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Positive Behavior Supports and Teacher Stress

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A dissertation  
presented to

the faculty of the Department of Education

East Tennessee State University

In partial fulfillment

of the requirements for the degree

Doctor of Education in Educational Leadership, School Leadership

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by

Robin R. Street

December 2020

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Dr. Richard Griffin

Dr. Virginia Foley

Keywords: positive behavior supports, teacher stress, burnout, disruptive behaviors

## ABSTRACT

### Positive Behavior Supports and Teacher Stress

by

Robin Street

The purpose of this study was to determine if there is a difference between the implementation of positive behavior supports and teacher stress? Previous research conducted by Ross, Romer, and Horner (2011) reported that teachers who work in schools that effectively implement Positive Behavior Supports (PBIS) had lower levels of stress and higher levels of efficacy. The current study investigated the difference between the PBIS and teacher stress. Additionally, this study sought to determine if teachers age, years of teaching experience, and gender had an impact on teacher stress. Data collection strategies included two surveys, Effective Behavior Support and the Teacher Stress Inventory. The survey instrument consisted of 65 statements that asked respondents to indicate their degree of agreement on a 7-point Likert scale. Using two ANOVA's and two independent sample *t*-test, 104 participant surveys across three school district groups were analyzed. Results revealed that there was no statistically significant difference in positive behavior supports and interventions and teacher stress. Additionally, there were no statistically significant difference in teachers age, years of teaching, and gender and teacher stress

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## DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my family members. Without them, this work would not have been possible. To my husband, Parker, I am thankful for your continued support and motivation. Your continuous encouragement to push through and not give up was always appreciated even when it might not have seemed so. Working as a school principal in the middle of a pandemic all while pursuing this degree was not always easy. Many times, I was unable to participate in family events due to the demands of the program and up writing many late nights, but you always understood and continued to remind me of the finish line. Thank you for your support and for always telling me how proud you are of me.

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## Chapter 1. Introduction

Teacher well-being, stress, burnout, and student discipline is of increasing concern to school stakeholders. Through-out history teacher turnover rates in the United States are increasing. Research suggests that teachers leave education at an alarming rate, usually before they have taught for five years. Previous research by Ross et al. (2011) reveals that teachers in schools that implement School-Wide Positive Behavior Supports and Interventions (SWPBIS) with fidelity had significantly lower levels of stress and burnout and significantly higher levels of teacher effectiveness. It is particularly concerning in states where zero-tolerance policies have been in place where the focus is on removing disruptive students from the classroom rather than using preventive measures. All stakeholders may benefit from the effective implementation of positive behavior supports as a discipline program. This system allows teachers to use data to prevent disruptive student behaviors before they begin and reach levels of disruption. With this in mind, the current study investigated the relationship between positive behavior supports implementation and teachers' stress, as measured by survey results using the Teacher Stress Inventory and the Effective Behavior Support survey. The research questions addressed teachers' assessment of the PBIS implementation and the stress that they have as a result of implementation. Survey data will be analyzed using two 1-way ANOVA's and two independent samples *t*-test.

Everyday students and teachers are exposed to the effects of the problem behaviors of other students. Students are growing up in a world ran by technology, interactive video games, and social media sites. They are entertained by devices for a majority of their day. This poses a challenge for teachers in keeping students engaged on instruction. Student's attention spans are

shorter than ever when they are not being entertained. In the classroom, focus and attention are important to ensure learning. When even one student misbehaves, other students' in the classroom are affected in some way. This problem behavior takes the attention off of the intended lesson and on to the disruption. Vital instruction is interrupted for many of the students in the classroom. The teacher's and often times the other students' focus are now on that one student's outburst or behaviors. Other students are subjected to this problem behavior and are at risk for repeating it, according to Bandura's (1977) social cognitive theory that people learn best when they observed others. Over a period of time teachers' repeated exposure to problem behaviors without supports can lead to stress. Zedan (2012) states that disruptive student behavior increases teacher's stress and that teacher stress positively correlates to teacher burnout that can in turn harm classrooms.

Problem behaviors have received a lot of attention through the media over the last few decades. With many news stations reporting that student problem behaviors can get out of control and possibly become extreme, teachers are more concerned than ever. This attention causes concern for the safety and well-being of teachers and students in public schools. The school's role in preventing problem behaviors has changed drastically over the past few years. Today, the school's role can vary from state to state. Some states use zero-tolerance policies, and some have begun to use preventive measures. Zero-tolerance policies can focus more on removal of the student from the classroom or school by means of suspension. Many states have moved to using positive behavior supports as a way to decrease problem behaviors and keep more students in the classroom learning. Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) is designed to



assist schools in creating and maintaining effective behavioral supports for students in the classroom.

### **Statement of the Problem**

The traditional model of dealing with discipline that allowed teachers to correct student problem behaviors through punishment is no longer acceptable to many parents and does not align with current laws regarding removal of students from the general classrooms. Laws now require schools to have a form of restorative practice policy. Episodes of violent behaviors in schools did not decrease with the implementation of the widespread use of zero tolerance policies. Incidents of disruptive behavior are becoming more frequent in America's classrooms (Home, n.d.). Some disruptive behaviors are escalating to dangerous outbursts that may expose other students to the harmful effects that come with it. With this rise in disruptive behaviors, general education classroom teachers are spending more time with disruptive student behaviors and less time with instruction. Problem behaviors have an effect on students' learning and the amount of quality instructional time that teachers are available to teach (Chang et al., 2009). With the increased pressure and demands that state testing has put on teachers to meet the rigorous expectations for achievement and growth in student testing outcomes, every single instructional minute is needed. Educators in today's schools must not only be prepared academically, but also be prepared to meet the needs of students who have these challenging and disruptive behaviors. Most teachers would agree that they spend a great amount of time, energy, and effort managing problem behaviors in the classroom. Time spent away from instruction and on discipline has teachers stressed and worried that they will not meet the end of year testing expectations and learning goals.

The implementation of PBIS in classrooms doesn't ignore disruptive behaviors or deny schools the use of discipline, but instead, the punishment is no longer the main focus. The focus is more on preventing behaviors by teaching behavioral expectations. The big idea is that if teachers can teach students how to multiply and add, they could be teaching them to behave appropriately. Many students come from families that have not taught them the correct acceptable behaviors. PBIS is structured around teaching the appropriate behaviors and consequences that are effective in changing behaviors long term rather than short term fixes like suspensions.

### **Significance of the Study**

Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) is designed to serve schools in creating and then sustaining effective behavioral supports for students in any classroom. Teacher attrition rates are higher than ever. Over the past few years, nearly 14,000 schools across the United States are currently implementing PBIS. Despite this increase, teachers still have trouble managing their classrooms; many even consider classroom management to be the most difficult portion of their day. Honor et al. (2004) states schools using positive behavior supports reduced the use of discipline referrals by 20% to 60%, which improves academic and instructional achievements and enriches the school climate. If PBS implementation can reduce student problem behaviors, it might also decrease the amount of stress that teachers have and prevent teacher burnout. This is an area of research that could improve teacher attrition rates and positively impact student achievement. The results of this study may also contribute to lower taxpayer costs that are used on training new teachers. It is reported that teachers leave the field before their fifth year of teaching. Districts that have to train new teachers each year could end

up spending thousands on beginning of the year professional developments and trainings. Taxpayer money that is allocated to public schools could be spent more effectively.

The following research questions guided this quantitative study:

RQ1: Is there a difference between the implementation of positive behavior supports and teacher stress?

RQ2: Is there a difference in teachers' years of teaching and teachers' stress?

RQ3: Is there a difference between teachers' gender and teachers' stress.

RQ4: Is there a difference between teachers' age and teachers' stress?

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study will be to examine the effect that Positive Behavior Supports have on teacher stress as measured by two survey instruments. Positive Behavior Supports is an evidence-based method that improves school climate and culture, student social outcomes, and teacher to student relationships through behavior modifications (Horner, 2007). The Legislative mandates such as No Child Left Behind (U.S. Department of Education, 2001) and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (U.S. Department of Education, 2004) encouraged schools to seek out alternative methods to discipline that were different than the previous zero-tolerance policy of suspending and removing students from the classroom when they display disruptive behaviors. Many schools began to implement Positive Behavior Supports and Interventions as a preventative discipline method and erase disruptive problematic student behaviors (Horner et al., 2010). The purpose of this study will be to investigate the relationship between Positive Behavior Supports and teacher stress that may lead to the high teacher turnover rate in the US.

## **Theoretical Framework**

Albert Bandura first created Social Cognitive Theory. The beliefs of social cognitive theory were that people learned best when they observed others. This theory was made of three components to relationship that were between the environment, behavior, and cognition (Bandura, 1988). He stated that people become more aware of their own behaviors when they watch the behavior of others. The Social Cognitive Theory Framework contains five pillars.

The first pillar of Observational Learning/Models suggests that people learn through observing others (Bandura, 1988). Students become aware of behaviors, positive or negative, by observing others. Those observations could be by the way the teacher reacts to that student or the way that other students react to the disruptive behavior. The second pillar suggests that for learning to occur and stick, students must first be able to see a consistent and positive result of that behavior. A consistent positive result must follow the behavior in order for the student to learn from it and want to repeat it. The third pillar of noted success says that students must be able to believe that they are learning based on positive feedback from others, particularly their teachers. The idea is that the teacher will build a relationship with the student to allow them to be able see value in themselves. The fourth pillar is goal setting. Future aspired outcomes must be met in order for learning to take place. When goals or successes are met, the student will continue to display the learned behaviors that have been taught. The fifth pillar is self-regulation. The student becomes aware of their behaviors, good or bad, and maintains control over them (Bandura, 1988).

The social cognitive framework posits that people learn from observing others, in this case, the learner is the student when connecting to Positive Behavior Supports. Those being

observed by the student were the teacher first and then the other students in the classroom. The classroom serves as the environment where student observes and learns. The student became aware of those behaviors that were appropriate in the environment by watching the interactions of the teacher and other students which was a connection to the PBS model and the first pillar of Observational Learning/Models. The second pillar is associated to expectations. PBS connects to this pillar by using the functional behavior assessments (FBA). When students display problem or disruptive behaviors, the teacher will consistently address the behaviors and then teach the correct behaviors. The third pillar is self-efficacy. PBS connects to this through functional behavior assessments. The data that is collected permits feedback from the teacher to the student which can improve the self-efficacy in students. The assessment allows the student to take responsibility for the disruptive behavior and make a better choice on their own in selecting the appropriate behaviors. The data collected allows the teacher to change the incentives and the reinforcements as the behaviors occur. PBS has been shown through research to be effective in redirecting and decreasing problem behaviors because it works in the theoretical framework of Banduras Social Cognitive Theory.

### **Research Questions**

RQ1: Is there a difference between the implementation of positive behavior supports and teacher stress?

RQ2: Is there a difference in teachers' years of teaching and teachers' stress?

RQ3: Is there a difference between teachers' gender and teachers' stress.

RQ4: Is there a difference between teachers' age and teachers' stress?

## **Definitions of Terms**

The following definitions provide explanations for specific terms relative to this study.

### *Positive Behavior Supports'*

The use of positive behavioral interventions and systems to attain positive and acceptable behavioral changes in students or patients (Sugai & Horner, 2004). Positive behavior support is an applied science that was started and maintained by a partnership between the National Department of Education, K-12 schools, colleges, and the United States Department of Education (Carr et al., 2002). Operant psychology supports positive behavior support: positive behavior support rewards, wanted student behavior, and redirects unwanted student behavior.

### *Levels of Positive Behavior Supports*

Presence of positive behavior support are the levels of measurement of positive support that teacher's rate as implemented in classrooms. The measurement was based on each teacher's response to the Effective Behavior Supports (EBS) survey of whether a behavioral support was in place, partially in place, or not in place (Sugai et al., 2003).

### *Teacher Stress*

The "experience by teachers of unpleasant emotions, such as anger, tension, frustration, anxiety, depression, and nervousness, resulting from aspects of their work as teachers"

(Kyriacou, 1989, p. 27)

### *Disruptive Behaviors*

Disruptive behavior is when a child is not cooperating and prevents themselves and other students in class from working and learning. A disruptive child also manages to grab a teacher's attention and prevent the teacher from giving the other children attention (Daniels et al., 1999).

## **Limitations of Study**

This quantitative study was conducted in three school districts in the Northeast Tennessee region. Conducted during the 2020-2021 school year, the survey results reflected from the responses from participants in selected districts may not reflect the stress that may be coming from teaching in a pandemic versus the stress of implementing positive behavior supports. Due to the nature of virtual teaching, teachers do not have to implement positive behavior supports behind a screen. This could impact teachers' responses. Also, survey results may not reflect the perceptions of educators in other regions of Tennessee or the nation. An additional limitation is the variation in campus criteria or district policies regarding the use of positive behavior supports and interventions. There may be inconsistencies among districts in its use and implementation.

## **Summary**

This study is organized into five chapters. Chapter 1 includes the introduction, the statement of the problem, limitations of the study, definition of terms, research questions, the significance of the study, and the overview of the study. Chapter 2 contains a review of literature related to positive behavior supports and teacher stress. This review includes an overview of the implementation of positive behavior supports, increased needs for positive behavior supports, teacher stress, teacher burnout, and teacher perceptions of positive behavior supports. Chapter 3 describes the research methodology, the research questions, null hypotheses, population, instrumentation, data collection, and data analysis. Chapter 4 is an analysis of the data. Chapter 5 is a summary of the study findings, conclusions, and recommendations for further research.

## **Chapter 2. Literature Review**

Bandura first created Social Cognitive Theory in 1986. His research expanded on the Social Learning Theory that was created by Miller and Dollard in 1941. The understanding of social cognitive theory was that people learned best when they observed others. This theory included three relationships between the environment, behavior, and cognition (Bandura, 1988). Bandura (1988) stated that people become more cognitively aware of their own behaviors when they watch the behavior of others. There are five pillars of The Social Cognitive Theory Framework.

The first pillar states that people learn through the observations of others (Bandura, 1988). Students notice their behaviors, whether positive or negative, through observing others. Those observations could be of teachers or other students. The second pillar is that people must first be able to see consistent positive results from that behavior. There must be a consistent result that follows a behavior if students are expected to learn from it. The third pillar of success says that people must be able to believe that they are learning based on positive feedback from others.

The learner is the student in regard to Positive Behavior Supports. Those being observed by the student were the teacher and the other students in the classroom. The classroom serves as the environment in which the learner observes. The student became aware of those behaviors that were appropriate in the environment by observing the interactions of the teacher and other students which was relative to the PBS model and the first pillar of Observational Learning/Models. The second pillar is connected to expectations. PBS connects to this pillar by using the functional behavior assessments. When students display problem behaviors, the teacher consistently addresses the behaviors and then teaches the correct behaviors. The third pillar is



self-efficacy. PBS connects to this through the use of functional behavior assessments. The data that is collected allows for feedback from teacher to student which can increase the success in students. The assessment enables the student to take responsibility for their behaviors. The data collected also allowed the teacher to change the rewards and reinforcements as behaviors occurred. PBS has been shown through research to be effective in redirecting and even erasing problem behaviors because it operates in the theoretical framework of Banduras Social Cognitive Theory.

There were several contributing factors to positive behavior support and its relationship to teacher stress. Exploring burnout from an occupation perspective and the contributing factors of student behavior had an effect on teacher job performance and retention. In a study done by Reinke (2008), results are promising because they suggest that discussion at the classroom level can create meaningful teacher and student behavior change.

### **Occupational Burnout**

The term burnout was created in 1974 by Herbert Freudenberger after experiencing what he calls a state of exhaustion due to his work at a local clinic (Freudenberger, 1974). Prior to this, the medical profession used the term burnout to refer to individuals with drug addictions. Freudenberger (1974) defined, “the verb burnout as to fail, wear out, or become exhausted by making excessive demands on energy, strength, or resources” (p. 159). Another researcher, Maslach (2001) defined burnout “as the prolonged response to chronic emotional and interpersonal stressors on the job and is defined by three dimensions of exhaustion, cynicism, and inefficacy”. The term burnout originally used in healthcare began to include other fields such as human services and education (Freudenberger, 1974).

Research conducted on burnout provided new perspectives on interventions and strategies that helped with job related burnout. Research ties it to those in the workplace which makes it a valuable contribution to people's health and well-being as well as those that work and live around them. Burnout was first used as a term in the clinical field in the early 1970s by Herbert Freudenberger, who was at the time a practicing American psychologist (Schaufeli, 2017). The concept was further developed by the researcher and social psychologist Christina Maslach, who created a widely used questionnaire to assess burnout (Schaufeli, 2017).

Research has gone through three phases of development according to Maslach, (2001). The first phase, Pioneer phase, was exploratory and came around in the 1970's and described burnout, gave it a name, and proved that it not uncommon (Maslach, 2001). Most early work was done in the human services and health care industries. The first articles were written by Freudenberger (1975) while he was a working psychiatrist in healthcare and by Maslach (1976) while she studied the emotions of others while at work and announced the foundation for research in the causes and prevention of job-related burnout. Freudenberger focused on moments when he and others went through emotional expenditure or a lack of inspiration or motivation while Maslach spoke with human service workers about their own emotional stressors.

The next phase was The Empirical Phase which began in the 1980's with a shift to empirical research. Questionnaires and surveys were used to study large populations to assess stress and burnout levels. The Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI) was developed by Maslach and Jackson (1981) to use in human service jobs but was later used by educational occupations due to the large interest by teachers. This was due to the increasing demands of the educational system

that changed to include student achievement scores, strict evaluations of teacher performance, and level of effectiveness measures. During this time, researchers of occupational burnout took an interest in teachers who were leaving the field at high rates because they were experiencing burnout while student enrollment was continuing to increase (Maslach et al., 2001).

Early research found that burnout can be associated with many types of withdrawal, absenteeism, intent to leave, and turnover in jobs (Maslach, 2001). By the 1980s, the idea of burnout had spread to other occupations, and caused the term occupational burnout to become a well-known topic for researchers (Skovholt & Trotter-Mathison, 2011). People who experience burnout had an unpleasant impact on their colleagues, either by causing a negative personal issue or by disrupting job tasks, therefore burnout was considered contagious (Maslach, 2001). Maslach and Goldberg (1998) stated that it was easier and much cheaper to change people rather than organizations.

### **Assessing Burnout**

Freudenberger (1974) wrote about the simple concept of burnout and related it to several other studies. Maslach and Jackson (1981) took that simple concept and turned it into multiple studies related to burnout which included exhaustion, cynicism, and success. When people displayed chronic feelings of despair and withdrawal, they were experiencing burnout. This led to Maslach's Burnout Inventory (MBI). A survey that was designed to assess three dimensions of burnout: emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishment (Maslach & Jackson, 1981). Maslach and Jackson's (1981) three-dimensional definition states that "burnout was not only relative to a person's psyche but relative to the effect the individual social working environment had on an individual's psyche" (Maslach & Leiter, 1997). Later,

Densten (2001) stated that there was a relationship between the job stress and burnout with teachers.

The harm to teachers in the workforce was traced and measured by looking at data from teacher attrition and shortage. Teachers who suffered stress and did not leave the profession were sooner or later affected by burnout or became ineffective in the classrooms, which harmed students (Densten, 2001). In the 1970's, job burnout emerged as a concept that dealt with the many different ways that people experienced work. Freudenberger (1975), defined burnout as failure or exhaustion feelings because of the excessive demands on resources. The concept of burnout as noted in research findings appears to be more serious than was generally assumed (Friesen & Sarros, 1989). Recognizing the early signs and symptoms of burn-out was crucial to get ahead of the problems of stress while encouraging researchers to study it and try to find ways to cope with it. According to Schaufeli et al. 2009, burnout has become a notable global significance. The term burnout comes from a metaphor for draining energy. It used the example of a smothering fire that once burning must continue to burn by using sufficient resources. Once those resources were gone, the fire burned out. Freudenberger (1974) borrowed the term burnout from the drug scene where it is referred to as a devastating effect of chronic drug abuse.

Burnout in teaching was first examined in a multitude of descriptive accounts (Block, 1977; Hendrickson, 1979; Needle et al., 1980). Many of these accounts began the work towards how we understood the stressful events that many teachers report that led to their burnout. One variable that teachers described as a negative characteristic was student misbehavior (Brissie et al., 1988).

## **Student Behavior**

Research on problem student behaviors was plentiful. In the 1950's Fritz Redi and David Wineman wrote about the minds and behavior of violent children in schools. B.F. Skinner (1948) worked with psychotic children and Gerald Patterson (1992) wrote about the social learning of children. Albert Bandura (1977) developed social learning theory and introduced us to Arnold Goldstein (1995) whose work with antisocial youth led to the curriculum that teaches replacement behaviors to students. Richard Shores (1987) research made the connection about the negative impacts that student behavior has on others. State legislation has also had an increasing input in the way that problem behaviors in schools are addressed.

### **Students with Disabilities**

The passage of Public Law 94-142 guaranteed students with disabilities a free and appropriate education (U.S. Department of Education, n.d.). This law had a huge impact on millions of children with disabilities and those that are being tested or have the academic scores to be in special education across the country. The law was enacted as a response to a concern for groups of children with disabilities. This law protected more than one million children with disabilities who had been excluded from the education system and children with disabilities with limited access to the education system (U.S. Department of Education, n.d.). This law brought to attention that these students had been denied an appropriate public education. Another group that this law supported was more than half of all children with disabilities who were living in the United States in the early 1970s (U.S. Department of Education, n.d.). Improved access to education for these students became the focus for further advances in educating children with disabilities (U.S. Department of Education, n.d.).

In recent years, lawsuits have become more prevalent in school systems due to the enactment of new laws. The court case *Honig v. Doe* (1988) states that students may not be suspended for behaviors based on their disability. Schools should use caution even when suspending students without disabilities because they are essentially putting them out of school into the settings that allow them to freely practice those behaviors that schools are trying to unteach. “A worse social reaming program could not be designed: remove the youth from the very society to which he must adapt, expose him to hundreds of criminal peer models and to criminal behaviors he hasn’t learned yet, and use punishment as the only learning principle to change behavior” (Willert & Willert, 2000). This practice removes children from environments where they can learn useful skills and learn from the more socially acceptable behaviors of their peers rather than from the problem behaviors that they may be exposed to.

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA '97) offered students and schools promising provisions that addressed the concerns of school disciplinary practices that were present in schools across the United States. Reforming school discipline practices will require a systemwide approach that seek improvements in both general and special education classrooms (Skiba & Patterson, 2000). New provisions of IDEA '97 argue strongly that if there is to be hope for success in reforming school discipline practice, it will be vital to undertake a systemwide approach. The positive behavior supports through IDEA '97 have worked their way into schools but may find slow acceptance in a climate that has always been dominated by punishment through suspension. Students who are sent to the office for behaviors are missing critical time in instruction in the classroom. If these punishments lead to in-school or out-of-school suspensions, the amount of time out of the classroom could be up to ten days or longer. The intentions of

IDEA '97 have come into conflict with the practices and perspectives of many school districts. If schools are going to educate young people, alternative approaches like prevention to discipline are important in keeping students in the classroom where learning is taking place.

### **Aggressive Behavior in Schools**

Extreme forms of problem disruptive behaviors, such as aggression and violence, have reached epidemic amounts (Koop & Lundberg, 1992; Rutherford & Nelson, 1995). According to Malafrente (2019), teachers in California at Valley Oak Middle School believe that their school's discipline model is broken. According to USA TODAY, teachers and parents are calling the reports of problem behaviors seen in their schools and on the news a crisis. These concerns have caused educators to take a closer look at their discipline procedures. Many schools and districts have not only developed policies that put them in compliance with the recently passed legislation, but they have also begun to implement programs, such as School-Wide Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (SWPBIS), as a method to help improve the overall school environment and reduce problem behaviors (Pugh & Chitiyo, 2012; Reinke et al., 2012; Simonsen & Sugai, 2013).

An effective teacher is the single most important criteria to student success. Disruptive and challenging behaviors in schools have become not only more common, but also more violent (Lewis & Sugai, 1999). Teacher preparation programs are training teachers in supporting students' learning, but most do not include ways to address problem behaviors. Implementing behavior interventions are common among special education teachers, but general education teachers are not usually trained (Lewis & Sugai, 1999). Interventions used by special education teachers are commonly used when adding goals to students' Individual Education Plans (IEP) to

help students have access to success in their academic classrooms. With the development of the PBIS framework, general education teachers are now faced with implementing behavior interventions and supports in classrooms (PBIS, n.d.). In the last decade, special education students have been included in the general education classroom (Steinbrecher et al., 2013). The responsibility for educating special education students and meeting their needs is now the responsibility of both the special and general education teachers (Steinbrecher et al., 2013).

Even one disruptive student can interrupt the learning of the entire classroom. The teacher's attention can be forced to focus on eliminating the behavior that is causing the disruption and take the attention off of the learning of others in the classroom. As many as 1 in 5 children are at risk for or currently have experienced mental, emotional, or behavioral problems (World Health Organization, 2004). That is an alarming number when five students can have problematic behaviors in a classroom of twenty students. The need for increased capacity across multiple systems including family, community, and schools to work with children with or at risk for mental health problems is clear (Stormont et al. 2010). General education teachers are now responsible for implementing prevention efforts while deescalating negative behaviors, are responsible for supporting all children, and have reported the need for training in supporting appropriate behavior (Pavri, 2004).

## **Bullying**

Many problem behaviors can escalate to become bullying of other students. Bullying has received a large amount of attention by popular media outlets and researchers. The majority of logical research has focused on bullying in elementary and middle school students (Jenkins et al., 2017). Results from one study reveal that 4.3% of students were found to be bullies, 10.2%



bully/victims, and 39.8% victims (Dake, 2003). Direct bully/victims, victims, and girls were most likely to have physical health issues such as sore throats, colds, and coughs (Dake, 2003). Direct bully/victims, direct victims, and year two children were likely to have psychological health problems such as poor appetite and serious concerns and worries about going to school (Dake, 2003). Bullying rates differ among different studies; however, a meta-analysis conducted by Modecki et al. (2014) of 80 research studies found that a mean prevalence rate among students between 12-18 years was 35%. Approximately 30% of students' report that they have been bullied by their peers (U.S. Department of Health & Human Service, 2017). Additionally, studies show significant similarities among bullies across multiple grade levels. Of the total number of students who were bullies in elementary school, 72% became bullies in high school, and 53.8% were bullies while in college (Ofe, 2015). According to the United States Health Department (2017), bullying victims are more likely than their peers to be depressed, lonely, and anxious. They tend to have low self-esteem and can experience health concerns like headaches, stomachaches, and poor eating habits. They are also more likely to be absent from school and threaten or even attempt suicide. Kids that are bullied can also experience mental health issues that cause them to lose interest in the activities that they used to enjoy.

According to the Tennessee Department of Education (2011), a small number of students that have been bullied may retaliate through extremely violent measures such as those in school shootings. A small number in these cases is too many. In 12 out of 15 school shooting cases in the 1990's, the shooters had a history of being bullied by their classmates (Stop Bullying Home Page, n.d.). Although bullying is not the sole cause of suicide, extreme retaliations, or school violence, it can make a situation worse when there is a lack of school or home support. Risk

increases when students do not have supportive parents, peers, and schools to seek help from. Teacher Preparation Programs and Problem Behaviors Research found that conflicts as early as preschool can have implications for bullying because they can develop into patterns of bad behaviors which follow them throughout their school age careers (Home, n.d.). Even though bullying may not look the same in preschool as it will in elementary age children, looking at patterns early may lead to an understanding of how to best prevent bullying as children enter elementary schools. It is also important to understand that some social conflicts, like arguing with a friend, can be a normal part of development at such a young age and may not be predictors of bullying (Home, n.d.).

### **Violent Behavior in Schools**

According to Leitman & Binns, 1993, only half of school age children feel safe in their schools. One third of parents nationally do not think their children are safe at school (Rose & Gallup, 1998). Some of the statistics are alarming and warrant immediate action. Research stresses that early identification along with planning and prevention is necessary for schools to begin preventing problem behaviors that often lead to school violence and place extra stress on teachers. Pietrzak et al. (1998) reported that 25% of teachers and administrators in rural schools stated that episodes of violence were growing at the middle and high school level. Behaviors that were viewed as escalating were not the types of deadly violence that appear to concern us most like drugs, gang involvement, or weapons carrying, but rather behaviors such as rumors, verbal intimidation and threats, pushing and shoving, and sexual harassment (Skiba & Peterson, 2000).

In the aftermath of school shootings, there have been increased calls for better school security measures. School violence can be better understood when viewed as extreme

expressions of bad habits and aggressive behaviors that have been learned and practiced in the home over time (Willert & Willert, 2000). Willert and Willert (2000) also report that when children lack the understanding and resources that produce successful and peaceful ways to resolve conflict, they can learn to be aggressive when they respond to others. This overtime can become habitual and possibly even more extreme. It is often hard to recognize signs of aggressive behaviors because there are so many signs of violence in the regular behaviors of children.

Between 1985 and 1994, juvenile arrest for murder had increased 150 percent, and arrest for aggravated assault and weapons charges had doubled (U.S. Department of Justice, 2020). The violent crime arrest rate for older juveniles was lower than the rates for young adults (U.S. Department of Justice, 2020). Current data reveals that after an increase in rates between 2012 and 2017, the juvenile arrest rate for murder finally began to remain steady rather than increase through 2018 (U.S. Department of Justice, 2020). Three years after leaving school, 70% of youth that appeared to struggle with social issues in school had been arrested (Walker et al., 1995). Data reveals that these behavior problems have been present for years. In 1993, the APA Commission on Youth Violence reported that 82% of crimes are committed by those who have dropped out of school. They also report that more than half of these crimes are committed by 5%-7% of youth between 10 and 20 years of age.

School Violence is associated with critical and long-term negative health outcomes (Hildenbrand et al., 2013). Not getting enough sleep is associated with adverse physical, behavioral, and psychosocial issues among adolescents, many of which are constantly implicated

in youth violence (Hildenbrand et al., 2013). Studies also report that students with insufficient sleep had higher chances of participating in school violence.

Both teachers and students are exposed to the effects of problem behaviors in school. When asked, eighth graders report that up to 16.9% of their friend's hand brought weapons to school (U.S. Department of Education, 1995). These statistics highlight the critical and immediate need to rethink discipline programs in all schools. If antisocial behavior is not changed by the end of grade 3, it should be treated as a chronic health condition like diabetes and assume that it cannot be cured but managed with the appropriate support and interventions (Walker et al., 1995). Twenty percent of students with disruptive behavior problems are arrested at least once before they leave school and 35% are arrested after they leave school (Walker et al., 1995). The way schools handle behavior problems can be summed up as the way public schools record of effectively accommodating students with behavioral disorders is close to abysmal and could be considered neglect of students experiencing serious behavior problems (Walker et al., 1990).

Bullying and problem behaviors are now being seen in students as early as elementary school. Educators need to be aware of evidence based-best practices to prevent bullying in schools. Research reports suggest that approximately 1 in 3 students in the United States have been victims of bullying in school (U.S. Department of Health & Human Service, 2017). From school shootings to social media harassments, bullying is a problem that has resulted in increased violence across the country (U.S. Department of Education, 2017). Because of the rise in problem behaviors in schools, the State of Tennessee required that all schools implement anti-bullying programs such as character education programs (U.S. Department of Health & Human

Services, 2017). Although these programs are beneficial, general educators are not always trained to effectively deal with problem behaviors in the classrooms that align with anti-bullying programs and interventions. Most schools train a team of teachers that are to facilitate the team meetings regarding creating behavior improvement plans. However, they usually are not the ones implementing the strategies in the classrooms. Team leaders work with the general education teachers in creating these plans but are not the ones trained to implement them.

To address these behaviors, districts are implementing zero-tolerance policies and resorting to suspensions for students who break school rules. There is an abundance of research that states that this is ineffective and can actually make behaviors worse. Many of today's students do not enter school with the necessary social behaviors that are necessary for success. Schools will have to be ready to immediately implement a continuum of effective behavior support. Disruptive behaviors in early childhood that continue beyond the age of two often turn into problems for students entering school-age, adolescence, and adulthood (Brennan et al., 2012). Early childhood problem behaviors were found to have an impact on the social functioning of students later in life according to parents (Brennan et al., 2012). This finding is consistent with the ideas that oppositional behavior is extremely relationship-based (Brennan et al., 2012).

Recent reviews of literature found that the least effective responses to violence in schools are counseling, psychotherapy, and punishment (Gottfredson & Gottfredson, 1996; Lipsey, 1999; Lipsey & Wilson, 1993; Guerra et al., 1994). There is no single explanation for the increase in student acts of aggression and problem behaviors. Research suggests that substance abuse, victimization, marital discord, spouse abuse, depression, exposure to violence in the mass media,

and extreme poverty all play a role in aggression and negative behaviors (Gable, 1994). Additionally, longitudinal studies show that school truancy, fighting, or troublesome behavior as early as the first grade can predict behaviors in high school students and predicts arrest as a possibility for juveniles (Sheline et al., 1994). This same study found that boys with problem behaviors had less affection from male role models and were not living with their fathers. It has also been reported that having a stepparent is the single most powerful risk factor for child abuse (Sheline et al., 1994). Violent or problem behaviors in school are said to be contagious because they have a high risk for modeling. Children do what they see other children doing. There is evidence that violent behavior is able to be changed, children can learn nonviolent responses with the appropriate interventions (Lefkowitz et al., 1977). Understanding these behaviors and what has worked in the past at preventing these behaviors could make a positive impact on teacher well-being and prevent burnout.

### **Student Behavior Affects Teachers**

Teacher burnout is the largest group studied in occupational burnout with 22% of research focused on teachers (McCarthy et al., 2009). Teachers find student discipline problems to be their leading source of stress (Supaporn et al., 2003) and a contributor to teacher burnout (Kokkinos et al., 2005). A recent study by Klassen and Chui (2010) found that teachers who experienced stress from the classroom were more likely to be less efficient in the classroom. This could be the reason that nearly half of new teachers leave the profession within 5 years, many reporting misbehaviors as a main reason for leaving (Ingersoll, 2002). The cost of losing teachers will significantly hurt our students. The loss of good teachers will continue to rise if stressors are

not reduced. How teachers feel about how efficient they are may result in whether or not they are willing to implement new behavior supports and interventions.

Teacher burnout has been connected to teacher attrition rates and job absenteeism (Belcastro & Gold, 1983). Teachers report episodes of emotional exhaustion, that is defined as the tired and fatigued feelings that develop as their emotions and energy are drained (Maslach et al., 1996). These feelings of emotional exhaustion can cause teachers to develop negative attitudes towards students. Research documents that teachers that have a more positive attitude with students will have students who perform better academically. When they praise their students for positive behaviors, they will have students who are most likely to be on task and have less disruptive behaviors. Praising students' efforts has been shown to increase the appropriate behaviors of disruptive students (Reinke et al., 2007).

### **Consequences of Burnout**

Teachers who remain in the field while experiencing high amounts of stress may experience fatigue that will lead to ineffectiveness in the classrooms. These teachers will also begin to withdraw from having relationships with students. Once these relationships decline, the teachers will begin to face further problems during instruction in regard to problem behaviors.

Emotional exhaustion is the most common claimed indicator of burnout due to work stress (Maslach et al., 2001). "There have not been any documented categories of occupational burnout shown to have a more devastating effect on our society and the future of our nation, than teacher burnout" (Bumen, 2010). According to Maslach (2003), individuals who suffer from burnout have chronic health problems such as: sleeplessness, tension, headaches, high blood pressure, ulcers, and a potential for a greater susceptibility to colds and flus. There is also a

concern that psychological issues and drug abuse can emerge from those experiencing burnout. As teachers move from stress to burnout, they will become less patient with students and quicker to punish them rather than teach them corrective behaviors. Also, teachers in the burnout stage will show lower levels of self-esteem (Maslach, 2003a) and will suffer from a lack of self-confidence (Farber, 2010). When teachers lose their self-confidence, they may feel inadequate to teach students and not put forth the effort that they once did. According to Maslach (2003a), the teacher that is in the burnout stage will do the bare minimum of job requirements to fulfill their duties. Teachers will also begin to show signs of absenteeism when in the burnout stage. Teachers will not only withdraw from work physically, but also mentally (Maslach & Leiter, 1997). Teachers will spend less time collaborating with other teachers and eventually leave the education field.

According to Haberman (2005), teacher burnout results in teacher attrition rates increasing or the retention of burned-out teachers in the classroom, both of which affect the quality of teacher and student achievement negatively. When teachers leave the field, they leave teaching positions to be filled with new teachers who also lack the knowledge and experience to handle the problem behaviors of some students. “Here, perhaps, is the most devastating legacy of burnout, a permanent hardening of the human heart” (Maslach 2003a, p. 144). Burnout can lead to a lack of empathy for basic human issues (Maslach, 2003a). A lack of empathy for others could result in teachers not being able to recognize that students with behavior problems may have causes for the behaviors. It can cause teachers to become uncaring towards their students.

Additionally, according to the Alliance for Excellent Education (2008), teacher turnover is influenced by stress and burnout and has become a problem for taxpayer funds costing around



7.4 billion. Barnes et al. (2007), state that burnout in teachers causes a decrease in productivity, an increase in workers compensation, higher health care expenses, and a decline in student achievement outcomes. Dworkin and Tobe (2012) report that the relationship between teacher stress and disruptive student behaviors is directly associated to teacher burnout. They also state that student disruptions often lead to teacher and student confrontations. Patterson et al. (2004) report that teacher burnout rates have grown in alarming rates in urban schools because of accountability measures and disruptive student behaviors.

Another cause for teacher burnout is linked to school safety. With the increase in student problem behaviors, teachers are more afraid of not only their own safety, but that their jobs could be at stake. Teacher accountability is linked to student performance. When students are disruptive it will affect the whole classroom, which can lead to less learning. When student achievement decreases, teachers become stressed and begin to worry about losing their jobs due to student testing data. In a study done by Dworkin and Tobe (2012), positive student behavior implementation reduced burnout in teachers in 1986 and in a separate study in 2009. These results indicate that student disciplinary problems are significant sources of teacher stress and burnout. Bressert (2006) conducted a study that revealed signs of stress as mental slowness, confusion, general negative attitude, constant worry, racing minds, difficulty concentrating, and forgetfulness. He also concludes that if stress is not managed it could lead to increased cancer risks, lower immune system, high blood pressure, and amnesia.

### **Teacher Stress**

Teacher well-being has become a well-studied issue due to the demands placed on them to increase student test scores. When teachers are experiencing stress, their performance in the

classroom is impacted which can lead to a drop in student achievement. According to Blasé (1986), there is a link between teacher stress and teacher performance. Teachers experience higher levels of accountability in schools with increasing degrees of diverse students, challenging school climates, and a variety of new initiatives (Ross et al., 2012). Stress in the workplace is not a new topic. As it becomes more evident in society, it becomes a topic of more research. The more we understand about stress, the more we realize the importance of addressing it.

Our understanding of stress originated in the research of Derogatis (1987), who conducted his most recent research using the Derogatis Stress Profile (DSP), a psychological questionnaire to measure individuals' stress (Montgomery & Rupp, 2005). His questionnaire was based off of the social interaction theory of stress started by Lazarus in 1966. There are many different definitions of stress. Derogatis (1987) defined stress as a state of psychological pressure that is influenced by three main sources: personality mediators, environmental factors, and emotional responses. Lazarus and Folkman (1984) define stress as an interaction between people and the environment that exceeds his or her personal resources and disrupts their daily routines. In the mid 1930's, Hans Selye first named the concept of stress as an equilibrium relationship. Later, Fimian (1980) defines stress as a hypothetical construct that represents an equilibrium state that exist between the individual responding to environmental demands and the actual environment. In his research, he discussed three ideas of stress symptoms as emotional, behavioral, and physiologically (Fimian, 1980). As this relates to teaching, Bloom (1983) states that teaching disturbed children is a psychological hazard in human relationships.

According to Chang (2009), K-12 teaching is a profession that consists of high levels of burnout and emotional exhaustion. The way that teachers think about students and their problem behaviors may contribute significantly to teachers' negative emotions that lead to stress and then eventually burnout. The term discipline comes from the same Latin root as the word disciple which means to teach. Children come to us at different stages in their growth and development and are not developmentally complete until after they leave school (Chang, 2009). They require correction and instruction to shape their behaviors into appropriate skills for success.

Even seasoned veterans in any profession experience stressful situations in their jobs. Stress in teachers has been more widely explored in recent years. Day and Gu (2010) state that burnout and stress is more prevalent in teachers because there is no other profession more susceptible to the effects of outside social forces and inside critical agencies. Public school teachers are experiencing severe stress that is related to their job, and it can be found at all levels of teaching (Fielding & Gall, 1982). People are affected differently by stress, some use stress as a reason to be more successful while others allow it to cause them failures. The way that people view stress can determine the impact it will have on them. Recent research indicates that the way an individual perceives issues can be the reason for turning potential situational stressors into actual real ones (Fielding & Gall, 1982). When stress becomes overwhelming and coping becomes more difficult and sometimes impossible, it can turn into burnout. Once you reach the burnout stage, it can become harder to find the energy to adjust to stress. Individuals can become more susceptible to illness and emotional trauma while in this state (Goodall & Brown, 1980). Teachers can experience a negative change in effectiveness in the classroom, personality changes, and at times resort to addictions. Reduced efficiency, tardiness, absenteeism, and staff turnover

are common outcomes of stress on teachers (Eskridge & Coker, 1985). More serious complications such as high blood pressure, cardiovascular difficulties, ulcers, shortness of breath, colitis, and gastrointestinal problems may require long-term medical attention (Cardinell,1980). Mood swings, frustration, irritability, lack of caring for others, feelings of helplessness, paranoia, and suspiciousness are all common indicators of stress-related behavioral changes (Cardinell,1980). Teachers can all experience periods of high blood pressure elevations which are common when stress is evident and can be hard on the heart and other organs in the body.

These findings corroborate those of Bloch's when considering the medical conditions that can occur at high rates when the body is under stress. Teachers who experience stress in the classroom exhibit emotions that do not go unnoticed by peers and students. This tension can lead to additional problems in the classroom and spill over into student achievement. In addition to medical factors, stress has also led to more teachers leaving the workplace. Twenty-five to fifty percent of new teachers resign in their first three years of teaching (Rieg et al., 2007). Fifty percent of teachers leaving the education field is alarming and brings attention to the urgency of the problem of teacher retention and stress. In Germany, less than ten percent of the teachers stay in their jobs until retirement and in Britain, the number of teachers who leave the profession is more than the number of teachers who remain until retirement (Chang, 2009). Teacher shortage issues have been a topic of discussion for decades. Shortages of qualified teachers are attracting increased attention (National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983). It is urgent that we understand what factors are involved in teachers leaving the profession if our country's academics are to remain strong.

The cost of losing teachers will significantly hurt our students and taxpayers. It has been estimated that the cost of teacher turnover in public schools exceeds 7 billion dollars a year (National Commission of Teaching and America's Future, 2007). Providing teachers, the tools they need to be successful in implementing positive behavior supports could result in less stress and reduce teacher turnover. This will require effective behavior support practices and systems in place that will support these changes, including data-based decision making within the school leadership team (Handler et al., 2007).

Research reveals that teachers that have a more positive attitude with students will have students who perform better academically. When they praise their students for positive behaviors, they will have students who are most likely to be on task and have less disruptive behaviors. Praising students regularly has been shown to increase appropriate behaviors of disruptive students (Reinke et al., 2007). When teachers increase student engagement, they are essentially decreasing disruptive and problem behaviors which will allow for more time on task and effective instruction to take place for all students. Research also shows that even among children with high expressive behaviors, teacher use of praise and corrective statements were related to declines in problem behaviors (Smith et al., 2020). However, research has found that teachers do not use behavior-specific praise at high enough rates (Reinke et al., 2008). This may suggest that teachers need higher rates of training that involve specific feedback in how they are using and implementing these behavior strategies. The need for feedback is important for maintaining the practice (Noelle et al., 2005).

Teachers are also experiencing higher levels of accountability through state testing and school performance expectations that range from handling a diverse set of students to lower

amounts of resources. They also are faced with an array of new initiatives that comes down from the state each year. Today general educators are expected to deal with a large number of students who are difficult to manage, as well as teach. The failures of conventional or traditional discipline models are one measure of the magnitude and persistence of student behavior problems (Gable et al., 1998). Teachers report experiencing stress from experiences with student discipline problems which has been linked to teacher burnout and teacher turnover (Ingersoll & Smith 2003). Given the rise in the number and severity of student behavior problems, schools recognize that there is a need for intervention programs that address the relationship of learning and behavior (Gable et al., 1998).

Although there are multiple causes for stress present in the workplace, many studies conclude that student behaviors are on the top of that list. Tension is more often produced by one or two students who chronically misbehave than by the lack of discipline among all students in the classroom (Eskridge & Coker, 1985). Haberman (2005) and Maslach and Leiter (1997) described the expectations as a shift on priorities from the lack of resources or control over external factors that have been known to contribute to student success to one that is focused more on increased workload demands of teachers, standardized curriculum, and continuous pressure to produce higher standardized test scores on high-stakes test. Feitler (1980) found in his study of 3,300 teachers in grades K-12, the most common reason teachers feel pressure is related to student behavior. In this study, teachers rated student misbehavior as the number one cause of their stress. Another study conducted by Kyriacou in 2001 concluded that one of the main reasons for teacher stress comes from maintaining discipline in the classroom. A strong variable that impacts teacher stress is that of the student (Stauffer & Mason, 2013). Students bring many

personal issues with them to school each day. Their varying family structures and the amount of support that exist outside of the school can lead to these behaviors and therefore increase the need for positive behavior support.

If a positive impact is to be made on student achievement and on the well-being of our teachers, it is important that we realize that stressors can seriously harm a teacher's effectiveness in the classroom and cheat children of the impact of effective instruction. Making teachers aware of the symptoms of stress and providing them with resources to manage it, is of utmost importance. As Fimian (1980) states, those who educate teachers, administrators, teachers, and counselors must learn to identify the problems of stress, face the issue, and then learn stress reduction techniques.

General education teachers are not the only teachers that are experiencing problems with stress, our special education teachers are also a concern in many school districts. Fore, Martin, and Binder (2002), states that even prior to the national teacher shortage, educators were voicing concerns about higher burnout and teacher attrition rates in special education when compared to general education (National Association of State Directors of Special Education, 1990). Changes in disciplinary practices such as functional behavior assessments and behavior plans, and the addition of inclusion have contributed to the reports of added stress on special education teachers.

Stress among public school teachers has been the topic of many research studies as violence in schools continues to rise. A study from the National Institute of Education's Safe School Studies report explored the linkage between reported experiences of victimization by 291 urban public-school teachers and task-specific stressors in the performance of the teaching role.

When teachers were asked to describe their fears and concerns about teaching, student discipline topped the list (Dworkin et al., 1988). Although the actual acts of violence are causes of fear, the idea and thought that violence is possible can cause stress in teachers. But as Fritz Redl often noted, what we often forget is that we have ourselves to consider and what happens within teachers while kids are around may influence students as much as the teaching material, the action of one student and the environments (Bloom, 1983). When teachers refuse to pay attention to the emotional impact that student behavior can have on them and how that can affect their professional work in the classroom, they fail to see that it makes them a prime candidate for stress or burnout. A researcher analyzed the relationship between outcomes of teacher well-being, burnout, and the implementation of PBS and found that teachers in schools who implemented PBS with fidelity had much lower levels of burnout and much higher levels of efficacy (Ross et al., 2012).

### **Sources of Teacher Stress**

According to Chang (2009), teachers often feel drained intellectually and emotionally when they continuously deal with disruptive student misbehaviors. Schools and students often suffer when there is an increase in teacher absenteeism because of student misbehavior. According to Blase (1982), teachers identify student misbehavior as a major source of stress. There are significant connections between student misbehavior and teacher burnout in correlation studies and when compared with high or low effects of burnout, student misbehavior is more often connected with higher levels. According to Maslach (1999) and Tonder and Williams (2009), teachers are more susceptible to occupational burnout than any other



professional field. Burnout is not a temporary problem, but rather it is a repeated cycle of unknown expectations and negative experiences (Zabel et al., 1984).

A study by Lawrenson & McKinnon (1982) found that an attrition rate of 48% over a 3-year period was found when 33 teachers were surveyed regarding teacher recruitment and burnout rates. This study concluded that the attrition rate of teachers of the emotionally disturbed students is high and that administrators should be aware of the impact. Buchanan (2012) conducted a similar study that set out to understand why teachers leave the education profession before retirement. Buchanan interviewed 22 teachers that had left teaching early. The results indicate that none of the teachers surveyed had any desire to return to teaching. The common reasons include a lack of support from their principals when dealing with student discipline, lack of proper training, loss of self-confidence, day to day heavy workloads, and an unhealthy school setting and culture. Moore (2012) found that teachers who taught in middle schools had a 31.8% increase in the chance that they would experience dissatisfaction and teachers in rural schools had a 12% increase in the chance of becoming unhappy with their jobs. Additionally, the chances of teachers being dissatisfied lowered by 30.9% with proper classroom management and those schools with high levels of administrative support had a 65.4% decrease in the chances of being unhappy (Moore, 2012).

Stauffer and Mason (2013) conducted a study that identified stressors for teachers. They interviewed teachers in lower socioeconomic schools and some who taught in a higher socioeconomic school. They found that 91% of teachers from both schools felt that the sources of stress were lack of external and internal administration support, lack of resources, school

accountability pressures, and too many unrealistic demands and expectations. They also report that 67% of all teachers found that student behavior and attitudes were instructional stressors.

Zedan (2012) used a survey to measure teacher stress and found that 91.3% of teachers experience stress at various levels: 55.1% felt low-to-low levels, 36.2 felt high-to-high levels. The results also indicate that the 10 most stressful factors for teachers are in schools; Overload classes; problems in pupil behavior; disdain of pupils for class assignments; pupils without motivation; lack of teaching resources; violence in schools; inconvenient working conditions; lack of public understanding of the burden on teachers; overload study programs; and integration of pupils with special needs (Zedan, 2012, p. 268).

The biggest problem for teachers in this study was that led to burnout is management of student behavior issues and classrooms that are overcrowded (Zedan (2012)). These results are comparable to a study done by Grayson and Alvarez (2008) that reveals that students' inappropriate behaviors in fact do increase teachers' levels of stress. These studies are important to understanding the sources and cause of stressors for teachers so that strategies can be found to reduce stress that eventually leads to teacher burnout. Data from research reveals that preventing burnout and stress in teachers is possible when teachers are properly trained to better handle student problem behaviors.

### **Professional Development**

Teacher training is the key to long term and successful implementation. Today's teachers must be able to accommodate students with moderate to severe learning and behavioral problems. They have to teach in areas that are not supported through appropriate training and work under harder conditions than ever before. New teacher training should include courses that outline

effective behavior interventions and strategies. Research that has been conducted on problem behaviors gives us an understanding of behavior that could lead to prevention of more serious responses and possible violent episodes. Examining these behaviors will reveal relationships that could inform and improve teaching practices in schools. Teachers that work with children should engage in intentional and clear teaching of social and emotional learning. Many schools have guidance counselors that are trained in social and emotional learning standards but are often not the ones facilitating the strategies in the classroom. Educators must be informed of best practices and behavior laws that come from the state level so that they can be effective in the classroom. National Middle School Association, (2010) encourages middle school level educators to create safe, inclusive, and supportive environments for all students in hopes of combating students' insecurities and fears that often lead to these behaviors. Specific training needs to be provided to educators to ensure they are well equipped to combat the student behavior issues and high personal stress levels that are pushing teachers out of the profession. Providing professional development training that focuses on Positive Behavior Supports is one way to provide educators with needed supports and the necessary skills to help students correct negative behaviors.

### **Positive Behavior Supports**

Positive behavior support (PBS) has been growing over the last 25 years. It initially began within the field of developmental disabilities and then emerged from three major sources: applied behavior analysis, the inclusion movement, and values (Carr et al., 2002). During this period, PBS expanded its programs across a large range of populations and through multiple

tiered levels of implementation. As a result, there have been some inconsistencies and confusion regarding the definition of PBS.

The approach that came to be known as PBS emerged in the mid-1980s as an alternative option to the traditional behavior management practices that made known the manipulation of consequences to induce behavior change (Kincaid et al., 2016). Before the arrival of PBS, extreme methods of punishments, some even including shock, were used on some of the more severe behavior cases. When the new positive approach to managing behaviors began it was referred to as non-aversive behavior management. In the early 1990's, the label "positive behavioral support" began to be used (Horner et al., 1990) and it was becoming adopted as the more preferred approach for managing problem behaviors by those in the occupation. PBS developed a set of standards of practice and has been expanding through all populations of children and adults with a variety of diagnosis and challenges. PBS was designed to not only treat groups but also individuals. The logic of multi-tiered systems was accepted by PBS researchers and program developers as a basis for promoting and encouraging desirable appropriate behavior among entire populations and maybe even preventing the emergence of violent behaviors (Kincaid et al., 2016). During the first ten years of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, PBS became a major program used in the restructuring of school discipline. The amendments in 1997 made to the IDEA began to introduce the label "positive behavioral interventions and supports (PBIS)". A recent essay published in the Journal of Positive Behavior Interventions discussed how these terms emerged and the advantages that each brought to the field (Dunlap et al., 2014). The authors concluded "positive behavior support" as the best term to refer to the entire enterprise of PBS and realized that PBIS would continue to be best for school-based applications.

Other terms were also endorsed in connection with PBS. For instance, program-wide positive behavior support (PWPBS) is used in early childhood programs; school-wide positive behavior support (SWPBS) is used in schools with students in kindergarten through Grade 12 and is referred to as PBIS or PBS.

The definitions of PBS are varied and are presented as an application, applied science, technology, procedures, an approach, or a framework. The most common definition refers to quality of life being the goal and focus on outcomes for the student. As suggested by Dunlap et al. (2014), those within and outside of the field should be using the same definition. The most updated and unified definition is that PBS is an approach to behavior support that includes ongoing processes of research-based assessments, intervention, and data-based decision making that is focused on building social competencies, creating supportive programs, and preventing the repeat of problem behaviors (Kincaid et al., 2016). PBS is a science that uses educational methods to increase a student's behavior choices and used change methods to redesign a student living environment to enhance quality of life and to minimize problem behaviors (Carr et al., 2002). The goal is to change their behavior in a manner that gives all stakeholders the opportunity to have an improved quality of life. A secondary goal of using PBS is to make the problem behavior become so irrelevant to the student in a socially acceptable way that will reduce or eliminate the episodes of problem behaviors. Using positive behavior can increase the possibility of success when at school and during family time at home.

Positive behavior support should be viewed as an ongoing process and not a one-time implementation or fix-all. PBS is considered a training program and a maintenance program (Willert & Willert, 2000). Administrators should ensure that teachers have the training and

knowledge about best practices and hold their teachers to high standards when implementing this program. Teachers should keep their focus on replacement behaviors and pre-correction of those behaviors. If students that are exhibiting signs of serious antisocial behavior are not given effective individualized interventions by the age of eight, the chances increase that they will be significant problems for our society (Kazdin, 1987). Administrators have an important job when it comes to implementation of PBS, they must change the public and teachers' attitudes toward children who have these challenging behaviors. They must change views of disciplinary procedures from punishment to reform. This will mean informing teachers of why behaviors occur and getting to the root of the behaviors rather than resorting immediately to traditional forms of punishments. Failure to do so will refer the responsibility of correction to other agencies like correctional facilities, hospitals and treatment centers. These services are more expensive not only to the individual, but also to taxpayers.

Positive Behavior Support (PBS) has become, for many, the approach of choice for individuals with different characteristics and used for a range of different environmental settings, circumstances, and challenges (Knoster, 2003). It is an approach that is focused on improving quality of life and resolving problem behaviors (Dunlap et al., 2010). It emerged in the mid 1980's as a set of intervention strategies that was meant to be used in a variety of environments. The primary goal of the program is not only to improve the quality of life of students but also to gain an understanding of the variables that cause problem behaviors and then use that knowledge to teach new skills for controlling or rearranging the environment so that it will result in appropriate desirable behaviors. Many schools and districts have not only developed policies to place them in compliance with the passed legislations and new laws, but they have also begun to

implement programs like PBIS as a means to improve the overall school culture and environment (Pugh & Chitiyo, 2012; Reinke et al., 2012; Simonsen & Sugai, 2013). PBS is designed to work with an entire school or individual students for developing prevention strategies and early interventions. Applied behavior analysis has made two major important contributions to PBS (Carr et al., 2002). First, it has provided an element of conceptual framework that is relevant to behavior change (Carr et al., 2012). Second, it has provided a number of assessment and intervention strategies that can be used by schools (Carr et al., 2002). Problem behaviors can range from aggression, self-injury, disruption, noncompliance, to withdrawal and can all be associated with PBS.

Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) is an evidence-based three-tiered framework to improve and collect data and practices affecting student outcomes every day (PBIS, n.d.). PBIS is said to create schools where all students can be successful. PBIS is similar to RTI in the way that it follows a tiered approach. School-wide Positive Behavior Supports can also be described as a data driven, team based approach for establishing effective behavioral practices and methods that prevent the development or worsening of the problem behavior and encourages the teaching and reinforcement of social expectations for all students by all staff (Sugai et al., 2008).

Tier 1 establishes a basis of regular and proactive support while preventing unwanted behaviors (PBIS, n.d.). Schools provide these supports to all students, school wide. This tier focuses on teaching skills and expectations of appropriate student behavior. The idea is to intervene early before the negative behaviors begin to occur. If you notice that a student is getting ready to exhibit bad behaviors, one would intervene before the behavior starts with

engagement strategies that are meant to take that student's mind off the negative behavior. The first tier, considered primary prevention, provides interventions schoolwide, such as teaching expectations, providing incentives, and using evidence-based classroom management strategies (Tillery et al., 2010).

Tier 2 provides students that are not able to achieve success in Tier 1 and are at risk for developing more serious behaviors with individualized targeted support (PBIS, n.d.). The focus in this tier is to practice proper social skills, self-management of behaviors, and interventions to provide academic support (PBIS, n.d.). This tier includes small groups rather than the whole class, with usually ten or more students participating. It is more focused than Tier 1 but less focused than Tier 3 (PBIS, n.d.).

The second tier is targeted to individual students using social skills training and management strategies. Tier 2 interventions can demonstrate positive effects for up to 67% of those students that are referred (PBIS, n.d.). This would mean that students would have continuous and available access to interventions within 72 hours of their referral that are functions and assessments based (PBIS, n.d.). The PBIS framework doesn't just work with school-wide and targeted support, it's also a successful way to address dangerous and highly disruptive behaviors that create obstacles to the learning environment of others as well as the student (PBIS, n.d.).

At Tier 3, students receive more intensive, individualized support to improve their behavioral as well as academic outcomes (PBIS, n.d.). The third tier provides intensive, individualized interventions to those students that are high-risk (Tillery et al., 2010). At this level, schools rely on formal assessment data to determine a student's need and required



interventions. Tier 3 strategies work for not only general education students but also students with disabilities. These include developmental delays, autism, and some emotional disorders (PBIS, n.d.).

When applied to the classroom setting, the key components of Schoolwide Positive Behavior Supports and Interventions (SWPBS) include clearly defining classroom expectations, teaching and encouraging these expectations, defining student consequences, consistently ensuring effective and positive consequences, and applying a collaborative, problem solving model to identify and monitor best practices, such as function-based behavior support plans sometimes called Behavior Intervention Plans (Sugai & Horner, 2006; Sugai et al., 2008).

Another approach Functional Analysis is a prescriptive approach to a student that is used to determine (a) what function the violent behavior serves, (b) what physical or environmental factors are associated with the behavior, and (c) what responses might be “Functionally equivalent” or serve the same purpose (Guetzloe & Rockwell, 1998). According to Kauffman (1997), functional analysis requires that three strategies be used for collecting information: (a) interviews with the student, family and anyone else that may have knowledge of the behavior or the student; (b) observations of the student and the different environments they are in; and (c) solid manipulations of the environment, antecedent events, and consequences. The goal of this assessment is to change the behaviors that are problematic to those that are socially acceptable alternative behaviors that serve the same purpose. Children are taught to recognize the situations or events that trigger the problem behaviors as a warning sign and focus on replacement behaviors. Since the teacher can observe and help the child become aware of what behaviors lead up to the incident, they can help them know when to seek assistance. These could include

increased breathing, increased muscle tension, raised voice levels, talking fast, a change in voice tone, or movement from an area (Goldstein, 1988; Trower,1995). Teaching students to recognize these behaviors is a crucial first step in learning to control behaviors. It is important to note that this does not happen overnight and will require repeated practice before it becomes a habit that the child uses on their own.

According to Guetzloe and Rockwell (1998), children learn multiple ways to show aggression that they do not use because they are impulsive or because they believe that violence works better and faster. Teaching children the beneficial reasons to try other ways to respond to situations that they do not like will increase the odds that they will trust these responses rather than violence or problem behaviors (Guetzloe & Rockwell, 1998). In other words, children that want attention should be taught to earn it for socially appropriate behaviors. Rewards should be given to those that make the appropriate choices.

Universal prevention focused school-wide intervention is usually beneficial for about 80-90% of students (Mayer, 1999; Taylor-Greene et al., 1997; Walker et al., 1996). A study completed by Herrenkohl et al. (2003), found a lower probability of violence within youths was connected to how well they bonded at school by age the age of 15. Bullock (1998), described the that functional assessments are used to determine the reasons for a student's behavior and the process for conducting the behavior assessment. Feldman et al., (2002) conducted a study involving 20 students that had severe problem behaviors by implementing the PBS protocol including functional assessments and reinforcement-based interventions. The results conclude that significant reductions in undesirable behaviors and an increase in positive behaviors exist. These results lasted for three years.

To successfully implement positive behavior strategies, teachers must be trained in the following (a) child development, (b) factors related to the development of violent behavior, (c) interventions strategies, and (d) appropriate curriculum used in PBS (Guetzloe & Rockwell, 1998). Over the past few years, PBS has become more widely used by schools in the United States which has also caused a rise in interest among researchers. Fallon et al. (2012) reviewed literature on behavior supports and culture and then developed a recommended list of best practices gathered from data after he surveyed school staff members about their thoughts on acceptability, feasibility, and the efficacy of these practices. Overall, the surveyed teachers found PBS to be acceptable in all of these practices (Fallon et al., 2015).

Another study conducted by Reinke et al., (2013) evaluated the use of classroom-level behavior management strategies that align with PBS. Findings indicate that the use of specific praise by teachers and the ratio of positive to negative interactions were not ideal. Teachers who praise their students less and used harsh reprimands had higher rates of classroom disruptions and reported being emotionally exhausted. Those teachers with higher rates of praise reported being more efficient in the classroom.

Effective implementation requires schools to have a solid team that is focused on continually reviewing procedures. The role of the PBS team is to problem solve and coordinate practices around five steps of PBS. These steps are defining behaviors, completing a functional assessment, developing a data plan that explains the behaviors, generating a support plan for the student, and implementing, evaluating, and modifying the plan on an as needed basis (Bambara & Kern, 2005). The difference in PBS to other behavior management systems is that the support

allows for a positive interaction between the teacher and the students. The student is given the opportunity to make a better choice rather than given a direct order.

### **Implementing Positive Behavior Supports**

Many schools struggle to achieve the system-wide change that is necessary in order to shift from a reactive discipline program to a more proactive system like PBS (Feuerborn et al., 2016). Results from a recent study on implementing School-wide Positive Behavior and Interventions with fidelity had significantly lower levels of burn-out and significantly higher levels of efficacy in teachers (Ross et al., 2012). Many of the research suggests that teachers in elementary schools are more likely to see teaching behavior skills as just part of the job, whereas teachers of secondary schools seem to place the majority of the responsibility on the students to already know what they are supposed to be doing and just do it.

Over the past decade, almost 14,000 schools across the United States are currently implementing positive behavior supports in their systems (PBIS, n.d.). Despite this increase, teachers still claim to struggle with classroom management; many even consider classroom management to be the most tiring portion of their day (Reinke et al., 2013). Teachers also report not having the necessary training needed to accurately implement behavior management programs. Classroom behavior management practices that are currently being implemented that do not focus on positive behavior supports are associated with negative outcomes for students and teachers (Reinke et al., 2013). Reinke et al. (2013) examined teachers' use of specific classroom practices that aligned with PBS intervention and supports. He also evaluated the relationship between the teachers reported successes regarding classroom management along with their level of exhaustion and observed teachers' classroom management practices. He found

that a positive correlation among teachers' self-efficacy and teachers who use praise in the classroom exist.

Bambara, Goh, Kern, and Caskie (2012) conducted a study to find what barriers and enablers were a problem or a possible benefit to the PBS process. The results indicate that structure, school climate, and professional development were perceived barriers to implementing PBS (Bambara et al. 2012). Organizational culture had the highest ranking in this study. Results also indicate that the strongest barriers to implementing PBS were related to the beliefs of the school's staff and their loyalty to remain with traditional practices.

Ross, Romer, and Horner (2012) looked at the relationship between the implementation of PBS and teacher's well-being. He compared two schools, one that implemented the program with high fidelity and the other with low fidelity. He sought out to see if implementing PBS is effective at improving the culture in the school. He used a survey that had three measures, teachers' demographics, level of stress, and levels of burnout. Results show that giving positive rewards to students was significant in predicting depersonalization. Schaubman et al. (2011) conducted a pilot study with eight teachers using positive behavior supports and interventions as well as implementing collaborative problem solving in schools. The data shows reductions in ADHD characteristics, student misbehaviors, teacher beliefs about student behaviors, and overall levels of teacher stress (Schaubman et al., 2011).

Many times, schools focus so much on the paperwork and tasks related to PBS that they fail to focus their attention on whether teachers are ready to properly implement the program or have been provided enough support and training to be effective. Through the use of clear and consistent behavioral expectations, schoolwide assemblies, and reinforcement practices, there

was a huge improvement in hallway behavior, with an increase of 134.9% for compliance (Leedy et al., 2004). The procedures presented from using a zero-tolerance policy create a behavior punishment environment and can lead to teachers and administration becoming reactive and actually increase the rate of negative behaviors. PBS workshops indicated a decrease of 80% in office discipline referrals the first year and 76% the next year, indicating an overall decrease (Leedy et al., 2004). Another school in a rural district reported a 39% increase in positive behavior and a 33% decrease in office referrals when using PBS systems.

Teachers will need a range of planned responses and effective supports to choose from or they will resort back to traditional methods like office referrals. This response removes the student from a situation and for repeat offenders this is often the student's desired consequence. If a student views the classroom as the problem and their behavior removes them from the problem, this is reinforcing their problem behaviors. Students often see their behaviors as a way to escape the demands of the classroom. These punishments do not teach new behaviors. Research on negative consequences (Alexrod & Apsche 1983; Wood & Braaten, 1983) reports serious side-effects when a punishment-based approach is chosen. This can include students that attempt to escape or display counter aggression, develop habits to harsh consequences, and experience reinforcement of the punishment. If teachers have a toolkit of responses to use that prevent the behaviors rather than react to them, they will be more likely to use them. Teachers will need to be taught how to design a classroom that produces a reinforcing environment and how to use techniques to decrease problem behaviors. The reinforcing environment will help students to view the classroom as a positive place to be and desire to remain there rather than looking for that escape.

Preventative approaches such as conflict resolution and improving classroom management strategies are more acceptable ways of accountability for interventions than the more popular school security measures like suspensions (Skiba & Peterson, 2000). As early as 1996-97, The National Center for Education Statistic reports document that schools that rely heavily on zero-tolerance policies continue to be less safe than schools that implement fewer components of zero-tolerance. Relying too much on physical security procedures has been associated with an increase in school disorders (Skiba & Peterson, 2000). Students with problem behaviors need support from their teachers. Harsh discipline seems to make them angrier rather than reflective. Throughout elementary school, at-risk students that have the possibilities for developing anti-social behavior display disruptive behavior and can experience social and academic problems that create a gap between them and their teachers and peers (Patterson, 1992). Alienating students with behaviors that are not desirable should not be practiced if we want to teach new behaviors and provide students with positive ways to deal with anger rather than resorting to violence.

A concern that rises from the use of PBS is the scare of practice abandonment. Effectiveness is only as good as the student's outcomes are (McIntosh, 2013). When effective practices are used with fidelity, they are more likely to lead to positive student outcomes and once visible changes are seen by others, the fear of abandonment will decrease. There is a lessened likelihood of practice abandonment by ensuring that ongoing access to professional development and resources are available. McIntosh (2013) states that Positive Behavior Support training has had a positive impact on teachers understanding and the way they respond.

Serious incidents of school violence have put school discipline to the forefront of public consciousness. Despite a drastic increase in the use of zero-tolerance procedures and policies in school systems, there is little evidence suggesting that these procedures have increased school safety or helped to improve student behavior (Skiba & Peterson, 2000). A preventative, early response disciplinary program increases the variety of options that will address violence and disruption (Skiba & Peterson, 2000). Schools in rural districts can no longer hold to the beliefs that school behaviors can be ignored because they happen only in inner city schools. The threat of school violence doesn't discriminate across class, location, or disability label (Skiba & Peterson, 2000).

After each school shooting, experts talk about the causes and impacts of violent behaviors in children and what safety measures need to be put into schools to solve the problem. William and Wilbert (2000), state that both experts and parents will use the trauma model to explain the behavior of children and the supervision model to find solutions. The trauma model suggests that we look at what is causing the behaviors and the supervision model suggest that we use metal detectors and security guards. Teachers are the primary resource that can achieve real solutions in the classroom. Schools stand the best chance of improving students' social skills and problem behaviors by using the classroom as their forum (Willert & Willert, 2000). The classroom provides teachers the time to build routines and habits and make positive changes in student behavior. This expectation can lead to high amounts of stress.

### **Barriers to Implementing Positive Behavior Supports**

The successful implementation of PBS is crucial to success for all students and to alleviate the potential for teachers to experience stress. One of the criteria for successful



implementation is the understanding the function of the behaviors. Feuerborn & Chinn (2012), found that only two teachers in his interviews talked about and could explain the function of behavior. Teachers either are not sure what the functions of behaviors are, or they are not aware that looking for the functions is important to changing behaviors. Teacher perceptions would improve if proper training was in place. When teachers aren't trained to consider the behavior as functional, they will less likely use the appropriate strategies (Feuerborn & Chinn, 2012). Instead, they will unintentionally resort to traditional behavior methods of sending students to the office. Targeted training on the powerful effects of school-based behavior supports may encourage teachers to feel more in control and thereby increase the possibilities that they will respond in a proactive manner (Zins & Ponti, 1996). According to Admiral et al. (2000), effective management and implementation of PBS is found when solid curriculum, instructional, and managerial strategies are used to maintain student's involvement and lowers the occurrences of management problems. Teachers must understand the content and understand how to implement it.

Additionally, teachers across all schools expressed concern that their colleagues did not buy into or support PBS and would refuse to implement the plan consistently (Feuerborn et al., 2016). They feared that teachers would begin trying and then grow bored and lose consistency. Kincaid (2007) conducted a study that relates to this data. Data from this study reveals that a primary barrier to implementation was staff buy-in. Feuerborn et al. 2016, also states that teachers rely on a personal point of view rather than seeing the overall impact issues can have on an entire staff. In this study, several teachers reported that many teachers do not see the power in having a staff that is united in a program that prevents behaviors. Those teachers that do adhere

to rules and implement a program with fidelity can be left feeling like the minority group in their schools. These issues are clear indicators that having administrator's that hold teachers accountable for implementation is a critical step in taking down this barrier. Inconsistently enforcing consequences for students, whether positive supports or negative consequences is a common theme in many of the teacher interviews done in recent studies. It is not feasible to expect to have all of your staff buy-in to any program but having strong administrative support can help prevent those teachers from completely sabotaging the efforts of the program.

Another barrier that is present when trying to implement PBS into schools is teachers who believe that too many accommodations have been made for one child. They still hold on to the traditional means of discipline which is to change the child's behavior rather than the expectations for the child. Some teachers state that administrators don't trust that teachers know what they are doing and that they have tried different things in the classrooms that would prevent behaviors before they send students to the office (Feuerborn et al., 2016). In his recent study, staff buy-in and support and useful resources were the most common concerns regardless of implementation level (Feuerborn et al., 2016). Also, teacher perceptions of beliefs that conflict with the framework of PBS may be more common in the middle and high schools; 27% of teachers reflected this (Feuerborn et al., 2016).

A significant barrier to implementing PBS in schools is that teachers don't know what to do with the data once it is collected. Muscott et al. (2004) assessed the implementation of a statewide PBS system in New Hampshire and found that only 15 of the 28 schools in the study effectively implemented the program. And after a few months the other 46% of schools had not met the successful implementation. They report time constraints and resources to be a few of the

factors causing the lack of successful implementation. A review done by Bambara et al. (2009) investigated what others thought the barriers to implementing PBS were. The findings reveal that factors such as school culture, time, training, and support are all barriers to proper implementation.

### **Teacher Control of Student Behaviors**

In recent years, education policies have changed to require schools to include students with special needs in the general education setting. Many of these students will be diagnosed with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHA). With the rising cases of ADHD, this means that each year every teacher will teach a student with ADHD. Individuals with ADHD exhibit symptoms of inattention and/or hyperactivity or impulsivity which often show as behavioral and academic problems in school settings (American Psychiatric Association, 2013). Jennings and Greenberg (2009) described the working environment of teachers as a rising number of students that are underprepared for school, and many have serious emotional and behavior problems. Gastra et al. 2020 conducted a study that examined teachers' experiences with classroom management strategies (CMSs) for those students with problem behaviors. They looked at the frequency and the perceived effectiveness of the classroom management strategies. Results differ according to certain teacher characteristics, such as years of teaching. There is also evidence that teachers that have more knowledge and training regarding ADHD and classroom management strategies are more likely to see changes in the classroom as beneficial. CMSs that are more individualized are less frequently used by teachers. These CMSs often lead to the largest behavioral improvement (Gastra et al., 2016).

Another study conducted by Tillery et al., 2010, found that teachers tend to work on correcting individual discipline issues rather than be proactive and preventive. These same teachers had training in PBIS but stated that they were unfamiliar with the concept and found themselves to be strong influences on student behavior. When interviewed, teachers could describe the use of positive behavior strategies but could not connect it to previous training or the term PBIS. According to the results of this study, the indication is that many teachers are randomly choosing interventions that are not necessarily individualized to a particular student. Most teachers continue to use these negative measures of discipline that are applied in a one size fits all manner that do not yield results. These methods of discipline would include removal of privileges, reprimands, suspensions, detentions, and time-out and all appear to be harmful. They can actually harm the student by reinforcing the negative behaviors. It is important to understand teacher perceptions of student behavior to reduce the likelihood of burnout. According to Whiteman et al. (1985), as experiences of burnout increase, the way that teachers interpret the student behavior becomes more negative.

Without reform of school discipline practice, increased instructional inclusion for students with emotional and behavioral problems may lead to an increase in the number of students to experience exclusion when they engage in disruptive behavior in general education settings (Hence, 2016). Despite years of policy encouraging tougher responses, disorder and violence has not stopped. Overusing suspensions places an important barrier that transforms any attempt to better meet the behavioral and emotional needs of students with disabilities into a possible source of conflict with administrators and teachers (Hence, 2016).

## **Teacher Perspectives of PBS**

Understanding the social behaviors that teachers believe in is critical for school success and can contribute to the development and implementation of effective behavioral supports and help teachers to better prepare students for successful school transitions across the K-12 grade span (Lane et al., 2010). A research study conducted by Lane (2010) concluded that teachers saw four characteristics in student behaviors as important. These four items have been considered as the most important in the last 15 years of research. The four characteristics were having control over tempers with peers, adults, following directions, and following through with instructions.

Another study conducted by Yarrow (2009) revealed that a group of teachers labeled as the disheartened group reported that 75% of teachers have feelings of being burnout. One of the reasons for this feeling was disruptive student behaviors and classroom management. The teachers complained that they were not properly trained in supporting students with behavior problems. Another study revealed that teachers with students that had difficulty handling student behaviors also had feelings of helplessness and frustration as well as of embarrassment and increased stress (Barnes et al., 2007).

Using school wide behavior programs such as PBS will only be dependent upon how and if teachers implement the practices in their classrooms. Teacher buy-in and support is critical to effectively implementing PBS school-wide. A study observed considerable differences in teacher perceptions of student behavior and believe that these differences may be because of the different levels of understanding of behavioral concepts (Feuerborn & Chinn, 2012). New teachers may be more affected by the instructional disruptions caused by outward behaviors than their more

experienced colleagues (Emmer & Stough, 2001). This same study found that newer teachers saw eye rolling as breaking the rules and disrespectful whereas experienced teachers found these same behaviors as silly and not worth the teachers' attention. This alone would be cause for steps toward a common definition and consistency with implementation school wide.

### **Summary**

Teachers are held to high expectations each year on student achievement data, all while dealing with job and parent expectations, and challenging student behaviors. This brings an emotional hardship for teachers in adjusting to a rapidly changing school climate. Problematic student behavior can influence a teacher's stress levels. Implementing PBS is a long-term practice to improving outcomes in school climate and can positively impact the relationships between students and teachers (Ross et al., 2011). This positive relationship will ultimately improve teacher stress amounts.

In this study, the theoretical rationale was examined. The theoretical rationale was based on Albert Bandura who first created Social Cognitive Theory in 1986. The beliefs of social cognitive theory were that people learned best when they observed others (Bandura, 1988). He stated that people become more cognitively aware of their own behaviors when they observe the behavior of others. Additionally, teacher stress was examined. Teacher's feeling of success is the application of (Bandura's, 1977) theory of self-efficacy, where a teachers' thoughts about their abilities to correctly execute strategies to improve student behaviors in the classroom becomes the item that is being measured.

### **Chapter 3. Research Methodology**

This quantitative study was designed to determine whether there is a significant difference in teachers' stress as a result of the effective implementation of positive behavior interventions and supports. Additionally, the study will focus on significant beliefs about positive behavior supports as an effective intervention in reducing student problem behaviors and reducing teacher stress as a result. Furthermore, the variation in differences in beliefs by grade level taught, years of experience, age, and gender will be investigated. This chapter describes the methodology used to make these determinations. Sections included in this chapter are research questions and null hypothesis, sample, instrumentation, data collection, and data analysis.

#### **Research Design**

To thoroughly understand the potential relationship between perceived positive behavior supports and teacher stress levels of teachers in Northeast Tennessee in grades K-8<sup>th</sup>, a non-experimental quantitative research design was chosen. Quantitative research's primary purpose is to explain causes in the naturally occurring phenomena that exist in the world. The knowledge that is generated through quantitative research focuses on measuring and describing phenomenon. This research design is subclassified as nonexperimental research. This nonexperimental research design used an electronic survey with Likert-type questions to evaluate the level of agreeability of participants in relation to the implementation level of positive behavior support and teacher stress.

#### **Research Questions and Null Hypothesis**

The following research questions guided this quantitative study:

Research Question 1: Is there a significant difference between the implementation of positive behavior supports and teacher stress?

H<sub>a1</sub>: There is a significant difference between the implementation of positive behavior supports and teacher stress.

H<sub>01</sub>: There is no significant difference between the implementation of positive behavior supports and teacher stress.

Research Question 2: Is there a significant difference in teachers' years of teaching and teachers' stress?

H<sub>a2</sub>: There is a significant difference between number of years taught and teacher stress.

H<sub>02</sub>: There is not a significant difference between number of years taught and teacher stress.

Research Question 3: Is there a significant difference in teachers' gender and teachers' stress?

H<sub>a3</sub>: There is a significant difference between gender and teacher stress.

H<sub>03</sub>: There is not a significant difference between gender and teacher stress.

Research Question 4: Is there a significant difference in teachers' age and teachers' stress?

H<sub>a4</sub>: There is a significant difference between age taught and teacher stress.

H<sub>04</sub>: There is not a significant difference between age and teacher stress.

### **Instrumentation**

In order to determine the perceptions of teachers regarding the effective implementation of positive behavior supports and interventions, a survey instrument will be administered. This survey will be sent electronically to school principals to distribute to teachers. The survey will be



available for one week. No identifiable information was collected, and all participants were adults in the United States, so no ethical concerns should exist.

### **Effective Behavior Supports Survey**

The Effective Behavior Supports (EBS) Survey developed by Sugai et al. (2000) at the University of Oregon has been used in previous research and was updated in 2003. The psychometric characteristics of the EBS were examined by Laxton (2006) and found the Current Status alpha coefficients to range from .82 to .95, demonstrating strong internal consistency. The purpose of the survey is to assess the presence of positive behavior support (PBS) systems in schools. The survey assesses both the current status and the need for improvement of PBS systems. The four behavior support systems are (a) school-wide discipline, (b) non-classroom management systems, (c) classroom management systems, and (d) systems for individual students with chronic problem behaviors (Laxton, 2006). For this study, classroom management systems were used. For each question, participants rate their current level of agreeability on a Likert scale of 1-7 ranging from highly disagree to highly agree. The presence of PBS components necessary for each system can then be calculated. The two behavior support systems assessed are based on the conceptual framework of PBS. This includes applied behavior analysis, teaching acceptable norms of social behavior, including those with disabilities, planning, self-determination, and involving the entire family and support system (Rentz, 2007).

### **Teacher Stress Inventory**

In order to determine the levels of stress that teachers feel related to the implementation of positive behavior supports and interventions, a Teacher Stress Inventory (TSI) survey was administered. The Teacher Stress Inventory was developed by Fimian (1984) to measure

teachers' perception of stress as it relates to their occupation. TSI is an instrument for measuring occupation stress in teachers. The Teacher Stress Inventory is a 49-item, 10-factor instrument that assesses the degree of strength of occupational stress experienced by American teachers in public schools. The stressful events measured by the Teacher Stress Inventory are different from those in other scales that address general stress or burnout in that the TSI assesses numerous stressful teaching events experienced on the job and in the schools (Fimian & Fastenau, 1987). The five stress source factors are Time Management, Work-Related Stressors, Professional Distress, Discipline and Motivation, and Professional Investment; the five stress manifestation factors are Emotional Manifestations, Fatigue Manifestations, Cardiovascular Manifestations, Gastronomic Manifestations, and Behavioral Manifestations. The TSI originally used a 5-point Likert-type scale; however, for this study the scale was adapted to show a 7-point level of agreement that ranges from highly disagree to highly agree. The five-stress source and five-stress manifestations scores are totaled and divided by 10 to obtain a Total Stress Score. The higher the score is, the higher the stress, and/or significance. There are nine demographic questions, however, only three of them were used for this study. This study used teacher age, gender, and years of teaching.

Fimian and Fastenau (1990) reanalyzed data that has been collected since 1980 to show that the TSI was a valid and reliable instrument. A sample of 3,401 teachers with twenty-one subsamples from seven states in the eastern United States was studied. Results of the study showed these ten factors were internally consistent and related to each other: time management, work-related stressors, professional distress, discipline and motivation, professional investment, emotional manifestations, fatigue manifestations, cardiovascular manifestations, gastronomic

manifestations, and behavioral stress manifestations (Fimian & Fastenau, 1990). Overall, the stress sources were experienced at stronger levels than were the stress manifestations. A Correlation analysis indicated that each stress factor was related to all of the others and that each was related even more strongly to the total strength of stress. Therefore, the TSI was deemed a reliable and valid instrument (Fimian & Fastenau, 1990).

### **Site Selection**

Nine schools were sent request through email asking for approval to send surveys to the teachers in their districts. These districts were chosen to represent the upper East Tennessee First Region. These schools participate in using positive behaviors supports to reduce problem behaviors in students. Out of the nine, four approved the study. Washington County, Johnson County, and Carter County participated in the study. Elizabethton City School Systems were on fall break during the time the surveys were sent out. Washington County School system has eight schools that surveys were sent to, Carter County schools have nine schools, and Johnson County has six schools. Each school principal received the survey along with a consent form and letter explaining the research study.

### **Population and Sample**

This study will include a sample of teachers from the Northeast Tennessee region during the 2020-2021 school year. Nine school districts were selected to participate. Three of the nine districts participated in the study. A request for permission to conduct this study was sent to all selected districts. The school districts will include three county schools. Participants included 104 teachers out an estimated 782 teachers. The survey was sent to kindergarten through eighth grade general education and special education teachers from county school systems. Participants

will be selected based on the following criteria: (1) written consent from school principal/district, (2) participants that complete both surveys.

### **Data Collection**

Following approval from district level leaders for each of the participating districts in the Northeast Tennessee region, the dissertation committee, and the Institutional Review Board (IRB), surveys were distributed. District personnel distributed an invitation to participate to all kindergarten through eighth grade general and special education teachers in each of the participating districts. This email invitation included a detailed letter about the purpose of the study, participation guidelines, and a hyperlink to the survey. Follow-up emails were sent to those districts not responding as a reminder and also to encourage participation. Google forms was used to create an online survey. The electronic survey was comprised of three sections, Effective Behavior Supports, Teacher Stress Inventory, and demographics. There were 3 demographic statements that asked participants their age, years of teaching, and gender. There were 49 statements that asked the respondents to indicate their level of agreement of their stress levels via a 7-point Likert type scale ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree. There were 11 statements that asked respondents to indicate their level agreement of positive behavior supports implementation via a 7-point Likert type scale ranging from high support to low support. Responses were collected and stored electronically. No identifiable information was collected, and all participants were consenting adults, therefore, no ethical concerns should exist.

### **Data Analysis**

Data analysis for this quantitative study was performed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). Completed surveys were used to determine descriptive details about

teacher beliefs of the effective implementation of Positive Behavior Supports, amounts of stress while applying the implementation of Positive Behavior Supports, age, gender, and years of teaching experience. Descriptive data included the identification of means, standard deviations, frequencies, and also percentages to summarize the data. Research question 1 was analyzed using an independent sample *t*-test. The levels of positive behavior support were compared to teacher stress. Research question 2 was analyzed using an analysis of variance (ANOVA). The grouping variable was years of teaching experience and the independent variable was teacher stress. Research question 3 was analyzed using an independent samples *t*-test. The teacher's levels of stress were compared to gender. Research question 4 was analyzed using an analysis of variance (ANOCA). The grouping variable was teachers age and the independent variable was teachers stress.

A series of independent t-test were conducted to measure the differences in Research Questions 1 and 3. An Analysis of variance (ANOVA) was used to compare groups of teacher stress, Research Question 2 and 4.

### **Ethical Considerations**

This quantitative research study was voluntary and provided participants the option to give consent or decline to participate. The ones who participated identities were kept confidential because no email addresses or names were collected during the online survey. Prior to sending out the survey the research proposal was reviewed and accepted by the Institutional Review Board. An email was sent to the school district directors of school that included the survey questions, letter of consent, and IRB approval letter requesting permission to permit their teachers to participate in this study. There were no potential hazards associated with this

research study because it was voluntary, and an anonymous online survey was utilized for the collection of data.

### **Summary**

Chapter 3 was a review of the research method and design used to examine the difference in positive behavior supports and teacher stress. Chapter 3 also reviewed the research method and design used to determine if differences were present between teachers' years of teaching, age, gender and teacher stress, as well as the difference between positive behavior supports and teachers' stress. The data findings are revealed in Chapter 4.

## Chapter 4. Findings

The purpose of this quantitative study was to analyze the effectiveness level of PBIS implementation and how it relates to that of K-8<sup>th</sup> grade Tennessee teachers stress as measured by their perception of their level of stress. The populations of this study were 104 K-8 public school teachers from three school districts in Northeast Tennessee. A survey was sent electronically to all teachers in the selected districts. The survey was completed anonymous, so no records were collected to determine how many responses were collected from each district.

In this chapter, data was presented and analyzed to answer four research questions and four null hypotheses. The following research questions guided this study:

1. Is there a significant difference between the implementation of positive behavior supports and teacher stress?
2. Is there a significant difference in teachers' years of teaching and teachers' stress?
3. Is there a significant difference in teachers' gender and teachers' stress?
4. Is there a significant difference in teachers' age and teachers' stress?

The data was collected via anonymous survey sent through email using Google Forms during the 2020-21 school year. Data were analyzed Effective Behavior Supports (EBS) survey measured on a 7-point Likert scale. Survey items addressed the effectiveness of positive behavior supports implementation on a scale variance of high support to low support.

Data were analyzed from Teacher Stress Inventory (TSI) survey measured on a 7-point Likert scale. Survey items 1-3 addressed demographic information. Items 4-14 were organized into categories. Those categories include time management, work related stress, professional distress, discipline and motivation, professional investments, emotional manifestations, fatigue

manifestations, cardiovascular manifestations, gastronomical manifestations, and behavioral manifestations. An additional covid-19 related stress question was added to the survey but excluded from the data.

In this study, K-8 public school teachers from Northeast Tennessee school districts were asked to participate in a survey. The survey begins with three demographic questions. These demographics included the years of teaching, age, and the gender of the teacher. Results indicated that 26% of respondents had taught from 1-5 years, 31% of respondents had taught from 6-10 years, and 43% of respondents had taught for 11 or more years. In terms of respondents, 11.5% were male and 88.5% were female. Additionally, 20% were younger than 30, 51% were between the ages of 31-49, and 29% were between the ages of 50-71. Table 1 details the respondents' age, table 2 details gender, and table 3 details the years of teaching experience.

### Group Assignments

**Table 1.**

*Distribution of Survey Respondents by Age*

Age of Respondents	# of Respondents	Percent of Respondents
22 – 30	21	20.2
31- 49	53	51
50 - 71	30	28.8



**Table 2.**

*Distribution of Survey Respondents by Gender*

Gender of Respondents	# of Respondents	Percent of Respondents
Male	12	11.5
Female	92	88.5

**Table 3.**

*Distribution of Survey Respondents by Years of Experience*

Years of Experience	# of Respondents	Percent of Respondents
0 - 5	20.2	27
6 - 15	51	32
16 -71	28.8	45

### **Research Questions and Analysis**

Analysis of data was conducted using independent-samples t-tests for Research Questions 1 and 3. One-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) test were used to analyze Research Question 2 and 4. An alpha level of .05 was used for all analyses.

#### **Research Question 1**

Research Question 1: Is there a significant difference between the implementation of positive behavior supports and teacher stress?

H<sub>a1</sub>: There is a significant difference between the implementation of positive behavior supports and teacher stress.

H<sub>o1</sub>: There is not a significant difference between the implementation of positive behavior supports and teacher stress.

An independent *t*-test was conducted to evaluate the relationship between the implementation of positive behavior supports and teacher stress. The grouping variable was the implementation of positive behavior supports. The dependent variable was teacher stress.

The *t*-test revealed no statistically significant difference between positive behavior supports and teacher stress, [ $t(81) = -.082, p = .935$ ]. The mean for teacher stress with high support was ( $M=6.24, SD = 1.78$ ) and the mean for medium/low support was ( $M=6.27, SD = 1.87$ ).

Therefore, the null hypothesis was not rejected. The results indicated reported levels of positive behavior supports were not significantly related to teacher stress. The means and standard deviations for the two groups are reported in Table 4.

**Table 4.**

*Summary of Positive Behavior Supports and Teacher Stress*

Teacher Stress	<i>M</i>	<i>D</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>t-value</i>	<i>Sig. (2-tailed)</i>
High Support	6.24	1.78	81	-.082	.935
Medium/Low Support	6.27	1.87			

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*Note.*  $P < 0.05$

## Research Question 2

Research Question 2: Is there a significant difference in teachers' years of teaching and teachers' stress?

H<sub>a1</sub>: There is a significant difference in teachers' years of teaching and teachers' stress.

H<sub>o1</sub>: There is not a significant difference in teachers' years of teaching and teachers' stress.

A one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted to evaluate the difference in teachers' years of experience and teachers' stress. The factor variable was years of teaching. The factor variable, years of teaching, included three groups: teachers that had taught 0-5 years, 6-15 years, and 16-41 years. The dependent variable was teacher stress. The ANOVA was not significant, [ $F(2,101) = 1.44, p = .241$ ]. Therefore, the null hypothesis was not rejected. The results indicated reported teacher stress was not significantly related to the years of experience of the teacher. Because the overall F test was not significant, a post-hoc comparison was not required. The means and standard deviations for the three groups are reported in Table 5. Figure 1 illustrates the box plot and Figures 2-4 are the frequency distribution of teacher stress and years of teaching experience.

**Table 5.**

*Summary of Teacher Stress and Years of Experience*

Years of Experience	N	M	SD	Sig. (2-tailed)
0 - 5	27	5.76	1.76	.241
6 - 15	32	6.55	1.85	
16 - 41	45	6.13	1.77	

*Note.* P < 0.05

**Table 6.**

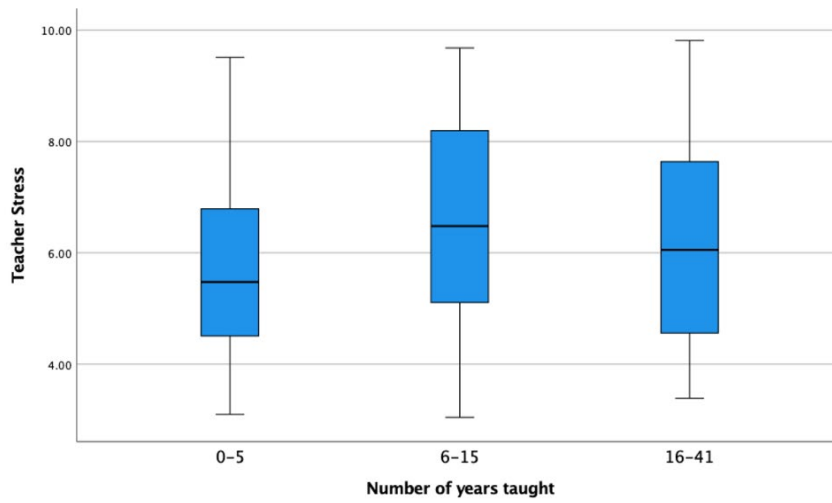
*ANOVA Summary of Teacher Stress and Years of Experience*

Source	SS	df	MS	F
<i>Between Groups</i>	9.254	2	4.627	1.444
<i>Within Groups</i>	323.671	101	3.205	
<i>Total</i>	332.924	103		

*Note.* P < 0.05

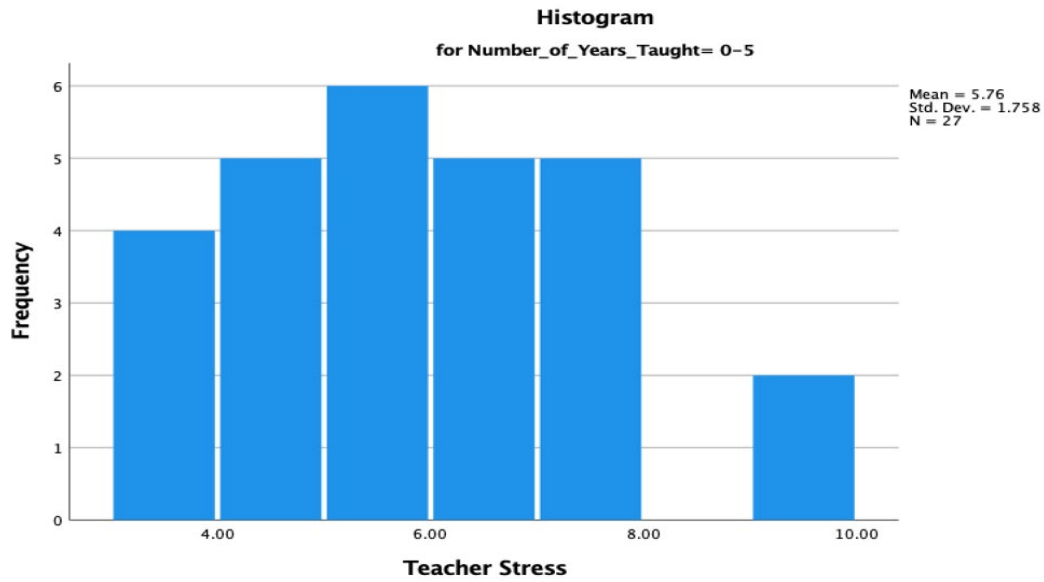
**Figure 1.**

*Box Plot of Teacher Stress and Number of Years Taught*



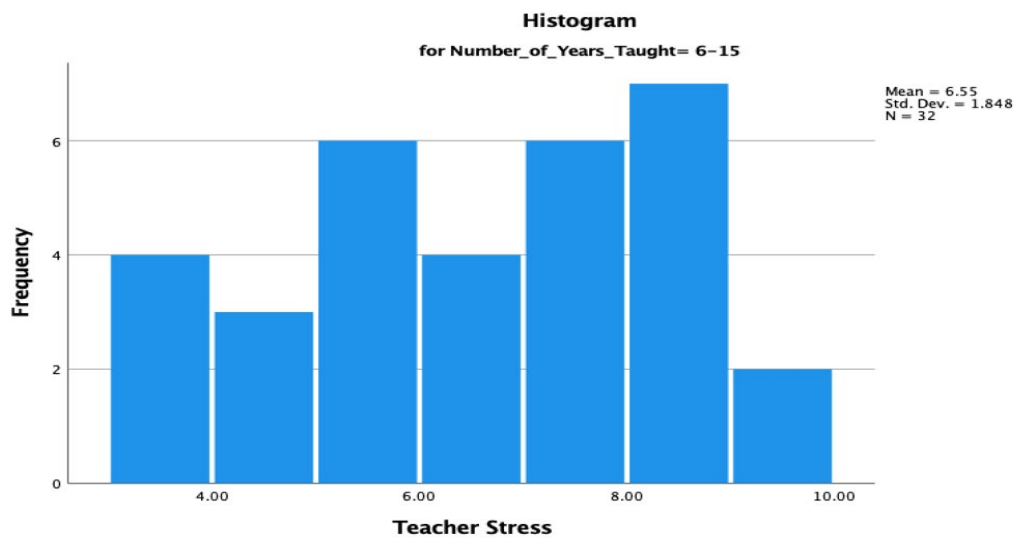
**Figure 2.**

*Frequency of Teacher Stress and 0-5 Years of Teaching Experience*



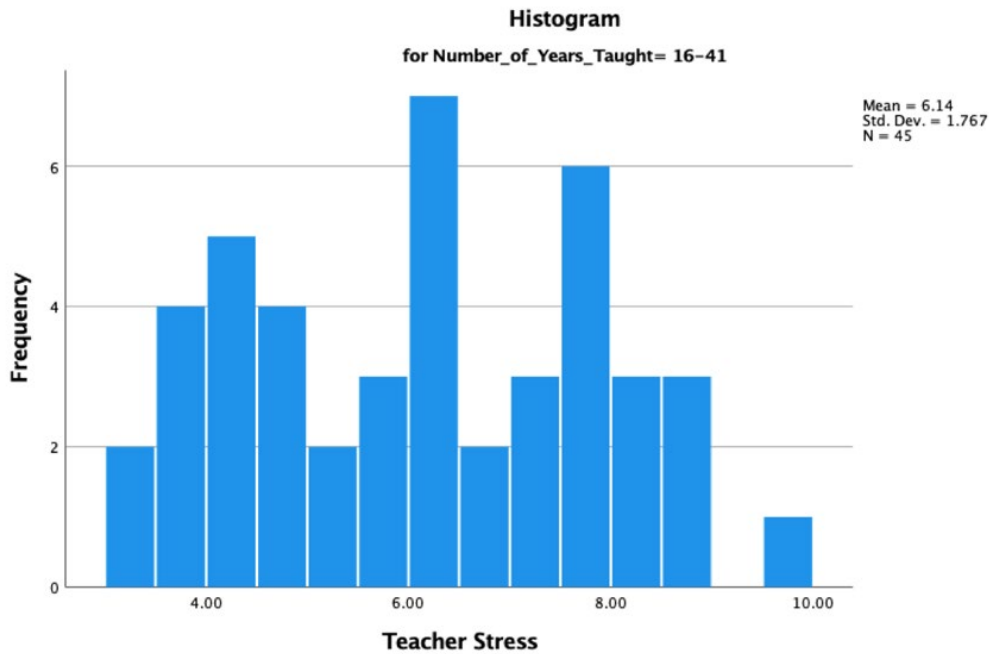
**Figure 3.**

*Frequency of Teacher Stress and 6-15 Years of Teaching Experience*



**Figure 4.**

*Frequency of Teacher Stress and 16-41 Years of Teaching Experience*



### Research Question 3

Research Questions 3: Is there a significant difference between teachers' gender and teacher stress?

H<sub>a1</sub>: There is a significant difference between teachers' gender and teacher stress.

H<sub>o1</sub>: There is not a significant difference between teachers' gender and teacher stress.

An independent *t*-test was conducted to evaluate the difference in teachers' gender and teacher stress. The factor variable was gender. The dependent variable was teacher stress. The *t*-test revealed no statistically significant difference between teachers gender and teacher stress,

[ $t(-.897) = 102, p = .372$ ]. The mean for males was ( $M=5.73, SD = 1.33$ ) and the mean for females was ( $M=6.23, SD = 1.85$ ). Therefore, the null hypothesis was not rejected. The results indicated reported that teachers' gender was not significantly related to teacher stress. The means and standard deviations for the two groups are reported in Table 7. Figure 5 illustrates the box plot and Figures 6-7 are the frequency distribution of teacher stress and gender.

**Table 7.**

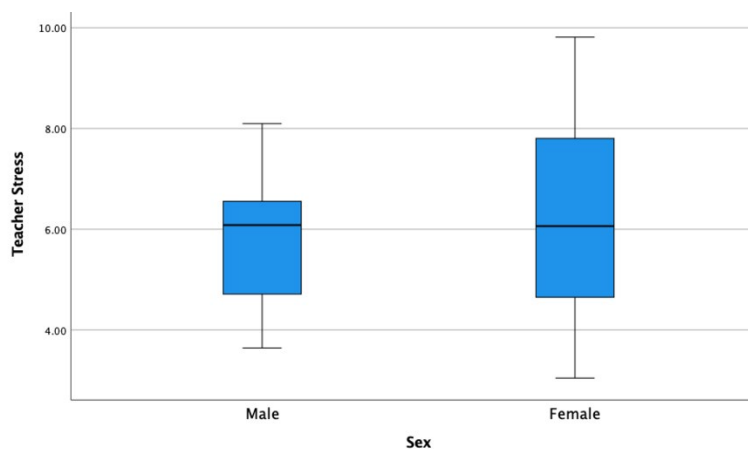
*Summary of Teacher Stress and Gender*

Group		<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>t-value</i>	<i>Sig. (2-tailed)</i>
Teacher Stress	Males	5.73	1.33	102	-.897	.372
	Females	6.23	1.85			

*Note.*  $P < .05$

**Figure 5.**

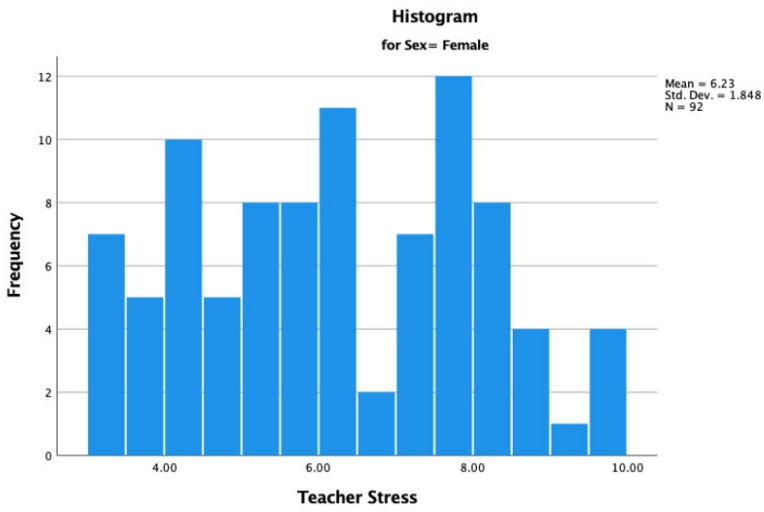
*Box Plot of Teacher Stress and Gender*





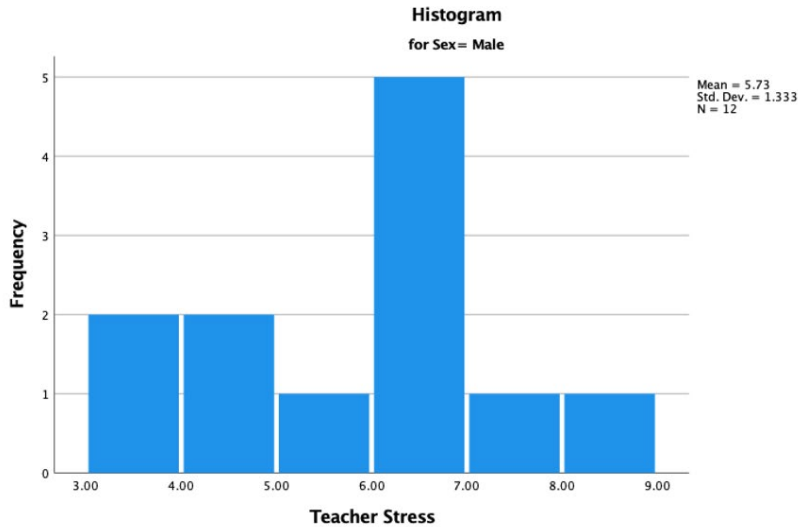
**Figure 6.**

*Frequency Distribution of Teacher Stress and Females*



**Figure 7.**

*Frequency Distribution of Teacher Stress and Males*



#### Research Question 4

Research Question 4: Is there a significant difference in teachers' age and teachers' stress?

H<sub>a1</sub>: There is a significant difference in teachers' age and teachers' stress.

H<sub>o1</sub>: There is not a significant difference in teachers' age and teachers' stress.

A one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted to evaluate the difference in teachers' age and teachers' stress. The factor variable was years of teaching. The dependent variable was teacher stress. The ANOVA was not significant, [ $F(2,101)=.600, p = .551$ ].

Therefore, the null hypothesis was not rejected. The results indicated reported teacher stress was not significantly related to the age of the teacher. Because the overall F test was not significant, a post-hoc was not required. The means and standard deviations for the three groups are reported in Table 8. Figure 8 illustrates the box plot and Figures 9-11 are the frequency distribution of teacher's age and stress.

**Table 8.**

*Summary of Teacher's Age and Stress*

Age	N	M	SD
22 - 30	21	5.88	1.66
31 - 49	53	6.35	1.82
50 - 71	30	6.05	1.87

*Note.*  $P < 0.05$

**Table 9.**

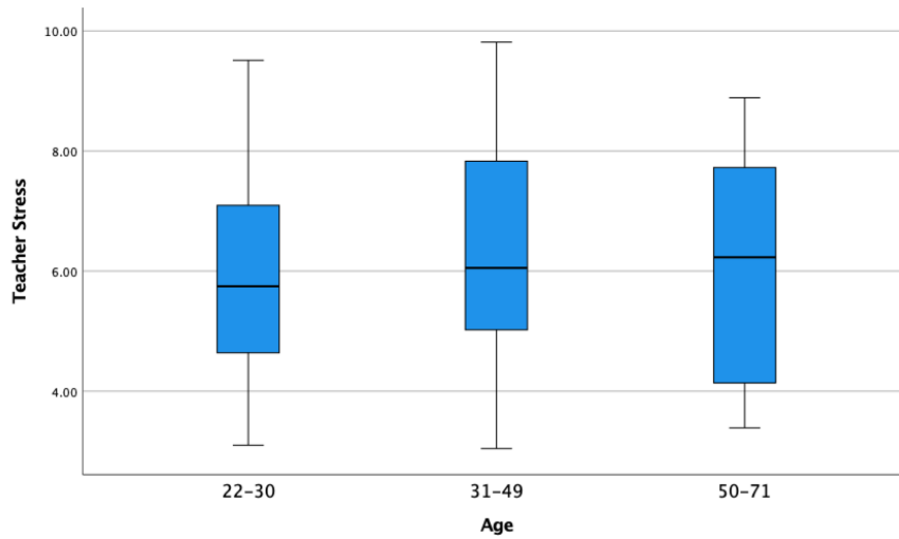
*ANOVA Summary of Teacher's Age and Stress*

<i>Source</i>	<i>SS</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>MS</i>	<i>F</i>
<i>Between Groups</i>	3.907	2	1.953	.600
<i>Within Groups</i>	329.028	10	3.258	
<i>Total</i>	332.924	103		

*Note.*  $P < 0.05$

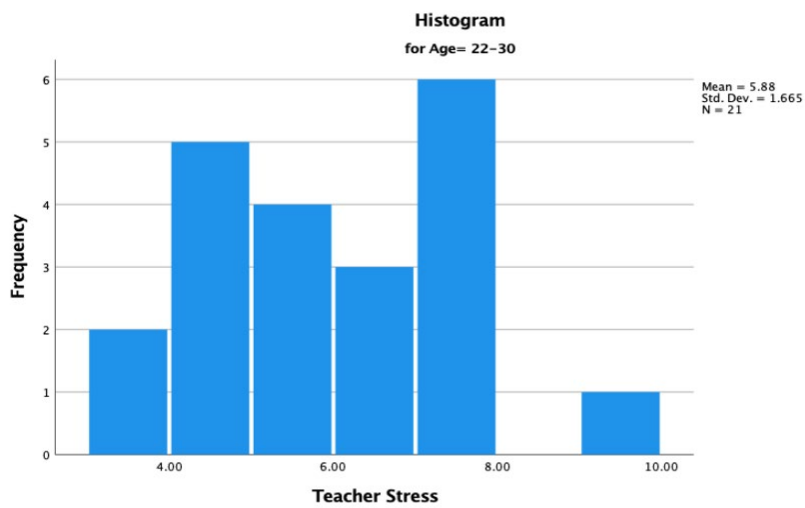
**Figure 8.**

*Box Plot of Teacher's Age and Stress*



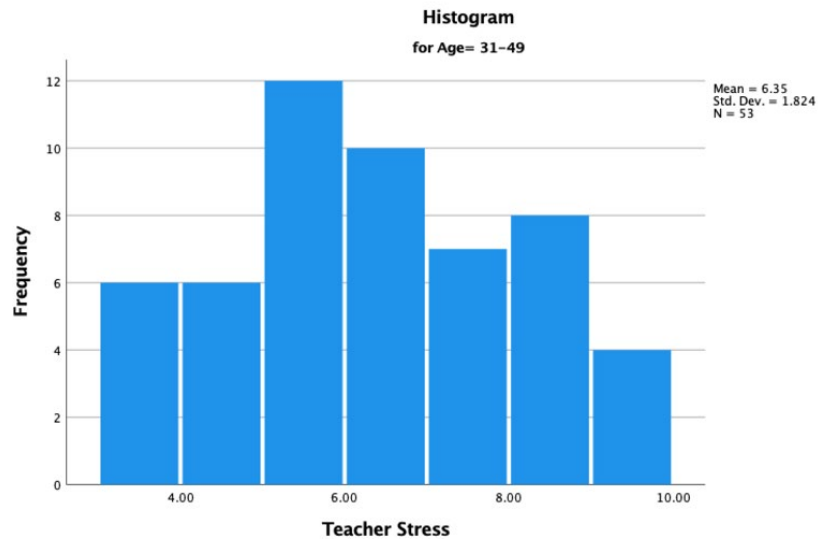
**Figure 9.**

*Frequency Distribution of Teacher's Age 22-30 and Stress*



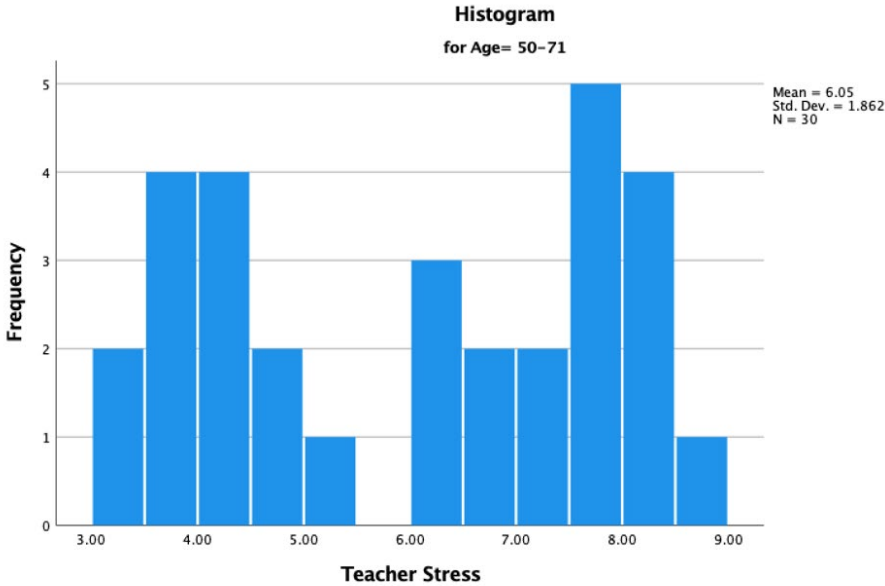
**Figure 10.**

*Frequency Distribution of Teacher's Age 31-49 and Stress*



**Figure 11.**

*Frequency Distribution of Teacher's Age 50 – 71*



### Summary

The purpose of this study was to analyze the effectiveness level of PBIS implementation and how it relates to that of K-8<sup>th</sup> grade Tennessee teachers. In this chapter, data obtained from 104 K-8 teacher participants were presented and analyzed. Teachers in nine school districts were invited to participate. Only teachers in K-8 grade levels were sent the link to the survey. Surveys used were the Effective Behavior Supports and Teacher Stress Inventory.

There were four research questions and 4 corresponding null hypotheses. Results for questions 1-4 indicated there was no statistically significant difference. For research question 1, there was no significant difference found between effective behavior supports and teacher stress.

The high support group had a mean stress score of 6.24 and the medium/low support group had a mean stress score of 6.27. The data suggest that there is not a statistically significant difference between teachers with high perceived effective behavior support and teachers with

perceived medium/low effective behavior supports. For research question 2, there was no significant difference found between teacher stress and teachers' years of teaching experience.

The teachers that taught between 0-5 years had a mean score of 5.76, teachers who taught between 6-15 years had a mean score of 6.55, and teachers who taught between 16-41 years had a mean score of 6.13. The data suggest that there is not a statistically significant difference between the number of years teachers taught and teacher stress. For research question 3, there was no statistically significant difference found between teacher's stress and gender. Male teachers had a mean score of 5.73 and female teachers had a mean score of 6.23. The data suggest that there is not a statistically significant difference between teachers' stress and gender. For research question 4, there was no significant difference found between teacher's stress and teacher's age. Teachers who were between the ages of 22-30 had a mean score of 5.88, those between the ages of 31-49 had a mean score of 6.35, and those between the ages of 50-71 had a mean score of 6.05. The data suggests that there is not a statistically significant difference between teacher stress and teacher's age.

## **Chapter 5. Summary, Conclusion, and Recommendations**

This chapter contains the findings, conclusions and recommendations for readers who may use the results of this study as a resource when developing, reviewing and revising positive behavior support professional developments. The purpose of this study was to determine the levels of positive behavior supports and teacher stress. This study was conducted using data retrieved from surveys completed by participating teachers in Northeast Tennessee School Districts. Permission to distribute the survey was granted by three of the nine districts.

The purpose of this quantitative study was to contribute to the existing knowledge base by examining the effectiveness level of PBIS implementation and how it relates to that of K-8<sup>th</sup> grade Tennessee teachers stress as measured by their perception of their level of stress. In this chapter, data was presented and analyzed to answer four research questions and four null hypotheses. The research questions addressed were the following:

1. Is there a difference between the implementation of positive behavior supports and teacher stress?
2. Is there a difference in teachers' years of teaching and teachers' stress?
3. Is there a difference in teachers' gender and teachers' stress?
4. Is there a difference in teachers' age and teachers' stress?

The quantitative research design provided the researcher the opportunity to examine the differences between teacher stress and positive behavior supports. The use of the surveys provided details of the participant's years of teaching experience, age, and gender.



## **Summary of Findings**

The statistical analysis reported in this study was based on four research questions presented in Chapters 1 and 3. Each research question had one corresponding null hypothesis. Research Question 2 and 3 were analyzed using a one-way ANOVA. The level of significance used in each test was .05. Findings indicated there was no statistically significant difference between the implementation of positive behavior supports and teacher stress. Respondents' perceptions of the level of implementation of positive behavior supports were not significant in relation to age, gender, or years of teaching experience.

The purpose of this quantitative study was to analyze the effectiveness level of PBIS implementation and how it relates to that of K-8<sup>th</sup> grade Tennessee teachers in Northeast Tennessee. Specifically, this research assessed the relationship between years of experience, age, and gender as it related to teacher stress.

## **Recommendations for Practice**

The findings and conclusions of this research established the foundation for the following recommendations for school districts, school personnel, and K-8 teachers. The results of this study are misaligned with previous research suggesting that the ineffective implementation of positive behavior supports does have a negative impact on teacher's stress levels. The last survey question revealed that 87% of participants either somewhat agree, agree, or highly agree that the current global pandemic impacted their levels of stress.

It is imperative to educate administrators and teachers on the negative impact of disruptive student behaviors on teacher stress levels in order to continue growing the teaching profession.

## **Recommendations for Future Research**

The following are recommendations for future research which may add to the body of research on teacher stress and more specifically on positive behavior supports in the State of Tennessee.

1. This study could be replicated in similar districts when a Covid-19 pandemic is not going on in the world to determine if results remain true for a similar sample size.
2. This study could be replicated in other regions of Tennessee in order to provide additional data collections and determine if the findings in this study remain true for a different or larger sample size.
3. Replicating this study with a qualitative design could provide details of teacher perceptions in relation to positive behavior supports and how it relates to their stress level.
4. This study could be replicated using only city districts and only county districts to provide additional insights into teacher perceptions of how positive behavior supports impacts their levels of stress.
5. Expanding this study to evaluate teacher perceptions in Title 1 versus non-Title 1 schools could provide additional data.
6. Expanding this study to include student discipline and achievement data could help determine the impact of implementing positive behavior supports.

## **Limitations to the Study**

Limitations of this study include the generalization of the findings. The study investigated only three K-8 school districts in upper East Tennessee. The study could have been strengthened by including more school districts across the state of Tennessee and including high

schools. Another limitation was conducting a research study during a global pandemic in school systems where Covid-19 is having an impact on all aspects of education such as attention for students and faculty, illnesses in families, online versus in-person classes, and continuous safety protocols that must be strictly adhered to by Department of Health and Safety and Centers for Disease Control. The stress that participants were under had an impact on the number of those willing to participate. Additionally, the number of male participants was significantly lower than female participants.

### **Conclusion**

Teacher stress levels play an important role in the education of all students. The effective implementation of Positive Behavior Supports and Interventions (PBIS) has impacted teacher stress for K-8 teachers in the existing knowledge base. This study examined the levels of implementation of PBIS by evaluating teacher stress based on gender, age, and years of teaching experience. Previous research suggests that ineffective implementation of positive behavior supports does have a negative impact on teacher's stress levels. Results from this study indicated that there were not significant differences in teacher stress and positive behavior supports.

The last survey question revealed that 87% of participants either somewhat agree, agree, or highly agree that the current global pandemic impacted their levels of stress. In the current school year, teachers are not only managing student behaviors in the classroom, but also in a virtual setting. This has brought new challenges to the teaching profession as teachers have had to become more efficient in person and online simultaneously with classroom management practices. Continued research supporting PBIS and teacher stress will add to the existing body of

knowledge and help with continuous improvements to professional developments on the effective implementation of PBIS.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Classroom Systems

Current Status			Feature	Priority for Improvement		
In Place	Partial in Place	Not in Place		High	Med	Low
			<b>Classroom settings</b> are defined as instructional settings in which teacher(s) supervise & teach groups of students.			
			1. Expected student behavior & routines in classrooms are stated positively & defined clearly.			
			2. Problem behaviors are defined clearly.			
			3. Expected student behavior & routines in classrooms are taught directly.			
			4. Expected student behaviors are acknowledged regularly (positively reinforced) (>4 positives to 1 negative).			
			5. Problem behaviors receive consistent consequences.			
			6. Procedures for expected & problem behaviors are consistent with school-wide procedures.			
			7. Classroom-based options exist to allow classroom instruction to continue when problem behavior occurs.			
			8. Instruction & curriculum materials are matched to student ability (math, reading, language).			
			9. Students experience high rates of academic success ( $\geq 75\%$ correct).			
			10. Teachers have regular opportunities for access to assistance & recommendations (observation, instruction, & coaching).			
			11. Transitions between instructional & non-instructional activities are efficient & orderly.			

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## Appendix B: Teacher Stress Inventory

### TIME MANAGEMENT

1. I easily over-commit myself. 1 2 3 4 5
2. I become impatient if others do things too slowly. 1 2 3 4 5
3. I have to try doing more than one thing at a time. 1 2 3 4 5
4. I have little time to relax/enjoy the time of day. 1 2 3 4 5
5. I think about unrelated matters during conversations. 1 2 3 4 5
6. I feel uncomfortable wasting time. 1 2 3 4 5
7. There isn't enough time to get things done. 1 2 3 4 5
8. I rush in my speech. 1 2 3 4 5

Add Items 1 to 8, divide by 8, and place your score here:

### WORK-RELATED STRESSORS

9. There is little time to prepare for my lessons/responsibilities. 1 2 3 4 5
10. There is too much work to do. 1 2 3 4 5
11. The pace of the school day is too fast. 1 2 3 4 5
12. My caseload/class is too big. 1 2 3 4 5
13. My personal priorities are being shortchanged due to time demands. 1 2 3 4 5
14. There is too much administrative paperwork in my job. 1 2 3 4 5

Add Items 9 to 14, divide by 6, and place your score here:

### PROFESSIONAL DISTRESS

15. I lack promotion and/or advancement opportunities. 1 2 3 4 5
16. I am not progressing my job as rapidly as I would like. 1 2 3 4 5
17. I need more status and respect on my job. 1 2 3 4 5
18. I receive an inadequate salary for the work I do. 1 2 3 4 5
19. I lack recognition for the extra work and/or good teaching I do. 1 2 3 4 5

Add items 15 to 19, divide by 5, and place your score here:

### DISCIPLINE AND MOTIVATION, I feel frustrated...

20. because of discipline problems in my classroom. 1 2 3 4 5
21. having to monitor pupil behavior. 1 2 3 4 5
22. because some students would be better if they tried. 1 2 3 4 5
23. attempting to teach students who are poorly motivated. 1 2 3 4 5

24. because of inadequate/poorly defined discipline problems. 1 2 3 4 5  
25. when my authority is rejected by pupils/administration. 1 2 3 4 5  
Add Items 20 to 25, divide by 6, and place your score here:

#### PROFESSIONAL INVESTMENT

26. My personal opinions are not sufficiently aired. 1 2 3 4 5  
27. I lack control over decisions made about classroom/school matters. 1 2 3 4 5  
28. I am not emotionally/intellectually stimulated on the job. 1 2 3 4 5  
29. I lack opportunities for professional improvement. 1 2 3 4 5  
Add Items 26 to 29, divide by 4, and place your score here:

#### EMOTIONAL MANIFESTATIONS I respond to stress...

30. by feeling insecure. 1 2 3 4 5  
31. by feeling vulnerable. 1 2 3 4 5  
32. by feeling unable to cope. 1 2 3 4 5  
33. by feeling depressed. 1 2 3 4 5  
34. by feeling anxious. 1 2 3 4 5  
Add Items 30 to 34, divide by 5, and place your score here:

#### FATIGUE MANIFESTATIONS I respond to stress...

35. by sleeping more than usual. 1 2 3 4 5  
36. by procrastinating. 1 2 3 4 5  
37. by becoming fatigued in a very short time. 1 2 3 4 5  
38. with physical exhaustion. 1 2 3 4 5  
39. with physical weakness. 1 2 3 4 5  
Add Items 35 to 39, divide by 5, and place your score here:

#### CARDIOVASCULAR MANIFESTATIONS I respond to stress...

40. with feelings of increased blood pressure. 1 2 3 4 5  
41. with feeling of heart pounding or racing. 1 2 3 4 5  
42. with rapid and/or shallow breath. 1 2 3 4 5  
Add Items 40 to 42, divide by 3, and place your score here:

#### GASTRONOMICAL MANIFESTATIONS I respond to stress...

43. with stomach pain of extended duration. 1 2 3 4 5  
44. with stomach cramps. 1 2 3 4 5  
45. with stomach acid. 1 2 3 4 5

Add Items 43 to 45, divide by 3, and place your score here:

BEHAVIORAL MANIFESTATIONS I respond to stress...

46. by using over-the-counter drugs. 1 2 3 4 5

47. by using prescription drugs. 1 2 3 4 5

48. by using alcohol. 1 2 3 4 5

49. by calling in sick. 1 2 3 4 5

Add Items 46 to 49, divide by 4, and place your score here:

TOTAL SCORE Add all calculated scores; enter the value here \_\_\_\_\_. Divide by 10; enter the Total Score here \_\_\_\_\_.

Demographic Variables

Your sex:

Number of years you have taught. \_\_\_\_\_

Your age: \_\_\_\_\_

From Teacher Stress Inventory (TSI) by Michael J. Fimian, Copyright (1984), from <http://www.instructionaltech.net/TSI/>

## Appendix C: Permission

### Permission to use EBS Survey

**Layla Forêt** <lforet@uoregon.edu>  
to me ▾

Mon, Apr 27, 11:27 AM (1 day ago) ✉ 📧 ⋮

Dear Robin,

Thank you for your inquiry! You are more than welcome to use the SAS in your work as long as the resource is properly cited.

All the best!

**Layla Forêt**  
Web Content Specialist  
Educational & Community Supports  
University of Oregon

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VITA

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