

STAR BEHAVIOR AT AN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

RESEARCH QUESTION/STATEMENT

Schools across the country are struggling with federal mandates in academics as well as educating students with behavior problems. Many techniques and programs available have proven to be effective in addressing problem behaviors. A current theme in many schools is to implement a school-wide behavior plan that involves all staff and students.

In this action research study, I explored how students and faculty at a suburban elementary school perceive the school-wide Positive Behavior Support program that has been in place for three years. I wanted to learn more about how our school is adapting to the program. The numbers of students who go to rewards and faculty surveys are insufficient in fully evaluating the full success of the program. I was interested in whether changes need to take place or if another avenue is more appropriate for our population. I investigated to what extent the teachers “buy in” to the program and used it in their classrooms as well as interviewing students, both who often earn rewards and those who have consequences for inappropriate behavior. I interviewed administrative personnel to gain an understanding of how they feel about the program. These multiple sources will provide valuable information as well as the opportunity for them to voice their concerns.

BACKGROUND OF RESEARCH QUESTION

Literature Review

Introduction

Before conducting my own action research study, I reviewed current literature about the Positive Behavior Support (PBS) program. Several themes emerged from the research that helped me understand how the program is working nationwide. I found that the program is rapidly moving to more schools and is providing success with difficult students. The themes found in the research are the improved behavior in most students, more instructional time in the classroom, and teachers are not being consistent with the program on a school-wide basis. These research articles helped me capture the meaning of the word “positive” in a school behavior plan, as well as how other schools adapt the program to their own situation. These themes relate to my own study because our school implemented the program three years ago.

Improved Behavior

The PBS program uses a positive approach to correct inappropriate behavior. One outcome found in the research was the fact that behavior did indeed improve after the program was implemented. Three studies indicated that the schools that implemented the program saw a significant decrease in office referrals and suspensions. These schools serve large, diverse populations with heightened behavior problems and low academic achievement. This is relevant to my school because the point of using this program with our diverse population is to improve behavior. We have a transient population and are a large school. We have used the program for three years and it is important to evaluate its effectiveness.

One group of researchers was interested in the correlation between using a positive approach to behavior management and the need for additional reading and

behavioral support in early elementary grades. The participants in this study included six elementary schools in the Pacific Northwest. Many students had low academic abilities in reading. They reviewed office referrals and collected data about low achieving students in reading. McIntosh, Chard, Boland, and Horner (2006) concluded that the PBS program did result in lower amounts of office referrals. Students responded well to the ticket system in place at the school and administrators and teachers were satisfied with the overall improved behavior and agreed that students needed consistency with behavior expectations throughout the school.

Oswald, Safran, and Johanson (2005) also found improvement in behaviors at a rural middle school in southeastern Ohio. This was a large school serving sixth through eighth grades. Their population consisted of mostly minority students with low academic abilities. The researchers were interested in the effectiveness of the behavior program in the hallways of the school. They observed and recorded target behaviors during transition times and dismissal. Their research found meaningful improvement and a safer environment with the use of PBS. The expectations and positive attitudes of faculty members helped students move quickly and safely during high traffic transition times.

Another study that found improved behavior took place in a suburban elementary school serving kindergarten through sixth grade. The student population is mostly impoverished, diverse, and transient. They decided to observe and record behaviors while students were at recess. The results indicated that a structured recess reported fewer incidences and the intense lessons about rules and procedures proved helpful. The transient students benefited from the program because they learned the school expectations through direct instruction, even though they missed the lessons at the beginning of the school year. Lewis, Powers, Kelk, and Newcomer (2002) concluded that this school, one that serves many grade levels and is diverse, benefited from the PBS program all of the behavior components embedded within the program.

Instructional Time

Many researchers and educators agree that a positive outcome to the PBS program is the increase in instructional time during the school day. Overall, when problems decrease, there is less time taken up by administration and teachers to deal with discipline. Academics guidelines set by federal mandates and more instructional time is necessary to help students be more successful with the curriculum. Two studies found an increase in opportunities to learn, as well as a satisfied staff and administration. These schools have diverse populations and needed a positive intervention to discipline. The information in these studies is significant to my own research because they have similar populations and implemented the PBS program school-wide over several years.

Lassen, Steele, and Sailor (2006) studied the PBS program at an urban middle school in the Midwest. They wanted to know the outcome of using PBS in an urban school over a period of three years. They reviewed documents that revealed a decrease in suspensions for inappropriate behavior. They also conducted a survey from faculty that showed an overall increase in students staying in the classroom for instruction, rather than in the office waiting for administration. As the school entered its second and third year of implementation, the committee added more PBS components and faculty adapted the program to meet the needs of their students. Lassen et al. (2006) found the program to progress each year with the most positive outcomes in the third year of implementation. PBS is an effective intervention in reducing problems at that particular school. As the

amount of PBS components increased over three years, the amount of instructional time increased as well

Scott and Barrett (2004) conducted their research in an urban elementary school in Maryland. Their research question focused around how the behavior system was working and was there long term, systemic lifestyle change. Their research indicated that students were spending more time in the classroom and less time in the office. According to Scott and Barrett (2004), the total time for students in the office allowed for more instructional time for them, as well as better use of administrative time. This ultimately led to a money savings for the school system over time because administrators and teachers were more efficient during the school day. This study spanned over a period of three years, and found that the program was working to fidelity.

Weak Consistency

Although many research studies found mostly positive aspects with the implementation of PBS, one area needed improvement. When the program went school-wide, researchers found that teachers were not consistent in monitoring and facilitating the components. Two studies indicated weak consistency in schools with the possibility of low amounts of faculty who actually supported the program and carried it out as advised. Both studies were survey based and concluded that consistency is a key component in implementing a success PBS program. My school is large and serves many grade levels. We have many transition times and most students travel throughout the school by themselves. They have multiple teachers and assistants working with them each day, so consistency is important. This is also important because the program may not be as successful if faculty members do not support the philosophy of the program.

Michaels, Brown, and Mirabella (2005) were interested in the current practices and perceptions of behavioral intervention strategies and challenges facing the field of positive behavior support. They found 73 experts in the Positive Behavior Support field and sent out extensive surveys that addressed issues such as challenges and attitudes. The study indicated that one of the challenges is the weak consistency across an entire school. In the long term, the consistency weakened and the program decreased in value to resolving behavioral issues. Experts agreed that school-wide consistency is imperative for the program to celebrate continued success.

Another research study by Safran (2006) sought out the differences across areas of support and schools. The participants for this study included teachers from three schools in Eastern Ohio. They sent out surveys that included questions about four different settings: school-wide systems, non-classroom setting systems, classroom systems, and individual student systems. They found that individual student systems were the highest priority and classroom systems were in place. The weakest area of success was school-wide, citing limited consistency with teachers. Many classrooms had their own way of facilitating the program and some did not fully explain procedures and expectations.

Conclusion

Recent literature indicates that the Positive Behavior Support (PBS) program is in over 5000 schools nationwide. These schools are reporting success in the forms of fewer office referrals and suspensions. PBS encourages praise and recognition for good behavior rather than punishment for inappropriate behavior. Schools are required to go through intense training and adapt the program to their individual style. This a school-

wide program in which expectations and procedures are specifically taught and reinforced. Researchers found that schools are using PBS as a response to federal regulations in the special education field. There is evidence that a positive and proactive approach to problem behaviors prevents many students from acting inappropriately.

Personal Context

I have taught at my school for over six years and have seen many changes in our staff and students. I am an Exceptional Children's teacher and provide service to students with disabilities in two settings. First, I pull small groups of students to my room and provide direct instruction. Secondly, I go into the regular education classrooms and provide support and collaborative teaching. Due to my job as an Exceptional Children's teacher, I represented our school at the regional Positive Behavior Support training four years ago. I was on the committee for developing and implementing the school-wide behavior program. Positive Behavior Support (PBS) is a well research program in which students earn rewards for good behavior rather than receiving punishment for inappropriate behavior. It involves teaching the students expectations and procedures that are universal in all areas of the school. Every teacher has the same expectations and participates in rewarding students. Our school chose the star theme, in which each student has his own "Star Card". Each month, students receive a card with 50 stars. Students are "caught" being good and receive punches on their cards. There is a two-week goal of earning 20 stars and monthly goal of receiving 40 stars in order to go to the reward programs. Each grade level facilitates their own two-week reward and the entire school is involved in the monthly reward. This extensive program requires collaboration and organization. We went school-wide in the 2005-2006 school year and have continued for the past two years.

Over the past three years, teacher retention has been a problem so we have many new teachers each year. There are few teachers still at my school **since** the beginning of the program. The population of our school changed significantly over the years including more transient students and a greater number of students with free or reduced lunch. This moved our school into full Title 1 status and the recipient of additional funds. Since I helped begin this program, I would like to ask teachers and students how they feel about the program and whether or not it is working at our school. Working together as a team can be challenging in an elementary school our size. We are often so busy that we barely have time to discuss the needs of our students, besides how well our behavior program is working. I would like to speak in depth with some teachers at various grade levels and see what they think about the program.

Because I teach a special population of students, those with disabilities, I would like know how they perceive the program. Many of my students do not participate in the grade level or school-wide rewards because they did not reach their goal. Is this because the teachers are not buying in or are the students' behaviors that inappropriate? I ask this question myself each reward time. I personally participate in the program by giving them credit for the time they are in my classroom. If the program does not help students in special education to be more successful, then the school needs to look at how we can accommodate those children. I am also interested in what the students who always make

their goal think about the program. Are they motivated or are they just going through the motions?

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY: ACTION RESEARCH

There are different models of research studies conducted in the field of education. In my case, I am interested how a school-wide behavior program is working in an elementary school, therefore, it is reasonable to do an action research study. It is important to know the dynamics within my own school. Finding solutions to problems in an elementary school can be difficult, especially because we are working with other people's children. School is to be a safe, learning environment that encourages students to do their best. My school chose the school-wide behavior program to facilitate learning and safety.

Action research helps individuals or teams develop an inquiry that will ultimately provide practical application solutions (Stringer, 2007). My elementary school consists of many important people, including students and faculty. These are the primary stakeholders at my school, so it is necessary to do qualitative research to evaluate at a deeper level. Action research taps into the human aspect of research, which will provide important information about the school-wide behavior program. According to Stringer (2007), transformation comes about through good research. Action research can be a change agent by using meaningful data to guide participants into the direction that is right for them. This research will help the students and faculty reflect on their participation in the school-wide behavior program and have a clearer understanding of the different perspectives and experiences of all involved in the program (Stringer, 2007).

For my own understanding, this research put me into the practitioner-as-researcher model. This allowed me to reflect and collaborate with other members of the school about this program. My personal knowledge of the school and the program helped me be a better researcher and lead to practical application of what the research shows. The purpose of this model is to transform organizations to act self-reflectively within daily routines (Bensimon, et al. 2004). The school-wide behavior program is such a large part of our school and consumes much time, so a deeper understanding of how faculty and students view the program is important.

Action research provides application in the individual classrooms, as well as the whole school and even into the community (Stringer, 2007). This action research project will offer information that can help the school better serve students and motivate teachers in a positive direction. Quantitative research only reveals data in the form of numbers, such as the reduction of suspensions or office referrals. This research project provided opportunities for individuals who are deeply involved to say how they feel about the program.

RESEARCH METHODS

Setting

My research took place at a suburban elementary school in the Foothills of North Carolina. The school has a diverse population and is a Title 1 school. Under federal guidelines, the school receives funding due to the number of students receiving free or reduced lunch. At this time, 56% are currently in the free or reduced lunch program.

These students are at-risk and need additional services to be successful in school. There are 751 students attending the school of which 49% are White, 26% are Hispanic, 9% are Black, 8% are Multi-Racial, and 7% are Asian. The school serves grades kindergarten through sixth grade and has approximately 100 people on staff. There are two guidance counselors serving all grades as well as testing and intervention teams. There are four teachers and two assistants to accommodate the 225 English Language Learners.

Our school was is a National School of Character as of 2006. This is a highly regarded honor by the faculty and surrounding community. The school tied the mission closely to the character education program and Positive Behavior Support. The faculty works hard to teach character traits and values each student as an individual.

The school has been in the area for many years, but moved to a new building six years ago. The school is contained in one building and there are no learning trailers at this time. There are three wings consisting of classrooms and the office and library are in the center of the school. There are specific guidelines for parents and visitors to visit, including that all must check in at the office. Procedures are practiced in depth during the month of September so students move through the building safely. All exits lock during the school day, with the exception of the front doors. At any given time, you will see groups of students, individual students, and whole classes move through the building. Staff members are in the hallways often as well. The cafeteria is at the back of the building beside the gymnasium. There are two playgrounds, one for kindergarten through second grade and another for the upper grades.

Participants

When choosing a sample for this action research study, I chose participants who are typical in the setting. Stringer (2007) suggests identifying primary stakeholders and choosing individuals from those groups. In this case, the primary stakeholders are faculty and students. I felt that I needed to expand my sample to include at least one administrator as well.

Faculty

After putting much thought into my participants, I chose faculty with different roles within our school. I chose two classroom teachers, one specialty teacher, and a guidance counselor. These individuals provided insight to different areas of the school and how they facilitate Positive Behavior Support program. I asked for suggestions to make the program better in these settings.

Dawn, the administrator has been at our school for nine years. She is the Assistant Principal and handles many behavioral issues. She is also in charge of bus behavior. She has worked in a middle school setting before coming to elementary school.

Mary is in her third year of teaching. She is a white female from the area that surrounds the school. She originally taught second grade and moved to kindergarten last year.

Shelly is a specialty teacher and has taught for three years. She entered the school system through a lateral entry program in which she left the business world to become an educator. She was a textile designer when she decided to pursue teaching art. She teaches art to all students in the school and is a white female.

Debbie is a white female and was new to our school last year. She is one of our two guidance counselors. Before she came to our school, she was a guidance counselor in a surrounding county.

Tiffany is a sixth grade teacher who has been at the school for 22 years. She is a structured teacher with specific expectations. She has taught on military bases as well as in other schools. She is a white female and lives in the same city as the elementary school.

Students

Elementary school students offer valuable information because school is such a large part of their young lives. Stringer (2007) encourages the inclusion of students in action research because they actively construct their own knowledge. They have experiences to share and are quite capable of reflecting on events that occur in different settings. I chose to interview these students in a focus group format so they would not feel like they are in trouble and would be more open with me. I was interested in knowing their opinions about the program and any changes they would propose. Children do not always get a voice when deciding school procedures, so this gave them the opportunity to tell how they feel in safe environment. Stringer (2007) says that action research gives empowerment and is democratic, so I gained valuable insight from these students.

Mindy is a fifth grade white female student who attended all PBS reward celebrations since the program began three years ago. She and her three siblings have attended our school for four years. She lives in the area surrounding the school.

Tina is a fifth grade female from Thailand. She and her two siblings attend our school. She has also attended all PBS reward celebrations during the last three years. Her family lives in a neighborhood around the school. She has average academic ability and made all A's on her last report card.

Adam is an African American male in the fourth grade. He has low-average academic ability and frequently visits the school counselors for emotional problems. He has never attended a PBS reward celebration in his three years at our school.

Nathan is a white male in sixth grade. He has attended our school for two years. He has been to three PBS reward celebrations. He transferred to North Carolina from Florida last year. He has average academic ability and made average grades on his last report card. He has a male teacher this year, his first in all of his elementary education.

Data Collection

There are a number of data collection techniques to use in an action research study. I thought about my question and participants and decided to use interviews, observations, and a document review. I was interested in the personal experiences with the Positive Behavior Support program and needed safe ways to seek this information. There is a range of ages and abilities among children and many faculty members on staff, so these three techniques are sufficient to gain an understanding of the student and faculty members' perspectives.

Document Review

I examined various documents during this study. Teachers participated in survey last school year and collected data about students who did not earn rewards each month. The consequence for not earning reward is to listen to a character lesson and write about

what they learned. Younger children draw pictures about what they learned, so I reviewed these documents as well. The quantitative data I collected is the number of discipline referrals and suspensions over the past four years. This correlated to the data collected in the literature reviewed for this study.

Interviews

Interviews help stakeholders interpret their experiences and describe events from their own experiences (Stringer, 2007). This also enables me to collect data from various perspectives. Since I have worked at the school for so long, I have relationships with my interviewees and look forward to giving them the opportunity to share. I interviewed each of the chosen faculty participants, but chose a different option for students. Some students have a difficult time-sharing with a teacher in fear they may be in trouble, especially when discussing behavior. Stringer (2007) suggests using a focus group to interview children so they can help each other trigger new ideas. This focus group session was carefully planned and it took place in my classroom. We established ground rules, which the students followed very well. Stringer (2007) encourages the use of set ground rules, clear guidance, a designated facilitator, and a recorder to capture the data. In this case, I was the facilitator and tape-recorded the session. I later listened to the tape and collected accurate responses from each student.

Observations

I also chose to observe teachers in their own classrooms and compare their approach to PBS to their interview questions. According to Stringer (2007), observations allow researchers to observe participants in their own context and provide detailed descriptions of actions. In action research, I observed behavior and procedures, but instead of taking numerical data, I recorded what I saw in detail. This is an open-ended approach to observations and was more explanatory than just how many students received punches on their star cards. I observed two of the teachers who were interviewed prior to the designated observation date.

Duration

Data collection began on October 22, 2007 and ended on November 20, 2007. Over the four-week period, I collected documents, interviewed faculty members, and observed the PBS program facilitation in two classes. Table 1 is a brief explanation of when I collected the data for this action research study.

Table 1

Data Collection Timeline

Week	Description of Data Collected
October 22- October 25	Reviewed PBS documents; notified students for focus group and sent permission slips home; contacted faculty members for interviews
October 29- November 2	Finalized interview times; Conducted specialty teacher interview (Shelley)
November 5- November 9	Conducted focus group; Interviewed administrator (Dawn) and classroom teacher (Mary); Observed PBS facilitation in Art class (Shelley)
November 12- November 16	Interviewed school counselor(Debbie) and sixth grade teacher (Tiffany); Observed PBS facilitation in kindergarten classroom (Mary)

Analysis

In order to remain focused on the research question and clearly understand what I heard from teachers and students, I organized and analyzed as I collected data. According to Stringer (2007), it is important to analyze data in order to summarize the perceptions of participants and structure actions to resolve problems raised by the research. In my study, I reviewed documents that were statistical and reflective. The statistical data gave me information about the past three years and how the school has had a decrease in office and bus referrals needing attention by administration. The reflective data included students' writing samples of how they felt when they missed the PBS reward celebration due to not making their goal. I also interviewed five faculty members with different roles at our school. After the first interview, I discovered that the administrator and school counselor have different roles at our school, so I adjusted the interview questions. I recorded each interview and later transcribed the tape. I formed a focus group of four students in fourth through sixth grades and recorded their interview as well. I transcribed the interview with coding that indicated which student was making comments. The final stage in my data collection was observations of teachers facilitating PBS in their own classrooms. I observed two of the classroom teachers I previously interviewed. I took notes during the observations that related to the PBS program.

As I collected data, I began analyzing and organizing to find emerging themes. I wrote my own thoughts on the interviews and observations. I found several commonalities between the interviewee's answers as I went along and noted those on the interviews as well. As I was analyzing the interviews, I found the data to be difficult to manage and created a dated chart to organize the emerging themes. I added the document review and observations to the chart so I could look at the data as a whole. When I realized there were some key issues emerging, I created a chart of codes and categories (table 2) that organized the data so I could go back through the documents, interviews, and observations to find specific details that supported those themes. Table 2 is the chart I developed in order to code the data correctly.

Table 2
Codes and Categories

General Themes	Code	Specific Categories	Specific Codes
Behavior Improvement	B	School-wide	BS
		Less office referrals	BR
		Students enjoy program	BES
Staff Buy-In	S	Students know expectations	SE
		Consistency	SE
		Positive	SP
		Teachers using program	SU
Intrinsic Motivation	I	Not building character	IE
		Students expect rewards	IC

The general themes found in the data relate to how faculty and students perceive the PBS program at our school. The documents reviewed, interviews, and observations were coded according to the specific categories. I developed the codes through analyzing the emerging themes coming through the data.

Validity

Action research is an inquiry that constructs meaning from complex environments. People are subjective and interpret events differently, so validity is a concern for any researcher (Stringer, 2007). Action research is specific to particular contexts so it important to report results accurately.

My research study established validity through prolonged engagement. I have been at the school for six years and have been actively involved in the PBS program. I know many students at the school and have relationships with many faculty members. I

also collected data from multiple sources, so triangulation gave my research study credibility. In addition, diverse case analysis provided credibility because I collected diverse perspectives from faculty and students. Together, these helped my research study be valid in this particular context.

Ethics and Politics

Any researcher struggles with ethical and political issues. Ethical conduct is very important in action research due to the nature of data collection (Stringer, 2007). Because I work in an elementary school asked questions about a major program in our school, I also have ethical considerations. First, I was careful not to seem like I am trying to find deficiencies in the program itself. I wanted to find out how the program is working within our school and our diverse population. I wanted to investigate this program so we can make students more successful and faculty more motivated. When I asked faculty members for their help, I explained that I was doing a research study for a graduate class and was not reporting their answers to interview questions or observation data to the principal in raw form. So that this information is confidential, I gave all of the participants' pseudonyms.

Because I interviewed children, I asked parental permission before involving students into my focus group. Parents need to be aware of what their children are involved in during the school day. An unexpected event occurred during this process. I sent the permission slips home and received most of them within a day or so. Only one participant did not return the slip. When I approached this participant, the response was, "My mom is still looking at it." I was aware of the unstable home environment of this student, so I called the parent. She did not seem to be aware of the slip, but gave me verbal permission to include the child in the focus group. I almost selected another student instead of making phone contact with the parent, but ethically I felt like the student deserved the opportunity to share experiences, ideas, and opinions about the PBS program.

Identity

This process has enlightened me about teachers with whom I have shared several years of teaching and students I did not know well previously. I was pleased when I received such a great response in wanting to help me with this action research project. One of the major changes since I began this project is getting to know teachers on another, deeper level. I have a newfound admiration for teachers who work with younger children, as well as the specialty teacher who works across the hall from me. One day, I was in the workroom and a teacher I interviewed came up to me and began discussing some personal information. I ended up helping her with a personal problem, and later found out that she took the advice and is well on her way to solving the problem. Had I not spent some intimate time with discussing school, I may never have developed a personal relationship with her. I have been in her classroom and discovered her exceptional ability to work with students with disabilities and her willingness to new ideas. I hope our relationship continues to grow as the year progresses.

DATA REPRESENTATION

Introduction

When I analyzed the collected data, three themes became apparent in relation to the PBS program at our school. According to documents, interviewees, and observations, behavior is improving and students are relating well to the program. In addition, teachers are using the program on a daily basis and see the need for a change to intrinsic motivation from external motivation. The following chart (Table 3) represents the assertions made based on the data, as well as which data collection tool used to make the assertion and illustrative responses directly from the research.

Table 3

ASSERTION	EVIDENCE	ILLUSTRATIVE RESPONSES
There has been an overall improvement in behavior as the PBS program began three years ago. Influences on this improvement are that the program is school-wide and students enjoy the program.	Interviews Document Review Observations	“For the type of students we have, behavior is exceptional.” (Interview with Dawn)
Related categories: BS, BR, BES		The document review indicated a significant reduction in office and bus referrals. Nathan (Focus group interview) indicated that he “kinda” likes the program he gets to see things he has never seen before (at the rewards)
The faculty is buying into the philosophy of the program. Teachers are implementing the program in their classrooms. Students are aware of expectations and teachers believe in the positive approach and consistency throughout the school.	Interviews Observations	“PBS is all I use.” (Interview with Mary)
Related categories: SE, SC, SP, SU		Most focus group members were aware of how their teachers facilitate the program. They knew the procedures and consequences, as well as expectations.
Teachers feel that the PBS program is lacking intrinsic motivators. They are concerned that the tickets and Star Cards encourage students to expect rewards. Teachers and administrators are concerned that the school is not assisting children in building their character for the future.	Interviews	“Good character is thinking about others before you think of yourself.” (Interview with Shelley)
Related categories: IE, EC		“I would like to see them doing the right thing because it is the right thing.” (Interview with Dawn)

Behavior Improvement

There has been an overall improvement in behavior at our school over the past three years. During the interviews, teachers indicated that they saw improvement in behavior because expectations and procedures were school-wide. They like the fact that there is universal terminology used throughout the school, no matter where the students travel during the day.

The focus group responses illustrated this point because they understood and used the language associated with the program. They used terms like “Star Card, positive, and PBS reward.” They were knowledgeable about the expectations and how they could earn rewards. They are also aware that their teachers want to “catch them being good”, so they must put forth effort most of the day. When I read the reflective writing samples, the students indicated they knew why they were in the classroom rather than enjoying reward. They receive punches or tickets for punches on their Star Card throughout the school, so they are aware of school expectations.

When I collected the statistical data about office and bus referrals, there was a dramatic decrease in the need for disciplinary action. Each year, the referrals decreased more as we added more components and made adjustments to adapt to our population of students. Additionally, there was evidence that most students make their goal and attend the reward celebrations. Only a small percentage of students remained in the classrooms for reflective writing activities. Dawn, the administrator also made the comment that she has seen a decrease for in administrative duties for discipline. Mindy and Nathan, members of the focus group, indicated that more of their classmates are going to rewards this year.

During my interview with Mary, she told me about the last reward celebration which her students enjoyed very much. When students reach the goal of 40 stars on their Star Cards, they go to a school-wide reward celebration. This year, according to Mary, the rewards are more meaningful because they divided the upper grade and lower grade students to make the activities appropriate. The reward that her students enjoyed was games outside. They played different large group games that included much interaction and running around. Mary often refers back to this reward because her students remember it well. She sees benefits in making the activities more hands-on and interactive, rather than just sitting in the gymnasium for a program. She said, “After 20 minutes, kindergarteners’ attention span is done.” It is difficult to keep them on task for ceremonies and long programs. The focus group discussion also indicated a need for more activity and less sitting in for a program. Nathan indicated that he did not enjoy the “play about the bully.” The students who earned reward watched this program at the end of last year. The actors in the play were students who attend our school. Once again, this is a long program, so it was difficult to maintain attention. Tiffany, a sixth grade teacher said that older students enjoy games and dances, which correlates with comments made by Mary and Nathan. The focus group also offered suggestions for rewards, such as a baseball game and playing outside.

Intrinsic Motivation

The poem below illustrates the direction in which our faculty would like to go in with the PBS program. As it stands now, the program is primarily a ticket system in

which students receive rewards for good behavior. They are motivated with extrinsic rewards, but are not practicing the good character traits that are strongly encouraged at our school. They are working for extrinsic rewards rather than just doing something because it is the right thing to do.

GOOD JUDGMENT
SCHOOL-WIDE
HONESTY
DEDICATED

CONSISTENT
HELPFUL
ABOVE AND BEYOND
RESPECTFUL
PERSISTENCE
COURAGE
INTEGRITY
EXPECTATIONS
RESPONSIBLE

Our school became a National School of Character three years ago, the same year we implemented the PBS program. Because we earned this honor, different character traits are a part of the curriculum. Teachers must address a different character trait each month and have students' complete different activities that reflect what they learned. The PBS program intertwines with the character traits because expectations and procedures kick the year off in August/September. PBS requires intense direct instruction and practice with procedures so students know what to expect and understand consequences. The teachers interviewed were very clear in that they see the need for our diverse, transient population to have a structured behavior program supported with character lessons. There is no clear understanding of how PBS is influencing good character other than their behavior has improved. Some students are working for rewards rather than just exhibiting positive behaviors. The words in the poem represent how PBS and our character traits correlate and how students need to moving toward being respectful and responsible.

There were two instances during the action research project in which this point became clear. First, when I was standing in the hallway and students were on their way to the buses, a student kicked a piece of trash over to me. I asked him why he did that and he replied, "So you could do it." This is definitely an instance in which that particular student is not practicing good character traits. Several faculty members made comments about the fact that they would like to see more intrinsic motivation in these students. Shelley was one of my first interviews and really brought this to my attention. She said, "Good character is thinking about others before you think about yourself." This is a reflection on how she grew up and how she adapted to expectations. She explained that there were not many behavior problems when she was young and everyone listened to their teachers. She indicated that the PBS program is geared more to the external motivators and needs to move toward internal motivation. Debbie also feels that students need to build good character skills while at elementary school by saying, "I hope it is

instilled in them and that it is the right thing, not because we have reward at the end of the month.” As a counselor, she views students in different aspects than classroom teachers and noticed this need. Dawn further corroborated this need when she envisioned the future. She said she would like students to be “Doing good when nobody’s looking, just because it’s the right thing to do, that would my utopia.” She also notices the students expecting rewards rather than doing something “just because.” There is no clear indication that PBS is addressing this fully.

Staff Buy-In

There was overwhelming evidence that our faculty agrees with the philosophy of PBS and that they are implementing the program in their classrooms. This evidence was apparent in interviews and observations, including comments made by the students in the focus group. The teachers indicated that students benefit from knowing expectations in advance and the consistency of program use in all areas of the school. There are expectations for all areas of the school, including the restrooms, cafeteria, and hallways. Most teachers mentioned utilizing a positive approach to behavior, rather than punitive methods. The focus group came up with ideas that extended the positive approach as well. The cheer below illustrates how the faculty members answered questions about the PBS program and how they adapt the program to their individual style.

WHO ARE WE?

Who cares about students?

WE DO, WE DO

Who will praise and reward students?

WE WILL, WE WILL

Who loves consistency throughout our school?

WE DO, WE DO

Who loves students knowing expectations?

WE DO, WE DO

Who uses the positive methods in their classroom?

WE DO, WE DO

WE WILL BE POSITIVE, CONSISTENT, CARING, AND TEACH!

WE ARE TEACHERS, ADMINISTRATORS, AND WE CARE!

During the interview and observation process, I saw the program facilitated and a clear understanding of what PBS is trying to teach with our diverse population in many instances. Students at our school have many obstacles and sad experiences at home, so they receive positive feedback each school day. That may be the only praise they ever receive. The program helped our school become more positive so students can have successful experiences with school and become lifelong learners. There has been a shift in how teachers deal with students with inappropriate behaviors. The faculty believes in rewarding students for good behavior because many did not have similar experiences, it just was not the norm in years past. The PBS program is comprehensive in that it helps

our students understand expectations while providing a solid foundation of praise and encouragement.

CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS

When I began the action research study, I wanted to know how our faculty and students felt about the PBS program and how it fits our school. I found much more than that and changed my own facilitation of the program. The first finding was the overall improvement in behavior at our school. That was observed by both faculty and students, as well as in the documents I reviewed. Administration is pleased that there are fewer office and bus referrals. A major impact of the improved behavior was the fact that the program is school-wide. There are no more individual class rules, so when students travel throughout the school, they know their expectations. Students seem to enjoy the program, especially the reward celebrations. They are working toward goals and most do not want to miss those monthly events. The literature I reviewed supported these findings because many schools now have transient, poor, diverse populations and the PBS program has shown success in many. Our school adapted the program to fit our needs, so after three years, there is a definite increase in appropriate behaviors and less need for punitive methods.

Another finding in this research is the amount of faculty members who buy in to the program. All interviewees believe in the positive approach to discipline. They believe that students need praise and to be rewarded for good behavior. It helps that the students know their expectations and that those apply to all settings in the school. The research indicated a weak consistency in some schools, but our school seems to be opposite in that, most teachers observe consistent facilitation throughout the building. One teacher did think more consistency was needed, especially in the hallways. She has always been a very structured teacher and I expected that response. Overall, the teachers are using the program effectively and report success with different groups of students. There will always be individual students who need additional resources for discipline; however, PBS addresses the needs of the majority.

In order for students to grow up and be good citizens, several faculty members agreed that more intrinsic methods need to be added to the program. They are concerned that the students are working for rewards only. A good point in the research is that adults work for a paycheck and need tangible rewards as well. I understand the concern, however, because these students are our future. A recommendation for the facilitation of this program in our school may be to look at the rewards and begin scaling back. More character lessons could be taught as well as giving more verbal praise. This may need to be further researched, as four weeks was not a long period. Due to time constraints, many classroom teachers did not have the opportunity to express their ideas and deserve to have their voices heard.

When developing an action plan, it is imperative to remember all stakeholders and take in account the fact that we have a diverse school. Teachers struggle with day-to-day issues, as well as covering the curriculum and meeting the needs of students. I will take this data and look further for additional areas of need. The faculty believes in the program, however, they may need refreshers about how to better facilitate the program in their classrooms. Each year, there is a large teacher turnover, so planning a professional

development opportunity may be beneficial. There was also an indication that rewards are not always appropriate for all grade levels, so a discussion of options may help those students be more successful. I am not sure that I will join the committee again, but will take this information to them to help resolve some issues. I do not want it to seem as though there is additional work for the teachers, most already facilitate the program well, but there is always room for improvement.

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