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Exploring the Public Value Associated with Implementing the Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) Framework in Ohio

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Executive Summary

Introduction and Background

Ohio was one of seven states awarded the Safe Schools/Healthy Students (SS/HS) Cooperative Agreement by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) in Federal Fiscal Year 2013. The Ohio Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services (OhioMHAS) administers the grant in collaboration with the Ohio Department of Education (ODE). To support the SS/HS State Program in Ohio, researchers from Ohio University’s Voinovich School of Leadership and Public Affairs (Voinovich School) conducted interviews with leaders at schools throughout the state that exemplify best practices in the implementation of the Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) Framework.

The research team sought to identify barriers and facilitators to using the PBIS Framework in selecting and implementing evidence-based strategies related to alcohol, tobacco, other drug, and violence (ATOD-V) prevention. The study’s findings are intended to support the SS/HS Public Value Proposition Workgroup in formulating a value-proposition for using the PBIS Framework in Ohio. It also provides direct insight from educational leaders who are utilizing PBIS.

History of Safe Schools/Healthy Students. Beginning in 1999, the U.S. Departments of Health and Human Services, Education, and Justice funded the interagency SS/HS grant program. The intent was to have local education agencies (LEAs) partner with a variety of local groups, organizations, and service providers to promote the mental health of students, enhance academic achievement, prevent violence and substance use, and create safe and respectful school climates.

Under Ohio’s SS/HS Comprehensive Plan (OhioMHAS, 2015), state leaders incorporated the development of public value-propositions regarding schools’ use of the PBIS Framework to select and implement evidence-based strategies related to ATOD-V prevention. Ohio’s plan includes two specific elements with goals focused on creating public value with PBIS.

The PBIS Framework. The PBIS Framework emphasizes four integrated elements: (a) data for decision making; (b) measurable outcomes supported and evaluated by data; (c) practices with evidence that outcomes are achievable; and (d) systems that efficiently and effectively support implementation of practices. The PBIS Framework also utilizes a three-tiered prevention response to intervention: Tier 1 (primary prevention), Tier 2 (secondary), and Tier 3 (tertiary).

Because most schools in Ohio utilize the Ohio Improvement Process (OIP), state leaders created guiding documents to explain the complimentary aspects of both OIP and PBIS. Notably, an ODE fact sheet on implementing PBIS notes the use of the 5-step OIP to integrate the Framework (ODE, 2014). An additional four-page summary describes the interface of Ohio PBIS with OIP (ODE, n.d.a). There is also guidance for how the Ohio Teacher and Principal Evaluation Systems (OTES and OPES) align with PBIS (ODE, 2013a).
Methods

**Theoretical context.** Two theoretical contexts frame this study. First, the public value model (Moore, 1995) conceptualizes three organizational strategies from which government leaders need to manage. Moore (1995; 2000) depicts the model as a triangle with three anchored points: (a) public value, where issues are deemed to be valuable or not; (b) the authorizing environment, where legitimacy and support occur; and (b) operational capacities, where issues become administratively feasible (Alford & O’Flynn, 2009; Moore, 1995; Moore & Khagram, 2004).

The second theoretical context comes from the implementation science literature (Aarons, Hurlburt, & McCue Horwitz, 2011; Damschroder et al., 2009; Fixsen et al., 2015; Fixsen et al., 2009; Fixsen et al., 2005; Olswang & Prelock, 2014), which focuses on how to move researched innovations into practice. Nationally, the Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) Center on PBIS has published a set of blueprints that draws heavily from the implementation science research (OSEP, 2015a; OSEP, 2015b). In addition, National Implementation Research Network (NIRN) researchers suggest viewing implementation of an innovation as a process of six iterative stages and three implementation drivers that influence organizational change: competency, organization, and leadership (Fixsen et al., 2015; Fixsen et al., 2009; Fixsen et al., 2005).

**Study design, protocol, and participants.** Four research issues guided the study design and were formulated to align with the public value model elements: (a) using the PBIS Framework, (b) creating public value, (c) understanding the authorizing environment, and (d) understanding operational capacity. To gather the data, a team of interviewers approached educational leaders from the 22 schools receiving 2015 Ohio PBIS Showcase recognition awards. Using an interview script, a total of 17 interviews were completed (77.3 percent response rate).

**Analytic approach.** Researchers selected an interpretivist approach for this study (Glesne, 2006) to illuminate the perspectives of educational leaders who utilize PBIS. Coding and analysis were grounded in Wolcott’s (1994) framework for transforming qualitative data: description, analysis, and interpretation. The theoretical contexts guided the process. Validation strategies suggested by Creswell & Miller (2000) increased methodologic rigor, including prolonged engagement in the field; triangulation; peer review and debriefing; and rich, thick description.

Results

**Using the PBIS Framework.** Most of the educational leaders have capacity to implement three of the four core PBIS elements. These include using data to make decisions, measuring outcomes, and utilizing systems to support implementation of efforts. With regard to using actual evidence-based practices to achieve desired outcomes, there appears to be less capacity. Generally, educational leaders rely on their stated values and character traits, and the positive benefits realized from those. Most ATOD-V prevention programming was framed as legacy or “home grown” rather than utilizing established evidence-based programs (EBPs).
Creating public value. Educational leaders in this study perceived many substantive benefits from the PBIS Framework, including its positive approach to managing behavior issues, its focus on using data for decision making, and its use of a team to support efforts. Educational leaders also said they value a tiered response to intervening; however, they appear to have varying depths of understanding of what it means to work within a “framework.” In particular, educational leaders are not viewing their efforts to implement PBIS as a core prevention strategy or framework. As previously mentioned, they also seemed to have limited experience responding in a tiered approach and are not selecting evidence-based programs for intervention.

Authorizing environment. Moore (1995; 2000) discusses the importance of building legitimacy and support for an effort, in this case PBIS. A review of the history of PBIS from a national, state, and local policy perspective suggests opportunities for strengthening implementation of PBIS in Ohio. Notably, Ohio’s authority for PBIS is situated in Ohio Administrative Code (Lawriter, 2015) and focuses heavily on limiting restraints and seclusion with only brief references to PBIS. Educational leaders discussed a variety of supports, structures, and policies that they found offered legitimacy and support when implementing PBIS.

Operational capacity. Educational leaders in this study described having operational capacity related to all three of the implementation drivers described by Fixsen et al. (2015): competency (selection, training, coaching, and performance assessment), organization (systems intervention, facilitative administration, and decision support data system), and leadership (technical and adaptive). In particular, the leaders stressed the need for having strong operational capacity to embed PBIS within schools and/or school districts. Notably, educational leaders found the training, technical assistance, and coaching offered by the state support teams to be a valuable way of expanding capacity. As previously mentioned with creating public value, educational leaders noted they have less capacity to engage PBIS with a full multi-tiered approach.

Conclusion and Opportunities for Consideration

The primary charge for this study was to identify barriers and facilitators to using the PBIS Framework among high implementing PBIS schools. In turn, state leaders sought to develop a public value proposition to increase implementation of PBIS in Ohio. In consultation with SS/HS state leaders, a proposed public value proposition follows:

In Ohio, PBIS is a process framework where schools, school districts, and school-community partnerships use data and information to improve behavioral outcomes for all students, which also promotes safe schools and academic success. When available, it emphasizes selecting and implementing evidence-based programs within a multi-tiered system of supports.

Moore (2000) suggests tests of alignment among the three strategic elements. This study found one element (public value) having strong results and two elements (authorizing environment and operational capacity) with opportunities for improvement.
• **With public value:** Educational leaders found substantial public value in implementing the PBIS framework in their schools. They discussed beneficial results, including improved student behaviors and more positive school environments. These outcomes created value for these leaders and built sustainability for it. Further value could be realized by shoring up issues related to legitimacy and support and operational capacity.

• **With legitimacy and support:** This study revealed several issues related to legitimacy and support. Importantly, Ohio has potentially narrowed its authorizing environment for PBIS by situating it within restraint and seclusion policies (Lawriter, 2015; ODE, 2013b). Nationally, researchers and policy makers advocate for a broader approach to implementing PBIS. State planning efforts related to implementing the Every Student Succeeds Act (ODE, n.d.c) could present an opportunity to strengthen support for PBIS in Ohio. An additional longer-term opportunity could exist with Ohio’s rule revision on the use of restraints and seclusion in school districts, due in 2018. Finally, from a legitimacy and support perspective, educational leaders indicated a need to re-conceptualize PBIS as a decision-making framework for all behavior management efforts.

• **With operational capabilities:** Most educational leaders said they heavily rely on using Tier 1 (Universal) supports and were not yet using a full tiered system of supports. Offering guidance to operationalize PBIS as a continuum of tiered response to intervention would align with national trends. It would also offer educational leaders support with identifying and selecting evidence-based programs. Finally, offering additional professional development, networking, and training opportunities could increase both operational capacity and build legitimacy and support for PBIS.

**Opportunities in Ohio**

A number of opportunities exist to help strengthen implementation of PBIS in Ohio. Possible ideas for consideration by the SS/HS state leaders and others are described in the conclusion of the full report. Two opportunities focus on enhancing the authorizing environment and two opportunities focus on building operational capacities. Other ideas and opportunities likely exist and could surface as state leaders and others consider the study findings.

In closing, a key finding from this study relates to conceptualizing PBIS as a framework. In their analysis, the research team gravitated to using the implementation science literature as a theoretical basis, given state and national references to it. Importantly, using the implementation science literature helped shed light on the public value of PBIS in Ohio and offered insights into how educational leaders are operationalizing it. However, it also revealed that educational leaders struggle to conceptualize PBIS as a framework with a continuum of tiered response to intervention. Future studies should explore the role of systems change and how this literature could help inform the expansion of PBIS in Ohio, especially within the context of home rule.
**Introduction**

Ohio was one of seven states awarded the Safe Schools/Healthy Students (SS/HS) Cooperative Agreement by Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) in FY 2013. The Ohio Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services (OhioMHAS) administers the grant in collaboration with the Ohio Department of Education (ODE). The grant consists of an intensive Year 1 planning period, followed by implementation of services and activities in Years 2 through 4.

To support the SS/HS State Program in Ohio, researchers from Ohio University’s Voinovich School of Leadership and Public Affairs (Voinovich School) conducted interviews with leaders at schools throughout the state that exemplify best practices in the implementation of the PBIS Framework. In particular, the research team attempted to identify barriers and facilitators to using the Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) Framework to select and implement evidence-based programs (EBPs) related to alcohol, tobacco, other drug, and violence (ATOD-V) prevention through the lens of public value that will lead to the development of actionable recommendations and the development of a value-proposition. The findings of this study will support the Safe Schools/Healthy Students (SS/HS) Public Value Proposition Workgroup in formulating a value-proposition for the use of the PBIS Framework in Ohio. In addition, the information collected from this study will provide an inside perspective from educational leaders who are utilizing the PBIS Framework to select and integrate evidence-based programs, policies, and practices in their schools.

This report contains the following sections:

1. **Background**: This section overviews relevant information for this inquiry including the SS/HS Initiative, Ohio’s SS/HS Comprehensive Plan, and the PBIS Framework.
2. **Methods**: This section describes two theoretical contexts for the study: the public value model and implementation science. It also describes the study design, interview protocol, participants, and approach to analyzing the data.
3. **Results**: This section presents the findings from the qualitative analysis for each of the four guiding questions in the study. Relevant literature is incorporated throughout these findings.
4. **Conclusion and Discussion on Opportunities**: This section offers a proposed public value-proposition, along with a proposed facilitated process to help state leaders to plan and prioritize how to expand the use of the PBIS Framework in Ohio.
Background

Safe Schools/Healthy Students: A Brief History

Beginning in 1999, the U.S. Departments of Health and Human Services, Education, and Justice funded an interagency grant program called the Safe Schools/Healthy Students (SS/HS) Initiative. Local education agencies (LEAs) were asked to work in partnership with local law enforcement and juvenile justice, social service and mental health agencies, and other community organizations to plan and implement comprehensive programs, policies, and service delivery systems that promoted the mental health of students, enhanced academic achievement, prevented violence and substance use, and created safe and respectful school climates. The original SS/HS Initiative was successful in reducing violence on school grounds and in communities, increasing the number of students who received school-based and community mental health services, increasing recognition by school staff of student’s mental health problems, and reducing alcohol and other substance use.

SAMHSA is building on lessons learned from the original initiative through the Safe Schools/Healthy Students State Planning, Local Education Agency, and Local Community Cooperative Agreement (Short Title: SS/HS State Program). The purpose of the SS/HS State Program is similar to the original SS/HS Initiative – to create safe and supportive schools and communities through the building of partnerships among educational, behavioral health, and criminal/juvenile justice systems. However, a key difference is that funds are given to states who are then responsible for developing infrastructure and partnerships at the state level along with three local communities to implement a comprehensive plan of activities, services, and strategies that address youth violence and promote the wellness of children, youth, and families. Collaborative partnerships are required at both the state and community levels. State, local education agency, and community collaboration allows for combined knowledge, skills, and resources of various local public, private, and community agencies to be used in responding these issues.

Ohio’s SS/HS Comprehensive Plan

The SS/HS State Program requires grantees to include the following five elements in their comprehensive plan: (a) promoting early childhood social and emotional learning and development; (b) promoting mental, emotional, and behavioral health; (c) connecting family, schools, and communities; (d) preventing and reducing alcohol, tobacco, and other drug use; and (e) creating safe and violence-free schools. Together with three local communities, Ohio developed the SS/HS Comprehensive Plan that was submitted to SAMHSA in October 2015. Ohio’s SS/HS Comprehensive Plan was built upon the federal SS/HS Framework and a comprehensive SS/HS Needs Assessment and Environmental Scan completed in 2014 at the state and community levels. Ohio’s SS/HS Comprehensive Plan represents both state-wide efforts and
local efforts to create an integrated network of activities, programs, services, and policies to
decrease youth violence and promote the healthy development of children and youth.

While Ohio’s SS/HS State Program Needs Assessment and Environmental Scan (Ohio
Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services [OhioMHAS], 2014) identified that a
number of important prevention and treatment programs have been developed, there is a gap
between prevention science and practice, specifically that Ohio’s schools and communities lack
the infrastructure and capacity (i.e., knowledge, skills, abilities, and resources) for schools and
communities to more fully adopt, embrace, and promote protective factors using evidence-based
strategies. As such, in Ohio’s SS/HS Comprehensive Plan (OhioMHAS, 2015), state leaders
incorporated the development of public value-propositions regarding schools’ use of the Positive
Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) Framework to select and implement evidence-
based strategies related to ATOD-V prevention. The two key elements and the relevant goals
from Ohio’s SS/HS Comprehensive Plan (OhioMHAS, 2015) that guide this inquiry include:

**Element 4: Preventing and Reducing Alcohol, Tobacco, and Other Drug Use**

*Goal: 4.2. (State) – To develop infrastructure and capacity for Ohio’s SS/HS grantee schools and
communities to plan and implement BH/SU EBPs.*

*4.2.a. Create a public value proposition that connects youth-led prevention, PBIS, and other
BH/SU EBP’s with academic, attendance, and disciplinary outcomes (e.g., speaking points with
data, peer sharing opportunities, trainings. Providing TA to LEAs at SMT/CMT meetings, by
email, and additional TA sessions).*

**Element 5: Creating Safe and Violence-Free Schools**

*Goal: 5.3. (State) – To develop infrastructure and capacity for Ohio’s SS/HS grantee schools and
communities to plan and implement school safety plans and violence-prevention EBPs.*

*5.3.a. Create a public value proposition that connects youth-led prevention, PBIS, and other
violence prevention EBP’s with academic, attendance, and disciplinary outcomes (e.g., speaking
points with data, peer sharing opportunities, trainings).*

**The Positive Behavioral Intervention and Supports (PBIS) Framework**

According to a fact sheet on implementing PBIS in Ohio (Ohio Department of Education [ODE],
2014, p. 1), the mission of the Ohio PBIS Network is

“To advocate for adoption and implementation of the PBIS Framework in teaching of
social competencies and development of safe and effective school environments.”

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In general, the PBIS Framework emphasizes four integrated elements: (a) data for decision making; (b) practices with evidence that outcomes are achievable; (c) systems that efficiently and effectively support implementation of practices; and (d) measurable outcomes supported and evaluated by data (see Figure 1) (ODE, 2014).

Within these elements, the PBIS Framework utilizes a continuum of tiered response to intervention (see Figure 2):

- Tier 1 (Universal/Primary Prevention): targets all students and aims to reduce new cases of problem behaviors
- Tier 2 (Secondary Prevention): aims to reduce current problem behaviors
- Tier 3 (Tertiary Prevention): aims to reduce complications, severity, and intensity of current problem behaviors.
State leaders recognize that most school districts and community schools in Ohio are implementing the Ohio Improvement Process (OIP). Thus, they created guiding documents to explain the complimentary aspects of both the OIP and PBIS initiatives (ODE, n.d.b). Notably, the ODE fact sheet on implementing PBIS suggests using the 5-step OIP to integrate a variety of initiatives that will result in a safe and positive school climate (ODE, 2014). There is also guidance for how the Ohio Teacher and Principal Evaluation Systems (OTES and OPES) align with PBIS (ODE, 2013a).
Methods

Theoretical Context

Public value model. Mark Moore’s (1995) public value model conceptualizes three organizational strategies from which government leaders and directors need to manage. Moore refers to this model as the strategic triangle (Moore, 1995; Moore, 2000; Moore, 2013). The three points of the triangle include: public value, legitimacy and support, and operational capacity (see Figure 3).

Moore (1995) and others (Moore & Khagram, 2004; Alford & O’Flynn, 2009) discuss the need for government managers to simultaneously bring each of these strategies into alignment. According to Alford & O’Flynn (2009), government managers need to ensure their operational strategies meet the following broad tests. They need to be:

1. Aimed at creating something substantively valuable (i.e., constitute public value);
2. Legitimate and politically sustainable (i.e., attract sufficient ongoing support—and concomitant resources—from the authorizing environment, that is, from political and other stakeholders taken as a whole, with due recognition of their differential power); and
3. Operationally and administratively feasible (i.e. doable with the available organizational and external capabilities needed to produce it) (p. 173).

While each element is substantively and strategically important, it is unlikely that all three will align at the same time. Instead, government managers will constantly and consistently make
trade-offs among these elements. Moore (2000) discusses three possible outcomes when one or more strategy is out of alignment:

- If a manager has support and capabilities, but nothing of value is being created, then the enterprise will succeed only in staying alive, but not in creating value. [public value]
- If a manager has a valuable purpose and capabilities for achieving it, but no one wants or needs it, then the enterprise will fail from a lack of a sponsor. [legitimacy and support]
- If a manager has a valuable purpose that is widely supported, but nobody knows how to achieve it, then the enterprise will fail from a want of accomplishment. [operational capabilities] (p. 189).

Implementation science. The Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) Center on PBIS published a two-part implementation blueprint in 2015 that draws from the implementation science research conducted by Dean Fixsen and colleagues (OSEP, 2015a; OSEP, 2015b). Part one of the blueprint cross-walks each of a variety of implementation stages with readiness questions to help schools operationalize the PBIS Framework. Part two discusses the importance of recognizing implementation drivers throughout the implementation process (OSEP, 2015a; OSEP, 2015b).

According to the National Implementation Research Network (NIRN), implementation science “is the study of factors that influence the full and effective use of innovations in practice. The goal is not to answer factual questions about what is, but rather to determine what is required” (NIRN, n.d.). NIRN researchers and others have put forth a variety of strategies on how to bridge the gap between findings of effective interventions and the integration of that information into specific settings (e.g., schools, an organization) or with specific populations (e.g., adolescents, college students). Implementation science also seeks to understand how an organization achieves the desired results from an intervention on a sustained level (Aarons, Hurlburt, & McCue Horwitz, 2011; Damschroder et al., 2009; Fixsen, Blase, Naom, & Duda, 2015; Fixsen, Blase, Naom, & Wallace, 2009; Fixsen, Naom, Blase, & Wallace, 2005; Olswang & Prelock, 2014).

In particular, implementation science highlights the need to further understand the effective processes and outcomes of implementing a new intervention. More specifically, several interactive domains have emerged from the literature as influencing implementation effectiveness. Notably, researchers note the importance of considering how the people who will implement the intervention perceive it, along with various other contextual factors. Researchers affiliated with NIRN offer two frameworks to help understand how to move evidence-based science on interventions into practice more effectively and efficiently. These include understanding implementation stages and implementation drivers.

Implementation stages. Implementation science delineates six stages as part of the implementation process (Fixsen et al., 2009; Fixsen et al., 2005). The stages are iterative in nature, meaning each stage may not have a distinct beginning or ending. Likewise, organizations may move back and forth between the stages and be in more than one stage simultaneously,
especially with complex, system-wide changes. Similarly, within each stage, the support, skills, and resources needed vary. A description of each stage in the implementation process follows:

1. **Exploration and Adoption:** This stage involves assessing the match between the needs of an organization and the potential use of a new intervention.

2. **Program Installation:** This stage involves carrying out the various tasks needed to operationalize a new intervention. The work occurs behind the scenes at this stage, and before the intervention is used with a specific population.

3. **Initial Implementation:** This stage involves making initial changes in practices. The literature notes that changes in skills, capacity, and culture require time, education, and practice to grow and mature. Many implementation efforts fail at this stage due to a lack of support at this particular point.

4. **Full Operation:** This stage occurs once a new intervention has become an accepted practice within an organization and is becoming fully integrated. At this stage, an organization realizes the benefits of the efforts made.

5. **Innovation:** This stage occurs after an intervention has been implemented with fidelity and allows for the opportunity to learn how to refine and expand the intervention.

6. **Sustainability:** This stage occurs after fully operationalizing an intervention. Evidence of sustainability includes how an organization weathers staff departures, including changes in leadership, and manages other factors that could impact long-term survival of the intervention (Fixsen et al., 2009; Fixsen et al., 2005).

Notably, OSEP (2015a; 2015b) operationalized these stages in their implementation blueprint for PBIS. In particular, OSEP (2015a) notes the importance of tailoring the technical assistance (TA) for the PBIS Framework offered to schools by the implementation status or phase the schools are experiencing at the time of the TA request. By tailoring the TA to the implementation stage, OSEP suggests the level of dependence on outside resources will decrease.

**Implementation drivers.** Implementation science literature (Fixsen et al., 2015; Fixsen et al., 2009) discusses the use of implementation drivers when guiding implementation and creating capacity. The core implementation drivers are used together to maximize the influence they have on the behavior of staff as well as the culture of the organization (Fixsen et al., 2009).

The core implementation drivers are categorized into three types: competency, organization, and leadership. Competency drivers are defined as the mechanisms used to develop, improve, and sustain one’s ability to implement an intervention as intended in order to benefit children, families, and communities. There are four competency drivers: staff selection, training of staff, coaching, and performance assessment (Fixsen et al., 2015). A definition of each of the competency drivers follows:
1. **Staff Selection:** Refers to who is qualified to carry out the evidenced-based practice or program and what the methods for recruiting and selecting staff should be.

2. **Pre-service and In-service Training:** Refers to the learning of when, where, how, and with whom to use new approaches and new skills, provides knowledge of background information, theory, philosophy, and values, it introduces the components and rationales of key practices, and provides opportunities for staff to practice new skills and to receive feedback.

3. **Ongoing Coaching and Consultation:** Coaches help staff members learn on the job skills by providing information along with advice, encouragement, and opportunities to practice and use skills specifically in their area.

4. **Staff Performance Assessment:** Designed to assess the use and outcomes of the skills that are reflected in the selection criteria, taught in training, and reinforced and expanded when coached. The assessment helps guide the staff to continue to improve performance.

Organization drivers are defined as mechanisms to create and sustain hospitable organizational and system environments for effective services (Fixsen et al., 2015). Fixsen et al. (2015) describe three organization drivers: decision support data systems, facilitative administration, and systems intervention.

1. **Decision Support Data Systems:** Assesses key aspects of the overall performance of the organization and provides data to support decision making to assure continuing implementation. Data reports provide guidance for decision making at the policy and practice levels of the organization to help move toward continuous improvement.

2. **Facilitative Administration:** Provides leadership and makes use of a range of data inputs to inform decision making, support the overall processes, and keep staff organized and focused on the desired implementation outcome or goals. Administrators ensure staff members have the skills and supports they need to perform at a high level of effectiveness.

3. **Systems Intervention:** Strategies to work with external systems to ensure the availability of the financial, organizational, and human resources required to support the work of staff.

Two leadership drivers account for the necessity of having multiple leadership strategies to address challenges that often emerge in the implementation process (Fixsen et al., 2015). Adaptive leadership styles are utilized to champion change, while technical leadership styles support and manage the implementation process to ensure both successful implementation and sustainability (Fixsen et al., 2015). Together, the core implementation drivers create and support high-fidelity practitioner behavior that result in commonalities among successful implementation programs (Fixsen et al., 2009).
Study Design, Protocol, and Participants

An interpretivist approach (Glesne, 2006) was selected for this study. The primary purpose of the research was to understand the perspectives from educational leaders who are utilizing the PBIS Framework to select and integrate evidence-based programs, policies, and practices in their schools. In order to understand these factors, we utilized individual interviews to allow us to “interpret the social world from the perspective of those who are actors in that social world” (p. 9). To that end, the study and its findings were framed within the context of the primary factors that initiated the inquiry: the public value model (Moore, 1995) and implementation science (Aarons et al., 2011; Damschroder et al., 2009; Fixsen et al., 2015; Fixsen et al., 2009; Fixsen et al., 2005; Olswang & Prelock, 2014).

Study Design. During the study planning phase, Voinovich School researchers worked with the SS/HS Public Value Proposition Workgroup to create an interview guide. In particular, four questions guided the development of the interview script for this study. Importantly, the four overarching areas align with the Public Value Model (Moore, 1995). See Appendix A for a copy of the complete interview guide. The four guiding questions were:

1. **Using the PBIS Framework:** How can the PBIS Framework be utilized to guide the implementation of evidence-based behavioral health, substance use, and violence prevention programs (BH/SU/VP EBPs)?
2. **Public Value:** What dimensions of public value are produced by using the PBIS Framework to guide the implementation of BH/SU/VP EBPs? How can we produce more net value in the future?
3. **Authorizing Environment (Legitimacy and Support):** What institutional supports, structures and/or policies need to be in place for schools to effectively use the PBIS Framework to guide the implementation of BH/SU/VP EBPs? How can we increase those sources of support in the future?
4. **Operational Capacity:** What capacity is necessary to effectively use the PBIS Framework to guide the implementation of BH/SU/VP EBPs and where does that capacity come from? (How well and how reliably does the use of the PBIS Framework to guide the implementation of Behavioral Health, Substance Use, and Violence Prevention Evidence-Based Programs (BH/SU/VP EBP’s) create value? How can it be made more efficient and effective in the future?)

Interview protocol. The Voinovich School had a team of five interviewers who were each assigned to a school/school district. The interviewers followed an IRB-approved process for requesting and scheduling telephone interviews (See Appendix B). The interview phase took one month to complete. During that time, each participant received as many as three IRB-approved interview invitations, one week apart, requesting participation in an interview focused on the implementation of the PBIS Framework. The initial contact was allowed to designate an alternate, and interviewers used the same IRB-approved emails and procedures to approach these
designates. Finally, additional staff from the school or school district were allowed to participate in the interviews.

At the agreed upon time, each interviewer called the participant(s) and utilized the interview guide to conduct the interview. Each interview was digitally recorded for transcription and coding. The length of the interviews ranged in duration from 23 to 63 minutes, with a mean duration of 41 minutes. Four interviews had more than one individual participating, and were based solely on the participants’ preference for other individuals to participate in the interview process.

*Participants.* Participants included educational leaders from the 22 schools receiving 2015 Ohio PBIS Showcase Recognition awards. Voinovich School interviewers contacted a total of 22 school personnel and completed 17 interviews, for a simple response rate of 77.3 percent.

Participants represented a variety of positions in the school, including principals, superintendents, deans of students, intervention specialists, occupational therapy assistants, school counselors, and teachers. Most of the participants had directly taken part in planning, developing, and/or implementing the PBIS Framework at one or more schools. Most of the participants were implementing the framework at the elementary level. A small number of schools served special populations exclusively (i.e., children with disabilities, etc.). The size of the schools/school districts varied considerably, ranging from 24 students to over 1,100 students. Geographically, the schools were located throughout Ohio in 10 of the 16 statewide support regions and were in both urban and rural locations. Notably, there were no schools in the central or southeastern parts of the state.

This study was approved by the Ohio University IRB, Protocol 16-X-83. Prior to participating in the interview, all participants received a notice detailing their rights as study participants (Appendix C).

**Analytic Approach**

A transcriptionist transcribed each of the 17 completed telephone interviews. Interviewers reviewed and verified each transcript for accuracy. Each transcript was uploaded into MAXQDA, a software package for qualitative data analysis (MAXQDA, 1989-2015). A core team of three Voinovich School research analysts coded and analyzed the data. The data analysis process was grounded in Wolcott’s (1994) framework for transforming qualitative data: description, analysis, and interpretation. In the description phase, we began by organizing our data. In the description phase, we organized the data from the transcripts into an analytical framework to prepare the data for analysis in an effort to ensure participant voice in our work. As we moved into the analysis phase, we began to create detailed coding schemas to classify the themes in a more systematic way. In the interpretation phase, we used theory (Aarons et al., 2011; Damschroder et al., 2009; Fixsen et al., 2015; Fixsen et al., 2009; Fixsen et al., 2005; Moore, 1995; Olswang & Prelock, 2014) to provide a structure to meaningfully present the data.
Richardson (1994) describes the validity process using the metaphor of a crystal, which has many reflective surfaces, and depending on the angle used to view it will have different interpretations. As such, it is important that qualitative researchers disclose their beliefs, values, and biases that could have potentially shaped the analytic process. This disclosure can be found in Appendix D.

Methodological rigor was obtained through the application of the following validation strategies suggested by Creswell & Miller (2000): prolonged engagement in the field; triangulation; peer review and debriefing; and rich, thick description. Prolonged engagement in the field was a key validation strategy used in this study. Up to an hour, and more time, if the participants desired, was allocated for each interview. Three types of triangulation (Denzin, 1978) were used throughout the analysis process; across sources, i.e.; participants in the study, between theoretical perspectives (Aarons et al., 2011; Damschroder et al., 2009; Fixsen et al., 2015; Fixsen et al., 2009; Fixsen et al., 2005; Moore, 1995; Olswang & Prelock, 2014), and among researchers. The SS/HS Public Value Proposition Workgroup played the role of peer debriefer; the research team found it invaluable to have an external lens throughout the research process. Finally, because this paper is grounded in the interpretivist tradition (Glesne, 2006), we thought it was essential to provide the results using rich, thick description in order to help readers understand the experiences of our participants.
Results

Guiding Question 1. Using the PBIS Framework

*How can the PBIS Framework be utilized to guide the implementation of evidence-based behavioral health, substance use, and violence prevention programs?*

The results presented for this guiding question discuss the use of the PBIS Framework relative to the four integrated elements outlined by ODE (2014). In addition, the results also examine the use of the PBIS Framework from an implementation science perspective, including how schools implemented the framework relative to six implementation stages (Fixsen et al., 2009; Fixsen et al., 2005; OSEP, 2015a).

**Use of the PBIS Framework.** In general, the PBIS Framework emphasizes four integrated elements: (a) data for decision making; (b) measurable outcomes supported and evaluated by data; (c) practices with evidence that outcomes are achievable; and (d) systems that efficiently and effectively support implementation of practices (ODE, 2014).

In this study, educational leaders appear to have existing capacity in three of the four core PBIS elements. With the first two elements, educational leaders were able to easily describe their use of data to make decisions and measure outcomes. For example, they were able to note data-driven behavioral issues that they wanted to address (i.e., excessive office referrals) and then use these measures to track progress over time. With improved outcomes (i.e., decreased office referrals), educational leaders also described ways they have fostered continued implementation of the framework. A third integrated element that educational leaders are utilizing is a structural approach to efficiently and effectively support implementation of their efforts. For example, educational leaders discussed the importance of having team-based structures for implementation and decision making. More specifically, they expressed appreciation for having a systematic way to more easily identify, refer, and track behavioral issues, as well as a process to help address issues. For example, one educational leader said,

“Behavior has to be discussed weekly, monthly, and at the end of the year we do a full staff training to discuss every little idea or problem that anybody in the building may have seen throughout the year. We problem solve as a team and come up with solutions.”

With regard to using actual evidence-based practices to achieve desired outcomes, it is a less straightforward story. First, a minor data caveat relates to three questions in the interview guide (Appendix A, Questions 11 - 13), which were intended to inquire about these efforts. These questions elicited the most requests for clarification among participants. Interviewers rephrased the questions; however, due to multiple interviewers some slight inconsistencies occurred.

Generally, what educational leaders referenced when asked about using evidence-based practices is the use of universal supports, and the positive benefits realized from those. It is important to
remember that many of the schools included in this study are implementing PBIS at the elementary level and noted they had not experienced much direct violence and substance use problems. Although the middle and high school leaders discussed more violence prevention and substance use efforts than the elementary schools; they did not appear to be data-driven efforts. They also appeared to be universal in nature for either the whole school or select grades. Most ATOD-V prevention programming was framed as legacy programming, such as Drug Abuse Resistance Education (D.A.R.E.) and guest speakers from law enforcement and/or local public health agencies.

A common theme nearly all of the educational leaders mentioned is how they use their data to identify behavioral issues occurring in less structured environments, such as on buses, on playgrounds, or in the cafeteria. Educational leaders view these “trouble spots” as opportunities to “shore up” their use of positive, universal expectations. In particular, they discuss using internal resources (e.g., providing targeted support and skill building to staff) rather than seeking any evidence-based programs or strategies. Educational leaders noted that they are looking more closely at their data too. For example, one educational leader discovered how bus problems never occurred in the morning, but instead were always on the ride home. Again, these leaders found ways to address the issue by creating a role play exercise for students rather than seek out any evidence-based programming.

Notably, at least six educational leaders outright said they were “not there yet” in terms of using the PBIS Framework to guide the selection of other programs. However, one educational leader stood out in terms of understanding how to use data collected as part of the PBIS Framework to then guide the selection and use of an evidence-based practice to address an issue. This leader said,

“Well, in exploring bus programs I attended an evidence-based training last week. They brought to my attention the program ‘In the Driver’s Seat’. Looking at evidence-based practices, once we know what our need is, then we can search for solutions through the evidence-based network so they’re available.”

In addition, three educational leaders discussed how they have evolved prior bullying efforts to attempt to embrace PBIS as an actual framework. However, as one educational leader noted, they are addressing drug, alcohol, and mental health as a “blended” effort and view the positive character traits from their base universal support strategy as their prevention strategy. Likewise, other educational leaders stated they need to continue to educate others within their school about how to address issues that arise, such as bullying. One leader said,

“And [we] keep kind of trying to get people to understand that [PBIS] is our bullying prevention program, [PBIS] is our prevention program, period, for all those areas. And to, so we’re protective of it, I guess, to be protective of it and then also educating that we are doing something. We’re not a school that’s not, you know, we’re not
Three other schools noted difficulties incorporating new programs such as Leader in Me or Mindsets within PBIS, which points to a need for understanding how it works as a framework. For example, one leader said,

“… it’s been a difficult year, this year, only because of the Leader in Me and trying to get those two things [Leader in Me and PBIS] to mold and not lose our integrity of PBIS and pick up the language of the Leader in Me, and so that has been a little bit more difficult than we anticipated.”

In addition, it is unclear what is driving educational leaders to consider adding these programs. For example, when educational leaders discussed folding Leader in Me within PBIS, it sounded driven by external forces rather than internal data-driven ones.

**Implementation stages.** All of the schools in this study discussed important factors related to each of the six implementation phases, which include exploration and adoption, program installation, initial implementation, full operation, innovation, and sustainability (Fixsen et al., 2009; Fixsen et al., 2005). Not surprisingly, implementation science has focused on how to operationalize individual interventions or programs. Notably, PBIS is considered a framework and not an individual program or curriculum. As Horner, Sugai, & Lewis (2015, p. 1-2) state:

“School-wide Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports is a systems approach to establishing the social culture and behavioral supports needed for all children in a school to achieve both social and academic success. PBIS is not a packaged curriculum, but an approach that defines core elements that can be achieved through a variety of strategies.”

Given that OSEP (2015) references the implementation science literature in helping schools operationalize strategies within the framework, the research team thought it could be beneficial to consider how schools approached implementation of the actual PBIS Framework from an implementation science perspective. In particular, it was thought that understanding how schools operationalized the framework relative to each implementation stage could offer insight into its current and future value, as well as ways to scale up implementation. While this lens provides a great deal of useful information, it also highlights the need to further clarify PBIS as a framework, rather than a program.

**Exploration and adoption stage.** In the exploration and adoption stage, the literature (Fixsen et al., 2009; Fixsen et al., 2005) focuses on three issues: (a) identifying the need to be addressed; (b) examining the possible intervention options; and (c) assessing the fit and feasibility of the intervention within an organization. Teams may form in this stage to assess these factors, along with potential buy-in issues. In this study, evidence of all of these explorative aspects was seen.
Educational leaders identified clear needs they wanted to change. They perceived the advantages of implementing the PBIS Framework to outweigh maintaining the status quo, and perceived it was a better fit than other alternatives.

*Identifying needs to be addressed: Catalysts for change.* During the exploration stage, educational leaders discussed different catalysts for deciding when to implement the PBIS Framework. All held an underlying desire to fundamentally change the school’s approach to managing behavior. One catalyst stemmed from seeing an excessive number of discipline issues (e.g., office referrals, write-ups, etc.). As one educational leader said, “[We] had 550 office referrals, and decided that it was time to do something, because what we were doing currently was not working.”

Another catalyst came from educational leaders wanting a more positive school environment. Administrators noted having an overly negative and punitive tone prior to the framework. One educational leader emphatically described the need for changing the school environment:

“I think the big thing was that we felt overall – students, staff, everyone – we really needed to boost morale in our community. We had some issues with a lot of negativity. I think that that was something that we all wanted to go away from. Together, we thought that if we continued with this we would hopefully see improvement.”

Finally, three educational leaders described opportunities arising from internal changes. In one case, administrators used the PBIS Framework to help staff and teachers build shared expectations of behavior and character development when five schools consolidated. In two other cases, newly hired administrators wanted a stronger, more consistent management system for behavior issues:

“...it was clear that there wasn’t any consistency amongst individual grade levels and across grade levels as far as what the expectations were, and there was a lot of teacher frustration, and kids getting sent to the office, and they were sent down with a half-sheet of construction paper torn apart, or a post-it note, or nothing at all for that matter.”

*Assessing fit: Trusted sources and fit with school.* Educational leaders said that there were several characteristics of the PBIS Framework that influenced their decision to implement it in their schools. Most educational leaders reported that they had heard about the framework prior to considering implementing it. Some sources were internal, such as staff specialists or administrators. Some sources were external, such as the State Support Team (SST). In some cases, the sources came from a combination of both.
Based on the needs identified, educational leaders perceived the framework would help them improve their behavioral management approach overall, and in a much more positive way. Educational leaders appreciated the common language from the universal supports

**Forming a team.** Educational leaders discussed forming initial teams to explore the use of the framework. One educational leader stated, “[It was] very much an exploratory process… I had a few teachers reach out and say that they were interested… As a group, we sat down and we started talking about expectations, and just talked about what is PBIS.”

**Program installation.** The installation stage includes practical preparations to support implementation, such as developing communication protocols, securing funding, and identifying training support. Selecting early adopters and having them trained generally occurs in this stage. The length of time needed for this stage varies. In this study, communication protocols, funding support, identification of early adopters, and training all contributed positively to the installation of the PBIS Framework in schools.

**Communication protocols.** Educational leaders discussed communicating the value of the PBIS Framework as an integral part of the implementation process. In this study, educational leaders were reflecting on their implementation experiences, which in some cases occurred over many years. The communication protocols described here likely evolved over time.

Individually for students, educational leaders discussed using visual, verbal, and even digital apps to help students know when they had made a preferred choice. Educational leaders also used classroom and school-wide incentives (e.g., behavior pep rallies, popcorn parties) to reinforce desired outcomes, which further embedded the PBIS Framework within the school. Externally, educational leaders emphasized the importance of communicating with parents to foster their understanding and support. As one educational leader said, “Helping the parents understand the philosophy behind it was certainly helpful.”

Similarly, communicating the value of the PBIS Framework to district administration, the school board, and community members was important. Administrators also discussed leveraging successes. For example, one said, “Our school got an award from our regional center for implementation. [They] made sure that it was presented to us at a board meeting so that it was noticed.” At another school, the students themselves were involved in communicating the value of the PBIS Framework:

> “[Our fifth and sixth grade student ambassadors] created a 20-minute long presentation about PBIS and what it means to them, and they presented to the board of education at a board meeting. You would’ve thought that they were professional public speakers the way that they took on that responsibility.”

**Securing funding.** Not all schools referenced a need for additional funding, likely due to the strong resources provided through the State Support Teams. However, two educational leaders
specifically noted the benefits of being able to pay for substitute teachers to allow for planning. For example:

“The teachers need the time to plan for this. When I say time, I mean time – you can’t ask everybody to stay after work for hours on end and work on it. I had to give the teachers planning time where I got substitute teachers in place, so that we could meet as a team and have three or four hours to work uninterrupted to develop this. That required support from our district office staff as well; because I was asking them to give me the money for substitutes so that I could do that type of thing, and they supported that. That was great.”

Another educational leader added, “We were given a set amount of money that we could use for subs to come in and free up the team so they could work on what it would look like for the following year.” It is important to note that one educational leader mentioned needing money to help purchase incentives to reward students for good behavior.

**Early adopters and training.** Similar to the exploratory phase, educational leaders emphasized the importance of selecting the right people for the initial implementation team. For example, one educational leader said, “I selected the individuals to serve on the PBIS committee and was part of the professional development that all of us went to, and all of the preplanning, everything leading up to the implementation this year.” An educational leader at another school emphasized the need to shore up buy-in at this stage: “So you have a program that might look great on paper that isn’t useful, and it doesn’t work, so you’ve got to have buy-in on all levels.”

Many educational leaders specifically noted the positive support and training offered from the State Support Team and Education Service Center staff at this stage. A person at one school said, “It started with the training, with the State Support Team and then we rolled it out to the students after we put together the framework for the school.” At another school, an educational leader referenced the benefits of using an outside, credible source (e.g., the State Support Team) by saying,

“Here I was as the new principal. Many of them would’ve [implemented PBIS] just because I said they had to, but they would’ve felt like that. Many of them would have been resentful and said, ‘Why should I do it? What makes you such an expert?’ But when you bring somebody in from the outside…staff members think that person must be a real expert.”

**Initial implementation.** The initial implementation stage includes beginning to make actual changes in practices. In this study, educational leaders discussed the importance of shoring up buy-in for the PBIS Framework when moving to the implementation phase. Interestingly, the amount of time educational leaders felt they needed to plan before implementing varied.
Seeking additional buy-in. During the exploration and installation stages, many educational leaders discussed the need to obtain buy-in from key staff to start moving forward with using the PBIS Framework. Educational leaders said they also found it important to seek additional input and buy-in from staff in the next phase of actually beginning to implement the framework. For example, one person said,

“Two-and-a-half years ago we had the training. Then pretty much right after that we started bringing some things to our staff. We started implementation pretty much right after that as much as we could. It was not necessarily full implementation…we had a lot of staff input about what they wanted to see. Then we did a training, and then full implementation started last school year, I think.”

At another school, an educational leader explained,

“And then we presented it to the teachers and said, ‘Now, give us your feedback. What are your thoughts? What are your ideas? What would this look like in your classroom?’ And so I think we really did it right as far as starting from the top down and letting everybody kind of have a thought in how is this going to make the most sense and how is this going to be effective without being cumbersome.”

Educational leaders also discussed encountering reluctant staff and teachers and allowing them time or space to warm up to using the framework. One person said, “It was a slow change for some people.” An educational leader from a different school elaborated:

“I think initially that first year, you had a group of teachers, I guess I would say maybe 25-30 percent, that kind of viewed it as, ‘Oh, well, we can’t discipline anymore. We’re just supposed to be nice to the kids all the time.’ So I think it’s that education and the understanding of what PBIS Framework is and how it’s meeting the needs of the kids.”

Full operation. In this stage, an intervention becomes more fully integrated into an organization. Staff would be accepting of new practices and feedback loops would be in place and being monitored. In this study, schools are at various levels of fully operationalizing the PBIS Framework in their buildings. Some have only recently begun their processes or have just revamped their efforts in the past year or so. Others have embraced the framework longer and internalized more of the practices.

Internalized practices. For educational leaders at this stage, they discussed having internalized the PBIS Framework and new ways of operating. They also referenced examples of reluctant staff who later bought-in. Educational leaders also noted how students were making requests for incentives or other positive, reinforcing activities. For example, one person said, “The kids will remind us, ‘Wait. Don’t we have [a behavior pep rally] coming up?’ They’re really good about it, so you can tell the interest is there because they buy into it.” Finally, interviews from
educational leaders at two schools described specific hiring efforts to recruit administrators or staff with experience and an understanding of the principles underlying the PBIS Framework.

**Innovation.** The implementation science literature (Fixsen et al., 2009; Fixsen et al., 2005) notes the importance of adhering to fidelity when implementing interventions. Innovations to interventions are best thought to occur after a program has been fully implemented. Likewise, experimentation and modification are seen as strengths and proxies for sustainability after an intervention has been fully internalized. In this study, educational leaders discussed a desire to be faithful to the PBIS model and appreciated the flexibility to be innovative. In this way, they appear to embrace PBIS as a framework; however, as previously noted they are not pulling that through in their discussions about their efforts.

**Fidelity.** Many implementers fail to understand the importance of the concept of implementing with fidelity to a model. Interestingly, seven schools in this study specifically discussed a desire to go back and “revamp” or “reinstall” the framework in their schools. All of the replies were in response to historical context questions of when a school had first heard about the framework or how long they had been using it. This reply was more common for those schools who were further along in the implementation process and likely had experienced greater staff turnover.

**Innovation and modifications.** Likewise, many educational leaders expressed a desire to expand and test new aspects of the PBIS Framework in the future. One said, “We add something new all the time.” Another leader noted,

“We are constantly – because of the PBIS – working towards adding more, assessing what’s working, what’s not working, adding more, and really trying to address a most positive level, even the discipline.”

Finally, another leader describes how they adapt to the students’ needs by saying,

“It changes as the kids change. As the students’ needs in the building’s needs change, the program changes. So it can’t be a onetime, ‘Yeah, we do PBIS, and we had a training.’ It can’t be like that.”

**Sustainability.** The sustainability stage includes the ability to manage issues impacting an intervention’s long-term survival, such as staff turnover. In this study, many educational leaders discussed how they had been able to weather staff changes, including core members.

**Staff turnover.** Schools who experienced turnover of PBIS team members indicated that they have been able to weather those changes. Notably, in some cases, core administrators have changed or a large number of staff have left. Two examples of comments for educational leaders include:

“This year we’ve had a lot turnover as far as administration goes. Practically our whole administrative team, minus myself, has changed this year.”
“We’ve had several different superintendents lately, but after each superintendent that we’ve had and talked to, they have been more than supportive…”

One school noted how it includes information during orientation and on the website to help new students and families become familiar with their approach: “...when we actually hire new staff members, [PBIS is] a huge part of their training into our district.”

Guiding Question 2. Public Value

*What dimensions of public value are produced by using the PBIS Framework to guide the implementation of BH/SU/VP EBPs? How can we produce more net value in the future?*

The results presented for this guiding question discuss the value produced by high performing PBIS implementing schools. Notably, educational leaders see many benefits from using the PBIS Framework, including its positive approach to managing behavioral issues. Likewise, they value its tiered response to intervening (see also the discussion under Question 4 regarding organization drivers).

**Public value.** As discussed in guiding question 1, this study found that educational leaders perceive there to be substantive value from using the PBIS Framework. In particular, they have realized benefits such as improved outcomes and more positive school environments. They also found the framework to be adaptable and perceived many positive aspects to it. Likewise, educational leaders appreciate the tiered response to intervention. All of these aspects have helped sustain implementation of the framework within these schools.

**Realizing benefits.** Educational leaders discussed using data for decision making and realizing positive outcomes from their efforts. In particular, educational leaders saw immediate and ongoing decreases in behavioral issues such as office referrals, write-ups, and use of detentions. For example, one person said, “Overall I think we’ve reduced our office referrals for the first year like 65 percent.” An educational leader at another school described a broader use of data and evidence to document outcomes:

> “Within the last three years, our data has shown we’ve had less referrals in the building, the climate of the building has went [sic] up drastically. Students are more excited and have more school spirit than they did three years prior… And then the attendance—that our attendance has increased by 2 percent…”

Another benefit from implementing PBIS relates to the school environment feeling much more positive for everyone. As previously discussed, educational leaders felt overall morale had improved and liked how staff felt connected with things such as the use of universal language. Educational leaders also perceived it helped the staff to see students in a more positive manner, such as in this example: “[The PBIS Framework is] helping us notice the strengths of all of the kids.”
Adaptability of framework. As discussed previously, educational leaders also appreciated the fact that the PBIS Framework was customizable to reflect their school’s culture and climate, which resulted in higher buy-in and ownership. In particular, all of the schools picked character traits they thought were important, and many came up with creative acronyms to represent them. Educational leaders also liked the flexibility to develop their own incentives and rewards. They also appreciated allowing teachers to select certain aspects within the framework. For example, one educational leader described PBIS as “individualized” at the teacher level:

“They like the use of a continuum of tiered response to match student need with behavioral supports. All of the educational leaders, at least conceptually, indicated that they were either currently using or planning to use a tiered approach to intervening.

At the Tier 1 (Universal) level, educational leaders said they valued the use of common language. In particular, many have created acronyms to represent a small handful of character traits, and utilized them as positive reinforcement for preferred behaviors. They feel these traits have improved communications, staff morale, and made the overall school environment more positive. The two alternative schools and one developmental disability school in the study noted they serve different student populations than traditional schools, but stated they still utilize universal supports intended for all students. As already discussed, educational leaders discovered many problematic behaviors were occurring in less structured settings, such as on buses, on the playground, or in the cafeteria. Even though most responses to these issues appear to be from internal resources, leaders noted seeing improvements from their efforts.

At the Tier 2 (Secondary) and 3 (Tertiary) levels, educational leaders in this study had varying levels of experience with using these types of supports. Those who were using Tier 2 or 3 supports stated that the PBIS Framework had helped them identify more at risk students, as well as students with additional needs. With Tier 2, specifically, about half discussed using tailored interventions, including pulling in some type of outside resource. In addition, the two alternative schools and the one serving students with developmental disabilities noted that all of their students need more individualized support. Leaders at three other schools stated they provide tertiary support, but provided less clear information about how they are doing this. Finally,
leaders at three other schools openly stated they are still working on Tier 1 and 2 supports, and are only in the planning and training stages for the tertiary level.

**Producing more net value.** From the interviews, it appears that educational leaders have varying depths of understanding of what it means to be implementing PBIS as a “framework.” Leaders clearly value having a team-based approach, using data to identify problems to be addressed, and tracking outcomes to monitor improvements. They acknowledge PBIS offers them flexibility and choice. They are also appreciative of how PBIS has fundamentally shifted their behavioral approach. However, they are not then internalizing PBIS as their sole decision making system for all behavior management and prevention efforts. Similarly, most educational leaders indicated a need for additional training and information about utilizing Tier 2 and 3 levels of supports, including the use of evidence-based programs.

**Guiding Question 3. Authorizing Environment**

*What institutional supports, structures, and/or policies need to be in place for schools to effectively use the PBIS Framework to guide the implementation of BH/SU/VP EBPs? How can we increase those sources of support in the future?*

The information presented for this guiding question focuses on the authorizing environment for the PBIS Framework. In particular, Moore (1995; 2000; 2013) discusses the importance of government managers working to build legitimacy and support for their efforts, in this case PBIS. With this in mind, the research team compiled a brief summary of PBIS from a national, state, and local perspective. This historical context suggests opportunities for strengthening implementation of PBIS in Ohio. Findings from the interviews with educational leaders are also presented and discuss supports, structures, and policies that could help build legitimacy and support for implementing PBIS more broadly.

**National, state, and local authority.** The authorizing environment for PBIS includes a multi-layered set of laws, policies, and guidance that began with an initial focus on educating children with disabilities. What follows is a brief history of the evolution of PBIS nationally and how it is legally situated in Ohio. This historical context suggests opportunities to strengthen implementation of the Framework throughout Ohio from a policy perspective.

**History and evolution of PBIS.** Nationally, the 1997 reauthorization of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), and subsequent amendments, specifically references PBIS as a behavioral approach for schools. The National Technical Assistance (TA) Center on PBIS notes, “Congress’ reasons for encouraging the use of PBIS are clear and stem from (a) the historic exclusion of individuals with disabilities based on unaddressed behavior and (b) the strong evidence base supporting the use of PBIS” (OSEP, n.d.). Further, Congress understood the importance of using evidence-based approaches and specifically notes how PBIS is designed to enhance both social and academic outcomes. At the same time, national legislators did not want to be “overly prescriptive” and “dictate any one educational approach to school” (OSEP, n.d.). In
particular, Congress sought to protect children and at the same time recognize states’ rights to govern education locally (OSEP, n.d.).

Under the reauthorization of IDEA, the national Center of Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (National TA Center) was created to share evidence-based practices for students with behavior disorders (Sugai & Simonsen, 2012). Over time, the National TA Center on PBIS shifted focus from one of “disseminating evidence-based behavioral interventions for students with behavior disorders” to using “school-wide behavior supports of all students, and an emphasis on implementation practices and systems” (Sugai & Simonsen, 2012, p. 2). In particular, researchers began emphasizing PBIS as a process or management approach (i.e., “framework”) and not a curriculum or program. They also began focusing on PBIS as a “continuum” to convey the “multi-tiered system of support” (Sugai & Simonsen, 2012, p. 2).

Ohio’s legal authority supporting PBIS. Authority for PBIS in Ohio stems from a broad legal mandate for all state agencies to address the use of restraints and seclusion under an Executive Order (Exec. Order No. 13S, 2009). The mandate applies to 14 different agencies, including those who provide treatment, service, and educational programs and law enforcement, security, and corrections. A multi-agency committee attempted to create a single, unified policy; however, they could not find agreeable language to apply in all circumstances and across all settings. Instead, ultimately each individual state agency put in place “appropriate and accountable restraint and seclusion policies and related procedures” (Governor’s Office of Health Transformation, 2014, p. 1).

In education, two applicable rules and policies reference PBIS as a behavioral management approach, both with a heavy emphasis on limiting the use of restraints and seclusion. First, the Ohio Administrative Code (3301-35-15) sets forth standards for using restraints and seclusion. The regulation notes that all school districts need to develop seclusion and restraint policies that are consistent with PBIS (Lawriter, 2015). Second, ODE’s policy guidance on restraints and seclusion references the use of PBIS; however, similar to the regulatory requirements, it focuses more on the restraints and seclusion elements than PBIS. It notes PBIS as an example of “a non-aversive effective behavioral system” to use within restraint and seclusion policies (ODE, 2013b, p. 1). A possible result of state regulations and policies closely associating PBIS with the use of restraints and seclusion could be school districts more narrowly conceptualizing PBIS.

An additional contextual point for readers less familiar with Ohio relates to home rule. All state agencies in Ohio have responsibilities for oversight and administration of services, but local entities maintain authority to run and operate them. In education, this means that ODE is the government agency overseeing and supporting primary and secondary education in the state. Likewise, ODE works with the State Board of Education, Governor, and Ohio General Assembly to shape education policy and provide support to Ohio schools (ODE, n.d.a; Yost, 2013). However, local control and decision making rests with school boards, superintendents, and
school districts, which means state leaders oversee efforts from a position of constraint. This makes it critical for state leaders to identify efficient and cost effective leverage points.

**Supports, structures, and policies to guide implementation of PBIS.** In the interviews, most educational leaders acknowledged the importance of district-level administrative buy-in. Likewise, educational leaders noted the benefits of structural elements such as training, which increased their operational capacities. Similarly, they appreciated the recognition and networking opportunities at the 2015 Ohio PBIS Showcase Recognition awards ceremony held by ODE, which offered legitimacy and credibility for PBIS. At least half of the educational leaders discussed a policy-related catalyst for engaging PBIS.

**District-level administrative support.** The educational leaders who were interviewed discussed the importance of having district-level administrative support (e.g., superintendent and/or school board). This buy-in provided much needed support and legitimacy for implementing the PBIS Framework in a building or district. For example, one educational leader said, “We needed the support of the higher ups, the superintendent, as well as our special education director at the county level.” Another educational leader said,

> “Once we were able to get support from administration, we could get support from teachers and then when teachers and administrators are supporting something together, it's much, much easier to present that to a board of education, to implement policy.”

Other educational leaders explained the importance of demonstrating results to district-level administrators to help legitimize efforts and obtain continued support. For example, one educational leader said, “Well, we’ve had several different superintendents lately, but after each superintendent that we’ve had and talked to, they have been more than supportive and made sure that we get recognized or support us in any way that we need as well. The board has done the same thing.” As an aside, most of the educational leaders in the study discussed PBIS implementation at a building level rather than as a district pursuit. Interestingly, despite PBIS being a proven framework with national prominence, individual educational leaders are spending time proving the merits of it to district and building-level staff.

**Structural supports to build operational capacity.** Educational leaders valued the professional development opportunities and trainings that were offered. They found them to be extremely helpful and discussed how they capitalized on those efforts to build local support for implementation. In particular, schools pointed to the SST trainings and acknowledged their efforts in helping facilitate the school’s engagement of the PBIS Framework (see Guiding Question 4 on Operational Capacity for more details). As one educational leader said,

> “Training for administrators about what PBIS is, about the impact of PBIS is critical, because they want to say, ‘I want to see the research, that it's been
effective.’ Training for staff has been definitely something [positive too], and training for the community, letting them know, because things get misconstrued.”

Another educational leader who was new to a school, and had heard about PBIS elsewhere, said the SST bolstered the credibility for PBIS. This administrator said (s)he relied on the SST “experts” to sell teachers and staff on its benefits.

Educational leaders also appreciated having time to get everyone trained and on board. As referenced previously in the report, educational leaders emphasized the need for time to plan and build staff support, which helped clarify and unify schools on their goals and commitment to the effort. Two educational leaders also discussed the incremental and ongoing training support offered:

“There were four days throughout the year, and we would go, and they would train us for the first half of the day. But then we would have a work session the second half of the day, where we could sit and hammer out a lot of those things. By doing that, by guaranteeing us that time out of the building to be able to do that, it was priceless.”

“It wasn't us getting a one-time training and then going back and trying to implement it. They would train us, and then we would try to develop that part of it. Then they would come back, and we would go over, and we'd do the second part, the second step. It was very helpful.”

Educational leaders also discussed the legitimacy for PBIS from the State’s 2015 PBIS Showcase awards ceremony. Educational leaders appreciated being recognized with an award for their efforts, and subsequently used that as a local public relations opportunity. For example,

“When we were recognized by the state, it really bumped it [PBIS], and you could tell teachers were excited. It was at the perfect time because we had already been in school for a while, and sometimes you need those booster shots. That was our booster shot for that.”

Similarly, educational leaders expressed gratitude to state leaders for the opportunity to network with other schools who were also implementing PBIS. For example, one educational leader said, “I think networking – one thing that I do feel [gets] really lost in this – is networking with other schools that are using it and are being successful or struggling, so having local schools come together, their local PBIS team schools [helps].” The following educational leader appreciated the camaraderie offered by networking with other like-minded leaders:

“… the middle school here got the bronze level award for PBIS, and we got to go to Columbus and hear what other schools were doing, and their struggles and their successes as well, and that was really empowering for that team. They came back energized. They saw some things that they were doing that they thought were great. They saw some things that, hey, maybe we can improve and use that. It’s a
very lonely island for schools who are trying to do it without that inter-collegial conversation.”

Similarly, another educational leader talked about wanting to be a resource to other schools:

“And then we are starting outreach through the public schools and I think this is another way, you know, since once we do [sic] get this first year under our belt, like maybe we can share. I mean, we’ve already been contacted by some of the local public schools to come and talk with us to see, you know, how we got our program up and running and, you know, just good ideas so they can implement theirs. So I think partnering with them is going to be key.”

Another educational leader talked about how the students at the school with PBIS are more well behaved than the other schools in the district: “The people come back and they’ll tell me, “We went to [a field trip location], and the whole district was there, and our kids really stood out on their behavior.”

Policy support and compatibility with other initiatives. At least half of the educational leaders discussed a policy-related catalyst for engaging PBIS. For example, four educational leaders specifically mentioned the then impending seclusion and restraints house bill as a motivator for implementing PBIS. One of these people expressed pride in being ahead of the curve and implementing it before the law on restraints and seclusion passed. Others noted that they proceeded with implementation because it seemed like a fit. For example, one educational leader said, “It wasn’t a compliance thing because if it were, we would’ve waited until the second year to do it, until we had to. This was something that we wanted to do.”

It is worthwhile to note that five educational leaders found PBIS to be compatible with other initiatives. Specifically, three educational leaders noted the connection with OTES as their catalyst for PBIS. One of these education leader said, “if you look at that [OTES] rubric you see the correlations between having a positive behavior framework in school and OTES accomplished teacher language.” Likewise, two schools talked about going through the school improvement process and connections with implementing PBIS, which they did simultaneously. One educational leader spoke about their academic performance rating moving from a category ranking of “school improvement” to “excellent” over a five-year period. They also saw a dramatic decrease in office referrals. They felt the processes from the School Improvement Grant and PBIS worked well together and doing both helped improve their behavioral issues and academic performance.

Guiding Question 4. Operational Capacity

What capacity is necessary to effectively use the PBIS Framework to guide the implementation of BH/SU/VP EBPs and where does that capacity come from? How well and how reliably does the
use of the PBIS Framework to guide the implementation of BH/SU/VP EBPs create value? How can it be made more efficient and effective in the future?

All of the educational leaders in this study discussed factors related to all three categories of implementation drivers described by Fixsen et al. (2015): competency (selection, training, coaching, and performance assessment), organization (systems intervention, facilitative administration, and decision support data system), and leadership (technical and adaptive). In addition, the educational leaders articulated the necessary capacities to implement and embed the PBIS Framework within their schools and/or school districts.

**Competency drivers.** Implementation science literature (Fixsen et al., 2009) posits that staff selection, training of staff, coaching, and performance assessment are key components to implementing a successful program or framework. In this study, educational leaders identified specific competency drivers that they perceived to help guide them through implementing the PBIS Framework and assist them in building capacity among either themselves or their colleagues.

**Staff selection.** Fixsen et al. (2009) explain that beyond academic qualifications and experience factors, there are practitioner characteristics that are difficult to teach or train. Therefore, staff selection is essential and the characteristics to look for when hiring staff include: field knowledge, basic professional skills, willingness to learn and intervene, good judgement, empathy, and common sense.

As the implementation science literature (Fixsen et al., 2009) suggested, educational leaders in this study identified staff experience, overall motivation, and staff or employee buy-in as key elements to successful staff selection. By focusing on selecting staff members who are excited to embrace the PBIS Framework, trust their leaders to make educated decisions, and have the ability to motivate others around them to create a positive atmosphere in schools and embrace the implementation of a new framework or program, educational leaders were able to drive the implementation process forward.

**Experience.** Educational leaders identified experience and foundational knowledge as two very important aspects of staff selection. Having an idea of what the PBIS Framework is, or having the experience of putting a new initiative into motion, were perceived as essential qualities when choosing team members to begin the implementation process. Educational leaders described searching for the person or people they could count on to champion the PBIS Framework early on in the implementation process. The “champion” was often described as having strong adaptive leadership skills, which are essential to initiate change. One educational leader confirmed that staff selection based on experience is key to successful implantation by stating: “… [The reason] I was hired on is because of my experience with the PBIS already.” Another educational leader also discussed staff selection as an essential implementation factor by attributing staff selection to creating a foundation for change, “So really taking the time to have that concentrated [PBIS] team, and then putting in the effort to plan and really customize it the
way that it’s going to work at your school, and create that foundation [for successful implementation].”

**Motivation.** Selecting staff for the implementation process who were highly motivated was also perceived as important by all of the educational leaders in the study. Motivation was seen as an essential element among staffing and it came in the form of self-motivation to be on planning committees, motivation through excitement for the process and the results, and motivation that could be passed onto others. Motivation to implement the PBIS Framework was found to be a precursor to the development of technical leadership skills within PBIS Teams. Leaders with technical skills are essential because they manage the implementation process and provide support to others as the implementation occurs (Fixsen et al., 2015). Educational leaders often articulated that the State Support Teams were essential in building technical leadership skills among PBIS Team members who already had a sense of buy-in for the process. When discussing self-motivation and its importance in implementation, one educational leader said, “I think it’s just it takes motivated people on the ground ready to put in the hard work to get it going.”

Another educational leader perceived excitement to be a key element when selecting staff for successful implementation. This leader describes excitement as essential for school staff to make a positive impact on their peers and on students:

> “To do a process like this justice, you need to find the teachers who are excited about and who know that it will have a great impact on students, on achievement, and on just their overall well-being. You find those teachers. You know who will put in the work. You get them together. The group of teachers that I had were just absolutely amazing, and they still are. They still serve on the PBIS committee. It wouldn’t be what it is without finding the right people to do that.”

Several educational leaders discovered finding staff members who have the ability to pass motivation on to others is one way to create a positive atmosphere in the schools. The outcome of having a motivated staff then will result in buy-in from other staff members, maybe even those who had been reluctant prior to exposure to the motivation. One educational leader said:

> “The only push back from teachers were – you know, there’s a saying that teachers use a lot, and it’s called, ‘One more thing,’ at that particular time, when we started this, everybody goes, ‘One more thing. One more thing.’ Our goal then was to show them that this doesn’t have to be a side thing. [The PBIS Framework] can replace what we’re doing now.”

**Buy-in.** Educational leaders believe schools who have buy-in from staff and administration will be successful at implementing the PBIS Framework and will create capacity to move forward with the process. Not only did those who were interviewed discuss buy-in as an essential factor throughout the interview, they also gave this as the number one piece of advice for others who are at the beginning of their PBIS journey. While experience and motivation among teaching
staff are particularly important, almost all educational leaders interviewed identified that a selecting principal who believes in the PBIS Framework is one of the main predictors for a success implementation of the PBIS Framework. One educational leader shared, “I worked with the implementation of this program in four different districts, and the buy-in of the principal is the number-one factor in how well it gets implemented.”

Educational leaders were emphatic about the important role of the building-level administrators in implementing the PBIS Framework:

“Well, hopefully they have the support of the administrators at least in my perspective. If there are any counselors that are a part of that PBIS, kind of journey, or program, definitely having a buy-in from your principal, the administrators, is a definite, I think, need, as far as them being able to get some things implemented.

And,

“The most important thing, I think, as a principal or as somebody trying to begin implementation is to find the most positive people in your building that you can establish buy-in with, and work as a team to implement so that you can, number one, use them as a model; and two, trust that they’re going to implement.”

**Pre-service and in-service training.** Providing learning opportunities, encouraging deep content knowledge, and creating a feedback loop are key components of pre-service and in-service training. Almost all educational leaders mentioned the State Support Team’s role in training and helping those who were involved in the implementation process. For many school districts, the State Support Team played a critical role of technical leaders throughout the implementation process. Many said they often looked to them for support in implementing the PBIS Framework. The State Support Team was frequently able to assist in the process of creating buy-in and developing technical leadership skills among those championing the PBIS Framework.

*Providing learning opportunities.* Literature (Fixsen et al., 2009) suggests that to be effective in implementation, practitioners must focus on learning when, where, how and with whom to use new approaches and skills. Training is one avenue to teach administrators, teachers, and those involved in the implementation process. One educational leader discussed training in terms of staff orientation, “So when we actually hire new staff members, [the PBIS Framework] is a huge part of their training into our district.” Yet another educational leader discussed the importance of training throughout the implementation process by saying:

“We still are always thinking and always training [on the PBIS Framework]. We had to do the [state training], and the [State Support Team] came in and trained us, and they talked to us about on a triangle the correlation between the academic side and the behavioral side, and how they fit together.”
**Encouraging deep content knowledge.** Having a deep understanding of the PBIS Framework is also essential when training. In addition, understanding and being familiar with the practical setting in which the framework is going to be used is key to successful implementation. One of the educational leaders underscored the importance of deep content knowledge by saying, “You have to have the framework and have your staff really understand it, that training, having people really understand it before you just dive in and try to do it.”

**Creating a feedback loop.** Creating a feedback loop regarding training has proven to be a major advantage for those who are implementing the PBIS Framework. Educational leaders discussed receiving input from school staff and others in the implementation process several times throughout the interview. One educational leader discussed the importance of staff voice in determining the types of training related to the PBIS Framework:

> “Two-and-a-half years ago we had the [PBIS Framework] training. Then pretty much right after that we started bringing some [learnings] to our staff. We started [PBIS] implementation pretty much right after that as much as we could. It was not necessarily full implementation, but we had talked at [professional development] kinds of things to our staff about [the PBIS Framework] and we had a lot of staff input about what they wanted to see. Then, we did a [PBIS] training and then full implementation [of the framework] started last school year, I think.”

Another educational leader discussed the implementation process as a way to gain input from teachers and staff members:

> “… being able to go back to the entire staff for their input as you move through the process is important, because when you do a change this big, you really can’t say, ‘Well, this is what we’ve created for you.’ They really need to be a part of that process as you go through, so finding the time not just to meet as a PBIS committee to develop the frameworks, but then also time to meet with the entire staff to bring them along slowly, but then also to get their input on the different parts of the PBIS System.”

**Coaching.** Coaching is one way to produce behavior change among teachers (Fixsen et al., 2005). Most educational leaders in the study perceived that the State Support Team coaching as positive, in addition to training. Frequently, the educational leaders described the State Support Team members as “coaches.” The coaching areas most frequently discussed by educational leaders in this study included guidance, encouragement, and the opportunities that came about because of coaching.

**Guidance.** Most educational leaders referred to the State Support Team as the coach or coaches who provided them with guidance regarding the implementation of the PBIS Framework. One educational leader discussed the value of the State Support Team by saying this:
“We’re lucky, because our State Support Team – we have a quarterly coaches meeting. During that time our State Support Team brings information to us. They have some networking time where we can just talk about things that are going well in our district and things that aren’t.”

This study also revealed there was a great distinction between training lead by the State Support Team and training that was facilitated in the school buildings by staff members of the schools. One educational leader discussed coaching in the school and referred to the following, “We don’t call teachers out, but then we also do look at which staff members are submitting the most referrals or document the most, because sometimes we need to intervene with a teacher.” This could indicate that the coaching style that the State Support Team uses is being transferred to the school level.

Encouragement. Educational leaders underscored the importance of the encouragement they received from the State Support Team. In addition to the encouragement by the State Support Team, many of the educational leaders reported that they were able to encourage teachers’ success by using coaching strategies suggested by the State Support Team. Educational leaders used these coaching strategies to encourage behavior change throughout the entire implementation process of the PBIS Framework. When discussing encouragement, one educational leader saw a direct connection between encouragement, the PBIS Framework, and school climate: “We celebrate more of students’ success and teachers’ success [as part of the PBIS Framework]. [The school climate] just feels different.”

One educational leader discussed the importance of encouraging teachers throughout the implementation process:

“Then you can show them, or encourage [behaviors], ‘Hey, this will cost classroom management.’ If you can show them that there’s going to be some benefit to them or to their students, you’ll get the buy-in, and I think that’s what [we have] done a great job here at the elementary. [Our PBIS Coach] explains to [teachers], “This is why we’re doing [the PBIS Framework]. It’s important that we do it. We’ve got to try it. It’s not going to work overnight. It might not work the first couple of months, but eventually, we’ll get the kids that need to come along with us and have better behaviors.”

Opportunities. Findings from this study show that the implementation of the PBIS Framework presents teachers with opportunities to take ownership of their own behavior change. Most of the educational leaders described how encouraging teachers and giving them guidance is in turn creating opportunities among their staff members to become more involved in the implementation of the PBIS Framework. Many educational leaders discussed coaching as a vehicle for teachers to take ownership in the implementation process. One educational leader said, “And having the teachers involved in that [program development] allowed [teachers] to take ownership in the implementation [of the PBIS Framework].”
**Staff performance assessment.** Staff performance assessments are used during the implementation process to evaluate the use and the outcomes of the skills that are provided in the early stages of the process (Fixsen et al., 2009). Most educational leaders acknowledged they have assessed and evaluated teachers throughout implementation of the PBIS Framework.

**Assessments.** Assessments measure the performance of staff members within an organization. Educational leaders discussed using data collected to identify and assess which staff members were actually implementing the framework and programs within the organization as well as who had not been actively implementing. One educational leader explained that in his school staff members were assessed by the PBIS Team looking at data regarding teacher referrals. The educational leader said, “We look at the location of the incident, the type of incident, so we have those ranked, you know, if it’s bullying, harassment, and those are again off of SWIS (School-Wide Information Systems) typically. And grade level. We also look at homerooms and/or person referring.”

**Evaluation of implementation.** Evaluation of the implementation proved to be an important aspect of the staff performance assessment. A few educational leaders found value in the process of evaluating the implementation of the PBIS Framework and compared dynamics of the implementation process to past experience or for future consideration. Regarding evaluation, one educational leader interviewed said, “We meet once a month after school, and then we take a full day at the end of each year to reevaluate our PBIS program and go ahead and implement new implementations we want to make for the following year.”

Among those interviewed in this study, assessments were used as a measurement for the purpose of improving the implementation of the PBIS Framework. Educational leaders used assessments and/or surveys to gauge the teachers’ perspectives of the implementation process. Assessments are used in many different ways in the implementation process. One educational leader discussed the use of end-of-year surveys to see if adjustments need to be made in the implementation process, “We took a lot of polls and asked the teachers generally what was going on and what they felt was needed to change.”

It is important to note that one educational leader discussed a survey that focused on student perspectives and the school environment: “We’re actually getting ready to do our staff survey so they can give their input, the adult implementation aspect, and then also the student – we look at the student aspect and then the environment.”

**Organization drivers.** Implementation science literature (Fixsen et al., 2009) explains decision support data systems, facilitative administration, and systems intervention as being key components to implementing a successful program or framework. In the study, educational leaders discussed how these components were used to help guide them through the implementation process of the PBIS Framework and to assist them in building capacity.
**Decision support data systems.** Performance of the organization and the data collected from assessments and evaluations help drive and support decision making. Many educational leaders revealed that their building or district did not collect behavioral data prior to implementing the PBIS Framework. Therefore, these educational leaders found the implementation process initially difficult because they had to collect baseline data in order to implement the PBIS Framework.

**Performance of the organization.** Overall, many educational leaders reported that implementing the PBIS Framework has decreased discipline incidents; including decreased office referrals, and decreased behavioral issues in the following settings: busses, classrooms, cafeterias, and playgrounds. In addition, educational leaders also reported experiencing an increase in positive behaviors as a result of implementing the PBIS Framework. One educational leader discussed the desire to have organizational performance data:

“I will say I’d like to tell you that our discipline numbers have gone down, [but] I can’t tell you that because before PBIS, we didn’t even have a discipline referral form. We had no data on numbers of kids who were being referred. So we think it’s gone down but we don’t have any numbers to say, if that makes sense.”

While another educational leader discussed how specific data can make a vast impact on understanding organizational performance:

“I use the Public School Works data tracking system to track discipline. Over the years that we’ve actually implemented and used that system, I can pull reports and track the number of office referrals for bus, office referrals for classroom behavior, et cetera, et cetera. We also are tracking our positive rewards for, if I hold a door open, I get a kindness coin, and I’m recognized for that. We’re using that data tool to track, and we meet monthly and review those reports to see which bus drivers are having potential problems, which children are having the potential problem, and also are we hitting kids and recognizing positive behavior. Since we’ve been using that tool, we’ve seen a drastic decrease in the number of referrals we have for bus and in classrooms.”

**Data to support decision making.** Educational leaders reported using data to make decisions as they implemented the PBIS Framework. Some educational leaders used discipline data to determine how to staff the cafeteria during lunch time or where to place teachers on the playground during recess. Other educational leaders used data to determine if their current rewards programs are working properly and whether or not they need to make changes to current programs that fall under the PBIS Framework. Here are a few ways educational leaders are using data to support decision making. One educational leader described:

“Usually, we try to look at one month at a time to see if we have any increases or decreases in certain areas or behaviors, whether it’s disrespect, or whether it’s not
following rules, or whether it’s a bus issue. We can kind of track our highs and lows with that as well.”

Another educational leader described the specificity of how data are examined to drive decision making processes:

“So, we collect our discipline data … so we look at the environment, we look at the time of the day, we look at other students involved. … We look at the location of the incident, the type of incident, so we have those ranked, you know, if it’s bullying, harassment, and those are again off of SWIS typically.”

While another education leader said the following:

“My assistant principal collects the data on behavior, who is doing what where, and they collect it. And then we also have what we call a STARS team of teachers, a representative from each grade level, and they discuss the data and if they have suggestions or if they see patterns and what we need to do to address that.”

**Facilitative administration.** Much like using data to support decision making, facilitative administration uses a range of data inputs to inform decision making. In addition, facilitative administration supports the overall processes of the organization and keeps the staff organized and focused on the outcomes or goals of the implementation (Fixsen et al., 2009).

Many educational leaders identified a team of building personnel that evaluated data, determined positives and negatives of programs implemented, and had discussions about what comprised the PBIS Framework in their particular environments. This team, often articulated as the “PBIS Team,” served in the role of administering the PBIS Framework; although most PBIS Teams were composed of individuals who are not typically considered building-level administrators (e.g., teachers, educational aides, counselors, etc.). Oftentimes, the purpose of the PBIS Team is to keep the school staff organized and focused on using the PBIS Framework.

When discussing facilitative administration, one educational leader described what that process looked like in practice:

“When we do administrative meetings, we talk about each building and what are the positives, what are our challenges, so we really talk about our PBIS data, our – what exactly are we doing, where do we see more needs, those kinds of things, so we sit in administrative meetings to have those conversations.”

Another educational leader discussed the importance of facilitative administration in finding and discussing patterns and trends in the school or building.

“As a PBIS team, we talk about what are we noticing as patterns. Patterns and trends. Then we discuss what we think how we could approach it from a positive standpoint in trying to reward the kids that are doing the right thing instead of the major behavior that seems to be the big one. Then, from there, our administrators usually bring that to
the [building-level team] and ask the specific building to look at the data and talk about, ‘What are you noticing for patterns?’"

Most educational leaders equated the idea of facilitative administration to maintaining focus. Educational leaders discussed consistency, perseverance, and maintaining a solid foundation as essential components to sustaining the PBIS Framework. One educational leader noted:

“Well, I just think that consistency is so important, and having those consistent building meetings. I noticed that is a huge factor in the buildings that are just in the beginning implementation stage. In the first year if you’re not having a building or at least a team meeting every other month, you’re not going to get it implemented with fidelity.”

Another who discussed consistency offered this advice to others, “Just keep working at it, keep looking at it, looking at your data, looking at reactions, students, … look at the whole picture and don’t give up, perseverance.”

**Systems intervention.** Important aspects of systems intervention include strategies that support the availability of financial, organizational, or human resources (Fixsen et al., 2009). Findings from this study support the need for financial stability and human resources to implement the PBIS Framework successfully.

**Financial resources.** Most educational leaders discussed the importance of financial support throughout the implementation process. Most of the financial costs discussed were associated with the costs of implementing programs as part the PBIS Framework and the cost of substitute teachers for when staff members are trained, as mentioned previously. The need for financial assistance was relatively high and most schools funded these costs through budget allocations, grant money, or donations from local businesses.

When discussing finances, educational leaders shared a wide range of thoughts. For example, one educational leader said:

“I mean, financially we needed assistance. That’s why we were really excited to get the grant a couple of years ago, the counseling grant, because it’s helped out so much with our secondary and tertiary level kids to have those small-group interventions and one-on-one interventions”

Others who were interviewed discussed the costs associated with programs that were implemented as part of the PBIS Framework. Educational leaders gave advice on how they were successful in raising money to support their efforts by saying:

“It takes money. I mean, like I said, we’ve had to go kind of knocking on business doors and who has contacts in the community that would be willing to help us with this program. Our PTO has been very generous with us. Something that we’ve done is we’ve sold T-shirts that have our logo for our program on them to the students, and so
when we do our monthly meetings, a lot of the kids will wear their shirts, and we made a little bit of money doing that. But just having some grant money or something like that available I think would be helpful, because we’re buying, like I said, the classroom kits for all of our teachers that include the posters that we created and the game boards and the medals and the tickets, so there’s been some significant cost to getting this up and running.”

Finally, one educational leader noted the importance of community support, “We have had … probably 30 different local businesses that have donated things to our program …”

**Human resources.** Educational leaders perceived that human resources were essential in implementing the PBIS Framework. Community involvement, parent involvement, guidance counselor involvement, and staff involvement were perceived as key to a successful implementation process. Finding and making the time for involvement from all of those key stakeholders is a factor that can make or break the success of the process. Regarding human resources, one educational leader strongly encouraged community involvement:

> “We involve the community. The local media has come, and they have covered stories on our PBIS program, about us getting the award, and has come out to different events that we’ve had to basically help get the word out there about our program. I know, at the middle school, I specifically did a Power Point about PBIS on our family night as well, previously. That was one way that we’ve been really trying to track, so trying to get the message out to the students, but also to the community members too. I think using the media has definitely helped in that aspect.”

Another educational leader noted the importance of parental involvement in the process: “We actually have a parent on the board, and she does come and meets with us, and then she also relays it to the community. We also use Facebook to note all the positive things we’re doing with PBIS and put that out there through there.”

**Leadership drivers.** Implementation science literature (Fixsen et al., 2015) underscores the importance of leadership when implementing a successful program or framework. Fixsen and colleagues (2015) do not define leadership as the actions exhibited by a singular person; instead, they define leadership as “different people engaging in different kinds of leadership behavior” (p. 23). A variety of leadership behaviors are necessary to initiate and sustain effective programs. Adaptive leadership skills or styles are needed to initiate or champion change and are important at the beginning of the implementation process. As the implementation process progresses and managing the implementation process becomes paramount, technical leadership skills or styles are necessary to support and sustain programs (Fixsen et al., 2015).

**Team approach.** Fixsen and colleagues (2015) are careful to note that while some individuals can provide both adaptive and technical leadership skills to an organization, leadership responsibilities can also be distributed among several individuals within an organization. A team
approach was described by many of the educational leaders representing the schools receiving 2015 Ohio PBIS Showcase Recognition awards. Educational leaders frequently used the terms “team,” “committee,” and “group” to describe the leadership core of their PBIS Framework efforts. The following positions were mentioned as key personnel serving as that leadership core: principal, special education director, school psychologist, behavior interventionist, guidance counselor, general education teacher, special education teacher, “special” teacher (i.e., art, music, physical education, etc.), department chair (i.e., head of social studies, head of math, etc.), and educational assistants. Of note, only one educational leader mentioned having a parent as part of the leadership team and another educational leader discussed having a representative from the “therapy department.”

Educational leaders discussed the importance of being intentional when forming the leadership core. Specifically, one leader offers:

“To do a process like this justice, you need to find the teachers who are excited about and who know that it will have a great impact on students, on achievement, and on just their overall well-being. You find those teachers. You know who will put in the work. You get them together. The group of teachers that I had were just absolutely amazing, and they still are. They still serve on the PBIS committee. It wouldn’t be what it is without finding the right people to do that.”

Inclusivity was another theme when educational leaders discussed the formation of their leadership cores. This educational leader expressed both intentionality and inclusivity:

“…Plan, plan first. Take the time to plan it out, and make sure that you have representation from everybody on the team – or in your building. If it’s a K-4 building, you should have a representative from each, and having the right people on the team.”

Consistency among the leadership core was cited as being important to successful implementation of the PBIS Framework by some educational leaders. Yet others noted that staff turnover was inevitable but not insurmountable (see also discussion under Question 1 regarding sustainability). For example, this educational leader discussed consistency:

“I think the consistency of our team has really made the difference. I think if there were different people in and out are kind of in charge but the fact that we all have been a part of it since the beginning, and by all, I mean, we’ve had a couple of new people in and out but I would say there’s probably four or five of us who have remained on this team. I think without that, it probably wouldn’t have happened as well as it has.”
Another educational leader acknowledged that change in core leadership happens over time and can be addressed by recruiting others to the group, “… The original team has kind of dwindled away, and we’re down to three of us that were at the beginning. We’ve picked up a couple other members, and they’re on board.” This educational leader summarized the need for intentionality and inclusivity in the selection process, as well as the ever-changing nature of the leadership core: “I would say … definitely … have a team that is … diverse. … We have … all areas covered. We just recently pulled in a couple of classroom assistants, so that way you get input from all areas. I think that’s key.”

Most of the educational leaders acknowledged that implementing the PBIS Framework is hard, important work. By creating a leadership team to carry the initiative forward, multiple people can use their leadership strengths to support implementation. Perhaps this educational leader describes it best:

“It’s a lot of work in the beginning, but just as long as you keep with it and you have a strong support system and a good team to help push it forward, you’ll get it going, because there are some days where it’s hard, but as long as you have those around you who you know believe in the same thing you do, it helps you make it through and know at the end of the day, you’re helping improve a child’s life.”

**Adaptive leadership.** Adaptive leadership skills and behaviors include the ability to align practices with the overall mission, values, and philosophy of the organization; convene groups and build consensus; establish clear and frequent communication channels; and seek feedback and support from practitioners and others (Fixsen et al., 2015). Educational leaders described the needs for each of these behaviors during the interviews, especially when they were in the early in their implementations of the PBIS Framework. Frequently, educational leaders identified specific individuals as champions for change. However, it is important to discern what adaptive leadership skills those identified champions for change have and the value they add to the implementation of the PBIS framework.

**Align practices with the overall mission, values, and philosophy of the organization.** Educational leaders believed that buy-in from school faculty and staff was facilitated by aligning the PBIS Framework with the overall mission, values, and philosophy of the school.

One of the major hurdles cited for school faculty and staff to buy-in to the PBIS Framework was understanding the connections between behavior, mental health, and academic success. This realization resulted in core leadership teams implementing professional development for teachers to help ameliorate this disconnect. For many educational leaders in the study, providing professional development on topics such as trauma-informed care, behavioral health intervention techniques, and mental health was a key way to align the PBIS Framework with educational practice. For example, one educational leader described the disconnect (s)he perceived:
“Teachers do not understand behavior. They still take it very personal. They don’t understand the mental health component behind it. They don’t understand a child that has survived through trauma and how their reactions affect – how their reactions are different – because of said trauma. … Behavior is so, so personal, so a way to kind of desensitize and depersonalize behavior would be a great training.”

Another educational leader described the “paradigm shift” that occurred when faculty and staff were able to clearly see how the PBIS Framework was aligned with educational practice:

“I think the huge problem was before kids were just labeled as bad kids. Now, we see the true value in the kid and put it on their behavior. We focus on the kid’s behavior, not on the kid. I think that’s been the major shift and that’s helped a lot with we focus on getting to the why. Why is the kid behaving this way? Before, it was just I feel like everyone was overwhelmed. There was nothing there to help us, so it was just, ‘I don’t understand. These kids are bad.’ Now it’s, like, ‘I don’t understand why this kid is behaving this way,’ so then we get together and we brainstorm, ‘What do you think is the overarching reason behind it?’ Sometimes we investigate and think, ‘I think this kid is making bad choices, because of doing drugs. I think this kid is making bad choices, because of their home life.’ Before it was just, like, ‘These kids are being bad,’ and, ‘These kids are bad.’ I think that that’s been the major paradigm shift.”

Educational leaders also noted that it was important for faculty and staff to engage in a process where they recognized and understood that what they currently were doing to manage behavior was not working. Realizing that current behavioral management practices were not aligned with the educational mission of the school was just as important as recognizing that the PBIS Framework was aligned with sound educational practices. One educational leader described how the use of data was able elicit buy-in from faculty and staff:

“We embraced it because of our [data] – we were really looking at our discipline numbers and our lack of student participation and attendance and tried to really reevaluate how we get kids more motivated and involved within the building or within the district, and that’s kind of where we really started the past three years, when we really started – we knew that we needed to change, and that was the change we took, and getting staff buy-in was probably, honestly, the most difficult, but once we had that, it really took off.”

One educational leader reflected on how far faculty and staff had come in terms of viewing the PBIS Framework as a sound educational practice:

“You go back to the old days, I think principals and teachers, you tried to discipline everyone the same way, but I think the PBIS framework, if it’s taught us nothing, it teaches us that all kids are unique, all situations are different, and two kids will do the
exact same thing and their consequence or their outcome could be completely
different.”

In almost all of the interviews, educational leaders identified that developing a common language was key to aligning the use of the PBIS Framework to the educational mission. Because past behavior management practices were often classroom-based and, therefore, siloed, many educational leaders spoke to the value of working with administrators, faculty, and staff to develop a common language related to behavior. In one school, the development of a common language was described as a first step to leverage buy-in from administrators, faculty, and staff:

“The first thing we had to agree upon were the rules that [we] wanted. What were the rules that we could agree upon across – at that time we were our K-6 building? What did we value for students? That was the first hurdle to get the buy-in from the whole staff, including the cafeteria workers, the custodians, about what the things were that we wanted to do. That’s when we came up with the [character traits], where we were going to build it around the character. In the beginning it very closely resembled assertive discipline, but as we learned more about the [PBIS] framework we realized that should be more focused on the positive and the teaching.”

In many cases, the benefits of having a common language for behavioral support extended beyond the administrators, faculty, and staff. Several educational leaders also noted that the use of a common language also encouraged buy-in and support of the PBIS Framework from families. As one teacher notes:

“But by creating a system where we’re specifically teaching kids what the expectations are, but then also building those relationships with kids, making them know that they are an important part of this school, and reaching out to them and their families, and creating that familial atmosphere here at school, then what you’re doing is you’re setting kids up. They’re getting such a leg up in regards to being successful here, because you’re eliminating that confusion, that gray area as they go from home to school. But then also they will work so much harder when they feel like they are a part of an environment that people want them to be in …”

Interestingly, only one educational leader connected that creating a common language as a Tier 1 (Universal) strategy being implemented within the PBIS Framework:

“Well, I think we’ve followed that framework pretty well as far as teaching the expectations and assume nothing and teach everything kind of philosophy, really scripting out the specific what it looks like and sounds like in each one of the environments and using the common language throughout the whole school so everybody uses that common language. So really solidly implementing that Tier 1 PBIS has made a great impact on our school.”
Convene groups and build consensus. Supporting the PBIS Framework at the building level was a process that was often co-created by core leadership teams and the administration, faculty, and staff. While the core leadership team was often a small subset of faculty and staff, many educational leaders reported collecting data and information from the entire faculty and staff to help guide decision making. Most frequently, core leadership teams surveyed faculty and staff to learn more about their perceptions of the implementation of the PBIS Framework. Several educational leaders cited the use of an end-of-year survey, “We do an end-of-year survey, and we have a committee meeting where we go over the results of the survey. We hope the survey is honest, but it’s only as honest as the people are willing to be.” Other educational leaders discussed soliciting feedback from teachers on a monthly basis:

“Well, we also have just about monthly meetings with the committee to talk about how the program is going and what areas we need to strengthen, what things are going well, what we’d like to do differently next year. The teachers are asked for their feedback on the program monthly. They’re sent a survey that they can fill out anonymously if they choose to do so, and then it’s just part of our day to day.”

An important component of consensus building was moving beyond just surveying faculty and staff members; educational leaders discussed convening the larger group and presenting the data and discussing the findings. These types of activities were perceived as giving voice to the teachers in the process:

“And then we presented it to the teachers and said, ‘Now, give us your feedback. What are your thoughts? What are your ideas? What would this look like in your classroom?’ And so I think we really did it right as far as starting from the top down and letting everybody kind of have a thought in how is this going to make the most sense and how is this going to be effective without being cumbersome.”

Of note, only one educational leader clearly described the process by which consensus was built and decisions were made:

“Then we got together in small groups and started working on … Well, as a group, we voted to determine if this was the direction we wanted to go, or if we wanted to continue to research maybe other avenues. Everybody was on board with [the PBIS Framework]. They just felt like it was a great way to go. We formed small groups and began developing what we call the [character traits], which is just our basic expectations for our students, and then a matrix of expectations in the common areas. At the same time, I had some new teachers that were coming on board that were struggling a little bit with classroom management, so we also began using PAX. Our [grant] enabled teachers to become PAX-trained, and they were very successful with that. As a result, the veteran staff members requested to be trained in PAX, so now my entire building is trained in PAX and uses PAX in the classroom setting.”
One educational leader summarized the importance of convening groups and building consensus:

“…being able to go back to the entire staff for their input as you move through the process is important, because when you do a change this big, you really can’t say, ‘Well, this is what we’ve created for you.’ [The staff] really need to be a part of that process as you go through, so finding the time not just to meet as a PBIS committee to develop the frameworks, but then also time to meet with the entire staff to bring them along slowly, but then also to get their input on the different parts of the PBIS System.”

Establish clear and frequent communication channels. To encourage buy-in and increase understanding of the PBIS Framework, educational leaders reported that it was necessary to establish open communication channels with the following stakeholders: parents, teachers, and the community at large.

The educational leaders in the study underscored the importance of sharing information with parents during the early stages of implementation. Oftentimes, this was a hard lesson learned. Several educational leaders discussed how communication outside of the school building was difficult to achieve. However, as the use of the PBIS Framework expanded, many educational leaders began to see parents as partners in the use of framework, particularly Tier 1 (Universal) supports. One educational leader describes this realization, “I think we talked, we would really like to reach out to maybe the families more. So you know, we’re talking about having like an open house for the families and … educate them more so what is working here, they can carry over into the home.”

Educational leaders expressed innovative ways in how to communicate with families, including using parent-teacher organizations and the students themselves as advocates for the framework:

“[The PBIS Framework is] just about in their face all the time. If we’re not putting it in their face through newsletters, or the school handbook, or Facebook – social media is a big tool that’s a great way for – that’s the way that our parents seem to really buy into communicating with us. PTO a big supporter of PBIS, and if we’re not putting it in their face – we have all our posters hanging around our school building – the kids will put it in their face.”

What is not clear, however, is exactly what these educational leaders are communicating to families. In the context of several interviews, it seemed like the PBIS Framework had become synonymous with the character traits that had been adopted as part of the Tier 1 (Universal) supports. In fact, one educational leader described how the primary strategy for communicating about the PBIS Framework was to assign grades for each character trait on student report cards. This strategy was met with some initial resistance by parents, but seems to have become a more accepted practice in this school over time:
“…we put the [character traits] on our grade card. That was a pretty big change to impact the external. Your typical segment on your elementary grade card that talks about your personal and social habits, we changed to the [character traits], so it’s reflected on the grade card. That was a little bit of a challenge because parents were not – they knew what the [character traits] were, but they weren’t familiar with it enough to think that it was something that needed to be on the grade card. So that was an initial challenge, but something that’s been well received and widely accepted once they understood.”

Communication with teachers was also described as essential to the successful implementation of the PBIS Framework. It is important to acknowledge that, in most schools, a core team is responsible for the day-to-day operation of the framework. Therefore, educational leaders cautioned that changes must be communicated to all teachers in the building. One educational leader described how communication with the teaching staff can be overlooked:

“I think, too, just creating that universal language between all of the teachers and everybody doing the same thing, and then communicating. I’ve been with this building for three years and my role with the PBIS hasn’t changed, but my role as dean of students has just come about this year. Before, I did other jobs in the building, but this year I have taken on the dean of students. I think the biggest piece for me this year that the staff was in dire need of is just the communication aspect. Things were happening in the building, but nobody was communicating that with the teacher.”

As educational leaders become more experienced with the PBIS Framework, there is evidence of communicating with the community-at-large about the framework. As was the case with parents, it is difficult to get educational leaders to clearly explicate what they are communicating to community members. Most of the conversations with educational leaders regarding communicating with community members centered around developing partnerships with local businesses to provide incentives used as rewards for prosocial behavior as part of a Tier 1 (Universal) strategy.

Seek feedback and support from practitioners and others. Overwhelmingly, educational leaders perceived the State Support Team was the most valuable element of Ohio’s PBIS Framework training and technical assistance resources, as noted previously. From providing information regarding training sessions, to giving ideas to those on implementation teams, and providing resources, the State Support Team proved time and time again to be a key resource for those implementing the PBIS Framework. Here are comments that a few educational leaders shared regarding the State Support Team:

“The training we received from the [State Support Team] was wonderful. It was very, very meaningful, and it was great and personalized. They really walked us through a
lot of the process, which made it manageable for us. It wasn’t us getting a one-time training and then going back and trying to implement it.”

Another educational leader said:

“… our State Support Team has been huge in helping us. I can’t tell you how much they’ve helped us. They really truly have done a great job informing us of everything. Then we set time aside for each of the professional development days as well as I would say we’ve had some outside people. For the most part, it’s mostly been our State Support Team that’s given us a huge influx of information.”

Finally, one educational leader’s suggestion to those who are early in the PBIS journey was very pointed, “Go to your State Support Team and go through the training.”

**Technical leadership.** Technical leadership skills and behaviors are essential to managing the implementation supports to sustain effective programs over time (Fixsen et al., 2015). Technical leaders have the ability to provide specific guidance regarding the innovation (in this case, the PBIS Framework) and focus on the implementation issues that are paramount at the practice level (Fixsen et al., 2015). When discussing leadership in a general sense, educational leaders tended to focus on the importance of adaptive leadership skills during the early implementation stages of the PBIS Framework. However, discussing successful and sustained implementation of the framework over time, educational leaders frequently cited technical leadership skills and behaviors.

*Provide specific guidance on technical issues related to PBIS.* Those who were interviewed discussed the importance of having a leader who was able to focus on the technical issues necessary to guide the process of implementing the PBIS Framework. Overwhelmingly, participants discussed the need to have a leader who focused on collecting, analyzing, reporting, and discussing data.

Educational leaders cited many ways that PBIS Framework data is collected and tracked in their buildings: Excel spreadsheets, School-Wide Information Systems (SWIS), Tiered Fidelity Inventory (TFI), and PublicSchoolWORKS. Most educational leaders discussed pulling reports from their preferred database and reviewing it with their core PBIS teams on a monthly basis, while a few discussed a quarterly data review and reporting cycle. Regardless of timing, the need for regularly scheduled meetings was underscored by this educational leader: “And then, you know, the monthly meetings, I think those are very helpful because initially we were only meeting, I don’t know, maybe every three, four months, so I do like the monthly meetings.”

Another educational leader also cited the importance of consistent meetings, especially during the initial implementation of the PBIS Framework:

“Well, I just think that consistency is so important, and having those consistent building meetings. I noticed that [consistency] is a huge factor in the buildings that are just in the beginning implementation stage. In the first year if you’re not having a
building or at least a team meeting every other month, you’re not going to get it implemented with fidelity.”

The monthly (or quarterly) meetings were generally described as being data-driven discussions facilitated by one or more members of the core leadership team. As data is a central element of the PBIS Framework, having a leader committed to facilitating conversations that utilize data to make decisions seemed to be essential for successful implementation. This educational leader described a typical monthly meeting:

“Basically what happens is, as a PBIS team, we talk about what are we noticing as patterns. Patterns and trends. Then we discuss what we think how we could approach it from a positive standpoint in trying to reward the kids that are doing the right thing instead of the major behavior that seems to be the big one. Then, from there, our administrators usually bring that to the Building Leadership Team and ask the specific building to look at the data and talk about, ‘What are you noticing for patterns?’ Then it’s shared, ‘The PBIS team notices this.’ Then after we talk about what we notice as patterns, then the big conversation is, ‘What are we going to do to make it better?’”

A few educational leaders described a more sophisticated, multi-level approach to data sharing and use. In this instance, data is shared beyond the PBIS through a variety of channels. This method allows for the feedback loop to be expanded and allow more voice in the decisions that are made at the building level. While this technique is unique, it demonstrates strong technical leadership skills when implementing the PBIS Framework.

“Each month during our PBIS meetings I pull the [data] and give it to our PBIS team. We talk about it. Our PBIS team is made up of members from each grade level, so they take that information back and share it with their grade levels. I also share [data] with the staff at our staff meetings. Mostly that information is done from a grade level perspective. How are we looking across grade levels? How are we looking as a building? Are we seeing a decrease in student office referrals or was last month a little higher? Why do we think that that might be higher? We look at [data] from that building perspective.”

All of the educational leaders in the study referenced the value of having a leader with strong technical leadership skills who is able to identify a process and create space for meaningful data-driven conversations that result in action-oriented steps.

Focus on issues that matter at the practice level. Educational leaders perceived that in order for a successful implementation of the PBIS Framework to occur, connections had to be made between the use of the framework and how it impacts the day-to-day practice of teaching students. Providing concrete experiences with early wins oftentimes sets the stage for sustained, successful implementation. For example, one educational leader shared this vignette which
allowed teachers and staff to see how the use of the PBIS Framework could impact the school day:

“We look at areas that are – reasons why [students] have maybe been referred from class or areas, and then we set up either re-teachings, focus on that area or that skill that they’re missing, that they’re struggling with. Like for example, in the one building, they were having trouble with the cafeteria. The cafeteria was just really starting to kind of fall apart ... with the PBIS thing, we kind of looked at that and put some supports in place in the cafeteria, talked about positive things that we could do there, had teachers go back and take their kids at a non-lunch time, review expectations, go through the cafeteria. We worked with cafeteria staff to see what supports they needed.”

As the use of the PBIS Framework expands in schools, technical leaders who are able to make the connection between research and practice are able to solidify the use of the framework. This educational leader describes how the principal has expanded the use of the PBIS Framework over a three-year period to include the use of individual-level, real-time data:

“Like I said, our principal, she first started collecting data three years ago. At that point in time we did not have SWIS, which is School-Wide Information System, which is what we use now. Two years ago she did not have that and she just kept track of the major forms that she got. Last year we implemented major and minor forms. We starting talking about, ‘If minor behaviors are chronic, we need to document those, and then have interventions, document those.’ Then if it’s still a problem, then it gets referred to her. At that point in time we still didn’t have SWIS. This year we have it, so she has been able to, just from the documentation she has kept, she has seen those significantly go down. She’s also linked to our ClassDojo system. She can go in and instantly see. If she’s having an issue with a student or a student ends up in her office, she can pull it up and say, ‘Wow, you’re really not having a great week, are you? I can see right here that you’ve gotten a lot of negative points from all these teachers. Let’s talk about that.’ It’s an instantaneous thing for her as well.”

The fact that the PBIS Framework is a framework and not a program provides an opportunity for those with technical leadership skills to make a clear link to educational practice. For example, one educational leader in the study articulated the need to use data to prioritize the immediate needs of the school and then add to the process moving forward. By focusing on what mattered most at the practice level, this educational leader was able to revitalize the use of the PBIS Framework in the building:

“I think the main thing was when we were looking at the PBIS, we really had to break down what we needed – what our district needed to be successful, so looking at the PBIS Framework and saying, okay, what do we need to do right this instant to
improve our school, and what can we wait on and start implementing down the road was probably the crucial aspects to getting it off the ground running again.”

In closing, this educational leader reiterates the importance of localizing the PBIS Framework and keeping it connected to the practice level:

“You really have to give yourself time to develop the system that fits your building, because this isn’t a cookie-cutter model. It’s not a boxed program. You can’t just take what another building’s done and then implement it in your building. It really needs to be tailored, and it needs to be tweaked from year to year, because buildings change. You really can’t rush the program. I solidly suggest taking a year to develop the program and then a year to implement the program. I know when schools are looking at – if they have constant and chronic behavior issues, if it’s turning into a toxic environment because of student behavior or staff interactions with kids, you can’t just throw something in and fix the problem right away. You really need to take that time to do it justice.”

This comment also underscores the importance of PBIS to be explained as a framework with a continuum of supports. Educational leaders like and appreciate the flexibility of utilizing a framework and need to better view PBIS as a system for making decisions about behavior management and prevention efforts.
Conclusion and Discussion of Opportunities

The primary charge for this study was to identify barriers and facilitators to using the PBIS Framework among high implementing PBIS schools. In turn, state leaders sought to develop a public value proposition to increase implementation of PBIS in Ohio. In consultation with SS/HS state leaders, a proposed public value proposition follows:

In Ohio, PBIS is a process framework where schools, school districts, and school-community partnerships use data and information to improve behavioral outcomes for all students, which also promotes safe schools and academic success. When available, PBIS emphasizes selecting and implementing evidence-based programs within a multi-tiered system of supports.

Moore (2000) suggests tests of alignment among the three strategic elements. This study found one element (public value) had strong results and two elements (authorizing environment and operational capacity) with opportunities for improvement.

- **With public value**, Moore (2000) states, “If a manager has support and capabilities, but nothing of value is being created, then the enterprise will succeed only in staying alive, but not in creating value” (p. 198).
  - Educational leaders found substantial public value in implementing the PBIS framework in their schools. They discussed beneficial results, including improved student behaviors and more positive school environments. These outcomes created value for these leaders and built sustainability for its continuation and expansion. Further value could be realized by shoring up issues related to legitimacy and support and operational capacity.

- **With legitimacy and support**, Moore (2000) states, “If a manager has a valuable purpose and capabilities for achieving it, but no one wants or needs it, then the enterprise will fail from a lack of a sponsor” (p. 198).
  - This study revealed several issues related to legitimacy and support. Importantly, Ohio has potentially narrowed the authorizing environment for PBIS by situating it only within restraint and seclusion policies (Exec. Order No. 13S, 2009; Lawriter, 2015; ODE, 2013b). Nationally, researchers and policy makers advocate for a broader approach to implementing PBIS. One opportunity to strengthen support for PBIS in Ohio exists with the planning efforts related to implementing the Every Student Succeeds Act of 2015 (ODE, n.d.c), which updates the federal No Child Left Behind Act. An additional opportunity could exist with Ohio’s rule revision on the use of restraints and seclusion in school districts, due in 2018.
  - At the national level, researchers and policy makers also advocate for operationalizing PBIS as a systems change for behavior management (Sugai, et
Many educational leaders in this study confused PBIS as being a strategy or program. This finding indicates a need for support to re-conceptualize PBIS as a decision-making framework for implementing all behavior management strategies and prevention efforts.

- On a positive note, educational leaders valued the expertise provided by the SSTs. They perceived it as offering legitimacy for PBIS. They also felt validated for their efforts with the 2015 Ohio PBIS Showcase Recognition ceremony and valued the peer networking opportunities. See the following discussion on building operational capabilities, which would also help expand the legitimacy for PBIS in Ohio.

- With operational capabilities, Moore (2000) states, “If a manager has a valuable purpose that is widely supported, but nobody knows how to achieve it, then the enterprise will fail from a want of accomplishment” (p. 198).

  - Most educational leaders said they heavily rely on Tier 1 (Universal) supports and were not yet using a full tiered system. One idea to consider would be offering guidance to school districts on how to operationalize PBIS as a continuum of tiered response to intervention. This could have two possible benefits. First, it would align Ohio with national efforts. Second, it would offer educational leaders support in knowing when and how to select evidence-based programs.

  - As discussed previously, educational leaders found the trainings, technical assistance, and support offered by the SSTs to be invaluable. Continued efforts to strengthen and enhance the professional development, training, and networking opportunities could help build additional operational capacity for PBIS. As mentioned already, this could also help build additional support for using PBIS.

**Possible Opportunities**

There are a number of opportunities that could help strengthen implementation of PBIS in Ohio. Possible ideas for consideration by the SS/HS state leaders and others follow. The research team expects these would include discussion and a prioritization process to determine which are most viable. Two opportunities focus on enhancing the authorizing environment and two opportunities focus on building operational capacities. Other ideas and opportunities likely exist and could surface as state leaders and others consider the study findings.

*Authorizing environment opportunities.* The study points to two possible authorizing environment opportunities.

1. Brainstorm and strategize opportunities to extend support for PBIS through state policy. The federal Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA of 2015, Pub. L. No: 114-95) provides updated policy guidance to states. Under the state plan, due in late 2016, opportunities
likely exist to provide support for PBIS in Ohio. Another opportunity relates to the regulatory rule related to restraints and seclusion, due for renewal in 2018. Either of these opportunities, and likely others, affords the state the ability to use its new public value proposition to clarify goals for implementing PBIS in Ohio, and in turn strengthen its authorizing environment.

2. **Brainstorm opportunities for fostering legitimacy and credibility for PBIS in Ohio.** Three possible ideas include
   a. Developing a template to gather public relations snippets from PBIS implementers. These could be used to advocate for PBIS in Ohio.
   b. Identifying ways to expand or deepen the training and assistance offered by the SSTs with the intent of fostering legitimacy for PBIS in Ohio.
   c. Building operational capacity (see the next ideas about offering another conference or showcase event) and leveraging those experiences to further validate and build credibility for PBIS.

*Operational capacity opportunities.* The study points to three possible operational capacity opportunities.

3. **Plan and host another educational conference/showcase event.** Given the accolades for the 2015 Showcase, state leaders could consider planning an additional conference. It could be run with multi-tracked session that group educational leaders by interest and experience. For example, one track could be geared to help those who are new to PBIS and needing more information. A second track could be for those who have made the decision to begin implementing PBIS and are in need information on how to begin. A final third track could be for those with PBIS experience and geared toward deepening their experience.

4. **Strategize how to deepen implementation of the PBIS Framework with existing high performing PBIS schools in Ohio.** Thinking through ways to further develop operational capacity within the existing PBIS implementers could help address areas of weaknesses identified in the study. Potential ideas include
   a. Identifying ways to shore up the local disconnect about PBIS being a decision making Framework, and one that utilizes a continuum of multi-tiered supports.
   b. Strategizing how to go beyond Tier 1 supports and select evidence-based programs, when appropriate.
   c. Helping educational leaders conceptualize PBIS as a parallel process to OIP.
   d. Planning how to expand efforts by existing implementers within school districts.
5. **Expand the number of school buildings and districts who implement PBIS.** Two approaches that could be pursued include

   a. Strategizing how to expand PBIS into new schools.

   b. Planning how to expand PBIS beyond addressing classroom behaviors, including prioritizing ATOD-V specific prevention efforts.

In closing, a key finding from this study relates to conceptualizing PBIS as a framework. In their analysis, the research team gravitated to using the implementation science literature as a theoretical basis, given state and national references to it. Importantly, using the implementation science literature helped shed light on the public value of PBIS in Ohio and offered insights into how educational leaders are operationalizing it. However, it also revealed that educational leaders struggle to conceptualize PBIS as a framework and a continuum with tiered response to intervention. Future studies should explore the role of systems change and how this literature could help inform the expansion of PBIS in Ohio, especially within the context of home rule.
References


Ohio Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services. (2014). Ohio’s Safe Schools/Healthy Students needs assessment and environmental scan. Columbus, OH: Author.


Appendix A
Ohio’s Safe Schools/Healthy Students Initiative

Toward Developing a Public Value Proposition for the Use of the PBIS Framework to Guide the Implementation of Evidence-Based Behavioral Health, Substance Use, and Violence Prevention Programs

Interview Guide

Guiding Questions:

1. **Using the PBIS Framework**: How can the PBIS Framework be utilized to guide the implementation of evidence-based behavioral health, substance use, and violence prevention programs (BH/SU/VP EBPs)?

2. **Public Value**: What dimensions of public value are produced by using the PBIS Framework to guide the implementation of BH/SU/VP EBPs? How can we produce more net value in the future?

3. **Authorizing Environment (Legitimacy and Support)**: What institutional supports, structures and/or policies need to be in place for schools to effectively use the PBIS Framework to guide the implementation of BH/SU/VP EBPs? How can we increase those sources of support in the future?

4. **Operational Capacity**: What capacity is necessary to effectively use the PBIS Framework to guide the implementation of BH/SU/VP EBPs and where does that capacity come from? (How well and how reliably does the use of the PBIS Framework to guide the implementation of Behavioral Health, Substance Use, and Violence Prevention Evidence-Based Programs (BH/SU/VP EBPs) create value? How can it be made more efficient and effective in the future?)

Hello. Thank you for taking the time to talk with me this morning/afternoon.

The purpose of this interview is to collect your thoughts and feelings about the use of the PBIS Framework to guide the implementation of evidence-based behavioral health, substance use, and violence prevention programs in your school/school district. We hope that this discussion can help us gain insight into the strengths of using the PBIS Framework. We are also interested in your thoughts on improvements that could be made when using the PBIS Framework from your particular perspective.

The discussion will be digitally recorded. The recording will be used for our reference only and will be erased once the research report is complete. Your individual comments will be strictly confidential and are solely for our purposes of gaining more information about the perspectives of the PBIS Framework from those who are utilizing it. Should you feel uncomfortable at any time during the discussion, remember that you have the ability to “pass” on any question. Do you have any concerns about the interview process?

If not, then let’s begin.
Opening

1. First, let’s start with some “warm up” questions to help you feel comfortable with the interview.
   a. Tell me about your current position in your district. What is your position and what are your primary duties?
   b. About what percent of your position is dedicated solely to implementing the PBIS Framework?
   c. What role(s) do you play in the implementation of the PBIS Framework in your district?

Introductory Questions

2. When did your school or school district first hear about the PBIS Framework?
3. How did your school or school district decide to embrace the PBIS Framework and move forward with implementation?
4. How long has your school or school district been using the PBIS Framework?
5. How has your school or school district utilized primary or school-wide level prevention in the PBIS Framework to support and help students succeed behaviorally and academically?
6. How has your school or school district utilized secondary or small group intervention level prevention in the PBIS Framework to support and help students succeed behaviorally and academically?
7. How has your school or school district utilized tertiary level - or the focus on the needs of individuals who exhibit patterns of problem behaviors prevention - in the PBIS Framework to support and help students succeed behaviorally and academically?

Transition Questions

8. In what ways can you tell that implementation of the PBIS Framework has benefited your school or school district?
9. How does the leadership at your school/school district know that using the PBIS Framework is an effective strategy?
10. The next series of questions are going to be a little specific. We are curious as to how you collect and use data.
   a. What mechanism(s) or system(s) are used in your district to collect and store data related to the implementation of the PBIS framework?
      o PROMPT (if needed) - Examples of evaluation tools: Tiered Fidelity Inventory, Self-Assessment Survey, Benchmarks of Quality, School Safety Survey
   b. At what levels does your school or school district track PBIS outcomes?
      o Individual level?
      o Classroom level?
      o School level?
      o District level?
   c. What data are you currently collecting that is related to the use of the PBIS framework?
   d. What data elements would you like to track but currently aren’t tracking or don’t have the capacity to track?
   e. How often does your school/district run data reports?
   f. How does your school/school district use those data reports to guide decisions based on the PBIS Framework?
   g. How does the leadership at your school/school district communicate the value of using the PBIS Framework to (choose applicable probes based on context):
      i. District-level administrators
      ii. Building-level administrators
iii. Faculty and staff
iv. Parents
v. Community stakeholders

Key Questions

Now we are really going to focus on some key questions. Please take your time answering these questions and answer them to the best of your ability. The first few questions are philosophical questions.

11. In what ways has your school or school district used the PBIS Framework or how do you anticipate it will be effective in guiding the implementation of evidence-based behavioral health, substance use, and violence prevention programs?

12. What is different from using the PBIS Framework versus a past strategy or how do you anticipate it will be effective in guiding the implementation of evidence-based behavioral health, substance use, and violence prevention programs?

13. How has the PBIS Framework been effective or how do you anticipate it being effective in guiding the implementation of evidence-based behavioral health, substance use, and violence prevention programs in your school or school district?

We are going to switch gears a little and these next several questions are going to focus on more operational questions.

14. What were the necessary supports, structures, and/or policies that needed to be in place for your school/school district to effectively utilize the PBIS Framework?
   a. Are there any additional supports that you believe schools or school districts need, in order to help them implement the PBIS Framework?
   b. If yes, what do you believe those supports are?
   c. How would these supports add value to schools who are considering implementing the PBIS Framework?

15. What resources, staffing, training, etc. were needed for your school/school district to effectively use the PBIS Framework to guide the implementation of evidence-based behavioral health, substance use, and violence prevention programs?
   a. Are there any additional resources that you believe schools or school districts need, in order to help them implement the PBIS Framework?
   b. If yes, what do you believe those resources are?
   c. How would these resources add value to schools who are considering implementing the PBIS Framework?

16. What internal challenges did your school/school district find in using the PBIS Framework to guide the implementation of evidence-based behavioral health, substance use, and violence prevention programs?

17. What external challenges did your school/school district find in using the PBIS Framework to guide the implementation of evidence-based behavioral health, substance use, and violence prevention programs?

Transition Question

18. What advice do you have for others who are at the beginning of their PBIS journey?

Thank you for your time today. We appreciate the information you have shared with us as we discover more about using the PBIS Framework to guide the implementation of evidence-based behavioral health, substance use, and violence prevention programs.
Appendix B

Initial Email Invitation
Subject Line: Interview Request: PBIS Framework

Dear (insert name),

At the request of the Ohio Departments of Education and Mental Health & Addiction Services, we are conducting interviews with schools that exemplify best practices in the implementation of Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS). The information collected from this study will give us an inside look from schools who have utilized, or are in the process of utilizing the PBIS framework to select and implement evidence-based practices related to substance abuse and violence prevention as well as mental and behavioral health promotion.

The intent of the interview is to gather data from schools or school districts recognized at the 2015 Ohio PBIS Showcase for their use of the PBIS framework. You have been identified as a key contact within your school or school district who would have information related to this topic.

If you believe there is someone else in your school or school district more knowledgeable about the PBIS framework, please reply to this email and provide this individual’s name and contact information.

This phone interview is estimated to take up to 1 hour. This research has been approved by the Ohio University IRB, Protocol 16-X-83.

If you are willing to participate in the interview:

1) Please indicate at least two of the following times listed below when you would be available. Choosing two or more times ensures the necessary flexibility to work around your schedule as well as the schedules of our other county representatives.

(insert times here)

2) Please provide a phone number where you can be reached at those times. I will email you to confirm your scheduled interview time.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,
Second Email Invitation
Subject Line: Second Attempt to Contact - Interview Request: PBIS Framework

Dear (insert name),

At the request of the Ohio Departments of Education and Mental Health & Addiction Services, we are conducting interviews with schools that exemplify best practices in the implementation of Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS). The information collected from this study will give us an inside look from schools who have utilized, or are in the process of utilizing the PBIS framework to select and implement evidence-based practices related to substance abuse and violence prevention as well as mental and behavioral health promotion.

The intent of the interview is to gather data from schools or school districts recognized at the 2015 Ohio PBIS Showcase for their use of the PBIS framework. You have been identified as a key contact within your school or school district who would have information related to this topic.

If you believe there is someone else in your school or school district more knowledgeable about the PBIS framework, please reply to this email and provide this individual’s name and contact information.

This phone interview is estimated to take up to 1 hour. This research has been approved by the Ohio University IRB, Protocol 16-X-83.

If you are willing to participate in the interview:

1) Please indicate at least two of the following times listed below when you would be available. Choosing two or more times ensures the necessary flexibility to work around your schedule as well as the schedules of our other county representatives.

   (insert times here)

2) Please provide a phone number where you can be reached at those times. I will email you to confirm your scheduled interview time.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,
Subject Line: Final Attempt to Contact - Interview Request: PBIS Framework

Dear (insert name),

At the request of the Ohio Departments of Education and Mental Health & Addiction Services, we are conducting interviews with schools that exemplify best practices in the implementation of Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS). The information collected from this study will give us an inside look from schools who have utilized, or are in the process of utilizing the PBIS framework to select and implement evidence-based practices related to substance abuse and violence prevention as well as mental and behavioral health promotion.

The intent of the interview is to gather data from schools or school districts recognized at the 2015 Ohio PBIS Showcase for their use of the PBIS framework. You have been identified as a key contact within your school or school district who would have information related to this topic.

If you believe there is someone else in your school or school district more knowledgeable about the PBIS framework, please reply to this email and provide this individual’s name and contact information.

This phone interview is estimated to take up to 1 hour. This research has been approved by the Ohio University IRB, Protocol 16-X-83.

If you are willing to participate in the interview:

1) Please indicate at least two of the following times listed below when you would be available. Choosing two or more times ensures the necessary flexibility to work around your schedule as well as the schedules of our other county representatives.

(insert times here)

2) Please provide a phone number where you can be reached at those times. I will email you to confirm your scheduled interview time.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,
Appendix C

Dear Participant,

At the request of the Ohio Departments of Education and Mental Health & Addiction Services, we are conducting interviews with schools that exemplify best practices in the implementation of Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS). The information collected from this interview will benefit those in Ohio and beyond by providing inside look from schools who have utilized, or are in the process of utilizing the PBIS framework to select and implement evidence-based practices related to substance abuse and violence prevention as well as mental and behavioral health promotion.

As part of the project, we invite you to engage in an individual telephone interview regarding your experiences with the PBIS framework. The interview will take approximately one hour to conduct. The interview is unlikely to expose you to risks or discomforts, though talking to an interviewer might be mildly disconcerting.

Interviews will be digitally recorded and recordings will be stored on a secure, password protected, server, accessible only to the project team. The digital recordings will be deleted at the conclusion of the project, May 2016. While every effort will be made to keep your interview confidential, there may be circumstances where this information must be shared with: (a) Federal agencies, for example the Office of Human Research Protections, whose responsibility is to protect human subjects in research; or (b) Representatives of Ohio University (OU), including the Institutional Review Board, a committee that oversees the research at OU. No names will be associated with any data or information reported out in any form.

By scheduling and completing the telephone interview, you are agreeing that:
- you have read this document and have been given the opportunity to ask questions and have them answered;
- you have been informed of potential risks and they have been explained to your satisfaction;
- you understand Ohio University has no funds set aside for any injuries you might receive as a result of participating in this interview;
- you are 18 years of age or older;
- your participation in the interview is completely voluntary;
- you may stop participating in the interview at any time; if you decide to stop participating in the interview, there will be no penalty to you and you will not lose any benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

If you have questions regarding this interview, please contact Holly Raffle (740-597-1710, raffle@ohio.edu). If you have any additional questions about participant rights, please contact Dr. Chris Hayhow, Director of Research Compliance, Ohio University, (740-593-0664, hayhow@ohio.edu). Please keep this letter for future reference.

Thank you again for your participation.

Sincerely,

Holly Raffle, Ph.D., MCHES
Appendix D

To increase validity for this study, the four primary research analysts have chosen to self-disclose their assumptions, beliefs, values, and potential biases that could shape the inquiry process.

Mary Haines is a Research Associate at Ohio University’s Voinovich School of Leadership and Public Affairs. Mary earned a Bachelor’s degree in Liberal Arts, majoring in Business and minoring in marketing, from Marietta College in 2005. She earned a Master’s in Business Administration from Ohio University in 2007. Mary currently is working on a Ph.D. in Higher Education, with research areas in public health and marketing.

Laura Milazzo is a Research Associate at Ohio University’s Voinovich School of Leadership and Public Affairs. Laura holds a master’s degree in Sociology with a concentration in Gerontology from the University of Kansas. Since 2003, Laura has conducted a wide variety of evaluation, applied research, and planning projects for foundations, non-profits, social service organizations, and government agencies. Prior to joining the Voinovich School in 2003, Laura worked for the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services in the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services as a social science research analyst.

Holly Raffle is an Associate Professor at Ohio University’s Voinovich School of Leadership and Public Affairs. She has a Ph.D in Educational Research and Evaluation. Dr. Raffle works primarily in the disciplines of K-12 education, post-secondary education, and public health. Dr. Raffle is the lead evaluator for Ohio’s Partnerships for Success project and has worked on a wide variety of alcohol and other drug prevention initiatives across Ohio, including the Ohio Strategic Prevention Framework – State Incentive Grant. In 2014, Dr. Raffle was the recipient of the Ohio Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services Prevention Champion Award. Prior to working in higher education, Dr. Raffle taught high school Health for the Logan-Hocking School District in Logan, Ohio.

Lezlee Ware is a Research Associate at Ohio University’s Voinovich School of Leadership and Public Affairs. She has a Ph.D in Experimental Social Psychology and has conducted public health research since 2008. Dr. Ware has extensive experience working within Ohio’s Appalachian region, has evaluated coalition programming, and has worked with a variety of substance abuse prevention programs.