

Positive Support Systems: A Qualitative Investigation into the Perceptions of Elementary School
Leaders Regarding Family Engagement with School-wide Positive Behavior Intervention and
Supports

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Abstract

Families play a vital role in their child's education both educationally and behaviorally. Schools hold family engagement events and want parent support, but schools are not including families in the planning and implementation of their School-wide Positive Behavior and Intervention Support (SWPBIS) process. Policy holds schools responsible for family engagement involvement as well as reducing discipline referrals, but there is little research on schools including family engagement with their SWPBIS. The purpose of this study was to identify elementary school administrators' overall perceptions of family involvement in SWPBIS implementation. Specifically, this study sought to identify family engagement in decision-making, barriers limiting family engagement, and family engagement activities focused on student behavior. Fourteen school administrators were interviewed and shared they have not been including families with the SWPBIS process, they need to get their school's process out to families so the families understand it and can have a voice in the school, they need training on how to involve families with the implementation process, and they need to plan events that focus specifically on their SWPBIS system. The study has created future opportunities for elementary school administrators to share ideas for involving families, utilize a common database or handbook for guidance with involving families, and ways to train school administrators on how to involve families in the SWPBIS implementation process. A suggestion for future research would be to expand the sample to include more regions of Virginia.

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General Audience Abstract

Families play a vital role in their child's education both educationally and behaviorally. Schools hold family engagement events and want parent support, but schools are not including families in the planning and implementation of their School-wide Positive Behavior and Intervention Support (SWPBIS) process. Policy holds schools responsible for family engagement involvement as well as reducing discipline referrals, but there is little research on schools including family engagement with their SWPBIS. Thirteen elementary school administrators in a PK-5 or K-5 school with at least three years of SWPBIS implementation were interviewed for this study. The interviews sought to discover how elementary school administrators include families with the implementation of their SWPBIS process and to identify any engagement events that focus on behavior as well as identify any barriers preventing families from participating. The administrators shared they have not been including families with the SWPBIS process, they need to get their school's process out to families so the families can have a voice in the school, they need training on how to involve families with the implementation process, and they need to plan events that focus specifically on their SWPBIS system. The study has created future opportunities for elementary school administrators to share ideas for involving families, utilize a common database or handbook for guidance with involving families, and ways to train school administrators on how to involve families in the SWPBIS implementation process. A

suggestion for future research would be to expand the sample to include more regions of Virginia.

Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to my wife, children, and parents. My parents, Charlie and Sherry Gill, always pushed me as a child to do my best in hopes of doing better than they did. Even as a struggling learner from an early age, they believed in me and would not let me quit. There were many days of tears and frustration, but I never gave up all because of how they pushed me and gave me the confidence to succeed. With their support, guidance, and sacrifices they made sure I went to college making me the first generation to attend and graduate college.

My wife, Heather, has been my personal cheerleader ever since we have been together. She has always believed in me and would not let me quit even though I wanted to numerous times. She had to make sacrifices in order for me to finish this process. We had to put off several things as husband and wife in order for me to complete this huge feat. I truly love you and without you believing in me and making sure I stayed focused, I would not have finished!

Madison and Caleb, you have both watched me work hard during this process and I thank you both for allowing me to show you that with hard work and dedication, you can complete anything you set your mind to. I am sorry I had to miss events in your lives in order to stay on pace with my research study, but I will make up for lost time now!

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Chapter 1: Introduction

The purpose of this study was to identify elementary school administrators' overall perceptions of family engagement in School-wide Positive Behavior Intervention and Supports (SWPBIS) implementation. Specifically, this study sought to identify family engagement in decision-making, barriers limiting family engagement, and family engagement activities focused on student behavior. Research reviewed on positive support systems outlined the following types of supports used in schools: student engagement, check-in/check-out, tiered levels of support, positive parent contact, cooperative partnerships, and family engagement.

As an assistant principal at the elementary level who provides opportunities for family engagement and a student in Virginia Tech's Educational Leadership and Policy Studies program, the researcher's current understanding of positive support systems in schools, the need for family involvement in regards to student behavior, and how combining both will increase by this study. After 10 years of elementary school administration experience the researcher has noticed an increase in negative student behaviors, but little focus on having families more involved in a school's SWPBIS. Schools have working SWPBIS systems and processes in place, but why are schools not engaging families more as they develop their SWPBIS?

Statement of the Problem

In 2015, President Barack Obama signed the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) into law that outlined a change for schools to reduce disciplinary action that removed students from classroom instruction, or suspended them from school for disciplinary action and implement SWPBIS (USDOE, 2015). Family and parental involvement in schools impacts student engagement, attendance, and academic growth (Benner et al., 2012; Benson, 2021; Hunter et al., 2014). The synthesis of current research indicates the need for family involvement in a school's

positive support system. The gap in the current literature is family engagement in a school's positive support system. Research into how schools involve families in their positive support systems could help leaders as they plan to implement and train their teachers in positive support systems to ensure a family input option. Family input or involvement with a school's positive support team is a relatively unexplored topic and further research into this topic could inform policies and procedures with regards to the reduction of student behaviors in elementary schools. Research suggests positive interactions with adults throughout the day improves the well-being of the student, assists with understanding the internalizing behaviors, and can be the start of a positive relationship (Benner et al., 2012; Fefer et al., 2020; Hunter et al., 2014).

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to identify elementary school administrators' overall perceptions of family involvement in SWPBIS implementation. Specifically, this study sought to identify family engagement in decision-making, barriers limiting family engagement, and family engagement activities focused on student behavior. Public schools in Virginia are responsible for student achievement, providing opportunities for all students to learn, establishing partnerships with the community, and ensuring all service and community partners align with academic expectations (USDOE, 2015). One aspect of ESSA is for schools to implement a SWPBIS plan and to establish partnerships with the community to ensure student success. One way to support a successful positive behavior intervention and support system (PBIS) is for school administrators to work cooperatively with families in order to teach students self-discipline (Banks-Tillmon, 2019).

The significance of studying family involvement in SWPBIS specifically in Virginia is to make school systems aware of the types of family engagement activities that support PBIS. The

study identified the benefits and challenges of having families involved with SWPBIS. Detailed interviews were used to examine perspectives of Virginia elementary school building administrators. Findings could help guide school level administrators in the development of activities that would involve families and lower negative behaviors of students.

The research focused on family engagement in SWPBIS. While it has been noted that schools have been tasked with working cooperatively with families to assist with student self-discipline and involving community partnerships in schools, barriers to participation include lack of training, lack of time, and lack of knowledge (Banks-Tillmon, 2019; Benson, 2021; USDOE, 2015).

According to Hunter et al. (2014), checking in with adults has been shown to be a positive way for students to start and end their day. Malczyk and Lawson (2019) stated parent involvement such as volunteering, helping their child complete homework each night, and making sure their child participates in school events have been the focus of families. This narrow focus of parental support is school-centric and schools should shift the focus to familial influences (Malczyk & Lawson, 2019). School professionals should begin to assess and intervene at the family level in order to have a higher engagement and academic impact of students (Hunter et al., 2014; Malczyk & Lawson, 2019). Not understanding the family dynamics can lead to negative student behavior (Benner et al., 2012; Fefer et al., 2020; Hunter et al., 2014; Malczyk & Lawson, 2019). Garbacz et al. (2016) stated PBIS has been successful in schools for years, but a component that most schools have not started to move towards or if they have there is little research regarding families being involved in the planning process of implementing PBIS. Garbacz et al. (2016) found a need for families to be part of SWPBIS: “if we are to effectively meet the diverse needs of families and students, a systematic and coordinated

approach that engages all families and educators together in a school community is essential” (p. 60).

Research Questions

The following research questions were developed to guide the study and assisted with the development of the interview protocol:

R1: What are the perceptions of elementary school administrators regarding the overall perceived benefits of involving families in SWPBIS implementation?

R2: What are the perceptions of elementary school administrators regarding the barriers that prevent SWPBIS schools from seeking or receiving family involvement during the implementation process?

R3: What are the perceptions of elementary school administrators regarding the strategies or activities that encourage family engagement with SWPBIS implementation?

Overview of the Study

With schools being responsible for planning family engagement activities each year as well as being responsible for developing a SWPBIS system, the perceptions and benefits of involving families are very valuable. It is possible the data collected from this study will assist future elementary school administrators with ways to involve families in their process of implementing their SWPBIS system and identify barriers that inhibit administrators from involving families in the process. This study consisted of interviewing elementary building administrators in order to determine the benefits of having families involved in their SWPBIS process as well as the barriers that may be preventing them from including families. This study lent itself to a qualitative study that consisted of interviews of elementary building administrators

who have been implementing SWPBIS in their school for at least three years. Interviews were recorded, transcribed, and coded with findings based on thematic categories.

Conceptual Framework

The research questions for this study were developed using themes from current literature including policy implications and legislation on family engagement and involvement within schools, the need for systematic approaches for involving families with SWPBIS, training administration and staff on how to involve families, and challenges of families participating in SWPBIS (Garbacz et al., 2106; Hunter et al., 2014; Malczyk & Lawson, 2019; USDOE, 2015). A review of the literature revealed there is ample research on the impact of SWPBIS within schools and its ability to assist teachers with classroom engagement and management if schools coach and train their teachers correctly, but there is little research related to how families can be involved directly with SWPBIS (Benson, 2021; Benner et al., 2012; Garbacz et al., 2016; Hunter et al., 2014). The conceptual framework was designed to connect the elements of family and school supports while keeping student success as the focus. As Roberts and Hyatt (2019) stated, a conceptual framework provides boundaries and narrows a study's focus in order to provide clarity for the reader. According to Miles et al. (2020), a conceptual framework "forces you to be selective to decide which things are most important; which relationships are likely to be most meaningful" (p. 15).

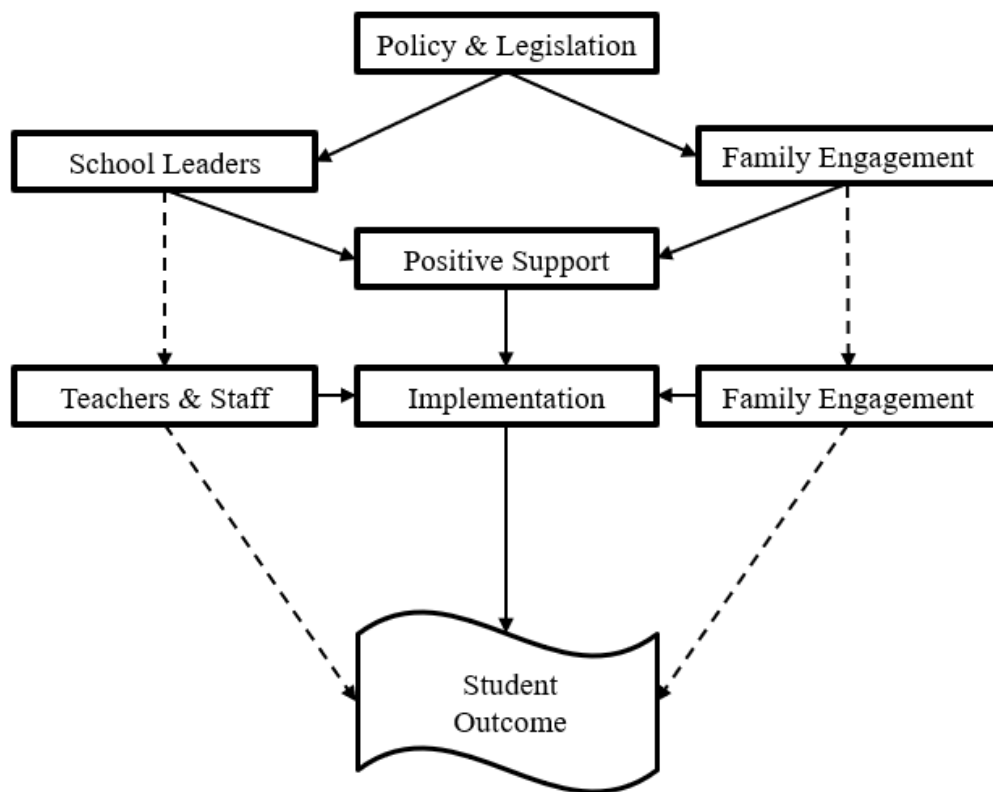
The conceptual framework for school and family positive support for positive student behavior in Figure 1 displays the relationships between components of this study. Federal and state legislation and policies have an impact on student achievement (USDOE, 2015). ESSA states under section 4108: Activities to Support Safe and Healthy Students, "each local educational agency, or consortium of such agencies, that receives an allocation under section

4105(a) shall use a portion of such funds to develop, implement, and evaluate comprehensive programs and activities” (USDOE, 2015, p.1978). Furthermore, ESSA specifically specifies the “implementation of schoolwide positive behavioral interventions and supports” (USDOE, 2015, p. 1981).

Policies and legislation require schools to form relationships with community partners and provide family engagement opportunities (USDOE, 2015). ESSA requires school leaders to enable parents “to become active participants in the development, implementation, and review of school-parent compacts, family engagement in education policies, and school planning and improvement” (USDOE, 2015, p. 2019).

Figure 1

Conceptual Framework: School and Family Positive Support for Positive Student Behavior



Definition of Terms

The following terms and definitions outlined in Table 1 are key to the study.

Table 1

Definition of Terms

<i>Check-In/Check-Out (CICO)</i>	When a student works with an adult in school and they check-in first thing in the morning with their assigned staff member and check-outs with the same staff member each day for consistency. The adult assists the student with specific goals they have set to improve behavior, attendance, or any other specific goal needed to improve the student's academic progress (Hunter et al., 2014).
<i>Externalized Behavior</i>	Behavior is known to be a behavior that is uncontrollable. It can be in the form of aggressive outbursts, classroom disruptions, hyper-activity (as seen with ADHD), defiance, and acting out (Benner et al., 2012; Fefer et al., 2020; Hunter et al., 2014).
<i>Family Engagement</i>	Family engagement is defined by Garbacz (2018) as "distinct ways that families support their children, which are embedded in cultural beliefs and ideologies" (p. 195).
<i>Internalized Behavior</i>	A behavior that is an emotion a person may experience on the inside. Some of examples may be withdrawal from peers, self-esteem issues, depression as well as mental health issues (Benner et al., 2012; Fefer et al., 2020; Hunter et al., 2014).
<i>School-wide Positive Behavior Intervention and Supports (SWPBIS)/(PBIS)</i>	<i>SWPBIS/PBIS</i> is a tiered system approach with several levels or steps to promote positive behaviors based on students' needs. This systems approach is usually done in a school-wide manner to ensure the whole school is following the same directions and approaches to positively change behavior (Benner et al., 2012; Bradshaw et al., 2010; Strickland-Cohen et al., 2019). Tiered system allows for individualizing plan for students based on their needs. Also, known in some school divisions as <i>Schoolwide Positive Behavior intervention and support- SWPBIS</i> (Bradshaw et al., 2010).

Researcher's Background

This proposal originated from the researcher's interest as to why schools with SWPBIS systems do not have families participate with the school teams for implementation. In his current role as assistant principal in an elementary school, he is responsible for handling Office Discipline Referrals (ODRs) and working with staff and students on SWPBIS. As one of the school's SWPBIS coaches, he has been researching ways to engage families within the school environment and to be a positive support for our students.

Limitations and Delimitations

According to Miles (2019), limitations are any factors the researcher has no control over and delimitations are defined as factors the researcher does have control over when conducting research. One delimitation in this study was that only elementary school administrators (i.e. principals, associate principals, and assistant principals) in the Commonwealth of Virginia with three or more years of SWPBIS implementation were selected. Limitations for this study were: (a) the study was limited by those who chose to respond to participate; and (b) the participants' responses may not have accurately reflected their positions.

Organization of the Study

Chapter 1 provides an introduction to the study, which consists of key components such as the statement of the problem, purpose of the study, research questions, conceptual framework, overview of the study, definitions of terms, and the researcher's background and assumptions. The study intended to contribute to the literature and find barriers that hinder schools from involving families in the SWPBIS process. Chapter 2 contains a literature review of the components of SWPBIS and its importance to schools and the importance of family engagement in schools. Chapter 3 includes the research questions and the qualitative methodology to collect data through structured interviews. Chapter 4 contains the data collected from the interviews and analysis of the results. Chapter 5 includes all of the findings based on the data analysis, implications from the findings, future research suggestions, and conclusion.

Chapter 2: A Review of the Literature

The purpose of this literature review was to investigate family involvement in schools and specifically what schools do to form relationships that engage families in SWPBIS. Research on positive support systems outlined the following types of supports used in schools: student engagement, check-in/check-out, tiered level of support, positive parent contact, cooperative partnership, and family engagement (Bradshaw et al., 2010; Hunter et al., 2014; Benner et al., 2012; Garbacz et al., 2016). The analysis of sources suggested that family engagement in schools has an impact on student engagement, attendance, and academic growth (Benner et al., 2012; Benson, 2021; Hunter et al., 2014). The synthesis of current research indicated the need for family involvement in a school's positive support system or SWPBIS. The gap in the current literature was family involvement in a school's positive support system. Research into how schools involve families in their SWPBIS systems could help leaders as they plan to implement and train their teachers in positive support systems to ensure a parent input option. Family input or involvement with a school's positive support team is a relatively unexplored topic and further research into family engagement in a school's positive support system could inform policies and procedures with regards to the reduction of student behaviors in elementary schools.

Search Process

Articles cited here were found using *EBSCOHOST* through the *Virginia Tech University library* website. The publication dates were set between 2011 and 2022 and limited to peer reviewed articles. When searching *student behavior* there were 10,126 hits. The next search was *student behavior and elementary schools* which narrowed the results to 1,888. The majority of the articles found and used were derived from searching *student behavior intervention and elementary schools*. This particular phrasing in the search process resulted in 110 articles. The

terms used in the search process are as follows: *behavior, negative behavior, positive behavior, parent engagement, PBIS, positive behavior intervention supports, elementary behaviors, student engagement, tiered supports, and elementary school students*. After finding articles regarding behaviors and PBIS, the search changed to family engagement and student behaviors in elementary schools. When searching family engagement and student behaviors in elementary schools 48 articles were located and reviewed. Several of the articles located referred to PBIS and strategies used in schools or with teachers in the classrooms. There were only two that referred to expanding studies regarding PBIS and family engagement or in partnership with schools and teachers. There were eight relevant articles used for this study that aligned with the researcher's focus.

Family and Parent Engagement

The research found improvements in student behavior and has made mention of involving family or parent engagement. According to Hunter et al. (2014), checking in with adults has been shown to be a positive way for students to start and end their day. Thus far, this seems to be a missing piece of the puzzle. There are times in school where teachers and administrators cannot control outside factors regarding student behavior. There have been a couple articles that have mentioned added family or parent engagement into the PBIS systems approach between school and home (Fefer et al., 2020; Garbacz et al., 2016). There is an innovative program called, WATCH D.O.G.S. (Dads of Great Students), which is part of the National Center for Fathering that focuses on having adult support in schools to better students' education in schools by using the positive support of father-figures for a two-fold purpose (a) to provide a positive male role model for students during the school day and (b) to provide an extra set of adults to increase school security (Watch D.O.G.S. Dads of Great Students, 2023). All schools have the

opportunity to initiate this program or something similar, but it does not seem that schools are taking this opportunity into consideration.

Positive Support Systems

With policies like No Child Left Behind (NCLB) and ESSA, schools and school divisions have had to collect data and then work on resolving the issues with out of school suspensions, student academic progress, increased absences from school, and lack of family engagement (Benson, 2021). When looking at specifically Title I schools, there are certain components that must be met and are monitored by the federal government (USDOE, 2015). However, Title I schools have more absenteeism and behaviors than those non-Title I schools (Garcia & Weiss, 2018). One assumption that can be made based on these data is that Title I schools have the most socio-economic disadvantaged students. Studies have also shown that schools with high numbers of students from socio-economic disadvantaged families have more behavioral issues or more discipline referrals at their schools compared to schools with a higher socio-economic status (Anderson, 2023). Anderson (2023) stated that “students who qualified for the free lunch program were assigned to an out of school suspension for violations of the student code of conduct four times as often as were students who were not in poverty” (p. 16).

According to Perera and Diliberti (2023), schools all across the country have been reporting an increase in student misbehaviors since the COVID-19 pandemic. Schools across the United States are using multitiered or response to intervention (RTI) models to improve both academic and behavioral outcomes of students (Benner et al., 2012). PBIS systems are in thousands of schools across the United States and have helped to improve behaviors of students and academic performance (Bradshaw et al., 2010).

As stated in Bradshaw et al. (2010),

Given the increased emphasis on accountability for student achievement and discipline problems resulting from the No Child Left Behind Act, local school districts and administrators are increasingly turning to schoolwide prevention models to promote a positive school climate and reduce discipline problems. (p. 133)

As teachers focus on their instruction, they build strong relationships with their students by providing positive feedback regarding behavior in class (Akalin & Sucuoglu, 2015; Fefer et al., 2020). There are three levels of tiered supports within the PBIS system (Horner & Sugai, 2010). According to Horner and Sugai (2010), each level has core elements that are addressed depending on the needs of the student(s).

Table 2

Core Elements of a Three-Tier Prevention Model

Prevention Tier	Core Elements
Tier 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Behavioral expectations defined • Behavioral expectations taught • Reward system for appropriate behavior • Clearly defined consequences for problem behavior • Differentiated instruction for behavior • Continuous collection and use of data for decision making • Universal screening for behavior support
Tier 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Progress monitoring for at risk students • System for increasing structure and predictability • System for increasing contingent adult feedback • System for lining academic and behavioral performance • System for increasing home/school communication • Collection and use of data for decision making • Basic level function-based support
Tier 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Functional behavioral Assessment (full, complex) • Team based comprehensive assessment • Linking of academic and behavior supports • Individualized intervention based on assessment information focusing on (a) prevention of problem contexts, (b) instruction on functionally equivalent skills, and instruction on desired performance skills, (c) strategies for placing problem behavior on extinction, (d) strategies for enhancing contingency reward of desired behavior, and (e) use of negative or safely consequences if needed. • Collection and use of data for decision making

Note. Horner et al. (2020)

According to Akalin and Scucuoglu (2015), teachers need training in order to gain knowledge on systems such as RTI and PBIS. Another aspect to ensure students are staying on task with classwork and meeting classroom expectations is for teachers to involve parents (Kaminski & Claussen, 2017). Parental involvement may present challenges but is essential in the child's education according to Fefer et al. (2020) whose study focused on Positive Parent Contact or involved teachers recognizing their students' positive behaviors by contacting their parents. Bradshaw et al. (2010) used data from a study in which data were used from a randomized trial of PBIS within 37 elementary schools. This study conducted over a five-year period, examined the impact of training in PBIS and implementing it to fidelity.

Bradshaw et al. (2010) found that the sustainability of SWPBIS suggests “strong leadership at the school and district levels, onsite and ongoing coaching to support high quality implementation, [and] evidence that SWPBIS can be implemented and incorporated into everyday practice” (p. 144). Furthermore, Bradshaw et al., (2010), found that schools “trained in SWPBIS reported a significant reduction in both the percentage of children with a major or minor office discipline referral (ODR)” (p. 145). Schools that do not provide training and implementation of SWPBIS systems with fidelity tend to have higher ODRs.

Garbacz et al. (2016) stated PBIS has been successful in schools for years, but a component that most schools have not started to move towards or if they have there is little research on it is having families involved in the planning process of the PBIS team. As shown in Table 1, there are three tiers to SWPBIS or PBIS and according to Strickland-Cohen and Kyzar (2019), schools should start looking into school-wide systems that will involve better communication between families. The study by Strickland-Cohen and Kyzar (2016) explored communication between home and school regarding student behavior focusing on schools who

are currently implementing SWPBIS. Strickland-Cohen and Kyzar (2016) stated that “due to emphasis on relationship building, family engagement models that are partnership-oriented encompass these critical communication practices and are most suitable for promoting positive behavior ... collaborative problem-solving and shared decision making” (p. 149).

Check-In/Check-Out (CICO)

According to Hunter et al. (2014), the CICO positive support system focuses on one-to-one adult mentoring. CICO targets specific behaviors and is reviewed daily by their adult coach (Hunter et al., 2014). Hunter et al. (2014) suggested that not only does CICO focus on a reward system of compliance, but it can also be individualized for specific needs regarding externalizing or internalizing behaviors. One of the study's findings proved that a RTI model where students were successful with Tier II intervention (see Table 2) would not be at risk; however, this study found that not to be the case with CICO regarding internalizing behaviors (Hunter et al., 2014). Based on this study, the researchers suggested opportunities for future research regarding CICO as well as cognitive behavioral interventions more effective (Hunter et al., 2014). However, the researcher only used one elementary school and just four students from a school in Louisiana. The school comprised of grades prekindergarten to fifth grade and only 500 students on roster at the time. Strickland-Cohen and Kyzar (2016) found that “at Tier 2, a commonly used mode of school to home communication is in the form of a daily behavior report card detailing the extent to which the student met his or her daily behavioral goals, such as in the case of Check-In-Check-Out” (p. 149).

According to Hunter et al. (2014), CICO is an intervention that has been effective for children with behavior problems (e.g., blurting out, arguing, physical altercations, and eloping). Having an adult meet with the students before and after classes can form relationships that are

meaningful and make the students feel important or meet a need of getting attention met. The researchers in this study focused on internalizing behaviors such as individual isolation, low self-esteem, depression, and anxiousness. Internalizing behaviors are more difficult to identify than externalizing behaviors. Internalizing behaviors are directed inwardly at the individual and are often overlooked and left untreated in the classroom compared to externalized behaviors (Hunter et al., 2014).

The unintentional overlook of internalizing behavior problems with students is troubling since internalizing behaviors or symptoms have been known to be linked to more extreme outcomes. Some of these behaviors could be things like internalizing disorders, academic problems, peer rejection, low self-esteem, suicidal behavior, poor physical health, and substance abuse (Hunter et al., 2014).

Having students participate in CICO, according to Hunter et al. (2014), with a teacher or staff member each day who discusses the student's performance with him or her from the day before and reviews the student's goal or goals for that day, will assist the student with remembering what their specific behavior goals are in order for them to focus on each day. These daily meetings form relationships and strengthen adult and student interaction (Hunter et al., 2014).

Based on the results from the study conducted by Hunter et al. (2014), CICO is a school-based intervention that can be utilized for more than just rewarding students for following school expectations. Staff can set goals that are individualized to the student and will benefit the student whether the student is showing internal or external behaviors. Based on the results from the study conducted by Hunter et al. (2014), focusing on students with internalizing behaviors can assist

with the overall efficiency of the PBIS system when they work with numerous students ahead of time and identify the student's specific needs.

Positive Parent Contact (PPC)

An experimental evaluation done by Fefer et al. (2020), consisted of students that had behaviors that were nonresponsive to Tier 1 strategies of PBIS. The team titled a Tier 2 intervention Positive Parent Contact (PPC) which consisted of delivering messages to parents praising positive student behaviors. The communication was determined by conversations held between the teachers and parents of the students involved in this study (Fefer et al., 2020). The study conducted by Fefer et al. (2020) suggested that PPC improved classroom behavior and reciprocal parent-teacher communication was enhanced. Teachers were responsible for sending at least two email communications per week to families of students on Tier 2 (Fefer et al., 2020).

According to Hunter et al. (2014), students checking in with adults has been shown to be a positive way for students to start and end their day. CICO, a Tier 2 element from PBIS can be used to target individual behaviors that can be both internalizing and externalizing (Hunter et al., 2014). A study conducted by Fefer et al. (2020) looked specifically at a Tier 2 element called PPC. The approach by Fefer et al. (2020) was done to better teacher and parent communication in order to lower classroom behaviors by students. Family involvement at school with their children has been shown to improve student success with their academics and behavior (Susnara et al., 2021).

Family and Teacher Engagement

Garbacz et al. (2016) stated that schools should involve parents and families when planning their school-wide PBIS team. By having family involvement on this team, schools can find out how parents interpret the positive support system and can offer ways to better the

school's implementation (Garbacz et al., 2016). The research above shows that positive supports for students can have improved results regarding behaviors and the more families are involved with the children's education, the more academic success can be had by students (Garbacz et al., 2016).

Sylaj (2020) stated students who may have violent tendencies should have their families collaborating more with their school. Adequate family involvement needs to move on from just formal involvement into more of a cooperative partnership (Sylaj, 2020). With more than 20,000 schools promoting SWPBIS, staff have limited ability to initiate family involvement which is a way to enhance the prevention and correction of problem behaviors among students with Tier 1 and Tier 2 needs (Strickland-Cohen & Kyzar, 2019).

Teacher Training with School-wide PBIS and Family Involvement

As schools move to involving families with their SWPBIS systems, more training for teachers will be important for their system. There should be new training for teachers to acquire more knowledge and skills regarding their professional development (Akalin & Sucuoglu, 2015). Parent involvement in their child's education is an important step to enhance their child's outcomes. Even though SWPBIS systems are successful in schools, research is limited on how personally involving families with a school's SWPBIS team impacts student success (Garbacz et al., 2016).

Bradshaw et al. (2010) stated that SWPBIS strives to change school environments by creating better systems and procedures that can implement change in student behavior by changing staff behaviors. When implementing families into school's SWPBIS programs and meetings, there will continue to be a need for training to ensure all parties' needs are met. Establishing school-based interventions for students with some challenging behaviors can have

beneficial outcomes if used correctly and training on the implementation of specific praise statements will ensure teachers are supported and successful (O'Connor & Hayes, 2020; Mrachko et al., 2017).

According to Mrachko et al. (2017), when teachers use behavior specific phrases such as, *thank you for walking, I like how Julie is sitting and ready to work, good job class for lining up quietly for lunch*, teachers have seen improved behaviors since the teacher is singling out the positive action versus telling the students to *stop running, get ready for class, or please stop talking in line*. Leijten et al. (2017) stated programs for parents have been considered to be key for prevention and treatment of disruptive behaviors of their children. There is a need for parent involvement in schools; especially, now during the times of still dealing with a global pandemic.

Another example of how teachers will need some training in regards to involving families more was seen personally by the letter Ranae Stetson wrote in 2009, (as cited in Stetson et al., 2012):

The weeks were dragging on and I still had not heard back from the parents of my new first graders who had just transferred to my school. The notes I'd sent home every couple of days were becoming more strongly worded. I needed to meet with the parents immediately to discuss their child's academic problems. After another week passed without a response, I approached the principal about personally visiting the child's home since the parents were not responding to traditional methods of communication. Because of the "worrisome neighborhood address" the principal insisted that I take a colleague. I sent yet another note home informing the parents that I would be making a home visit; there was no response on the parents' behalf. We arrived on the appointed day and knocked on the door of the trailer. A surprised and apprehensive young mother answered

the door, and after a brief introduction, she eagerly invited us inside. There on the incredibly small kitchen table was every note I had sent home! I admit my fury was hard to hide until she averted her gaze and quietly asked if I would read the notes to her. In a flash of instant knowing, I realized she was incapable of reading the notes! This one, very brief home visit altered forever my interaction with this little boy, and every child I taught thereafter. (pp. 21-22)

The quote above from Stetson et al. (2012) emphasized how important it is to completely understand where families are coming from and how teachers should know how to meet their families where they are just like they do in the classroom with their students.

According to Stetson et al. (2012), teachers feel parents should be involved more with their children with regards to school; however, they are at a loss with how to make it take place in the schools, and parents feel a disconnect with regards to their child's teacher and school. Building level educators, including school administration as well as state and national level policy makers are trying to make sure K-12 students are working to their highest potential, but creating those strong parent and teacher relationships has been overlooked (Stetson et al., 2012). There has been so much state-mandated testing that school administrators have said there is not time to resolve the family involvement issue even though it has been shown that parent involvement could have the potential to increase student academic success and decrease behaviors (Stetson et al., 2012). Strickland-Cohen and Kyzar (2019) found that "family members describing experiences in which they and their children's teacher worked together to increase and support appropriate student behaviors (both social and academic), to solve a behavioral issue, or to decrease challenging behaviors" (p. 152). Parents and teachers who use the same

common language regarding SWPBIS showed positive results in the study (Strickland-Cohen & Kyzar, 2019).

Importance of School-wide Positive Intervention and Supports

Bradshaw et al. (2010) stated districts have increased schoolwide prevention models to ensure positive climates within schools and have reduced discipline. The study consisted of 37 Maryland public elementary schools which consisted of five different districts. All of the schools selected were in Maryland. They were matched based on their demographics such as number of students who receive free or reduced lunch. The researchers viewed items such as: established written discipline procedures, goals the school wanted to improve on, and incident summaries with regards to behavior. The researchers reported that there were three to five behavior visuals posted in 10 locations throughout the school.

School staff and at least two students per class per grade level were interviewed regarding their school's PBIS system and expectations for school wide disciplined. After analyzing the data from the research, the number of suspensions, rather than the total number of students with a suspension were available. Thus, stating some schools had a small group of students who accounted for the majority of the suspensions (Bradshaw et al., 2010).

Fefer et al. (2020) contributed to the research since the researchers focused their study on the positive parent contact and how the researchers noticed a change in some of the classroom behaviors. This study suggested teachers continue to need training on how to positively communicate with families. The researchers suggested that teachers find out from their families the best way to communicate the interactions with them regarding their children. Fefer et al., (2020) stated there have not been many studies that examine Tier 2 approaches for students needing behavioral support. Schools using SWPBIS focus more of their attention on the Tier 1

approaches such as common language, handbooks, posters of expectations, etc. (Garbacz et al., 2016). Fefer et al. (2020) looks deeper into Tier 2 strategies with students and focuses on how teachers should be in direct contact with families of students that have now moved past Tier 1 and have entered Tier 2 approaches such as CICO. According to O'Connor and Hayes (2020), there are positive outcomes with regards to PBIS and the reinforcement of positive behaviors. Many PBIS systems utilize a reward system that is based off of two to five positive expectations. Teachers are trained to use positive praise instead of focusing on the negative acts of the behavior (O'Connor & Hayes, 2020). Schools also use the data collected during the school year to show the number of office referrals, suspensions, and student successes.

Hunter et al. (2014) focused specifically on internalizing behaviors while using CICO. The researchers in this study stated it is harder to see internalizing behaviors versus externalizing ones, but if school staff could identify students with these behaviors, then the school's PBIS system would help the school's effectiveness and efficiency. One of the limitations was the fact the researchers were unsure if the time spent with the mentor was the reason for this intervention working or if it was the praise throughout the day from the teacher (Hunter et al., 2014).

Strickland-Cohen and Kyzar (2019) provided insight into how schools and teachers can provide communication between school and home with schools using SWPBIS. Most of the communication between a teacher and home is seen from a negative aspect. Unfortunately, most times, the conversations between home and school tend to be about what a student has or has not done in class. Strickland-Cohen and Kyzar (2019) stated for students who require behavior support at Tier 3, all adults involved with the student's education (school staff and family) should share information, understand and identify individualized supports needed for success, and collect data with regards to the student's progress. However, when thinking about

communication regarding the school's Tier 1 and Tier 2 of PBIS, the school only focused on communication from school to home (Strickland-Cohen & Kyzar, 2019).

The research study by Garbacz et al. (2016) suggested that schools using SWPBIS allows the following:

- Creating a family liaison group to participate in the development and implementation of the school's system.
- Parental involvement is important for improving student outcomes.
- Involving families in the PBIS meetings or implementation of would have a valued part needed in schools.
- The liaison would bring feedback from families regarding how information is shared (readability of expectations by the families at home, language barriers if any, how teachers are communicating to families, and ease of access to the school's PBIS program).
- Having families involved in PBIS, will allow home and school to share the responsibility for school community practices and initiatives.

When students see their families working with the teachers and administrators in their school in a positive way, behavior can begin to change at that moment as the families are modeling how to interact appropriately with the school (Garbacz et al., 2016).

Benson's (2021) study went back and looked at some of the historic data of how single parent families have contributed to higher discipline issues. This researcher also looked at how families that have just one-parent families or family homes with one parent in the house will have a difficult time attending school activities and they may not be as supportive with regards to

their child. NCLB and ESSA policies make it harder for certain families to assist with helping their child meet certain standards (Benson, 2021; Bradshaw et al., 2010).

According to Benson (2021), school and policy barriers such as segregation within schools, issues with student discipline, academic tracking inequalities, and funding of schools have all played a part in not making schools form relationships for families. Even something as simple as voting at school events, such as Parent Teacher Association (PTA) meetings, could hinder the results that could benefit Black students. Another interesting fact, that Benson (2021) found was the term “navigational capital,” which was defined as meaning, “the ability to maneuver through and manipulate institutions and practices that were designed to exclude black families” (p.12). Just based on this meaning alone, Benson (2021) stated that families do not have the knowledge to realize which school districts are higher performing and even know to look for certain areas to rent or purchase homes that may fall within the school boundaries of such schools. Again, by having families not knowing how to find the higher performing school districts, keeps them in certain income areas and in lower performing schools starting the segregation process all over again (Benson, 2021).

Summary

Based on the current research thus far, schools with SWPBIS system in place have seen progress regarding improved behaviors in the classroom or school (Garbacz et al., 2016). Several studies have focused on the importance of forming relationships, identifying externalizing and internalizing behaviors, and providing positive feedback to the students and families. Schools need to ensure they have a system in place that is implemented to fidelity (Benson, 2021; Garbacz, 2018; Garbacz et al., 2016; Strickland-Cohen & Kyzar, 2019). Several studies have mentioned the importance of including families in the SWPBIS process. At this time, there

seems to be little research on how to implement family participation especially when discussing student behaviors or specific school discipline data at the PBIS team meetings (Garbacz et al., 2016).

The researchers stated having a family advisory group instead of calling it a parent advisory group in order to be equitable to all including those students that may not be living with a parent. By using the term family, it will open up the possibility to have a family member of a student participate (Garbacz et al., 2016). Including a family advisory group will help the school by making sure the PBIS program is understood by the school's families and provide specific examples of how the families can implement the school expectations at home with their children. This can be the first step in getting families into the building and forming the relationship needed to help reduce behavioral issues during the school day (Sylaj, 2020). When families understand what is happening in their child's school, they feel a connection and can be informed about the progress of their child and school (Garbacz et al., 2016; Sylaj, 2020).

As movement towards including families in the school's PBIS process evolved, researchers stated parent involvement in education, specifically teacher perceptions of involvement, is a must to stop the expected negative outcomes overtime (Herman & Reinke, 2017). Findings from the study conducted by Herman and Reinke (2017) found that there was a need for training teachers on how to assess their perceptions of parents and students. Trust is an important piece of parent and school involvement as well as parent-teacher relationships, which is known to have an effect on students' academics as well as their behaviors (Santiago et al., 2016). Moving towards involving families more, a study conducted by McCormick et al. (2013) suggested there might be a disparity in how teachers interact with urban parents, based on their level of classroom emotional support.

This literature review synthesized the importance of families interacting and being involved with SWPBIS systems to create a relationship between school and home. As schools are following guidelines such as ESSA, it is important that administrative teams include families' input. Garbacz (2018) stated, "It is useful for school faculty, such as PBIS leadership team members, to build their knowledge about family engagement" (p.197). School-based teams should learn about home-school connections to inform decision making about becoming a partner with families (Garbacz, 2018).

Chapter 3: Methodology

In this chapter, the methodology of the study will be provided. The chapter includes the research design, which includes sample selection, instrument design, data collection procedures, and data analysis process. Procedures used to ensure reliability and validity, security of data gathered, and a summary are also included in this chapter.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to identify elementary school administrators' overall perceptions of family involvement in SWPBIS implementation. Specifically, this study sought to identify family engagement in decision-making, barriers limiting family engagement, and family engagement activities focused on student behavior.

Research Design – Methodology and Justification

The researcher used a basic qualitative design in order to gain an understanding of the participants' experiences (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). A basic qualitative research design is flexible unlike a case study or ethnographic study and allows for more in-depth open conversations and data collection from the participants (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Using a basic qualitative design will allow the participants to share information from an insider perspective, which is more applicable to the intended audience (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Miles et al. (2020) stated a key feature of qualitative data is that the focus is “naturally occurring, ordinary events in natural settings,” which can give the researcher real life interpretations (p. 7). Miles et al. (2020) further stated qualitative data from lived experiences are “fundamentally well suited to locating the meaning people place on the events, processes, and structures of their lives” (p. 8). The researcher felt qualitative research was appropriate for this study.

Research Questions

In order to address the purpose of the study, the following research questions guided this study:

R1: What are the perceptions of elementary school administrators regarding the overall perceived benefits of involving families in SWPBIS implementation?

R2: What are the perceptions of elementary school administrators regarding the barriers that prevent SWPBIS schools from seeking or receiving family involvement during the implementation process?

R3: What are the perceptions of elementary school administrators regarding the strategies or activities that encourage family engagement with SWPBIS implementation?

Site/Sample Selection

A group of participants from Virginia were selected based on specific criteria for the research. Participants had experience with SWPBIS in their school for at least three years and were an elementary school administrator. According to Merriam and Tisdell (2016), conducting purposeful sampling will identify more diverse information and rich responses. A qualitative study will allow for conversations to be had and provides data collection from the individual participants (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). The researcher sought to gather information from participants who had current knowledge of SWPBIS in the school and according to Merriam and Tisdell (2016), qualitative research can give the researcher this meaningful data. The researcher sought a sample size of 5-15 participants comprised of elementary administrators using the criterion.

The study focused on administrators within the Commonwealth of Virginia. Administrators from any of the 132 school divisions within the Commonwealth of Virginia who met the recruitment criterion were considered. Administrators with at least three years of SWPBIS within their school were eligible to participate in the study. The researcher recruited participants across the Commonwealth of Virginia by use of social media and accessing the Virginia Department of Education's (VDOE) public school divisions' directories. After IRB approval, an introductory email (Appendix D) and recruitment flyer (Appendix E) were shared on social media. The recruitment flyer was also shared on the researcher's X account and shared by other educational professionals. The flyer was used to recruit elementary administrators who had SWPBIS systems set up in their buildings and had done so for a minimum of three years. The researcher also sent emails (Appendix F) to building administrators using the VDOE public school list with principal contact information.

Data Collection Procedures

The CITI Social and Behavioral Research Basic Course program (Appendix B) was provided with the IRB application. After IRB approval was granted by Virginia Tech, the researcher began the process of contacting principals through the VDOE directory (Appendix F), sharing the recruitment flyer on X (Appendix E), and asking other educational professional contacts to share. As participants showed an interest in participating in the study, thirteen participants were identified to interview. Prior to the interviews, participants were sent via email a Virginia Tech Research Study Information Sheet (Appendix C) that included the overview of the study, the researcher's contact information, and a link to sign up for an interview time was included in the email.

The interviews gathered information on the perceived benefits of involving families in the implementation of SWPBIS, barriers preventing schools from involving families, and any family engagement activities that focus on student behavior. The participants engaged in a one-to-one interview answering semi-structured open-ended questions in a virtual setting that lasted approximately 30 minutes.

Data Gathering Procedures

Interviews took place synchronously one-to-one using the researcher's Virginia Tech Zoom account. Merriam and Tisdell (2016) stated verbal interviews with a video component using computer mediated communication (CMC) tools are "more like face-to-face interviews" (p. 115). Interviews containing a video component have the following strengths: assists with building rapport, the researcher and participants are not constrained by geography, and there is a transcription component (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Using CMC tools bring weaknesses for the researcher such as: technology access, unexpected issues with the platform (Zoom), and the possibility of confidentiality being compromised over the Internet (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

Interviews began after participants were selected and consent was given to the researcher. The researcher conducted interviews in August 2024 during an agreed upon time with each participant. The researcher obtained verbal permission to record the interview using the Zoom record feature and asked each participant seven open ended questions. Each participant received an edited Zoom transcript to review for accuracy and a timeline was placed on the acceptance of the transcript.

Instrument Design

The researcher formulated seven interview questions for the study. These questions were designed to align with the purpose of the study, the research questions, the conceptual

framework, and insights obtained from the literature review. An eighth question was included and asked if the participant had any colleagues that may be interested in participating in the study. A few colleagues with a doctoral degree from Virginia Tech and experience with qualitative research were consulted to review and improve the list of questions, and my advisor, serving as the principal investigator, assisted with the research protocol, interview questions, and provided specific feedback on all drafts. Table 3 contains a list of the interview questions and their alignment with each research question. Appendix I, interview protocol, was designed to guide the researcher with the interview process and questions for each participant.

Table 3

Interview Questions and Research Question Alignment

Interview Questions	Alignment to Research Questions
1. Describe the implementation of your SWPBIS system.	R1
2. What role did families have during the SWPBIS implementation process?	R1
3. Describe the benefits of involving families with SWPBIS implementation. Does family engagement make a difference?	R1
4. What barriers did your school encounter that prevented families from participating in your SWPBIS implementation?	R2
5. How do you know whether families understand your school's SWPBIS expectations?	R2
6. Describe any family engagement activities or events that your school implements to increase SWPBIS awareness.	R3
7. What strategies would you recommend to other school principals to increase family engagement in SWPBIS?	R3
8. Do you know of any additional elementary administrators who may be interested in participating in my research study	NA

According to Merriam and Tisdell (2016), pilot interviews should be conducted to gain knowledge as to which questions may not be clear for the participants. Before beginning

interviews with study participants, a practice interview was conducted with a colleague to ensure the researcher's protocol and questions were clear and concise. During the practice interview, candid feedback was requested so the researcher could make adjustments to the protocol or questions to gain more data.

Instrument Validation and Reliability

Merriam and Tisdell (2016) stated that “all research is concerned with producing valid and reliable knowledge in an ethical manner” (p. 237). The researcher used the following practices during the study to ensure validity and reliability: (a) research questions and interview questions align, (b) triangulating research with semi-structured interviews, (c) a journal documenting data collection and analysis, (d) member checks by sending interview transcriptions to the participants for feedback, (e) a sample size to allow for sufficient data collection, (f) documenting in a journal to address assumptions, and (g) peer review of the data by at least two doctoral candidates who were trained in qualitative research to provide feedback (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Trusting the results from research by the professionals in the applied fields is very important (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

Data Treatment and Management

Data collected from each semi-structured interview were recorded using the researcher's Virginia Tech Zoom account to record the conversation through video and transcription. The transcript obtained from each interview was transferred to Microsoft Word in order to be reviewed and edited for accuracy. Each interview file was labeled with the pseudonyms Administrator 1 (A1), Administrator 2 (A2), etc. as to protect the identities of each school leader from the researcher so the participant's anonymity remained protected.

All data collected were saved electronically in multiple locations including in a file on the researcher's laptop computer under password protection, USB drive, and Virginia Tech's Google Drive. The researcher used Microsoft Word and Excel in order to sort and analyze the data. As the researcher analyzed the data, precautions were in place in order to keep the participant's information confidential.

Data Analysis Treatment

Data collection and analysis should take place at the same time when conducting qualitative research (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Researchers use raw data to develop a meaning of the data analysis by identifying themes, organizing demographic data, developing categories or patterns and answering your research questions (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). The data analysis process began in September of 2024 with organizing the data for each participant using Microsoft Excel. Merriam and Tisdell (2016) stated that "the use of computers has evolved into something of subfield labeled CAQDAS ... an acronym for *computer assisted qualitative data analysis software*" (p. 221). Computer software will not analyze the data for the researcher, but will assist with the organization of the data analysis (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). The researcher identified themes, patterns, and categories in regards to what was meaningful and significant in the data (Patton, 2015). The researcher used an alphanumeric code to provide anonymity and assist with organizing the data. For example, the first administrator interviewed was A1 and the second administrator was A2.

Merriam and Tisdell (2016) stated that "assigning codes to pieces of data is how you begin to construct categories" (p. 206). The data underwent two coding cycles to define the segments of raw data and assist with further organization of the first set of codes into themes (Miles et al., 2020). Merriam and Tisdell (2016) stated data analysis should meet certain criteria:

(a) “be responsive to the purpose ... answer your research questions, (b) be exhaustive ... place all data into a category, (c) be mutually exclusive ... each piece of data fitting into only one category, (d) be sensitive to the data ... capturing the exact meaning of the phenomenon, and (e) be conceptually congruent ... same level of abstraction to characterize the categories”. (pp. 212-213)

After all interviews were completed, an additional thorough data analysis occurred in late September 2024. The researcher used Microsoft Excel to transcribe interviews with columns set up to make coding notes and identified emerging themes. As emerging themes were identified, a color code was used to aid in organizing the data into developing categories. Patton (2015) stated researchers have to rely first on their own understanding followed by the participants’ responses as well as the reactions of peer reviews since there is no real test to determine significance of themes as a qualitative analyst.

Summary

This chapter discussed the design of the study including its methodology and reasoning for selection. A qualitative methodology was used to collect data on elementary school administrators who had implemented SWPBIS for at least three years and their perceptions of family involvement and any barriers that existed to prevent family involvement. A semi-structured interview protocol using feedback was created and used to guide the interviews. Interviews were conducted virtually using Zoom and pseudonyms were used to protect the confidentiality of each participant. The interviews were transcribed using the Zoom transcription tool and read for completeness and accuracy. All edited transcriptions were sent to each participant for their approval prior to using the data. Data were analyzed and coded to identify themes among elementary administrators regarding family involvement in SWPBIS and barriers

preventing family involvement in their SWPBIS implementation. Chapter 4 will present the analysis of the data from the researcher's study.

Chapter 4: Data Analysis and Results

The purpose of this study was to identify elementary school administrators' overall perceptions of family involvement in SWPBIS implementation. Specifically, this study sought to identify family engagement in decision-making, barriers limiting family engagement, and family engagement activities focused on student behavior. Interviews were conducted with thirteen elementary school administrators from the Commonwealth of Virginia. Administrators were selected based on the following criterion: Virginia public elementary school administrator serving students from grades PK-5 or K-5 and must have been implementing SWPBIS practices for a minimum of three years.

Research Questions

In order to address the purpose of the study, the following research questions guided this study:

R1: What are the perceptions of elementary school administrators regarding the overall perceived benefits of involving families in SWPBIS implementation?

R2: What are the perceptions of elementary school administrators regarding the barriers that prevent SWPBIS schools from seeking or receiving family involvement during the implementation process?

R3: What are the perceptions of elementary school administrators regarding the strategies or activities that encourage family engagement with SWPBIS implementation?

Participants and Qualitative Data

Information regarding the research study was sent out to elementary administrators using the Virginia Department of Education Public School Listing by Region, shared via the

researcher's social media platforms (X and Facebook), and by recommendations made by administrators during the face-to-face interviews. Thirteen face-to-face interviews took place via Zoom and each participant was assigned a pseudonym at the beginning of the interview for confidentiality. Administrators interviewed for the research study consisted of six principals and seven assistant administrators (associate and assistant principals) from two regions of Virginia. During the analysis process, all files were coded with an "A" and a number with this format: Administrator 1 (A1), Administrator 2 (A2), etc. to promote anonymity and maintain the confidentiality of the respondent. After the interviews were conducted, each one was transcribed, checked for accuracy, and emailed to the participants for accuracy.

According to Merriam and Tisdell (2016), when coding data, the focus should be set on patterns and insights, that are related to the purpose, questions, and theoretical frame. Themes were developed by member checking, performing multiple cycles of coding, and looking for commonalities. When more than one administrator mentioned a topic, a theme was created. The following section is organized by research question including the aligned interview questions. Any percentages below represent the number of administrators who referenced the code in their response to the specific interview question.

Research Question 1

Three interview questions sought to answer the first research question: What are the perceptions of elementary school administrators regarding the overall perceived benefits of involving families in SWPBIS implementation?

Interview Question 1: Describe the Implementation of Your SWBIS System. The first question addressed the implementation of the SWPBIS system within the school. The participants were asked: Describe the implementation of your SWPBIS system. The themes in Table 4 were created by the participants' responses.

Table 4

Interview Question 1 – Describe the Implementation of Your SWBIS System

	A1	A2	A3	A4	A5	A6	A7	A8	A9	A10	A11	A12	A13
Acronym established to focus on expectations	X	X	X	X	X	X			X		X	X	X
Token system for students to earn when expectations were met	X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X		
School-wide common language to address behaviors	X	X	X	X				X					X
Train staff on SWPBIS					X	X	X	X	X			X	
Matrix containing acronym & expectations posted in school		X					X	X		X			
SWPBIS committee formed				X			X						X
Teach expectations to students	X	X			X								
House system as part of SWPBIS										X			X

Eight themes emerged after analyzing the responses from the first interview question: 1) an acronym was established to focus on expectations; 2) school-wide common language was written to address behaviors; 3) a token system was created for students to earn when expectations were met; 4) staff will teach expectations to students; 5) a SWPBIS committee was formed to discuss school needs; 6) train staff on SWPBIS; 7) create a matrix containing acronym and expectations then post throughout the school; and 8) house system as part of SWPBIS.

Acronym Established to Focus Expectations. Ten out of the thirteen administrators (77%) indicated their school created an acronym to assist with helping staff and students focus on specific behavior expectations (A1-A6, A9, A11-A13). A1 shared that her school's acronym is S.W.I.M. "because our mascot is a whale and it stands for self-control, work ethic, I can, and manners motivate" (1129-32). Administrators 2, 4, 5, 11, and 13 all shared their SWPBIS acronym goes along with their school's mascot because it is easier for their students to remember the expectations. A9 stated her acronym is P.R.I.D.E. and it does not go along with their mascot since they are the hornets.

Token System for Students to Earn When Expectations are Met. Ten out of the thirteen administrators (77%) have a token system in their schools for students to earn as they meet behavior expectations (A1-A6, A8-A11). A1 stated her school's token system is also tied in with the school's mascot, which is a whale and her students can earn "goldfish which can be redeemed for an item in the store we have" (1144-50). A2 also stated her school's token system aligned with their dragon mascot and students get excited to share with their parents when they earn Dragon Dollars. A3 had an interesting way for her 4th and 5th graders to exhibit leadership skills. Her 4th and 5th graders "are interviewed, trained, and run her Tiger store" (1172). A8 stated her school is working on implementing a unified way her students can use their tokens that they

earn. Her school mainly used token systems in individual classrooms and their team is trying to brainstorm ways to implement a cohesive school-wide system. A9 stated, “Students earn P.R.I.D.E. tickets and any staff member in the building can give a student one if they demonstrate these expectations” (1126-47). Only one administrator (A10) out of the ten stated that her school transitioned from tangible items that her students could purchase with their tickets to non-tangible items like no shoes while in class or lunch with the principal. Her school started PBIS seven years ago and she thought it was time for a change regarding items students can purchase with their tickets.

School-wide Common Language to Address Behaviors. Six out of thirteen administrators (46%) established school-wide common language to assist with addressing behaviors (A1-A4, A8, A13). All six administrators mentioned they had a school-wide common language tied the language into their acronym. A2 stated the development of their common language from PK-5 was to have the same language and understanding of the rules and expectations all throughout the school including the classroom, resource areas (music, gym, library, etc.), hallways, cafeteria, playground, bathrooms, and on the bus (1129-47). A4 stated, “We wanted to think of ways to make it friendly, you know, user friendly for the kids and appealing” (150). A13 stated when they started out with identifying their school’s common language “staff was surveyed in order to determine who understood the PBIS framework” (1152-56).

Train Staff on SWPBIS. Six of the thirteen administrators (46%) shared the importance of training their staff members on their SWPBIS system (A5-A9, A12). A5 stated his counselors would work with teachers on “how to build systems of supports with their students versus trying to be reactionary to problems that may happen” (1147-56). A6 shared how she and her staff

“worked closely with T/TAC through VCU” to train her staff (//44-47). A7 had a similar experience to A6, but she sent staff to state level trainings on PBIS (//38). They focused on how the “five to one ratio where you give five positives to one negative” in order to shift the student feedback from positive to negative (//113-116). Her school had quite a few students with Tier 2 and Tier 3 behaviors so they “focused on using positive referrals and making positive phone calls home to bring our Tiers 2 and 3 students back to Tier 1 by focusing on Tier 1 interventions” (//143-155). A8 shared that her division has now implemented a division-wide mandate that all schools need to train staff on the meaning of PBIS and how to use a matrix focusing on specific behaviors developed by the schools’ needs (//68-71). A9 and A12 both have unique ways to train staff. A9 shared that they “developed a team of staff members that provide feedback” to teachers after observing staff implementing SWPBIS (//83-86). Due to the teacher shortage in her school, A12 shared her school is constantly training staff because “there is so much turnover so training 27 new teachers this year alone is an on-going process so we feel as if we are always rebooting our SWPBIS” (//50-65).

Matrix Containing Acronym and Expectations Posted in School. Four of the thirteen (31%) administrators mentioned having a matrix, which contained their school’s acronym and expectations for specific areas of the building posted in their school (A2, A7-A8, A10). A2 stated they needed a “common understanding of the rules and expectations and those rules and expectations would kind of govern what they did not only in the classrooms, but resource areas, hallways, cafeteria, recess, bathrooms, on the bus” (//35-47). A7 indicated her team met to “establish school-wide expectations in all areas, created signage, printed the signage, and put the signage up” after her team met with staff and students to get feedback before rolling it out (//71-98). A10 shared the matrix creation took about three years to finalize the language, but they

needed to implement a matrix starting in year one as well and just had reboots for the first few years “to get the wording correctly” (I150-53).

SWPBIS Committee Formed. Three of the thirteen administrators (23%) formed SWPBIS committees to establish expectations, a matrix, and agree on a common language for staff and students (A4, A7, A13). A4 shared her school had “a grade level representative” to provide feedback and help with the development (I101-110). A7 was actually on the team from “the beginning in terms of forming the team, putting the team together, going to state trainings up into multiple state trainings” (I35-38). A13 shared that eight years ago she “pulled a group of teachers who were interested in or had a little knowledge of SWPBIS” to meet and form their committee (I38-41). She shared their process:

We started with that small group of staff to make sure that everybody on that team knew what the framework was, what we were looking to do, and kind of outlined what our ultimate goals were. And truly that team of teachers led the entire process. The process took four to five months and we met monthly with the entire staff and we used questions to get teachers talking about what they, as teachers, expected of students, and so really tried to weed out the individual expectations that teachers have and helped guide the staff as a whole to not only understand what the PBIS framework was and required of us as educators but also being able to align our beliefs and our values as to what our ultimate goals were for our students. (I47-107)

Teach Expectations to Staff and Students. Three of the thirteen administrators (23%) mentioned teaching expectations to students so they understand the school’s expectations and model what it looks like in the different areas such as hallways, cafeteria, playground, and in the classroom (A1, A2, A5). A2 stated that, “In order for our students to do what is expected, we

must explicitly teach our expectations for each area of the school like we explicitly teach reading, writing, and math (I53). A5 shared that his school counselors are responsible for reteaching his school's SWPBIS expectations and procedures during teacher work week when all of his teachers are back in the building "so each staff member understands the meaning of PBIS and reminds them about the intervention supports" (I44).

House System as Part of SWPBIS. Two of the thirteen administrators (15%) mentioned the house system has now become part of their SWPBIS system (A10, A13). Both A10 and A13 are implementing Ron Clark's House System along with their SWPBIS system to build school-wide participation by all students. Each of their students have been sorted into different houses and each student can earn points for their house if they meet the school's expectations. A10 shared that her school has "moved away from intrinsic rewards and have now implemented the winning earning of weekly and quarterly house points, which leads to a house celebration at the end of the quarter" (I198-107). A13 shared that after eight years of maintaining the momentum of SWPBIS implementation that they just recently started the House System "due to the passion that many of my teachers have for Harry Potter or for the Ron Clark Academy" (I257-260). She sent teachers to the Ron Clark Academy and "they came back pumped and so excited wanting to make this implementation happen" (I272-275). In the 2022-23 school year, A13 implemented the house system with her team of teachers. All staff members as well as parents were sorted into different houses and house points are given instead of individual tokens or tickets. During this school year, A13 figured out how to have parent volunteers assign house points while volunteering in the building (I323-338).

Interview Question 1 Summary. The first interview question sought to find out the SWPBIS implementation process. School administrators shared how they created and

implemented an acronym to explain their school's expectations. The administrators implemented school-wide token systems for students to earn as they met the school's expectations, but two administrators have moved away from the token system and have started the House System based on Ron Clark's Academy. Administrators have either formed committees to discuss SWPBIS expectations or have trained their staff on the meaning of PBIS and how to give positive feedback versus negative.

Interview Question 2: Role of Family During the SWPBIS Implementation Process.

Administrators were asked the following question: What role did families have during the SWPBIS implementation process? The interview question was designed to find out how families were involved if at all in the SWPBIS process within the school. The themes in Table 5 were created by the participants' responses.

Table 5

Interview Question 2 – Role of Family During the SWPBIS Implementation Process

	A1	A2	A3	A4	A5	A6	A7	A8	A9	A10	A11	A12	A13
Families did not participate	X		X	X	X	X			X		X	X	
Families are informed about SWPBIS	X		X		X			X		X			
Staff are also parents							X		X			X	
Families do participate		X											X

Four themes emerged after analyzing the responses from the second interview question: 1) families do not participate; 2) families are informed about SWPBIS; 3) staff are also parents; and 4) families do participate.

Families Did Not Participate. Eight of the thirteen (62%) administrators stated families did not have a role in the SWPBIS implementation process (A1, A3-A6, A9, A11-A12). A1 shared that her families are told what PBIS is, but they had no role in the process (I89). A4 stated, “to be honest with you while we were first starting it parents did not have input” (I179). A5 shared with me that as she “read my information sheet prior to the interview and looking at what I was looking for in my research” she reflected, “hmmmm We don’t do that” (I92-95). “This was the section in the PBIS fidelity check that we always get gigged on because we don’t involve families or parents”, A6 stated (I215-230). A9 also supported what A6 said regarding the Tiered Fidelity Inventory (TFI) says you should have a parent or family member involved, but she also stated, “to be honest, none, we have a PBIS team and I know we are supposed to have a parent according to the TFI, we do not” (I119-134). A12 informed me that she “does not do a good job involving her families” (I110).

Families are Informed About SWPBIS. Five (38%) of the thirteen administrators shared with me that their families are given information regarding their SWPBIS process, but they did not play a role of any kind in the implementation process (A1, A3, A5, A8, A10). A8 told me she has an active PTA and when they meet with the PTA team, information is shared with that group and “those parents share information to the rest of the families” (I152-153). A5 told his parents about PBIS and they had a store, but “families did not play a role in the implementation process” (I125). A3 stated,

Families of course are informed or educated in how we utilize R.O.A.R. as part of promoting respect in our school and they receive copies of our matrix at Back to School Night and our teachers share our expectations on this night with families, so they will be well aware of what we expect from our kids. (I87-96)

Staff are also Parents. Three of the thirteen (23%) administrators shared that they have teachers on staff who are also parents of students in the building so they considered them as parents involved in the process (A7, A9, A12). All three administrators shared that the teachers that are parents in their buildings also serve on the PBIS team. A12 stated, “Only families that are seriously involved in it are ones that are parents and employees and they tend to be part of our PBIS team to capture the family input” (//113-119).

Families Did Participate. Only two of the thirteen (15%) stated they have families involved in the implementation process (A2, A13). A2 shared that she felt her school was “unique in the fact that they did have parent involvement when it first started before she got there” (//80-83). A13 had a unique situation in her building regarding involving her families in the process. When she first came on as principal, she did not involve all stakeholders. During year three of implementation when a parent heard about PBIS from her son who had just transferred to the school and asked more about it and that she would love to help, the parent formed a parent committee (//380-443).

Interview Question 2 Summary. The second interview question was asked in order to find out what role families played in the SWPBIS process. The school administrators revealed most of them (62%) with at least three years of SWPBIS implementation did not include families. Some of the administrators did not say their families did not have a role, but instead shared they were just informed by sending home information about their SWPBIS process or informed them at Back to School Nights. Two administrators (A2, A13) stated that their families participated by having a voice in the process and also were taking part in involving other families since they were active PTA members.

Interview Question 3: Benefits of Involving Families with SWPBIS Implementation.

Administrators were asked the following question: Describe the benefits of involving families with SWPBIS implementation. Does family engagement make a difference? This interview question was designed to find the benefits of involving families with SWPBIS and if administrators feel family engagement makes a difference in schools. The themes in Table 6 were created by the participants' responses.

Table 6

Interview Question 3 – Benefits of Involving Families with SWPBIS Implementation

	A1	A2	A3	A4	A5	A6	A7	A8	A9	A10	A11	A12	A13
Family engagement makes a difference in schools	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Relationships are formed between school and home	X		X			X	X		X		X		X
Gives them a voice						X	X	X				X	X
Involves them in school	X	X				X							
Same language used at school and at home		X			X					X			

Five themes emerged after analyzing the responses from the third interview question: 1) family engagement makes a difference in schools; 2) relationships are formed between school and home; 3) gives them a voice; 4) involves them in school; and 5) same language used at school and at home.

Relationships are Formed Between School and Home. Seven of the thirteen (54%) administrators stated that a benefit of involving families with SWPBIS implementation is

forming a relationship between school and home (A1, A3, A6-A7, A9, A11, A13). A1 shared that she asked her teachers “to reach out to families and start building those relationships and the most positive experiences are the ones where they have strong parental relationships or family engagement relationships” (//116-119). A3 indicated that even the “simplest form of involvement” is beneficial to families and will help when “conversations you have with them whether they are positive or negative” will help with her families understanding the expectations (//138-147). A6 stated, “I wish I would have involved families...I wish I knew then what I know now of how important it is mostly for the buy-in and to get parents to really understand the why” (//254-266). A7 got emotional with this question and stated, “Involving families is really the common denominator and is my opinion but there’s also research to back that up that we cannot do this job alone as educators ... we need to partner with families” (//248-254). A7’s goal was for her staff “to realize that we can’t do the work that we need to do with the students in isolation because we need to partner with them and they need to be part of the decision-making process ultimately” (//257-263). A11 shared that having them involved would form relationships with the families and it “would benefit us with them knowing our purpose, so they could reinforce the behavior we want at school at home” (//431-443). A13 explained involving families would “help to bridge home and school together and the students would know that school and home are on the same page” (//569-587).

Gives Them a Voice. Five of the thirteen (38%) administrators stated a benefit from involving families would give them a voice (A6-A8, A12-A13). A6 stated that the community she serves are not as fully educated as she is and “decisions I am making are impacting people who don’t always understand the why and the how and just to hear their perspective and even get their thoughts on things would give them a voice” (//286-305). A7 shared that she has quite a few

English Language Learners (ELLs) in her school and she feels strongly that they need a “voice in their students learning and she is trying to create more ways to get their families in the building so the school does not feel like a secret society” (I284-314). A12 shared she feels involving them in the process will give them a voice and she referenced having their voice and having them on the school team “would provide an outside lens to look through specifically with what their child responds to at home regarding incentives and they may work for other students in the building” (I137-143). A13 stated that by giving them a voice would “help to build trust between school and home and continue to build that trust with families and form solid relationships” (I698-701).

Involves Them in School. Three out of the thirteen (23%) administrators shared a benefit was getting their families involved in school (A1-A2, A6). A1 stated how much a difference it would make “if parents were offered the opportunity to come into the school to be engaged in any of the learning that their students are doing” (I122). A6 shared that her school community is not as educated as the staff or even her, but she wants to help them understand so she is trying to get them in the school more by “just inviting them in so they can see what their child is doing on a daily basis and the more involvement we can have them in, the better understanding they will have with academics and all things school” (I332-375).

Same Language Used at School and at Home. Three out of the thirteen (23%) administrators stated a benefit was using the same language between home and school (A2, A5, A10). A2 stated that having “the school and home using the same language would let the students know that everybody is on the same page and they are being held to the same standards at school that they’re held to at home and vice versa” (I197-200). A5 stated that now that his

school has started the house system the parents are “using the same language at home with regards to expectations” (I209).

Interview Question 3b. Twelve of the thirteen (92%) of the administrators interviewed agreed family engagement makes a difference (A1-A5, A7-A13) and eight of the thirteen (62%) do not involve families with their SWPBIS implementation (A1, A3-A6, A9, A11-A12). The majority of the administrators agreed that family engagement makes a difference, but eight of them do not involve families with SWPBIS.

Interview Question 3 Summary. The third interview question sought to identify the benefits of involving families with SWPBIS and to find their perception of whether or not family engagement makes a difference. All but one administrator specifically said family engagement makes a difference (A1-A5, A7-A13). Over 50% of the administrators said relationships can be formed between home and school if families are involved with SWPBIS. Five of the thirteen emphasized that families would have a voice if they were involved in SWPBIS (A6-A8, A12-A13). Additionally, three administrators identified that schools could use the same language at home and school if families were involved (A2, A5, A10). Three other administrators expressed that by having families involved would also lead to more involvement in the schools (A1-A2, A6). Administrators have expressed they do not have families participate in their SWPBIS implementation, but over 50% have said it would form a better relationship between home and school.

Research Question 1 Summary

The first research question aimed to identify the perceptions of elementary school administrators regarding involving families in SWPBIS implementation. Elementary school administrators explained their SWPBIS implementation at their school. All thirteen of the

administrators are from two regional divisions in the Commonwealth of Virginia have a SWPBIS system in place. Ten administrators shared how their school uses an acronym to help staff and students focus on specific behavior expectations (A1-A6, A9, A11-A13). The use of a token system with their SWPBIS was used to reinforce the positive behaviors wanted in their building (A1-A6, A8-A11) and a common language is used school-wide to ensure their staff and students understand the expectations (A1-A4, A8, A13).

When asked about the roles families had in their implementation of SWPBIS and the benefits of involving families the administrators, twelve out of the thirteen expressed the importance of involving families as making a difference (92%). However, eight of the administrators (62%), shared that they did not involve families with their SWPBIS implementation (A1, A3-A6, A9, A11-A12).

Elementary administrators identified the following benefits of involving families with the implementation of SWPBIS: relationships are formed between home and school, families can have a voice, usage of the same language creates an understanding of the expectations, and can increase the involvement of families in schools.

Research Question 2

Two corresponding interview questions aimed to answer the second research question: What are the perceptions of elementary school administrators regarding the barriers that prevent SWPBIS schools from seeking or receiving family involvement during the implementation process?

Interview Question 4: Barriers Encountered by Schools that Prevent Families from Participating. The fourth question sought to identify barriers that prevented families from participating in SWPBIS at their school. The participants were asked: What barriers did your

school encounter that prevented families from participating in your SWPBIS implementation?

The themes in Table 7 were created by the participants' responses.

Table 7

Interview Question 4 – Barriers Encountered that Prevent Families from Participating

	A1	A2	A3	A4	A5	A6	A7	A8	A9	A10	A11	A12	A13
Working parents	X	X	X	X			X		X				
Language barrier	X	X	X	X									
Families are not involved with school									X		X	X	
COVID				X									X
Families not reading school communications					X						X		

Five themes emerged after analyzing the responses from the fourth interview question: 1) working parents; 2) language barrier; 3) families are not involved with school; 4) COVID; and 5) families not reading school communications.

Working Parents. Six out of the thirteen administrators (46%) referenced working parents made it difficult for families to participate in SWPBIS and any other school activities (A1-A4, A7, A9). A1 stated, “Parents who are at our school work shift work, and they are unavailable during the school day” (I/179-182). Families’ work schedules just do not allow for them to participate during the school day and if they can get off work then the same parents attend school activities (A1, A2, A3, A4, A7, A9). One administrator, A9, stated, “Getting involvement from my community is a time concern because many of them are working two and sometimes three jobs or many of them, not all, are just in survival mode” (I/326-341). A7 shared

that sometimes transportation is an issue due to “only one vehicle and if one of the parents has the car at work, then the other one cannot attend” (I338).

Language Barrier. Four out of the thirteen (31%) administrators stated that they have a language barrier with their families since they serve a large number of Spanish-speaking families. A1, A2, A3, and A4 specifically stated that since most of their families speak Spanish, it was hard to involve the families. A1 stated her “families who do not speak English are a little more hesitant to become involved and even with her bilingual liaison trying to help, it is still hard to bring them in” (II143-152). A3 and A4 also shared that the language barrier made it difficult to connect with families. Although they don’t have a bilingual person in their buildings, they at least try to get all communication translated in Spanish (A3, A4).

Families are Not Involved with School. Three out of the thirteen (23%) administrators identified families not being involved with the school was a challenge (A9, A11-A12). A9 shared as a first-year principal “it is hard to get all stakeholders involved as you are learning, but when you have families who do not want to come in makes it even more challenging to get them in” (II287-293). A11 noted that in his school community, “The families that would be involved live so far from the school that they do not come in and the ones who live close to the school are just not involved” (II467-503). A12 agreed that getting families involved is a challenge and she shared, “My PTA is really small and is just made up of the executive board and those few parents are getting worn out so if I asked them to also help on the SWPBIS committee, it would be one more thing” (II158-173).

COVID. Three out of the thirteen (23%) administrators still referenced COVID as a barrier in getting families to participate (A4, A9, A13). A4 mentioned that COVID is still concern for some of her families and even though families are allowed in schools now, she still

has difficulty getting them in. COVID played a role in A9's school. When schools reopened, A9 stated, "Our schools looked different in regards to how we could do things so just passing out our PRIDE tickets had to be changed and we could not have parents in the building to help with implementation" (//296-314). A13 shared the following:

We had anywhere from 30-45 adults volunteering in our building on a daily basis and then the pandemic hit. Many of our families experienced various stresses and strains, their life changed at home based on work and things like that didn't allow for the same type of flexibility that they had previously, so we saw a huge decline in our face-to-face volunteers. (//860-908)

She continued to share that she has finally seen an increase of volunteers now that families have started to get back on their feet (//911-914).

Families Not Reading School Communications. Two of the thirteen (15%) administrators identified families not reading the communications they sent out as a barrier for them (A5, A11). A5 emphasized that fact, "Parents reading communications stands in the way" (//284). A11 concurred with A5 by noting, "We try to over communicate through emails and send home paper copies, but they don't read them" (//524-533).

Interview Question 4 Summary. The fourth interview question was asked to find out what barriers were perceived as to why parents could not participate in the implementation of SWPBIS. Six (46%) of the administrators (A1-A4, A7, A9) all stated that the work schedule of their parents caused an issue with families being able to be involved. A1, A2, A3, and A4 all said they had a language barrier issue between the school and their families due to a large number of their families have Spanish-speaking families. Even with a bilingual liaison in one of the schools, communicating with her families is still a barrier (A1). Administrators also discussed issues they

experienced because of COVID and how it has made some families nervous about coming in to help out (A4). Two administrators shared how they had changes in family support even after the pandemic. A9 had to change how her school gave tickets out to students due to restrictions and at the time parents were not allowed in the schools. A13 shared how she had a huge number of volunteers and parent participation, but after the pandemic was over many of her families had experienced hardships like losing their jobs, which caused her families to decline with regards to having a flexible work schedule or even time to take from work to help out. Families not reading the communications sent out by administrators was also noted as a barrier two administrators had in their buildings (A5, A11).

Interview Question 5: Understanding SWPBIS Expectations. The fifth question aimed to identify how administrators know whether their families understand their SWPBIS expectations. The participants were asked: How do you know whether families understand your school's SWPBIS expectations? The themes in Table 8 were created by the participants' responses.

Table 8

Interview Question 5 – Understanding Your SWPBIS Expectations

	A1	A2	A3	A4	A5	A6	A7	A8	A9	A10	A11	A12	A13
Parents were never asked				X	X	X			X		X	X	
Communicate with families	X								X			X	X
Based on questions asked by families	X						X						
Students and families talk about it			X							X			
Survey families		X						X					

Five themes emerged after analyzing the responses from the fifth interview question: 1) parents were never asked; 2) communicate with families; 3) based on questions asked by families; 4) students and families talk about it; and 5) survey families.

Parents were Never Asked. Six out of thirteen (46%) administrators admitted to never asking their families if they understand their SWPBIS expectations (A4-A6, A9, A11-A12). All six of them (A4-A6, A9, A11-A12) stated they never really thought about asking their families if they understood what PBIS was and if they knew what was happening in school with their child and PBIS. A4 shared, “We use our matrix and have it available, but we have never done a survey asking our parents about what they know or may want to know more about PBIS. I have just not seen this done before” (I/335-350). A5 noted, “We’ve not done a survey or anything, so it’s really word of mouth. It’s really just seeing if we have confusion when we call home for a positive thing or whether we call about not meeting expectations” (I/308-311). She went on to say, “It’s gauging from them like I didn’t know respect each other was something the school was looking for and to be honest I don’t have a good handle on whether my families understand. We didn’t send a survey” (I/314-323). A6 shared, “She has not really asked if they know what it means or do you know what this stands for, but it’s in our handbook; however, to be honest, we all know parents don’t go through the 50-page handbook” (I/479-485). A9 emphasized, “In my weekly communication that I have out to families I describe what PRIDE means and how we work on it daily, but this is a good question because I have never asked them” (I/389-401).

A11 and A12 both shared they communicate the expectations in their weekly newsletters, but neither of them have actually asked their parents if they understand their acronym and why they use it. A12 stated, “We don’t really have a pulse on whether they [parents] truly grasp what the program is as a whole” (I/200-203). A11 admitted to, “You can start to understand if they

understand them when you have conferences and they start to ask questions, but I have never outright asked them if they knew what the expectations were and how we use it” (I/557-575).

Communicate with Families. Four of the thirteen (31%) administrators noted they communicate with families regarding if they understand their school’s SWPBIS expectations (A1, A9, A12-A13). A1 shared, “I would say that it ends up being by communication and the level of communication she receives as an administrator back based on their questions they have when their child is in trouble” (I/209-215). A9 sends out weekly communications to families “on our Facebook page when they have some of their PRIDE expectation celebrations and I can see how many families look at the page” (I/422-446). A12 and A13 both communicate to their families, but in different ways. A12 communicates by “sending home copies of SWIM matrix and it’s listed in their handbook and she also asks teachers to talk about it during their Back to School Night” (I/185-197). A13 shared:

Well, one is we are constantly having conversations with parents every chance we get so whether they are in the building or whether it’s the Good News Call of the Day when we call home to brag about their child, we are reinforcing what the expectations are and what their child has done so well and if we are handling a disciplinary measure then again, the conversation is around our PBIS expectations. (I/947-974)

Based on Questions Asked by Families. Two of the thirteen (15%) administrators mentioned they knew if their families understood their SWPBIS process based on the types of questions that their parents ask them (A1, A7). A1 mentioned, “I can tell if my families understand our SWPBIS based on the questions they ask with regards to why their child is in trouble or what type of consequence was issued” (I/212-218). She continued by stating, “You can tell that the parent does not have familiarity with what the expectations are around the school

when they call me and start questioning some of the things around the school” (I224). A7 concurred with A1 regarding the questioning she receives also leads her to believe her families do not understand the expectations at her school. She said, “It’s clear evidence right there if there’s an influx of questions when it is being well-communicated across the board” (I422-428).

Students and Families Talk About It. Two of the thirteen (15%) administrators shared when they hear or know their students and families are talking about their school’s SWPBIS then they feel as if the expectations are understood (A3, A10). A3 shared, “I think it’s shown when our kids are demonstrating it and they’re able to articulate and communicate it to their parents along with us” (I249-255). A3 also mentioned that when she views her discipline data and it is down that “tells me our parents are partnering with us and supporting what we are doing” (I282). A10 stated:

My families often like to quote me when one of the expectations is broken and we have a pledge that goes along with our PBIS and I will get emails from parents that this happened on the bus and I don’t think that demonstrates our pledge. (I359-363)

Survey Families. Two of the thirteen (15%) administrators have sent surveys to their families to find out how much they know and understand their SWPBIS system (A2, A8). A2 stated, “We do a lot of surveys to see what the awareness is from families about the rules and expectations” (I314). A2 elaborated on the what she asks families, “Do you know that we have a PBIS system? Do you know what that is? What can your child tell us about the PBIS system? Does your child talk about getting Dragon dollars?” (I314-317).

Interview Question 5 Summary. The fifth interview question was asked to find out how administrators know whether their families understand the SWPBIS expectations. Six (46%) of the administrators (A4-A6, A9, A11-A12) all stated that they have never asked their families if

they know anything about the SWPBIS system. Four elementary administrators shared they communicate with families either with emails, conversations or using social media to get the message out to families and use the feedback from the families to determine if they understand (A1, A9, A12-A13). Two administrators shared that the questions their families asked or emailed them was a way they could tell if their families understood their SWPBIS system (A1, A7). Two other administrators stated if their students can articulate the expectations to their teachers or administration then they understand it (A3, A10). One of the administrators gave a specific example of how she knew if her family understands her SWPBIS system. She has families who will actually quote her expectations back to her when they see or hear an expectation on their pledge is not met (A10).

Research Question 2 Summary

The second research question aimed to identify the perceptions of elementary school administrators regarding barriers that prevent SWPBIS schools from seeking or receiving family involvement during the implementation process. Because elementary school administrators had acknowledged previously, they had not involved families with their SWPIBS their responses regarding barriers were more general about how they could be involving families in schools. Elementary school administrators shared what barriers they experience at their school and how they know if their families understand their SWPBIS expectations. All thirteen of the administrators are from two regional divisions in Virginia have a SWPBIS system in place. Two interview questions were asked to find the barriers that are preventing families from participating and how they know if families understand the SWPBIS expectations. They shared that they experience issues with having families participate due to the families' work schedules, speaking another language, families are not involved with school, COVID is still interfering with

participation, and families just not reading the communications being sent out by the school or administrators.

Elementary administrators identified barriers that are preventing families from participating and understanding SWPBIS in their buildings. As they were sharing their concerns, they were also brainstorming ways to improve participation and making sure their families understand the school's expectations. Six of the thirteen (46%) administrators shared they never even thought to ask their families if they knew about their SWPBIS system or if they understand the school's behavior expectations (A4-A6, A9, A11-A12).

Research Question 3

Two corresponding interview questions aimed to answer the third research question: What are the perceptions of elementary school administrators regarding the strategies or activities that encourage family engagement with SWPBIS implementation?

Interview Question 6: Family Engagement Activities or Events to Increase SWPBIS Awareness. The sixth question sought to identify family engagement activities or events that schools implement to increase SWPBIS awareness. The participants were asked: Describe any family engagement activities or events that your school implements to increase SWPBIS awareness. The themes in Table 9 were created by the participants' responses.

Table 9

Interview Question 6 – Family Engagement Activities or Events to Increase SWPBIS Awareness

	A1	A2	A3	A4	A5	A6	A7	A8	A9	A10	A11	A12	A13
No events focusing on SWPBIS	X	X				X	X		X	X	X		
Awards assemblies			X	X							X		X

Back to School Night	X	X	X
House system		X	X X

Four themes emerged after analyzing the responses from the sixth interview question: 1) no events focusing on SWPBIS; 2) awards assemblies; 3) Back to School Night; and 4) house system.

No Events Focusing on SWPBIS. Seven out of the thirteen administrators (54%) admitted they (A1-A2, A6-A7, A9-A11) do not have any activities or events that increase SWPBIS awareness. A1 shared, “We have multiple events throughout the year that focus on math like an event we call Math and Muffins, but it is academically focused” (//245-248). She also stated, “We also have a multi-cultural night where families can come in and celebrate the cultures that they have and that gets the families in the schools” (//257-263). A2 stated, “So I was thinking about the parent engagement events we have had and we send out information at Back to School Night, but I don’t remember having an event that really centered around PBIS” (//359-365, 401). A6 only responded with, “Nope, not for PBIS, specifically, family engagement yes, but not specific to PBIS” (//500-509). A7 also concurred with A6 by stating:

I will say that we never did that at my school just in terms of increasing PBIS. It was highlighted at events because we wanted to share like a table with flyers and that type of thing, but we never as an event that solely focused on PBIS. (//455-464)

A9 emphasized this as, “That’s a good question. When we talk about family engagement my brain goes to our monthly events that bring families in, but now that I’m even answering this question ... I’m like why couldn’t we do something like that” (//479-513, 521). She shared she would share this idea with her PBIS team. A10 stated, “That’s definitely an area of growth for

us” (//431). A11 agreed by sharing the only time he mentions PBIS to families is at Back to School Night and Open House. He went on to say, “We don’t have anything specifically centered around our PBIS program” (//614, 662-665).

Awards Assemblies. Four out of the thirteen administrators (31%) shared they (A3-A4, A11, A13) hold award assemblies and that is how they increase SWPBIS with families. A3 stated, “Definitely the award celebrations since we have changed it from the common one where everyone comes up and shakes hands to more of a focused one of expectations and leadership awards as well as house awards” (//288-300). A4 also shared she had “award assemblies where students were recognized students for earning things regarding expectations, but most of the awards were academic based rather than solely being focused on PBIS” (//386-392). A11 shared, “We specifically have awards that are tied into our the four characteristics that we establish with PBIS and if we have other assemblies we start off the assembly reminding everyone of the PBIS expectations so parent here about them during this time” (//620-656). A13 does something similar to A11 where her students attend “quarterly assemblies where the students are recognized for their expectations” (//1034-1037).

Back to School Night. Three out of the thirteen (23%) administrators shared they focus on their SWPBIS expectations during their Back to School Nights in their building (A2, A5, A11). A2 said, “As I was thinking about parent engagement events we have at school we pass out brochures to families during our Back to School Nights in both English and Spanish that explains our expectations” (//359-368). A5 shared he and his team “record a message that talks about PBIS for Back to School Night and teachers play the short video clip when parents arrive in their classrooms, but we do not have specific PBIS events for families” (//362-365, 395). A11 briefly mentioned that his team speaks to families about it at Back to School Night.

House System. Three out of the thirteen (23%) administrators have started to implement the house system and now tie their SWPBIS system into it (A4, A10, A13). Students can earn points for their house by meeting the SWPBIS expectations. A4 shared, “At my school we implement the house system and it helps quite a bit because we have a Unity Day and parents are invited to come celebrate students earning positive reinforcements” (I/368-380). A10 stated, “We have house parents this year so we are working with the PTA about moving away from the traditional carnival style event to a family house day to focus on activities that revolve around our core values” (I/446). A13 shared that her school started the house system as part of her school’s SWPBIS and this year they are “involving parents with it so they can award students with house points when they volunteer in the building if they see students meeting the school’s PBIS expectations” (I/323-350).

Interview Question 6 Summary. The sixth interview question was asked to identify what events or activities administrators implement within their schools to increase SWPBIS awareness. Seven of the thirteen (54%) administrators shared that they do not have any events that specifically focus on SWPBIS (A1-A2, A6-A7, A9-A11). Administrators hold awards assemblies that either focus specifically on earning an award for meeting SWPBIS expectations or the administrator mentions the expectations for assemblies. A3 shared how she changed her awards from the traditional everyone shakes hands to a more leadership and expectations focused assembly. Administrators with the house system involve families more with SWPBIS awareness because the families are more involved, but they still do not have specific events focused on SWPBIS.

Interview Question 7: Recommended Strategies to Other School Principals. The seventh question sought to identify strategies that administrators would share with other school

administrators to increase family engagement in SWPBIS. The participants were asked: What strategies would you recommend to other school principals to increase family engagement in SWPBIS? The themes in Table 10 were created by the participants' responses.

Table 10

Interview Question 7 – Recommended Strategies to Other School Principals

	A1	A2	A3	A4	A5	A6	A7	A8	A9	A10	A11	A12	A13
Invite families into the school		X		X	X	X			X			X	
Create an event that is PBIS specific					X		X	X	X				
Know your population and build relationships	X					X		X					X
Clear communication					X		X	X		X			
Create engaging activities to increase participation			X										X
How you share your information with families	X							X				X	
Model SWPBIS expectations with families			X							X			
Print information about SWPBIS for families		X		X						X			X

Eight themes emerged after analyzing the responses from the seventh interview question:

1) invite families into the school; 2) create an event that is PBIS specific; 3) know your population and build relationships; 4) clear communication; 5) create engaging activities to

increase participation; 6) how you share your information with families; 7) Model SWPBIS expectations with families; and 8) print information about SWPBIS for families.

Invite Families into the School. Six out of the thirteen administrators (46%) shared the need to get families into the school building is the most important recommendation for future principals to increase family engagement regarding SWPBIS (A2, A4-A6, A9, A12). A2 stated, “I think the more you can get parents to come in during the day in a volunteer opportunity like WatchD.O.G. dads or just having lunch with their student the more they will hear organically our expectations being used” (//428-434). A4 stated:

Well, this has definitely got me thinking about it. You know, I think sometimes we forget to do this and to be honest with you, I mean we’re definitely so focused on explaining what our expectations are, what our procedures are, going over new standards that students are learning, what tests they will take, how the bus application works, that I think we definitely overlook how a parent can support a child with SWPBIS. (//404-425)

A5 said, “My suggestion is not what I’ve done, but more of what I have seen done before. Invite families in to volunteer with the PBIS store and invite them in to just chat like a coffee with the principal chat to discuss things like PBIS” (//401-404, 431). A6 concurred with A5 regarding getting them in the building and said, “Invite them...find non-threatening ways to engage and involve them” (//524-530). A9 shared that she just thought of this as she was thinking of an answer to this question, “Just thought of this, we could have our families in our building once a month and we could talk about what PBIS is and include some PBIS with the math and reading nights since they are already there” (//572-599). A12 stated, “I think just trying to find a way to really get them involved; especially, in Title I schools” (//245).

Create an Event that is PBIS Specific. Four out of thirteen (31%) administrators identified that creating an event for families to attend that focused specifically on SWPBIS is a strategy principals should use to increase their family engagement (A5, A7-A9). A5 shared that he feels like principals should “create an event with their PTA to invite families and discuss what PBIS means and to learn more about it” (I440). A7 emphasized that:

I feel like the more they know the better. Families know about how their kids are learning academics and all of the core content areas and then how that applies to their grades and just different programs that school divisions off. They also need to know about behavior and how we support students with tiered interventions at school. We do the same for academics so why not behavior? That’s a big piece. If a child is not regulated or is having difficulties with regulation then they’re not able to learn. (I476-497)

A8 stated, “Be as transparent as possible so make sure if you want to implement PBIS and have buy-in then you need to have the community’s support” (I461-467). She went on to say you need to find out the need and then create an event that focuses on that need regarding the school’s SWPBIS system.

Know Your Population and Build relationships. Four out of thirteen (31%) administrators shared that principals should get to know their population and build relationships with their families if they want to increase family engagement in regards to SWPBIS (A1, A6, A8, A13). A1 said, “I would definitely consider your population, so you will know what events and when to have make the most impact” (I293-299). Selecting an event and when to have it depends on when your families are available (I296). A6 shared, “We throw out letters to families like alphabet soup. For example, SOL, PBIS, PBSR and we think they know what they all mean, but it intimidates them” (I536-551). She went on to say we need to understand and know our

families, so they feel comfortable. A8 said, “You need to get out there to their apartments or visit them in the trailer park. Get to know where they live and knock down those barriers, so they feel comfortable with the school’s expectations” (//485-491). A13 shared a specific example of how she learns things about her families:

We needed our courtyard cleaned up and our PTA had been reaching out trying to get parent volunteers. I knew we had several families who either owned landscaping companies or worked for them but the problem was they weren’t connected with the PTA. They weren’t hearing that this was a need and so one of the dads came in to drop off his child’s lunch and I was like hey if I remember correctly don’t you own a landscape company? He said yes and I told him what our problem was and he was like I’m here now so let’s take a look. He took one look at it and asked when he could come fix it. I told him I needed to know the cost so the PTA could pay for it. He told me that I was not going to pay him anything because he was donating his time and his resources so his son and other kids could access the courtyard. (//1292-1346)

She shared that if she did take the time to get to know her families, this project would not have been completed so fast. She said, “Get to know your parents just like we expect our teachers to get to know their kids” (//1373).

Clear Communication. Three out of thirteen (23%) administrators mentioned having clear communication with families will help to increase family engagement with SWPBIS (A5, A7, A10). A5 noted that his team “sends out newsletters to families weekly that addresses SWPBIS”, but you need to make the communication is “clear” so they know what you are trying to get them to know (//410-416). A7 and A10 both concurred that, “Clearly communicating with

parents the what, the why, and the how regarding your expectations” (I1512-518). Families can then talk to their children about the expectations at home.

Create Engaging Activities to Increase Participation. Two out of thirteen (15%) administrators noted creating an engaging activity would increase participation with SWPBIS (A3, A13). A3 stated, “You need to give students a reason to love and enjoy school so you make lessons engaging so it must be engaging to parents, but you should be open to other innovating activities engage both students and families” (I1429-438). A13 referenced having opportunities for families to come in to “offer their knowledge and skills that may help others related and listen to them when they share their experiences” (I1277-1280).

How You Share Your Information with Families. Two out of thirteen (15%) administrators stated how you share information would increase the families’ engagement within your building (A1, A12). A1 said, “The most important thing is that you provide multiple modalities of communication. Not just sending everything through email or with a phone call, but finding out how they communicate best” (I1314-3223). She shared administrators need to find out how each family communicates and then use it if we want our messages to get to them. A12 also shared, “Offering principal and parent chats to share information because that would get them in the schools and then could see students interacting with PBIS” (I1251-263).

Model SWPBIS Expectations with Families. Two out of thirteen (15%) administrators said modeling SWPBIS expectations with families would increase engagement (A3, A10). A3 stated, “Definitely make sure that your staff and your students are all modeling and living those habits or living those expectations and they can articulate what they are because that increases families discussing it at home” (I1393-399). She stated if we model it for families, then they can

use the strategies and language at home with their child so we should share the framework for them to use at home (//400-402). A10 gave a specific example:

My AP and I ride the bus so we can model the expectations on the bus with the students and when the kids get home they tell their parents that we rode the bus and it was so quiet today. This gets the students talking with their parents about our SWPBIS. (//476-494)

She continued to say, “It shows parents that we are actively building relationships by modeling, making positive phone calls home, eating lunch with our students is how you get parents onboard by showing them that we hold their kids to a higher expectation” (//488-497).

Print Information About SWPBIS for Families. Two out of thirteen (15%) administrators shared that printing information about SWPBIS for families will increase their knowledge and engagement (A2, A4). A2 identified, “Having printed materials that really focus on what our PBIS system is and why we use it will increase your families knowledge” (//440-443). A4 shared that she sends home their “matrix to families if their child gets in trouble by not meeting the expectation in certain areas of the building, but not all parents get a copy of the matrices” (//464-476). She reflected that it would be a good idea to send home a printed copy of each area matrix for each family to review (//479-497).

Interview Question 7 Summary. The seventh interview question was asked to identify what strategies would be recommended to other school principals to increase family engagement in regards to SWPBIS. Six administrators (46%) stated school administrators should work to get their families into the building to participate in school activities (A2, A4-A6, A9, A12). Four other administrators (31%) shared their experiences with getting to know their population from where they live to what they have to offer will build relationships with the families and this will allow them to feel part of the school more often (A1, A6, A8, A13). Administrators also

identified creating engaging events at school for families to learn about SWPBIS, communicating clearly with families, modeling SWPBIS expectations with students and families, printed material that explains the SWPBIS system, and figuring out how families would like information shared as helpful strategies to increase family engagement with SWPBIS. A13 shared she works hard to get to know her families' strengths and how they may be able to assist the school. Administrators shared several strategies, but several of them had not implemented these strategies themselves, but after thinking about it they would start utilizing them as well. A5 said he has seen several strategies at other schools work and is planning to implement some of them this year. A9 shared she will start working with her PBIS team to start surveying her families to determine what they know and do not know about her SWPBIS system.

Research Question 3 Summary

The third research question aimed to identify family engagement activities or events that would increase SWPBIS awareness and what strategies would be recommended to other school administrators to increase family engagement with regards to SWPBIS. Two interview questions were used to ask elementary school administrators to share what activities or events they have in their buildings that increase family engagement and what strategies they would share with other administrators. The first question was broad and asked the administrators to just describe any events or activities. Seven of the thirteen (54%) shared they do not have any events that focus on SWPBIS. Elementary school administrators identified the following as being helpful with increasing awareness: awards assemblies, Back to School Nights, and implementing the house system.

Elementary school administrators (46%) identified the importance of inviting families into the schools to see what is happening in the building. They shared that specific events should

be created that focus on SWPBIS for families to attend. Taking the time to get to know their families and specifically find their families' strengths would increase family involvement. They also identified the need for engaging activities for families, having printed material explaining SWPBIS, and identifying the best ways to communicate with your families.

Summary

Chapter four included the purpose of the study, research questions, a description of the participants, and qualitative data gathered from the sample of thirteen elementary school administrators. The purpose of this study was to identify elementary school administrators' overall perceptions of family involvement in SWPBIS implementation. Specifically, this study sought to identify family engagement in decision-making, barriers limiting family engagement, and family engagement activities focused on student behavior. Administrators participating in this study were asked to specifically reflect on and share experiences with SWPBIS in their school.

The first research question aimed to identify the benefits of involving families in the SWPBIS implementation process in schools. School administrators described the implementation processes in their buildings and identified specific strategies to focus on student behaviors. Elementary administrators identified creating an acronym, designing a matrix for each area of the building where specific behavior is expected, having a token system, establishing school-wide common language, setting up teams or committees to train staff, teaching staff and students the expectations, and setting up a house system as being beneficial to the implementation of their SWPBIS system. The most frequently mentioned strategy was the use of an acronym that went along with the school's mascot. For example, SWIM was used for the whale mascot.

When explaining the role of families during the SWPBIS implementation process, over half (62%) of the elementary school administrators did not have families participate in the process. Families were informed about SWPBIS either by printed material or during conversations at Back to School Nights or Open House. Additionally, teachers who had kids of their own at the school were counted as families involved in participating in the implementation process. Two administrators (15%) reported that they involve families in their SWPBIS implementation process. When identifying benefits of involving families in the implementation process more than half of the thirteen (54%) administrators stated having families involved would form relationships between home and school. They also shared that there is a need to give families a voice, involve them with school activities, and make sure you are using the same language at school and at home.

The second research question sought to identify the barriers school administrators experience with parents being prevented from participating in SWPBIS. Elementary school administrators shared that they have a difficult time getting families in the building due to their work schedules. Families are working during the day or they are working multiple jobs, which cause them not to be available during school hours. Elementary administrators have also identified language barriers with families, lack of involvement with school, COVID aftermath, and families not reading school communications. Administrators also shared they have not even asked families if they understand the SWPBIS expectations. Some of the ways families have expressed an understanding are communicating with staff or administration, asking questions, talking about it as a family, and completing surveys from their schools.

The third research question aimed to explore family engagement events or activities that increase SWPBIS awareness and to identify strategies that could be shared with other

administrators to increase family engagement in regards to SWPBIS. Elementary administrators expressed they had not thought of hosting any specific events that focus solely on SWPBIS. Awards assemblies, Back to School Nights/Open House, and implementing the house system have all worked in regards to sharing information with families. In regards to recommended strategies for other administrators, the need to have families invited in the schools, specific SWPBIS events should be engaging and planned for families, get to know your families, make sure any communication regarding SWPBIS is clearly explained and used by families, expectations should be modeled for families, and make sure there is printed material explaining the SWPBIS process in both English and Spanish at the school. Chapter 5 will discuss the findings, implications, future studies, and provide reflections.

Chapter 5: Findings, Implications, Future Research, Conclusions, and Reflections

The purpose of this study was to identify elementary school administrators' overall perceptions of family involvement in SWPBIS implementation. Specifically, this study sought to identify family engagement in decision-making, barriers limiting family engagement, and family engagement activities focused on student behavior. Interviews were conducted with thirteen elementary school administrators from the Commonwealth of Virginia. Administrators were selected based on the following criterion: Virginia public elementary school administrator serving students from grades PK-5 or K-5 and had been implementing SWPBIS practices for a minimum of three years. Administrators participating in this study were asked to specifically reflect on and share experiences with SWPBIS in their school. Interviewees, thirteen elementary school administrators from two regions in the Commonwealth of Virginia, had the opportunity to share their perceptions of involving families in the implementation of SWPBIS, barriers that prevent families from participating, and strategies to encourage family engagement.

This study addressed the following research questions:

R1: What are the perceptions of elementary school administrators regarding the overall perceived benefits of involving families in SWPBIS implementation?

R2: What are the perceptions of elementary school administrators regarding the barriers that prevent SWPBIS schools from seeking or receiving family involvement during the implementation process?

R3: What are the perceptions of elementary school administrators regarding the strategies or activities that encourage family engagement with SWPBIS implementation?

Summary of Findings

Elementary school administrators reported families have not been involved in the SWPBIS process and administrators indicated they never asked families if they understood their SWPBIS expectations. School administrators shared there are benefits of having families involved in SWPBIS, such as, giving families a voice to be heard and creating a common language between home and school. Additionally, relationships between home and school would be formed but identified their parents' work schedules as a barrier that prevented families from participating in their school. The administrators also noted the need to have family engagement events or activities that are specific to SWPBIS implementation and understanding. Another identified need was the training of staff on SWPBIS and parent involvement.

The research study produced four findings based on elementary school administrators' perceptions of involving families in the implementation of SWPBIS. The review of literature summarized in chapter two supported the findings and implications. A discussion of the findings and identified implications along with suggestions for future research are outlined below.

Discussion of Findings

This qualitative study sought to identify elementary school administrators' perceptions on involving families in the SWPBIS implementation process and what benefits schools could have with regards to involving families, what family engagement events administrators created that focused on SWPBIS, and what barriers elementary school administrators had when trying to get their families involved. This study produced four findings.

Finding 1

Elementary administrators indicated that they had never asked families if they understood SWPBIS expectations nor have they involved them in the SWPBIS process.

This finding was developed from the elementary school administrators' responses to Interview Questions 2 and 5. Elementary administrators were asked about the role families play in their SWPBIS implementation process and how they know if their families understand the SWPBIS within the school. Eight out of the thirteen elementary school administrators stated families do not participate with their SWPBIS process (see Table 5). A1 shared that her families are told what PBIS is, but they had no role at all in the process (I89). A4 stated, "To be honest with you while we were first starting it, parents did not have input" (I179). A5 shared with me that as she "read my information sheet prior to the interview and looking at what I was looking for in my research" she reflected, "We don't do that" (I92-95). "This was the section in the PBIS fidelity check that we always get gigged on because we don't involve families or parents", A6 stated (I215-230). A9 also supported what A6 said regarding the TFI says you should have a parent or family member involved, but she also stated, "To be honest, none, we have a PBIS team and I know we are supposed to have a parent according to the TFI, we do not" (I119-134). A12 informed me that she "does not do a good job involving her families" (I110).

Six out of thirteen elementary administrators stated they never asked their families if they understood what their SWPBIS process was or even if they knew what was happening with their child and PBIS (see Table 8). All six of them (A4-A6, A9, A11-A12) stated they never really thought about asking their families if they understood what PBIS was and if they knew what was happening in school with their child and PBIS. A4 shared, "We use our matrix and have it available, but we have never done a survey asking our parents about what they know, or may want to know more about PBIS. I have just not seen this done before" (I335-350). A5 noted, "We've not done a survey or anything so it's really word of mouth. It's really just seeing if we have confusion when we call home for a positive thing or whether we call about not meeting

expectations” (//308-311). She went on to say, “It’s gauging from them like I didn’t know respect each other was something the school was looking for and to be honest I don’t have a good handle on whether my families understand. We didn’t send a survey” (//314-323). A6 shared, “I have not really asked if they know what it means or do you know what this stands for, but it’s in our handbook; however, to be honest, we all know parents don’t go through the 50-page handbook” (//479-485).

Schools have been reporting increases in student behaviors across the country since COVID (Perera & Diliberti, 2023). The use of multi-tiered or RTI models are being used by schools across the United States as a way to improve both academic and behavioral outcomes of students (Benner et al., 2012). PBIS systems are in thousands of schools across the United States and have helped to improve behaviors of students and academic performance (Bradshaw et al., 2010). Due to the emphasis on reducing behaviors and increasing academic achievement from the NCLB Act, school districts and administrators are turning to SWPBIS models for a positive school climate and to reduce discipline (Bradshaw et al., 2010). Garbacz et al. (2016) stated PBIS has been successful in schools for years, but a component that most schools are missing is having families involved in the planning process of the PBIS team. Elementary school administrators shared involving families and asking what they know or would like to know about SWPBIS is something they will need to learn more about.

Finding 2

Elementary administrators indicated that involving families forms relationships and gives them a voice creating a common language between school and home. This finding was developed from the elementary school administrators’ responses to Interview Question 3. Elementary administrators were asked to describe the benefits of involving families with

SWPBIS implementation. Seven out of the thirteen elementary school administrators stated a benefit of involving families with SWPBIS implementation would form a relationship between school and home (see Table 6). A1 shared that she asked her teachers “to reach out to families and start building those relationships and the most positive experiences are the ones where they have strong parental relationships or family engagement relationships” (//116-119). A3 indicated that even the “simplest form of involvement” is beneficial to families and will help when “conversations you have with them whether they are positive or negative” will help with her families understanding the expectations (//138-147). A6 stated, “I wish I would have involved families...I wish I knew then what I know now of how important it is mostly for the buy in and to get parents to really understand the why” (//254-266). A7 got emotional with this question and stated, “Involving families is really the common denominator and is my opinion but there’s also research to back that up that we cannot do this job alone as educators ... we need to partner with families” (//248-254). A7’s goal was for her staff “to realize that we can’t do the work that we need to do with the students in isolation because we need to partner with them and they need to be part of the decision-making process ultimately” (//257-263). A11 shared that having them involved would form relationships with the families and it “would benefit us with them knowing our purpose, so they could reinforce the behavior we want at school at home” (//431-443). A13 explained involving families would “help to bridge home and school together and the students would know that school and home are on the same page” (//569-587).

Five out of thirteen elementary administrators stated involving families with SWPBIS would give the families a voice, and three out of the thirteen shared it would give the families and school a way to have a common language (see Table 6). A6 stated that the community she serves are not as fully educated as she is and “decisions I am making are impacting people who don’t

always understand the why and the how and just to hear their perspective and even get their thoughts on things would give them a voice” (I/286-305). A7 shared that she has quite a few ELLs in her school and she feels strongly that they need a “voice in their students learning and she is trying to create more ways to get their families in the building, so the school does not feel like a secret society” (I/284-314). A13 stated that giving them a voice would “help to build trust between school and home and continue to build that trust with families and form solid relationships” (I/698-701). A2 stated that having “the school and home using the same language would let the students know that everybody is on the same page and they are being held to the same standards at school that they’re held to at home and vice versa” (I/197-200).

Finding 2 supports research regarding family involvement and forming relationships between home and school. Parental involvement may present challenges, but is essential in the child's education according to Fefer et al. (2020) whose study focused on Positive Parent Contact or involved teachers recognizing their students’ positive behaviors by contacting their parents. Another aspect to ensure students are staying on task with classwork and meeting classroom expectations is for teachers to involve parents (Kaminski & Claussen, 2017). Strickland-Cohen and Kyzar (2016) stated that “due to emphasis on relationship building, family engagement models that are partnership-oriented encompass these critical communication practices and are most suitable for promoting positive behavior ... collaborative problem-solving and shared decision making” (p. 149). Garbacz et al. (2016) stated that schools should involve parents and families when planning their school-wide PBIS team. By having family involvement on this team, schools can find out how parents interpret the positive support system and can offer ways to better the school’s implementation (Garbacz et al., 2016). Adequate family involvement needs to move on from just formal involvement into more of a cooperative partnership (Sylaj, 2020).

Family involvement at school with their children has been shown to improve student success with their academics and behavior (Susnara et al., 2021).

Finding 3

Elementary school administrators indicated a need to train staff on SWPBIS and parent involvement. This finding was developed from the elementary school administrators' responses to Interview Question 1. Elementary administrators were asked to describe the implementation of their SWPBIS system. Six out of the thirteen elementary school administrators stated a need to train staff on SWPBIS and parent involvement (see Table 4). A5 stated his counselors would work with teachers on "how to build systems of supports with their students versus trying to be reactionary to problems that may happen" (//47-56). A6 shared how she and her staff "worked closely with T/TAC through VCU" to train her staff (//44-47). A8 shared that her division has now implemented a division-wide mandate that all schools need to train staff on the meaning of PBIS and how to use a matrix focusing on specific behaviors developed by the schools' needs (//68-71). Due to the teacher shortage in her school, A12 shared her school is constantly training staff because "there is so much turnover so training 27 new teachers this year alone is an on-going process so we feel as if we are always rebooting our SWPBIS" (//50-65).

Finding 3 supports research regarding training teachers and staff on the implementation of SWPBIS. As schools move to involving families with their SWPBIS systems, more training for teachers will be important for their system. There should be new training for teachers to acquire more knowledge and skills regarding their professional development (Akalin & Sucuoglu, 2015). Parent involvement in their child's education is an important step to enhance their child's outcomes. Even though SWPBIS systems are successful in schools, research is

limited on how personally involving families with a school's SWPBIS team impacts student success (Garbacz et al., 2016). Building level educators, including school administration as well as state and national level policy makers are trying to make sure K-12 students are working to their highest potential, but creating those strong parent and teacher relationships has been overlooked (Stetson et al., 2012). According to Stetson et al. (2012), teachers feel parents should be involved more with their children with regards to school; however, they are at a loss with how to make it take place in the schools, and parents feel a disconnect with regards to their child's teacher and school. Strickland-Cohen and Kyzar (2019) stated for students who require behavior support at Tier 3, all adults involved with the student's education (school staff and family) should share information, understand and identify individualized supports needed for success, and collect data with regards to the student's progress.

Finding 4

Elementary school administrators indicated they do not have any family engagement events focusing on SWPBIS, but they should be inviting families into the school and creating events to focus on SWPBIS to build relationships. This finding was developed from the elementary school administrators' responses to Interview Questions 6 and 7. Elementary administrators were asked to describe any family engagement, activities, or events the their school implements to increase SWPBIS awareness and then to share strategies other school administrators should do to increase family engagement with SWPBIS. Seven out of the thirteen elementary school administrators stated they do not have any family engagement events or activities that focus on SWPBIS (see Table 9). A1 shared, "We have multiple events throughout the year that focus on math like an event we call Math and Muffins, but it is academically focused" (I/245-248). She also stated, "We also have a multicultural night where

families can come in and celebrate the cultures that they have and that gets the families in the schools” (//257-263). A2 stated, “So I was thinking about that parent engagement events we have had and we send out information at Back to School Night, but I don’t remember having an event that really centered around PBIS” (//359-365, 401). A6 only responded with, “Nope, not for PBIS, specifically, family engagement yes, but not specific to PBIS” (//500-509). A7 shared, “We wanted to share so we had a table with flyers, but we never had an event that solely focused on PBIS” (//463-464). A9 emphasized this as, “That’s a good question. When we talk about family engagement my brain goes to our monthly events that bring families in, but now that I’m even answering this question ... I’m like why couldn’t we do something like that” (//479-513, 521). A10 stated, “That’s definitely an area of growth for us” (//431). A11 agreed by sharing the only time he mentions PBIS to families is at Back to School Night and Open House. He went on to say, “We don’t have anything specifically centered around our PBIS program” (//614, 662-665).

Six out of the thirteen elementary school administrators indicated they should be inviting families into the school to increase family engagement in regards to SWPBIS and eight out of thirteen elementary school administrators indicated events and relationships should be created specifically around SWPBIS (see Table 10). A2 stated, “I think the more you can get parents to come in during the day in a volunteer opportunity like WatchD.O.G. dads or just having lunch with their student the more they will hear organically our expectations being used” (//428-434). A5 said, “My suggestion is not what I’ve done, but more of what I have seen done before. Invite families in to volunteer with the PBIS store and invite them in to just chat like a coffee with the principal chat to discuss things like PBIS” (//401-404, 431). A6 concurred with A5 regarding getting them in the building and said, “Invite them...find non-threatening ways to engage and

involve them” (I1524-530). A9 shared that she just thought of this as she was thinking of an answer to this question, “Just thought of this, we could have our families in our building once a month and we could talk about what PBIS is and include some PBIS with the math and reading nights since they are already there” (I1572-599).

Finding 4 supports research regarding family engagement specific to SWPBIS. Parent involvement in their child’s education is an important step to enhance their child’s outcomes. Even though SWPBIS systems are successful in schools, research is limited on how personally involving families with a school’s SWPBIS team impacts student success (Garbacz et al., 2016). Building level educators, including school administration as well as state and national level policy makers are trying to make sure K-12 students are working to their highest potential, but creating those strong parent and teacher relationships has been overlooked (Stetson et al., 2012). With more than 20,000 schools promoting SWPBIS, staff have limited ability to initiate family involvement which is a way to enhance the prevention and correction of problem behaviors among students with Tier 1 and Tier 2 needs (Strickland-Cohen & Kyzar, 2019). When students see their families working with the teachers and administrators in their school in a positive way, behavior can begin to change at that moment as the families are modeling how to interact appropriately with the school (Garbacz et al., 2016). Building level educators, including school administration as well as state and national level policy makers are trying to make sure K-12 students are working to their highest potential, but creating those strong parent and teacher relationships has been overlooked (Stetson et al., 2012). When families understand what is happening in their child’s school, they feel a connection and can be informed about the progress of their child and school (Garbacz et al., 2016; Sylaj, 2020).

Implications for Practice

The purpose of this study was to identify elementary school administrators' overall perceptions of family involvement in SWPBIS implementation. Specifically, this study sought to identify family engagement in decision-making, barriers limiting family engagement, and family engagement activities focused on student behavior. Four implications were recommended for administrators based on the study's findings.

Implication 1

The VDOE and local school divisions should provide professional development for elementary school administrators to attend that focuses on specific resources or strategies to involve families with SWPBIS. Findings 1, 3, and 4 indicated a need for implication 1.

Elementary school administrators shared they are not involving families with their SWPBIS implementation process. Since the state requires schools who implement SWPBIS to complete the TFI at the end of each school year, professional development should be developed on how to involve families. Professional development would provide opportunities for state level leaders or school division leaders to provide specific ways for building level administrators to involve families at the school level. Resources and strategies should be shared between schools or school divisions if there are schools already involving families.

Implication 2

The VDOE and local school divisions should develop a training guide that is specific to guiding elementary school administrators on how to have families serve on their SWPBIS school teams. Finding 3 indicated a need for implication 2. Elementary school administrators reported a need for training staff on SWPBIS and parent involvement. This guide should include specific guidance on the role of involving families or parents within the SWPBIS

school-based team. The purpose of their involvement should be outlined and defined, so building level administrators can share it with families as they are recruiting families participation. School division leaders should determine schools that are including families on their school-based teams and have them work with schools who have not started this process.

Implication 3

School division leaders should provide opportunities for school-based administrators to meet with colleagues to brainstorm ways to get parents in the building for events and to provide support to the SWPBIS team. Findings 1, 2, 3, and 4 indicated a need for Implication 3. As schools are developing and implementing their SWPBIS systems, division leaders should offer time for school-based leaders to meet with colleagues to brainstorm strategies to get families involved with the school and how families can be part of the school's SWPBIS team. Administrators had different strategies on how they involved families within their own buildings, so providing time for administrators to meet in order to focus on ways to support their SWPBIS team could increase family participation.

Implication 4

The VDOE and local school divisions should work together to create a database of family engagement events that focus specifically on SWPBIS that building level administrators can choose to implement. Findings 2 and 4 indicated a need for Implication 4. Elementary school administrators reported that they have family engagement events, but they do not have events that solely focus on SWPBIS. School based administrators plan their own school events and if there was a resource that could be shared in order to choose events that would assist them. Administrators could look at the events and choose the ones that best match the school's needs and population. The events should focus on ways for families to share their opinions of the

process and create a safe place for families to ask questions and to offer suggestions. The database of events should be designed for ease of implementation by the school and allow for the school to fit their specific SWPBIS system into the event, so their families can understand the school's needs. Division level leaders could also identify school leaders within their division that are implementing SWPBIS events successfully and request them to add their events and strategies to the division database.

Future Study Recommendations

This study consisted of thirteen elementary school administrators who had implemented SWPBIS for at least three years. As a result, the study identified a need for elementary schools to involve families in the SWPBIS implementation process, create events specifically focusing on SWPBIS, and increasing professional development opportunities for school-based administrators to gain more knowledge of how to involve families with SWPBIS. Additional studies regarding involving families with SWPBIS in elementary schools may contribute to more opportunities for families to be involved in schools and increasing the knowledge of SWPBIS.

- Increase the sample size to include 30-40 elementary school administrators.
- Expand the study to include other states within the United States.
- Consider identifying elementary school administrators who have been leading their school since the implementation of SWPBIS instead of inheriting the process that a previous administrator had started.

Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to identify elementary school administrators' overall perceptions of family involvement in SWPBIS implementation. Specifically, this study sought to identify family engagement in decision-making, barriers limiting family engagement, and family

engagement activities focused on student behavior. Interviews were conducted with thirteen elementary school administrators from the Commonwealth of Virginia. The findings from this study indicated that elementary school administrators do not involve families with SWPBIS, have never asked families if they understood SWPBIS expectations, do not have specific events for families that focus on SWPBIS, and they need training on SWPBIS to assist with family support to create relationships between home and school. Elementary administrators understand the need to have families involved with school activities and they should be involved with SWPBIS.

Elementary school administrators need support with regards to professional development at the state and local levels to find ways to support them with involving families in the SWPBIS process. A resource guide should be developed at the state level regarding how administrators can involve families or parents on the SWPBIS team within their school. Local school divisions should allow time for their school-based administrators to meet with other colleagues within the division or at the state level to work together to share ideas of how families can be involved in the SWPBIS system. The VDOE should create a database of resources, activities, and events that schools are currently using to involve families with SWPBIS implementation, participation, and other ways to assist with positive behaviors in schools. Providing supports for school administrators from both the school division level as well as the state level can ensure families are involved in the schools, thus supporting their children's needs.

Reflection

Behaviors have always been seen in schools, but the COVID-19 pandemic placed a strain on families and schools; especially, with regards to behaviors increasing. Families had their own stress with regards to losing jobs, trying to support or teach their children at home, and balancing

the social needs for themselves and their children. Schools have been tasked with so much that was not an issue many years ago. Now, school staff are not just responsible for educating students, but they are also responsible for providing social emotional skills, counseling of families, providing workshops for families, as well as lowering behavioral issues. All of this is supposed to happen at the same time they are working to close the academic gaps amongst all of their students. Now, is the time that all of the pieces to this puzzle are in place to ensure staff, students, and families are working as a cohesive team, so our students can be successful not only academically, but socially as well.

The VDOE, school division leaders, and building level administrators should all be working together to find creative ways to get families involved with their children's needs. We cannot continue to place all of the responsibility on schools to close the academic gaps along with ensuring students' behavior is lowered in order to reduce discipline consequences. Families should be willing and wanting to participate in schools, so they understand what is happening on a daily basis with regards to implementing positive supports to reduce behaviors. Building level leaders should find ways to involve families and make sure they are part of the school's decision-making processes that will benefit the students.

I will work my school division leaders to share my study findings and work with my own administrative team on ways that my school can involve our families. We need to reflect on the age old saying of, "It takes a village to raise a child," so we can start moving our students in the right direction so they can be successful. With so many expectations placed on schools from the federal and state level, schools and families need to partner now if we want to make sure our children are set up to ensure a bright and successful future.

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Appendix A: CITI Certification



Completion Date 06-May-2023
 Expiration Date 06-May-2026
 Record ID 45003851

This is to certify that:

Jason Gill

Has completed the following CITI Program course:

Not valid for renewal of
 certification through CME.

Social & Behavioral Research

(Curriculum Group)

Social & Behavioral Research

(Course Learner Group)

1 - Basic Course

(Stage)

Under requirements set by:

Virginia Polytechnic Institute & State University (Virginia Tech)

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Appendix B: Institutional Review Board (IRB) Approval Letter



Division of Scholarly Integrity and
Research Compliance
Institutional Review Board
North End Center, Suite 4120 (MC 0497)
300 Turner Street NW
Blacksburg, Virginia 24061
540/231-3732
irb@vt.edu
<http://www.research.vt.edu/sirc/hrpp>

MEMORANDUM

DATE: August 15, 2024
TO: Carol S Cash, Jason Gill
FROM: Virginia Tech Institutional Review Board (FWA00000572)
PROTOCOL TITLE: Positive Support Systems: A Qualitative Investigation into How Schools Involve Families with School-wide Positive Behavior Intervention and Supports
IRB NUMBER: 24-806

Effective August 15, 2024, the Virginia Tech Human Research Protection Program (HRPP) determined that this protocol meets the criteria for exemption from IRB review under 45 CFR 46.104(d) category (ies) 2(ii).

Ongoing IRB review and approval by this organization is not required. This determination applies only to the activities described in the IRB submission and does not apply should any changes be made. If changes are made and there are questions about whether these activities impact the exempt determination, please submit an amendment to the HRPP for a determination.

This exempt determination does not apply to any collaborating institution(s). The Virginia Tech HRPP and IRB cannot provide an exemption that overrides the jurisdiction of a local IRB or other institutional mechanism for determining exemptions.

All investigators (listed above) are required to comply with the researcher requirements outlined at:

<https://secure.research.vt.edu/external/irb/responsibilities.htm>

(Please review responsibilities before beginning your research.)

PROTOCOL INFORMATION:

Determined As: **Exempt, under 45 CFR 46.104(d) category(ies) 2(ii)**
 Protocol Determination Date: **August 15, 2024**

ASSOCIATED FUNDING:

The table on the following page indicates whether grant proposals are related to this protocol.

Invent the Future

Appendix C: Information Sheet



Information Sheet for Participation in a Research Study

Principal Investigator: Carol S. Cash, EdD.; College of Liberal Arts & Human Sciences, School of Education, Educational Leadership Program at Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University

Co-investigator: Jason M. Gill; 804-691-9197; jasangill278@vt.edu

IRB # 24-806 and Title of Study: Positive Support Systems: A Qualitative Investigation into How Schools Involve Families with School-wide Positive Behavior Intervention and Supports

My name is Jason M. Gill and I am currently a doctoral candidate at Virginia Tech and I am conducting this research study as part of my course work. This form includes information about the study and contact information if you have any questions.

What Should I Know?

You have been identified as an elementary school administrator in the state of Virginia. If you decide to participate in this study you will be asked to participate in a Zoom interview. The questions asked in the interview will focus on your experience with implementing SWPBIS/PBIS in your school and how you incorporated family involvement with the process and what barriers you may have encountered in doing so. The interview will be recorded and transcribed via Zoom and audio recorded as a backup. The Zoom transcriptions will be crosschecked by the researcher for accuracy. The interview should take approximately 30-45 minutes to complete.

I do not anticipate any risks to the participant for completing this study. You will have the option to be part of the study or not. If you volunteer to participate, you can withdraw at any time without consequence. During the interview you will have the option to choose not to answer a question and remain in the study. The researcher may withdraw you from this research if circumstances arise with warrant doing so.

Confidentiality

All of the information collected from the interviews will be kept confidential and your identity will not be revealed during the study or while compiling the findings after analyzing the data for the dissertation. The researcher will keep all data collected confidential. Your interview will be recorded via Zoom and a digital audio recording device will be used as a backup. The researcher will crosscheck the Zoom transcription from the interview for accuracy. The participant will have an opportunity to crosscheck the responses for accuracy. The participant will have one

week to review and submit any desired changes to the researcher once the transcription has been received. The researcher will code the transcripts using a pseudonym (false name) for the participant. All recordings and transcriptions will be uploaded to the researcher's secure password protected computer in the researcher's office and uploaded to Virginia Tech's Google Drive, which has a two-factor login. All recordings and transcriptions will be stored until the researcher's dissertation is completed.

Who Can I Talk To?

If you have any questions or concerns about the research, please feel free to contact Jason M. Gill (jasongill278@vt.edu). You are not waiving any legal claims, rights or remedies because of your participation in this research study. If you have any questions regarding your rights as a research participant, contact the Virginia Tech HRPP Office at 540-231-3732 (irb@vt.edu).

Please print a copy of this information sheet for your records.

Thank you so much for your time!

Appendix D: Introduction Email to Professional Organizations

Subject Line: Request for Distribution of Research Study Information

Dear (contact person for research at organization),

I hope this email finds you well! My name is Jason Gill, and I am a doctoral candidate in the Virginia Tech Educational Leadership and Policy Studies program. I am currently searching for elementary administrators to participate in my dissertation research study. My study is being conducted through Virginia Tech, IRB #- and is supervised by my dissertation chair, Dr. Carol Cash. I am contacting you because your organization has a membership containing many school administrators that may be eligible to participate in my study.

The purpose of this study is to identify elementary school administrators' overall perceptions of family involvement in School-wide Positive Behavior Intervention and Supports (SWPBIS) implementation. Specifically, this study will seek to identify family engagement in decision-making, barriers limiting family engagement, and family engagement activities focused on student behavior. The study will enrich the current literature by incorporating the barriers and strategies identified by elementary school administrators that may provide guidance as future administrators implement family engagement in the implementation process or provide strategies to overcome barriers.

I am using a qualitative research design to collect rich narrative data from participants and build a deeper understanding of administrator perceptions and strategies. I am actively recruiting elementary administrators who have been implementing SWPBIS in their school for at least three years. Administrators may be principals, associate principals or assistant principals in public elementary schools. The qualitative design will consist of a 30-45 minute interview. The information provided by participants will be confidential and anonymous.

If you are willing to distribute information about my study, please use any avenues you deem necessary to share the attached recruitment flyer. If you would like to discuss the research study further before proceeding, please do not hesitate to contact me by email or phone. Again, thank you for your time and consideration.

Kind regards,

Jason M. Gill
Doctoral Candidate, Virginia Tech School of Education
jasongill278@vt.edu
804-691-9197

****Recruitment Flyer Link****

Appendix E: Recruitment Flyer

Recruitment Flyer for Distribution via Professional Organizations and Social Media

A recruitment flyer will be shared with professional organizations and via the researcher's X and Facebook accounts. While the visual design of the flyer may be updated prior to distribution, the information below will remain the same.



WHAT: Participants are needed for a Virginia Tech Educational Leadership and Policy Studies doctoral research study (IRB # 24-806)

WHY: The purpose of this study is to identify elementary school administrators' overall perception of family involvement in School-wide Positive Behavior Intervention and Supports (SWPBIS) implementation. Specifically, this study will seek to identify family engagement in decision-making, barriers limiting family engagement, and family engagement activities focused on student behavior.

WHO: You may qualify for this research if you are a Virginia elementary school administrator who has been implementing SWPBIS in the school for at least 3 years.

HOW: Eligible participants will participate in a 30 to 45-minute interview virtually via Zoom.

FOR MORE INFORMATION: contact Jason M. Gill at jasongill278@vt.edu

Appendix F: Administrator Recruitment Email

Subject Line: Perceptions of Elementary School Administrators Regarding Family Engagement and School-wide Positive Behavior Intervention & Supports

Dear Elementary School Administrator,

I hope this email finds you well! My name is Jason Gill, and I am a doctoral candidate in the Virginia Tech Educational Leadership and Policy Studies program under the supervision of my advisor and expert researcher Dr. Carol Cash. I am conducting research to analyze the perceptions of elementary school administrators regarding benefits of involving families in School-wide Positive Intervention & Supports (SWPBIS/PBIS) implementation, barriers preventing families from participating and any strategies or activities encouraging family engagement in the SWPBIS/PBIS implementation.

I am looking for elementary principals, associate principals, and assistant principals to participate in an interview. If you are interested in learning more about this research please reply to this email and I will share an information sheet with you. Prior to the interview I will get your verbal consent to participate. During the interview, participants will be recorded via Zoom for transcription purposes. A copy of the transcription will be sent to all participants to ensure accuracy. The interview should last 30-45 minutes and is very informal.

All responses to the questions will be kept confidential. Each participant will be assigned a pseudonym during the interview and will not identify any demographic or work location, other than the number the number of years you have implemented SWPBIS/PBIS in your school, your title, type of school district (rural, urban, or suburban), size of school (grade levels and student enrollment), and if you are a Title 1 or non-Title 1 school. Interview recordings will be stored on a password protected VT secured and managed computer until transcribed. Once the recordings have been transcribed, they will be shared with you for verification before being destroyed.

There is minimum risk involved in participating in this research and it will not be possible to identify you as the individual who provided the information for the research. The Human Research Protection Program of Virginia Tech has reviewed this interview protocol (IRB # 24-806).

Again, thank you for taking the time to learn more about this research study. If are willing to participate, please reply in order to schedule a convenient date and time that works around your schedule.

Yours in Education,

Jason M. Gill
Doctoral Candidate, Virginia Tech School of Education
jasongill278@vt.edu
804-691-9197

Appendix G: Email to Potential Participants Named During Interview

Subject Line: Invitation to Participate in Research Study

Dear Elementary School Leader,

I hope this email finds you well! My name is Jason M. Gill and I am a doctoral candidate in the Virginia Tech Educational Leadership and Policy Studies program under the supervision of my advisor and committee chair, Dr. Carol S. Cash. You are receiving this email because you were named as a potential participant in my doctoral study focusing on elementary schools implementing School-wide Positive Behavior Intervention & Supports (SWPBIS/PBIS) and family involvement.

I have attached an informational sheet below so you can learn more about my research study. If you are willing to participate in my research study, please review the information sheet, sign up for an interview day/time, and respond to this email. Your input is voluntary, but is greatly appreciated in conducting authentic perceptions and strategies for including families in the SWPBIS implementation within schools. This information may be beneficial to future elementary administrators as they implement SWPBIS/PBIS in their schools and involve families. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me via phone or email. Again, thank you for your consideration to participate in my research study.

*****Information Sheet Link*****

*****Interview Sign-up Link*****

Kind regards,

Jason M. Gill
Doctoral Candidate, Virginia Tech School of Education
jasongill278@vt.edu
804-691-9197

Appendix H: Transcript Verification Email

Title of the Research Study: Positive Support Systems: A Qualitative Investigation into How Schools Involve Families with School-wide Positive Behavior Intervention and Supports

Principal Investigator: Carol S. Cash, Ed.D., Educational Leadership & Policy Studies, Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University

Co-Investigator: Jason Gill, Educational Leadership & Policy Studies, Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University (e-mail: jasongill278@vt.edu, phone: 804-691-9197)

Date: _____

Attached you will find a copy of the transcription of our interview conducted on _____.
Please review the transcript and choose one of the options below.

Option 1: I have read the transcription of our interview and agree that it can be used in its current state.

Option 2: I have read the transcription of our interview and would like the following additions or corrections to be made before moving forward. *Please share any additions/corrections in your response to this email.*

Option 3: I have read the transcription of our interview and would like to withdraw from the study. With this option, I acknowledge that the data from our interview will be destroyed.

Please respond to this e-mail with the option of your choice. If I do not receive a response within five business days of the date printed above, the information will be included in the study.

Thanks again for your time,

Jason M. Gill
Doctoral Candidate, Virginia Tech School of Education
jasongill278@vt.edu
804-691-9197

Appendix I: Interview Protocol

Title of the Research Study: Positive Support Systems: A Qualitative Investigation into How Schools Involve Families with School-wide Positive Behavior Intervention and Supports

Time of the Interview:

Date:

Place:

Interviewer: Jason M. Gill, Educational Leadership & Policy Studies, Virginia Tech (email: jasangill278@vt.edu)

Each interview will be conducted virtually using Zoom.

Before the Interview:

- Confirm participant received the information sheet emailed prior to the interview
- Confirm rename on Zoom (aligns with pseudonym code assigned to participant)
- Turn on the Zoom recording feature and enable captions

Interviewer: *Thank you for taking time to meet with me this (timeframe). I greatly appreciate your participation in my study. I am interviewing principals, associate principals, and assistant principals to find out the overall benefits of family involvement in School-wide Positive Behavior Intervention and Supports implementation, what barriers may limit family engagement and what family engagement activities you have had experience with focusing on student behavior.*

The interview should take between 30 to 45 minutes. During the interview you will not have to identify any demographic information other than the number of years you have implemented SWPBIS in your school, your title, type of school district (rural, urban, or suburban), size of school (grade levels and student enrollment), and if you are a Title I or non-Title I school. Were there any questions regarding the information sheet that was emailed to you? The entire interview will be recorded and transcribed, but will not include any identifying information. You will receive a copy of the transcription to review for accuracy. At the completion of my research study all data and recordings will be destroyed.

Do I have your permission to move forward with the interview and record our conversation?

Note: *I may interject with phrases such as, “Tell me more”, “Could you expand on that”, or “Can you share an example?” in order to collect more detailed information.*

The interview today focuses on family engagement and their involvement in the School-wide Positive Behavior Intervention and Supports (SWPBIS) system in your school. The first question will begin with, Describe the implementation of your SWPBIS system.

Then, the following questions will address the benefits of involving families in SWPBIS, barriers preventing families from participating, family engagement activities focusing on student behavior and what would you recommend to other administrators as they plan to engage families in SWPBIS. Again, thank you for meeting with me today.

-
1. Describe the implementation of your SWPBIS system.
 2. What role did families have during the SWPBIS implementation process?
 3. Describe the benefits of involving families with SWPBIS implementation. Does family engagement make a difference?
 4. What barriers did your school encounter that prevented families from participating in your SWPBIS implementation?
 5. How do you know whether families understand your school's SWPBIS expectations?
 6. Describe any family engagement activities or events that your school implements to increase SWPBIS awareness.
 7. What strategies would you recommend to other school principals to increase family engagement in SWPBIS?
 8. Do you know of any additional elementary administrators who may be interested in participating in my research study
-

Interviewer: *Thank you again for sharing your time and thoughts with me today. I will be sharing your transcript of this interview with you to allow you to review your responses and provide any changes or corrections. Please send me any revisions within five business days of transcript receipt.*

End of Interview:

- Turn off Zoom recording