PBIS (POSITIVE BEHAVIOR INTERVENTION STRATEGIES) IN HIGH SCHOOL AND THE EFFECTS ON SCHOOL CLIMATE AND CULTURE

By

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to look at the school climate and culture of a medium sized high school in Missouri and analyze the newly implemented program, PBIS (Positive Behavior Intervention Strategies) to see if it could impact the climate and culture within the building. The research includes an overview of PBIS and information provided by various literature and data that was collected.

The research includes findings that answer the questions, “Can PBIS help change the perception of climate in the high school?” and “Can PBIS help change the culture to be more positive in the high school?”

In September of the 2012-2013 school year, a survey was given to all students and staff about their perception of school climate and culture and whether they believed that there was a need for improvement in those areas. They were also asked about PBIS and their thoughts and perceptions in regard to PBIS.

In December of 2012, students and staff were again asked those same questions. The pre and post tests were compared to determine whether PBIS could change the perception of climate and culture in the building. It was determined that PBIS did not change the climate and culture within this high school.
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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

Background

Smithville School District adopted PBIS in the spring of 2009. This was a district wide initiative that all buildings in the district were to implement. Every building did... except for the high school. The high school began the implementation process this year, 2012-2013. It has been met with much resistance.

PBIS (Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports) is a district or school’s process for teaching social and behavioral skills so the teacher’s focus can be on teaching and students learning. PBIS is “a broad range of systematic and individualized strategies for achieving important social and learning outcomes while preventing problem behavior with all students.” (DESE department PBIS team workbook, p.13)

Behavior is a form of communication and some students have learned that behaving in an inappropriate way is the best way to get their needs met. At least it provides them with the attention that they desire. Because of this, behavior is a function that some students use to get what they want.

As educators, we need to provide students with a way to receive the attention that they desire, through positive means. This is one of the goals of PBIS. Generally speaking, PBIS “emphasizes four integrated elements: (a) data for decision making, (b) measurable outcomes supported and evaluated by data, (c) practices with evidence that these
outcomes are achievable, and (d) systems that efficiently and effectively support implementation of these practices.” (What is PBIS?, 2012)

Essentially, PBIS is an evidence based process which has been shown to increase student achievement, increase student attendance, and provide an overall perception of school success and all this while decreasing challenging behaviors.

For Smithville High School, this has been where the challenge lies. Smithville High School has not had an exurbanite amount of office referrals and the for the most part, the faculty and staff have been able to handle any difficult behaviors for themselves within the classroom. Implementation of PBIS at the high school level has been difficult at best.

**Conceptual Underpinnings for the Study**

PBIS in the Smithville School District was adopted with the understanding that all buildings in the district would implement it. Every building implemented it the first year except for the high school. At the beginning of the 2012-2013 school year, the high school began implementation of PBIS. The faculty at the high school felt that this program would be a waste of time and not worth the effort. The district felt differently.

At the beginning of the school year, I conducted a survey to faculty and staff along with the students in grades 9-12 regarding their perception of PBIS and whether they believed it to be useful in changing the culture and climate within the high school.

For the purposes of this study, culture is defined as “the shared beliefs and attitudes that characterize the district wide organization and establish boundaries for its constituent units.” (Best Practice Brief, 2004) School climate is defined as the ‘feel’ of a school. “While
an individual school can develop a climate independently of the larger organization, changes in the school culture at the district level can positively or adversely affect school climate at the building level." (Best Practice Briefs, 2004)

According to Missouri School-Wide Positive Behavior Support, a collaborative organization of the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) and the University of Missouri – Columbia, PBIS is “a process for creating safer and more effective schools by structuring the learning environment to support the academic and social success of all students. The process supports the adoption and long-term implementation of efficient and effective discipline throughout the school environment. These methods are research-based, proven to significantly reduce the occurrence of problem behaviors in schools, and supported by a three-tiered model.” (PBIS Missouri, 2012)

Statement of the Problem

The issue for Smithville High School is that PBIS is a program that works to improve student academic and behavior outcomes by implementing effective instructional and behavioral practices and interventions. The faculty and staff believe that Smithville High School does not need to improve student academic and behavioral outcomes. They do not feel that we have the necessary office referrals and academic downfalls that would warrant this program. This study will look at the perceptions that the faculty, staff and students have about the climate and culture of the high school. PBIS will be implemented and then these perceptions will be looked at to see if they have changed within the first semester of implementation.
This is an important study because the district has given a mandate for this program to be implemented and we need to see if it is being effective or not.

**Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study is to see if implementing PBIS at the high school in the Smithville School District will be perceived as a changing agent in the culture and climate at the high school. By administering a pretest and then a posttest to the faculty and students at Smithville High School, the goal is to see if PBIS can help foster a more positive climate and culture at the high school.

**Research Questions**

RQ 1: Did the implementation of PBIS change student’s perception of climate in the high school?

RQ 2: Did the implementation of PBIS change the culture to be more positive in the high school?

**Null Hypothesis:**

1. There is no significant difference in perception of climate at the high school as compared to before PBIS was implemented.

2. There is no significant difference in culture being more positive in the high school as compared to before PBIS was implemented.
Anticipated Benefits of Study

“Whenever a group of people spend a significant amount of time together, they develop a common set of expectations.” (Gruenert, 2008) It was my goal to see if implementing PBIS would help to change the school climate and culture to be more positive. I anticipated that PBIS would not change the climate and culture in the high school. However, this study will be beneficial in that it will help us to determine whether or not to continue the program or make changes as necessary.

Definition of Terms

**Behavior** – is defined as the way in which one acts or conducts oneself especially toward others. It can also be defined as the way in which a person acts in response to a particular situation or stimulus.

**Climate** – is defined as the prevailing psychological state of the students and staff within the building.

**Culture** – is defined as the shared patterns of behaviors and interactions, cognitive constructs, and affective understanding that are learned through a process of socialization.

**DESE** – Department of Elementary and Secondary Education

**PBIS** – Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports

**Perception** – is defined as the way in which something or someone is regarded, understood, or interpreted: the ability to see, hear, or become aware of something through the senses.
Summary

The purpose of this study was to look at the school climate and culture of Smithville High School in Smithville, Missouri and analyze the newly implemented program, PBIS (Positive Behavior Intervention Strategies) to see if it could impact the climate and culture within the building. The research includes an overview of PBIS and information provided by various literature and data that was collected. A survey was issued to all students in the high school. There are 840 students in the high school and every student was sent a pre-survey and post-survey using Survey Monkey. Of the 840 survey’s that were sent out, I received 230 pre-surveys back and 227 post-surveys back. The survey results indicated that there was no significant changes from the beginning of the school year to Christmas break, using PBIS for this first semester.
CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

*Historical review of topic*

Positive Behavioral Interventions and Support or PBIS came on to the education scene in 1997 and “has been implemented in more than 10,000 schools in more than 40 states.” (Team Workbook, 2012). However, most of these schools are elementary and middle schools. This has made the implementation in the high school not as easy or as well defined.

PBIS has been studied and discussed since the introduction of the Individuals with Disabilities Act. “PBIS is an implementation framework that is designed to enhance academic and social behavior outcomes for all students by emphasizing the use of data for informing decisions about the selection, implementation, and progress monitoring of evidence-based behavioral practices; and organizing resources and systems to improve durable implementation fidelity.” (Sugai, G. & Simonsen, B., 2012).

In the 1980’s people began looking at ways to improve behavior interventions for students. (Sugai, G. & Simonsen, B., 2012). Some of this was done at the University of Oregon. Research at that time indicated that it would be beneficial to focus on prevention and student outcome.

When the Individuals with Disabilities Act of 1997 were reauthorized, The University of Oregon was able to get a grant that allowed them to develop the PBIS Center. In
conjunction with several other universities, a partnership was developed to define the direction of PBIS. (Cohen, R., Kincaid, D. & Childs, K. E., 2007).

Originally, PBIS was developed to work with students that had behavioral disorders. With the PBIS Center, the focus was shifted to work with students on all levels and really make it a school-wide initiative. “PBIS uses a three tier model to illustrate the application of an integrated approach for providing behavior interventions in schools.” (Lindsey, B. C., 2008).

High Schools are made up differently that the other buildings in a school district. The high school is comprised of unique structures and challenges that can impact the implementation of PBIS. “Success in leading any reform effort often hinges on the ability of the administrator to create a shared vision within the school community and facilitate organizational structures that engage the staff in the adoption and implementation of the initiative.” (PBIS Missouri, Chapter 2, 2012)

The most important thing for administrators to remember is that support for the adoption and implementation of PBIS is critical for its success. If this doesn't occur, the faculty and staff see no need for the program and can cause it to fail. Because of this, it is recommended that the building administration works toward 80% buy-in from the staff. This is another important function of the administrator. This is not an easy task. Especially in a high school setting.

“The organization and operations of high schools present challenges in establishing and maintaining staff participation around school-wide initiatives, especially compared to elementary and middle schools.” (PBIS Missouri, Chapter 3, 2012) For one thing, teachers
in high schools tend to have more students that they are responsible for on a daily basis. High school staff also has different opinions on how much of a student’s social skill development should be taught at this level. Many teachers feel that this is not their responsibility. Student academics tend to be more scrutinized by central office administration and the high school focus tends to be more on academics versus social development. This makes it hard for high school teachers and staff to feel the need to commit to this initiative, as they feel this takes away from why they are there.

Another thing that makes the implementation of PBIS hard is the difficulty there is in establishing a leadership team. Many high school staff have after school responsibilities that limit their accessibility and ability to serve on these teams. If the teams meet in the mornings before school, it is doubly hard, as time becomes a factor to completing necessary tasks for implementation.

Instructional practice under study

PBIS is the positive approach to discipline, the teaching and reinforcing of appropriate behaviors in all school settings before problem behaviors have the opportunity to take hold. This is unique to PBIS and unusual for high school teachers. Pre-teaching social behaviors and the frequent positive reinforcement is contrary to the traditional reactive and punitive approach used by most high school educators and has been in practice for years.
Current research on topic

PBIS is an educational initiative to tackle undesirable behaviors of students prior to them occurring. Smithville School District has adopted PBIS as a district-wide program. Current research states that PBIS is effective if implemented correctly. However, most of the research has been done in elementary and middle schools. There has not been much research in the high school setting. Some current research in school reform can be linked to other ways to improve student performance. One of those ways is to tap in to central office personnel. According to Kaufman, what needs to be addressed “is an understanding within schools and district offices of the ways in which district personnel can engage to scale up best practices into a system standard so that one phenomenal teacher’s techniques could generate many excellent teachers, and one administrator’s effective methods could serve other district professionals.” (Kaufman, T. E., Grimm, E. D., & Miller A., April 18, 2012).

Another thought in educational reform is looking at the structure of American high schools. According to Diakiw, “Our high schools are relics of the past.” (2012) “We need to offer new kinds of schools and new kinds of classrooms. We need to revolutionize our basic high school structures. We need to explode the boundary between the school and the workplace.” (2012) Diakiw believes we need to change our current school system.

PBIS can help with these changes. How teachers, staff, students and parents feel about their schools and what their students are learning, is a powerful tool in school reform. “Schools that have implemented PBIS with fidelity have reported reductions in discipline referrals, decreased amounts of administrative time devoted to addressing
problem behavior, and improved positive school climate. These findings suggest PBIS is an effective education innovation to reduce problem behaviors.” (Lindsey, 2008).
CHAPTER THREE
RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

Problem and Purposes Overview

PBIS in the Smithville School District was adopted with the understanding that all buildings in the district would implement it. Every building implemented it the first year except for the high school. At the beginning of the 2012-2013 school year, the high school began implementation of PBIS the faculty at the high school felt that this program would be a waste of time and not worth the effort.

The purpose of this study was to look at the school climate of Smithville High School in Smithville, Missouri and analyze the newly implemented program, PBIS to see if it could impact the climate within the building. The research includes an overview of PBIS and information provided by various literature and data that was collected.

The issue for Smithville High School is that PBIS is a program that works to improve student academic and behavior outcomes by implementing effective instructional and behavioral practices and interventions. The faculty and staff believe that Smithville High School does not need to improve these outcomes.

Research Questions

RQ 1: Did the implementation of PBIS change student’s perception of climate in the high school?

RQ 2: Did the implementation of PBIS change the culture to be more positive in the high school?
Field Study Methods and Research Design and Variables

The research design for this study employed data retrieved from various literature and surveys given to the faculty, staff and students at Smithville High School in Smithville, Missouri. Results from the research will include independent and dependent variables. The independent variable will be the people of the study and their perceptions. The dependent variables will be their perceptions in regards to climate in the building and the effectiveness of PBIS.

Study Group

The information used for this study was collected from various literature and surveys that were administered to the faculty, staff and students at Smithville High School in Smithville, Missouri.

Data Collection and Instrumentation

The data used for this study was retrieved from various literature and surveys given to the faculty, staff and students at Smithville High School in Smithville, Missouri. The surveys were conducted on Survey Monkey so that the responses could be completely anonymous.

Data Analysis

The data that was collected from the surveys given to students and will be summarized and compared. The pre-survey will be compared to the post-survey to determine whether the perception of the students has changed.
Summary

Surveys given to students using Survey Monkey were compared between the pre survey and post survey. Based on the results from these surveys it was determined that the implementation of PBIS did not change the perception of students in regards to climate or culture in the high school.
CHAPTER FOUR

PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF DATA

Review of Research Design

The primary purpose of this study was to determine whether or not the implementation of PBIS in the high school would change the perception of climate and culture with the students of the high school. Data was collected by issuing a pre and post-test and then comparing the data.

Presentation of the Data Analysis

The following data was collected taken from a survey that was issued to students about their personal perception as to the climate and culture at their high school. Students were asked to answer the questions at the beginning of the school year and then at the end of first semester. Each question was looked at independently and compared. The following shows the comparison of each question.

Table 1

| Summary of question 1 comparing responses from pre-test to responses from post-test. |
|---------------------------------|-----------------|----------------|----------------|
| “Teachers, staff and administration treat each other in a courteous and professional manner.” | Yes | No | Percentage |
| Pre-test | 176 | 22 | 89% yes |
| Post-test | 180 | 24 | 88% yes |

No significant difference
Table 2
Summary of question 2 comparing responses from pre-test to responses from post-test.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>“Teachers, staff and administration treat students in a courteous and professional manner”</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pre-Test</td>
<td>144</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>71% yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post-Test</td>
<td>151</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>74% yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Positive significant difference

Table 3
Summary of question 3 comparing responses from pre-test to responses from post-test.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>“Have you noticed a positive change in the high school since/at the beginning of the school year.”</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pre-Test</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>104</td>
<td>47% yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post-Test</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>130</td>
<td>38% yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Negative significant difference

Summary

During the analysis of the data, it was determined that there was no significant difference in the perception of climate and culture at the high school before the implementation of PBIS and after it had been in practice for a semester. When comparing the responses to the questions about student perception, it appears that culture and climate are more affected by teacher interaction with students than using a reward based program to encourage appropriate behavior.
CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Overview

Smithville School District adopted PBIS in the spring of 2009. This was a district wide initiative that all buildings in the district were to implement. Every building did... except for the high school. The high school began the implementation process this year, 2012-2013. It has been met with much resistance.

PBIS (Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports) is a district or school’s process for teaching social and behavioral skills so the teacher’s focus can be on teaching and students learning. PBIS is “a broad range of systematic and individualized strategies for achieving important social and learning outcomes while preventing problem behavior with all students.” (DESE department PBIS team workbook, p.13)

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As educators, we need to provide students with a way to receive the attention that they desire, through positive means. This is one of the goals of PBIS. Generally speaking, PBIS “emphasizes four integrated elements: (a) data for decision making, (b) measurable outcomes supported and evaluated by data, (c) practices with evidence that these
outcomes are achievable, and (d) systems that efficiently and effectively support implementation of these practices." (What is PBIS?, 2012)

Essentially, PBIS is an evidence based process which has been shown to increase student achievement, increase student attendance, and provide an overall perception of school success and all this while decreasing challenging behaviors.

For Smithville High School, this has been where the challenge lies. Smithville High School has not had an exurbanite amount of office referrals and the for the most part, the faculty and staff have been able to handle any difficult behaviors for themselves within the classroom. Implementation of PBIS at the high school level has been difficult at best.

**Discussion of Findings**

The purpose of this study is to see if implementing PBIS at the high school in the Smithville School District will be perceived as a changing agent in the culture and climate at the high school. By administering a pretest and then a posttest to the faculty and students at Smithville High School, the goal is to see if PBIS can help foster a more positive climate and culture at the high school.

During the analysis of the data, it was determined that there was no significant difference in the perception of climate and culture at the high school before the implementation of PBIS and after it had been in practice for a semester. When comparing the responses to the questions about student perception, it appears that culture and
climate are more affected by teacher interaction with students than using a reward based program to encourage appropriate behavior.

Conclusions

The data that was collected from the surveys given to students and will be summarized and compared. The pre-survey will be compared to the post-survey to determine whether the perception of the students has changed.

Surveys given to students using Survey Monkey were compared between the pre survey and post survey. Based on the results from these surveys it was determined that the implementation of PBIS did not change the perception of students in regards to climate or culture in the high school.

Summary

During the analysis of the data, it was determined that there was no significant difference in the perception of climate and culture at the high school before the implementation of PBIS and after it had been in practice for a semester. When comparing the responses to the questions about student perception, it appears that culture and climate are more affected by teacher interaction with students than using a reward based program to encourage appropriate behavior.

It is my recommendation that the high school not do away with PBIS, but look at different avenues for which to recognize student's behaviors in a positive way. The PBIS team is currently looking at putting together a graduated ID system to recognize students on attendance and grades.
REFERENCES


