
The Effectiveness of Participating in School-Wide Positive Behavior Support on  
Number of Office Discipline Referrals in both High and Low SES (Student  
Economic Status) School Settings

SPONSOR: None

FROM: Ira S. Fischler, PhD; Chair *IF*  
University of Florida  
Institutional Review Board 02

SUBJECT: **Exemption of Protocol #2011-U-1201**  
The Effectiveness of Participating in School-Wide Positive Behavior Support on  
Number of Office Discipline Referrals in both High and Low SES (Student  
Economic Status) School Settings

SPONSOR: None

Your protocol submission has been reviewed by the Board. The Board has determined that your protocol is exempt based on the category listed below:

*45 CFR 46.101(b)(4) Research involving the collection or study of existing data, documents, records, pathological specimens, or diagnostic specimens, if these sources are publicly available or if the information is recorded by the investigator in such a manner that subjects cannot be identified, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects.*

Should the nature of your study change or if you need to revise this protocol in any manner, please contact this office before implementing the changes.

IF:dl

## APPENDIX D SCHOOL-WIDE EVALUATION TOOL (SET) FORM

Description of Data: The charts below represent the School-Wide Evaluation Tool (SET), which is a research instrument used to assess School-Wide Positive Behavior Support.



<b>School-wide Benchmarks of Quality: SCORING FORM (Revised)</b>							
School Name: _____			District: _____				
Coach's Name: _____			Date: _____				
<p><b>STEP 1:</b> Coach uses the Scoring Guide to determine appropriate point value. Circle ONLY ONE response.</p> <p><b>STEP 2:</b> Indicate your team's most frequent response. Write the response in column 2. (in place ++, needs improvement +, or not in place -). If there is a tie, report the higher score.</p> <p><b>STEP 3:</b> Place a check next to any item where there is a discrepancy between your rating and the team's rating. Document the discrepancies on page 3.</p>							
Critical Elements	STEP 1					STEP 2 ++, +, or -	STEP 3 ✓
PBS Team	1. Team has administrative support	3	2	1	0		
	2. Team has regular meetings (at least monthly)		2	1	0		
	3. Team has established a clear mission/purpose			1	0		
Faculty Commitment	4. Faculty are aware of behavior problems across campus through regular data sharing		2	1	0		
	5. Faculty involved in establishing and reviewing goals		2	1	0		
	6. Faculty feedback is obtained throughout the year		2	1	0		
Effective Procedures for Dealing with Discipline	7. Discipline process described in narrative format or depicted in graphic format		2	1	0		
	8. Discipline process includes documentation procedures			1	0		
	9. Discipline referral form includes information useful in decision making		2	1	0		
	10. Problem behaviors are defined	3	2	1	0		
	11. Major/minor behaviors are clearly differentiated		2	1	0		
	12. Suggested array of appropriate responses to major (office-managed) problem behaviors			1	0		
Data Entry & Analysis Plan Established	13. Data system is used to collect and analyze ODR data	3	2	1	0		
	14. Additional data are collected (attendance, grades, faculty attendance, surveys) and used by SWPBS team			1	0		
	15. Data analyzed by team at least monthly		2	1	0		
	16. Data shared with team and faculty monthly (minimum)		2	1	0		
Expectations & Rules Developed	17. 3-5 positively stated school-wide expectations are posted around school	3	2	1	0		
	18. Expectations apply to both students and staff	3	2	1	0		
	19. Rules are developed and posted for specific settings (settings where data suggest rules are needed)		2	1	0		
	20. Rules are linked to expectations			1	0		
	21. Staff are involved in development of expectations and rules		2	1	0		

Critical Elements	STEP 1				STEP 2 ++, +, or -	STEP 3 ✓
Reward/ Recognition Program Established	22. A system of rewards has elements that are implemented consistently across campus	3	2	1	0	
	23. A variety of methods are used to reward students		2	1	0	
	24. Rewards are linked to expectations and rules	3	2	1	0	
	25. Rewards are varied to maintain student interest		2	1	0	
	26. Ratios of acknowledgement to corrections are high	3	2	1	0	
	27. Students are involved in identifying/developing incentives			1	0	
	28. The system includes incentives for staff/faculty		2	1	0	
Lesson Plans for Teaching Expectations/ Rules	29. A behavioral curriculum includes teaching expectations and rules		2	1	0	
	30. Lessons include examples and non-examples			1	0	
	31. Lessons use a variety of teaching strategies		2	1	0	
	32. Lessons are embedded into subject area curriculum		2	1	0	
	33. Faculty/staff and students are involved in development & delivery of behavioral curriculum			1	0	
	34. Strategies to share key features of SWPBS program with families/community are developed and implemented			1	0	
Implementa- tion Plan	35. A curriculum to teach the components of the discipline system to all staff is developed and used		2	1	0	
	36. Plans for training staff how to teach expectations/rules/rewards are developed, scheduled and delivered		2	1	0	
	37. A plan for teaching students expectations/rules/rewards is developed scheduled and delivered	3	2	1	0	
	38. Booster sessions for students and staff are planned, scheduled, and delivered		2	1	0	
	39. Schedule for rewards/incentives for the year is planned			1	0	
	40. Plans for orienting incoming staff and students are developed and implemented		2	1	0	
	41. Plans for involving families/community are developed & implemented			1	0	
Classroom Systems	42. Classroom rules are defined for each of the school-wide expectations and are posted in classrooms.		2	1	0	
	43. Classroom routines and procedures are explicitly identified for activities where problems often occur (e.g. entering class, asking questions, sharpening pencil, using restroom, dismissal)		2	1	0	
	44. Expected behavior routines in classroom are taught		2	1	0	
	45. Classroom teachers use immediate and specific praise		2	1	0	
	46. Acknowledgement of students demonstrating adherence to classroom rules and routines occurs more frequently than acknowledgement of inappropriate behaviors		2	1	0	
	47. Procedures exist for tracking classroom behavior problems		2	1	0	
	48. Classrooms have a range of consequences/interventions for problem behavior that are documented and consistently delivered		2	1	0	
Evaluation	49. Students and staff are surveyed about PBS		2	1	0	
	50. Students and staff can identify expectations and rules		2	1	0	
	51. Staff use referral process (including which behaviors are office managed vs. teacher managed) and forms appropriately	3	2	1	0	
	52. Staff use reward system appropriately	3	2	1	0	
	53. Outcomes (behavior problems, attendance, morale) are documented and used to evaluate PBS plan	3	2	1	0	

Scoring the Benchmarks of Quality: \_\_\_\_\_ / 107 = \_\_\_\_\_ Benchmarks Score  
Total pts. / 107

APPENDIX E  
OUTCOME DATA SUMMARY FORM

Description of Data: The chart below represents the Outcome Data Summary, which is an end-of-the-year summary of the effectiveness of implementing the School-Wide Positive Behavior Support strategy. Only the first page of the 36-page document is included. To access the entire document, refer to the link: <http://flpbs.fmhi.usf.edu/>



**School-Wide Positive Behavior Support  
Outcome Data Summary**

School \_\_\_\_\_ District \_\_\_\_\_  
 School Year 2011-2012 Date of Report \_\_\_\_\_  
 Six-digit DOE district/school number \_\_\_\_\_

Attendance Data ( <i>Current Year</i> )	
Total number of school days	
Average daily attendance (%)	

Behavioral Data (Current Year <b>through the last day</b> )	
Total number of office discipline referrals (major referrals)	
Total number of <b>days</b> of in-school suspensions	
Total number of <b>days</b> of out-of-school suspensions	

Are Progress Monitoring Tools in Use at Your School? <i>Circle Yes or No. If Yes, describe briefly and email samples if possible*.</i>	
For <b>Tier 2</b> Supplemental? Yes*      No	Describe:
For <b>Tier 3</b> Intensive? Yes*      No	Describe:
*Be prepared to email samples of progress monitoring if possible. An email link will be provided when entering the data on PBSES	

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## BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Sean Christopher Kinsley was born in 1969 in Buffalo, New York. Sean was raised in Lockport, New York, throughout his childhood. He graduated from Lockport Senior High School in 1987 and was recruited to play college hockey; he played four years as well as participated on the track and field team. A change in his major allowed him to fulfill a lifelong dream in the science field. Sean graduated from the State University of New York College at Fredonia in 1992 with a major in biology as well as a certification to teach science.

Sean relocated to the east coast of Florida to teach high school science in 1994. Upon completion of his first year of teaching biology and oceanography, he had the opportunity to return to his hometown to teach at the high school from which he graduated. Over the next five years, he had the opportunity to teach many science courses at the high school level. During this time, Sean also completed two Master of Science degrees in both education and school administration from Niagara University.

In February of 1992, he became the Assistant Principal at the Royalton Hartland Junior/Senior High School. He eventually became an Elementary School Principal and Middle School Principal. He is currently an Elementary School Principal in Naples, Florida.

In 2007, Sean had the opportunity to join a cohort of school administrators who were participating in a doctoral program through the University of Florida. He focused his doctoral studies on school leadership with an emphasis on studying the effects of implementing a School-Wide Positive Behavior Support program at the school setting. Upon completion of his degree, Sean plans to continue his career as a K-12 school

administrator. In addition, he plans to teach education courses at the post-secondary level.