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Special Educator as Change Agent: Creating Services for Students with EBDs in a Full-Inclusion School

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the

requirements for the degree Doctor of Philosophy

in Education

by

Kelsee Ann Bensley

Committee in charge:

Professor George Singer, Chair

Professor Michael Gerber

Professor Andrew Fedders

Professor Rachal Lambert

September 2021

The dissertation of Kelsee Ann Bensley is approved.

Rachel Lambert

Andrew Fedders

Michael Gerber

George G.H. Singer, Committee Chair

September 2021

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VITA OF KELSEE ANN BENSLEY
September 2021

Education
B.A., Psychology, University of California, Santa Barbara June 2011
M.A., Education, University of California, Santa Barbara, June 2014
Ph.D., Education, University of California, Santa Barbara, September 2021
Dissertation: "Special Educator as Change Agent: Creating Services for EBD students in a Full-Inclusion School" (Expected completion September 2021)
Committee: George Singer, Michael Gerber, Andrew Fedders, Rachel Lambert
Area of Specialization: Special Education, Disability, and Risk Studies
Teaching Credential: Mild/Moderate Education Specialist Antioch University, Santa Barbara, 2015
Teaching Credential: Moderate/Severe Education Specialist Teaching Credential, University of California, Santa Barbara, 2013

Awards, Honors and Fellowships
Dorman Commons Fellowship, May 2018
Dissertation Block Grant, June 2016
Patty-Hopkins Acos Memorial Fellowship, 2013
Dr. J Student Teaching Award, 2013

Teaching Experience
Teaching Assistant:

UC Santa Barbara- ED LA 320 W Elementary Reading and Language Arts Teaching Methods (Fall 2020, Spring 2017, Fall 2019, Fall 2018, Fall 2017, Fall 2016, Fall 2015)
UC Santa Barbara- ED LA 320 F Elementary Reading and Language Arts Teaching Methods (Winter 2019, Winter 2018, Winter 2017, Winter 2016, Winter 2015, Winter 2014)
Antioch University, Santa Barbra TEP 5050: Elementary Reading and Language Arts Teaching Methods (Fall 2016, Fall 2017)
UC Santa Barbara CNCSP 256 Behavioral Assessment and Intervention (Fall 2014)

Guest Lectures (UC Santa Barbara):
"Progress Assessments in Special Education: Writing Triennial Reports and How to Administer the Woodcock Johnson IV Academic Test" (Spring 2015, Spring 2016, Spring 2017, Spring 2018, Spring 2019, Spring 2020)
"An Overview of School-Wide Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (SWPBIS) and Meeting the Needs of Students with Emotional and Behavioral Disabilities" (Fall 2017, Fall 2018, Fall 2019)

University Service:
Teacher Education Program Special Education Representative (Fall 2013, Winter 2013, Spring 2013)

Languages:

Intermediate/Advanced Spanish

References:
Professor George Singer (advisor and chair of dissertation committee)
Department of Education, University of California, Santa Barbara CA 93106
Email: singer@education.ucsb.edu

Professor Michael Gerber (Member of Dissertation Committee)
Department of Education, University of California, Santa Barbara CA 93106
Email: mgerber@education.ucsb.edu

Professor Andrew Fedders (Member of Dissertation Committee)
Department of Education, University of California, Santa Barbara CA 93106
Email: afedders@ucsb.edu

Professor Rachel Lambert (Member of Dissertation Committee)
Department of Education, University of California, Santa Barbara CA 93106
Email: rlambert@ucsb.edu>

ABSTRACT

Special Educator as Change Agent: Creating Services for Students with EBDs

in a Full Inclusion School

by

Kelsee Ann Bensley

Students with Emotional and Behavioral Disabilities (EBDs) are often pushed out of the least restrictive schooling environment due to schools' inability to meet their unique learning needs (OSEP, 2020). School-Wide Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (SW-PBIS) is a research-based framework for helping school teams establish social and behavioral supports. Robert Horner and George Sugai have developed several very large-scale grants which helped to establish implementation teams at the state level. Their procedures for helping schools implement these supports have resulted in one of the largest adoptions of a model in the history of US schooling. While there have been several studies analyzing the steps taken to support students at Tier One and Tier Two of the SW-PBIS framework, very little to no research exists for developing supports for Tier Three students. The present case study analyzes a school team's efforts to implement an intervention package including a Check-In-Check-Out (CICO) behavior intervention combined with a Social Thinking social skills groups for students with EBDs in a unique full-inclusion public school context. The researcher, a practicing education specialist for students with mild to high support needs, used qualitative methods to analyze the implementation process for building Tier Three supports for students with EBDs over a four-year implementation period.

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Chapter I. Literature Review

Societies have the potential to help achieve a significant reduction in the prevalence of behavioral and psychological problems that develop in childhood and adolescence—if they can implement evidence-based practices widely and effectively (Biglan, 2003). Adolescents with Emotional and Behavioral Disabilities (EBDs) are placed into more restrictive and segregated settings when school systems cannot effectively determine support needs and offer research-based interventions (OSEP, 2020). Despite several advances in the fields of Social Emotional Learning (SEL) and School-Wide Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (SW-PBIS), schools continue to rely on demonstrably ineffective methods for supporting students, especially those with Emotional Disturbances (ED) (USDOE, 2018) including the use of restraints and seclusion.

EBDs and SW-PBIS

The National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) defines Emotional and Behavioral disabilities as, "Mental illnesses are medical conditions that disrupt a person's thinking, feeling, mood, ability to relate to others and daily functioning. Just as diabetes is a disorder of the pancreas, mental illnesses are medical conditions that often result in a diminished capacity for coping with the ordinary demands of life." Some of the characteristics and behaviors seen in children who have an emotional disturbance include:

- Hyperactivity (short attention span, impulsiveness);
- Aggression or self-injurious behavior (acting out, fighting);
- Withdrawal (not interacting socially with others, excessive fear or anxiety);
- Immaturity (inappropriate crying, temper tantrums, poor coping skills); and

- Learning difficulties (academically performing below grade level)

According to the CDC (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention), approximately 8.3 million children (14.5%) aged 4–17 years have parents who've talked with a health care provider or school staff about the child's emotional or behavioral difficulties. Nearly 2.9 million children have been prescribed medication for these difficulties (CEC, 2020).

EBDs and Access to the Least Restrictive Environment (LRE)

American schools are still struggling to meet the needs of these learners placed within general education settings. In 2016, 47.2% of students who qualify for special education services under the eligibility category of Emotional Disturbance were educated within a general education public-school classroom for 80% or more of their school day (USDOE, 2018). During the 2017-2018 school year students with Emotional Disturbance were more likely to be outsourced to a different school than students who qualify under 11 special education eligibility categories (USDOE, 2020). This means that most schools are not equipped with the infrastructure and systems necessary to support these students, and teachers need training from special education professionals with backgrounds in applied behavior skills. In 2018, a more significant percentage of the students reported under the category of emotional disturbance exited special education and school by 'dropping out' than reported for any other eligibility category. The dropout percentage for students with ED eligibility was over 34.8% in 2016, down from 65.6% in 1998 (USDOE, 2018).

The current study is an ethnographic holistic case study that examines questions regarding the creation and implementation of multicomponent, research-based Tier 2 and Tier 3 intervention program for students with Emotional and Behavioral Disabilities (EBDs) within a full-inclusion elementary school context. It examines my role as a special education teacher and our team's efforts to use a Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS) framework to establish school-wide behavioral norms via School-Wide Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (SW-PBIS) (Schaffer, G., 2019). The staff at our site implemented research-based interventions for students at Tier Two and Tier Three of the SW-PBIS framework. These supports involved the implementation of Tier Two and Tier Three Check-In/Check-Out behavioral tracking system in addition to a Social Emotional Learning (SEL) social skills intervention. In the section below, I will outline the SW-PBIS model which was used as a framework for developing Tier Three supports in the current study.

School Wide Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (SW-PBIS)

School Wide Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (SW-PBIS) is an approach that focuses on the emotional and behavioral learning of students. Implementing a SW-PBIS framework leads to increased engagement and decreased problematic behavior over time while assisting the educational organizations in adopting and organizing evidence-based behavioral interventions that improve all students' social and emotional behavior outcomes (Bradshaw et al., 2012). As with Response to Intervention (RTI), SW-PBIS is systematic and data-driven with tiered levels of intervention to benefit all students. The current study specifically targeted the systems for learners with documented Emotional and Behavioral Disorders (EBDs) at Tier Three of the framework and tells the story of the implementation

process within a full-inclusion context. Table 1 below outlines the elements defined by Crone and Horner. This text guides school staff to meet *all* learner's needs—including those with identified social, emotional, and behavioral needs. This text guided implementation of interventions in the current study at the Tier Three level.

Table 1
Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS) Tiered Core (cite)

Prevention Tier	**Core Elements**
Primary	1. Behavioral Expectations Defined 2. Behavioral Expectations Taught 3. Reward System for appropriate behavior 4. Clearly defined consequences for problem behavior 5. Differential instruction for behavior 6. Continuous collection and use of data for decision-making 7. Universal screening for behavioral support
Secondary	1. Progress monitoring for at-risk students 2. Systems for increasing structure and predictability 3. Systems for increasing contingent adult feedback 4. Systems for linking academic and behavioral performance 5. System for increasing home/school communication 6. Collection and use of data for decision-making 7. Basic-level function-based support
Tertiary	1. Functional Behavior Assessment (full, complex) 2. Team-based comprehensive assessment 3. Linking of academic and behavior supports 4. Individualized intervention based on assessment information focusing on: a. prevention of problem contexts b. instruction on functionally equivalent skills, and instruction on desired performance skills, c. strategies for placing problem behaviors on extinction, d. strategies for enhancing contingency reward of desired behavior, and e. use of harmful or safety consequences if needed. Collection and use of data for decision-making

The core elements of SW-PBIS integrate into the organizational system in which teams, working with administrators and behavioral specialists, provide the training, policy supports, and organizational supports needed for: (a) initial implementation, (b) active implementation, and (c) sustained use of core elements (Sugai & Horner, 2010). SW-PBIS involves a three-tiered prevention logic:

1. Tier 1: interventions support all students.
2. Tier 2: interventions support targeted groups of students who are at risk (i.e., approximately 15% of students).
3. Tier 3: interventions support individual students with high-intensity problem behavior.

Again, in alignment with Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS), the unique features of SW-PBIS include: (a) three-element integration, evidence-based behavioral interventions, and (c) a continuum of behavior supports (Horner, 2009). Crone, Hawkin, and Horner (2003) outline recommended steps school districts should take when moving toward an SWPBS framework for disseminating behavioral interventions aligned with an MTSS system. This text includes many valuable tools and considerations regarding building a behavior support team and using data to make informed allocation decisions about delivering academic and behavioral interventions and special education supports and services. The text also includes resources for schools to self-evaluate their progress toward developing their tiered supports and recommendations for staff working with Tier Three students who are not responding to Tier One and Tier Two supports. Table 2 outlines the current recommendations for foundational systems and practices. This text aided me in this study

and helped guide my thinking while working with our school team to implement a Tier Three intervention package, including a CICO program and Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) social skills group using the Social Thinking methodology. This text was a critical resource in determining essential steps to take for effective implementation.

Table 2

Outline of SW-PBIS Foundational Systems and Practices for Tier 1, 2, & 3

	Foundational Systems	Practices
Tier 1	• Leadership Team • Regular Meeting Routine, Schedule, & structure • Commitment Statement for Establishing Positive School-wide Social Culture • Ongoing Data-Based Monitoring, Evaluation, and Dissemination • Procedures for Selecting, Training, and Coaching New Personnel	• School-wide Positive Expectations and Behaviors are Defined and Taught • Procedures for Establishing Classroom Expectations and Routines Consistent with School-Wide Expectations • Continuum of Procedures for Encouraging Expected Behavior • Continuum of Procedures for Discouraging Problem-Behavior • Procedures for Encouraging School-Family Partnerships
Tier 2	• An intervention team with a coordinator • Behavioral expertise • Fidelity and outcome data are collected • A screening process to identify students needing Tier 2 support	• Increased instruction and practice with self-regulation and social skills • Increased adult supervision • Increased opportunities for positive reinforcement • Increased pre-corrections • Increased focus on the possible function of problem-behaviors
Tier 3	• A multi-disciplinary team • Behavior support expertise • Cultural and contextual fit	• Function-based assessments • Wrap around supports • Cultural and Contextual fit

The field of SW-PBIS relies heavily on the use of tracking behavioral patterns to allocate resources and interventions effectively. If students are unresponsive to interventions, the systemic response is for a team to convene and determine if other research-based interventions may better meet students' needs. If children are unresponsive to Tier One and Tier Two supports, they need more intensive Tier Three interventions which may involve increased levels of monitoring and oversight to support their individualized needs. Currently, there is a significant gap in the literature concerning the development of Tier Three support systems in schools—especially when there is not a solid Tier One and Tier Two foundation in place. According to Landers (2012, as cited in Shelling, 2015) "students with severe disabilities are not often included in SW-PBIS due to physical separation from other students, programmatic separation from SW-PBIS procedures, and the separation of special education teachers during professional development opportunities. So, although special education teachers may be able to successfully implement Tier Three interventions and supports with students with significant disabilities, the lack of implementation of Tier One interventions and supports with these same students is problematic as Tier One interventions provide the foundation for the other tiers and implementation of Tier One and Tier Two interventions may decrease the need for Tier Three interventions." In the following section, I will discuss the concept of Evidence-Based Practices in special education and the importance of ensuring school leaders are well-versed in providing access to EBPs in their Tier One and Tier Two intervention menus. By providing effective Tier One and Tier Two supports, districts can reduce Tier Three referrals and also provide Tier Three staff interventions and supports with which to align the district's Tier Three practices and intervention menus.

Evidence Based Practices (EBPs) Across SW-PBIS Tiers

Educational policies have pushed for increased scrutiny regarding implementing 'scientifically-based research' for students with special needs and ensuring effective programming. The evidence-based practices movement within education represents a push to ensure that adequate, research-based methods reach applied settings, including public schools (Odum et al., 2005). The movement is beginning to impact the fields of allied health sciences, clinical and counseling psychology, and special education (Odum et al., 2005). The No Child Left Behind (NCLB) act called for research-based teaching methods better to meet the need of struggling readers with dyslexia. The 2004 reauthorization of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) incorporated language around science-based practices requiring highly qualified teachers. These recent policy decisions mark a shift towards developing the EBP-oriented teachers of tomorrow. Parallel to the medical fields pushing for preparing doctors who would use both their clinical expertise combined with the best available external evidence, the field of special education seeks to develop teachers who can provide the same unique balance of clinical expertise and professional development in the application and implementation of current educational 'best practices.'

Qualitative Research to Inform EBPs

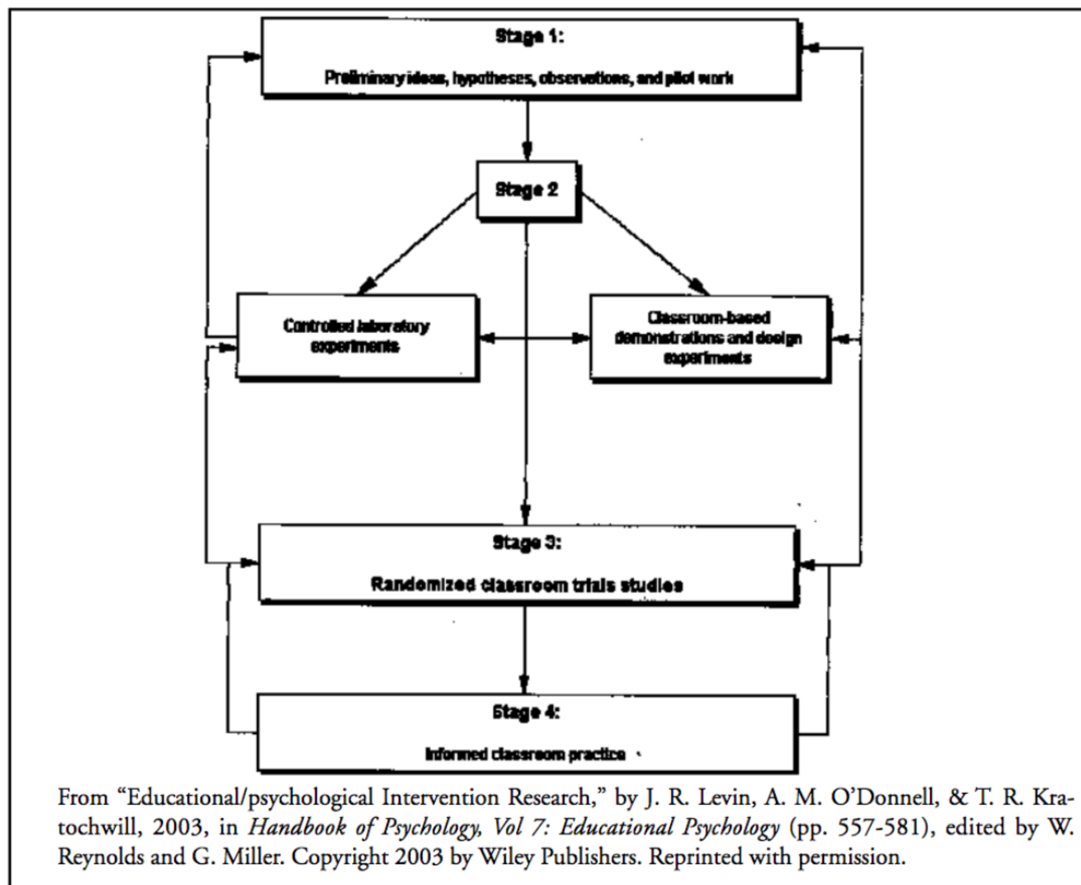
Practice refers to a curriculum, behavioral intervention, systems change, or educational approach designed for use by families, educators, or students which is designed to result in measurable educational, social, behavioral, or physical benefits (Horner, 2009). The National Research Council report (Shavelson & Towne, 2002) asserts that careful descriptive research was done primarily by firsthand observation and interviewing—sometimes called qualitative or case study or ethnography—can make valuable contributions

to educational research. Careful descriptive research falls within the range of educational methods called scientific methods (Erickson & Gutierrez, 2003). Brantinger, Jimenez, Klingner, Pugach, and Richardson reviewed the kinds of qualitative design that meet standards for trustworthiness and credibility that undergird scientific evidence in 2005. They noted that qualitative research is empirical, stemming from experience and observation. "What was the treatment, specifically?" is a question best answered by qualitative research (Morningstar, Shogren, Lee, & Born, 2015; Shogren et al., 2015).

Qualitative methods can help us understand the nature of classrooms as socially and culturally organized environments for learning (Erickson & Gutierrez, 2002; Morningstar et al., 2015; Shogren et al., 2015). Researchers hope to better understand how classrooms seem to work for some students but not for others. Researchers also need to understand how the teacher's role and curriculum design shape some students' access to knowledge and discovery while constraining others. Qualitative methods are necessary because they may be the best choice for helping to make visible the everyday activities of life in classrooms that often go unexamined but may offer explanations for how some students lose interest in formal schooling.

Figure 1 below represents a continuum of stages that educational research passes through on the path towards becoming an EBP. As shown, Stage one would involve observational, focused exploration, and flexible methodology, which qualitative and correlational methods would allow. Stage two involves increasing controlled laboratory or classroom experiments, observational studies of classrooms, and teacher-researcher collaborative experiments. Design experiments involving qualitative methodology, single-subject designs, quasi-experimental and Randomized Control Trial (RCT) design studies may

be beneficial at this stage as well. Stage three research would build upon and incorporate knowledge from these previous stages to design well-documented interventions and attempt to 'prove' their effectiveness through well-documented RCT studies implemented in the classroom or naturalistic settings by the natural participants (e.g., teachers) in the setting. Kratchowill et al. (2010) argues that single-subject design studies could also accomplish this purpose (p. 145). Finally, in stage four, it would be necessary for researchers to determine the factors that lead to adopting effective practices in typical school systems under naturally existing conditions. In this stage, the potential methodologies include qualitative, correlational, mixed methods, RCT, and large-scale, single-case designs.



From "Educational/psychological Intervention Research," by J. R. Levin, A. M. O'Donnell, & T. R. Kratochwill, 2003, in *Handbook of Psychology, Vol 7: Educational Psychology* (pp. 557-581), edited by W. Reynolds and G. Miller. Copyright 2003 by Wiley Publishers. Reprinted with permission.

Figure 1: Stages of Programs of Research as conceptualized by Odum et. al 2005.

Odum stresses that research at stage four collaborates across cross-disciplinary partnerships (Odum et al., 2005). This study aligns with stage four of Odum's model and seeks to analyze the steps taken by Tier Three team, including an education specialist with behavioral training, in implementing SW-PBIS at Tier Three—involving a research-based behavioral intervention Check-in/Check-Out (CICO) intervention and an emerging practice defined as Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) social skills group using the Social Thinking (ST) methodology and curricula. These curricula included Wee Thinkers, Super Flex, and the Zones of Regulation. Rather than examining the efficacy of these interventions, this project seeks to outline the steps in the phenomena of developing a Tier Three support system for students with Emotional and Behavioral Disorders (EBDs) within a full-inclusion context. The following sections provide a review of the literature in regard to the core SW-PBIS interventions embedded across Tiers over the four-year implementation period for this case study.

Tier One SWPBIS Intervention: Restorative Practices (RP)

I am reviewing the literature of Restorative Practices, because in the study that follows, this intervention became embedded as a Tier One support. Restorative Practices (RP) have roots in the field of restorative justice which is defined as a way of looking at criminal justice that emphasizes repairing the harm done to people and relationships rather than simply punishing offenders (Zehr, 1990). RP is distinguishable from restorative justice in that RP encourages the involvement of the whole school community— including all school staff, pupils, and sometimes parents (Hopkins, 2004). Some of the key characteristics of RP include: the development of restorative conferencing; a structured process for restoring relationships when an individual has caused harm, that encourages the involvement of

offenders, victims, and key others in a process designed to resolve difficulties in order to restore human relationships (Morrison, 2007). According to the International Institute for Restorative Practices (IIRP). The use of restorative practices helps to:

- reduce crime, violence and bullying
- improve human behavior
- strengthen civil society
- provide effective leadership
- restore relationships
- repair harm

Restorative practices include a variety of formal processes, such as restorative conferences or family group conferences, but can range from informal to formal. On a restorative practices' continuum, the informal practices can include affective statements which communicate people's feelings, and also affective questions designed to help people reflect on how their behavior has impacted others. Moving up the continuum, impromptu restorative conferences, groups and circles involve structured but not the elaborate preparation required for formal conferences at the end of the continuum. As more formal restorative practices become required, they involve more people, require more planning and time, and are highly structured. The continuum of restorative practices includes the incorporation of both informal processes, which have a cumulative impact as they are embedded into everyday life, alongside more formal restorative processes which can dramatically impact a community's ability to heal in times of dire conflict (McCold & Wachtel, 2001).

Silvan S. Tomkins (1962) described nine affects which humans can experience including: two Positive Affects of 1) joy, 2) excitement; one Neutral Affect 3) surprise, so brief that it has no feeling of its own; and six Negative Affects 4) that feel dreadful — we are hardwired to conform to an internal blueprint. The human emotional blueprint ensures

that we feel best when we 1) maximize positive affect and 2) minimize negative affect; we function best when 3) we express all affect (minimize the inhibition of affect) so we can accomplish these two goals; and, finally, 4) shame/humiliation, 5) distress/anguish, 6) disgust, 7) fear/terror, 8) anger/rage, and 9) dissmell— a neologism coined by Tomkins which refers to the characteristic way in which an infant reacts to odors that smell bad. Restorative practices demonstrate Tomkins's fundamental hypothesis in regard to the psychology of affect by creating and encouraging the development of environments for human beings in which there is free expression of affect, and an emphasis on minimizing the negative and maximizing the positive (Nathanson, 1992). Across the continuum form the simple affective statement to the formal conference, restorative practices are designed to meet these goals (Wachtel, 1999).

Nathanson (1992) developed the Compass of Shame as an illustration of a variety of ways that human beings react when they feel shame. The four poles of the compass of shame and behaviors associated with them are: 1) Withdrawal—isolating oneself, running and hiding; Attack self—self-put-down, masochism; Avoidance—denial, abusing drugs, distraction through thrill seeking; and Attack others—turning the tables, lashing out verbally or physically, blaming others. According to Nathanson the 'attack other' response to shame is responsible for the proliferation of violence in modern life. Generally, people with adequate self-esteem have the capacity to move beyond their feelings of shame. Regardless, we all react to shame, in varying degrees, in the ways described by the Compass.

Restorative practices were developed to provide an opportunity for us to express our shame, along with other strong emotions to reduce their intensity. Restorative conferences are a disciplinary procedure which bring both the perpetrator and victim in a conflict together

in a structured resolution process. These conferences are guided by a skilled facilitator. The process of restorative conferences helps people routinely move from negative affects through the neutral affect to positive affects (Nathanson, 1998).

Classroom Circles.

A circle is a versatile restorative practice that can be used proactively, to develop relationships and build community or reactively, to respond to wrongdoing, conflicts and problems. In classroom circles, students are given an opportunity to speak and listen to one another in an atmosphere of safety, structure, and equality. Circles encourage and allow people to tell their stories and offer their own perspectives (Pranis, 2005). Classroom circles have a variety of purposes including: resolution, healing, support, decision making, information exchange and relationship development. Circles provide alternatives to contemporary meeting processes which rely on hierarchical organization, win-lose positioning and argument. Circle time (Mosley, 1993) and morning meetings (Charney, 1992) have been widely used in primary and elementary schools for many years and more recently in secondary schools and higher education (Mirsky, 2007, 2011; Wachtel & Wachtel, 2012). In these meetings, students are encouraged to share their thoughts and feelings in relation to different topics that are dictated in the Circle Forward text (Boyes-Watson, C., Pranis, K.,2015). This text offers comprehensive step-by-step instructions for how to plan, facilitate and implement the Circle for a variety of purposes within the school environment. It describes the basic process, essential elements and a step-by-step guide for how to organize, plan, and lead Circles. It also provides over one hundred specific lesson plans and ideas for the application of Circles in areas of school life including providing social skills training (Boyes-Watson, C., Pranis, K.,2015).

Restorative Conferences.

Restorative conferences are structured meetings between offenders, victims and both parties' family and friends, in order to deal with the consequences of a crime or wrongdoing and decide how best to repair the harm. Distinguishable from a counseling or mediation process, conferencing is a victim-sensitive, involving straightforward problem-solving methods that demonstrate how citizens can resolve their own problems when provided with a constructive forum in which to do so (O'Connell, Wachtel, & Wachtel, 1999). Conferences provide victims and others with an opportunity to confront the offender, express their feelings, ask questions and have a say in the outcome. Offenders hear firsthand how their behavior has affected people. Offenders may choose to participate in a conference and begin to repair the harm they have caused through a variety of means including: apologizing, making amends, agreeing to financial restitution or community service work. Participation in conferences is voluntary. After it is determined that a conference is appropriate and offenders and victims have agreed to attend, the conference facilitator invites others affected by the incident including the family and friends of victims and offenders (O'Connell, Wachtel, & Wachtel, 1999).

Restorative conferences can either complement traditional disciplinary justice processes or be used as an alternative to these approaches (O'Connell, Wachtel, & Wachtel, 1999). In the Real Justice approach to restorative conferences, developed by Australian police officer Terry O'Connell, the conference facilitator sticks to a simple written script (O'Connell, Wachtel, & Wachtel, 1999). The facilitator keeps the conference focused but is not an active participant. Each participant is given the chance to speak led by the facilitator who is trained to begin with asking open-ended and affective restorative questions of the

offender. The victims and their family members and friends are then encouraged by the facilitator to answer questions that provide an opportunity to tell about the incident from their perspective and how it affected them. The offenders' family and friends are then given the same opportunity (O'Connell, Wachtel, & Wachtel, 1999).

Offenders are asked these restorative questions:

- "What happened?"
- "What were you thinking about at the time?"
- "What have you thought about since?"
- "Who has been affected by what you have done?"
- "What do you think you need to do to make things right?"

Victims are asked these restorative questions:

- "What did you think when you realized what happened?"
- "What impact has the incident had on you and others?"
- "What has been the hardest thing for you?"
- "What do you think needs to happen to make things right?"

The victim is then given the opportunity to express what they would like to be the outcome of the conference. Restorative conferencing is an approach to addressing wrongdoing in various settings in a variety of ways (O'Connell, Wachtel, & Wachtel, 1999). The response is discussed with the offender and everyone else at the conference. When agreement is reached, a simple contract is written and signed (O'Connell, Wachtel, & Wachtel, 1999). Conferencing can be employed by schools as either a reactive or proactive strategy. These strategies were employed at the Tier One level in the current study. The

following section outlines the core Tier Two interventions in the study which were included in the intervention package.

Tier Two SWPBIS Behavior Interventions: CICO and CBT SS Groups

The Tier Two and Tier Three implementation teams were in agreement that students not only required an intervention involving behavioral feedback and supports, but also access to explicit social skills trainings, instruction, and coaching. The following sections describe the selected interventions used to develop this Tier Two and three intervention packages for students with Emotional and Behavioral Disabilities (EBDs).

Check-In/Check-Out (CICO).

Check-In/Check-Out (CICO) programs are designed to provides structure in a student's day, create accountability, provide teacher feedback to parents and students, create internal motivation, improve student behavior, increase academic success, increase academic, and create a stronger home-school connection. Check-In/Check-Out intervention forms can be customized to reflect behaviors that need additional focus. Teachers provide feedback to the student on these behaviors throughout the day. The purpose of the CICO intervention is to develop access to consistent praise-based feedback on tailored goals that relate to school-wide behavioral expectations (Crone, D. A., Hawken & L. S., Horner, R. H., 2010).

This type of intervention is easy to implement, requires little time to oversee and track, and aligns with the data collection measures used to determine Tier One effectiveness. The clarity and simplicity of this program allow for easy implementation with minimal levels of training. However, what is unclear is if/how this system effectively addresses the need for explicit teaching in students' Social Emotional Learning (SEL) deficits. The increased oversight supports the connection/attention seeking function of some students' behaviors.

However, many students need additional supports in terms of explicit social skills instruction to bolster their social-emotional competencies.

Research demonstrates that, when implemented with fidelity by a trained clinician, a behavioral intervention such as CICO does effectively meet the behavioral needs of many students (Crone, D. A., Hawken & L. S., Horner, R. H., 2010). However, while there is a chance that assigned CICO facilitators have the skillset to provide some ad-hoc social-emotional teaching throughout the school day, it is unclear if behavioral self-monitoring interventions such as this are enough for a student who has demonstrated significant social-emotional learning challenges or social skills deficits. If this intervention is designed to allow school districts to allocate their resources effectively, the staff assigned to be the CICO personnel assigned to a student (e.g., general education teachers, instructional assistants, janitors, or other team members) may not have the level of Social Emotional Learning (SEL) training necessary to provide meaningful social-emotional teaching. If the severity of the student's needs warrant explicit clinical expertise, logic suggests that it is essential to build collaborative partnerships between the stakeholders on site who have expertise in social-emotional teaching and positive behavioral interventions.

When school teams determine that more explicit social skills coaching is necessary, one highly recommended intervention is play-based Cognitive Behavioral Therapy for providing more intensive support (Scahill, L., Sukhodolsky, D. G., 2012). In the current study, an education specialist collaborated closely and co-taught lessons with a school psychologist in the social skills groups for and sought out and received feedback and support on developing the CICO program from a Board-Certified Behavior Analyst (BCBA) for Tier Three students. The following section provides an overview of Cognitive Behavioral

Therapy and the Social Thinking methodology and curricula which were embedded into the Tier Three intervention packages developed for students with Emotional and Behavioral Disabilities (EBDs) in the current study.

Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) Groups.

Social Learning Theory (SLT) heavily influenced SEL methods and techniques (e.g., Bandura, 1977). This theory developed from clinical and personality psychology and emphasized how cognitive factors fuel the persistence of behaviors that appear to be undesirable or unproductive. Bandura was particularly interested in this point and observed how traditional, purely behavioral theories could not explain how humans developed novel behavior for watching others' actions without reinforcement or rehearsal (Bandura & Jeffrey, 1973). SLT focused on the impact of modeling and observation and how individuals draw from experiences to create expectations about interactions with others. SLT emphasized Bandura's concept of the reciprocal interaction between behavior and environment, which contradicted the existing behavioral learning theories that focused primarily on environmental cues and how they elicited and reinforced behavioral patterns. This theory implied that solutions to aggressive behavior include "not only helping an individual develop new behavioral patterns but also sharpening the individual's observations about the contingencies in the environment and changing the environmental contingencies which support aggressive behaviors in the first place" (Bandura, 1978). Bandura stressed the idea of preventative programs implemented in natural settings, carried out by individuals with whom the aggressive person has frequent contact (e.g., parents, teachers & friendly school staff).

Bandura felt that this support would increase the likelihood that new behavioral patterns would be elicited and reinforced by the individual's everyday environmental context. He prescribed extensive training to reduce the likelihood that the environment reinforces aggressive behaviors to ensure teams learn to reinforce more socially and emotionally "intelligent" behaviors. His points regarding group training are especially relevant when working in a school setting. A large portion of the school team's efforts in the current study involved ongoing training with instructional assistant staff and teachers to reinforce the language and strategies taught in the social skills groups.

Cognitive Behavioral Theory (CBT) also influenced the development of SEL interventions. Problematic patterns of cognition, affect, and behavior arises, but adaptive behavior patterns develop in their place through CBT. The area of CBT which most heavily contributed to SEL is known as social problem-solving (Elias, et al., 2008). Social problem solving includes identifying a problematic situation, addressing the feelings related to it, putting a problem into words, and defining a goal. Then, through cognitive behavioral therapy, one can generate multiple options, analyze their potential consequences for short- and long-term implications for self and others, make a choice, plan and rehearse how to carry out that choice, and take the necessary action, and reflect on what happened. It was Spivack and Shure (1974) who urged that these "interpersonal cognitive skills" not only be taught in isolated clinical settings but generalized by building these skills on a universal basis in the regular context of school and family life.

Social Thinking Methodology.

Social Thinking (ST) is a therapeutic methodology designed to complement and add to other approaches or frameworks, such as SW-PBIS, to work with individuals with social

communication challenges. ST is an emerging practice, meaning that there are not enough published studies to establish ST as an Evidence-Based Practice (EBP). ST has two published studies finding an increase in positive behaviors and a decrease in undesired behaviors following intervention for students with autism (Lee, 2009; Crooke et al., 2008). The program, founded by Michelle Garcia Winner, a clinical-level researcher and Speech-Language Pathologist (SLP), is grounded in social communication challenges that students exhibit with social and emotional learning challenges (e.g., joint attention, inferencing, theory of mind) (Baron-Cohen, 2000; Charman et al., 2000; Hughes & Leekam, 2004; Landa, Klin, & Volkmar, 2000; Mundy, Sigman, & Kasari, 1994; Norbury & Bishop, 2002, Tomasello, 1995). The various therapeutic protocols and frameworks comprising the methodology tie to these theories (Crooke & Winner, 2015), and many of the implementation strategies share the core tenants of behavioral and cognitive-behavioral theories.

ST guides interventionists and teachers in developing treatments. This methodology begins with *identification* or *discrimination* of the desired target or concept terminology (e.g., '*social observation,' 'thinking with eyes,' 'smart guess')* (Winner & Crooke, 2008; Hendrix et al., 2013; Zweber-Palmer, Tarshis, Hendrix, & Winner, 2016) in combination with these well-documented behavioral concepts. Similar to Pivotal Response Therapy (PRT), the ST methodology also promotes the use of naturalistic reinforcement, motivation, self-regulation, and social validation for generalization (Koegel, Koegel, Harrower, & Carter, 1999), and other behaviorally (and cognitive-behaviorally) focused interventions. The program provides stakeholders with strategies, activities, and social development tools to organize and tailor for individual students. Social Thinking utilizes Evidence-Based Practices (EBPs), including Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT), Modeling, Naturalistic Teaching, Self-Management,

Social Narratives, Reinforcement, and Visual Supports to provide students with curricula, activities, and motivational tools in order to support their social skills development (Crooke, P. J., Hendrix, R. E., & Rachman, J. Y., 2008). Social Thinking curricula provide clinicians and practitioners with the tools and flexibility to tailor their instruction to meet the needs of their learners.

The founders of the Social Thinking methodology have developed several different social skills curricula for helping clients with weaknesses in the areas of emotional regulation, understanding social norms, and interpersonal skills (Crooke, P. J., Hendrix, R. E., & Rachman, J. Y., 2008). One of the foundational programs, Wee Thinkers program is designed for children age 3-7 and helps children build foundational social competencies and essential life skills through stories, lessons, and play activities (Hendrix, R., 2013). These teachings help students better understand themselves and others, develop self-awareness, perspective taking, social problem solving, and supports students' social-emotional learning, relationship building, classroom learning, and academic performance. The material is designed to be used with both typically developing children and those with social learning challenges, indicating that it can and should be prescribed for use in Tier One settings, if needed. Another program known as Superflex (Hendrix R. et al., 2013) introduces kids to the idea of flexible and inflexible thinking introduced as superheroes and villains which display common challenges the children face in their interactions with others. This program is designed for students ages 5-10+ and helps them develop and enhance their self-regulation and flexible thinking abilities. Finally, the program known as The Zones of Regulation curricula (Kuypers, L. M., 2011) provides books and games that can be used at school and at home. Kids are exposed to stories with relatable characters encountering everyday situations

and challenges as they learn about their feelings and emotions and how their bodies help show and tell them what they are feeling. Students learn along with the characters that they can manage and control how they feel by using tools—such as movement, activities, and art—to relax, focus, or stay calm so they can meet their goals and needs for the day. These programs are designed for flexible use in home and school settings by parents, counselors, teachers, speech pathologists, and other interventionists.

School psychologists or counselors are commonly the sole implementers of evidence-based social skills instruction and cognitive-behavioral training within their school site, meaning that students often have to endure the daunting and tedious process of getting tested for special education before even being offered access to systematic and tailored social skills supports on campus. In thinking about the combined use of behavioral monitoring tools (e.g., Check-In/Check-Out) and cognitive behavioral therapy social skills groups recommended within the School-Wide Positive Behavior Intervention and Supports (SWPBIS) framework, I believe that developing a data-based program with feedback loops and communication resulted in a successful approach to providing students with Emotional and Behavioral Disorders (EBD)s access to tailored intervention. The present student hopes to capture the process of developing a tiered intervention for students with EBDs in a full-inclusion context through a qualitative lens in order to fully define the components of a Tier Three intervention with Check-In/Check Out (CICO) behavioral monitoring and Social Thinking (ST) social skills teaching components and describe the steps for successfully implementing this program in this unique full-inclusion context.

The Tiered Fidelity Inventory (TFI) for Assessing Implementation

Durlak and Dupre (2011) monitored the implementation process by coding reports for instances of implementation problems (e.g., when staff failed to conduct certain parts of the intervention or unexpected developments altered the program). According to Durlak, compared to teacher-led programs, multicomponent programs, like the one described in the current study, were more likely to have implementation problems (31% vs. 22%, respectively)" (p.415). Assessing the fidelity of implementation of an EBP is essential for organizational teams to ensure that there are not fidelity issues evident in their implementation efforts. Fidelity guides are a measurement and evaluation tool meant to assure successful implementation. The Tiered Fidelity Inventory (TFI) is an instrument designed to provide a baseline measure for how different tiers of a school team are functioning in terms fidelity of implementation (Caputo Love, L. et al., 2020).

In this study I will be telling the story of how I and my colleagues implemented a treatment system for EBD students. I am interested in reflecting on what we did and the extent to which our implementation was consistent with the recommendations for Tier Three interventions described in Crone et al., 2010). The Tiered Fidelity Inventory (TFI) is a tool designed to assess how closely school personnel applies the core features of School-Wide Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (SW-PBIS). The TFI uses the features and items of existing SW-PBIS fidelity measures and provides school teams with an efficient yet valid and reliable instrument that can be used over time to guide both implementation and sustained use of SWPBIS. As described in the manual, the TFI "may be used (a) for an initial assessment to determine if a school is using (or needs) SWPBIS, (b) as a guide for implementation of Tier 1, Tier 2, and Tier 3 practices, (c) as an index of sustained SWPBIS implementation, or (d) as a metric for identifying schools for recognition within their state

implementation efforts" (p.3). Criteria for scoring each item of the TFI reflect degrees of implementation (0 = Not implemented, 1 = Partially implemented, 2 = Fully implemented) of Tier 1: Universal SWPBIS Features, Tier 2: Targeted SWPBIS Features, and Tier 3: Intensive SWPBIS Features. A complete administration of the TFI produces three scale scores: Percentage of SWPBIS implementation for Tier 1, Percentage of SWPBIS implementation for Tier 2, and Percentage of SWPBIS implementation for Tier 3, as well as subscale and item scores for each tier. The subscale and item reports guide coaching support and team action planning. Though this guide was a tool referenced to guide planning, it is essential to note that it was not scored and utilized to guide implementation efforts. Rather I am using this as a reflective tool to assess my self-identified critical incidents for implementation of SWPBIS at Tier Two and Tier Three. Again, though implementation science was not a part of the research questions guiding this study, key ideas from this field that were presented in this section were used in reflecting upon my findings in the discussion section of this paper.

Purpose of Study

The current study is an ethnographic case study that examined an education specialist's role in implementing interventions for Tier Three students with identified Emotional and Behavioral Disorders (EBDs) within a developing School-Wide Positive Behavior Intervention and Support (SW-PBIS) framework. The study used qualitative methods to explore the steps a school team took to support students with EBDs. This context, a full-inclusion elementary school setting—defined as a setting where students with disabilities, including those with Emotional and Behavioral Disabilities (EBDs)—are educated in alongside their typically developing peers for 80% of the day or more— has not

been researched. I developed a detailed account of the steps taken to implement this packaged intervention for Tier Three students within this particular context. This was a unique exploration into how schools can effectively support students with EBDs within the Least Restrictive Environment (LRE) by developing Tier Three intervention methods.

Research Questions

1. How did an education specialist serve as a change agent in developing Tier Three SW-PBIS support systems?
    - A. What were the obstacles of change?
    - B. What were the drivers of change?
    - C. Which strategies worked in this context?
2. What were the stages in the evolution of the school's support systems for Students with Emotional and Behavioral Disabilities (EBDs)?
3. What was the story of system's change at Seaside Elementary School?

Chapter II. Methodologies

This section presents the methodology for this study—a qualitative ethnographic study. Marshall & Rossman (1999) identified eight categories of pivotal information in a research proposal, these are: 1) the overall strategy and rationale, 2) site selection and population, 3) researcher's role, 4) data collection methods, 5) data management, 6) data analysis, 7) trustworthiness features, and 8) a management plan.

Research Design

A holistic-case study analysis was the research method for this study. A holistic case study is "an empirical inquiry that investigates 1) a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, when 2) the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not evident and in which, 3) multiple sources of evidence are used" (Yin, 2017 p.23). The case study analysis method is structured so that the researcher can investigate the phenomenon (i.e., the implementation of a Tier Three SW-PBIS intervention) within its natural context (i.e., a single school district with an inclusion program including students with Emotional and Behavioral Disabilities (EBDs)). A single-case study model was employed to examine a context—a highly affluent school's full-inclusion program including students with Emotional and Behavioral Disorders (EBDs). Multiple data sources, including contemporaneous emails, documents on implementation, videos, and interviews with key informants, were analyzed. More than one type of data was advantageous in that it helped to provide the study with more reliability (i.e., data triangulation) and painted a complete picture of the implementation process. In summary, a holistic case study analysis is the method for this research study to provide a detailed exploration of the many facets involved with implementing the Tier Three SW-PBIS Social and Behavioral Intervention package for

students with EBDs within a unique full-inclusion context.

Sources of Data

The relevant data largely came from a mixture of elicited and extant internal documents downloaded from a Google Drive file for this study. I gained retroactive access with consent from school administrators, staff, and parents of students involved in the case study. Planning documents included scans of handwritten notes, team emails (coded by student name), planning guides for the Social Emotional Learning (SEL) groups, meeting notes from the character committee (Tier One support team) and special education Professional Learning Community (PLC for Tier Two and Tier Three supports). Other data sources included behavioral tracking tools and data graphs for target students and video clips of social skills intervention sessions along with follow-up emails to parents and IEP team members.

Researcher Role

The unique nature of ethnographic experience—entering a school system and becoming a part of the school culture over four years— allowed me to explore the phenomena of developing Tier Three SW-PBIS interventions from a novel angle. However, it was essential for me to be reflexive about how my former role and connections with the participants in this study might influence the results. I needed to carefully craft my investigative questions targeting the CIs that I had self-identified at both the student-specific and systems levels during my memo writing exercises.

I worked at Seaside Elementary as an Instructional Assistant (IA) in the special education department from the 2011-2012 school year before going to graduate school to enter the special education credential program for students with moderate to severe

disabilities. During my time as an IA, I became close with the families and students that I served and the teaching staff with whom I worked. I also worked as a clinician for an Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) agency in the local area and worked with many students and families from Seaside Elementary within home and community settings. I was placed as a student-teacher at Seaside Elementary and was supervised and supported by the (Special Day Class) SDC/Inclusion classroom teacher, who later became my co-worker.

A year after graduation from my credential program, my supervising SDC/Inclusion teacher reached out to let me know of the opening for the inclusion specialist position and recommended me for the position. In entering the position, staff members whom I had developed relationships with confided in her that there were challenges on campus due to the needs of students with significant emotional and behavioral disabilities— one of whom was the student who qualified for special education services under the eligibility category of Emotional Disturbance (ED), whom I had worked with as an instructional assistant. I also was told that the former inclusion specialist had been critiqued and was no longer at Seaside elementary partially due to challenges with effectively supporting this population. There were also concerns about the prevalence of Crisis Prevention Interventions (CPI) restraint and holds being conducted on campus. The Non-violent Crisis Intervention training program given to staff of the county education office (the organization from which Seaside's special education program was outsourced) provided instruction in the use of CPI personal safety techniques and physical restraint techniques. The restraint techniques are viewed as emergency procedures to be used as a last resort, only when an individual is an imminent danger to self or others. However, there were concerns that, due to the lack of proactive supports in place, these reactive approaches were being utilized at a much higher rate.

The relationships I developed and insights from my peers helped me orient to the program's needs while I began to navigate the organizational hierarchy and systems in place. My relationships with the families and staff allowed me to garner their trust in developing individualized supports for their children. As I began integrating into the organization's structure and became involved in relevant committees for developing systemic interventions, these relationships allowed me to navigate this system to better meet student needs. Interviewees for this study include vital participants involved in critical incidents at either the student-specific or system's levels. It is important to note that my relationships with the key informants in the study may have influenced their willingness or unwillingness to provide accurate reflections regarding their beliefs about the developed interventions. As recommended by Charmaz, to address participants' comfort levels and encourage candor and transparency in their responses, the interview guide questions I developed allowed for both open-ended responses to elicit new Critical Incidents (CIs) and targeted questions relating to the researcher's self-identified CIs.

Participants

Over the course of developing the Tier Three intervention package, there were many students who were receiving components of the behavior and social skills treatment program as recommended and agreed upon by their Individual Education Program (IEP) team. Table 3 below highlights some of the characteristics of students who were in the Tier Three treatment group at Seaside elementary school.

Table 3

Summary of Characteristics of the Tier Three Students with Emotional and Behavioral Disabilities (EBDs)

Characteristics of the Tier Three Seaside Students with Emotional and Behavioral Disabilities (EBDs)					
Pseudonym	**Age(s) while in Tier Three Program at Seaside**	**Primary Eligibility**	**Positive Behavior Intervention Plan in IEP?**	**Check In Check Out (CICO)?**	**Social Skills Group Participant?**
Ryan	10-11	Emotional Disturbance (ED)	Yes	Yes	No
Julio	10	Emotional Disturbance (ED)	Yes	Yes	No
Mark	9-11	Other Health Impairment (OHI)	Yes	Yes	Yes
Jake	10-11	Autism (AUT)	Yes	Yes	Yes
Angie	10-11	Emotional Disturbance (ED)	Yes	Yes	Yes
Baxter	10-11	Autism (AUT)	Yes	Yes	Yes
Michael	9-11	Autism (AUT)	Yes	Yes	Yes
Simon	6-9	Autism (AUT)	Yes	Yes	Yes
Cooper	6-8	Autism (AUT)	Yes	Yes	Yes
Drake	5-8	Emotional Disturbance (ED)	Yes	Yes	Yes

The participants in this study included 12 adults— nine adults who were staff members who regularly interacted with students with EBDs who were involved in the systematic interventions developed, and three adults directly involved in Tiered SW-PBIS behavior interventions on campus. The selection criteria for Student-Specific interviews were identification in Student Specific CIs and included a mixture of instructional assistants,

general education teachers, and a school psychologist.

Nine individuals were interviewed with interview guides targeted student-specific CIs. The selection criteria for Systems-Level interviews were identification in Systems-Level CIs and included two vice principals, a school psychologist, and a general education teacher. Those who agree to participate were given a *Consent to Participate Form* (See Appendix A) and were notified of the purpose, procedures, risks, and benefits of the study. Consent to participate was requested from all adult participants (e.g., school psychologist, speech-language pathologist, special education teacher/case manager, and instructional assistants) and the school and district administrators. It is important to note that consent was not given by the students themselves. However, all students' parents were contacted for parental permission. Consent sought agreement to participate in the interview and survey components of the study and the release of documents on student information regarding students' progress in their emotional and behavioral functioning. All of the participants were initially contacted via email to request their participation in the study. All participants were provided with a written and oral explanation of the research study's purpose, procedures, and safeguards. Digital signatures on human subject consent forms from the University of California were obtained from each study using DocuSign.

The interviews occurred via scheduled Zoom video-calls, once participants agreed to and signed the research consent form. Intensive interviewing was used as a way to generate data for the qualitative study. The Zoom calls took place at mutually agreed-upon meeting times. Zoom interviews lasted between 40-90 minutes, depending on the participants' input and elaboration. Interview protocol categories for the school district members, such as the administrators, teachers, and related service professionals, included questions that explored

the participants' experiences and perceptions concerning supporting students with (Emotional and Behavioral Disabilities) EBDs. A self-report demographic instrument was also used to obtain information about the participants' age, ethnicity, gender, professional role during the case study, current professional role, and their years in their current professional role. A summary of the demographics for 10 of the 12 study participants is included in Table 4 below.

Table 4

Summary of Adult Participant Demographics

Summary of Adult Participant Demographics						
Pseudonym	**Current Age**	**Gender**	**Ethnicity**	**Role(s) in Study**	**Current Role**	**Years in Role**
Chris	38	M	White	Vice Principal	Assistant Superintendent	6
Jace	41	M	Asian	Classroom Teacher & Vice Principal	Vice Principal	6
Marta	52	F	White	School Psychologist	School Psychologist	25
Becca	33	F	Hispanic	School Psychologist	School Psychologist	9
Laura	61	F	White	Classroom Teacher	Classroom Teacher	29
Stephanie	44	F	White	Classroom Teacher	Classroom Teacher	16
Kristen	39	F	Asian	Classroom Teacher	Classroom Teacher	15
Jessica	38	F	White	Classroom Teacher	Classroom Teacher	15
John	53	M	White	Instructional Assistant	Special Education Teacher	5
Lisa	28	F	White	Instructional Assistant	School Psychologist	2
Kara	37	F	White	Instructional Assistant	Special Education Teacher	6

	*Complete Information not available for 1 of the 12 study participants

At the student-specific CI level, the interview protocol included a mixture of open-ended and targeted questions about addressing Student-Specific CIs, including 1) their experience on specific students' IEP teams concerning the implementation of behavioral and social skills for individual students, 2) their recollection of features of the organization that were essential to their role in supporting these students, 3) tests of the education specialists' identified CIs for specific students and 4) their current views on supporting students with emotional and behavioral disorders in inclusive settings.

At the systems level, the interview protocol included a mixture of open-ended and targeted questions addressing the researcher's self-identified intervention implementation components, including their experiences on steering committees involved in developing Tiered SWPBIS supports (e.g., Character Committee, SPED PLC, and Social Skills Planning Committee), their perspective of Tier One, Tier Two, and Tier Three behavioral supports for students— specifically the Check-In/Check-Out CICO intervention and the Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) social skills intervention—, the general needs of students with identified Emotional and Behavioral Disabilities (EBDs) on campus from their perspective, a description of their perspective of the evolution of interventions available for students with EBDs across the four year implementation period, their perspective on the use of data to inform access to additional supports in a SW-PBIS framework for supporting students with social and emotional disabilities at Seaside Elementary School, their perspective regarding the expertise representation available on the student study team, tests of the education specialists' identified Systems-Level Critical Incidents (CIs) for the implementation of the packaged Tier Three social and behavioral skills intervention package, and their current

views on supporting students with EBDs in inclusive settings.

The interview guide for each participant included questions targeting their experience in their previous and current role regarding working with students with emotional and behavioral disorders. This process allowed the researcher to investigate how participants defined or remembered identified Critical Incidents (CIs) and how these experiences have impacted their perspectives regarding working with students with EBDs. This involved the practice of following up on unanticipated areas of inquiry, hints, and implicit views and accounts of actions. As mentioned above, the interviews allowed flexibility for rescheduling and following up on new information or critical perspectives as they surfaced during the interviewing process.

Table 5

Charmaz' Interview Key Characteristics and Alignment with Current Study

Charmaz Key Characteristics	Alignment with the Current Study
Selection of research-participants who have first-hand experience that fits the research topic	All key informants were selected based on their familiarity with Critical Incidents in the development of the Tier Three SW-PBIS interventions. All key informants were directly involved in the interventions.
In-depth exploration of participants' experiences and situations	The interview guide for each selected participant included open-ended questions used to solicit information regarding their experiences in relation to being involved in the development and implementation of the interventions.
Reliance on open-ended questions	The interview guide for each selected participant included open ended questions in order to allow participants to tell their stories.
Objective of obtaining detailed responses	Each interview did not include a time limit, but rather followed the flow of the conversation and provided opportunities for follow-up conversations in the event that more information

	is needed.
Emphasis on understanding the research participant's perspective, meanings, and experience	The interview guide for each participant included questions targeting their experience in their previous and current role in regard to working with students with emotional and behavioral disorders. This allowed me to investigate how participants defined or remembered incidents that I have deemed to be critical incidents and how these experiences have impacted their perspectives in regard to working with students with emotional and behavioral disorders.
Practice of following up on unanticipated areas of inquiry, hints, and implicit views and accounts of actions	As mentioned above, the interviews allowed flexibility for rescheduling and following up on new information or important perspectives as they surfaced during the interviewing process.

Intensive Interviewing

Intensive interviewing (Charmaz, 2014) elicited participant's interpretation of his or her experience in connection with the identified critical incidents when the interview took place. The interview participants had relevant experiences to shed light on the topic of School-Wide Positive Behavior Intervention and Support (SW-PBIS) implementation across tiers of support. As described by Charmaz, I listened, observed with sensitivity, and encouraged the participants to talk. In these conversations, the goal was for the participants to do most of the talking.

As recommended by Charmaz, constructing an interview guide prepared me for conducting the actual interviews. By grappling with creating, revising, and fine-tuning the interview questions, I gained a better sense of how and when to ask the questions in conversation. Charmaz's guidelines were referenced in the development of the interviews and interview guide. In conducting qualitative interviews, it is not uncommon for novice

researchers to struggle with pacing, question formation, and reworking the content of the interview guide in the event the questions are not eliciting informative responses as written. Charmaz (2014) recommended principles for prepping for the interview and refining research questions that are not working well. These principles are outlined alongside my application to the current study in Table 6 below.

Table 6

Charmaz' Interview Practices and Alignment with Current Study

Charmaz Key Characteristics	**Alignment with the Current Study**
Give the participants comfort level higher priority than obtaining juicy data	I checked in with participants to gauge their level of comfort with more difficult topics and prefaced probing questions with a reminder than it's okay to ask for some 'think time', ask to come back to a question, or to state that they would like to skip the question.
Frame questions to understand the experience from the participant's view. Give an example of how you will do this.	In order to elicit the participant's perspective, I began with questions that contextualized their role in the situation. For example, "…given your critical role as an instructional assistant supporting students with emotional and behavioral disabilities what would you describe were the most important steps in…".
Affirm that the participant's views and experiences are important.	I made statements like this: "I really appreciate your efforts to remember what happened at this stage of the implementation. I know it's not easy to remember. If it would help, I can show you a few emails or a document from our committee to help you remember", etc.
Be aware of questions that could elicit the participant's distress about an experience or incident	In determining critical events that had the potential to trigger or cause emotional reactions from a participant, I ensured that I preface the questions with the prompts in section 1 above and was prepared to either come back to or skip questions entirely, depending on the comfort level of my

	participants.
Construct follow-up questions that encourage elaboration	As recommended by Charmaz, I constructed a series of closing questions that had an open-ended structure to allow for elaboration and permission to reach out to ask follow-up questions, as needed.
Slant ending questions toward positive responses to bring the interview to closure at a positive level.	I ensured that the structure of the interview question guide targeted any probing or potentially triggering or difficult questions at the appropriate phase in the interview and ensured closure questions took on a positive tone highlighting the supportive role the participant took in supporting students with emotional and behavioral disorders.
Re-evaluate, revise and add questions throughout the research process	I used each interview as an opportunity to test questions and refine them, based on participants' responses in order to ask better, more refined questions as the interviews unfolded.

In terms of structuring the interview guide, Charmaz recommends beginning with Initial Open-ended questions designed to elicit leading to Immediate Questions—designed to delve into the tricky areas and attempt to elicit the participant's views of his or her experience, and closing with Ending Questions—designed to bring the interview back to a normal rhythm and pace in order to end on a positive note. The following table outlines some of the more general core questions asked during the interviews' more general initial and closing phases.

Table 7

Sample Initial and Closing Interview Questions

Sample Initial and Closing Interview Questions	
Initial Questions	When, if at all, did you first experience or notice that students at Seaside (including your target student) may need a stronger level of support for their social/emotional and behavioral needs? Tell me about how you came to work as

	(participants' role) at Seaside? Tell me about your experience on IEP teams using the Check In/Check Out intervention or Social Skills Training... If you recall, what were you thinking when you found out that you would be working 1:1 with sample student? Who if anyone influenced your actions? Tell me about how he/she/they influenced you…
Ending Questions	How has your experience working with students with social, emotional, and behavioral needs affected how you interact with these learners? After having these experiences what advice would you give to a new special education teacher or instructional assistant who just discovered that they will be supporting a student with social, emotional, and behavioral needs in an inclusive setting? Is there something you might not have thought about before that occurred to you in this interview? Is there anything you would like me to ask?

Table 8 below is a more complete example interview guide which was used with a key informant.

Table 8

Sample Interview Guide from Current Study

Critical Incident #1-_________5 Day Suspension (Interviewee: ___________)	
Open Ended	**Tailored Questions Regarding CI #1**
When, if at all, did you first	Could you describe the events that led up to critical

experience or notice that students at Seaside (including your target student) may need a stronger level of support for their social/emotional and behavioral needs? Tell me about how you came to work as an instructional assistant for the county education office? Tell me about your experience on IEP teams using the Check In/Check Out intervention or Social Skills Training... If you recall, what were you thinking when you found out that you would be working 1:1 with sample student? Who if anyone influenced your actions? Tell me about how he/she/they influenced you…	incident (Student being suspended for 5 days)? (Provide CPI form) What happened next? Who, if anyone was involved? When was that? How were they involved? Who was the most helpful to you during this time? How was she/he helpful? Was the organization helpful? How did the county education office or Seaside administrators help you? How was it helpful? Do you remember the green behavior charts that we used to use with ________ (picture)? Can you tell me your thoughts on the usefulness of this tool? How would you describe the end of the 2014-2015 school year for ________? Could I ask you to describe the most important lessons you learned through working with and supporting ________? How have your thoughts and feelings about working with students with emotional and behavioral needs changed since then?
Ending Questions	
How has your experience working with students with social, emotional, and behavioral needs affected how you interact with these learners? After having these experiences what advice would you give to a new special education teacher or instructional assistant who just discovered that they will be supporting a student with social, emotional, and behavioral needs in an inclusive setting? Is there something you might not have thought about before that occurred to you in this interview? Is there anything you would like me to ask?	

I first had to develop an outline of Critical Incidents (CIs) that occurred during my

tenure as an education specialist at my former school site, such as the 5-day suspension for a student after a violent episode in the 3rd month of school before we had SW-PBIS intervention in place.

Interview Coding

Student-Specific and Systems-Level interviews were analyzed from my perspective as an education specialist with behavioral training who developed Tier Three behavioral interventions for students with emotional and behavioral disorders. Charmaz's recommended coding steps were used with a two-pronged coding strategy. I used both deductive and inductive coding methods to develop a theory regarding implementing the Tier Three School-Wide Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (SW-PBIS).

Initial Coding

The inductive analysis was open-ended. Selected documents were coded, and all of the interviews using a three-step process. The codes emerge from the data rather than starting with pre-existing codes. The coding process defined what was happening within the data set, as I grappled with what it means. By being careful and following Charmaz's recommendations, I developed generalizable theoretical statements while provided a contextual analysis of the actions and events from the data set. As Charmaz describes, grounded theory coding involves two main phases including, "1) an initial phase involving naming each word, line, or segment of data followed by 2) a focused, selective phase that uses the most significant or frequent initial codes to sort, synthesize, integrate, and organize large amounts of data" (Charmaz, 2014, p.113). The inductive process begins with studying emerging data (Glaser, 1978). I began by engaging in thorough coding and comparing data and codes to explore tentative categories to keep the coding simple, direct, and spontaneous.

As is the case with the grounded theory method, I was simultaneously engaged in an interactive method. For example, while studying the data and engaging in the coding process, I was sometimes pulled to attain more information from some research participants while still moving forward with fresh ideas to check with new participants. As described by Charmaz, I acted on the data, and these actions sustained my involvement with them.

This first level of coding involved minimal inference. It functioned as an index at the back of a book that allowed me to find particular parts of the data at a fine level of detail. *Line by line coding* means naming each line of the written data, including both the internal documents and interview transcripts. It is essential to remain open to the data and look for nuances in them. I made margin notes for each idea that appeared in an email or an interview transcript. For example, if the vice principal says, "A crucial step from my point of view was our decision to include Mr.____ and Mrs. ___ on the steering committee." In the margin of the transcript, the researcher included: "key step, name ____ & ____." This process resulted in hundreds of codes that needed to be further refined through more in-depth coding. I stuck closely to the data to see actions in each segment of code with words that reflect action. By focusing on actions, I prevented myself from focusing on individuals rather than on the data, preventing conceptual leaps or attempting to adopt extant theories critical before conducting the necessary analytic work, as is a crucial concern of Charmaz. It was vital for me to learn and examine how my past experiences influenced how I interpreted the data. It was essential to ensure that the initial codes were "provisional, comparative, and grounded in the data"(Charmaz, 2014, p.117). Using these strategies flexibly and following the emerging leads from the data, I developed theoretical categories to help define the initial codes. The next phase in the inductive research process involved focused coding.

F*ocused Coding*

This step involved evaluating the most useful initial codes developed and then testing different directions and form the data took. As Charmaz describes, focused coding "condenses and sharpens what the researcher has already done because it highlights what they find to be important in their emerging analysis" (Charmaz, 2014, p.138). This coding stimulated the comparative process. Charmaz recommends using the following questions to determine which codes could serve best as focused codes:

- 'What is this data a study of? (Glaser, 1978, p.57; Glaser and Strauss, 1967)
- What do the data suggest? Pronounce? Leave unsaid?
- From whose point of view? Include acknowledgement of whose point of view is being privileged
- What theoretical category does this specific datum indicate (Glaser, 1978)

Charmaz recommends the following strategies for coding:

- Breaking the data up into their component parts or properties
- Defining the actions on which they rest
- Looking for tacit assumptions
- Exploring implicit actions and meanings
- Crystalizing the significance of the points
- Comparing data with data
- Identifying gaps in the data

Consistent with the logic of grounded theory, this focused coding process was also an emergent process, meaning unexpected ideas continued to emerge.

Charmaz recommends that researchers ask themselves the following questions:

- What do you find when you compare your initial codes with data?
- In which ways might your initial codes reveal patterns?
- Which of these codes best account for the data?
- Have you raised these codes to focused codes?
- What do your comparisons between codes indicate?
- Do your focused codes reveal gaps in the data?

Theoretical Coding

The next phase of coding involved a more sophisticated level of coding know as Theoretical Coding. Glaser (1978, p.72) introduced theoretical codes as conceptualizing 'how the substantive codes may relate to each other as hypotheses to be integrated into a theory. This phase allowed me to structure the focused codes that I collected into a more coherent form. This process allowed me to reconstruct the 'fractured story' of the line-by-line coding analysis back into a fuller, more complete account. In this process, I specified possible relationships between the categories developed through the focused coding process. The next step in the method's process involved developing reliability and accountability measures for maintaining a rigorous and thorough analysis of the data which I will describe in the results section.

Materials

Materials for this study include retroactive access to the Google Suite account for extant internal documents, a digital signature program for signing consent forms (DocuSign), a video-call software with recording ability for transcription purposes (Zoom), a password-protected computer drive for storage of student documents, and access to transcription software (Freetranscriptions.com).

Summary

A single-case study analysis provides this research study with a thorough exploration of the implementation of Tier Three interventions for students with Emotional and Behavioral Disorders (EBDs) in a single school district in an inclusion program. This research method was the best fit for this student for several reasons. First, this strategy allowed for the investigation of these practices within the real-life context of the district. Second, this strategy is multi-faceted and includes three major types of evidence allowing data triangulation (Patton, 1990). This research strategy resulted in a more telling story than any other research strategy could have promoted.

Chapter 4: Results

The results from this study will provide a story of the implementation process for developing Tier Three Supports for students with Emotional and Behavioral Disabilities (EBDs) at Seaside Elementary School. Below I have provided an overview of the full-inclusion schooling context available at Seaside Elementary School and in the following sections I will outline the four stages of implementation including: Stage One: Baseline Problems, Stage Two: SW-PBIS Implementation—New Staff and New Leadership, and Stage 3: Making Progress through New Administrative and Organizational Structures. Please note that pseudonyms are used throughout this section to protect the confidentiality of participants and students described in the study.

Seaside Elementary Unified School District

A pseudonym for the school's name was used for confidentiality. The criteria for site selection involved one school district with an inclusion program serving Tier Three students with Emotional and Behavioral Disabilities (EBDs). By contracting with the local County Education Office, Seaside elementary school was able to develop a full-inclusion program for students with emotional and behavioral disorders educated alongside typically developing peers for over 80% of their school day. I recruited the district for this study after working as an education specialist in the inclusion program supporting Tier Three students with special needs, including those with emotional and behavioral disabilities. I left my position at the school site a year before requesting permission to conduct the study.

The Seaside Unified School District is a single-school district serving a small unincorporated community with approximately 10,000 people. The single-school school district serves 410 students at a single elementary school from transitional kindergarten to

sixth grade. The district has a special education enrollment of 10.9% and receives special education services through the local county education office due to the small enrollment size. The school's student population is 80% white. The teaching staff at the school site is also predominately white and female. The percentage of students who met or exceeded standards on the California Assessment of Student Performance and Progress (CAASPP) test scores were 91% for Language Arts and 85% for Math for the 2017-2018 school year. The state CAASPP testing averages for 2017-2018 were 50% for Language Arts and 38% for Math. In terms of special education students at Seaside elementary school, 83% met or exceeded Language Arts standards, and 70% met or exceeded math standards. The state testing average for students in special education was 15% for Language Arts and 12% for math. These measures indicate the high level of support and achievement across typically developing students and those with identified special needs at Seaside Elementary school, as well as a huge disparity in the wealth and social status of the school in comparison to other schools.

Special education services were delivered in an inclusion model with two full-time SDC/inclusion teachers for students with moderate to severe needs requiring academic and behavioral support and one full-time resource teacher supporting students with mild support needs. The teaching staff was highly qualified, and no staff were outside of their appropriate credential placement. The inclusion program employed a team of approximately twelve instructional assistants to help support and facilitate Individual Education Plan (IEP) supports and adaptations within the general education classrooms under the guidance of the inclusion teachers. The level of support provided at this school site required significantly higher levels of funding than provided to typical schools. My experience working as an education

specialist at the school site led me to investigate the implementation components used to implement Tier Three supports for students with Emotional and behavioral disorders in the inclusion program. The school paid above and beyond the minimal level of special education service, including salaries of approximately one extra full-time equivalent special education teacher and approximately one and half extra instructional assistant positions with funding outside of the special education discretionary funds. In the sections below, I describe the three stages of the implementation process for developing supports for students with Emotional and Behavioral Disabilities (EBDs) on campus at Seaside Elementary.

In order to help contextualize the culture at Seaside Elementary School, it is important to note that the administrative hierarchy of the school is unique in that there are five administrators allocated to supporting one school—four on-campus administrators (Superintendent; Chief Financial Officer (CFO); Chief Learning Officer (CFO); and Vice Principal) as well as a special education coordinator assigned by the county education office. This is important to note in that a greater number of administrators adds to the complexity of hierarchical relationships and the skills one would need to understand their role and how to navigate this complex organizational structure. This complexity was not only due to the number of administrators on site within the school District but that the special education program from which I was outsourced was from a different organization altogether, the County Special Education program.

Description of Students Involved in the Study

The students who were involved in the Tier Three support programs had a variety of diagnoses ranging from bi-polar disorder, posttraumatic stress disorder, oppositional defiant disorder, to autism. Each of my students had a Behavior Intervention Plan (BIP) in place to

support the team in including them within their general education classes during applicable inclusion times. In conducting Functional Behavior Assessments (FBAs), each of the students had behaviors that were deemed to be rooted in seeking attention or connections with others. Additionally, each of the students had significant needs in the areas of social skills and meeting classroom expectations at school. These conditions made them ideal candidates for the selected Tier Three intervention package involving the Check-In/Check-Out (CICO) program combined with the Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) social skills group which utilized Social Thinking (ST) curricula. In the first stage below, I will describe the baseline conditions and challenges present at Seaside which I encountered upon entering the Education Specialist role at the school site.

Stage One: Baseline Problems

During the first phase of implementation which lasted approximately for the first year and a half of my time teaching at Seaside, there were significant challenges I encountered in establishing support systems for my students. In the example below, I have described one of the crisis incidents which occurred during my first year in the program that resulted in the need for emergency Crisis Prevention Intervention (CPI) techniques. After describing this situation, I will then contextualize this example and provide insight into why these types of reactive interventions were occurring on-site at Seaside elementary throughout this first stage of implementation.

Baseline Crisis: An Example of Reactive Discipline Problem at Seaside

During the early spring of my first year of teaching, right before our spring break, one of my students who qualified for special education under the eligibility of Emotional Disturbance (ED), became escalated in her general education classroom during an afternoon

social studies lesson in the 6th grade. I had established a protocol where the general education teacher or Instructional Assistant (IA) could call me if needed for help supporting her. Instead of calling the room, the general education teacher decided to try to bring her to my room while the class was transitioning past the special education room, on the other side of campus, to P.E, because the child's Instructional Assistant (IA) was not on campus that day and a substitute IA had not been sent from the County Education Office. Meaning that the general education teacher sent her to my room highly escalated without first calling the room and notifying me of the situation. During this incident, the student barged into the classroom and immediately began opening cabinets and pouring materials onto the floor. I was at my desk on my lunch break finishing paperwork for an upcoming Individual Education Plan (IEP) coming up the following day. I tried prompting the student to take a break and calm down, but, after watching her tear up materials and continuing to look for my reaction, I called the principal for back-up support, because I was the only person in the room and the student was known for being physically aggressive.

While I proceeded to dial the phone, the student began moving towards filing cabinets in the corner of the room which had large heavy boxes on top. I was able to communicate that I needed help in room 12 to the front office before dropping the classroom phone and trying to prevent the student from either dropping the boxes on herself or throwing them at me. By the time an administrator got to the room, I was in the process of getting one of the boxes back onto the filing cabinet, as the student grabbed a pen from my desk and proceeded to stab me in the foot. At this point, she ran from the room prompting myself and the administrator to follow her. She then proceeded to run across the street to the park and locked herself in the park's bathroom.

The administrator and myself maintained supervision of the bathroom stall and called the student's grandmother to pick her up. When the grandmother arrived, we made a plan to get the student from the stall to the car and talked about a reinforcer she could earn at home if she made a smooth transition. Despite agreeing to the plan, the student tried to run from the car and the administrator and I used a Crisis Prevention Intervention (CPI) child transport position to help her grandmother get her into the vehicle. After the adrenaline wore off, I was asked how many days she should be suspended and told to go get my foot injury looked at after work.

While many educators would have come away from this situation feeling like a failure and looking for a way out, I used this as an opportunity to meet with administrators from both of the organizations to negotiate for resources to better support my student's need including a better space to meet this student's need, closer to her classroom in the sixth-grade wing and the school psychologist's office. Additionally, in debriefing the situation with her general education teacher, I discovered that this teacher was a member of the 'Character Committee' on campus and that member of that committee were looking into ways to improve the discipline practices on campus. They were going to be meeting with applicants for the new Vice Principal who was being hired for the following school year. While this incident occurred at the end of the first, baseline stage of the implementation process, I will now highlight the core implementation challenges being faced throughout this first phase of implementation which contributed to the frequent crises on campus, especially for students with Emotional and Behavioral Disabilities (EBDs).

Stage One-Baseline Problem One: Divided Administrative and the 'In-Group/Out Group'

While the contracted nature of the County Education Office for supporting the special

education inclusion program at Seaside allowed for access to student resources, it also created a divide within the school culture. Members of the Seaside faculty and administration did not value the contributions of the County Education Office team, leading to members of this team, including myself, to be viewed as members of an out-group within the work place. While the Seaside staff was referred to as the "faculty", Members of the County Education Office were simply referred to as "the county people". Everything from our pay to our staff badges was reflective of this 'in-group/ out-group' situation. Coming into the setting as the new resource/inclusion teacher on campus, I experienced challenges around both defining my role and providing leadership to the special education Instructional Assistant (IA team that I supervised due to the stress of navigating a culture that did not feel healthy on an adult level. For example, the vice principal who came into the district described his perception of the broken relationships between adults on campus and how this state impacted the school team's abilities to function and collaborate around developing and implementing initiatives effectively.

"I think one of the most important lessons from Seaside is that it reinforced just how important the culture of adults was to really transforming the culture of kids. So, there was a perceived divide and there always is to an extent, but it was pretty broad between administration and faculty. Definitely between administration and support staff, and parents and support staff and parents and administration."

This last sentence meant that there were divisions between people according to their roles: that is, administrators were not in sync with the support staff, parents and support staff were not well coordinated, and the parents were at odds with the administration.

"There were all of these broken relationships and seeing how those played out showed me that even with the most you can have all of the fiscal resources in place but it's hard to have a truly restorative campus if we're not practicing that on the adult level because the kids will see right through that …there's not a lot of books that talk about how we need to be in an adult culture to develop academic excellence, a culture of social change and improve behavior. It really starts with the culture and Seaside taught me that."

The challenges presented by working with a population of students with EBDs with such heightened levels of need for positive behavioral supports and healthy adult relationships combined with the current state of unhealthy adult culture made for a very difficult system to navigate. Despite these challenges, the team and I persisted in our efforts to develop systems to meet the needs of these learners within Seaside's context.

In describing the adult chemistry and relationships at Seaside Elementary school, it is essential to highlight that the school district, which had less than 500 students, outsourced its special education program in a contract with the local County education office, as is allowed by California state law. The special education team members were hired and trained through a separate entity with a separate administration and pay scales. Given the nature of this 'in-group/out-group,' many special education staff interviewees commented on the difficulty establishing rapport with and garnering respect from the Seaside team, which directly impacted team members' relationships with their teammates and the potential for successful collaboration around supporting students with EBDs. For example, an administrator from Seaside described the situation as follows.

"The way Seaside was structured is quite unique in so many ways. It's a basic aid district. Class sizes are so much smaller than the state average and special education program was contracted through the county education office and in some ways that created a divide in the staff, at least that I felt. You had county office employees and you had Seaside employees and I think everything from pay to consistency of scheduling there was an elephant in the room and I at times didn't feel like the special education staff was respected at the same level as the faculty by the faculty…It's imperative that when you're in a position of leadership that you recognize that there's a disconnect in status in a hierarchical system. Otherwise, you have a fear-based culture."

The challenge of working with special needs students in a context in which those in special education staff role are not on equal footing or respected at the same level as their colleagues was tricky and emotionally draining. For example, one of the former special

education teachers at this site described how he felt in supporting students with emotional and behavioral needs at Seaside in relation to challenges teaming with one of the general education teachers on site.

"…I was out on an island, ya know? I was on an island with a student and it was just 'get him out get him out! It's your problem!'…And I mean the thing about this general education teacher is that there were other kids that were typically developing who were doing the same thing this other kid was doing, but the general education teacher didn't like when my student did it. She'd always pick on her."

The quote above highlighted the feelings of being in the county education office outgroup and the impact which that had on those trying to support students with the highest level of need on campus. This sentiment is echoed in the quote for the Seaside vice principal entering the program during the second phase of implementation.

"In terms fully systematizing, we didn't have challenges in terms of expertise, and we definitely didn't have challenges there in terms of fiscal resources, the challenge was adult to adult relationships and really the perception of status…there was a noticeable disrespect between a county education office employee and a Seaside faculty member. I was working with the professionals who understood behaviorism on the deepest of levels and trying to bring that forward. It was a challenge that I think we would have overcome had everyone been there for years. I always believe the culture of adults shapes the culture of kids and that culture was palpable."

The challenges presented in the relationships and functioning of administrators and adults on campus between the 'group/out-group' was exacerbated by the fact that there was a large misunderstanding about the Vice Principal role which contributed to the overreliance on reactive disciplinary measures and Crisis Prevention Intervention (CPI) holds and restraints such as those described in the baseline crisis example at the beginning of this section. Below, I will outline the second prevalent baseline problem involving the misunderstanding of the Vice Principal role along with Seaside's historical reliance on reactive Crisis Prevention Intervention (CPI) holds and restraints in the absence of

established Tier One, Two and Three Positive Behavior Supports and Interventions allocated within a School-Wide Behavior Intervention and Support (SW-PBIS) framework.

Stage One- Baseline Problem Two: VP Viewed as Disciplinarian and Reliance on CPI

In continuing to describe the challenges presented in the stage one baseline phase of implementation, the former vice principal at Seaside describes the misconceptions many teachers and faculty members on site had in relation to the progress made during the second year of implementation and how the Seaside faculty defined the vice principal's role. This quote exemplified the problem that many of Seaside school board and faculty had a traditional view of the vice principal as a disciplinarian alone, failing to understand the need for the school culture to shift toward emphasizing building systems of support.

"When I left Seaside, I think that the faculty felt like we had great systems in place and I think we had a great start but I don't think we were as far along as they thought, I think there was a misunderstanding of Tier Two and Tier Three levels and we weren't leaning in to expertise in those areas. I think they saw me as Tier Two. You know what I mean like 'the discipline guy'."

In this quote the vice principal is referring to the fact that the school team viewed his role as that of "the discipline guy"— an outdated belief that the vice principal is the sole disciplinarian in the school and the one who should deal with all student behaviors. However, when under the School-Wide Positive Behavior Intervention and Support (SW-PBIS) model, the entire school team including the classroom teachers should have been dealing with classroom-level behavioral issues by implementing data-driven evidence-based practices across Tiers of support aligned with data-driven indicators of student need.

Given the misunderstanding of the vice principal's role paired with the struggle to elevate and provide a voice to team members who were not on an equal footing or disrespected by the Seaside in-group, there was a lot of work to do in terms of foundational

training on Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS) and the theoretical underpinnings necessary to effectively implement and sustain this type of a structure. As a first step in accumulating and transferring this knowledge, the vice principal reflected that it was important to ensure that team members with this level of expertise were elevated into positions in which they could help guide the successful implementation of SW-PBIS structures and interventions.

Given the turnover happening at some of the most vital roles associated with discipline and social skills teaching (e.g., Vice Principal and School Psychologist), it was difficult to ensure consistency in approaches and build upon the foundation year after year. I was essentially attempting to function as a change agent working to keep the momentum for building Tier Three systems intact through turbulence caused by frequent staff turnover. One of the primary concerns for me and my informants was getting the over reliance on Crisis Prevention Intervention (CPI) holds on campus under control. The vice principal at the time had been working to develop more systematic School-Wide Positive Behavior Intervention and Supports (SW-PBIS) interventions including both mindfulness trainings and restorative circles. As described by the vice principal below, the campus was in a very reactive state and the use of restraints and holds was out of control.

"The over reliance on CPI holds came to my attention after I was hired. And ...I don't know what the right word is somewhere in between stress and frustration when I had heard the superintendent and the principal talk about how they had they put students in holds for 45 minutes or an hour and hinting to me that I would be doing the same. It was counter to a value that I have with respect to behaviorism… I might be misguided or naïve, but that seemed like a very traumatic visual …not only for the student but for anyone observing. If you have the right proactive supports in place, you shouldn't need restraints and so yes, I do recall coming in and having the principal say "hey, you're probably going to have to do two of these a week." I'm like, "What? I thought you wanted me to do restorative circles and mindfulness and put systems in place"… The frustration I had in putting students in a hold twice a week is that if you're spending all of your time doing that you're not moving

upstream and it's going to be rinse and repeat everyday of chaos. That approach still existing was one of the reasons I ultimately became dissatisfied with that job."

This quote highlights that the negative disciplinary practices that were setting the tone for the campus culture at Seaside and disconnect between the administrator's values that were stated in hiring him with the actual campus practices led to his ultimate decision to leave the district. It outlines how the use of reactive disciplinary measures and a lack of understanding around School-Wide Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports was contributing to and arguably causing the next baseline problem involving staff turnover at the core roles involving supporting students with Emotional and Behavioral disabilities (EBDs) including the vice principal, school psychologist, and education specialist roles. I have outlined this next baseline problem which I encountered in the baseline implementation problem defined below.

Stage One-Baseline Problem Three: Staff Turnover

After reflecting on the steps that I took in assimilating into the organizational structure and working to break down the 'in-group/out group' divide, I realized that garnering and maintaining trust, support, and alliances with key administrative personnel were among the most important steps I took. However, maintaining these relationships was difficult due to significant administrative turnover at the vice-principal and school psychologist roles—those most strongly associated with student discipline and behavior management and whose collaboration and influence were necessary for successfully implementing systems to support the students with EBDs on my caseload.

As the year went on, I worked to develop a collaborative relationship with the vice principal implementing these changes in addition to the school psychologist on campus who was supporting and overseeing Tier Three supports. This collaboration was solidified when

the school psychologist, the vice principal, and I were meeting to discuss the intensive needs of a Tier Three student who had recently been identified by his outside doctor as having bi-polar disorder and who was demonstrating a need for more intensive Tier Three supports, evidenced by the occurrence of new eloping behaviors that were beginning to occur. The school psychologist, Vice Principal, and I began meeting weekly to discuss this student's needs in addition to beginning conversations around Tier One and Tier Two supports that would help reduce Tier Three support referrals and also give students with Tier Three needs other foundational positive behavior support systems. The vice principal reflected on these conversations as follows.

"Part of our conversations were, you know talking about what happens when you don't have Tier One and Tier Two support really manifested in a school and practiced in the classroom that you have high level of Tier Three referrals and also a lack of support when the special education professional is coming in and saying I need you to do this this or this and we were talking about how if I recall correctly how to like both implement lower tier interventions that could be supportive of all students, but then also support our staff with interventions that could support students with disabilities."

One of the roles the arguably endured the highest level of stress and was most critical for supporting students with Emotional and Behavioral Disabilities (EBDs) on campus was the special education instructional assistant role. In the quote below, one of the IAs supporting a student with significant emotional and behavioral needs described her advice to those entering this role.

"Don't quit. Just kidding. I had student who had emotional needs and behavioral outbursts and you just to have patience and give yourself breaks and again, like the same with Julio. Remember to always think beyond the what you see because there's something going on behind the behavior and at the end of the day the kids all need to know that they have someone that believes in them, that talks to them and that wants to listen. I mean I literally can't tell you how much just listening a lot of time and letting them come into your class at lunch, I mean even though I know that was your like 10-minute break or whatever. Just how much you can just see their faces light up or them or how they might even just start coming out and opening up to you and the respect develops and I just feel that there's always

something behind everything and so it's really important not to just think that the kid is just a bad kid."

In this quote the instructional assistant is making light of the persistent struggle that those in the IA role have to make with reframing their perceptions of students needs and finding the positive aspects of their job that will prevent them from burnout and deciding to leave the role. The special education instructional assistant role at Seaside had one of the highest levels of turnover in the school. In the next section, I will describe the difficulty in navigating and understanding the role of an instructional assistant tasked with supporting students with Emotional and Behavioral Disabilities (EBDs) within a full inclusion context.

Stage One- Baseline Problem Four: Role Difficulties of Instructional Assistants (IAs)

Seaside Elementary School's inclusion program is notorious for many instructional assistant team members—both in the general education classrooms and the SDC level 1:1 inclusion Instructional Assistants (IAs). While attempting to define the role and vast expectations placed on the shoulders of instructional assistant team members, it is essential to note the varied background experiences and training different staff members bought to the table. Fortunately for the students and staff at Seaside Elementary school, the school's location is in an affluent community near a well-renowned research university with college students seeking entry level employment opportunities and resume-building experiences.

Many of the IA team members at Seaside came from highly educated and experienced backgrounds and were seeking higher education and advancement in the field. For example, in the following excerpts two of the staff members on the special education instructional assistant team defined the high level of experience and education they had coming into this paraprofessional position.

"Seaside was my first placement from the county education office and it was my after-college job. I had been working as an in-home aide for adults with special needs and then I knew I wanted to work as a school psychologist and I didn't get into grad school initially, so I was like okay more experience, I'm on it. But I'm glad because actually worked out well…I mean Seaside is obviously a unique little spot…because I feel like we got to push the limits in terms of inclusion for students with behavioral needs and there are so many people who are like that's not possible and then it's like well actually like you're wrong like you have preconceived notions that are false."

In this quote the IA explained she was gaining experience to help her admission to graduate school and she is commenting on the widespread belief that students with Emotional and Behavioral Disabilities (EBDs) cannot be successfully served in full inclusion settings.

"I actually had just moved back from out of state and was looking for a job and I had been working for adults with disabilities in group homes for a long time before that so I had heard that there that they needed instructional assistants so I just applied for it and that's kind of where it led… like I worked with a very wide range. Some were severe where they had very physical disabilities so they were in wheelchairs or walkers. Some of them needed suctioning of feeding tubes so it was medically intensive and then I worked with people who would be considered more on the moderate level where they have maybe just learning disabilities or autism and extreme aggression."

In this quote the IA describes that she had already had considerable experience in settings where Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) provided the basic model for intervention.

Lack of Special Education IA involvement in Seaside Trainings.

Despite the highly experienced and educated applicant pool, many of the IAs interviewed expressed frustration at the lack of ongoing professional development during their time working at Seaside school district and they were craving more support. For example, one IA described the level of training and support offered to her by the county education office as follows. She expressed her frustration with a system that seemed to her to have fallen down by failing to provide any training or professional development to staff.

"One thing I did notice that was a slight downfall in the reliance on like aides and that way was like it could be really good or it could be really bad specifically because I don't think the

county education office was doing like any training at all. I could have had that job like with no experience …I feel like there's so much potential there but like all so you would have to invest like the little bit not like a crazy amount just like a small amount of training like a little bit…Even like a weekend before school starts. Anything!"

It is clear that the IA relationships and role were critical to supporting students with EBDs in an inclusive setting and my informants believed it's important for school teams to collaborate around providing these paraprofessionals with the ongoing training and support necessary to implement evidence-based practices for Tier Three students with fidelity. In capturing the instructional assistant's role in relation to the general education instructional assistants on campus and the lack of understanding toward their role and responsibilities in regard to implementing and sustaining Tier One campus Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS), the vice principal described the situation as follows.

"When you have a class size of 15 it's an easier space to manage then when you have a playground of 200 and so I don't feel like that was fully acknowledged at all times that your classified staff who are supervising the campus really are teaching behavior in unstructured environments and need a lot of behavior training and so otherwise they turn into you know you blow a whistle and you play Wack-A-Mole— ultimately you kind of become a villain on the playground and that's not effective and that's not effective teaching and so that's one of the things that Seaside had just amazing human beings in that role and they were hungry for training so I really had the opportunity to provide that you know every 1-2 weeks to build their own toolbox."

While the Seaside administrator described his efforts to provide training and ongoing professional development to Seaside's general education instructional assistant team, it is imperative to note that the County education office instructional assistants—those working directly with students with emotional and behavioral disabilities—were not a part of this training model. Not including the County education IA team in these trainings serves as a prime example of organizational disfunction.

Despite not including all essential team members in the trainings, the Vice Principal was clearly in tune with the need to provide this team with the skills and training they were

craving. It was also important to build team capacity through giving status to team members who had insights and expertise that could benefit the school team as a whole. In addressing the need to provide behavioral skills training and supports to the special education instructional assistant team, I worked with the special education team to align our intervention efforts with the Tier One and Tier Two supports being built and to give support to the team in meeting the connection or 'attention-seeking' needs of students with emotional or behavioral disabilities. To capture the level of need for positive connections and attentions by students who were being supported by special education IA staff, one IA described the positive praise needs of her student below.

"…you could just tell he just wanted that positive reinforcement from his gen ed teacher so when if he did do something. I think it was super important to praise him even for the tiniest little things. Like oh you did 5 math problems and normally you wouldn't do any and I mean you know he had a page of 20 to do or something. There were moments like that that you could just see it his face would light up and he would be so excited and the more people would praise him I mean it seems silly but he literally needed like a parade of people to praise him and even like his friends when they would talk to him and be like, like good job Julio you did good today like sometimes they would do that for him and give him high fives and stuff and he would get so excited and you would see it in his face."

The lack of positive praise and consistent implementation of behavioral interventions and the IA team's yearning for foundational training in the area of behaviorism was consistently expressed across both paraprofessional and credentialed staff informants. However, it was incredibly difficult for to navigate the complex organizational structures within the affluent, yet unhealthy context at Seaside elementary in order to voice these concerns, especially given the aforementioned challenges at the adult level, so I sought out support and alliances in order to navigate the system.

Difficulties with General Education Teacher Consensus Around IA Roles.

Many staff members commented on the role of the instructional assistants and the

challenge of agreeing upon their expectations. IAs commented on the difficulty defining their role, stating that the expectations varied depending on which special education teacher and general education teachers with whom they were assigned work, which changed each year in addition to the frequent change of students whom they were assigned to support. Navigating the challenge of a new student and differing expectations from their collaborating teachers was consistently cited as one of the more stressful aspects of the instructional assistant's role. For example, in the excerpt below one IA describes her what she perceived to be a conflict between respecting the wishes and directions from the teachers who were her supervisors and her perceived duty to also be an advocate for the student that she supervised.

"…as an instructional assistant at the time it was my job to help guide them through their days both in and out of the classroom per the teacher's lead, so what the teachers thought was best for him. The student was challenging but the general education teacher was tricky to work with too and you find yourself between the two of them a lot and just like "okay guys, we need to cool off a little and try to understand each other a little bit", but it's hard when you're a para because you don't… you want to like respect the people that are above you which I considered teachers to be above me when I was a para but you also want to like defend that child. I don't know it's hard. I think paras are definitely in a tricky space."

In interviews with the general education teachers, it became clear that there were differences in their perceptions of the IA roles and what they wanted and expected in terms of support for the IAs working in their classrooms. There were many contradictory statements about the role and expectations for IAs responsibilities, with some teachers expecting IAs to defer to the teacher's authority and judgment and others calling for IAs to 'step up to the plate' and take on an equal authority to the teacher in the classroom. For example, one general education teacher who was new to the district wanted the IA to have a hands-off approach.

"Well, I definitely know that Ryan was with an aide that was brand new to the district and the aide, felt like his job was to kind of like, be really on him. And which I would, I mean, I was like, that's the job that you have. Like you're there for the student, you need to be there,

but I was trying to say to him, like, you know, what, like kind of back off."

In contrast to this teacher's statement, other general education teachers at the same school had completely different expectations and beliefs about the role of instructional assistants in the classroom. For example, the following quotes came from two teachers who had been at the school for a longer period of time who reflected on their differing expectation that instructional assistants to take on a more active role in a position more equal to that of the classroom teacher.

"…well, I'll just say like she was like one of the most magical like teachers' helpers … I feel like their job is to listen to my teaching and like I see her job as if Drake's not going to pay attention to the math lesson, she is so that she can then help him one-on-one and scaffold and modify for him based on my instruction… I need the instructional assistant to be doing two things like one you're getting that child to be engaged and focus and not do the distracting behaviors. So, whether that's like you're moving that child to the back of the room, but then you're helping the teacher so that she can teach the whole group. But then also you're paying attention to the lesson so that you can go over all of the parts that you need to review because that child needs extra time with a concept..."

This quote articulates that in contrast to the teacher in the previous quote, this teacher expected the instructional assistant to be able to have a more hands on approach to managing discipline from target students in the classroom setting. In addition to expecting that an IA would be able to intuitively coach a student in 'not doing the distracting behaviors', the teacher expects that the paraprofessional would be able to simultaneously absorb the content of her teaching and be able to then skillfully scaffold instruction to students who are not willing or able to attend to instruction. This implies that an IA should have significant levels of trainings not only in the areas of behaviorism and positive behavior supports, but also in common core math and language arts as well as the interventions that align with these areas. Along this same vein, the teacher below described her process in collaborating with an instructional assistant team member and validating and encouraging their equal authority and decision-making in the general education classroom.

"…[Aides] deserve the respect and the expectation of being able to make decisions for that student without always referring to the teacher and that's, that's a hefty role to take on in terms of like, you know, some aides that are hired. They're just looking for the teacher to tell them every single step along the way and yet that doesn't help build a relationship with a student and the aide and then the teacher but I don't know if you remember when the first time, I met Mrs. Orinda I asked her or I told we're teachers we're making these decisions together. And I remember her saying or something along the way. 'Oh, that's not how it worked before.' So, whoever been her previous supervising teacher was basically the you do what I say and don't do different but the permission that I gave to Mrs. Orinda was you're in there in every step of the way. You've got to be ready to make decisions and know that I'm going to support your decision making…"

This quote highlights this teacher's view that many people coming into the IA role are looking for explicit guidance from the teacher, but that some teachers are expecting that these individuals take initiative and fill the role of the teacher's equal. Establishing this level of equal authority on the part of a veteran teacher of more than a decade and an often-entry-level minimum-wage position would seem like a very challenging dynamic to establish, especially given the broken, hierarchical, adult relationships on Seaside's campus. This same teacher went on to pose wonderings in regard to how to motivate instructional assistants to 'step up the plate'.

"I know they don't pay special ed aides much, but if they were sort of given that immediate respect of your going to be at IEP meetings, you're going to weigh in on report cards, you are an integral part of this picture. I wonder if that would help some of those folks that in a sense hang back step up to the plate and then say to the teacher, hey this person deserves this kind of respect and then of course like I said that an ego negotiation for some, but I know there are other teachers are like yeah, this person is critical to this picture and I don't know if that happens."

In light of this dissensus regarding expectations of the instructional aide role, one of the most consistent views emerged those positive relationships between the IA, teachers and students were essential to ensuring successful collaboration for supporting these high need learners. Some teachers went so far as to say the special education Instructional Assistant's relationship with the child could make or break the child's ability to have a successful school

year. Many also commented on the importance of collaboration and trust among the entire IEP team. It is clear that defining this role and developing collaborative working relationships between credentialed staff and paraprofessional staff is a highly important area for enhancing the capacity for these adults to team together in the shared goal of supporting all students— including those with Emotional and Behavioral Disabilities (EBDs).

When considering a one-to-one instructional assistant's role in supporting students' ability to effectively navigate and interact with peers and teachers in an inclusive setting, many interviewees recalled the importance of their relationship with the students. Each of the aides interviewed described the depth of their relationships with students as a very positive experience, as demonstrated in the following interview excerpt taken from a one-to-one instructional assistant who supported three students with emotional and behavioral needs across a two-and-a-half-year span.

"…when you're an aide and a one on one with the kid and you're spending eight hours with them every single day, they kind of become your best friend. You form a really tight relationship in the most ideal situations. I definitely felt like that happened to me. I love Mark and Avalon. I wonder what Avalon's doing? Does she still love birds? I saw a unicorn thing; I saw a parrot. Avalon would love that! And like you know same with Nate definitely for sure like where I'm like Nate my best bud. Like how you doing man? But I think that's, that's one of those possible like really amazing kinds of intrinsic benefits of having a one-on-one support…"

Many classroom teachers also commented on the importance of solid relationships between instructional assistants and their assigned students. Below, one teacher described the careful balance of developing strong relationships between students, teachers, and instructional assistants.

"I think the thing that is the most helpful is the connection piece between the instructional assistant and the student. So, for example, I think Drake would get super irritated with Mrs. Orinda and wouldn't want to do anything she wanted to do…he definitely wasn't responding at first and was oppositional like 'don't tell me what to do and don't look at me and don't

follow me around'…I feel like breakthroughs happened when there's a good relationship and a good rapport between the general ed teacher and the student and when there's a good relationship between that instructional assistant and that student. So, I feel like that supersedes everything and that nothing will get done and only break throughs are only going to happen when there when there's a good relationship. I feel like that that was a big thing with making sure that everyone respected each other and had that relationship piece, because then the kids like want to work for you."

In the next segment, I will move onto describing the challenge of the school's lack of foundational evidence-based Tier One interventions to support students, including those with identified EBDs.

Stage One- Baseline Problem Five: Ineffective Tier One Supports

One of the reoccurring issues on Seaside's campus was the lack of effective Tier One supports during the baseline period of the intervention. When the new vice principal came to campus, I took the opportunity to meet with him and discuss my concerns with some of the existing Tier One support systems in pace. These conversations then led to discussions of the former foundational behavior support approach which was developed by a consultant that the district sought out and hired.

This approach became known on campus as the 'take a break' policy that was supposed to encourage teachers to ask students to reset themselves in a calm unjudgmental way during times of dysregulation. However, as implemented, this approached lacked the process of teaching Seaside student's emotional regulation strategies needed to regulate during the breaks in order to effectively come back to class. Due to high stress levels likely due to issues with adult relationships on campus, this 'take a break' protocol was often not implemented in a calm, unjudgmental way by the classroom teachers or general education instructional assistant team. When the Vice Principal came in, he expressed that he felt that

this approach was ineffective in that the teachers were not implementing it with fidelity and it did little to address students' underlying struggles with social skills. Seaside's new vice principal described this system in the quote below.

> "Before I got there was like a system 'take a break' or something along those lines where if you made a mistake take a break, take a break, take a break. I think the teachers were longing for more tools in the toolbox of what to do when a student is struggling so you know when an eight-year-old would come to my office, you know, you can't just you know you can't just you know suspend them or expel them. And take a break wasn't really supporting their needs, I mean it was support in terms of giving them time to deescalate maybe but not in terms of really getting at some of the underlying causal factors…"

The vice principal described his approach to acknowledging the positive aspects of this system while trying to steer the school team in a direction that would more adequately meet students' needs. This was not an evidence-based practices and many staff members reflected on feeling jaded by these practices. The VP highlighted that prior to implementing the SWPBIS program that Seaside general education IA's had been encouraged to use a different discipline approach on the playground. It involved timing students out from the playground by requesting them to "take a break". In the following quote the VP explains how this approach had created a negative atmosphere on campus across both classroom settings and on the playground.

> "The general education instructional assistant's intervention prior to us resetting you know when I came in was 'Take a Break' and the IAs had felt kind of jaded by that—that it wasn't effective. And a lot of what take a break is and a lot of their feedback to students and when in monitoring was to focus on the kids who weren't following the rule in a group setting and calling them out. You know Miles, Take a break! Johnny, Take a break! Jen, Take a break! Walk! Don't run! Walk! Don't run! So ultimately, they were almost magnets of negativity because they were only focused on the negative when 90-95% of kids are displaying positive choices"

This quote highlights the vice principal's perception that the general education instructional assistant staff did not feel that the 'Take a Break' system was effective and that

they were craving training on alternative supports and practices. This was a challenge that needed to be addressed quickly while moving into the stage two of implementation which will be addressed after the final baseline problem.

Stage One- Baseline Problem Six: Treatment of 'Newbies' on Campus

The final baseline problem that inhibited implementation of School-Wide Behavior Support Systems (SW-PBIS) was the treatment of new staff on campus, especially those who were new members of the aforementioned county education office 'out-group'. The quote below is from a school-psychologist who came into the study during the third year of the implementation process. This team member was also a critical change-agent in influencing the culture of the school, but, even as a highly-regarded school-psychologist of twenty plus years, she also described her feelings of not being listened to or respected for the first five years of her tenure at Seaside elementary. In the quote below, the school psychologist retrospectively described her challenge in gaining respect and trust from her Seaside colleagues and the relief she now feels finally getting some buy-in during her sixth year working in this school district as follows.

"I think it's It just takes time to build credibility to I mean, especially if you're if you appear young or if you appear to be less experienced. I think you kind of go through a hazing period…Even me, even though I had had over twenty years of experience, because I was new to the site… I think I am just now getting to the point where you know teachers don't completely challenge everything I say and where they realize that like actually, I care and I want what's best for kids and there's a method to my madness and you know, there's reasons that I do things the way that I do them. I think that I'm finally getting there and so that feels better."

One of the consistent themes in my participants interviews is that it takes several years to build these SW-PBIS systems and people need to learn to work together and acquire new expertise in a gradual fashion over time. In a statement which echoes the sentiment that incoming educators—who are not necessarily new to the profession but new to the site or

context— have trouble finding a voice in decision-making and giving their feedback, another Seaside general education teacher of a student with significant social and emotional needs described coming into Seaside's setting and having difficulty advocating for both herself and her students' needs as follows.

"When you come into the school, you're encouraged to let others lead at first. You are not encouraged to step in and be the leader and be the change and I don't like that...I had six years of experience and behavioral training, but I don't think new people's voices are as valued as they should be and now that goes to a whole other level, you know it's cultural. I don't think it's just here at Seaside. I think most schools when you come in, you know, you're the newbie and roll with it, but often times those are the best people to rely on because they have expertise from another school and they've seen what worked and what hasn't worked. I mean is getting bit or stabbed in the foot normal?"

In regard to the last sentence of this quote the general education teacher is referring to a behavioral crisis described above from my first year on site at Seaside elementary in which a student with an Emotional and Behavioral Disability (EBD) was escorted to and dropped off in my room in a highly escalated state. After the foot stabbing incident, the general education teacher and I had a conversation about the character committee and the character committees hopes for interviewing the next vice principal and the plans for re-imagining disciplinary practices on campus. This incident prompted my integration into Seaside's campus culture.

Stage One-Baseline Problem Seven Socio-Economic Divide and the Impact on School Functioning

Due to the highly affluent nature of the Seaside community, there were many complications that existed in terms of teaming with families. Many families demonstrated a lack of trust with the school system which made it difficult to establish collaborative, trusting relationships across many levels of the organizational structure starting with the out-group

county education special education instructional assistant role and leading all the way up the organizational hierarchy to Seaside's superintendent and the board of Seaside school district.

A quote which exemplified this unequal footing and participants' reported entitlement on the part of parents in the district is highlighted in the quote below from a general education teacher who was quite startled one day when an administrator let a parent into her classroom during a lockdown drill when she was trying to ensure the safety of her students.

"Do you want to know the scenario that sums Cooper's mom up to me was the day we were on lockdown at school and it was not a practice one. We didn't even know why we were locked down. We were just suddenly in lock down and the next thing I know Cooper's mom is let into the classroom. Scared the crap out of all of us, right? I mean, the kids were shocked! I was shocked! Suddenly there she was on the rug with Cooper. I looked at her and I said we need to be quiet. Right? and she was fine. But Kelsee, somehow, she was the only parent who did not get taken over to the auditorium with the rest of the parents because other parents were on campus. They took them to the auditorium, but this mom got let into the classroom and that sums her up somehow she managed to say I'm going to that classroom and there she was."

This teacher described her astonishment that a parent would and could demand entry to a classroom against established safety protocols during a real lockdown drill. It highlights that the entitlement and demands placed upon faculty and educators at Seaside was unique in that many of the parents saw themselves above members of the schoolboard and the organization itself. This final quote taken from a former Seaside administrator truly captures the challenge the school organization was tasked with in serving such an affluent community and the steps such an organization must take in order to truly begin the implementation process of changing the school's culture in order to effectively implement best practices for all kids—including those with Emotional and Behavioral Disabilities (EBDs). The administrator had just described the challenge of being in his former role and not having the capacity to make the systemic, cultural changes necessary to make longer term disciplinary

changes. In the quote below, he provided important insights into addressing issues in a culture like the one at Seaside elementary school.

"I definitely think that there needed to be more systems of listening and empathy from students and classified staff and parents which is modeling humility you know. And who is in charge of that? The superintendent. And, who directs the superintendent? The board, and Seaside's board or Seaside's families. And, because of the cost of living in Seaside almost no one who worked at the school lived in the community and so there's this cultural disconnect and so in many ways the board looked down on our school. I think at least the professionals. It was like we were almost the help and that permeates. Right? That permeates through the superintendent, administrators and right into the school. And how do you fix that in a place like Seaside? I would default to my answer is I don't know, but I do know it starts with the adults and it starts with having a superintendent who is there long enough and respected well enough to have hard conversations with the community and to get the right board in place with the right values."

These quotes exemplify the importance of developing a school culture that fosters strong connections, and mutual respect and understanding across multiple levels in the classroom and beyond in regard to the student, teacher, and family relationships. Rather than being able to focus on students' needs and implementing evidence-based practices, most of the staff in these interviews focused on finding mutual respect and understanding between students and staff at various levels in the organizational hierarchy. Taking steps to encourage and support a healthy adult culture can provide a more solid foundation upon which a school team can come together to implement evidence-based practices which are grounded in data and guided by students' needs.

Stage Two: SW-PBIS Implementation, New Staff and New Leadership

Now that I have fully defined the six identified baseline challenges and barriers to implementation, I will now describe the phases of the next stage of implementation in the following sections. These phases begin with new leadership at the Vice Principal role in the school setting and a push for developing stronger systems of supports and interventions at the foundational tier one level.

Stage Two- Phase One: Renewed Implementation of Tier One SW-PBIS

The Character Committee functioned as the Tier One steering committee for School-Wide Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (SW-PBIS) and at the end of the baseline phase of implementation and one of the teachers who was a participant on this committee shared with me that the group would be making plans for presenting their desires in regard to shifting the disciplinary culture at Seaside to the new vice principal who would be coming into the role during the following school year. We discussed the idea of School-Wide Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (SW-PBIS) and she shared that the committee was developing a list of standard behavioral expectations to implement across campus. This marked a renewed interest in level one SW-PBIS on the part of the Seaside team.

One of the first steps the Vice Principal and Character Committee took was to implement a day for all staff and students to rotate through the campus to different stations and learn the rules of that station while being guided by a staff member or support person that would be involved in that area. These stations aligned with the SW-PBIS behavior matrix in regard to the key areas on campus and the rules within each area (e.g., the hallways, the restrooms, the lunch tables, etc.). The school team put out a classroom set of chairs in each of the areas and had a scheduled rotation for classes to transition to each station to learn the rules and expectations for that area on campus. For example, in the bathroom section, the campus custodian would give a seven-to-ten-minute talk about expectations in regard to keeping the bathrooms clean and safe and then field questions from students prior to them rotating to the next designated station. The administrator who continued these bi-annual orientation days described the impact of that process in the quote below. This model aligns

with distributed leadership and elevating general education IA and certificated staff into roles of authority across campus.

We had our Seahorse Days in which you know campus-wide every single student got the opportunity to be coached on and model what the expectation was around campus that we set forth with our matrix of expectations that we also share with the families. And so, you know, we can't come in assuming that kids have that knowledge and skill set. We also want to coach them and take that opportunity for all kids to have that same education in terms of character-building, positive behavior, and how to build relationships because we do the same thing with literacy and math, you know, every kid we want them to have that same exposure. We wanted character education to have that same approach too with the Seahorse days. We'd do that a couple times a year—one of the Fall and one in the Spring—and it got to the point of where it evolved into additional staff member support staff. Like IAs leading some of the stations because they are the ones who are out there with the kids during recess during those unstructured times when a lot of the conflict would arise, so it gave them the opportunity to feel empowered and be a part of Leadership Team because they are and they're the ones who are on out there with the kids' day to day."

The second Vice Principal led the character committee which worked to continue the former vice principal's foundational work on developing interventions in the areas of mindfulness and restorative circles. To clarify some of the systems that this former vice principal had hoped to get in place, restorative circles were an approach to having classroom teachers have their class meet in a ritualistic circle each morning and practice sharing and connecting with their classmates in a structured way involving a talking piece and specific group norms around conversation. Having this type of structured communication present in the campus culture then allowed for more streamlined and effective communication in times of conflict. For example, one classroom teacher described the power of using circles to address specific conflicts within her classroom environment and that she still uses this practice years after the initial implementation effort.

"The restorative circle approach transformed a large part of what we do and there was a situation where I had a student who was special education and she had a lot of a lot of different diagnoses and the kids knew that she received support but they didn't really know why because she was such a very high-functioning, but she had some very interesting

behaviors that led to her actually peeing her pants throughout the day. She knew she had to go quickly go, you know change her pants and one day a couple my 6th graders said, you know "hey so and so you know why did you change your pants?" and they were trying to call her out and just meanly targeting her and I you know, when I heard this right away, I called her parents and I said, hey the kids figured it out. I would love without her there to address that behavior and we sat down. I just said I want you to know that everybody in this room is dealing with some issue. I have issues that I don't want you to know about you have issues that you don't want me to know about and if we all come and attack each other, that's going to create a very different community than if we come and support each other knowing that we're all fighting something and I'm just sobbing. And with the parents' support, the parents' permission you know I shared that she had this condition where she'd lose bladder control and the kids are just crying because they didn't know she was fighting something that they didn't know about. And frankly 12-year-olds don't really think beyond themselves oftentimes and I remember that was a distinct shift in our classroom, especially for the kids that need a little extra support. I had 3 SDC kids that year and I noticed that those the students that had either a support person or were what the kids deem to be somewhat you know different from their friend group received the biggest most amazing boost of empathy I've ever seen and it was this look of like yeah, were all different but that's okay and kind of the start to embrace. So, long story, but that's something positive that came out of restorative circles."

This teacher describes the use of this tool to help guide conversations around bullying in her sixth-grade classroom, essentially describing a class-wide or Tier One bullying issue that could have risen to the level of requiring Tier Two or Tier Three reactive interventions and support for the perpetrators. Through utilizing this Tier One classroom circle intervention, instead of calling in the vice principal, the teacher was effectively able to address the issue at the Tier One level thanks to her collaborative, trusting relationship with the child's family. As an example of how this circle intervention was applied in a higher Tier by an administrator if a teacher asked for the support, the vice principle described the application of a campus-wide fishbowl circle, in which those in conflict have a conversation in the middle of the rest of the group while bystanders watch, as follows:

"The most significant memory I have that an action was we had a couple first and second grade students who are always like peeing on the walls in the bathroom. We could never find who the culprit was and why, and even leading a couple classroom circles on why we don't do this was ineffective until at a school-wide assembly one of our custodians got in front of the campus and we did a little kind of a back and foreth discussion about how does this affect

you and he was able to say “It’s gross. It’s unsanitary when I have to clean it up.” Not only did he become kind of a campus celebrity to the kids, but it never happened again.”

By modeling and training staff to effectively implement the restorative circles at classroom-level interventions at the Tier One and Tier Two levels, the vice principal not only taught teachers to effectively develop and maintain a healthy classroom culture, but also allowed for building upon those systems for application at a higher tier in times of conflict. In terms of implementing mindfulness practices on campus, the vice principal described the implementation of this system as follows:

“…Mindfulness practice was something that we started to really dabbling into, and at the time bringing that in the schools was a relatively new thing and so I found a couple of our teachers on campus with expertise in that area. I think one was the art specialist. We kept it really simple…with teachers who say you know “hey, kids are coming in after playing foursquare and can’t learn for 30 minutes and can you watch and see what’s going on?” And low and behold, the bell rings and kids are just like dropping the ball and running so we put in a system where you pause at the end of recess and take a breath, so you can slow the campus down.”

These Tier One interventions were part of the foundation of evolving the SW-PBIS structure on Seaside’s campus. In terms of beginning to think about tiered interventions and supports, the vice principal described his role in developing the Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS) framework for Seaside Elementary which outlined the supports available at each tier while describing the interventions and supports available to students who were struggling to meet expectations across each tier. He emphasized that schools need to keep in mind that the step of outlining expectations is only the beginning to building positive behavior support systems in a school. In the following statement, the vice principal pointed out the disconnect he found between the posted and written diagrams supporting the tiered model the school was trying to put in place and the actual understanding and practices of the staff.

"It's really easy to put together a colorful pyramid and put it on paper. It's a lot harder to help folks understand a predictable sequence of interventions and the administrator who only works with other admins or only works with a small number of teachers and doesn't include the behaviorists, the counselor, the psychologist, the professionals supporting students with disabilities and the classified staff who see students in unstructured environments. If you don't engage all of those resources and look at what they're challenges are and then provide training and training and ongoing training, then you're just going to have a pretty laminated pyramid that sits on your wall and I see that so often. It's like look at our sequence of interventions and I'm like, it's…it's pretty but you have 20 terms on there and no one knows what they are."

It is important to note that this former Vice Principal has been elevated to a position of increased authority and now oversees the supervision and training of administrators for a large school district. His reflection highlights that in his current role, he frequently encounters school administrators who have not effectively developed SW-PBIS systems but have rather just created visuals that do not align with the actual discipline practices on their campus. In this quote the Vice Principal is acknowledging Seaside's need for continued training and feedback loops for staff to transparently discuss their struggles and request support and ongoing training. Below he described the first steps taken in the process of getting the steering committee on the same page in regard to developing consistent behavioral expectations on campus.

"We started with clarification of rules and the character committee before I got there had even started that part… First off, redefine expectations. Teach first. Second give kids tools for de-escalation, mindfulness. Give kids tools for understanding and empathizing with each other, restorative circles. Finding opportunities for kids who didn't have anything to do on the campus. If I recall there was a lot of sports and physical activities, but not a lot of mental and artistic activities so we added a whole bunch of stations for kids to play and meet different needs and to build friendships that they might not have otherwise had and then when students break a rule you know misbehave bring them into a supportive setting um that provides you know conversation, dialogue, counseling supports, a reentry plan that feels supportive and not like you know 'the man is coming after me'.'"

This basic foundation of beginning with establishing and clarifying campus rules for all students and adults on campus was critical in ensuring that the team could begin to build

systems of support to help students who were struggling to abide by campus expectations for one reason or another. After working to redefine the expectations, and then working to implement effective interventions for meeting students social and emotional needs on a classroom level, such as restorative circles and mindfulness practices described above, the vice principal commented on his efforts to add in activities which reflect the range of interests of the students. For example, the vice principal began making a schedule of different pathways students could engage in at recess which included a sports pathway, an arts pathway, and a community-service pathway. The vice principal created a visual of the weekly offerings in each pathway station. These stations were run by the general education instructional assistant team and the newly appointed Campus Support Coordinator who was a former IA promoted to developing the schedule of activities and coordinating the other instructional assistants on the general education support team which increased the vice-principal's bandwidth, another prime example of distributed leadership and enhancing staff capacity at Seaside.

Stage Two- Phase Two: Gaining a Voice as a Member of the Special Education 'Out-Group'

During the baseline phase of the implementation, after the crisis situation described in the baseline phase, I met with the administration from both Seaside and the County Education Office to discuss supports I would need to successfully meet the needs of the students in the special education program, namely those with identified Emotional and Behavioral Disabilities (EBDs). One of the main concerns I had after this incident was the fact that my classroom was so far away from the students' rooms on the upper grade side of campus. Additionally, both the special education teachers and all twelve Instructional

Assistant (IA) team members were expected to share a single classroom for the entire inclusion program. During this meeting, I came prepared to negotiate for a better workspace which had breakout spaces for working one-to-one or in small groups with students or helping them learn about their emotions and strategies for de-escalation. Additionally, this space was closer to the school psychologist's office and the fourth, fifth, and sixth grade classrooms, which were located on the other side of the campus from my current shared classroom. In this discussion, I was able to successfully make my case for needing this space and I was able to better structure my classroom environment to meet the needs of my students while having closer access to the students with Emotional and Behavioral Disabilities (EBDs) who were primarily located in the upper grades. My success in this endeavor to garner resources to support my students encouraged me to continue looking for avenues to use my voice to advocate for both my students and myself.

Stage Two- Phase Three: Making Progress with New Administrative and Organizational Structures

Simultaneous to the Seaside administration beginning to build their foundational Tier One and Tier Two support systems, I gained permission from the new vice principal to sit in on committee meetings for the character committee steering team and to develop a Special Education Professional Learning Committee (PLC) which allowed me to build connections between these two organizational structures and make attempts to transmit feedback and knowledge across groups. Although the PLC model was highly engrained into the Seaside culture and each general education grade level team had a PLC which met regularly, special education team members had not been requested to develop a PLC. The PLC model is helpful in providing subunits of the organization time to think and collaborate with other

colleagues in order to transmit feedback back to the larger school steering committee. In requesting support in developing a PLC, I sought buy-in form the school psychologist on-site at the time. The members of this committee were primarily the special education staff from the county education office, who had not been included in a site-based PLC due to the disconnect between leadership styles between the county education office and on-site at Seaside elementary. Having our special education team meet regularly allowed us to develop team goals based on our agreed upon areas of need for our program. After the second school psychologist left her role the following year, the administrators at Seaside requested that the third incoming school psychologist continue implementing and overseeing these PLC meetings which helped ensure more continuity across the agencies.

Stage Two- Phase Four: Piloting the Check-In/Check-Out Program at Tier Three

During the stage two SW-PBIS implementation phase, I reached out to the new Vice Principal who, in collaboration with the Character Committee, brought in the Tier One and Tier Two behavioral monitoring intervention known as Check-In/Check-Out (CICO). He and the character committee had presented to the Seaside staff during a Seaside-staff before school in-service. I, as a county education office employee, had to request permission to attend Seaside's back-to-school faculty in-service training day. During the in-service we learned that this intervention would allow for students to form trusting connections with adults on campus and get feedback and guidance on their ability to meet the social norms and follow rules on campus. During the interview, the vice principal described this system as follows.

"Check-In/Check-Out is a really common system in the PBIS world…when a student was struggling when they came to my office in the first couple times you know it would allow for there to be a relationship that was developed with the school and with an adult that they could work with so that there was a consequence that it was a supportive consequence and

yeah in some areas it had efficacy and in others it was not a successful support and we had to go to another intervention."

In collaborating with the vice principal, I asked permission to use the newly developed Seaside CICO template which had the Seaside logo and Seaside's school-wide behavioral expectations at Tier Three with my students with Emotional and Behavioral Disabilities (EBDs). Below I have highlighted the steps my IEP teams and I took to develop effective treatment for our students, including piloting the CICO system with these learners at Tier Three.

1. We conducted a Functional Behavior Assessments (FBAs) and developed a particular Behavioral Intervention Plan (BIP) that was student specific with the support of a Board-Certified Behavior Analyst (BCBA) staff member.
2. For students in the intervention, we piloted a Check-In/Check-Out (CICO) system, as appropriate, in alignment with Tier One system in the beginning level of implementation on site.
3. We developed a communication plan for keeping team members in the loop on the students shifting needs and the planned responses to ensure more consistency across staff and settings which took the following form:
    - A daily or weekly CICO communication via email or printed copies depending on team preference.
    - Direct access to special education teacher and administrator during crisis events via cellphone or classroom phone by the classroom teacher and IA.
    - Access to BCBA modeling and shadowing as needed, if IA or teacher needed support via the County education office.

The initial implementation of the CICO systems took an immense amount of communication and training on my part in order to solicit buy-in from both my special education Instructional Assistant (IA) team, as well as the Seaside classroom teachers. While rolling out this new intervention, I relied heavily on team communications and began building the foundation of my Tier Three communication Systems.

Stage Two-Phase Five: Building Tier Three Communication Protocols

Developing healthy organizational communication systems was consistently cited as critical to the success of the interventions. My informants agreed that having consistency in the manner and systems used for communication was essential. For example, in the quote below one classroom teacher reflected on the need for an agreed upon system of disseminating information to a child's IEP team.

"If you have a communication system in place you need to make sure that everybody's using the same system. You couldn't have one general education teacher saying were going to do it this way. And then the special education teacher going to do it this way and then the IA is like no I'm going to do it this way."

This quote highlights the importance of getting team buy-in and ensuring that the communication protocol is understood and followed by all team members. In addition to the importance of having a standard team communication protocol in place, many team members cited the importance of the communication role I took on in terms of crisis responding and disseminating information about behavioral events and articulating the manner in which the team was responding along with the rationale.

Developing Crisis Response Systems.

Having an effective communication plan allowed critical intervention team members (e.g., the school psychologist and contracted mental health specialist) more immediate access struggles that a student was having throughout the week or ways in which the team needed to

address a certain behavior. For example, one general education teacher described the need for immediate access to me, the special education teacher, in order to effectively support students with Emotional and Behavioral Disabilities (EBDs) in the general education classroom in response to the question “When students were displaying behaviors that were really challenging who was the most helpful to you during that time, like in terms of the organization. How did Seaside or the county education office staff help you and how is that helpful?”.

“You. You gave me permission to have direct access to you. If something happened, quickly happened and escalated and I do believe the vice principal made that offer too. Although your response was more consistent. Then if I needed the vice principal sometimes wasn’t available, but I believe he tried really hard Kelsee to be available. Just so you know, there’s so many kids right and so many situations but you allowing me to have access to you was critical if I didn’t have that. I don’t know. I don’t know how I would have dealt with things that suddenly felt like a crisis. I had your contact information and that was critical.”

This quote highlights an important part of the treatment model in which I created an emergency response system in which I made myself available to help teachers in real time with problem behavior, which again freed up the vice principal to respond to the many other situations that take place during a school day. In addition to the need for general education teachers to have direct access to a staff member that supported a student with emotional needs, many of the instructional assistants echoed this sentiment stating that consistent communication on the part of the special education teacher was essential for supporting students with EBDs. For instance, in terms of responding to behavioral crisis on campus, one of my instructional assistant team members described her appreciation for having direct access and supervision from me using my personal cell phone number which I shared with the school team.

“I was in direct consultation with a sped teacher like a trained person all the time and supervised by like classroom teachers also all the time. So, it’s like there is no it’s not like I

would never be like out in the wild by myself which was good… texting was important as well because for example, if the special education teacher was in class or something or if I was like on the field, you know, like at the bathroom currently witnessing the scene like you know that I think was super helpful having like sort of an immediate line, not for everything obviously but as an emergency call if something has come up immediately."

In this quote the inclusion program instructional assistant is describing the importance of having a direct access to their special education supervisor if something were to come up. In this instance the instructional assistant is talking about feeling relief that she could get in touch with me when there were crises or unexpected events that she was unsure of how to deal with in the moment. Oftentimes, IAs would request back up support so we could collaborate around an approach that would work best, or I could simply take over and model a strategy in an attempt to resolve the situation.

Sample Crisis Response.

One sample crisis response situation occurred when a student began screaming and acting out in response to being asked by the instructional assistant to put his computer away. The student had a significant emotional disability and often perseverated on using technology in the classroom or even trying to 'fix or update' the general education teacher's technology. This would often result in a broken device, despite his good intentions. In this circumstance the student was supposed to be completing an assignment and was instead fixated on adjusting the settings in his computer for roughly 20 minutes prior to his Instructional Assistant (IA) prompting him to put the device away to work together on developing the assignment. The student was unresponsive to the IA's request to which the IA attempted to move the laptop back to the general education classroom's charging cart.

At this point, the student escalated to a very emotional state, ran from the room with his laptop and began shouting at the adult that the device belonged to the student and could

not be taken away. At this point the IA texted me for back-up support and I met up with the IA and student to discover the student throwing the laptop into a bush outside of the classroom. I quickly asked the IA what support he needed to which he responded that he really just needed a break. I asked the IA to retrieve the device and try to find the vice principal to fill him in on the situation. Then, I invited the student to our SDC classroom space to de-escalate and make a plan for the rest of the school day. After the student was calm and we had made a plan for completing some work in my room, the vice principal came to check in with me and we were able to determine that the student would lose access to the device for the rest of the week. The vice principal called the parents and asked them to pick him up and talk about the incident, and we made a plan to meet the next morning right after the bell with the student and his parents to discuss a re-entry plan in addition to the loss of technology privileges for the remainder of the school week.

Team Email Communication Systems.

In addition to being able to handle crises and respond with immediacy, it was important to be able to quickly inform the team of the situation, how the team responded, and provide recommendations and language to support the development of replacement behaviors and skills. For example, one general education teacher described this style of communication after an incident in which she called me and requested support.

"You impressed me with your strong voice. I honestly learned a lot that year. I can tell you exactly what it was. I learned to just say exactly what happened. Basically, you didn't pull punches. You were definitely doing it like a teacher, but you just named what happened. And I was like wow okay just it's exactly what happened. This is what this person did. This is what this person did and I'm going to tell you, you did it without throwing judgment in which is a, that's a huge skill, by the way, and one of the key things they say is one of the key things for using nonviolent communication if you can communicate without tossing in judgment, and I remember specifically, it could have been the fake shooting instance. I remember going like way to go Kelsee!"

This quote refers to an incident on campus in which a community-based Applied Behavioral Analysis (ABA) agency had a staff member who would take one of the children to school for the parent. One day this support person came to campus and was playing a fake shooting game with the student. The general education teacher came to the special education teacher to express her concern about this situation worried that the student would continue to play this game at school with his peers, as the child was saying that he and this ABA staff member would come to "shoot up the school." It is important to note that the child was an English-Language Learner (ELL) and there could have been cultural misunderstandings as to why this language would not be appropriate at school. In an effort to help communicate that this type of play was against school policy and request that the ABA staff member try to steer the child in a different more appropriate game selection, I wrote an email to the home team, parents, and vice principal describing the concern and requesting that a different game be taught in order to prevent the child from being misunderstood or getting in trouble at recess. The phrase 'you just named what happened' can be interpreted as the use of articulating the ABC (Antecedent-Behavior-Consequence) of a student interaction on campus and articulating the rationale for teaching a more appropriate replacement behavior (i.e., a more appropriate game which was not against school policy). In my role, I needed to outline behavioral incidents like these along with our team response as required at least one to two times per week per child on my caseload. I used email communication primarily for documenting and disseminating this information because I could include all members of the child's team despite the complex organizational structure at Seaside Elementary and maintain a record of the communication. I could also use these records to check-in with key intervention team staff on how to approach the situation in the future and which follow up

actions were needed to resolve the situation (e.g., asking the school psychologist or mental health specialist to check in with the child about the language and rationale for using a different game).

Stage 3: Making Progress through New Administrative and Organizational Structures

In the third stage of the SW-PBIS implementation, which happened between the beginning on the third year of the implementation through the fourth year, the new alignment between tiers of interventions for students with social and emotional needs on campus allowed special education team to enhance our capacity to effectively allocate interventions and supports. It also allowed us to team together in order to recognize existing or evolving student areas of need that were not currently being clearly targeting within the existing menu of intervention options.

Stage 3-Phase One: Breaking Down the In-Group/Out-Group and Enhancing Collaborative Capacity Though Organizational synchronicity

As the school team went into the 3rd and 4th years of beginning to really hone in on the effective implementation of Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS), the Tier One School-Wide Positive Behavioral Intervention and Supports (SW-PBIS) steering committee, which was still known as the Character Committee at the time underwent some major changes. The expertise that the original character committee developed allowed it to morph into a central management mechanism for a much more complicated implementation of an MTSS steering committee. The school psychologist who joined the committee during the third year of implementation described the evolution of into the most current structure of this committee as follows.

"The character committee kind of shifted over to an MTSS committee. The MTSS committee has three separate subcommittees, one for social skills, one for reading, and one for math.

The three subcommittees meet separately and then we have an overarching MTSS committee that meets too. I am on both the social skills subcommittee and the overarching committee. And we also hired one of the former district's (Teacher's on Special Assignment) TOSA to be the MTSS coordinator. She is great too. Very highly regarded by the staff and knowledgeable about MTSS. At one of the staff meetings recently she actually teared up a bit talking about the importance of social skills right now during the pandemic. She is really respected by the team."

The psychologist described that Seaside's historical character committee was steered properly in a positive direction and staff were able to acquire experience and strengths over time that were harnessed to make higher levels of change by developing distributive leadership units. In the fifth year of implementation, after I was no longer a part of the school system, the committee invited a highly respected Teacher on Special Assignment (TOSA) who was also coincidentally a parent of a child with an Emotional and Behavioral Disability (EBD) to oversee the Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS) committee. By doing so, the committee garnered the ability to communicate with the teachers in the voice of the well-respected TOSA who had a child with an Emotional and Behavioral Disability (EBD). The Seaside faulty respected and could understand this teacher's message which provided the school psychologist with an ally who she could rely upon to help elevate her a voice and expertise with the staff too—despite the unhealthy nature of adult relationships and clear in-group/out-group still present on the campus.

Stage 3 Phase Two: Developing Social Skills Group to Complement the CICO Intervention

As a result of building this collaborative capacity within the special education team, in the third year of the implementation, a couple special education team members including myself, school psychologist, and speech language pathologist began to define areas in which students' needs were not being met—mainly in the areas of social and emotional learning skills supports. As a result of this collaboration, our team worked together around the

implementation of another research-based social skills intervention using social skills groups based in Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) using the Social Thinking (ST) social skills curricula. These curricula involved teaching foundational social skills concepts for 'Whole Body Listening' and then building upon this foundation with more complex social skills. Our team utilized a continuum of support with foundational concepts being taught in 1:1 or 1:2 sessions by the speech teacher and more complex skills being taught in groups of 3-5 students through collaborative instruction on the part of myself, the special education teacher, and the school psychologist.

This was very different from the traditional counseling model at Seaside which was primarily delivered in 1:1 session due to fears of confidential information being shared across students. It is important to note that there was still a need for 1 on 1 sessions for some students with trauma or very unique counseling needs. For many students being part of a group allowed the teacher and school psychologist to contrive situations in which the students could apply and monitor identified areas of social skill need to receive immediate support and feedback within the group setting. Additionally, for effective data collection, special education Instructional Assistant (IA)s were trained on collecting data during the sessions to help them develop their understanding of the skills being taught and to help them provide ongoing monitoring outside of the weekly sessions when checking in with their students on their CICO charts. The new school psychologist at the time described this process as follows.

"I remember that [the speech language pathologist] and I were talking about we had some shared training in Michelle Garcia Winner Social Thinking materials and you had some training too. How I remember it is that we tried to get the groups going it didn't work out like we had initially planned, but you were really persistent and reached out to the families on your caseload and we got a couple of the groups going... We worked to identify good

groupings based on ages and areas of need. It was really nice to have your support with setting up the groups and managing student behaviors."

In reflecting on the initial steps in the process of implementing these systems and interventions it is clear that first it was important to continually work on building team relationships while beginning to enhance capacity through training in order to get the implementation ball rolling. We were able to enhance team capacity through the doubling and data collection systems being offered to Tier Three IAs, as well as through modeling lessons in the general education classroom for classroom teachers, and providing communication and training to the team regarding target student behaviors and the terminology and skills being taught to increase consistency across both classroom and home settings. This helped to establish the interventions within Seaside's Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS) structure. However, in terms of sustaining the implementation and increasing fidelity of implementation, one topic that came up again and again was the importance of clear, streamlined communication systems that ensured that the Tier One, two, and three support staff were in the loop on the effectiveness of the intervention.

Tying the Social Skills Instruction into Existing Communication System.

In addition to communicating performance on student's daily or weekly behavioral monitoring Check-In/Check-Out (CICO) sheets with the team for minor behavioral incidents or writing a team email for more complex incidents such as the 'shooting the school up' incident described above, I also began to use this system to integrate terminology from the social skills interventions our special education team developed. For example, if the student had been struggling with a concept we were targeting in our social skills groups such as overreacting to small problems throughout the school week, I would include a description of the character 'Glassman'—one of the brain invaders from the Superflex Program who causes

a person to have a ‘large reaction’ to a ‘small problem’ and share that this term could be used to help the child make connections to this tendency along with the coping tools we had identified to help them regulate in these situations in my weekly team communication.

The school psychologist who came into the district my third year at Seaside described our collaboration around setting up social skills interventions to meet the needs of our students whose behaviors were being monitored by a CICO program but needed more explicit coaching on the social skills they were consistently struggling with at school. She described this communication system as follows.

“It was really nice to have your support with setting up the groups and managing student behaviors. And you were really good at the communication piece. That’s something I really miss and forget about. You sent like weekly emails to the team about the skills we were working on and I think that helped in getting the vocabulary used across settings.”

These weekly emails that incorporated both CICO data and terminology from the social skills groups allowed me to bolster the team’s capacity and consistency in responding to an individual child’s problem behaviors. Providing these steady communications became an essential part of my role in moving into ensuring the team was handling student behaviors proactively through identifying their areas of need and administering explicit instruction to help bolster the child’s skills. The communication system was important but what was being communicated—the ABA analysis of student behavior aligned with the language for developing replacement behaviors and social skills instruction—was the active ingredient in helping to building the capacity of the team and our ability to effectively meet the complex, individualized needs of our students with EBDs across an inclusion setting involving a complex array of support providers.

Impact of the Tier Three SW-PBIS Interventions

It is important to note that the purpose of this study was not to prove the efficacy of

the Check-In/Check-Out (CICO) or Social Emotional Learning (SEL) social group interventions. This purpose of this study was to tell the implementation story for Tier Three SW-PBIS in a full inclusion context to support students with Emotional and Behavioral Disabilities (EBDs). That being said, Table 9 below outlines the total number of Office Discipline Referrals (ODRs) for the 2016-2017 and 2017-2018 school years. ODRs are a commonly used indicator when providing evidence of progress in the implementation of SW-PBIS. This information was collected by the Vice Principal and the general education instructional assistant team using a google forms spreadsheet which was digitally tracked on staff assigned iPads at Seaside Elementary School. This information relates to the effectiveness of the Tier One supports in reducing student Office Discipline Referrals. It is important to note that this information was collected via google sheets platform rather than an established SW-PBIS data-tracking tool in the beginning phases of the implementation process, though the school has since moved to a more formalized data collection system.

Table 9

Disciplinary Outcome Measures for Seaside Elementary Students for 2016-2018 School Years

Outcome Measures for Tier 1 Students		
	2016-2017	**2017-2018**
Office Discipline Referrals	669	140

Table 10 below shows outcome measures for the target population of learners—those with identified emotional and behavioral disorders in the intervention treatment group. As demonstrated, by developing and refining behavioral and social-emotional learning

interventions, staff members at Seaside could drastically reduce reliance on Crisis Prevention Intervention (CPI) holds, suspensions, expulsions, or alternative placements for students in the target intervention group. The data were stored either electronically on Google Drive or, if IAs or teachers requested, data were kept in hard copy, printed, and scanned to Google drive to accommodate technological skill gaps.

Table 10

Outcome Measures for Seaside Students with EBDs for 2014-2018 School Years

Outcome Measures for Students with EBDs in Intervention Groups				
	2014-2015	**2015-2016**	**2016-2017**	**2017-2018**
Crisis Prevention Interventions	14	1	0	0
Suspensions	3	1	0	0
Expulsions/Alternative Placements	1	0	0	0

Reliability

For accountability, the study employed two commonly utilized qualitative research reliability measures. These measures included memo writing and member checking.

Memo Writing

Historical memo writing allowed me to delve into the history of the school site using the document mentioned above to timestamp critical incidents and events. Memo writing prompted me to analyze my data and develop my codes into categories early in the writing process. Writing successive memos keeps researchers involved in the analysis and helps them to increase the level of abstraction of their ideas" (Charmaz, 2014, p.343). Memo writing allowed me to record my thoughts and ideas and as well as document my analysis of

the data. These memos provided me with records of my shifts in thinking and an analysis of the materials. Another accountability strategy used was 'member checking'.

Member Checking

Member checking involves taking ideas back to research participants for confirmation through interviewing and another critical incident iteration. These member checks involved me explaining major categories to particular participants and inquiring whether and to what extent the categories fit the participants' experience. This process challenged the analysis of the data to heighten the reliability of the analysis; after developing the main themes from the two-fold process of conducting deductive coding and inductive coding, a summary of the themes was derived. I identified several factual incidents based on my preliminary review of emails and other documents and recalled critical events. Before developing my list of Critical Incidents (CIs), I developed a research memo of my experience coming into the setting of Seaside elementary during my first year as an inclusion specialist in as much detail as possible in order to jog my memories of the experience and make myself aware of personal biases that may be present in my account and reflection of developing the intervention. After I completed this process, I began compiled my list of CIs.

Summary of the Study

In summary, Seaside Unified school district continues to improve their efforts to integrate School-Wide Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (SW-PBIS) under a Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS) framework. Despite historical challenges with significant turnover at key leadership roles and organizational dysfunction in regard to the outsourcing of the special education department and other challenges described in the baseline phase of the intervention, progress has been and continues to be made in

establishing and maintaining effective School-Wide Positive Behavior Support Systems (SW-PBIS) for meeting the social, emotional and behavioral needs of *all* Seaside students—including those with Emotional and Behavioral Disorders (EBDs). Through continued efforts to improve adult relationships and collaboration on campus and effective leadership the district can refrain from reliance on punitive discipline or outsourcing of students with EBDs. In the following discussion chapter, I will review the research questions this study was designed to answer, summarize the findings of the study, and describe insights for the field.

Research Questions

1. How did an education specialist serve as a change agent in developing Tier Three SW-PBIS support systems?
    D. What were the obstacles of change?
    E. What were the drivers of change?
    F. Which strategies worked in this context?
2. What were the stages in the evolution of the school's support systems for Students with Emotional and Behavioral Disabilities (EBDs)?
3. What was the story of system's change at Seaside Elementary School?

Chapter V: Discussion

Supporting students with Emotional and Behavioral Disorders (EBDs) has become a national topic of concern, especially due to the mental health crisis associated with school closures and the rapid shift to online learning due to the current Covid-19 pandemic. In recent years, disputes for supporting students with EBDs have centered on US school districts' overreliance on Suspension, Restraint, Expulsion, and Seclusion (SESR) and outsourcing of students with EBDs into private schools which arguably fuel the pipeline to prison industry in the United States. When schools outsource students with EBDs, it is not only costly to the district, but highly ineffective in treating the child's needs or helping schools develop support systems for these children. U.S. schools outsource students with Emotional Disturbance (ED) to specialized schools or facilities at higher rates than any other disability category (USDOE, 2020).

Researchers in the field of Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) have been working to develop a research-based framework for integrating Evidence-Based Practices (EBPs) in schools through the implementations of a School-Wide Positive Behavior Intervention and Support (SW-PBIS) framework. SW-PBIS is a well-established Evidence Based Practice (EBP) (Horner, Sugai & Lewis, 2020), but more work needs to be done in regard to determining how this framework can be developed and implemented by real-world practitioners under naturally-occurring conditions. In particular, there is very little guidance available about how to establish a Tier Three intervention program for students with the most severe behavioral problems within a full-inclusion school context.

This current study provides guidance and expertise in regard to developing support systems for students with EBDs. By examining the reality of implementing SW-PBIS under

real-world conditions, researchers can help develop trainings and guidance for administrators and leaders tasked with making complex organizational changes necessary to develop programs for educating those with EBDs in the Least Restrictive Environment (LRE). Additionally, this work speaks to the skills needed by practitioners in the field, highlighting gaps in training pre-service special education teachers on the complex role of acting as a change agent. By examining this work, I hope to help both administrators and teachers learn about the skills needed to navigate the complex organizational structures they are entering in order to effectively advocate and garner resources and support for their future students with Emotional and Behavioral Disabilities (EBDs).

Reflecting on Research Questions for the Current Study

The current study was developed to tell the implementation story for developing Tier Three supports for students with Emotional and Behavioral Disabilities (EBDs) across a four-year implementation period at Seaside elementary school. During the 2014-2018 school years, I worked at Seaside elementary in the role of an inclusion specialist for students with Emotional and Behavioral Disabilities (EBDs). While developing the study, I sought to answer three main research questions, the answers to which are outlined in the subsections below.

Research Question One: How did an education specialist serve as a change agent in developing these systems?

My integration into the culture of Seaside elementary school was complicated for many reasons with the main being that I was hired from an outside county education office agency which complicated assimilation into the school's culture due to the established 'in-group'/ 'out-group' divide between special education and general education teachers at

Seaside. This first and arguably largest obstacle was further complicated by an array of other baseline obstacles, some of which were not unique to Seaside's context, which are outlined and briefly summarized below.

What were the obstacles of change at Seaside?

Obstacle One: Divided Administrations and the In-Group/Out-Group.

The nature of the in-group/out-group between special education staff from the County Education Office and Seaside general education faculty members created a very unhealthy contentious environment which was not conducive to staff collaboration across these respective groups.

Obstacle Two: Vice Principal Viewed as 'the Discipline Guy' by Seaside Staff and Historical Reliance on Crisis Prevention Intervention Holds and Restraints.

Seaside's historical reliance on punitive discipline had created an engrained belief that the Vice Principal should be the primary disciplinarian on campus. This had historically created significant dissatisfaction for the individuals who were placed in this role. Now that SW-PBIS systems are developing, Seaside was able to attract a strong Vice Principal candidate who has maintained tenure in this role. During the baseline phase of implementation, because students with EBDs were simply placed into inclusive classrooms without Proactive SW-PBIS training and supports, the school was historically in a state of crisis, leading to an over-reliance on Crisis Prevention Intervention (CPI) holds.

Obstacle Three: High Staff Turnover.

The significant stress placed on the Vice Principal role in addition to the trauma and stress associated with using reactive practices as a first-resort in the absence of effective Tier One SW-PBIS, contributed to turnover at roles involving the expectation to use these last-

resort CPI strategies (i.e., special education inclusion specialists, instructional assistants, school psychologists, vice principals, etc.) in the absence of established Evidence Based Practices.

Obstacle Four: Lack of Special Education IA Involvement in Seaside Trainings.

When new programs and foundational Tier One and Tier Two Supports were Implemented during the second year of the intervention, the special education Instructional Assistant team—those expected to work directly with students with the highest level of Behavioral need, were left out of these trainings which meant that they were not provided the skills to navigate the evolving Tier One and Two interventions and supports that would have supported their assigned students.

Obstacle Five: Ineffective Tier One Supports.

Prior to the adoption of the Evidence-Based Tier One and Two interventions, the only training that staff had received was largely centered around a practice that did not have a strong research base. This was highly problematic at Tier One and Two, in that there were available, well-established evidence-based SW-PBIS interventions already established for these foundational tiers of supports and the school leadership should have been able to recognize the need for seeking effective practices to support the majority of students on campus.

Obstacle Six: Treatment of Newbies on Campus.

As with many school organizations, individuals who were new to Seaside's campus faced an additional layer of hazing which presented a challenge in establishing themselves and garnering respect from the Seaside team across both the in-group and the out-group. This inability to capture these voices excluded the insights for working with students with

EBDs for those in roles that faced high turnover decreasing access to the expertise of individuals who fell into this category.

Obstacle Seven: Socio-Economic Divide and the Impact on School Functioning.

The overarching challenges with providing effective supports largely stemmed from the challenges associated with the educational administrators not being on equal-footing with the affluent school community. For example, the selection of interventions which were not established Evidence-Based Practices (EBPs) at Tier One and Two either points to a lack of awareness on the part of the administration which is unlikely due to the rigorous vetting process that Seaside faculty endure or, more likely, symptomatic of the overarching power imbalance between parents and members of schoolboard. This disparity contributed into the inability of these leaderships units to effectively work together in implementing EBPs based upon data.

What were the drivers of change at Seaside?

Driver One: New Seaside VP from County Education Office Out-Group.

One major factor that started to break down the in-group/out-group nature of Seaside's campus was the hiring of the Vice Principal in the second year of the implementation. This individual had formerly served in a high-ranking position at the county office of education through which members of the special education out-group were employed. As someone who had been a member of the out-group, this leader was able to quickly recognize and make steps to counteract the divide amongst Seaside's staff. However, this individual unfortunately, and understandably became dissatisfied with this leadership role due to a combination of the other change obstacles defined above.

Driver Two: Distributed Leadership: Creating Capacity.

One major shift in increasing the bandwidth of individuals involved in leadership and supporting students with Emotional and Behavioral Disabilities on campus were the steps that people in these roles took to increased their bandwidth through training and elevating other staff, student teachers or interns. For example, at the vice principal role this involved the creation of a new Campus Support Coordinator position at Seaside which involved the promotion of one of the general education Instructional Assistant Team members into a role of increased responsibility in overseeing and organizing the schedule of Tier One lunchtime activities which were part of the universal social skills supports offered to student on campus. Additionally, this individual was trained to oversee and help with the management of Office Discipline Referrals and the data collection methods used to track and communicate successes to the staff in reducing the need for these reactive practices.

Driver Three: Providing Training to Special Education Outgroup.

As a result of forming connections and collaboration between the Seaside administration and the special education out-group, the Seaside administration began to recognize the need for county education teachers to be included in the trainings being given to Seaside faculty members. Though access to these trainings has not quite trickled down to the level of including the out-group county special education instructional assistant staff in Seaside's general education instructional assistant trainings, at least this provided the county special education teacher the ability to learn and then provide some training to their special education IA teams. In an ideal world, as the school's SW-PBIS structures evolve, the general education IA trainings would be organized and scheduled in a way that was inclusive of their county special education IA counterparts.

Driver Four: Elevating Expertise Amongst the Staff.

Due to the connections established between the in-group and out-group after the hiring of an administrator from the county education outgroup to a position of power within Seaside's district, individuals from the special education team garnered access to collaborating with the new administrator and sharing their insights about necessary changes on campus. Not only did this help foster respect and support for the county education outgroup, but also for other employees who were not on level standing with the Seaside faculty (e.g., the contracted school counselor, the general education instructional assistant team, and the certificated staff members at Seaside). Through open dialogue with team members, Seaside administrators were able to begin to chip away at the hierarchical divides at various levels on campus

Driver Five: Building Credibility and Capacity Among New Staff.

The established Professional Learning Community (PLC) model on campus was a good system for garnering and creating feedback loops across a variety of levels from a variety of distributed leaderships units devoted to different sectors of the organizations functioning. By allowing the special education outgroup the ability to join the Professional Learning Community (PLC) model, which took a commitment to ensure that team members had access to student-free time across the workday, the more opportunities for connection with the administration through inviting members of the outgroup to join the established Professional Learning Community (PLC) model, the newest vice principal who came during year three of the implementation effort cited providing staff surveys to elicit feedback from all groups as a way of garnering more feedback from members who were not comfortable or welcome to speak up about their challenges otherwise.

Which strategies worked in this context?

In consideration of the strategies used for building support systems across Tiers of support at Seaside, an overview the essential strategies which worked within this context is bullet pointed below.

- Build School-Wide Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (SW-PBIS) supports from the bottom up AND the top down simultaneously.
- Develop connections and communication between steering committees across tiers of support.
- Determine ways to build team capacity and reduce burden placed on those in key administrative roles (e.g., vice principal, school psychologist, education specialist, etc.).
- Ensure oversight by key administrators on each tiered steering committee to help facilitate and encourage collaboration.

What was the Story of System's Change at Seaside Elementary School?

In order to fully describe the story of organizational change at Seaside, I began by outlining the critical steps to implementing these Tier Three systems from a systematic perspective. By looking are the larger, systems-level Critical Incidents (CIs), I was able to test these stages through the interview process in order to confirm which CIs were in alignment with my self-identified systems level CIs in order to capture new CIs which emerged. Some of the CIs which emerged were surprising to me, and reflective of the differing participant roles and perspectives included in this study. The variety of participant roles across levels of the organizational hierarchy (e.g., Instructional Assistants (IAs), General Education Teachers, Special Education Teachers, School Psychologists, Seaside Administrators, etc.) added to the richness of feedback provided in relation to critical steps in

developing SW-PBIS at Tier Three within Seaside's context. Interestingly, the main differences in identified CIs came from members of the Seaside in-group, who contributed some successes of supporting this population with critical incidents involving the influx of new Tier One interventions and supports that came during the second year of the implementation period. This is likely due to the fact I was not able to be included in all aspects of the in-group's trainings or access to administrative support and may not have been privy to the complexity of the supports and trainings being offered to this group, especially in regard to administrators teaching and modeling the use of new Tier One SW-PBIS supports and interventions on campus.

In shifting, and narrowing my focus, I also developed student-specific Critical Incidents with permission from the children's parents. These CIs were developed through carefully reflecting upon my self-identified key incidents involved in supporting and developing programs for these learners in addition to a careful review of existent documents and data tools that I was granted access to by Seaside. In terms of supporting Tier Three learners, the elements of the intervention that were universally agreed upon as being essential to implementation included developing team rapport and chemistry, defining the instructional assistants' roles, repairing adult relationships and collaborating with existing behavioral and social skills expertise on campus, and developing bandwidth and capacity for consistent communication systems. In analyzing the events which I deemed as critical incidents in the implementation of Tier Three interventions and supports for this study, I found that most of my informants agreed upon core areas of the intervention and their effectiveness (e.g., the use of the Check-In/Check-Out protocol for individual students). One notable feature of across both systematic and student-specific CIs is the extent to which they involved

developing and building steering committees across tiers of support that had the necessary behavioral and social emotional expertise to fuel effective and sustained implementation.

Implications for the Field

One of the major ways in which this study adds to the existing literature is that there is currently very little existent research on developing and implementing effective systems for students at the Tier Three within a school. There is also little know about how support teams can be given the resources and guidance necessary to supplement for Tier One supports, as systems are being built. This study provides insights into which specific factors aided the school teams in compensating for gaps in Tier One and Tier Two implementation efforts. Because students with significant mental health needs are often outsourced to special schools, this study provides a unique testimony about developing a school system that can collaboratively meet these intensive Tier Three needs. Finally, and most importantly, this study provides insights in how to turn around a history of negative school discipline including the practices of Seclusion, Expulsion, Suspension, and Restraint (SESR).

Implications for Teacher and Administrator Trainings

In entering into a new role, administrators and teacher teams are often tasked with the responsibility of integrating into and understanding a schools' culture, determining the current systems in place, soliciting feedback on areas that need attention, and then developing implementation plans for getting evidence-based practices in place. In the event that there are not designates (Evidence-Based Practices) EBPs available—whether this be due to unique context (e.g., Students with Emotional and Behavioral Disabilities (EBDs) being educated in an inclusion setting) or organizational challenges/dysfunction (e.g., outsourcing of special education, lack of training provided to staff, etc.), it is important that

school teams can be trained and trusted to problem solve and find appropriate promising practices to implement (e.g., Social Thinking social skills groups) along with data-based means for assessing the impact of these intervention tools as the educational research catches up to the quickly evolving needs of applied contexts throughout the field.

This study provides insights into the importance of building school teams, understanding and leaning into available expertise on campus, enhancing existing systems and structures, and clearly communicating data regarding the effectiveness of the intervention and next steps to the team. This study defines and provides insights into the following key areas in regard to educational leadership and implementation: understanding and navigating organizational systems and structures, training staff—including instructional assistant and classified team members, how to work with others who do not believe in principles of behaviorism, and managing time at the teacher and administrative level to build these supports while gradually building team capacity and training to delegate responsibilities to members of the school team. Finally, this study sheds light on the education specialist's role in building these support structures and developing emergency back up support protocols for Tier Three students as systems are being built from both the top up and the bottom down.

Implications for preparing special educators of EBD students

Teachers of students with Emotional and Behavioral Disabilities (EBDs) need to be taught how to recognize and navigate organizational structures. For example, credential programs should teach candidates to seek out the schools' administrative role flowchart to understand the structures in place at their future places of employment. Additionally, these staff members need to be taught how to help develop and communicate the role of

instructional assistant team members and provided training on teamwork skills necessary to encourage successful collaboration. It is critical for staff members in this role to have Applied Behavioral Analysis (ABA) training, in that they may very well be one of the only members of their school team who does. Finally, these education specialist team members need an understanding of effective communication skills for the particular schooling context which they enter. They need to understand how to identify systems of communication being used across tiers of the organization and how to align their communication efforts with the expectations of the system or which staff members or administrators to talk to about developing clear communication protocols.

Implications for Developing Tier Three Support Systems in Inclusive Contexts

As shown in table A1 in the appendix, I used Horner's Tiered Fidelity Inventory (TFI) tool as a way to look at and examine the steps taken by the school team. I analyzing the TFI checklist, I identified components that were missing at Seaside and provided a description of how our Tier Three support team compensated for these missing components. In looking for patterns in the compensatory factors which helped alleviate challenges due to missing TFI components, I created the bullet point list below which summarizes the main ways in which a Tier Three team can overcome obstacles of missing components and underdeveloped Tier Two and Tier One supports, as the school is building these systems from both the bottom up and top down. Though there will still components that the team wasn't able to compensate for yet, this tool could be used as a guide for school teams to begin to think about where to start in evaluating where their Tier Three school team is at in the implementation process and beginning to developing and continually refine their systems on the path towards fidelity of implementation. The bullet pointed list below provides an

overview of the main missing components for Seaside's Tier Three team and a description of ways in which the team was able to compensate for these challenges as systems were being built.

- **Team Composition and Operating Procedures**: When lacking bandwidth for a Tier Three steering committee coordinator and a Tier Three team which can meet at least monthly and has defined meeting roles and a current action plan, tie supports from Tier Three into the established or developing the Tier Two steering committee. Focus district resources on building the capacity of Tier Two staff. Once effective Tier Two staff are in place, develop plans to gradually fade Tier Three staff out in order to develop a separate, but connected Tier Three steering committee.
- **Screening**: In the case of missing Office Discipline Referrals (ODRs) reporting data and Tier Two or Three performance data, bring in data from established or developing Tier One data collection system. Begin using these systems to capture information about Tier Two and Tier Three students, while building more formalized Tier Two and Tier Three data collection systems.
- **Student/Family/Community Involvement:** If a Tier Three Team is missing a contact person for community-based supports on site, reach out to the local Special Education Local Planning Agency (SELPA) office in order to request access to a list of support providers in your area. Take inventory of all support agencies involved on the Tier Three IEP teams at the site and develop and maintain an updated list of community-based support agencies to provide upon family request.

- **Professional Development**: In the event that the Tier Three team does not have access to a formal process for teaching behavior theory or has obstacles in place, such as the in-group out-group, which prevent staff members with behavioral expertise from providing it to all staff in a proactive way, begin by bolstering the skills of Tier Three staff members. If there are opportunities to provide training to specific Tier Three instructional assistants who can then support and enhance the training capacity of the Board-Certified Behavior Analyst (BCBA) serving the site, explore these options. Just as with the Vice Principal role, creating distributed leadership opportunities for experts in the field of behaviorism will help create opportunities for these individuals to provide professional development available to staff, beginning with those at Tier Three. If there is an agreement to allow outside agencies to work on-site, this is another way teams can bring in behavioral expertise and modeling for school team members.
- **Quality of Life Indicators:** Due to challenges present on Seaside's campus including the socio-economic divide coupled with the in-group out-group special education situation, it was important to have strong, working relationships with community-based agencies who were often called upon by the parents to serve as advocates in times of disagreement among Tier Three IEP teams. In the event of disagreement on a parent's belief about their child's need, it was important to have systems in place for listening to parents view whether expressed directly by the parent or on the part of a community-based service provider, seeking consensus around treatment practices, and

consistently taking and referring the team back to data to inform team decisions.

- **Comprehensive Support Plans**: In the event that there are not clear, established protocols for assessing fidelity and impact of Tier Three support plans and getting the plan in place, it was important to identify a staff member with behavioral expertise who could take on this role. Due to the fact that the county education office Board Certified Behavior Analyst (BCBA) was stretched very thin, it was important for both agencies to consider supports to provide this individual with the bandwidth necessary to conduct these fidelity assessments. In terms of the county education office, they assigned a BCBA assistant to help conduct these fidelity plans across the county. Fortunately for Seaside, one of the special education instructional assistant team members was working on her BCBA and was able to help collect some of these measures under the guidance of the county BCBA. Again, creating opportunities to increase the bandwidth of team members with necessary expertise while developing systems and enhancing staff capacity allowed the Seaside team to begin conducting these fidelity checks while the Tier Three team was building established protocols for consistently embedding these essential fidelity checks into student plans.

In conclusion, the present study has provided contributions to the field of School-Wide Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (SW-PBIS), especially in relation to developing Tier Three supports for students with significant Emotional and Behavior Disabilities (EBDs). Further research is needed in regard to looking at this case study

through an implementation science lens and providing guidance and training to professionals tasked with developing these systems in applied settings at both the administrative and classroom levels in order to better serve students with Emotional and Behavioral Disabilities (EBDs) in the Least Restrictive Environment (LRE).

Limitations of study

As with all research studies, there were some limitations to this study. My position in the study is a limitation. Though I strove to maintain objectivity with the data, I cannot erase my viewpoint for my interpretation. Other limitations included the fact that it was conducted as a retrospective study, meaning the data was from an implementation which happened between the 2014-2018 school years. This was also a benefit in that it allowed me to be removed from my direct working relationship with participants in the study which may have allowed for more objectivity in the interviews. Because the study was a retrospective account some data sources were not available for analysis due to data storage limitations prior to the school district switching to the google suite program. Additionally, many emails were not made available for accessing and analyzing critical incidents. Finally, some key informants were not available for interviewing. Despite these limitations, I believe I was able to present an accurate account of building supports for students with emotional and behavioral disabilities within a full-inclusion context and contribute knowledge about how to develop this type of packaged behavior and social skills intervention within a real-world public-school context.

Chapter VI: References

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Appendix A

Table A1

Overview of Missing Tier Three Components and Compensatory Actions

Overview of Missing Tier 3 Tiered Fidelity Inventory (TFI) Components & Compensatory Tier Three Team Actions Not Reflected in TFI	
3.1 Team Composition missing: -Tier 3 systems coordinator 3.2 Team Operating Procedures missing: -Tier 3 team meets at least monthly and has defined meeting roles, and a current action plan. 3.3 Screening missing: -ODR reporting data -Tier 2 performance data 3.4 Student Support Team missing: -N/A 3.5 Staffing missing: -N/A 3.6 Student/Family/Community Involvement missing: -Contact person for outside agency 3.7 Professional Development missing: -unwritten, informal process for teaching behavioral theory 3.8 Quality of Life Indicators missing: -Assessment includes student strengths and identification of student/family preferences for individualized support options to meet their stated needs across life domains (e.g., academics, health, career, social). 3.9 Academic, Social, and Physical Indicators missing: -N/A 3.10 Hypothesis Statement missing: -N/A 3.11 Comprehensive Support Plans missing: -a systematic process for assessing fidelity and impact, and the action plan for putting the support plan in place.	3.1 Team Composition missing: • Tier 3 systems coordinator: Due to the fact that the Tier Three teams simply consisted of independently functioning Individual Education Plan (IEP) team for students in the designated Tier Two and three interventions, the Tier Two steering committee served to guide the functions of the Tier Three team. In order to encourage alignment with Tier Two interventions and practices, the three special education case-managers who oversaw and provided communication for Tier Two and three teams were each a part of the Tier Two steering committees. However, there was dissensus among the team in regard to developing a menu of interventions and the shared goal of ensuring students had access to Tier Two evidence-based interventions, prior to individualizing plans that were not in alignment with the Tier One and two School-Wide Positive Behavior Intervention and Support (SW-PBIS) implementation efforts. 3.2 Team Operating Procedures missing: • Tier 3 team meets at least monthly and has defined meeting roles, and a current action plan: Due to the fact that core members of the Tier Three team (e.g., the Special Day Class Level (SDC)/Inclusion teachers

3.12 Formal and Natural Supports missing: -RENEW or Person-centered planning approaches -documentation of the quality of life, strengths, and needs completed by formal (e.g., school/district personnel) and natural (e.g., family, friends) supporters. 3.13 Access to Tier 1 and Tier 2 Supports missing: -N/A 3.14 Data Systems missing: -Aggregated i.e., overall school-level) Tier 3 data are summarized and reported to staff at least monthly on (a) fidelity of support plan implementation, and (b) impact on student outcomes. 3.15 Data-Based Decision-Making missing: -Each student's individual support team meets at least monthly (or more frequently if needed) and uses data to modify the support plan to improve fidelity of plan implementation and impact on quality of life, academic, and behavior outcomes. 3.16 Levels of Use missing: Team follows written process to track proportion of students participating in Tier 3 supports, and access is proportionate. 3.17 Annual Evaluations missing: At least annually, the Tier 3 systems team assesses the extent to which Tier 3 supports are meeting the needs of students, families, and school personnel; and evaluations are used to guide action planning.	were currently taking on the role of the Tier Two steering committee and overseeing Tier Three Individualized Education Programs (IEPs), there was not enough bandwidth to allow for additional Tier Three team steering committee meetings. If the resource teacher on the Tier Two team had gradually been able to take on being the sole special education teacher on the Tier Two steering committee, the Tier Three team might have had the bandwidth to being having regular proactive meetings. In order to compensate for this, the SDC/inclusion teacher who was more frequently assigned students with Emotional and Behavioral Disabilities (EBDs) developed and refined consistent communication protocols to use with the IEP teams supporting these students. These protocols involved language to help provide introductory training to core aspects of the Check-In/Check-Out intervention package being implemented for students with Emotional and Behavioral Disabilities (EBDs). These communication systems in addition to the training components being gradually allocated from the Tier Two team for both teachers and Instructional Assistants (IAs) helped to compensate for and prevent the need for the lack of regular monthly team meetings of the IEP team. It is important to note that the frequency that the Tier Three teams needed to meet with between years one through four of the study. 3.3 Screening missing: Due to the fact that the Office Discipline Referral (ODR) system was not a well-

	refined and established system and there were sometimes gaps in reporting of ODRs for special education students due to the fact that their Instructional Assistants (IAs) would often be asked to intervene in lieu of traditional discipline protocols, the Tier Three teams were not utilizing these systems on a consistent basis. To compensate for this area, in year three of the implementation, the teacher who was responsible for supporting the majority of EBD students on campus gained access to the informal Tier One discipline data sheet system generated by the Campus Support Supervisor. This allowed her to analyze and review these monthly sheets for student names and ensure that any reported incidents were documented in students CICO communications and included in team communications. Due to the fact that there were sometimes incidents that the vice principal would handle without having time to clearly communicate to the special education case-managers, there was not a timely communication to the IEP team resulting in a crisis situation where law enforcement needed to provide support to the team. 3.4 Student Support Team missing: N/A 3.5 Staffing missing: N/A 3.6 Student/Family/Community Involvement missing: <u>Contact person for community-based supports:</u> Due to the fact that the Seaside school district did not have access to a designated support person to help parents in finding community-based supports,

	oftentimes parents would be referred to other parents whose children were receiving outside services in order to learn about the available programming. Another compensatory factor was that many outside agencies teamed with tier level three staff and were involved in team communications. This allowed for transmission of knowledge regarding available program. Additionally, local Special Education Local Planning Agency (SELPA) provided a list of available service provided listed in the area. 3.7 Professional Development missing: • Written, formal process for teaching behavioral theory: Due to the fact that the Board-Certified Behavior Analyst (BCBA) contracted through the county education office was not able to be involved in the Tier Two and Tier Three teams, there was not discussion around developing a protocol for effectively allocating her time and training in a preventative way. Therefore, she was not able to offer proactive training to staff and Instructional Assistants (IAs) and instead had to reserve her time to provide crisis responding for Tier Three students across the county education office's jurisdiction and informal ad hoc training to members of Tier Three Individual Education Program Teams. This was likely exacerbated due to the in-group/out-group reality with the Seaside and county education office staff. To compensate for a written formal process for teaching behavioral theory, the BCBA and Tier Three SDC teacher shared many students so they were able to collaborate

	around behavioral crisis and refine systems for meeting students' needs at Tier Three. An additional compensatory factor in the agency was that one of the Instructional Assistant (IA) team members began receiving supervision from the BCBA during her contract hours and this allowed effective training for this staff member so she could effectively implement programs for the students with Emotional and Behavioral Disabilities (EBDs) that she was supporting. In addition to the BCBA involved from the county education office, many students with EBDs had Applied Behavioral Analysis (ABA) support staff who were involved in team discussions and provided support and training to parents at home. These team members also provided modeling of strategies during on-campus interventions that were allowed due to Seaside's Memorandum of Understanding (MOU). This provided additional support to Tier Three teams in regard to access to behavioral theory trainings. 3.8 Quality of Life Indicators missing: • <u>Identification of student/family preferences for individualized support options to meet their stated needs across life domains (e.g., academics, health, career, social):</u> Due to the hierarchical status challenges between parents, Seaside staff and outside agency support staff, there were often times when families were dictating a certain intervention or approach and would use their status as leverage to have outside agencies pushing to provide services on campus. Inventories were taken during triennial assessment times, but parent

	preferences were not always aligned with the rest of the team's beliefs in regard to treatment for students with Emotional and Behavioral Disabilities (EBDs). In these situations, there were often additional Tier Three Individual Education Plan (IEP) meetings which resulted in outside agencies guiding the parent to communicate their beliefs regarding their child's treatment needs. In these situations, careful listening, consistent communication, and reliance on data-informed progress helped the teams not need to head toward mediation proceedings. 3.9 Academic, Social, and Physical Indicators missing: N/A 3.10 Hypothesis Statement missing: N/A 3.11 Comprehensive Support Plans missing: • -Systematic process for assessing fidelity and impact, and the action plan for putting the support plan in place: Due to the fact that there were not clear systematic processes for putting the fidelity and impact measures in place, the Board-Certified Behavioral Analyst (BCBA) often had to take on this role, despite being stretched thin while supporting all contracted county education office programs. Oftentimes, the BCBA and education specialist would work collaboratively on implementing the Behavioral Support Plans (BSPs) through training and modeling with guidance and support from the BCBA or her designated assistant, as requested. The BCBA would develop implementation checklists

	for her assistant to use when doing observations and providing feedback on implementation efforts. However, those tools were not shared with or utilized by the Tier Three IEP teams and there was not a Tier Three steering committee to oversee these action and implementation plans 3.12 Formal and Natural Supports missing: • RENEW or Person-centered planning approaches: due to the fact that there were not trainings offered to Tier Three staff in the area of person-centered planning or RENEW this support were not in place. **There were not identified compensatory factors to help alleviate impact in this area.** 3.13 Access to Tier 1 and Tier 2 Supports missing: • <u>Aggregated i.e., overall school-level) Tier</u> <u>3 data are summarized and reported to staff at least monthly on (a) fidelity of support plan implementation, and (b) impact on student outcomes:</u> **There were not identified compensatory factors to help alleviate impact in this area.** 3.14 Data Systems missing: • Aggregated i.e., overall school-level) Tier 3 data are summarized and reported to staff at least monthly on (a) fidelity of support plan implementation, and (b) impact on student outcomes. 3.15 Data-Based Decision-Making missing: • <u>Each student's individual support team meets at least monthly (or more frequently if needed) and uses data to modify the support plan to</u>

	improve fidelity of plan implementation and impact on quality of life, academic, and behavior outcomes: The communication system protocol developed by the education specialist for Tier Three IEP teams for EBD students, did allow for the dissemination of data to the team on a regular basis. This information helped provide behavioral descriptions of key incidents, align areas of need with social skills instruction or counseling supports, and make ties to access to Tier One support personnel or community-based supports. 3.16 Levels of Use missing: • Team follows written process to track proportion of students participating in Tier 3 supports, and access is proportionate: **There were not identified compensatory factors to help alleviate impact in this area.** 3.17 Annual Evaluations missing: • At least annually, the Tier 3 systems team assesses the extent to which Tier 3 supports are meeting the needs of students, families, and school personnel; and evaluations are used to guide action planning: **There were not identified compensatory factors to help alleviate impact in this area.**