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Teacher Attitudes Toward the Implementation of Positive Behavior Support Plans

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Abstract

With the reauthorization of IDEIA 2004 schools are emphasizing the need for students to have access to the general education curriculum. In doing so, general education teachers are faced with a diverse student population, which include students with disabilities. A portion of students with disabilities can exhibit behaviors in the classroom that may negatively affect their own learning or the learning of others. Students with these behavioral concerns have what is often referred to as a Positive Behavior Support Plan that details solutions and accommodations to the students’ classroom environment in order to prevent negative behaviors. In this study the researcher sought out a population of teachers who taught at a charter school system that placed every student with a disability in the general education classroom. The data suggests that general education teachers felt having an additional adult in the classroom (support), training, and frequent consultation with the Inclusion specialist were amongst the most beneficial strategies in the effective implementation of positive behavior support plans. This was also mentioned as a challenge general education teachers had in implementing positive behavior support plans as well as having difficulty in finding the time to implement these plans.

Keywords: positive behavior support plan, students with disabilities, accommodations, behavioral concerns, inclusion
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Chapter 1

As districts and schools adhere to both state and federal regulations requiring that students with disabilities receive their educational support in the least restrictive environment (LRE), more students with disabilities are accessing the general education classroom. In 2004 the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEIA) was reauthorized. In this re-authorization it states that to the maximum extent possible, students with disabilities are to receive educational services in the least restrictive environment (LRE) in a classroom with their non-disabled peers. With increasing diversity within the general education environment, teachers are faced with a wide range of challenges in the classroom and are in need of the support of special education teachers and others to transition and support students with special needs into the general education setting. Students with disabilities have what is called an Individualized Education Program (IEP), which outlines their disability, how it affects their learning in the classroom, goals for the current year, services they receive, and accommodations they receive in the classroom.

For many students with IEPs a portion of their day is spent in classrooms that are specifically designed for students with disabilities. As was stated above, with districts and schools working towards serving all students within the least restrictive environment, more schools are integrating their students with disabilities into the general education setting for longer periods of time. A portion of students with IEPs exhibit behaviors within the classroom that are seen as a barrier to their learning or the learning of others. Within the IEPs these behaviors are addressed with what is called a positive behavior support plan (PBSP). PBSPs use a system that involves a series of observations and assessments in order to determine the purpose of the non-preferred behavior and then designs a system in order to minimize the behavior (Carr
et al., 2002). The PBSP is expected to be implemented by the general education teacher and upheld by any individual working with the students. For the purpose of this study students with Individual Education Programs (IEP’s) who have an informal or formal behavior support plan will be referred to as “students with behavioral concerns,” in order to offer a simplified term.

Previous research has suggested general education teachers are becoming more comfortable teaching students with disabilities in their classrooms and are willing to make the accommodations necessary. However, when it comes to students with disabilities who exhibit behavioral concerns general education teachers have shared feelings of hesitancy (Wagner, et al., 2006). This includes a variety of students who qualify for special education services, which can range from emotionally disturbed (ED), ADHD, ADD, Autism, Asperger’s Syndrome, or any other disability that could cause the student to react negatively due to an unmet need within the classroom.

General education teachers have expressed feelings of inadequacy when teaching students with disabilities who have serious behavioral concerns in the classroom due to lack of training and lack of support from the special education staff and faculty. Wagner et al. (2006) found that in many high schools, teachers felt they lacked the proper support or information in the classroom more so than elementary school general education teachers:

The large majority of elementary and middle school students with ED had teachers who had reported receiving information about their needs or abilities; high school students were much less likely to have teachers who reported receiving such information. (Wagner et al., 2006, p.21)

The same researchers found that general education teachers received less support for students with ED as opposed to other disabilities, “Teachers who had a reduced class size to
accommodate a student with a disability other than ED reported higher levels of support than did teachers of students with ED (13.5% vs. 5.4%, $F = 4.70$)” (Wagner et al., 2006, p.22). Such supports include: having smaller classroom sizes, the support from an instructional assistant, small group instruction, a low percentage of students receiving mental health or behavioral services (Wagner, et al., 2006) and the absence of information regarding their students’ behavioral plans and educational history.

Lack of training has been a recurring theme, when researching negative teacher attitudes in teaching students with disabilities who have a behavioral concern. In many research articles, general education teachers state that there are not enough professional developments or training that would enable them to feel comfortable in teaching students with behavioral issues that have an IEP (Wagner et al., 2006.); Or studies suggests general education teachers would benefit from professional development training (Avramidis et al., 2010). Some researchers have looked into the training and preparation general education teachers have had at the university level when receiving their credential. Gao and Mager (2011), from Syracuse University researched pre-service teachers who were participating in a teacher preparation program that required students to complete their practicums in settings, which included both general education settings as well as special education settings. At the end of their research they found the following, “The participants showed the most favorable attitudes towards inclusion of children with social disabilities. They were least favorable (but still positive) to include children with behavioral disabilities” (Gao and Mager, 2011).

Since the reauthorization of IDEIA 2004, giving students with IEPs access to LRE is becoming more common practice and general education teachers are becoming more comfortable having students with disabilities in their classrooms. Yet there is still a reluctance
when it comes to teaching students that have disabilities that may negatively affect their behavior in the classroom. It is unclear as to what types of specific behaviors general education teachers feel uncomfortable teaching, but there is a need to further research if the implementation of informal or formal positive behavior support plans are contributing to the stress that general education teachers feel when teaching students with disabilities with behavioral concerns.

**Purpose of the Study**

Beginning August 2011, I began working at an elementary school within a charter school system in Southern California that followed an inclusive model. This meant every student who had a disability was integrated into the general education classroom for the entire day, regardless of type or severity of disability. I worked as member of the Inclusion Team (Special Education Department) as an Academic Coach working under the Inclusion Specialist. Currently I am a 9th grade Inclusion Specialist at a High School within the charter school system. There were challenges that presented themselves in the primary grades particularly. Many of the students were not identified as having a disability and were exhibiting behavioral concerns; i.e. hitting, spitting, running away, fighting, and arguing with their teachers. In order to prevent and alleviate these behaviors in the classroom, I would collaborate with the general education teacher and would create an informal behavior plan that could be used in class.

However, when I would observe the student in the classroom to check their progress over the course of a few weeks I would see little progress. When I would approach the teacher and ask for specific feedback, the teachers would often willingly admit they did not have the time to administer the program correctly. This also meant the implementation of the program was not consistent. This was not a reflection of the general education teachers’ abilities, but rather shows that while a teacher may have good intentions the demands of the general education setting and
the inexperience in dealing with students with informal or formal positive behavior plans can be a barrier in preventing the accurate implementation of these plans.

Much of the research in regards to students with behavioral concerns has focused on teachers’ attitudes toward inclusion and their feelings of integrating students with behavioral concerns or disabilities, such as Ruesen et al. (2001) and Hsien M., (2009). Many studies have found that teachers feel unprepared and inexperienced in handling students with IEP’s that had behavioral concerns as well (Ruesen et al., 2001). Yet, there was little research performed regarding whether or not the implementation of informal or formal positive behavior plans have been utilized properly or consistently enough to be effective in the classroom.

The purpose of this study was to determine if general education teachers were utilizing informal or formal positive behavior plans consistently and if they found these plans useful to them in the classroom. Information was collected in regards to the implementation of PBSPs will include what general education teachers feel the barriers and challenges are in implementing a PBSP. This study researched current teacher attitudes about PBSPs as well as how they feel about including students with behavioral concerns in the general education classroom.

The school system that was studied is a public charter school system located in Southern California. The charter school system implements an Inclusive model for their students with IEP’s. I thought it would be interesting to study the effectiveness of PBSPs in this type of setting. Often times when parents have struggled with their child’s behavioral concerns in the public school setting, such as a refusal to integrate their child into the general education setting or are unsatisfied about the treatment of their child, they look for alternative schools to enroll their children in. In turn, public charter school systems will often receive a higher population of students who have behavioral concerns in their classes.
Research Questions/Hypothesis

The following research questions will be addressed in this study:

1) What do general education teachers know about positive behavior support plans and how comfortable do they feel implementing a positive behavior support plans?
2) What do general education teachers identify as challenges and barriers in the consistent implementation of behavior support plans?
3) What do general education teachers identify as possible solutions to the those challenges and barriers?
4) What do general education teachers identify as the most challenging behaviors in the classroom?

General education teachers have many responsibilities within their classrooms. They often have larger class sizes than their Education Specialist counterparts, generally do not have instructional aides, and have the responsibility of differentiating instruction for their students. With many of these job duties it can be difficult to deal with a behavioral concern in the classroom. PBSPs have been proven to be effective in the classroom; however, they must be implemented correctly and consistently. My hypothesis is that the general education teachers feel uncomfortable teaching students with behavioral concerns or behavioral disabilities due to the additional strain that can be put on them by having to create and consistently implement an informal or formal PBSP. I believe some of the common challenges and barriers will include the additional classroom time it takes to implement this plan, the amount of information that needs to be collected, general education teachers may feel discouraged because they may not see immediate results from the BSP, and feeling that they do not receive enough in class support from the Inclusion/Special Education staff.
Significance

This study will help those of us working in education to understand the challenges general education teachers face and help find a solution to these common barriers to help general education teachers support their students with informal and formal PBSPs. In order to help students with behavioral concerns in the classroom there needs to be a united front in the education field. It is important to remain consistent for these students to help them become successful in the classroom.

The first step to obtaining this consistency is to determine what factors contribute to the prevention of PBSP’s from being effectively implemented. If PBSP’s are properly implemented they can be extremely effective in preventing behavioral concerns in the classroom.

Limitations

Due to the sample population that will be studied there are a few limitations that will present itself in this study. The sample population will be fairly small because there will only be one charter school system that will be participating. The charter school system is located in Southern California as opposed to receiving a nationwide sampling.

This sampling is not an accurate representation of multiple school settings in which Special Day Classes and Resource pullout is more of the typical model for public schools. Since the school is a charter, they are not under strict state regulations as opposed to other local public school systems. There is not a large emphasis on testing within this school system and the curriculum does not use “Teacher Editions,” or textbooks to dictate the curriculum for the year, this is a project-based learning environment. This means general education teachers are able to make accommodations and modifications for their students with IEPs with much flexibility in
terms of the curriculum and projects. This flexibility is not commonly seen in public school
districts, therefore a more diverse population should be sought in order to compare the findings.

Summary

According to the CA Department of Education Diagnostic Center, Southern California
website (2012) A Behavior Support Plan can be used as a “proactive action plan to address
behavior(s) that are impeding learning of the student or others” (“What is a Behavior Support
Plan (BSP)?” para 1). This study took a deeper look into what general education teachers know
about PBSPs, how they feel about the implementation process, and what they identify as the
challenges and barriers they face when trying to consistently implement these plans. I will take
the information from this study and use it to help create a solution to help general education
teachers in being able to effectively implement PBSPs in their classroom for students with
behavioral concerns. This chapter is an overview of the background regarding this topic and
purpose of this study. The findings in this research add further information that may clarify the
difficulties general education teachers face in creating and implementing informal and formal
behavior support plans as well as answering the question of whether or not this contributed to
general education teachers having negative feelings towards students with IEPs that may show
signs of behavioral issues in the classroom. The next chapter will provide the current findings
that are relevant to this topic.
Chapter Two Literature Review

The purpose of this chapter is to discuss the professional literature in regards to inclusive practices and attitudes, positive behavior support plans, as well as teacher strengths and challenges in teaching students with behavioral challenges that are due to a disability or who have an Individualized Education Plan or IEP. An increasing amount of schools are beginning to place an emphasis in adhering to the least restrictive environment, which for many students is within general education. Many studies have shown the positive effects of inclusive practices and state that both students with and without disabilities benefit from the exposure to one another in the classroom (Baker et al., 1995).

Inclusive classroom practices has been a topic of debate for the past few decades and most seem to agree that students with disabilities benefit from being a part of the general education setting. However, there is still a great amount of skepticism when it comes to students with an IEP who have behavioral disabilities or those who have an emotional disturbance (ED)Wagner et al. As defined by IDEIA 2004, an emotional disturbance is:

A condition exhibiting one or more of the following characteristics over a long period of time and to a marked degree that adversely affects a child’s educational performance: An inability to learn that cannot be explained by intellectual, sensory, or health factors. An inability to build or maintain satisfactory interpersonal relationships with peers and teachers. Inappropriate types of behavior or feelings under normal circumstances. A general pervasive mood of unhappiness or depression. A tendency to develop physical symptoms or fears associated with personal or school problems (para. 7).

A lot of research regarding behavior support plans has been done regarding students who have been identified as having ED (Wagner et al., 2006), however they are not the only population
who have BSPs. General education teachers have expressed feelings of inadequacy when it comes to teaching students with behavioral disabilities. They feel they lack the training in support of students with ED specifically and therefore feel reluctant to teach these students (Wagner et al., 2006).

Teachers who felt less reluctant teaching students with disabilities in general had received additional training at the university level (Avradimis et al., 2010). Students with ED or who exhibit behavioral concerns, prove to be difficult for general education teachers because they have to give additional support for these students not only in academic areas but in behavioral areas as well. Students with behavioral concerns require many supports from outside of the classroom. They often require the need for special education teachers and other mental health systems (Wagner et al., 2006).

**Lack of Resources**

Students with ED or other behavioral concerns require many resources that should be provided by the school, but they are finding it difficult to meet those needs. Students with ED are often times enrolled in schools where the special education population is large (Wagner et al., 2006). This means many other students are utilizing the school resources that are available at the site as well. Having enough resources is an issue schools are faced with today. It is a challenge schools are working toward solving in the hope they can make the most of their resources. Many high school teachers are finding they often are assigned students with ED or behavioral concerns, and are not given enough information about individual students. “The large majority of elementary and middle school students with ED had teachers who reported receiving information about their needs or abilities; high school students were much less likely to have teachers who reported receiving such information” (Wagner et al., 2006 p. 21). The authors found such
resources that were lacking included consultations from the special education teacher in regards to the students with ED or behavioral concerns, an instructional aide, or reduced class sizes.

Students with behavioral concerns or ED are more likely to experience both the general education and the special education settings. Those students who were in Elementary and Middle School spent less time in the general education setting than those students in High School (Wagner et al., 2006). Students with ED or behavioral concerns are provided with many accommodations such as extended time on assignments and tests, these were more commonly available at the elementary and middle schools. According to Wagner et al., (2006), in high school these accommodations were less commonly available.

In Wagner et al.’s article, “Educating Students with Emotional Disturbances: A National Perspective on School Programs and Services,” they found it is “…important to address both the academic and the emotional/behavioral dimensions of students with ED who participate in special education programs” (Wagner et al., 2006 p. 27). With the support of special educators and mental health professionals they believe addressing both of these elements will provide the best outcome for students with behavioral concerns. Even though the causes of ED may be an external factor schools have to be careful in their implementation of proper interventions because they often can impede on the child’s motivation and capability (Wagner et al., 2006 p.27).

The authors decided to base their research on the results of two studies that were previously done by the Special Education Elementary Longitudinal Study (SEELS) and The National Longitudinal Transition Study-2 (NLTS2):

The SEELS consisted of students’ receiving special education services who were 6 through 12 years old in the 1999-2000 school year, and NLTS2 consisted of youth ages
13 through 16 who were receiving special education services in seventh grade or above in the 2000-2001 school year. (Wagner et al., 2006, p. 14)

The first sampling consisted of SEELS taking a random selection of 245 school districts that served all students and 30 schools who only served students with disabilities and NTLS2 took 501 school districts who served all students and 38 schools that served only students with disabilities nationwide. Following this sample both SEELS and NTLS2 took, they then included a population of students that qualified for special education under ED, however the researchers did not clearly define if the population of students with ED were pulled from the original sampling. The researchers combined the second sampling of both SEELS and NTLS2 to provide a perspective that would cover grades elementary to high school. The researchers did not give any additional detail in regards to the demographics of the students, teachers, or administration they were researching, such as race or ethnicity.

Both groups gathered their information by collecting survey questionnaires and over the phone interviews. Teachers, faculty (principals), and parents were asked to answer a set of questions, but students were not involved in the interview process. The authors state the items that were included in the surveys were straightforward survey or interview questions. This required yes/no answers and other portions of the survey used an ordinal scale; “rarely,” or “sometimes” (Wagner et al., p. 15), although there was not a survey included in the article for the reader to examine. Had there been the original survey included, the reader may have been able to better identify what types of questions the researchers were asking to determine specific criteria they were looking for.

Wagner et al., (2006) made the purpose of their research clear from the beginning of the article. They explored the supports that were available to students with ED in the elementary,
middle, and high school settings. They noticed a vast difference amongst the services the high school students and teachers received in comparison to the elementary and the middle schools (Wagner et al., 2006, p. 12). They established there is a need for their research because there is a lack of information in regards to services that students with ED actually receive in the educational setting. The researchers were able to establish multiple reasons as to why high school teachers feel unprepared in teaching students with behavioral disabilities, such as: lack of collaboration between general education and special education teachers, little support to mental and behavioral services, and lack of professional training (Wagner et al., 2006). However, there was not a discussion about the lack of resources due to the fact that many schools have to cut funding. School systems having to cut their resources may have been an additional contributing factor to teachers feeling unprepared to teach students with ED because they may not have had the support of having an additional adult in the room due to a lack of funding.

**Teacher Attitudes**

As inclusive educational practices are becoming more accepted in our public schools, teachers are noticing a change in the diversity of the students they are serving in their classrooms. They are beginning to see students with individualized education plans or IEP’s integrated into the general education setting more often. Research has been performed that has suggested general education teachers feel more comfortable in teaching students with IEPs with more exposure and practice (Idol, H. 2006). While many general education teachers understand inclusive practices are also best practices there is a hesitation in serving particular populations. “When teachers are asked specifically about students with ED, they generally note that such students are among the least desirable to have in general education classrooms” (Soodak, Podell, & Lehman, 1998 as cited in Wagner et al., 2006, p. 14).
General education teachers have expressed they feel students with behavioral concerns often threaten the classroom community and make other students uncomfortable. This has been an argument for teaching these students in a separate setting (Maag, J.W. 2001). However Maag, J.W. 2010 argues that teaching students with behavioral concerns in a separate classroom does not motivate the students themselves to change their behavior.

General education teachers feel unprepared to address the needs of students with ED and feel that if they are going to teach students with these specific behavioral disabilities that they would need the direct support and collaboration with a special education teacher (Cook, 2002). Researchers such as Gao and Mager from Syracuse University have conducted research in which they studied the relationship between preservice teachers’ attitudes towards efficacy and attitudes toward diverse student populations through course preparation. The researcher decided to take a closer look into the following study due to the lack of literature regarding students with behavioral concerns who were not identified as having ED.

This study was conducted in one private university’s Inclusive Elementary Teacher Education Program in an Eastern state in the United States, the researchers wanted to know how the attitudes and perceived sense of efficacy changed throughout the course of their program (Gao & Mager, 2011). The authors asked the following questions: “1) How do preservice teachers’ perceived sense of efficacy and attitudes towards school diversity shift over the course of preparation? 2) How do preservice teachers with different degrees of perceived efficacy view school diversity?” (Gao & Mager, 2011, p. 96).

The program in which the study was carried out is a four-year dual-certification inclusive teacher preparation program. “The preservice teachers have nine placements in urban and suburban schools, general classrooms and pullout resource rooms, and lower and higher grades,
beginning from their first year of study” (Gao & Mager, p. 96). The program is between 128-139 credits and include a liberal arts skill, a major or concentration of no less than 30 credits in an approved liberal arts and social sciences area, and professional coursework (Gao & Mager, 2011). The coursework the students complete is meant to create a foundation in theory that coincides with the students’ fieldwork. The program aims to create students that are reflective and knowledgeable teachers that can engage all students (Gao & Mager, 2011).

There were two hundred sixteen preservice teachers enrolled in the program in which one hundred sixty-eight valid responses were received and used in the study. There were seven cohorts that were at different phases in the teacher preparation program, ranging from just beginning the program to completing the last phase of their program. Four different questionnaires were given to the cohorts; “demographics, sense of teacher efficacy, attitudes towards inclusive education, and beliefs of diversity…” (Gao & Mager, 2011, p. 98). These questionnaires measured the students’ professional and demographic background, multicultural experiences, beliefs in personal impact on student learning, general confidence in teaching efficacy, attitudes toward students with disabilities in the general education classroom, attitudes toward students with social, physical, academic, and behavioral disabilities (Gao & Mager, 2011). The surveys were given three weeks prior to the end of the semester.

The results of the survey varied from cohort to cohort. Overall the authors found the participants showed positive teacher efficacy, favorable attitudes toward inclusion, and positive attitudes towards diversity (Gao & Mager, 2011). Further analysis showed all six cohorts held favorable attitudes towards inclusion of students with social disabilities as opposed to those with behavioral disabilities (still positive). However the authors wrote, “It suggests that no matter how prospective teachers viewed the significance of the teaching profession, they as a whole
were reluctant to educate children with behavioral disabilities in general classrooms” (Gao & Mager, 2011, p. 105). At the conclusion of this study the authors recommend further emphasis on adding more fieldwork on behavioral disabilities since there did not seem to be a change in attitude toward teaching this particular group of students throughout the program.

The authors provided a clear and detailed description of preservice teachers’ attitudes throughout the course of the program. The instruments in which they used to survey the participants seemed to be thorough in asking direct questions to receive the data they needed. Yet, there did not seem to be a question that addressed specific details in regards to why teachers feel uncomfortable teaching students with behavioral disabilities. Although, had the authors provided the actual questionnaires the reader would have been able to further determine the efficacy of the survey that was given to the participants. The authors were aware of where their study may fall short in providing a diverse and accurate sampling of preservice teachers, claiming, “A more diverse population of preservice teachers should be sought” (Gao & Mager, 2011, p. 105). The authors had sought out one private university in the Eastern U.S. that consisted of a predominately Caucasian Female population. There were eight males enrolled in the entire program at the private university and only twelve students that were not of Caucasian descent. The ethnicity, location, gender, and experience of a preservice teacher has much to do with the way in which they view their students and diverse populations. Due to the lack of diversity in the researcher’s sampling many of the attitudes of those they surveyed were similar. Which is why a more diverse population should be sought in further research.

Collecting evidence of current teacher attitudes is essential in creating an inclusive environment for all students. There is a need for further research in determining what specifically teachers fear about teaching students with behavioral disabilities. Teachers will
commonly mention they feel they lack the training in managing student behavior and teaching students with behavioral disabilities. In Gao, W., and Mager, G. (2011) the authors studied and observed a university in which they planned to adequately prepare their teacher candidates to provide services for students with all disabilities. Despite the training they received on a college level the attitudes of their students had not changed in regards to feeling hesitant in teaching students with behavioral disabilities. The question then becomes, what supports could help a general education teacher feel comfortable teaching a student with behavioral disabilities?

**Positive Behavior Supports**

In order to prevent and alleviate problem behavior for students with behavioral concerns in the general education and special education classrooms many special education teachers and psychologists have been creating and implementing positive behavior support plans or PBS plans. “Positive behavior support (PBS) is an applied science that uses educational and system change methods (environmental redesign) to enhance quality of life and minimize problem behavior” (Carr et al., 2002, p. 4). These plans place emphasis on the prevention of behavior and identifying the root of the problem behavior or “trigger.” Creating PBS plans can be time consuming based upon the amount of data that needs to be collected in order to create these plans. This process can take weeks and requires the involvement of multiple persons. The types of data that is generally used include qualitative measures, ratings, interviews, questionnaires, logs, and reports that record behavior and direct observations (Carr et al., 2002, p. 10).

PBS plans are intended to improve the quality of life for an individual with a disability (Carr et al., 2002, p.5). Generally speaking the negative behavior that is being exhibited by the individual with a disability prevents them from having relationships with others and being able to function on a day-to-day basis with little interference. Due to these interferences the quality of
life for these individuals is impacted greatly. The PBS plans evaluate the causes for the behavior and assess what specific tasks or environmental factors are contributing to the negative behavior. The individuals who are administering the evaluations and the team that is working with the student or individual with disabilities then determine how to alleviate the environmental elements in order to prevent the behavior as opposed to approaching the issue once the individual has already escalated.

In the article, Carr et al. (2002) wrote, they state the primary focus of the article was to describe the process and applied science that goes into the creation of a positive support plan, give an overview of critical features, and give a vision for the future of PBS plans. The article is more of a literature review rather than a research article. The authors have taken the research and information from previous works and wrote an article that would act as more of a type of guide in which the teachers could refer to in order to get a better understanding of PBS plans.

The authors’ objectives are clear in the sense that they want to further explain the purpose of PBS plans and the critical elements that differentiate the PBS from other behavior plans. The authors explain the primary difference are PBS plans emphasize prevention strategies and interventions as opposed to implementing strategies after the individual or student has reacted. Even though the authors are clear in their execution of explaining what they had stated in the beginning of the article, there could have been more information provided. The authors addressed assessment practices, intervention strategies, and training needed to successfully implement PBS plans. They described the critical elements that need to be present in each of these categories to implement and create a PBS plan. However, they lack in describing specific details about each section. The descriptions of each critical element are vague and idealistic, but it lacks concrete details that could help the reader implement and create PBS plans. The reader
could not design a successful PBS plan based off of this article. The reader could read this as either an introduction to the topic or to clarify the philosophy behind PBS plans, but could not aid in the implementation throughout the process. The research that is available for educators regarding positive support plans are limited. There has not been a lot of qualitative research that proves the effectiveness of positive behavior plans in the general education classroom.

There are many articles similar to Carr et al., 2002 that describe PBS plans and how to create an effective plan. Yet, there is not a lot of research done that describes what these plans specifically look like in the classroom. One article addressed the difficulty general education teachers feel they have in effectively implementing a PBS some kind of system that it coincides with what exists within the school as a whole (Scott, T.M., 2007). There needs to be further research in regards to how easily the administration and implementation of PBS plans are within the general education classroom setting. Often times there is only one teacher in the classroom with increasingly larger numbers of students. This means that the implementation of PBS plans can be difficult to enforce in the classroom. This is an additional support that students with behavioral concerns generally need, which goes back to the issue of having a lack of resources available for these students. Since students with behavioral concerns need many supports in the classroom and can be difficult to handle in a general education setting the fact that they have a PBS plan can create additional responsibilities for the general education teacher, which can effect their attitudes towards teaching students with ED.

Summary

While inclusion is becoming more accepted in our schools there is still a significant population of teachers who feel uncomfortable teaching students with behavioral disabilities. Teaching students with behavioral concerns is a difficult task and requires educators to supply
additional support in helping these students become successful in their classrooms. Positive Behavior Support plans are designed and implemented based on individual student needs and focus on prevention as opposed to treating a reaction a student may exhibit. PBS plans are becoming the common solution to behavior issues in the classroom, however due to a lack of school resources and teacher preparation general education teachers are continuing to feel hesitant in serving these students in their classroom. After examining the previous articles it seems that there is a lack of research of how effectively general education teachers are implementing PBS plans and how comfortable they feel in the design process of these behavior plans.

The next chapter will discuss the research methods that were used in order to collect and analyze data to provide a clear description of the research questions that drove the study.
Chapter 3

Introduction

The creation and implementation process of a positive behavior support plan can be extensive and place additional responsibilities on the general education teacher, but little research has been done regarding positive behavior support plans specifically. The purpose of a positive behavior support plan is to determine the antecedent of undesired behaviors and then set systems in place in order to prevent and alleviate the need of the behavior for the student. With the emphasis to allow students with disabilities more access to the general education curriculum, researchers are finding these students have a better opportunity to learn and perform better in school (Baker, E.T., et al., 1995). The purpose of this study was to determine what were the specific challenges and barriers general education teachers experienced when implementing positive behavior support plans.

The researcher invited 220 general education teachers to participate in an online survey. 15 general education teachers responded, which was particularly low. The researcher made multiple attempts to invite general education teachers to participate in the online survey. The researcher decided to move forward with the study because the results that were collected still revealed meaningful results and the response rate itself showed the researcher how significant PBSPs were to the faculty, meaning the lack of attendance suggested general education teachers either had little knowledge about PBSPs or did not feel this topic was a priority of discussion. Therefore, individual interviews that were conducted were in depth and addressed meaningful questions that were driven by the results of the surveys. The information that was gathered from the interviews was used to clarify and offer deeper meaning of the survey results.
Research Questions

1) What do general education teachers know about behavior support plans and how comfortable do they feel implementing behavior support plans?

2) What do general education teachers identify as challenges and barriers in the consistent implementation of behavior support plans?

3) What would be possible solutions to those challenges and barriers?

4) What behaviors are most challenging in the classroom?

Purpose of the Study

In the current research that has been completed in regards to general education teachers’ attitudes and teaching students with IEPs that exhibit behavioral concerns in the classroom had found there was a hesitation amongst general education teachers. The research that was completed in this study explored what were some of the specific factors that contributed to teacher hesitations in teaching students with IEP’s that had behavioral concerns.

There seemed to be a lack of research regarding the specific barriers general education teachers face in teaching students with IEP’s that exhibited difficult behaviors in the classroom. It seemed that general education teachers were becoming comfortable having students with disabilities in their classrooms, but they were still struggling to handle students with disabilities that had behavior issues. Often times students with behavior issues would have a Positive Behavior Support Plan (PBSP). The creation of these plans requires a lot of research and data collection to be completed by the general education teacher as well as the education specialist and sometimes other professionals. After the plan is created it is then up to the teachers to implement this plan, which means the general education teachers are now responsible for the implementation.
Methodology

The design that was used in this study was a mixed-method methodology. The research focused primarily on the quantitative data that was collected using a fifteen question survey, which consisted of four multiple answer, three one answer, four likert scale, two optional short answer, and two fill in the blank questions regarding demographics. In order to further examine and clarify the quantitative data, the researcher moved forward in performing qualitative research. This was done in the form of individual interviews with voluntary participants who indicated they were willing to participate in a face-to-face interview. The findings were primarily driven from the quantitative data with the use of qualitative data to expand upon the findings. Copies of the survey and the one on one-interview questions are provided in the appendices.

Participants and Setting

I, as the researcher, was interested in taking a deeper look at the school system in which I was employed for the previous two years. I was an Inclusion Specialist who had recently transferred to a High School that was 50 miles north of my previous school, which was a K-8, within the same charter school system.

The research took place in one charter school system located in Southern California. The charter school system had eleven schools, which consisted of two elementary schools, four middle schools grades six-eight, and five high schools. The student population of each school is as follows in Table 1.
Table 1

Student Population for Individual Schools Within Charter School System Examined

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School</th>
<th>Grade Level</th>
<th>Student Population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>School A</td>
<td>Elementary</td>
<td>400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School B</td>
<td>Elementary</td>
<td>361</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School C</td>
<td>Middle</td>
<td>330</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School D</td>
<td>Middle</td>
<td>336</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School E</td>
<td>Middle</td>
<td>340</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School F</td>
<td>Middle</td>
<td>570</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School G</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School H</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School I</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>550</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School J</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>549</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School K</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>300</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Student populations are estimates; exact enrollment of each school can vary throughout the school year.

The charter school system was a non-profit public charter that was funded through public funding, private and public grants. The charter school system ran a graduate school in which they were able to credential their own teachers as well as offer Master’s degrees in educational leadership. There was much emphasis on creating a diverse learning environment for their students as well as encouraging their teachers to work collaboratively with their colleagues and students in order to create a linear organization. The school system was student driven and took
the opinions of their students very seriously. Every teacher interview did include a student panel interview in which students determine if this would be a teacher they would like to work with.

The charter school system did encourage collaboration amongst colleagues. This included the participation in completing surveys in the collection of research and data in order to help promote an environment that encourages their teachers to continue to evolve as learners and to keep up to date on educational research. The educational leaders at these schools believe it was a teacher’s job to continue to fight for equality and social justice in the classroom, which leads to an environment that is open to teacher research. Therefore offering an incentive was not necessary.

The participants were selected based upon the position they taught within the school; general education teachers. The setting in which the school was located was unique in the sense that they followed an inclusive model for their students with disabilities. The school prides itself on housing a project-based learning environment where the teachers design their own curriculum based around the common core standards. The general education teachers were sent an e-mail asking them to take a web-based survey. The participants were informed about the study and the purpose of the questionnaire. The researcher was an Education Specialist at one of the High Schools within the charter school system and sent the survey via email using a BCC when sending the survey.

Inclusion specialists/Education Specialists and Academic coaches were excluded from participating in the study because both groups of educators work specifically with students with special needs. The study itself researched the impact of teaching students with IEP’s who have behavioral concerns on general education teachers rather than special educators.
Research Instruments

The survey was created using www.surveymonkey.com. 220 general education teachers were given the survey and 15 responded to the survey. Survey questions included information that referred to challenges and barriers they faced in the classroom when serving students with behavioral concerns, behaviors they found to be most distracting, and simple demographic questions. A copy of the survey is provided in Appendix.

The last question on the online survey was optional, and asked participants who were interested in participating in a face-to-face interview to fill in their personal information in order for the researcher to contact them. Once the researcher closed the survey and analyzed the results the researcher formulated guideline interview questions, which are included in the Appendix. Further questions were developed around specific answers to questions on the survey based upon the specific participants responses.

Data Collection

In order to collect data the following steps were used. The researcher first reached out to all general education teachers within the Charter School organization by email. The researcher emailed potential participants sending out an informative request letter. Those who chose to participate in the study were then able to follow a link that was included in the letter in order to participate in the online survey.

The online survey was designed using www.surveymonkey.com. The survey invitation was sent out October 18, 2012. There was an e-mail sent to potential participants that included the, “Informative request to participate in research.” This included a brief summary of the research and the purpose of the study. The e-mail will include a direct link to the survey that will be available on www.surveymonkey.com. On October 25, 2012 the researcher sent an additional
email inviting general education teachers to take the survey before the closing date of November 1, 2012.

The survey remained open for a total of two weeks and was closed on November 1, 2012. The results were then analyzed November 2, 2012 to November 4, 2012 and the first three subjects who decided to participate in the one on one interviews were selected. The researcher analyzed those particular participants answers closely and formulated interview guide questions based off of their personal responses. The individual interviews took place from November 5, 2012 - November 15, 2012.

The participants were e-mailed to confirm interest and to setup a neutral location in which the participants felt comfortable. Within the e-mail the “Consent to Participate in Research,” document was attached in which the participant looked over the document at their leisure prior to the interview. Questions that were asked during the interviews were based upon the guide questions provided as well as questions that were asked regarding their individual responses in the online survey. The individual interviews were conducted in a mutually agreed upon setting in order to provide the participants with a comfortable location. Interview times ranged from 60-120 minutes. Participants were given a letter of, “Consent to Participate in Research.” Participants were also told they may stop the interview at any time and were reminded them their personal information would remain confidential. The interviews were recorded with participant consent and a transcription of the interview was provided to participants in order to allow the individual to ensure accuracy. The participants were given the opportunity to receive a copy of the study's results and an e-mail attachment was provided to those requesting a copy.
The researcher decided to use a mixed-method methodology in order to gain a comprehensive perspective of general education teachers’ attitudes towards PBSPs. The researcher decided to use a survey to determine if there were any patterns and commonalities amongst specific barriers and challenges that general education teachers face in the classroom. The researcher felt survey results alone do not always provide detailed information that can give an explanation to results that have been discovered. Therefore, the researcher decided to move forward with follow up interviews in hopes to gain a deeper understanding of the results of the survey. In this study the survey served as the researcher’s qualitative research and in order to gain a comprehensive perspective the individual interviews were used as qualitative research.

**Data Analysis**

Once the survey was closed and removed from the internet the researcher decided to analyze the data in the following ways. The researcher reviewed the online surveys, recorded interviews, and transcriptions in order to find common themes. The researcher coded the transcripts in order to determine themes. The researcher took the data from the face-to-face interviews and revisited the online surveys in order to determine if there were any additional commonalities or any other data that proved to be useful in the study. The researcher also placed the quantitative data into graphs in order to use a visual in order to re-affirm or contradict themes that were identified earlier. Some of the data that was most important to the researcher included challenges and barriers general education teachers faced in implementing and feelings toward students with behavioral concerns. The collection of the qualitative data was used to determine how effective the implementation of informal and formal PBSPs were in the general education setting.
The researcher invited 220 general education teachers to participate in an online survey. 15 general education teachers responded, which was particularly low. The researcher made multiple attempts to invite general education teachers to participate in the online survey. The researcher decided to move forward with the study because the results that were collected still revealed meaningful results and the response rate itself showed the researcher how significant PBSPs were to the faculty, suggesting general education teachers either were unfamiliar with PBSPs or did not find the topic to be significant. Therefore, individual interviews that were conducted were in depth and addressed meaningful questions that were driven by the results of the surveys. The information that was gathered from the interviews was used to clarify and offer deeper meaning of the survey results. The 15 participants consisted of 9 high school, 4 middle school, and 2 elementary school teachers. The questions used a rating scale ranging from: very, somewhat, heard the term, to not at all. Variations of those answers were very, somewhat, not sure, not at all, disagree, and strongly disagree.

The research questions that guided my research addressed, what general education teachers know about PSBPs and how comfortable they feel in implementing them. It also discussed what general education teachers identify as challenges and barriers in the implementation process of PBSPs. The researcher asked general education teachers what behaviors are most challenging in the classroom as well as possible solutions. General education teachers are faced with a changing student demographic, which includes the increased numbers of students with IEPs in their classrooms, larger classroom sizes, lack of resources, and are responsible for differentiating instruction for their students. The researcher feels there are
positive attitudes in teaching students with behavioral concerns in the classroom because of the demanding accommodations and plans that are involved in their IEPs.

This chapter will be discussing the results from the online survey as well as the results from three individual follow up interviews; Participant A, Participant B, and Participant C. The interviews give a more comprehensive perspective regarding the results from the online survey. The results of both the online survey and individual interviews are integrated throughout each section. The first section of the chapter, Familiarity with PBSPs, will discuss what general education teachers know about positive behavior support plans and how comfortable they feel in implementing them. The second section of the chapter will discuss the challenges and barriers that were identified by general education teachers in the implementation of the positive behavior support plans. The third section will discuss behaviors general education teachers find the most challenging in the classroom. The final section, Strategies, will address possible strategies that have worked in the past for general education teachers when teaching students with behavioral concerns and suggested strategies for the future.

**Familiarity with PBSPs**

When general education teachers were asked to respond to the following statement, “I am very knowledgeable when it comes to BSPs (Behavior Support Plans).” The participants responded in the following manner; 6.7% very, 60% somewhat, 13.3% heard the term, and 20% not at all. When asked to respond to the next question, “I feel comfortable implementing BSPs in my classroom (informal and formal),” the participants answered in a similar fashion; 6.7% strongly agree, 60% agree, 33% not sure. The participants’ results were as follows for the following statement, “I don't feel I have enough information regarding BSPs,” 33.3% strongly agree, 20% agree, 33.3% disagree, 13.3% strongly disagree. The last statement the general
education teachers were asked to answer was, “I feel comfortable teaching students with an IEP who exhibit behavioral concerns in the general education setting.” The responses included; 20% strongly agree, 60% agree, and 20% disagree. Based upon the results of the survey questions it seems a majority of the participants are familiar with PBSPs but have not had a great amount of experience in implementing them. When asked to determine their comfort level in teaching students with behavioral concerns the answers were widely distributed. This led the researcher to believe that this did not necessarily mean they had not had an experience with a PBSP, but that they may not have had clear direction, not enough training, or a positive experience in implementing this plan.

The researcher decided to look further into why general education teachers felt they did not have enough information regarding students with behavior concerns who had a behavior plan. Participant A, is a general education teacher who teaches in the primary grades. She stated she selected “agree,” because she did not feel she had enough training in implementing positive behavior support plans in her classroom, but with guidance was able to implement such plans. However, when these plans are first explained to her she felt she was able to understand the purpose and felt the plans could make a significant difference in the classroom. The issue she would encounter would be in failing to remain consistent in her execution because she did not have an additional teacher or academic coach to ensure the plan was executed within a relevant amount of time. This contributed to her answer when describing her comfort level in teaching students with behavioral concerns; she selected “agree.” Participant A had said she had no philosophical issue with students with behavioral concerns in her classroom, however, when she would find a student had a PBSP, she did feel a bit of stress due to the fact that she felt she lacked experience and knowledge in being able to effectively implement such a plan.
The general education teachers were then asked, “Can you provide an example of an informal or formal BSP you have implemented in the classroom? If so, briefly describe.” The responses included allowing the student flexibility in seeing their inclusion specialist, frequent breaks when anxiety levels seemed to escalate, visual schedule, sensory breaks, break down of tasks, cues for activity changes, behavior contracts, token economy systems, and rating scales. Responses included participants from high, middle, and elementary school levels. The participants in general seemed to have a basic understanding of PBSPs, however there seemed to be a lack of information regarding the intent of addressing antecedent behavior and discovering the true cause of the behavioral concerns in the classroom, which are due to an unmet need.

**Challenges and Barriers in Implementing Positive Behavior Support Plan**

The next portion of the survey asked participants to respond to questions regarding specific challenges and barriers general education teachers faced in implementing PBSPs. The top three challenges that seemed to significantly impact their ability to implement these plans were finding time to implement formal and informal PBSPs, modifying curriculum, and collecting data. Collaborating with the inclusion or education specialist seemed to be the least significant factor in effectively implementing informal and formal PBSPs. The graph in Figure 1 gives a more detailed view of what general education teachers feel are areas of difficulty
When participants were asked to address this question they were given the opportunity to fill in an “other” section, where they could include a challenge or barrier that was not mentioned as one of the original options. The participants had mentioned there was a lack of feedback from parents, and one participant had written the following. “The challenge is when a student needs SO much support - a BSP for several behaviors. We tackle one at a time, but in the meantime, the others are incredibly toxic to the learning environment and hurt the rest of the class.” This particular concern was not addressed by other participants.

The participants were then asked, “Do you have difficulty implementing strategies that have been suggested to you by your Inclusion Specialist? If so please explain.” 33.3% said “yes” and 66.7% said “no,” and 3 individuals skipped the question. Participants mentioned
remembering each student’s behavior plan was difficult as well as providing immediate feedback or remaining consistent in giving consequences and documentation. Another participant wrote, “It's not physically difficult - just mentally difficult to accept simply because most of the specialists seem to tell me what to do versus discussing options and alternatives with me.” Some of the responses addressed the challenges in accommodating for students academically as opposed to making accommodations for behavioral concerns. The responses for this particular question varied significantly, therefore no theme or commonalities were identified in this section.

A common theme that was noticed in addressing challenges and barriers, was the issue of lack of time. The top four choices that were identified as a challenge was finding time to implement PBSPs, modifying curriculum, collecting data, and high population of students. All of these challenges were issues because they all require a great deal of time and dedication.

When discussing these issues with Participant A, the researcher asked about this topic in further detail. She had shared a struggle she had in her first year at this charter school was finding the time to plan and get organized for project based learning. This particular school does not follow a textbook or a curriculum that involves a “Teacher’s Edition.” The teachers design their own curriculum either as a team or individually. This in itself takes a great deal of time, then she mentioned having the challenge of finding time in class to implement this plan without another adult in the classroom, having to modify the curriculum, and collecting data added additional time to her already packed day. This is a great deal of responsibility for a general education teacher. Participant A discussed when teaching younger students, the general education teacher has to teach students basic structures and routines on top of curriculum. Participant A described having difficulty with PBSPs because she would be addressing behavior issues within her entire class and would be implementing a separate behavior plan for one student. Overall, the
researcher found that lack of training and knowledge and finding the time to implement, document, and accommodate for students with PBSPs, seem to be the primary barrier for the general education teachers to effectively use and administer PBSPs.

**Challenging Behaviors in the Classroom**

The same participants were asked to identify behaviors they found to be the most challenging in the classroom. The top three behaviors that were selected were uncooperative with peers, difficulty working in groups, and verbal outbursts. A more detailed list of behaviors identified as being challenges in the classroom are found in the graph in Figure 2.

**Figure 2**

![Figure 2: Challenging Behaviors in the Classroom](image)

*Note: General education teachers’ responses to the following question: “What behaviors do you find the most challenging in the classroom?” 1 general education teacher skipped this question.*

The behaviors that were identified as the most challenging all involved negative interactions with their peers that may affect their learning. While, none of the behaviors that were listed as an
option are preferred behaviors, the ones that seemed to make the most impact were affiliated with the negative effect they may have on the rest of their class. Earlier in this chapter it was mentioned that survey participants were asked to identify other challenges and barriers they faced in implementing PBSPs, one participant had mentioned, “The challenge is when a student needs SO much support - a BSP for several behaviors. We tackle one at a time, but in the meantime, the others are incredibly toxic to the learning environment and hurt the rest of the class.” The charter school system where the survey was administered, the school encourages students to work together on nearly every assignments and every project. There is an emphasis on creating a school culture and community in which students and faculty collaborate together. When a student has difficulty working with their peers and exhibit behavior in the classroom that inhibits others from learning, this can make a huge difference in the classroom community itself, which explains why these behaviors are viewed as the most challenging.

Participant B had said she felt when students do not interact well with their peers is the most difficult behavior to handle in the classroom. Participant B teaches in the primary grades and she said in the beginning of the school year the teacher is implementing new routines and teaching students how to be a successful student. However, in the younger grades it can take students a few months to become independent in the classroom, which makes the implementation process more difficult.

Leaving the classroom without permission seemed to be a behavior that was not seen as a huge concern. The school system allows students to work in spaces outside of the classroom when reading, working on a project, or even if a student works better outside. 86.67% of the participants either taught at a middle school or high school, where students are given more freedom to travel outside of the classroom as opposed to their elementary school counterparts.
Overall, the most common behaviors that prove to be a challenge to general education teachers in the classroom are those that would result in a negative experience for their peers.

**Strategies and Solutions**

The final part of the survey asked participants to identify strategies that have worked for them in the past, regarding students with behavioral concerns. 85.7% of the participants felt positive reinforcers such as verbal praise proved to be a successful strategy when teaching students with behavioral concerns. The next two most successful strategies that were identified were offering frequent breaks and regular consultation with the inclusion specialist. The graph in Figure 3 offers a more detailed look.
Ultimately the effect of the PBSPs seem to be successful in the classroom when implemented correctly. Participant A was asked to explain why she thinks positive reinforcement works to her advantage in the classroom as opposed to other systems. She felt that when students received positive feedback from their teachers and especially their peers they become more motivated in the classroom. Participant B was asked the same question; she felt that receiving positive feedback from their peers was more powerful than when receiving that feedback from their teachers. Participant B previously taught a student with a formal PBSP. In the beginning of the year he had difficulty working and interacting with this peers, which was affecting his ability to make friends. When his sensory needs in the classroom were beginning to be met, he began to notice and understand how his actions had prevented him from making friends. When he began
to have positive interactions with his peers Participant B noticed this was becoming a huge motivator in itself because he was able to have friends to eat lunch and play with during recess.

Frequent breaks and regular consultation was seen as a successful strategy in the classroom as well. Participant C mentioned she felt allowing the student frequent breaks is useful because it prevents the student from becoming anxious and overwhelmed in the classroom which could result in an escalation of behavior. However, she did mention it can be difficult to get the student back on task upon return. Participant C was asked whether or not she felt over time the students with behavioral concerns return to their tasks with more urgency. Her response was, “sometimes, it just really depends on the student.” When Participant C would have difficulty redirecting a student she mentioned she appreciates meeting with the inclusion specialist on a regular basis so they can discuss further strategies that may work in the classroom. It seems having regular consultation with the inclusion specialists can be beneficial for general education teachers to have a “sounding board,” which was described from a participant on the online survey, in order to feel supported.

In the interviews with all three participants there was an additional support that was suggested and discussed. They felt having an additional adult in the classroom to help support in the implementation process of the PBSP would be extremely helpful. Participant A and Participant B both mentioned in their classes last they both had a student who had behavioral concerns in the classroom. Participant A had an informal PBSP, token economy system, and Participant B had a student with a formal PBSP, changes to classroom environment and token economy systems. Participant A had an Academic Coach (Inclusion team member, working under the Inclusion Specialist), who would check in to her classroom 3-4 times a day. Participant B had an Academic Coach co-teaching with her in the classroom for the entire day.
Participant A, mentioned it was extremely difficult implementing the PBSP because she did not have the time, while Participant B had huge success with her student, which she feels was due to having an additional adult in the room at all times. The Academic Coach in Participant B’s classroom was a credentialed teacher earning her education specialist credential while she worked as an Academic Coach. This individual was able to keep track of data, relieve the general education teacher when needed, enforce the token economy system immediately, and offer additional physical support when needed. Participant C said she has had the support of an Academic Coach in previous years, but due to budget cuts she now has an Academic Coach sporadically throughout the day, which has been difficult. Participant C, said it would be exceptionally helpful to have another adult in the classroom to act as a supportive co-teacher in teaching students with behavioral concerns or even students with IEPs who do not have behavioral concerns.

In general the participants felt positive reinforcement and offering frequent breaks are the most beneficial and successful strategies to utilize in the general education setting. Having follow up support from the inclusion specialist is a way for not only the student to receive support, but for the general education teachers as well. Additional support from an Academic Coach or another adult in the classroom would be extremely beneficial as well. Teaching a student with behavioral concerns can be very difficult physically and emotionally, offering enough emotional support for the teacher appear to be just as important as providing the students with the same support.

Chapter 5 will provide a thorough review of the results from both the online survey and follow up interviews in hopes to answer the following topics; familiarity with PBSPs, challenges and barriers in the implementation process, difficult behaviors, and successful strategies that
have been and will be used in the classroom. The details discussed in chapter 4 will provide data in driving the conclusion and analysis of the evidence found in the research.
Chapter 5

Discussion

Classrooms across America are changing and teachers are witness to a more diverse demographic in their classrooms. The presence of students with disabilities is becoming more commonplace and many school systems are adopting an inclusive model. The charter school system that was selected in this particular study follows this particular model. With the high population of students with IEPs there is a higher probability students with behavioral concerns will be present. General education teachers have many responsibilities in the classroom, teaching a student with a PBSP becomes an additional responsibility. This study takes a deeper look into how general education teachers who taught in an inclusion model viewed the implementation process of a PBSP and what are some of the challenges and barriers that have presented themselves within their classrooms.

The findings in this study were similar to previous research in certain aspects, but also considers factors that were not heavily discussed in the literature researched. General education teachers felt they would benefit from having additional support in their classrooms in order to keep up with the demands in implementing a PBSP and even teaching students with behavioral concerns. In Wagner’s et al., (2006) research it is stated, “...general education teacher supports reveal that these professionals are provided with very limited assistance, particularly at the high school level” (p.25). Wagner’s et al., (2006) research indicated general education teachers who were teaching students with emotional disturbance (ED) as a qualification to receive special education services, were often left with little support in their classroom. These teachers were expected to integrate students with ED into existing groups and classroom activities (Wagner, et
The charter school system that was examined, shared the same responsibilities and expectations regarding student with all disabilities.

It was found within the online survey and in the individual interviews, general education teachers felt they did not have enough training and knowledge to effectively implement PBSPs on a consistent basis. Previous research reflected a similar finding, “...research has indicated that general education teachers can feel unqualified and therefore are reluctant to teach students with ED (Cook, 2002; Martin et al., 2003). Suggestions in offering professional developments were found to be beneficial in both cases as well.

A topic that played a significant role in general education teacher’s attitudes in the online survey as well as the individual interviews had to do with students with behavioral concerns having difficulty when engaging with their peers. Other studies touch briefly on the topic, the researcher found this topic to drive the results regarding behaviors general education teachers find to be difficult or undesirable to teach. Due to the high amount of collaborative work the students do within this particular charter school system, these behaviors can be especially difficult in handling in the classroom. The face to face interviews also revealed, while they have difficulty in teaching students with behavioral concerns they did not have any doubt that including students with these concerns in the classroom were beneficial and it was important to have high expectations for these students. This was a similar finding in Srikala, N,’s research that was performed in 2010.

**Implications**

The researcher’s original hypothesis was that general education teachers have difficulty implementing PBSPs due to the high demand of responsibilities they face in the classroom. General education teachers within this setting have a classroom with 25-28 students...
they are responsible for, at this particular charter school system they have to design their own curriculum. When a student with a PBSP is present in their classroom they have to administer their plan, it is the responsibility of the general education teacher to implement these plans in the general education classroom regardless of what type of school they work at (Sugai, et al., 2000). The researcher believed general education teachers had a less desirable attitude toward teaching students with PBSPs due to the amount of supports they have in the classroom, which then becomes the general education teacher’s obligation.

Once the data was collected from the online surveys and individual interviews took place, the researcher found part of the original hypothesis proved to be true. The researcher did find general education teachers at this school system have difficulty in effectively implementing PBSP’s because of the time restraint, which are due to the high demands of their job. However, the researcher found general education teachers did not have a negative attitude towards teaching students with behavioral concerns due to the amount of supports needed. Rather, it was due to the effect they had on their peers and classroom community. General education teachers felt uncomfortable having students with behavioral concerns in their classroom because of their concern for the other students in their class.

The charter school system that was utilized for this survey emphasizes collaboration amongst teachers and students. This school is always looking to further develop their teaching practices by focusing on teamwork and reflecting on each other’s work. The same philosophy is shared with their students. Students work primarily in groups when working on projects and assignments. When students are not able to work well together this can become an issue not only with the group but amongst the class in general.
General education teachers were asked to describe their familiarity regarding PBSPs. Very few teachers felt they were very knowledgeable or had no information when it came to PBSPs, most teachers felt they had some knowledge regarding PBSPs. This led the researcher to believe there seemed to be a lack of training and inexperience when teaching students with formal or informal PBSPs. In Chapter 4, the interviewees had discussed they had feelings that they did not have enough training regarding PBSP’s, however with the support and instruction of their Inclusion specialist they felt comfortable implementing the plans in the classroom. Individually they did not feel comfortable enough to implement such a plan without any direction.

Within the findings of the survey and interviews the researcher felt there were a few key strategies that seemed to help general education teachers in implementing PBSP’s. Overall the researcher found providing positive feedback to students has been identified as a productive strategy in working with students with behavioral concerns. The other key elements are working collaboratively with the Inclusion specialist as well as being a flexible educator, meaning allowing the student frequent breaks, being open to accommodations in the classroom, and allowing the student to communicate their needs. An additional support that was discovered in the individual interviews was having additional physical support in the classroom as a supportive co-teacher. This type of support was not listed in the strategies section of the survey, however in the individual interviews this support became a key topic of conversation. In meeting individually with participants in a follow up survey it was found overwhelmingly they felt having an additional adult in the classroom to help implement PBSPs was essential.
Limitations

The researcher sent out an invitation to participate in the survey to 220 potential participations. However, only 15 general education teachers took part in the online survey. Four individual interviews were originally sought and 3 individuals provided their information to take part in the follow up interviews. The researcher invited general education teachers to participate on 2 separate occasions prior to the closing of the online survey. The researcher found the lack of participation in the online survey to be a reflection of the general education teacher’s priority in discussing students with behavioral concerns as well as the implementation of PBSPs. The demographic makeup of the participants was not a direct representation of the charter school system itself. 54.5% of the schools in the charter system are from Campus A 27.3% are from Campus B, and 18.2% are from Campus C. 53.3% of those who participated in the online survey were from Campus A, 20% taught at Campus B, and 26.7% taught at Campus C. Aside from Campus A, the percentage of participants did not reflect an accurate representation of the charter system itself.

The individual interviewees that were used in the research taught at an elementary and high school level. There was not an individual used in the research who taught from a middle school setting. The individuals that participated in the survey were from one charter school system in which they follow an inclusion model. This special education model is not followed by many school districts and therefore the results are unique to this particular school system. A more comprehensive population is recommended to be sought in order to compare and add to the research that was found in this study.
Recommendations for Future Research

Future research regarding this topic should seek the participation of a much larger sample. Offering an incentive in the participation of this survey would be recommended in receiving a larger attendance rate. The results were not as comprehensive as the researcher would have desired. This study sought participants from a unique charter school setting where a full inclusion model is utilized. In order to gain a wider perspective and compare the findings of this study one should pursue a public school setting that practices inclusion by administering the same survey in order to receive an accurate comparison.

Conclusion

As our classrooms continue to become more diverse and the range of students with behavioral concerns varies from year to year it is important for our administrators, special educators, and general education teachers to keep the following in mind. General education teachers have many responsibilities and with budget cuts, their duties in the classroom only grow. General education teachers need to be supported physically and mentally. They have a limited amount of time and resources to implement elaborate PBSP’s effectively. While they have the stress of having to implement a PBSP they still have to think about the well being of their remaining students. Special educators and general education teachers need to work collaboratively in order to ensure the needs of all of their students are being met, while supporting one another in the struggle to make up for a lack of resources and time.
References


Appendix A

Survey Questions:

1. Are you a general education teacher?
   a. Yes       b. No

2. Have you supported a student with an IEP (Individualized Education Program) who had an informal or formal positive behavior support program, that exhibited behavioral concerns that has impacted their own learning or the learning of others?
   a. Yes       b. No

3. I am very knowledgeable when it comes to BSPs (Behavior Support Plans)?
   a. Very       b. Somewhat   c. Heard the Term   d. Not at all

4. I feel comfortable implementing BSPs in my classroom (informal and formal).
   a. Strongly Agree   b. Agree       c. Not Sure   d. Strongly Disagree

5. I don't feel I have enough information regarding BSPs.
   a. Strongly Agree   b. Agree       c. Disagree   d. Strongly Disagree

6. I feel comfortable teaching students with an IEP who exhibit behavioral concerns in the general education setting.
   a. Strongly Agree   b. Agree       c. Disagree   d. Strongly Disagree

7. Can you provide an example of an informal or formal BSP you have implemented in the classroom? If so, briefly describe.

8. Comments regarding the first six questions.

9. What are some of the challenges/barriers you face when working with students with IEPs who have behavioral concerns that utilize an informal or formal PBSP? (Check all that apply)
a. Collaborating with Inclusion Specialists or Ed. Specialists
b. Finding time to implement formal and informal BSPs
c. Finding time to implement formal and informal BSPs
d. Collecting data
e. Lack of information regarding students with IEPs
f. Difficulty implementing BSPs due to high population of students
g. Lack of consultation from Inclusion Specialists
h. Lack of consultation from Inclusion Specialists

10. Do you have difficulty implementing strategies that have been suggested to you by your Inclusion Specialist? If so please explain.
   a. Yes       b. No

11. I feel the following solutions and strategies would help me in overcoming challenges and barriers:
   a. Regularly scheduled meetings with my Inclusion Specialist
   b. Trainings regarding students with IEPs who have behavioral concerns
c. Easy access to strategies to use in the classroom
d. Data collection forms provided for me
e. Data collection forms provided for me
f. Other, please specify

12. What behaviors do you find most challenging in the classroom?
   a. Leaving class without permission
   b. Verbal outbursts in the classroom
c. Verbal outbursts in the classroom
d. Uncooperative with teachers

e. Unable to control emotions in the classroom

f. Physical outbursts towards teachers or peers

g. Difficulty working in groups

h. Verbally threatening their peers or teachers

i. (Other) Do you have difficulty implementing strategies that have been suggested to you by your Inclusion Specialist, if so please explain?

13. What are some strategies that have worked for you in the classroom?

  a. Visual support

  b. Social Stories

  c. Regular consultation with the Inclusion Specialist

  d. Offering frequent breaks to the student

  e. Token systems

  f. Token systems

  g. Other (please specify)

14. Demographics

  a. What Campus do you teach in? (Chula Vista, Pt. Loma, North County)

  b. Do you teach in an Elementary, Middle, or High School?

  c. Years of teaching experience

  d. Gender

15. (Optional) If you would like to participate in a follow up interview with the researcher please provide your information below.

  a. Name
b. Email

c. Phone number
Appendix B

Guide Questions

1. When was your first experience with a PBSP?

2. Can you give me some examples of the types of Positive Behavior Support plans you have used in your classroom?

3. What do you find to be the most difficult when implementing PBSPs?

4. What are some suggestions you have that would make the implementation and creation process of PBSPs easier?

5. What are your concerns when you see a student with an IEP who may have behavioral concerns as well?

6. Can you elaborate on some of the strategies that have worked for you in the past?

7. Is there something I may be missing, or anything else you’d like to talk about regarding this topic?