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Teachers' Experiences of School-Wide Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports: A Qualitative Study

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DISSERTATION

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to describe the unique personal experiences of teachers implementing School-Wide Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (SWPBIS) in their classroom and identify themes within their experiences that impacted their desire or ability to implement SWPBIS. Phenomenological analysis was utilized to analyze data to develop a greater understanding of how teachers view and experience SWPBIS, and identify factors that aid and hinder acceptance and implementation. Four participants involved in implementing Tier 1 of SWPBIS were interviewed and asked about their experiences implementing SWPBIS. Participants described a number of experiences that negatively impacted their belief in, attitude toward, and use of SWPBIS. Themes identified that negatively impacted teachers' belief in, attitude toward, and use of SWPBIS included: (a) reluctance and negative emotional experiences upon introduction and training, (b) personal and philosophical conflict with SWPBIS, (c) insufficient knowledge and training, and (d) lack of resources. Participants also described experiences that increased their belief in, attitude toward, and use of SWPBIS. These themes included: (a) participants utilizing Responsive Classroom to manage behavior in their classroom, (b) seeking out independent professional development, (c) peer-to-peer mentoring, and (d) implementation team training and support. Implications of this study for administrators, researchers, teachers, and clinical psychologists are discussed along with limitations and recommendations for future research.

Keywords: School-Wide Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports, Implementation, Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis

Teachers' Experiences of School-Wide Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports Implementation: A Qualitative Study

This study aimed to explore teachers' experiences of implementing the first tier of School Wide Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (SWPBIS) in elementary schools. The study explored the personal, professional, and psychological experiences teachers are faced with when implementing SWPBIS. The first section contains the context and background of the study, rationale for and importance of the study, and the conceptual framework for the research. The subsequent sections include a description of the methods utilized to recruit participants and to collect and analyze the data. Results of the study and a discussion of the findings follow.

Problem Statement

School districts throughout the United States have been implementing SWPBIS, a tiered public health prevention model, to improve academic performance, address student behavior, and increase the safety of schools. The implementation of SWPBIS requires significant buy-in and investment by teachers who are the main implementers. Research has shown that SWPBIS is highly effective in improving academic and behavioral outcomes when implemented with fidelity, but implementation is highly contingent upon teacher buy-in (Bradshaw, Mitchell, & Leaf, 2009). Teachers are placed in a challenging situation, whereby they are asked to implement SWPBIS but have personal and professional experiences and reactions to SWPBIS that may negatively impact their implementation of SWPBIS. It is important to explore which aspects of SWPBIS and its implementation conjure negative and challenging emotions and experiences in order to improve the introduction and implementation of SWPBIS.

Background and Context

School districts in the United States face the challenge of managing student behavior while simultaneously educating students to meet state and federal standards (Oliver, Wehby, & Reschly, 2011). To further complicate the behavior management landscape, the reauthorization of The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (1997) required schools to reintegrate special education students into mainstream classes. As a result, students with serious behavioral and emotional needs were mainstreamed in classrooms, with the expectation that teachers and paraprofessionals could manage the behaviors of all students while educating the students to meet mandated academic standards (Forness, Kim, & Walker, 2012; Skiba & Peterson, 2000). At the elementary level, approximately one to two children per class have an emotional or behavioral disorder, which increases to approximately 4–5 students per class in high school (Forness et al., 2012).

Disruptive and other problem behaviors in schools have been a source of concern for decades. The single most common request from teachers for assistance is related to behavior and classroom management skills (Rose & Gallup, 2005). Problematic behaviors in the classroom increase teachers' level of stress and burnout and impede teachers' ability to meet instructional demands (Emmer & Stough, 2001; Smith & Smith, 2006). Consequently, students in classrooms with frequent disruptive behaviors tend to be less engaged, earn lower grades, and fare worse on standardized tests than their peers (Shinn, Ramsey, Walker, Stieber, & O'Neill, 1987). Attempts to control disruptive behaviors interfere with teachers' time and attention spent on achieving the academic mission.

Traditional approaches to managing behavioral problems are ineffective. Schools have traditionally managed student behavior and behavioral health needs by utilizing reactive,

punishment-based interventions. In the late 1990s, school districts nationwide began implementing zero-tolerance policies to help manage rising rates of violence, bullying, and dangerous behaviors through the use of expulsion, suspension, and other exclusionary methods. These zero-tolerance policies were utilized for both major and minor infractions, and to manage the emotional and behavioral needs of special education students (Skiba & Peterson, 2000).

Unfortunately, the expectation that zero-tolerance policies and the ubiquitous use of punishment-based behavior management strategies would decrease problem behaviors has not come to pass (Skiba & Peterson, 2000). Research indicates that zero-tolerance policies and punishment-based behavior management interventions have been ineffective at reducing problematic behaviors in schools (Cohen, Kincaid, & Childs, 2007). In addition, reactive and punishment-based interventions have been utilized and administered unevenly with minority students (Skiba & Peterson, 2000). Ultimately, the use of reactive, aversive, and exclusionary behavior management strategies impeded the schools' ability to meet the academic, emotional, and behavioral needs of all students (Cohen et al., 2007).

New approach to behavior management needs in schools. Due to the ineffectiveness of punishment-based behavior management strategies, new approaches to individual and school-wide behavior management have emerged (George, Kincaid, & Pollard-Sage, 2009). SWPBIS, which is based on a tiered public health prevention model (Lewis & Sugai, 1999), has been found to have promising effects on educational environments, and reduces the prevalence of behavioral management difficulties. Implementation of the SWPBIS model has been found to lead to sustained changes in a school's internal disciplinary practices (Barrett, Bradshaw, & Lewis-Palmer, 2008). Furthermore, the utilization of SWPBIS has been found to reduce the number of office discipline referrals and suspensions, improve student behavior, and increase

academic performance across diverse types of schools (Luiselli, Putnam, Handler, & Feinberg, 2005; Muscott, Mann, & Lebrun, 2008).

A three-year randomized control trial conducted by Horner et al. (2009) found that implementation of SWPBIS was associated with improvements in students' perception of school safety, reading performance, and reductions in office disciplinary referrals. Additionally, multiple studies have focused on the impacts of SWPBIS implementation and found that SWPBIS improved teachers' perceptions of the schools' organizational health (Bradshaw, Koth, Bevans, Lolongo, & Leaf, 2008), self-efficacy, job satisfaction, and level of burnout (Ross & Horner, 2007; Ross, Romer, & Horner, 2012).

SWPBIS is designed to foster a positive school environment that encourages positive social interactions among staff and students and promotes effective teaching and learning (Sugai & Horner, 2009). The main goal of SWPBIS is the prevention of problematic behaviors through the utilization of evidence-based interventions rooted in behavioral, social learning, and organizational behavior principles, along with repeated data collection to guide decision-making (Lewis & Sugai, 1999). SWPBIS is a framework that guides development; as such, SWPBIS is applied flexibly. SWPBIS varies in structure and design depending on what a school's data set dictates in order to meet the unique needs of each. The supports provided to teachers and students increase as a school's and individual student's needs increase (Lewis & Sugai, 1999). The first tier provides universal support to all students (e.g., positively stated expectations, positive reinforcement). Tier two provides targeted intervention and supports provided to those "at risk" (e.g., Check-in/Check-out, behavior contracting, peer tutoring). The third tier provides intensive and individualized support to students who demonstrate significant challenges (i.e., Functional Behavior Assessments, therapy, behavior intervention plans, wraparound programs)

(Lewis & Sugai, 1999). SWPBIS focuses on a positive strength-based teaching approach (Simonsen, Sugai, & Negron, 2008). Given the effectiveness of SWPBIS in improving behavior, social competence, and academic achievement, the implementation of SWPBIS has expanded to other educational settings (Simonsen, Pearsall-Jeffrey, Sugai, & McCurdy, 2011).

Interventions implemented can vary across schools and school districts, due to the specific culture and needs of each school. Tailored interventions and practices are emphasized in all schools (Lewis & Sugai, 1999). However, several common practices are at the foundation of SWPBIS such as the identification of a small number (3 to 5) of positively stated expectations that are emphasized and encouraged throughout a school. “In contrast to a laundry list of prohibited behaviors that emphasize compliance with adult directions, expectations are positively stated to represent social–emotional competencies and foundational principles of prosocial behavior” (McIntosh, Bennett, & Price, 2011, p. 47). SWPBIS also seeks to support staff members by implementing systems such as leadership teams, external coaching and support, staff training, and communication and collaboration with other implementing schools (Sugai & Horner, 2009). Lastly, the effective and continuous use of data is vital to the success, goal creation, intervention monitoring, and continual improvement of each school’s SWPBIS model (Horner, Sugai, Todd, & Lewis-Palmer, 2005).

SWPBIS implemented with fidelity is more effective. Implementation fidelity pertains to the extent to which implementation of an innovation or intervention program in the field resembles the innovation or program model (Durlak & DuPre, 2008). Durlak and DuPre noted that perfect or near-perfect implementation is not realistic; yet, the degree of implementation may impact the outcomes obtained by a particular program. Schools that implement SWPBIS with integrity have been found to experience improvements in student academic outcomes along

with a decrease in the number of disciplinary referrals after the first and second year of SWPBIS implementation (Eber, Lewis-Palmer, & Pacchiano, 2001). Schools that have implemented SWPBIS with integrity (fidelity) have evidenced a decrease in the number of disruptions and fights, a reduced number of referrals for bullying and harassment, a reduced number of days of out-of-school suspension, and fewer suspensions per day (Eber et al, 2001; Mannella & Eldridge, 2003; McCurdy, 2001; Metzler, Biglan, & Rusby, 2001; Scott, 2001). For SWPBIS to be successful at changing the educational environment and addressing problematic behaviors, teachers and other school staff members need to implement the SWPBIS model with integrity (fidelity).

Teachers often struggle to implement SWPBIS with fidelity. Teachers report that behavior management is one of the most difficult aspects of their job, yet they receive minimal training in classroom behavior management skills (Buell, Hallam, Gamel-McCormick, & Scheer, 1999; Pavri, 2004; Reinke, Stormont, Herman, Puri & Goel, 2011). Likewise, teachers struggle to implement SWPBIS, which can undermine the effectiveness of this approach (Reinke et al., 2011). A pilot study completed by Reinke, Herman, and Stormont in 2012 evaluated 33 elementary schools implementing SWPBIS had found that classrooms routinely had positively stated classroom expectations posted consistent with the SWPBIS model. However, Reinke et al (2012) noted that teachers routinely failed to specifically praise students and negative interactions between teachers and students outnumbered positive interactions.

The complexities of large systems impact implementation integrity. Teachers play a significant role in the implementation fidelity of SWPBIS. However, factors specific to school systems impact the implementation integrity of SWPBIS and the outcomes of individual students (Schoenwald et al., 2011). Kincaid, Childs, Blasé, and Wallace (2007) identified key

system-level factors that hindered and/or facilitated high implementation integrity of SWPBIS. Kincaid et al. identified district support and staff support for the implementation of SWPBIS as the greatest facilitator of implementation. Additionally, Kincaid et al. identified staff training, communication, effective utilization of data, plan implementation, and team functioning as significant facilitators. They identified failure to elicit teacher buy-in, lack of data utilization, and overall misconceptions about SWPBIS as barriers to implementation.

From a process-oriented standpoint, Barrett et al. (2008) found that (a) open and accurate communication between administrators and staff, (b) a shared commitment to SWPBIS, (c) an understanding of evidence-based practices, and (d) a clear and commonly shared definition of behavior were identified as factors integral to implementation fidelity of SWPBIS.
Barrett et al. identified other system-level factors that motivated implementation integrity which included: (a) the establishment of a clear coherent process for discipline with written procedures for staff, (b) data-based decision-making, and (c) community and parent involvement from the school district. Ultimately, both teachers and school system functioning have an impact on implementation fidelity of SWPBIS, which, in turn, impacts student outcomes (Schoenwald et al., 2011).

Teachers' personal experiences impact the level of implementation. Generally, during the implementation of any educational reform, teacher and administration characteristics significantly impact the implementation of a program, which in turn impacts program outcomes and buy-in (Durlak & DuPre, 2008). Durlak and DuPre found that stakeholders who recognize a need for innovation, believe the innovation will enact change, feel a greater sense of efficacy in their abilities (self-efficacy), and have the required skills to implement the innovation tend to implement a program to a greater degree of fidelity. Furthermore, Durlak and DuPre added that

training and support prepared providers for their new roles and helped develop mastery in specific skills needed for implementation. Lastly, Durlak and DuPre found that training attended to the provider's expectations, motivations, and sense of self-efficacy, all of which can impact their performance and support for the educational innovation.

Specific to SWPBIS implementation, Kincaid et al. (2007) identified six key areas that inhibit or promote the application of SWPBIS. Of the six areas, staff buy-in and teacher philosophical differences were noted as important factors that impacted SWPBIS implementation. Kincaid et al. found factors that hindered staff buy-in included philosophical differences between teacher and SWPBIS, teacher's lack of knowledge of behavioral principles, and low support for the implementation.

Teachers' experiences of SWPBIS implementation. Few studies have examined teachers' experiences of SWPBIS implementation. Hall and Hord (2006) contend that the adoption of any educational change or reform begins at the individual level, which emphasizes the importance of understanding teachers' experiences of SWPBIS introduction and implementation. Extant research in the change process details the impact that change has on teachers' emotions. Zembylas and Barker (2007) reported that conflict, unpredictability, resistance, and changes in teachers' self-image are associated with school reform. Teachers often experience conflicting emotions that impact change and implementation efforts (Lasky, 2005). Furthermore, Zembylas and Barker found that change and a teachers' interpretation of reform or change is directly influenced by the emotions they experience prior to and during the implementation process.

Summary

Schools have historically struggled to manage student behaviors and have often resorted, to the utilization of punishment-based and exclusionary disciplinary practices to manage behavior with little success. Teachers have been faced with an arduous task of simultaneously educating students and addressing the behavioral needs of their students. SWPBIS was introduced in the early 1990s and was based on a tiered public health prevention model aimed at addressing the behavioral and emotional needs of students through the use of positive and proactive behavioral management techniques, and the appropriate provision of services based on each student's needs. SWPBIS has been found to effectively decrease problematic behaviors in the classroom, encourage a more positive and safe school climate, and improve academic achievement. However, these results require that SWPBIS be implemented with fidelity by teachers and administrative staff. Past research has identified staff buy-in and teacher philosophical differences as impactful to SWPBIS implementation. Training and staff support were also found to aid implementation fidelity. Despite this knowledge, little research has explored how a teacher's personal, psychological, and emotional experience of SWPBIS introduction and implementation affects their own implementation of the model. In the research for this study, I explored teachers' emotional and psychological responses to SWPBIS and investigated which parts of implementing SWPBIS were the most challenging. Lastly, I investigated what aspects aided teachers in implementing SWPBIS in their classroom.

Method

This section describes the sampling, data collection, interview process, and data interpretation as well as ethical principles that were addressed in the current study.

Participants

Participants were recruited from a pool of elementary schools participating in a New Hampshire-wide behavioral health implementation initiative to integrate SWPBIS. Once permission was received by seven school principals, I provided flyers and an email describing my study to the implementation leaders in each school. I asked implementation leaders in each school to post flyers in the staff break room and send a mass email describing my study to all teachers in their elementary school. To follow up on the email sent by implementation leaders, I sent an email to each teacher describing the study. A total of four teachers volunteered to participate. Three of the teachers who responded were elementary school teachers who were actively implementing SWPBIS in their classroom and had 1–3 years of experience with implementing the first tier of SWPBIS in their school. The fourth teacher had more than 20 years of experience teaching in multiple school districts and with SWPBIS. All four teachers were from schools in rural settings. One teacher taught first grade, two teachers taught second grade, and one teacher taught fifth grade.

Data Collection

Data were collected during semi-structured interviews and were conducted in person (n=2) or via Skype or FaceTime (n=2). Interviews ranged in length from 25 to 55 minutes; audio from the interviews was recorded by a digital recorder with the consent of each participant. Upon completion of the interviews, I reviewed each transcription and documented my understanding of the important and meaningful aspects of the interview. I conducted member checks by emailing this summary to each interviewee to ensure that their feelings, thoughts, and experiences were accurately interpreted. Interviewees were encouraged to make any corrections or additions as

necessary. Two participants responded and approved the accuracy of the summary, there was no response from the two remaining participants.

Data Analysis and Synthesis

Data were analyzed utilizing Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (IPA), described by Pietkiewicz and Smith (2014), to interpret, describe, and apply meaning to the interview data. Smith, Flowers, and Larkin (2009) indicated that three to six interviews provide sufficient enough data to develop similar meanings and differences among interviewees.

Transcription of interviews. The first step entailed the verbatim transcription of each recorded interview. Transcription included documenting nonverbal events or qualities that added to the meaning or depth of each transcript, including laughs, sighs, extended pauses, and changes in tone or volume.

Initial read through. After transcribing the recorded interviews, I read through each transcript while listening to the interview. I made notes on my reflections and thoughts on the left margin of the transcript. Once completed, member checks took place (Smith et al., 2009).

Second read through. During my second read through, I noted themes emerging within the text and made note of these themes in the right-hand margin. Throughout this process, I was careful to consider alternate explanations and was mindful of where my opinions might bias my understanding.

Peer debriefing. After the second read through, I enlisted the assistance of a fellow graduate student from my program to conduct a peer debrief as suggested by Smith, Flowers, and Larkin (2009). During the peer debrief, my colleague read my notes and reflections, identified alternative interpretations of the text, and suggested alternative descriptions of themes. I analyzed my colleague's notes and made changes where I deemed it appropriate. In several

instances, I rejected changes that broke down themes into smaller subthemes due to them being clustered together later in the analysis process. These instances prompted me to conceptualize a more accurate description of the theme. In two cases, my colleague and I had a discussion to come to a resolution on whether the changes should be made.

Peer coding. Once all four transcripts were coded with themes and peer debriefing was complete, a doctoral graduate coded half the interviews utilizing my themes. He was provided with two original transcripts and a coding system of themes. The coding system including brief descriptions for each theme. The doctoral graduate reviewed the coding system, read each transcript, and applied the codes to the content within the transcripts. Upon review of my colleague's coding, I found there to be a strong similarity between my colleague's and my coding of the two transcripts. Coding was dissimilar on five occasions, where my colleague appeared to identify additional data. After a conversation with my colleague, I retained the five instances, as I agreed with their interpretations and coding.

Clustering of themes. After peer coding, I organized the identified themes into clusters of similar meaning. These clusters were then examined for patterns of meaning within each interview and among all four interviews. In order to create a visual representation of the themes, clusters, and overarching themes, themes were written on index cards and placed on a dry erase board in clusters. At first, I organized the clustered index cards based on the interview question from which they were derived. I made adjustments to the clusters if I found that a theme within the cluster fit better in another cluster. Within these large clusters, themes began to break down into overarching clusters of meanings and smaller groups within clusters that related to emergent themes. I separated groups when they fit better in a different way. The end result is described below in text and supported by quotations from the interviews.

Ethical Considerations

Prior to collecting data, this research was reviewed and approved by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) of Antioch University New England. Every effort was made to conduct the research in an ethical manner to protect participants from harm and protect their privacy and confidentiality.

Ethical participant recruitment. Participants were informed that their participation would concern their professional, psychological, and emotional experience of implementing SWPBIS in their classroom and school. Participants were informed that their names would be kept confidential and any information that could be tied to a specific individual would be removed from transcriptions and any direct quotes used in the research. Participants were informed of the $25 compensation for their participation.

Informed consent procedures and documents. Once contact was made with teachers interested in participating, I emailed each teacher an informed consent form, which described the purpose of the study, potential risks of participation, and limits to confidentiality. For interviews that were conducted in person, I reviewed the consent form prior to starting the interview and teachers consented to participation and recording of the interview by signing the informed consent form. For interviews completed by Skype or FaceTime, I ensured each participant had received a copy of the informed consent by email and reviewed the informed consent form with them. These participants' acknowledgment of the informed consent was recorded. All participants were provided an opportunity to ask questions about their participation, about measures that would be taken to protect their confidentiality, and any risk for participation.

Results

Interviews

Interviewees discussed numerous experiences and factors impacting their implementation of SWPBIS and shared unique perspectives, experiences, and rationale describing their acceptance or rejection of SWPBIS. The findings of my investigation are organized and broken down into multiple levels, beginning with the restatement of interview topics and questions. From each question or topic, one or more overarching clusters of meaning arose, with several emergent themes in each cluster. Quotations from the interviews are included to elucidate each theme. Interviewees' names have been changed to protect confidentiality, and information that would in any way identify the school they were from was removed.

Experiences Affecting Beliefs, Attitude, and Support of SWPBIS

Interviews started with participants describing their experience of the SWPBIS from the introduction, through training, and their use of SWPBIS in the classroom. Interviewees described their emotional and professional reactions to SWPBIS introduction and implementation. Through this process, participants identified factors that positively and negatively impacted their belief in, support of, and use of SWPBIS in the classroom. Interviewees also described factors within the model of SWPBIS and aspects of their school that interfered with their ability and desire to implement SWPBIS. The responses to this section fell into five clusters: (a) knowledge and training, (b) seeking additional information and training, (c) emotional experiences and reactions, (d) personal and philosophical agreement, (e) and resources.

Knowledge and training. Most interviewees described the initial presentation and training in SWPBIS as highly impactful on their ability to implement SWPBIS. All four participants described their initial introduction and ongoing training in SWPBIS as deficient,

leaving them with a lack of knowledge about and belief in SWPBIS. Most participants used aspects of Responsive Classroom (RC), which they had more experience and training in, to aide their use of SWPBIS principles, which also supported them in managing student behavior.

***Insufficient and uninformative introduction and training*.** Three interviewees described similar experiences of an ineffective or uninformative initial introduction to SWPBIS as newly hired staff at their schools. Interviewees described being provided a substantial amount of information within a brief amount of time and struggling to understand SWPBIS completely so they could incorporate it effectively in their classroom. Participant 4 described their training in SWPBIS when they started at their school. Participant 4 stated:

> I do remember the first few days of training. I think they trained us on SWPBIS on the first day of school. It was during a whole staff assembly. They did a brief presentation on what SWPBIS was. There was a ton of information about all sorts of things, so it was a lot for me. None of it made sense to me at the beginning, but in time, I have come to understand it more, a bit. I definitely understand the tier side more than the behavior side. The training did not help me to really know how to implement SWPBIS and there were no follow-up trainings. The lack of information definitely hindered me and has made work more stressful. Even when I got your email, I had to do a quick refresher on what the acronyms mean. I hear SWPBIS all the time, but I had to look it up to remind myself of what it was.

Participant 2, who was a recently hired teacher, described a similar experience of being introduced to and trained in SWPBIS. Participant 2 stated:

> I believe I got more of the rundown of SWPBIS more so than a training in SWPBIS during the new teacher training over the summer to be honest. And even in that brief

> run down, there was so much information that I was given, I remember feeling like I was drowning. I did get the basics of SWPBIS and what the school was looking for. We have a main school rules that everyone has to follow. However, there was no follow up or additional trainings so I needed to figure it out on my own.

Use of Responsive Classroom addressed belief, knowledge, and skill gap. Most participants described the significant role Responsive Classroom played in effectively addressing student behavior and teaching elementary school-aged children the language and expectations of their school, which are the main components of SWPBIS. One interviewee, Participant 1, shared:

> With the little guys, I tend to use the terminology from Responsive Classroom [instead of SWPBIS] …. because some of the words are difficult for the younger kids to understand. The star and all that. I just find that teaching tolerance to a first grader and having them understand it is very difficult, but I can model tolerance through Responsive Classroom, which I do. Every opportunity that comes up between children I can easily make into a modeling kind of example. I believe the children enjoy it. I just find it easier to put it to work. I know, in my head, we are looking at SWPBIS and positive reinforcement. Maybe because I have had Responsive Classroom for so long it has come to be part of who I am. It is natural for me. That's how I run my classroom. It seems to fit better compared to the language and methods of SWPBIS.

Seeking additional information, training, and help. Most interviewees described a need and desire to seek out more information about SWPBIS. Interviewees utilized resources and supports unique to each interviewee that assisted them in developing their behavior management skills and understanding of SWPBIS. Resources and supports included peer mentoring, independent research and professional development, in addition to the universal roll-outs

presented by the implementation team.

Independent professional growth and development. One interviewee described furthering their understanding of SWPBIS and behavior management skills through independent research and exploring other avenues for professional skill development. Participant 2 stated:

> I've been doing research and taking seminars to get more information on my own. I feel like experience is a huge part of it, but I need to have the knowledge base around behavior management, so I have been doing some of the work on my own at home, at night, and on the weekends. Being a new teacher, I have found this to be really helpful in implementing SWPBIS in my classroom.

Universal roll-outs address knowledge gap. One participant reported universal roll-outs increased their understanding, knowledge, and use of SWPBIS. They also acknowledged that roll-outs improved their ability to teach their students socially and emotionally. Participant 4 stated:

> Every month we have a different skill or intervention presented to us by the universal team. This first month was the zones of regulation. They set up a bulletin board with a football field with all the zones. The roll-outs have really helped me understand what I should be doing in the classroom and with the students. It also helps make sense of SWPBIS and helps guide my thinking.

Peer mentoring. One participant described engaging in daily conversations with trusted peers about SWPBIS and behavior and classroom management styles. Mentoring relationships were reported as helping the participant learn about SWPBIS and other teaching skills and helped fulfill a desire to gain mastery over their profession. Participant 2 stated:

> When I have conversations about behavior management with other educators I feel like I am being mentored. Getting an idea of what they have done, how I can improve what I'm doing. I enjoy collaboration. We get to talk and share ideas on a teacher level. I don't know if that's what administration would want, but there is so much that I do not know and want to learn about. Administration, they don't see day-to-day. We have to have that interaction. We have to do something about it.

The initial introduction and training experience of the participants was described as insufficient. Training and knowledge pertaining to SWPBIS can be a significant barrier or enabler of successful SWPBIS implementation (Lohrmann, Forman, Martin, & Palmieri, 2008). "Furthermore, the quality of engagement during trainings, and satisfaction with the content and how it is delivered, are likely to be important predictors of the quality with which the implementers deliver the intervention" (Domitrovich et al., 2008, p. 16). Given that finding, three out of the four participants identified their lack of training and support when implementing SWPBIS as a barrier to their belief, understanding, and use of SWPBIS in their classroom. Implementation research has identified the importance of thorough and effective training. Training should address more than just the specific skills necessary to implement an intervention; it should also address implementers' beliefs, motivations, and self-efficacy, which can all impact the implementation and belief in a new innovation (Durlak & DuPre, 2008).

Teachers' emotional experience and reactions. Most participants described experiencing negative emotions and reactions during the initial introduction to SWPBIS that negatively affected their belief in and desire to implement SWPBIS and its component parts in their classroom. One participant described experiencing gratification and greater belief in SWPBIS when data provided feedback that positively reinforced her implementation efforts.

Overwhelmed by change and SWPBIS introduction and use. Three interviewees described experiencing negative emotional reactions upon the initial introduction and utilization of SWPBIS. Participant 1, a first-grade teacher with more than 20 years of experience teaching, described their initial reaction as ambivalent and stated: "at first when SWPBIS came on board there was a lot of resistance from the school as a whole. I was open to it but felt like here we go again, another system (exhausted tone). If you have taught as long as I have, you know there is a cycle to things. This one will pass."

Two interviewees expressed a feeling of being overwhelmed when they were introduced to SWPBIS. These responses were reported as being due to the amount of the information they were provided and their lack of experience being new to the field of teaching. Participant 4 described having negative feelings about the material that she was presented and struggled to understand SWPBIS in its entirety. Participant 4 stated:

> It was overwhelming, but I feel like because I was new, I felt like I wasn't understanding everything like someone who had more experience may have known. It was a lot, almost too much. No matter what my understanding was of the whole structure, I felt supported. I guess, it just seemed like a lot.

Participant 3 also reported negative emotional reactions to both the way SWPBIS was introduced and how they were taught about SWPBIS. Participant 3 expressed doubt about the approach. Participant 3 stated:

> The introduction and training of SWPBIS was overwhelming. There were points where it was very stressful more than anything. But I think in the end, things work out. The whole positivity thing was the most difficult to digest when they presented it to us. Not giving students consequences for their bad behavior is hard to look

over and made me question what I would be doing. Not giving a consequence and letting it slide, and be positive about it, is really hard to do.

Reluctance to contribute. One interviewee expressed a desire to further the development of SWPBIS in their school, but due to a lack of experience and seniority, felt unable to engage with their implementation team and administrators. Participant 2 described:

> I haven't been able to present all of my thoughts to the implementation team. I need to find a way to do that. I would love to be able to do things like that. Although some of the educators that I work with might disagree. It would make me feel a little better to express my view and opinion. But I also don't want to challenge other teachers or administration and principal. It still is my first full year; I'm trying not to step on as many toes as I already am by existing. There are a lot of things that I'm trying to do. I just want to make things better, I don't want to challenge anybody. I just want to make things as smooth as possible especially for the students.

Validation and positive reinforcement. One participant described experiencing feelings of validation and greater belief in SWPBIS after consistently seeing the improvements in student behaviors and achievement over time evidenced in the data presented to them by administration and implementation team. Participant 3, stated:

> Interviewer: Have you been able to see the fruits of your labor utilizing SWPBIS?
>
> Participant 3: (speaking excitedly) I have overall, between this year and last year, we have seen a decrease in referrals in tier one, two, and three students.
>
> Interviewer: That must feel awesome.
>
> Participant 3: Yeah. It definitely does.

Interviewer: Do you feel that seeing the data helps reinforce your work and use of SWPBIS going forward?

Participant 3: It is definitely rewarding. Seeing that makes me realize that it is working!!! And I want to learn more and continue with the work I have been doing.

Interviewer: So, being presented with the data is really helpful for you?

Participant 3: I would say that it's definitely a positive that should be within every school. I think if you were presenting SWPBIS to other teachers or schools, presenting the data is something that should be included.

The existing research base for SWPBIS has not addressed the role of teachers' emotional experience during introduction, training, and use. However, Participant 2 and Participant 1's emotional responses to the introduction of SWPBIS are consistent with findings in the area of mandated school reform (Hargreaves, 2005; Schmidt & Datnow, 2005, Zembylas & Baker, 2007). Participant 2's response of feeling overwhelmed and inadequate by the introduction of SWPBIS and his role as a teacher is understandable and expected. Hargreaves identifies that new teachers, such as Participant 2, are in a process of establishing their confidence and competence. Unfortunately, the training Participant 2 received did not to meet their needs and added to feelings of being overwhelmed. In contrast, Participant 1, who had greater than 20 years of teaching experience, responded to SWPBIS with ambivalence. Hargreaves noted that teachers in the later stages of their careers have witnessed many changes throughout their careers and become familiar and accustomed to change and become positive focusers or negative focusers. The former type, like Participant 1, tends to focus their efforts on improving "the small world of their own classroom and students" (Hargreaves, 2005, p. 974). Hargreaves added that negative focusers have a tendency to react to newly introduced programs with self-interest and are often

resistant to change. As with any new implementation or programmatic change such as SWPBIS, it is vital to understand how different teachers will react emotionally to the proposed changes. By taking steps to anticipate the emotional and behavioral reactions of teachers implementing new programs like SWPBIS, implementers can tailor the introduction and implementation processes to meet the personal and professional needs of teachers, experienced and inexperienced.

Two participants described experiencing, to some degree, negative emotional responses when introduced to SWPBIS during the initial training. While research into this area of experience with SWPBIS is very limited, research in implementation science and business administration can help to explain the importance of the teachers' initial emotional reactions and how they may influence belief in, support of, and use of SWPBIS. In general, organizational change is an emotional experience. Shin, Taylor, and Seo (2012) identified that individuals who experienced more positive emotions, when introduced to a proposed organizational change, evaluated the change process more positively. Furthermore, Steigenberger (2015) postulated that active emotion management can help to guide change within an organization. "Emotions are important contingencies for implementing a change effort in any organization" (p. 445). The emotions experienced by teachers being introduced to and trained in SWPBIS are important indicators of the effectiveness of the training and introduction process of SWPBIS, and can potentially predict the process of SWPBIS implementation, at least at an individual level. Suggestions on how to address this are provided in the subsequent section.

Personal and philosophical agreement. Most interviewees described believing in the tenets and approach of SWPBIS, but also expressed doubts about SWPBIS and the effectiveness of the positive, proactive approach. They also experienced struggles shifting their philosophical approach/belief about behavior management. Most interviewees also believed reinforcing

expected behaviors was rewarding mediocrity and opted to praise behavior that went above and beyond, defeating the aim of SWPBIS which is to shape positive and prosocial behaviors through the use of praise and reinforcement.

Reservations about positive, proactive approach and other interventions. All four interviewees described buying into the tenets and approach of SWPBIS, but also expressed doubts about SWPBIS's effectiveness and applicability to elementary school children. Participants appeared to have difficulty shifting their philosophical approach to rewarding expected behavior in their classrooms. Interviewees questioned the appropriateness of the positive, proactive approach including the process of consistently rewarding students for expected, but positive and prosocial behaviors. Participant 2 shared:

> I definitely believe in what SWPBIS and my school are trying to do. I usually like to reward my students when I see them going above and beyond. I am not one of those teachers that praises them for every little thing. It's hard for me because when it comes to expectations, I have the same expectations for every student regardless. I like to think that you shouldn't be rewarded for doing your job, you should be rewarded for going above and beyond your job.

Participant 4 also shared a similar perspective about praising students for desirable and expected behaviors. They stated:

> I think the whole positive aspect of SWPBIS is nice, in a perfect world. Knowing how to motivate and reinforce behavior can be challenging. It's a lot for me. There's a lot pulling for my attention. You are riding a line of praising them for things honestly that they should be doing. That's where I struggle the most. I try and reward them for things that

are above and beyond. I don't think it's appropriate to praise them for things that they should be doing.

Punishment of unwanted behavior and preparing students for the "real" world. Three participants identified a need to punish certain behaviors and felt that SWPBIS did not provide logical consequences for undesired or dangerous behaviors. Two of the participants also reported that they felt like they needed to teach students about real world expectations, Participant 3 stated:

> A part of being a teacher for me is preparing them for the real world. They are not going to get a pat on the back and given high fives for doing their job at work. So, I kind of want to prepare them for that too. Some teachers may think that my expectations are too high for kids but I think that I don't want to hide them from how things really are. I don't know, but that's a big learning experience too.

Similarly, Participant 4 stated a need for serious consequences for unwanted or undesirable behavior. They stated:

> I think there are times where there needs to be a serious consequence. The word punishment is a hard-sounding word. But a logical consequence for what's been done is necessary. I don't know if this is positive. But I take away recess time. I feel if you're going to waste our time. I'm going to waste your time that you find valuable. I do feel that it works. They don't want to miss out on things. There are times where you have to use punishments and be a mean teacher (laugh). I believe it provides structure for them. They need to understand how our day works. If you're going to interrupt the structure of the day, they are ruining it for everyone else. There will be a consequence for that.

***Past experience as a student with SWPBIS*.** One interviewee described how their experience of SWPBIS as a student impacted their level of buy-in and agreement with the way SWPBIS is being implemented in their school and the way they implement it in their classroom. Participant 2 stated:

> I feel as though our school has a significant focus on students with behavioral needs as opposed to just the general population. I also feel like some of the students who are doing their jobs all the time aren't getting what they need in the same sense. That is something that I kind of struggle with. I was a student in the same school district where I'm teaching, and they were using SWPBIS at that time. I remember feeling the same frustration as students have expressed to me about SWPBIS. I remember seeing other students get more recess time or attention for doing what I was doing without being asked. That feeling still stays with me and impacts how I approach SWPBIS, rewards, punishment, and all the students in my class.

Philosophical disagreement has been identified as a significant barrier to SWPBIS implementation in a number of previous studies with teachers (e.g., Bambara, Goh, Kern, & Caskie, 2012; Feuerborn & Chinn, 2012; Lohrmann et al., 2008; Lohrmann, Martin, & Patil, 2013). Tyre and Feuerborn (2016) found that staff understood the theoretical underpinnings of SWPBIS, but disagreed with it nonetheless. Similarly, three of the participants stated that they understood and believed in SWPBIS's mission and approach, but struggled to abide by those tenets in their classroom and were reluctant to reward students for expected behavior.

Lack of resources. Most interviewees expressed concerns about how to logistically incorporate the processes of SWPBIS into their classroom routine. Concerns raised varied among interviewees, but each interviewee expressed difficulties implementing SWPBIS, as a result of

feeling understaffed, having too many students, not enough time, or too many initiatives they are asked to implement at one time.

The number of staff, students, and lack of time impacting the feasibility of SWPBIS. Three participants identified themes of being understaffed or having too many students to implement aspects of SWPBIS in their classroom. For instance, Participant 3 explained:

> They asked us to implement these processes, but there are not enough staff members to do what they want us to. Like, we are already down staff members, and it's already a lot of work for the ones that are already here. It's more work for us I guess. How can I manage all the students in my class and complete an office referral on my own?

Participant 2 shared similar concerns. Participant 2 stated, "the biggest enemy of teachers is the number of students. It's nice to be able to get to know each student individually but there are so many things that get in the way and I never have enough time." Participant 4 described similar concerns. Participant 4 stated:

> I know we do a behavior referral form so we can track behavior. Personally, I'm terrible at filling them out. When a behavior happens in the moment, I have 22 kids in my class; so, it's one out of twenty-two. So, it slips my mind by the end of the day. I'm in second grade. The kids are needy. I love them dearly but they are a handful. When one acts up, then I have three acting out while trying to deal with one. How am I supposed to have time to be proactive or positive, and then sometimes I have to fill out paperwork.

Too many initiatives. Two interviewees described concerns pertaining to the number of initiatives teachers are asked to implement, both behavioral and academic. The interviewees questioned whether or not teachers have time to master one initiative before another one is thrust upon them. Participant 4 stated:

> I see a lot of roll-outs, all sorts of new initiatives, and it's almost too many to really master one. I think that if I had more time and could put more effort into learning one, I would have had a better understanding. It would be more beneficial to the students. Sometimes, I think the number of initiatives, makes it difficult for teachers. Not just with behavior management, but for everything. It's a lot for a teacher to take in.

Previous research has identified the perceived lack of resources such as time, training, and monetary resources as barriers to the implementation of SWPBIS (Kincaid et al., 2007; McIntosh et al., 2014; Pinkelman, McIntosh, Rasplica, Berg, & Strickland-Cohen, 2015). Consistent with findings in previous studies, resources, specifically time, were reported by all participants as a factor that limited their ability and desire to implement SWPBIS. Two participants also mentioned the requirement to implement multiple initiatives simultaneously contributing to the lack of necessary time to master each one. This finding suggests, at least for the participants in this study, that the implementation process of multiple initiatives can be overwhelming and can impact a teacher's ability, belief, and desire to implement SWPBIS and other behavioral and academic initiatives. Also, unique to this study is that three of the participants had less than three years of experience teaching. Previous research has identified that less experienced implementers focus upon logistical concerns pertaining to implementation whereas, more experienced implementers tend to identify advanced barriers such as procedural and theoretical aspects of implementation (Baker, Gersten, Dimino, & Griffiths, 2004). This previous finding may help to explain the three participants' concerns about resources, in particular, time to learn about and implement multiple programs simultaneously and complete activities such as behavior tracking, team meetings, and office discipline referrals. The

participants' challenges with SWPBIS were likely exacerbated by a lack of knowledge, philosophical disagreement, and emotional experience.

Discussion

Overall Findings

Inherent within the introduction and implementation of SWPBIS lies a profound shift from the long-held belief that exclusionary and punishment-based approaches to addressing negative and unwanted behaviors are effective. SWPBIS seeks to change how teachers and educators address maladaptive and unwanted behaviors in schools through the use of positive and proactive interventions, consistent modeling of appropriate behavioral norms, and common school-wide expectations and language. As a result of this change to the fundamental view and approach to teaching and managing student behaviors at the school-level, teachers are forced to alter their beliefs about behavior and shift their approach to addressing students' behavior in their classrooms. Significant research has identified change or educational reform, such as SWPBIS, as having the potential to be profoundly difficult for teachers and can give rise to negative emotions that impact an individual's acceptance and use of the proposed change (Hargreaves, 2005; Lohrmann et al., 2008).

This study aimed to identify aspects of SWPBIS implementation that are personally and professionally challenging and can impact the implementation of SWPBIS. Teachers' belief in SWPBIS is a vital aspect to the successful implementation and sustainability of SWPBIS (Langley, Nadeem, Kataoka, Stein, & Jaycox., 2010; McIntosh et al., 2014; Pinkelman et al., 2015). Shedding light on factors affecting teachers' belief in SWPBIS and challenging aspects of SWPBIS implementation will aid in the development of supports to assist teachers in adapting their views about behavior, change their approach to effectively and positively address

maladaptive and unwanted behaviors, and bolster full engagement in the implementation of SWPBIS.

Interviews with four participants identified two periods during the process of integrating SWPBIS that were impactful to their beliefs, attitudes toward, and support of SWPBIS. The initial introduction of SWPBIS was reported as being an influential event that elicited negative emotions and reactions that significantly impacted each participant. Participants also identified factors and experiences within the implementation phase of SWPBIS that positively and negatively affected their desire and ability to implement SWPBIS in the classroom. Participants found increasing their knowledge and skills pertaining to SWPBIS and behavior management, as well as feeling encouraged by the presentation of data, fostered a greater belief in SWPBIS, which in turn increased participants' desire to implement SWPBIS in their classroom. Consistent with previous research, participants also reported that resources (i.e., time, staff, and simultaneous implementation of multiple initiatives), closed or critical school culture, and philosophical or personal alignment with SWPBIS affected their implementation of SWPBIS (Bambara, Nonnemacher, & Kern, 2009; Feuerborn, Tyre, & Beaudoin, 2017; Pinkelman et al., 2015; Tyre & Feuerborn, 2016).

Initial Introduction and Training

The initial introduction and training phase of SWPBIS, as evidenced by the personal and professional experiences described by participants, was challenging. These experiences were vital factors that negatively impacted their belief in and perceived ability to implement SWPBIS. Meeting the personal and professional needs of each teacher being introduced to and trained in SWPBIS can be profoundly difficult and further complicated by teachers' personal beliefs and varying levels of experience with SWPBIS and years spent teaching. Participants in this study

expressed emotions and personal reactions such as ambivalence about the repetitive nature of implementing changes over the years and experienced stress and worry due to the struggle to acclimate to a new career and school while working to accommodate the new information and philosophical approach of SWPBIS. Professional experience played a significant role in the participants' emotional responses to SWPBIS introduction and training. As a result of these challenging reactions and emotions, coupled with the perceived lack of quality training, participants' belief in and support of SWPBIS was limited.

The emotional experiences and negative reactions expressed by participants during the introduction and training of SWPBIS has been consistently identified throughout the literature base as impactful on teachers' acceptance and use of SWPBIS (Feuerborn et al., 2017). The introduction of SWPBIS presented a change that Hord, Rutherford, Huling, and Hall (2006) described as needing to impact individuals first, before system-wide change occurs. The individual's role in the implementation of any reform or change is vital; however, change can prompt individual reactions ranging from strong agreement to strong resistance (Wittig, 2012). Hord et al. identified that teachers will initially consider a change, such as SWPBIS, in terms of how it will affect them personally, including their beliefs, impact student behavior, and change their current classroom practices. Lastly, Hord et al. recommended that during the introduction of any educational reform or change, that concerns and questions be addressed in tangible and meaningful ways in order to reduce the potential for resistance.

It has been found that individuals who can obviously see the benefits of an innovation are more likely to implement that innovation (Denis, Hebert, Langley, Lozeau, & Trottier, 2002). Therefore, identifying explicit advantages of SWPBIS such as using data or narrative examples from other schools to demonstrate improvements in behavior and teacher self-efficacy or a lack

of reduction in disciplinary referrals seen with punitive approaches, may increase belief in SWPBIS. Furthermore, demonstrating the dichotomy between approaches may aid belief in and shift attitudes toward SWPBIS.

Teachers may benefit from being provided with information and explicit examples of how SWPBIS will affect their jobs, including aspects that may be challenging at first. Once SWPBIS is introduced, administrators and implementers should provide opportunities to follow up with teachers to check for understanding and address any questions or concerns. Given the complexity of SWPBIS, introducing and training teachers in the components of SWPBIS gradually, rather than all at once, may increase adoption. Providing teachers with opportunities to have experience with SWPBIS after introduction but prior to system-wide implementation may aid acceptance, knowledge, and comfort with the approach. A gradual approach to introduction and training and prior exposure to implementation have been found to improve adoption with other innovations (Plsek, 2003).

Addressing philosophical disagreement. Results show that teachers may hold varying philosophical views about classroom management that may or may not seem consistent with SWPBIS and the way it handles unwanted and problematic behaviors in the classroom. These views may be challenged upon the introduction of SWPBIS. Research in the medical field has identified that compatibility between an innovation and its implementer's values, experiences, and hopes significantly improves the adoption of an innovation (Aubert & Hamel, 2001; Denis et al., 2002). The current findings emphasize the importance of administrators and implementers taking steps to provide teachers with the necessary information to challenge misconceptions about punishment-based and exclusionary behavior management practices and work to identify and emphasize how teachers' existing expectations and goals are aligned with SWPBIS's goals

and expectations of improving academic and behavioral outcomes.

Administrators and implementers should work to subtly shift teachers' beliefs and perceptions about behavior and behavior management to be more accepting of positive and proactive interventions. However, shifting one's beliefs is a challenging process. Developing genuine relationships with teachers and designating time to meet with them individually can allow teachers to be open about their beliefs and philosophical views about behavior and SWPBIS, although it is likely that some teachers will not be comfortable sharing this information with administrators or peers. This process can give administrators and implementers key insight into ways to address or align teachers' beliefs and values with SWPBIS. As noted earlier, slow and thoughtful introduction and training, where information is provided in a concrete way that demonstrates the effectiveness of SWPBIS, can help to steadily shift teachers' beliefs, expectations, and philosophical views.

Recommendations to ease introduction, improve training, and address philosophical differences. The adoption of SWPBIS can be a challenging, emotion-laden process. While this study broke the implementation into events (introduction and implementation), the reality is that the implementation of any innovation is a process (Hall & Hord, 2006). As a result, the process of learning about SWPBIS and implementation in the classroom should include an ongoing dialogue among principals, teachers, and implementers. Because the introduction of SWPBIS appears to evoke strong reactions and emotions, per Hall and Hord's recommendations, all interested parties need to develop a level of trust, which can be engendered by helping teachers and other staff do their job well. This further emphasizes the importance of the introduction of SWPBIS and the quality of initial and ongoing training. Implementers and principals can also ease the introduction of SWPBIS by having genuine conversations prior to the introduction to

SWPBIS that allow all stakeholders to express their concerns and reservations with administrators, who must be trusted not to respond in a punitive manner to those who ask questions. Open discussion will allow administrators to ensure that teachers' questions and concerns are specifically addressed during the introduction process and throughout its implementation. Lastly, Hall and Hord recommended that principals follow up with each teacher and have open conversations about what is working for the teachers and what is getting in the way. This approach conveys to the teachers that they are supported, and not alone, in adapting to school-wide change.

To aid in creating space for open dialogue and sharing views about behavior management and SWPBIS in an efficient manner, administrators and researchers might utilize the Staff Perception of Behavior and Discipline Survey (SPBD) which could be completed anonymously if teachers are wary about sharing their opinions. Created by Feuerborn, Tyre, and Zečević (2019), the SPBD can assist schools implementing SWPBIS to understand staffs' perceptions, beliefs, and attitudes toward classroom management and SWPBIS, as well as glean an understanding about the school climate, necessary resources, and level of agreement with school-wide expectations. The survey can help to indicate areas of strength for each school as well as areas of challenge or weakness. Integrating the results of this survey into the introduction of SWPBIS, as well as throughout the implementation process, can aid administrators and implementers in identifying system-level factors that might impede or facilitate the implementation of SWPBIS. The SPBD survey can also aid administrators and implementers in understanding the degree of acceptance among teachers and other staff, and provide detailed information about the attitudes and perceptions of teachers and staff as a whole, to help guide

training and provide supports and interventions that can address negative emotional experiences, beliefs, and attitudes about SWPBIS.

This study also found that less experienced and newly hired teachers experienced challenging emotions and a lack of confidence in their introduction and training in SWPBIS that negatively impacted their implementation of SWPBIS. Future introductions of new programs should place an emphasis on developing effective and thorough orientation, training, and support processes, especially for newly hired and less experienced teachers who were not present for the initial introduction of SWPBIS. New teachers and inexperienced teachers' belief in, knowledge about, and skill pertaining to SWPBIS can be facilitated through several actions indicated to be effective within the research literature. For instance, Andreou, McIntosh, Ross, and Kahn (2015) found, "recruiting new staff onto the SWPBIS implementation team builds capacity and increases immersion into the school SWPBIS culture, as well as enhances acceptance from teachers when champions rotate off the team" (p. 49). Fixsen, Naoom, Blasé, Friedman, and Wallace (2005) recommend developing institutional policies that encourage SWPBIS acceptance and sustainability. New teachers may also benefit from opportunities to observe teachers who are considered exemplars in SWPBIS implementation (Domitrovich et al., 2008). This approach has been found to help increase the acceptability of interventions such as SWPBIS, and further address knowledge and skill gaps (Domitrovich et al., 2008). Policies can be developed to facilitate implementation. Policies might strongly encourage or even require new staff to be part of the SWPBIS implementation team by (a) pairing new staff with experienced teachers for mentoring; (b) supporting and facilitating attendance at conferences and trainings; and (c) creating job descriptions that indicate preference for teachers who are supportive of or experienced in SWPBIS implementation (Fixsen et al., 2005).

Many of the themes identified in this research can be addressed by system-level interventions prior to and during the implementation of SWPBIS to increase teachers' knowledge and skills. Given the personal nature and unique aspects of teachers' experiences that impacted their beliefs, attitudes, and use of SWPBIS, administrators and researchers might increase their knowledge of their staff to determine ways to increase acceptance and address resistance. Administrators, implementation teams, and researchers should be aware that when not provided with enough information about SWPBIS, teachers may tend to turn to their peers for support, seek outside information, or integrate other familiar methods into their use of SWPBIS. Despite a willingness to comply with school-wide mandates, inadequate knowledge and training in SWPBIS can trigger emotional responses that can hinder the implementation of new programs like SWPBIS, especially with less experienced staff members.

The goal of training in SWPBIS should be to assist teachers in developing a knowledge and skill base for implementing specific behavioral principles, and to address the behavioral health needs of students. By providing teachers with the support needed to acquire these skills, teachers will be better equipped to provide an array of behavioral interventions that can positively affect the school and classroom climates and increase the implementation fidelity of SWPBIS. Most importantly, with a greater base of knowledge and skills, teachers will be able to meet the unique academic, social, and emotional needs of each of their students. Furthermore, providing these skills and support to teachers on an ongoing basis, along with a thorough initial introduction and training, and presenting data to provide teachers with feedback on the success of SWPBIS in their school, may positively affect the attitudes and beliefs of most teachers regarding program implementation. These recommendations may also reduce the potential for

negative emotional reactions and shape beliefs and attitudes about utilizing punitive or punishment-based interventions.

Implementation

Participants identified a number of experiences that impacted their use and implementation of SWPBIS in their classrooms. Participants' limited knowledge about SWPBIS and the skills it requires to implement components of SWPBIS and behavior management limited SWPBIS implementation. While teachers understood the philosophy of SWPBIS, they reported a desire for more specific ways to implement the program. Despite their perceived lack of skill and knowledge, most participants actively engaged in activities that increased their knowledge and skills. Participants also relied on past experiences, training, and other approaches to implement SWPBIS to the best of their ability. Despite most participants' lack of complete philosophical agreement and full understanding of SWPBIS upon its introduction, each participant demonstrated a desire to abide by the tenets of SWPBIS and meet the social and emotional needs of students to the best of their ability.

Peer mentoring and individual learning addressed knowledge and skill gap. Lack of knowledge about SWPBIS and behavior management and the skills to implement these practices were found to be a significant limiting factors in all but one participant's experience of implementing SWPBIS. This difference can be explained by the vast difference in professional experience among participants, with the one outlier having many years more teaching experience than the other participants. Participants were aware of their knowledge and skill deficits pertaining to SWPBIS and behavioral management principles but engaged in activities in their personal time or with their peers that increased their knowledge and skills in these areas. Administrators and implementers should identify ways to provide opportunities for peer-to-peer

interaction and encourage teachers to engage with their peers in dialogue—particularly with teachers who have championed SWPBIS—surrounding behavior management skills and SWPBIS. Teachers may benefit from being involved in a formal ongoing peer support group, which could be led by an implementation team member or staff member more experienced in implementing SWPBIS and the use of its behavior management principles. The peer group could be a source of personal and professional support.

The three less experienced participants engaged in attempts to increase their knowledge about SWPBIS and behavior management skills independently, indicating that despite being challenged by SWPBIS and not completely agreeing with it, participants demonstrated a desire to improve the functioning of their classroom and their behavior management skills in a manner consistent with SWPBIS. Thus, inexperienced teachers appeared to be open to learning about SWPBIS despite their emotional experience and might have benefitted from structured and unstructured opportunities to learn about SWPBIS and behavior management interventions. To support teachers' desire for information, training, and knowledge about SWPBIS, administrators and implementers should provide resources for those teachers who feel a need for additional information beyond the initial presentation and training, and make educational materials, seminars, and other resources readily available. Staff should be made explicitly aware that educational and support materials are available.

Alternative approaches. The majority of participants identified Responsive Classroom, an evidence-based academic and social and emotional approach to manage student behavior and addressing students' social/emotional needs, in their classroom. The use of Responsive Classroom increased participants' perceived ability to implement behavior management strategies and create a classroom of positivity, consistent with the SWPBIS approach (Northeast

Foundation for Children, 2009). Participants reported utilizing Responsive Classroom for a number of reasons including its teaching approach rather than disciplinary approach, use of modeling, and appropriateness of the language used with students, which was believed to better fit students' age and capabilities compared to SWPBIS. Two participants expressed a lack of knowledge about SWPBIS and felt more confident with implementing the Responsive Classroom curriculum. It is important to note that SWPBIS and Responsive Classroom share a common philosophical approach, which emphasizes consistent teaching, modeling, and reinforcement of positive behavior (Northeast Foundation for Children, 2009). Responsive Classroom's approach to addressing unwanted behaviors in the classroom is limited to a verbal, teaching approach incorporating modeling while SWPBIS is less specific, and only stipulates that behavioral interventions be positive and proactive (Northeast Foundation for Children, 2009).

The greater structure, guidance, and set of behavioral interventions stipulated by Responsive Classroom assisted this group of participants in implementing positive behavior management strategies. Three participants reported that they were previously trained in Responsive Classroom and used it consistently in their classroom prior to the introduction of SWPBIS. As a result, participants possessed a greater base of knowledge, skill, and comfort with the Responsive Classroom compared to the newly introduced approach of SWPBIS. Participants' use of Responsive Classroom was further motivated by the limited training in specifics skills needed with SWPBIS that left participants feeling overwhelmed. This finding indicates that teachers may gravitate to familiar strategies to manage student behaviors, and if teachers are uncomfortable or unfamiliar with an approach, they may revert to the approach that they feel most equipped to utilize. This emphasizes the importance of thorough and ongoing training in

SWPBIS and behavior management to increase teachers' perceived efficacy in implementing SWPBIS principles and interventions.

Lastly, school districts and teachers may benefit from integrating other philosophically similar evidence-based approaches into their SWPBIS framework. This can help increase teachers' knowledge of behavior management strategies, impart them with the skills to implement strategies that are unique to each student's needs, and help teachers feel a sense of philosophical alignment and professional competency. To ease the process of identifying other practices, administrators and implementers might survey teachers and staff to identify any trends in experience with particular evidence-based practices consistent with SWPBIS. Not only will this process ease the implementation of a known practice, but it also conveys to teachers that their experiences and competencies are taken seriously by administration.

Recommendations for administrators and implementers to further implementation of SWPBIS. To ease the implementation of SWPBIS, integration of Responsive Classroom and other evidence-based strategies may make the adoption of SWPBIS less challenging for some teachers by providing specific ways to implement interventions and strategies consistent with SWPBIS. Allowing teachers to take steps to supplement SWPBIS and their approach to behavior by implementing other strategies consistent with SWPBIS helped facilitate its adoption in this study. Implementation research has identified that providing implementers with the opportunity for reinvention of an innovation has been found to support adoption of other innovations (Meyer, Johnson, & Ethington, 1997). The above strategies may reduce emotional reactivity, engender feelings of ownership of the SWPBIS framework, and increase the number of teachers confidently utilizing behavior management strategies consistent with the tenets of SWPBIS.

To impart teachers with the skills necessary to implement SWPBIS and utilize behavioral management strategies in their classroom, administration and implementation teams should focus on developing and instituting an on-going training process throughout implementation that focuses on increasing awareness, skill, problem-solving, and use of behavior management interventions consistent with SWPBIS. As one participant identified, universal team roll-outs provided basic information and skills necessary to implement SWPBIS and behavioral principles in their classroom. However, more frequent and intensive training or workshops may be needed depending on the experience and skill level of teachers. Trainings could be integrated into staff development days or provided by outside presenters. As identified in this study, participants' use of Responsive Classroom points to a tendency toward teaching-based and modeling-based interventions. Skill development and training should focus on helping teachers learn how to generate and maintain a positive classroom environment while integrating (a) other behavioral interventions such as environmental manipulation; (b) understanding behavior chains to identify triggers and functions of behaviors; (c) use of proximity to students; (d) use of positive language; (e) greater use of rewards or reinforcers to motivate students and increase the potential for positive, desirable behaviors; and (f) setting predictable and consistent expectations and consequences (Barbetta, Norona, & Bicard, 2005). Creating a space and time for teachers to receive assistance from a peer or identified support staff can help to reduce resistance to utilizing these interventions (Barbetta et al., 2005).

Implications for Clinical Psychologists

The overall goal of SWPBIS and the schools that implement it is to improve the educational environment, academic outcomes, and the emotional and psychological well-being of students. Clinical psychologists can have a role in supporting this mission. Clinical

psychologists are highly trained in principles of learning and behavior, as well as assessing readiness for change and facilitating emotion management, which are all key areas of need for teachers and administrators when they take on the challenge of implementing SWPBIS. As such, clinical psychologists can fulfill a unique role in the introduction, training, and ongoing support of teachers and other staff members implementing SWPBIS. Clinical psychologists can also assist administrators and implementation teams to initially prepare teachers for impending change, and throughout the process of implementation to meet the personal and professional needs of teachers. At a higher level, clinical psychologists possess the skills to aid in the implementation of SWPBIS through consultation with administrators and implementation teams, and to provide program evaluation at individual schools and larger, district-wide evaluations.

Limitations and Future Research

One limitation of this study was the number of participants. While use of Interpretive Phenomenological Approach allows for the uniqueness of an individual's experience to be heard, the current study's four participants' experiences do not represent the diversity of teachers' experiences during the introduction to SWPBIS and its implementation in their classrooms. Consequently, the results of this study and the information derived from each interviewee's experiences should be interpreted with caution and held as points of view among a myriad of potential responses. Another limitation of this study lies within the way participants were recruited, as this process may have elicited more responses from participants who possessed negative perspectives, attitudes, and experiences with SWPBIS. The majority of participants possessed, at most, three years of teaching experience, with only one participant having many more years of experience. The lack of diverse professional experience in this study likely impacted the results.

There are several directions for future research. The first direction should explore the experiences and perceptions of individual teachers who strongly believe in SWPBIS to identify key aspects of their experience that contribute to their belief in SWPBIS. This would add to the current findings, as this study had participants who were, generally, philosophically wary of SWPBIS. A second direction for future research would be to elicit a greater number of responses from teachers with a diversity of professional experience to glean a greater understanding of how personal and professional experiences influence teachers' experiences of SWPBIS and its implementation.

Conclusion

The findings of this study help to describe the challenges teachers experienced when faced with the implementation of SWPBIS. Furthermore, the results emphasize the importance of meeting the individual needs of teachers through individual and system-level interventions. Administrators and implementation teams are not alone in this process. Teachers can play a key role in learning about and implementing SWPBIS by engaging in their own process of learning and skill development individually and among their peers. The integration of SWPBIS into a school and each classroom is a process whereby administration, implementation teams, teachers, and staff need to collaborate in a safe and trusting environment to meet the unique challenges of each school, students, and staff.

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Appendix A: Interview Protocol

1. How was SWPBIS presented to you and your colleagues?
    a. What was your initial reaction?
    b. How thorough was this presentation? Did you understand what would be expected of you?
    c. Did you initially buy-in to the purpose and approach of SWPBIS?
    d. Did you have any emotional reactions to this shift?
2. During the implementation process, what was your experience of implementing interventions?
    a. What type of thoughts and emotions did you experience during this process?
        i. What did you think of the program when you first learned about it?
        ii. What did they think about being asked/required to implement it?
    b. Did you think it would be helpful? Did you think it would be effective?
3. What has helped or hindered your implementation of SWPBIS?
    a. Staff/Administration
    b. Training/Support
    c. Philosophical Beliefs
    d. Past experiences with/system change
    e. Did you feel you had the knowledge to implement SWPBIS with fidelity?
    f. Tell me about how implementation went in your classroom?
4. How has the implementation of SWPBIS changed the way you experience your occupation and/or your relationships with staff and students?
5. Anything I did not ask that you would like to add?