

Response to Intervention (RTI-B) and its Impact on Student Behaviors

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Abstract: In this research study, I explore the current Response to Intervention (RTI-B) system at my K-2 elementary school and the impact it has made on student behavior. My interest in school-wide behavior led to me formulate the question, "What impact has the RTI-B process, implemented at the K-2 level, had on student behavior?" This study uses a sample of 20 students in a first grade, public school classroom who all received the same Tier I intervention, a universal program known as Second Step. Two students received Tier II interventions from the school Behavior Interventionist. This study was conducted during a one-month period in which all data was collected. In this program evaluation research study, I used a mixed methods approach, obtaining both qualitative and quantitative data. The study uses data collected from student questionnaires, staff interviews, observation notes, and a behavior tracking system to evaluate the current impact that the school's RTI program has made on student behavior. This data has been analyzed and outlined in the findings section. Overall, the results found that students felt positively about the RTI support they receive at school. In addition, there is a desire amongst staff to improve the data collection system and create school-wide expectations for behavior. The current RTI process is making a positive impact on student behavior, although there is much room for improvement. Possible implications include establishing common language and school-wide expectations to encourage an atmosphere of positive behavior. The data analysis suggests that students and staff respond positively to a research-based universal intervention such as Second Step. In order for a full and successful implementation of a true RTI-B program, time, resources, and support are imperative.

I began my journey in education as a Special Education Educational Technician where I worked with students having both learning and developmental disabilities. As I gained more experience in this field, I was faced with many challenging behaviors presented by students under the age of ten. I soon realized that these behaviors often interfered with the ability for students to be successful (both academically and social/emotionally) and found that schools were tackling behavior as a greater issue, much beyond the confines of individual teachers in their classrooms. After I completed the Extended Teacher Education Program (ETEP) through the University of Southern Maine and was responsible for a classroom of my own, I began to come across more behavior challenges in a classroom setting with a larger group of students. The Response to Intervention (RTI-B) process for behavior is one that I was not particularly familiar with until I had students in my classroom who required this level of support. Therefore, my interest in this action research stems from my own personal experience with student behavior in the classroom.

This year, I was pleased to learn that the K-2 school where I now teach first grade made behavior a school-wide focus for the year. In fact, results from a survey administered by the Behavior Interventionist and School Psychologists indicated that a majority of teachers and staff would like to see some form of school-wide RTI-Behavior (RTI-B) implementation. These staff, as well as other members of the school's RTI-B team, will be looking more closely into this model and how they will make it available and accessible for teachers. I became interested in researching, both in my own classroom and school-wide, behavior interventions that students were receiving and how their behavior has improved. I knew that I wanted to look at trends in documented behavior to determine what types of behaviors are occurring most frequently, and where they are occurring. I plan to share the data I collect and analyze from my research with my building principal, behavior interventionist, guidance counselor, and school psychologist. In addition, it will be informative to share with my grade level team members. The information I have gained

through my research will also be beneficial for parents of those students receiving RTI-B Tier II support. This information will likely be used and shared during parent-teacher conferences, where I can discuss individual student progress with parents.

Currently, it is recommended that all staff fill out “blue slips” for behavior incidents. Staff members record the student’s name, teacher, type and location of incident. On the back of the slip, there is a space for “further action.” Teachers who receive these blue slips for their students are encouraged to record what further action they have taken after the incident (i.e. discipline the student, make a phone call home, etc.). These slips are entered into a database, known as *Pulse*, which allows the Principal and Behavior Interventionist to track individual students’ behaviors. In addition, it provides information on discipline events by type, grade level, location, and time period.

I became interested in pursuing this research not only because behavior is a topic that will be a school-wide focus this year, but because I wanted to be better informed about the nature of behavior in elementary students and how our school RTI program is addressing the issue. My hope was that this research would provide me with a greater understanding of the source of behavior and how to provide additional support to my students with behavioral challenges. In addition, I hoped that my research would impact my awareness on how student behavior is addressed at my school, as well as the effectiveness of our RTI interventions. The entire first grade, including my class, is receiving a universal Tier I intervention through a program known as *Second Step*. *Second Step* is a grade level specific program which teaches skills for social and academic success. Furthermore, I have two students receiving more targeted Tier II interventions who work with the Behavior Interventionist on an individual basis. My intent was that through my data collection, I would have a greater understanding of the effectiveness of these interventions on the student behavior I see in my classroom on a daily basis. By looking at behavior trends in recent school years, I hoped to identify common behaviors and where they are most frequently occurring. I plan to share this information with my colleagues with the intention of informing our school culture and support systems surrounding behavior.

Literature Review

One of the most important aspects of my research will be looking at the effects that RTI has had on the students. To determine whether or not student behavior has changed after this type of intervention, I interviewed students to determine how they felt about the process. Yeager and Walton (2011) argue that, “Critically, if a social-psychological intervention does not deliver its message in a way that changes how students think or feel about school or about themselves in school, then nothing has been delivered at all.” These psycho-social interventions do not teach academic content, but instead target “students’ thoughts, feelings, and beliefs in and about school.” In addition, they have been shown to have a positive influence on student achievement.

This study reviewed four different social-psychological interventions and their influence on student achievement both in the short and long term. In the first intervention, Wilson and Linville targeted college students in a brief intervention developed to teach students that poor academic performance is normal during a transition to a new school, and that their grades would improve with time (as cited in Yeager & Walton, 2011). This was reinforced through a video the treatment group viewed with upper classmen saying how normal it was for first year grades to be low. A year later, when their grades were compared to those in the control group who watched a video with upper classmen who did not mention grades starting low in their first year, the students receiving the intervention had higher GPAs. In the second intervention reviewed,

Dweck (as cited in Yeager & Walton, 2011) looked at the *entity* (intelligence is fixed and unchangeable) versus *incremental* (intelligence is improvable with hard work and effort) theories of intelligence. These theories were tested in a study with fifth grade students who were given a set of logic problems and randomly assigned to receive intelligence praise (“That’s a really high score. You must be very smart at these problems”), effort praise (“That’s a really high score. You must have worked hard at these problems”), or neutral praise (“That’s a really high score”). For a final set of problems, the effect of the different types of praise was influential in that students’ scores did not change for those receiving neutral phrase. For students receiving effort praise, they not only improved on the final problems, but they also asked for more challenging problems in the future. Students receiving only intelligence praise, solved 30 percent fewer problems and requested only easy problems.

While Yeager and Walton (2011) praise the successes of these effective interventions, they warn that they are not “silver bullets” and should not be considered quick fixes for students who need great support. In fact, they suggest that the interventions are “context dependent and reliant on the nature of the educational environment” (p. 274). This research article encouraged me to explore the behavior trends at my school and determine what specific interventions have targeted certain behaviors, and how they have impacted these behaviors.

The Pearce (2009) study examined students in Kindergarten through Grade 5 receiving RTI in the form of positive behavioral supports. These students have been identified because of their challenging behaviors presented at school, and the effects these behaviors are having on their school performances. Through my research, I intended to find out the impact that our RTI-B program is having on student behavior at my school, and whether this intervention has influenced students’ social, emotional, and academic performances.

I believe that this study will be influential in my own research for a number of reasons. First, the study looks at the implementation of an RTI program that was implemented over two successive years. Currently, there is a Tier I universal intervention known as *Second Step* in its second year of implementation at my school. While I conduct my research, one of my goals will be to look at behavior trends that have occurred during the past two years. I would like to investigate the times of year when problem behaviors are more frequently occurring, where these behaviors are occurring, and what types of behaviors are the most common amongst students at my school. Second, the Pearce (2009) research is a mixed methods study using both quantitative and qualitative data to complete its findings and conclusions. While nine students were examined across two years, their progress was recorded and graphed (number of maladaptive episodes and types/frequency of interventions received). Qualitative data in this study was defined by interviews of staff involved in the intervention process. This included principals, general education teachers, special education teachers, students, and parents who were involved in the program. Similarly, I conducted interviews of school staff involved in the RTI process as well as students receiving the interventions for my data collection. These staff members included my building principal, Behavior Interventionist, School Counselor, and School Psychologist Intern. Last, this article serves as a program evaluation, much like what my research will be exploring. While this evaluation looked at the implementation of an RTI model through positive behavior supports, I will be looking at my school’s current response system to the most common and problematic behaviors, and what interventions are in place to support these behaviors.

While this article focuses on many of the emotional issues this particular student population faces, Pearce (2009) included the fact that, “RTI processes focusing on the needs of students with learning and emotional disabilities show promise in addressing many of these identified issues.”

Although I will not know if students receiving “blue slips” suffer from emotional difficulties, there is likely a percentage of students affected by these and in turn make poor choices while at school.

The Saeki et al. (2011) article looks at social, emotional, and behavioral difficulties in school children and how they are addressed by the RTI system. This article suggests that “Early identification and intervention can prevent the escalation of problems into more debilitating forms of social-emotional and behavioral functioning” (Saeki et al., 2011).

This study proved to be beneficial to my research because of the interventions used with the 55 third grade students involved in the study. Because it looked at RTI and its commonly known three-tiered system, the study targeted students to receive interventions at all levels. This included an intervention at the Tier I level, which is considered a “Universal Intervention.” This consisted of a lesson on impulse control and was given to all students. As students were identified for Tier II, more specific needs were addressed in a “Selected Intervention,” while Tier III consisted of a “Targeted Intervention” (Saeki et al., 2011).

This study inspired me to use the information I receive from the “blue slip” data regarding behavior trends to discuss with RTI-B staff members who are part of the process and are making decisions on how this data is used. In Tier II, two groups of six boys and three girls were selected to work on impulse control and friendship and empathy skills. The intervention used in Tier II came in the form of *The Second Step Curriculum*, which promotes social skill development in children (Saeki et al., 2011). The students in my classroom are also currently receiving this intervention from our Behavior Interventionist in the form of weekly lessons that will last for about 20 weeks. All first grade students in my school are receiving *Second Step* as a Tier I universal intervention to learn and practice skills for learning.

Finally, the Campell, Rodriguez, Anderson & Barnes (2013) article looked at the effectiveness of Tier II interventions in school settings. One Tier II intervention that was evaluated was the Check-in/Check-out (CICO) intervention. This intervention is such that the student receiving the support “checks in” with his/her coordinator at the beginning of every day to review expectations and set goals for the day, receiving a daily progress card. At the end of the day, that student briefly meets with his/her coordinator again to review how their day went by reviewing his/her daily progress card (Campell et al., 2013). I am particularly interested in CICO because a student of mine started receiving this intervention at the time I began conducting my action research in the classroom. Her CICO coordinator is our school’s Behavior Interventionist, and we are working together to record data on my student’s daily progress sheet. I also have an additional student who meets with our Behavior Interventionist on a daily basis in a one-on-one setting for Tier II support to review rule and expectation following. I was able to collect data on both of these students to measure their feelings towards the support they receive from the Behavior Interventionist and if they feel it helps them to be better students in our classroom.

Research Question

Behavior and how it is managed in public schools is an area that is constantly evolving. Behavior itself is dynamic, especially in a public school setting. Students with diverse backgrounds, barriers, and capacities often face challenges at school that present themselves both in and outside of the classroom. As a classroom teacher, behavior management is an area where I am constantly looking for ways to improve my practice. I am grateful that my students had the shared experience as Kindergarten students of the *Second Step* program taught by our school

Behavior Interventionist, and continue to receive this Tier I universal intervention this year as first graders.

With behavior at the forefront of our work as a school staff this year, I have become more interested in how behavior is being handled at my school as a whole. Looking through a behavior lens at my own students, my teaching practice, and school wide-behavior lead me to ask the research question, *What impact has the RTI-B process, implemented at the K-2 level, had on student behavior?*. In addition to this research question, I formulated three sub-questions in hopes of reaching more clarity when evaluating the RTI-B process at my school. These sub-questions include, *What are the most common behavior trends that have been reported within the past two years?*, *How do students receiving RTI behavior services feel about the support they are receiving?*, and *What are the most common behaviors being reported, and where are they occurring?*. To understand my sub-questions further, it is important to note that some, not all, behavior incidences are recorded and documented through a database in my school district known as *Pulse*. Staff members are encouraged to fill out “blue slips” for behavior incidences such as non-compliance, physical aggression/violence (towards self or peer), disrespectful language, making threats (towards staff or students), destruction of property, and unsafe/inappropriate use of playground equipment/toys. However, there has been no official training for the “blue slips,” nor are they required or being enforced in any way.

Research Design

This study was conducted using a mixed methods approach to program evaluation research, looking at both qualitative and quantitative data collection. Qualitative data was collected through observation notes, as well as recording and transcribing interviews with students and four staff members at my school. These staff include the Behavior Interventionist, School Psychologist Intern, building Principal, and school Guidance Counselor. Quantitative data was collected through student questionnaires based on Tier I and Tier II interventions, and how students receiving these interventions felt about this support they received. In addition, I collected data from a school database known as *Pulse* to determine trends in “blue slip” behavior reporting at my school for both the 2013-2014 and the current school year. This data allowed me to observe trends in discipline events by type, grade level, location, and month. The following sections, Sample and Setting, and Methods of Data Collection, outline the research design of this study in greater depth.

Sample and Setting

This study was conducted at Robert P.T. Coffin Elementary School in Brunswick, Maine. This K-2 school is home to ten Kindergarten, seven Grade 1, and four multi age classrooms (Grades 1 and 2). Only 38 second grade students attend Coffin School, all spread out amongst the four multiage classrooms. Coffin School has 390 enrolled students, and approximately 36.6% of first grade students receive free or reduced lunch. In this study, 20 students from my first grade classroom were surveyed using questionnaires and observed during three weekly *Second Step* lessons. I believe that it was beneficial for me to have had the opportunity to use my own students in this study, as I have a strong understanding of their backgrounds and they were comfortable working with me throughout the surveying process. These students represent a diverse range of barriers and capacities in academic, social/emotional, developmental, and socio-economic areas. Three students with Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) were surveyed as part of this study. At the time of the study, all students received a universal Tier I intervention known as *Second Step* to target skills for social and academic success. This program is taught

during a weekly lesson by our school's Behavior Interventionist. Along with this Tier I support, two of my students received Tier II interventions in which they see the Behavior Interventionist for support on an individual basis. As previously mentioned, one student sees her for a Check In/Check Out at the beginning and end of every day, and the other student sees her for a longer break during the day. Four staff members were also part of the sample for this study. These staff members were interviewed and asked the same six questions as part of an interview protocol (Appendix A). These individuals consisted of the building Principal, School Counselor, Behavior Interventionist, and School Psychology Intern. All staff who were interviewed are members of the school's RTI-B team.

Methods of Data Collection

As previously mentioned, a mixed methods approach was used for my research, combining both qualitative and quantitative methods of data collection. The first method of qualitative data collection was through observation notes. These observation notes were recorded during three weekly *Second Step* lessons taught by the Behavior Interventionist. These lessons were approximately 30 minutes in duration, and reviewed, taught, and reinforced skills for learning that students are encouraged to use across academic and non-academic settings. In fact, I asked my students if they could name a specific skill for learning when I surveyed them using student questionnaires as a data collection tool (Appendix B). The motivation behind observing these lessons was to gain an understanding of the level of participation and engagement by my students. I also hoped to observe skills reviewed, taught, and reinforced by the Behavior Interventionist. The *Second Step* program places a large emphasis on recognizing, naming, and demonstrating feelings, and I wanted to observe my students engaged in all of these. In addition, I wanted to observe those specific students who were able to attend to the speaker, and make note of those who needed reminders more often than others.

The second method of qualitative data collection occurred through staff interviews. These staff members were my building Principal, Guidance Counselor, Behavior Interventionist, and School Psychology Intern. All staff members interviewed were part of my school's RTI-B team, and therefore were quite knowledgeable of the subject of my research. All staff members were asked the same six questions regarding student behavior and the RTI-B process. These interviews were transcribed and analyzed for themes found within each interview for the six different questions. The interview protocol focused on behavior trends (type of behavior and its location), effectiveness of the RTI-B system currently in place, and their role and the impact they believe it has made on student behavior (Appendix A).

The two additional methods of data collection during my research were both quantitative. The first was in the form of student questionnaires. I created two different questionnaires to address both the Tier I intervention (which all of my students receive) and the Tier II interventions (which two of my students receive). First, I surveyed all 20 students in my class about the Tier I intervention *Second Step*. Second, I surveyed two students in my class who received individual Tier II RTI support from the behavior Interventionist. Therefore, these students (coded using numbers 19 and 20) were surveyed using both questionnaires. These questionnaires intended to measure students' feelings toward Tier I and Tier II RTI-B interventions. In addition, the Tier I survey intended to measure students' feelings towards *Second Step* and if they believed that the program helps them be better students in the classroom.

The final method of quantitative data collection was gathered through the program *Pulse*, a database that allows documented student behavior incidences to be input into its system. After

data has been entered into *Pulse*, it is possible for reports to be run and trends to be observed. For my data collection, I gathered information on behavior incidences (or “discipline events” as used in *Pulse*) and was able to collate them by type, grade level, location, and by month. By accessing data collected through *Pulse*, I was able to look for behavior trends over the past (2013-2014) and current (2014-2015) school years. These behavior trends allowed me to determine the top five most common behaviors and where those behaviors were occurring.

Coding

The observation notes that were collected throughout this study were coded by student number, observation day, and page number. All students were given a number (1-20), which I used to code the observation notes as well as label the student questionnaires. As previously mentioned, one of the areas I wanted to focus my observation notes on was the level of engagement of my students during *Second Step* lessons. After a transition toward the end of one lesson in which students had the opportunity to pass a stuffed animal around the circle (which required the skill of taking turns), the Behavior Interventionist gave students the reminder, “If you are having a hard time waiting, take a belly breath.” My observations noted that Students 7, 10, and 15 had the most difficulty with this reminder. Although these students needed reminders to attend, when surveyed using the student questionnaire, they were all able to name a skill for learning and they believed that *Second Step* helps them be a better student in our classroom. Furthermore, they all circled the smiley face that indicated how they felt when doing *Second Step* with our Behavior Interventionist, lending itself to the conclusion that this was overall, a positive experience for these particular students.

After the four staff interviews were transcribed, I compared quotations by staff members according to questions asked. From these responses emerged common themes across staff members. If common language (words or phrases) were used by staff members, these were highlighted in bold to recognize their significance. Differences in opinions and responses were also considered, but not represented in the final data analysis (Appendix A).

Findings

I will discuss results found through my data analysis according to each of the three sub-questions that were proposed at the beginning of my research project. First, *What are the most common behavior trends that have been reported within the past two years?* According to data collection from “blue slips” documented in *Pulse*, non-compliance, battery/simple assault, and unsafe behaviors were the most common behavior trends reported within the past two years. In these top behaviors reported, a majority of these documented cases occurred by Kindergarten students compared with any other grade level (Appendix C). For the top recorded behavior during the 2013-2014 school year, 176 of 320 reported cases of battery were by Kindergarten students compared to 143 cases by Grade 1 students, and only one case by Grade 2 students. During the 2014-2015 school year, Kindergarten students accounted for 66 of the total 93 documented accounts of simple assault, whereas Grade 1 students only accounted for 26, and Grade 2, one.

The second sub-question, *How do students receiving RTI behavior services feel about the support they are receiving?* was addressed through both observation notes and student questionnaires. Through my observation notes, I was able to better understand the language used during *Second Step* and see how engaged my students were in this universal Tier I intervention. My observations lead me to draw the following conclusions. A majority of my students were engaged during all three *Second Step* lessons. The themes that resonated throughout the lessons

included being assertive, reading and interpreting facial expressions, naming and showing feelings, and whole body listening. A majority of students showed active participation through both verbal responses and body language. This level of engagement and attentiveness observed during my observations was also reinforced by the results of the student questionnaires. All 20 students that were surveyed believed that *Second Step* helped them to become better students in our classroom. In addition, 19 out of 20 students circled the smiley face when asked how they feel when doing a *Second Step* lesson with the Behavior Interventionist (Appendix B). The questionnaire results further reinforced student attentiveness in that 19 out of 20 students could name a “skill for learning,” one of the pillars of the *Second Step* program. These skills were reinforced and mentioned during all three observed lessons. With only two students receiving this Tier II support in my classroom, the data collected through this second questionnaire is not substantial enough to make any generalizations. This small sample size is certainly one of the limitations of this study. However, of the two students receiving Tier II support from the Behavior Interventionist, both felt positive about going to her room to work with her each day which was indicated by circling the smiley face on the questionnaire.

The third sub-question *What are the most common behaviors being reported, and where are they occurring?* was addressed through *Pulse* data as well as information received through staff interviews. Out of 831 reported behaviors (discipline events) that occurred over the past two school years, top five most common were battery (320), non-compliance (222), simple assault (93), unsafe behaviors (87), and disrespectful language (42) (Appendix C). Battery alone accounted for 38.5 percent of all documented behavior in 2013-2014 and so far in 2014-2015. Staff asked about these reported behaviors through interviews reported similar behaviors, naming non-compliance, simple assault, and physical aggression as the most common behaviors they believed were being reported. In the 2013-2014 school year, the majority of documented discipline events occurred in the classroom, and in 2014-2015, on the playground. Figure 1.1 and 1.2 below show a graphic representation of discipline events within the 2013-2014 and so far in the 2015-2016 school year. As you can see, the classroom and playground account for the areas of Coffin School where discipline events are most frequently being documented.

Figure 1.1

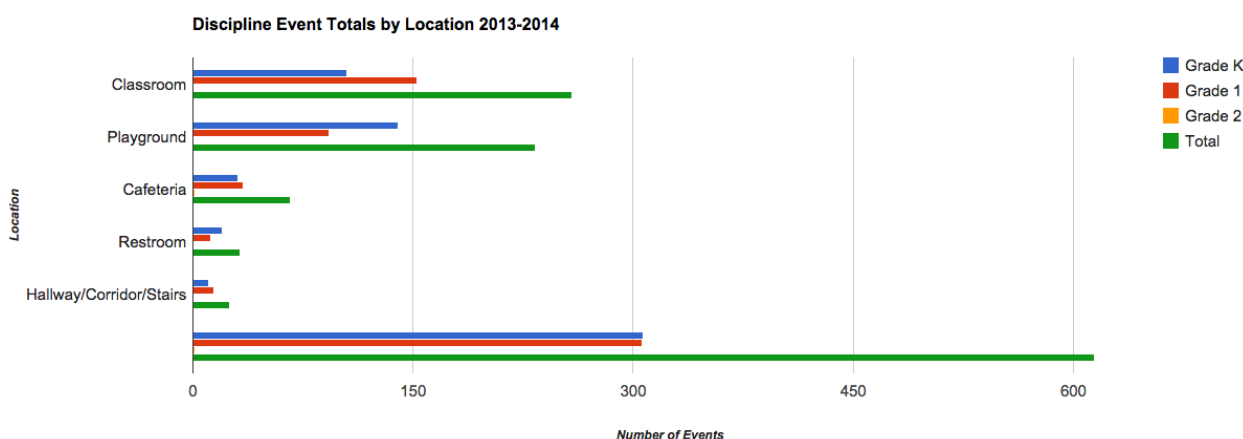
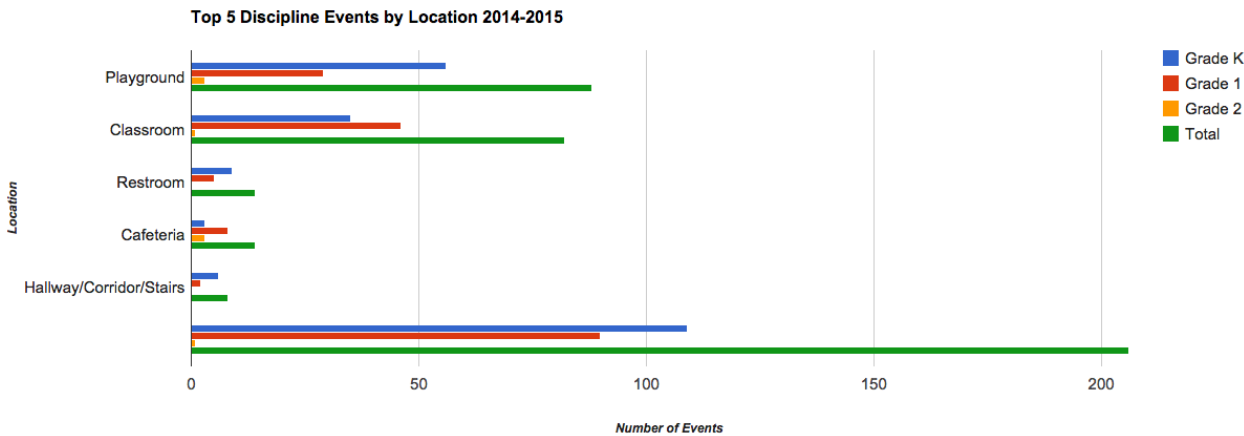


Figure 1.2



As for location, 340 out of 820 discipline events occurred in the classroom. The playground accounted for 321 events, the cafeteria had 80, the restroom 46, and the hallway/corridor/stairs 33. Again, 41.5 percent of all documented behavior within the 2013-2014 school year and so far within the 2014-2015 school year occurred in the classroom. Interviewed staff members agreed that “non-compliance” and “aggression” were the most common behaviors occurring at Coffin School. Additionally, they believed that these behavior occurred in the classroom, in the cafeteria, at recess, and on the bus. Only the Behavior Interventionist and the Principal described student behavior as “simple assault,” which is a *Pulse*-specific term for physical aggression. The “blue slips” do not reflect this language, and therefore it is up to the staff member entering the blue slip data to deem whether a specific discipline event should be considered simple assault. As discussed in the next section, this issue of subjectivity presents itself as one limitation to my research results.

After completing data analysis and synthesizing results gathered from all my data collection tools, the following findings and conclusions were made. First, the most common documented behaviors that occurred at Coffin School within the 2013-2014 and 2014-2015 school years are non-compliance, battery, simple assault, and unsafe behaviors, and they are occurring in classrooms and on the playground. The concrete data available through *Pulse* is an effective resource for the Principal, Behavior Interventionist, School Counselor, and School Psychologist Intern to have access to as part of the RTI-B team. However, it is limited in that not all staff members are consistently filling out the “blue slips” on a regular basis. In 2013-2014, the majority of documented discipline events occurred in classrooms. This data leads me to the conclusion that classroom teachers were mostly responsible for filling out “blue slips” during this school year. As mentioned previously, “blue slips” are encouraged, but not mandatory and the staff at Coffin School has not had a formal training regarding their use.

Second, the majority of students surveyed feel positive about the RTI support they receive. The student questionnaires showed that 100 percent of students surveyed felt positive about their experience receiving universal, Tier I support through *Second Step* lessons. In addition, every staff member interviewed commented on how *Second Step* has become an effective behavior support at Coffin School. The Behavior Interventionist stated that *Second Step* is “very much alive in some classrooms.” The School Psychologist Intern believes that system-wide work with

Second Step is proving to be an effective behavior support at Coffin School. Through my own observations, it was apparent that students were engaged and interested in learning skills to help improve their behavior across academic and social situations.

Third, the supports currently in place through RTI-B are improving behavior overall, however, a true RTI-B system has yet to be fully implemented. Among staff members interviewed, there is a desire for improvement and they believe that the RTI-B system is “definitely growing,” yet still in its “formative stages.” Along with this sentiment of desired growth of RTI-B, there also exists a desire amongst staff to create school-wide expectations for behavior as well as improve “blue slips” to make them a more effective data collection system. Clear, school-wide expectations and using a common language are phrases that were used consistently in each staff interview in response to improving behavior on a school-wide basis.

Last, *Second Step* is an effective, universal Tier I intervention from which both students and staff are benefitting at Coffin School. Students are benefitting from the common language and skills for learning that have enabled them to draw upon strategies across academic and social areas. Staff members have benefitted from the common language provided by *Second Step* and the ability to hold students accountable for their behavior. Students surveyed through questionnaires felt positive towards receiving this Tier I intervention, and they believe it helps them to be better students in the classroom. Overall, its effect has been a positive one amongst my students.

Limitations

This study had various limitations that did not allow the results from my research to be as robust as they could be. Initially, I had hoped to collect data from my school’s *Pulse* behavior database from the past three years to compare behavior trends. It was not until I was granted access to and recorded data from the *Pulse* system that I found data only to be available from the 2013-2014 and 2014-2015 school years. I believe that my first sub-question, *What are the most common behavior trends that have been reported within the past 2 years?*, would have been more effective for my research had there been data recorded for three or four total years. I would have had the ability to look at longer term behavior trends. Another limitation was the small sample size (n=2) of students receiving Tier II interventions in my classroom who were surveyed through a second questionnaire. It would have strengthened my study to survey students from other classrooms receiving Tier II intervention as well. Due to the short nature of the study and the fact that I did not collect data on students in other classrooms, I cannot draw conclusions for other first grade classrooms at my school, or at other schools who might receive the same Tier I intervention. However, for the students and staff from which I collected data, it appears *Second Step* is making a positive impact on the culture of behavior in my own classroom, and is certainly having an effect on the school behavior climate as well.

Recommendations/Implications

My passion for this research study came from my eagerness to learn more about our school-wide RTI-B system as well as shine a light on the behavior occurring in my own classroom. After the weeks of data collection and subsequent data analysis, I have determined implications for both the future and for my own teaching practice. One implication for the future is that after collecting data and listening to the desires of my fellow staff members involved in the RTI-B process, it appears that the most effective RTI-B system is one which is fully implemented and all staff are on board. If staff members were to receive a “blue slip” training, then our school would have a more effective method of data collection for behavior. This full implementation would require

ample time, resources, and support from our school principal along with the specialists whom I interviewed and other members of the RTI-B team. Another implication is that both students and staff respond positively to a research-based curriculum that creates a common language and one that can be used across social and academic situations, such as *Second Step*. Many students are gaining skills and strategies to help them in and outside of the classroom, and teachers are learning a common language that provides consistency for both themselves and their students.

As for my own teaching practice, one implication from my research is that to encourage an environment of positive behavior, school-wide expectations must be taught and known by all students and used by all staff. As I consider my own behavior management in my classroom, it is worth considering the expectations students have for outside of the classroom as well. As evidenced in the *Pulse* data, one of the most common areas for behavior events to occur is on the playground. It is worth noting that this should be an area of focus for all staff to consider when teaching and enforcing school expectations and rules. We currently have Playground rules set by our Physical Education teacher, but who is reinforcing these rules? And moreover, is there positive reinforcement for those students who follow the rules? What other Tier I universal interventions exist that are accessible to all students and would support positive school-wide behavior? These are all important questions that require consideration as our school looks at the further implementation of an effective RTI-B system in the future. As I think about other expectations that would improve school-wide behavior, I believe that training for staff and a common language to draw from will not only benefit our students, but our school climate as well.

Summary

While engaging in action research and managing a classroom of 20 first grade students felt daunting at times, I feel grateful to have had the opportunity for this experience. This action research process allowed me to have a heightened focus around the issue of student behavior that I likely would not have had in such a concentrated capacity. Although school-wide behavior was made a goal for staff to focus on this year, being an action researcher focused solely on the topic of behavior allowed me to dive much deeper. I was able to work with my students in a capacity that would have not presented itself had I not pursued this avenue. Additionally, I was able to connect with staff members around a subject that we wouldn't otherwise necessarily discuss. It was enlightening to have the opportunity to interview my Principal, Behavior Interventionist, School Counselor, and School Psychology Intern. As I look back on my experience as an action researcher, it reminds me very much of a long journey. One in which you may encounter many obstacles along the way, but it is worth the wait and the experience is in the process, not necessarily the end result. I was able to data collect concrete through observations, surveys, and interviews. I had conversations with staff members who are passionate about improving school-wide behavior at Coffin School. I made connections with my students around social skills and skills for learning, rather than literacy or math strategies for a change. I believe that the most important gain I made throughout this journey is perspective. Perspective on where a RTI-B system came from and where it is going. Perspective on student behaviors over time and what is being done now to improve them. Perspective on staff members' opinions and suggestions for the future. Perspective on my own teaching practice and behavior management both in and outside of my classroom. These perspectives gained from my research inspire me to continue following my passion as an educator, and to continue contributing to the greater school community through my involvement in the RTI process.

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APPENDICES




Appendix A

Question #	Interview Protocol Questions
1	What behavior supports do you feel are most effective at our school? Least effective?
2	How do you feel that your role has made an impact on student behavior?
3	Do you believe that the ‘blue slip’ system is an effective method of data collection for behavior?
4	How do you feel about the impact that RTI-B has made at our school?
5	What behavior(s) do you believe most commonly occurs at our school? Where do you think it is occurring most frequently?
6	What areas do you believe are essential for improving behavior on a school-wide basis?

Question	LW - Behavior Interventionist	SC - Principal	RB - Guidance Counselor	SJS - School Psychologist Intern
1. What behavior supports do you feel are most effective at our school? Least effective?	<p>Most effective:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - establishing expectations - rehearsing routines, all of that repeated practice - Second Step and that is very much alive in some classrooms <p>Least effective:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - signage because it's in written word it's a K-2 school and so I don't necessarily think it has as much meaning for our <u>non-readers</u> 	<p>Most effective:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - proactive work that we've been doing - Second Step is just one manifestation - developing that common language <p>Least effective:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <u>encounter</u> folks who are not on board with "fixed mindsets" 	<p>Most effective:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - proper programming for the students - Connections--a very effective program for students who need that level of support (structured time, a lot of adult supervision) - Second Step (Tier I) <p>Least effective;...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - did not answer 	<p>Most effective:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <u>dedicated</u> behavior interventionist - <u>system-wide</u> work with Second Step <p>Least effective;...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - different pieces here and there of data collection and not in a way that we can get a full picture of where behavior is occurring correctly, and where it is not occurring correctly
2. How do you feel that your role has made an impact on student behavior?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <u>it</u> was my goal coming in to reduce like office referrals by 50 percent, and what he came up with was that it was <u>actually</u> by 80 percent - having somebody else to help navigate - when I start getting multiple referrals on a kid or calls on the radio, I just put them on my <u>schedule</u>... - <u>proactively</u> versus reactively 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <u>bringing</u> the right people to the table - survey the scene - seek to understand - learn from the work - create the opportunity for the right people to collaborate on the work that is going to move our school forward, and then to support the work - to listen, and see what the needs are, the collective needs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <u>want</u> them to have a strong connection to an adult when their feelings are hard to manage - I'm a resource for them--more on the level of sadness, grief, frustration, anxiety - In a way, I'm doing RTI all the time - I feel like I'm setting that tone, that school climate that is important for all children to know that their feelings are important 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - I hope that I'm backing up our Behavior Interventionist - support her when the behavior issues go beyond the environment, and become something that is internal to the child (psychological issue, emotional disturbance, mental disability) - provide concrete educational recommendations to support a student's appropriate behavior - I try to recommend strategies in RTI when students are in regular <u>ed</u> classroom

Appendix B

Survey Questions			
How do you feel when you get to go to Ms. W's room everyday?	2	0	0
Do you think that working with Ms. W helps you follow directions and rules in our classroom?	1	1	0
Do you like talking to Ms. W about strategies for following directions and being safe at school?	1	1	0
How do you feel when you come back to the classroom after working with Ms. W?	1	1	0

Survey Questions				Yes	No
How do you feel when you are doing Second Step with Ms. W?	19	1	0	-	-
Can you name one of the skills for learning?	-	-	-	Eyes Watching 9/20 Ears Listening 6/20 Voices Quiet 1/20 Body Still 1/20 Other 3/20	1
What if puppy tells you to do something when you should be listening to snail, should you do what he says?	-	-	-	0	20
Do you think that Second Steps helps you be a better student in our classroom?	-	-	-	20	0

Appendix C

Total Discipline Events 2013-2014					
	Event Description	Grade K	Grade 1	Grade 2	Total
1	Battery	176	143	1	320
2	Non-compliance	59	102	0	161
3	Unsafe behavior	36	40	0	76
4	Disrespectful	23	19	0	42
5	Vandalism	10	9	0	19
Total		304	313	1	618

Total Discipline Events 2014-2015					
	Event Description	Grade K	Grade 1	Grade 2	Total
1	Simple Assault	66	26	1	93
2	Non-compliance	18	43	0	61
3	Peer-to-Peer	12	15	5	32
4	Unsafe Behavior	7	3	1	11
5	Other School Code Violation	2	6	8	16
Total		105	93	1	213