

THE BENEFITS OF FAMILY-TEACHER
ENGAGEMENT IN STUDENT
BEHAVIOR

by

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Abstract

Schoolwide Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (SWPBIS) play a key role in student behavior in schools. In addition to SWPBIS, teachers and families can work together to form a positive partnership built on teamwork and communication. With both parties involved, the student will be able to achieve success in academics and social and emotional growth. The participants of the current study were teachers from three different elementary schools within the same school district. Authors led focus group interviews with each group of school teachers to gain current perspectives of family teacher engagement. The results found that when teachers and families established expectations early on, the partnership was easier. Constant communication is also a key role in the partnership. Teachers expressed concerns with feeling alone when addressing needs or were met with defensiveness. Teachers realize that families do not always have the resources or training they need to help their child. As a result, teachers would work to provide these families with resources.

The Benefits of Family-Teacher Engagement in Student Behavior

Schoolwide Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (SWPBIS) is a multi-tiered framework focused on the prevention of problem behavior through the explicit instruction of behavioral expectations for all students at the campus and classroom levels. The goal of SWPBIS is “to prevent, as well as change, patterns of problem behavior” (Horner & Sugai, 2005, p. 360). Within SWPBIS, students with or at risk for problem behaviors receive additional instruction and support to help them meet behavioral expectations. There are three tiers of instructional support. The first tier, referred to as Tier 1, is the universal tier, and applies to all students in the classroom. Tier 1 supports serve as the primary prevention tool. An example of Tier 1 support includes class reward systems. The second tier, referred to as Tier 2, involves targeted instruction within small groups and is designed to meet the needs of students who are at risk of problem behavior. The third tier, referred to as Tier 3, involves individualized supports (e.g., one-on-one instruction) and is designed to meet the needs of students with persistent and more severe problem behaviors (Sugai & Horner, 2006).

Prior to the implementation of SWPBIS, a team of administrators and teachers who have received training in the SWPBIS strategies create positively-stated behavioral expectations for all students. There are normally three to five rules that focus on preferred behaviors, such as “be responsible,” rather than “do not hit others” (PBIS.org). In addition to establishing clear expectations, educators in schools implementing SWPBIS explicitly teach behavior expectations and they track student progress in order to make data-based decisions about student programming (Sugai & Horner, 2002).

Since the environment influences students’ behaviors, educators in SWPBIS schools consider environmental factors such classroom layout and procedures, peer interactions,

schoolwork, and the home/community context when implementing the model (Sugai & Horner, 2006). The SWPBIS model recognizes that behavior change occurs over time based on the reinforcements across the home and school contexts; therefore, the rate with which student behavioral outcomes change may be longer than programs that target academics alone (Bradshaw et al., 2010). However, this slower process is well worth the effort. As Bradshaw et al. (2010) explained, student academic outcomes within SWPBIS schools are more robust than academic-only interventions because the reduction in the rates of behavior problems in the classroom results in increased opportunities for learning.

Family Engagement Within SWPBIS

Within SWPBIS, family engagement is defined as an active, interactive, dynamic, and ongoing process in which family members and key stakeholders engage as equal partners in decision-making, planning, and implementation to support children and adolescents across settings (Weist, Garbacz, Lane, and Kincaid, 2017). The term “family” is used instead of parents because of the inclusivity to encompass other adults in the homes of students such as grandparents, aunts/uncles, foster parents, siblings or others. The word “engagement” is used instead of the commonly-used term “involvement” because involvement suggests that families may be more passive than active in their role within their children’s education services (Grant & Ray, 2019).

Engaging families in the SWPBIS process across all three tiers of instruction (Tiers 1, 2, and 3) is a critical aspect to the success of the model since the consistent implementation of behavioral expectations across the home and school contexts helps to promote positive student behaviors (Dunlap & Fox, 2007). Family engagement research within Tiers 1 and 2 is especially important for preventing problem behavior. In order for teachers to help students succeed in the

area of academics and behavior, the teacher needs a foundation of trust with their students' families (Adams & Christenson, 2000). According to Adams and Christenson, trust in the family-school relationship is defined as “confidence that another person will act in a way to benefit or sustain the relationship, or the implicit or explicit goals of the relationship, to achieve positive outcomes for students” (p. 480). This foundation should be formed earlier rather than later to give families access to individualized supports throughout the tiers and prevent challenging behavior from escalating to Tier 3 (Fantuzzo, 2004). When prosocial and challenging behaviors are addressed consistently and collaboratively by both teachers and families at the universal (Tier 1) and targeted (Tier 2) levels, students receiving Tier 3 behavioral supports will be more likely to have a predictable management plan in place.

Research shows that family engagement practices such as open communication and home-school collaboration are associated with prosocial student behavior. According to McCormick (2013), practices such as volunteering are associated with lower levels of student problem behaviors. Home-school communication along with classroom emotional support are also both predictors of student behavior. According to Muscott et al. (2008) family engagement also shows that when implemented, families and students “feel welcomed, valued, and respected” (p. 11) when their opinions and ideas are heard, creating an open environment and two-way exchange of communication.

The purpose of this study was to examine elementary school (PK-6th grade) teachers' perspectives about factors that influence their ability to partner with families for enhanced student behavior. Due to the limited amount of family engagement research within Tiers 1 and 2, this study focuses on home-school relationships in situations where student problem behavior is mild to moderate (as contrasted to severe). The goal of this study is to identify themes that can be

used to help families and educators build proactive home-school relationships that serve as a foundation for SWPBIS programming across all instructional tiers.

Method

Participants

The participants included 23 teachers from three elementary schools within the same district. These schools implemented SWPBIS and were located in an urban district in the Southwest region of the U.S. Participating teachers were primarily female ($n = 20$; 86.95%) and identified themselves as White or European American ($n = 15$; 65.22%), Hispanic or Latino ($n = 4$; 17.39%), or Black or African American ($n = 3$; 13.04%). Among the 23 participants, 22 were classroom teachers and one was a guidance counselor. Of the classroom teachers, grade-level representation was evenly distributed among the participants: kindergarten ($n = 4$), first grade ($n = 2$), second grade ($n = 2$), third grade ($n = 2$), fourth grade ($n = 1$), fifth grade ($n = 4$), sixth grade ($n = 4$), and multiple grade levels (K-6, 1st/2nd, K-3rd; $n = 3$). Approximately 86% of the classroom teacher participants were in a general education position ($n = 20$), and approximately 13% were in a special education position ($n = 3$). On average, participants had 10 years of teaching experience (range = 18 years).

Data Collection

Sampling procedures. Upon IRB approval, the researchers contacted SWPBIS leaders and administrators in the urban district (as described previously) to identify three elementary schools from which teachers would be recruited for the study ($n = 2$ Title 1; $n = 1$ non Title 1). Once the three schools were identified, the researchers met with the principals at each school to describe the study and to invite them to identify teacher participants who met the following criteria: general or special education teacher in an elementary school setting that had been

implementing SWPBIS for at least two years. To avoid the risk of coercion, interested teachers contacted the researchers directly about participation.

Focus group procedures. To collect data for the study, the second and third authors of the research team led three focus group discussions (one focus group discussion at each site) with selected teacher participants. The first author was not present for data collection. The researchers used a semi-structured interview protocol to guide the discussion with the participants. Questions centered on (a) struggles and success in communicating with families about student behavior, (b) perceptions of the participants' roles and skills in teaching appropriate behaviors and addressing problem behavior, (c) participants' perceptions of family members' roles and skills in teaching appropriate behaviors and addressing problem behavior, (d) key home-based practices or strategies that prevent problem behavior, and (e) barriers to collaborating with families around student behavior and social-emotional learning. While one researcher moderated the focus group discussion, the other researcher took notes, which served as an additional data source. Each focus group discussion lasted between 60-70 minutes and occurred in the fall of the 2016-2017 school year. The focus group discussions were audio recorded and transcribed for data analysis.

Data Analysis

The first author joined the research team at the time of data analysis. Data were analyzed using qualitative coding methods. For the first cycle of coding, the research team separately read the transcripts to develop holistic codes, which were used to “capture a sense of the overall contents and the possible categories that may develop” (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2014, p. 77). Each code described a single idea emerging from the data. The research team members discussed similarities and differences among the codes, as well as agreed on the definition for

each code. These codes were used for the second cycle of coding, which involved grouping the codes into larger segments of data, or categories (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2014).

As a result of this process, there were five resultant categories and 22 total codes. The five categories that emerged from the data aligned strongly with existing theoretical models guiding family engagement research and practice. While different models use different terminology to describe the key dimensions of family engagement, each align with the following two dimensions: (a) families and educators build relationships in order to support students and (b) families and educators take action in addressing student goals within the home and school contexts (Dunst & Trivette, 2010; Kyzar, Brady, Summers, & Turnbull, 2018; Clarke, Sheridan, & Woods, 2010). For the purposes of this study, we chose to align the categories and codes with the model put forth by Sheridan et al. (2012). In this model, the relationship dimension is referred to as Relational Components, which involve supporting parent-child relationships, parent-teacher relationships, having a welcoming environment, and shared responsibility (e.g., joint decision making, creating joint perspectives). The competence dimension in Sheridan et al.'s model is referred to as Structural Components, which involve aspects such as curriculum of the home, home-to-school or school-to-home (one-way) communication, and parent tutoring. See Table 1 for a list of codes aligned with the five categories.

Findings

Structural Components

Improving home-school communication about student behavior. Participants expressed discouragement regarding families' involvement in implementing SWPBIS strategies and, overall, in addressing the behavioral needs of their children. Participants reported that, on

the extreme end, some families do not respond to their attempts to contact them about their child and do not show for meetings at the school.

I find that just getting to talk to a parent... And it doesn't matter what the issue is. Just talking to the parent; it's very difficult, especially with the students that we do need to talk to the parents. Those are the ones that we cannot find or get in touch...or they ignore us.

While all participating teachers used a written form of daily home-school communication (aligned with district practices), they suggested that this form of communication—if used in isolation—has limitations. Participants cited instances of miscommunication due to language barriers, the nature of written communication (lacks tone, body language), and using the student as the mediator (e.g., student fabricating or embellishing the truth, denying the teacher's account of a situation that happened at school).

Participant 1: It could also be a language barrier if they don't speak English and they don't understand what the assignment is about or you can't communicate to them about it.

Participant 2: And their kids aren't explaining it accurately.

Participant 1: Correct

Participant 2: They're saying it means something else than it really does, and parents don't know that they're not being honest with them about it.

...

When we sign the planners, we might be saying it in a certain way, and they might be taking it in a different way. So we've had situations where they'll [parents] write back

ugly letters where... Yeah, it's kind of hurtful and makes you feel like, "Oh, I didn't mean it that way," type of stuff.

Teachers reported that finding ways to communicate directly with families about behavior, is an important strategy to offset these limitations, and that communication applications offer such a platform.

I also use Class Dojo. I know some of the teachers use it. That way, if some incident does happen, I will send them [parents] an email and they'll get the full story from me before the child's even gone home to show them the PDS [personal daily planner] or told them their version of the story.

...

I've had a lot of parents who find it [Remind Application] an easier form of communication. They [parents] can send something to me back quickly. They don't have to 100% rely on their student to remember certain things, which we all forget, but when that kid is going to get that sign-in the next day if they don't have it and I've sent out that reminder, it's just that extra help to make sure that they have what they need.

Other strategies that some participating teachers discussed in order to help ensure that regular, written communication was effective was to include positive comments about student behavior—comments that students would be proud to show their parents—in the written communication. Additionally, participating teachers ensured that their written comments were linked with the SWPBIS behavior matrix.

You have to share not only with the parents but the students to know that just because I'm asking you to sign your planner doesn't necessarily mean it's a bad note. It's a good note. So you want to give those also and just make sure, maybe when you have your parent

conferences, to let the parents know. You know, it's not just all, like she said, negative. It is also implementing some positive notes, too.

...

You know, we have a matrix for every [behavioral] expectation. We have a matrix in the classroom. We have a school-wide matrix which is posted throughout the building. It's in the planner. So when we write in the planner, we always try to relate it back to the expectation of the matrix.

In sum, without participants expressing their concerns about communication between families, pinpointing specific strategies would be more difficult for implementation. Teachers shared their input about maintaining behavior consistency through different communication platforms so that they can become partners for the success of the child.

Ensuring parental efficacy and understanding about social-emotional and academic learning at home and at school. Participating teachers expressed concerns with families' skills in basic parenting (e.g., amount of sleep children need, the importance of exercise).

Exercise—they don't understand the impact of exercise on the brain. They don't understand the importance of proper nutrition on the brain. They have no clue. I had to learn it. I mean I had to learn how many hours my child needed to sleep, how much sleep they needed at certain ages, how their diet needed to look, how much exercise they need.

Participants shared that they have encountered families who accept their child's behavior as just who their child is/a part of their child's personality, or general make-up. To the teachers, this suggested that parents lacked of understanding that behaviors are learned and can therefore be shaped by the reinforcements within the environment.

I think sometimes they think that's how a child is and they can't do nothing about it, but their behavior can change if they work together. Like she was saying, if we team together to help the child change the behavior, the behavior can change. (Williams, p. 9)

Participants also shared that they have encountered families who dismiss concerns about their children's problem behavior because of their children's age. Within one focus group discussion, there appeared to be a consensus that this most frequently occurs when children are in second grade or younger.

Third grade, I believe they're [parents] a little bit more receiving of if they do a planner sign or if...you know, holding them more accountable. I don't know what it is, but second grade, I think they're still seeing them as their little babies. (Goodman, p. 10)

Participating teachers also expressed the frustration that families lack an understanding of how teachers manage behavior within the classroom and the extent to which problem behavior, that may seem "normal" or "mild" outside of a classroom context (e.g., talking out or out of seat behavior), has significant consequences for student learning within the classroom context.

Whenever we're communicating, if we send a note home that says your child is repeatedly talking in class, this doesn't mean like once or twice; this is like every five minutes I have to turn around and ask them to not be talking. A lot of the problem I have is when I try to do one-on-one in small groups is if I'm walking a student through some kind of division problem, I can't go from one step to the next asking what they understand without having to stop and get up, get another group back on task, then go back to it. Then by the time you come back, you're with a student who's struggling, and now they've had 30 seconds where they've stopped thinking about the problem... You've got to go back to the beginning. So they're just really hurting the struggling students more than

anything else because they can't learn in the spurts. They have to have a constant teacher attention for a minute.

In sum, the teachers' concerns about families' parenting abilities was a key barrier in home-school partnerships. They shared that the developmental age of the child and the environment of the classroom plays important roles in the partnering of families and teachers so that they can remain on the same page without misconceptions.

Relational Components

Going above and beyond. Participants expressed a need for teachers to help families gain the skills they need to support student social-emotional and academic learning, even if the supports that teachers provide are above and beyond their stated job description.

I teach sixth grade, so we have kids who are in extracurricular activities. So we try to attend like one of their sporting events or something like that just so we can show that it's not just in school, that we're outside school, too, that we support them and we encourage them. Parents will try to make that a conference time, which it's not a bad thing because it's sometimes convenient, but I always remind them that I'm there to support their kid in this activity that they're doing and to try to keep the conference time to a minimum.

...

Well, I've even had parents call me... I've had at least three I can think of that have wanted to conference me to ask for help—how to parent. They have just made that specific meeting.

Therefore, a common trend that came up during discussion was the teacher's drive to help the child succeed and feel confident. This included teachers stepping up their role from

classroom teacher to supporter benefit the students' psychological needs in addition to academic needs.

Working as a team. Within each focus group discussion, teachers emphasized the critical importance of having parents work with them in meeting the social-emotional learning needs of students. In some cases, parents reportedly believed their child's account of the incident over the teacher's account.

I was just going to say a lot of times they [parents] call the teachers and they don't get clarification. They just start attacking or making this assumption based on what their child says, and so then you have to clarify it. Sometimes they'll believe you. Sometimes... I had a situation where it didn't matter if I clarified it; it didn't matter what I said. Their child was always right.

Teachers recalled instances in which the interactions they have with family members about student problem behavior were met with sarcasm, anger, defensiveness, or dismissal of their concerns.

I was going to say attitude of the parent can be a barrier because I think when you start addressing the behavior to the parent, they may feel like they're not a good parent, or you may think that they're not a good parent because of the behavior or the child. I think that sometimes causes a barrier between the teacher and the parent as well.

They also attributed parents' lack of knowledge/skill related to behavior management in causing these attitudes.

They're [parents] tired of disciplining their kid; it didn't work. So they gave up and they just accept that the PDS is going to come home with that sign-in on it that's going to say the same thing that it always says because their kid has never learned and they gave up

and... Or they don't know where else to go in trying to teach them to and so they've... their resources are limited or they just gave up.

Participating teachers expressed the regret that, at times, they feel alone in addressing student problem behavior.

No. I've been told, "Here you go. They're all yours." And I remember one time I said, "Uh-uh-uh. This is a partnership. They're your child; I'm their teacher. We do this together. It's not a you against--" because they told me, "They're all yours." I go, "No. They're ours. It's a partnership." I think some parents just drop them off.

Several participants expressed the strong desire that parents would understand that they want their children to succeed and to learn; that teaching is not just a "job" for them.

They don't. They... I feel like if they think that this is a job, and I know that to some people—which I really think that it's a very small number—it is a job, but the majority of us, this is not a job. I mean, look. I know that I cannot teach anything but math. Nothing but math, and because of that reason I stay with math because I love it because I want them to see how great is math. So they don't see that. They just see that I'm picking on them, that I'm asking them to do this, that... I want them to know that I want them to love math.

In sum, teachers expressed their need for emotional support from families in order to connect with the child and his or her family. Without the trust and need for partnership, the families will become disconnected from the teacher.

Recognizing confounding factors. Within each focus group discussion, participating teachers raised various points that were aimed at explaining the reasons for the family-related

barriers they cited. They pointed out that families, unlike teachers, do not have behavioral training.

It is kind of hard because we assume that they know it, but even at... As a parent of an 11-year-old and a five-year-old, sometimes I butt heads with my husband, and he's like, "Well, you have training and you know how to do with an 11-year-old who thinks she 14, 15." I was like, "Well, you know what? You need to back off and you need to ask her instead of just expecting her. She's still... She's in a between stage, you know.

Sometimes she things she's a grown-up and sometimes she's still little," and so, just the way... I mean, "Don't talk to her that way. You need to be more understanding, more positive reinforcement." And my husband, he has a college degree and stuff. But it's very different because he has not had that behavior training that we've received kind of stuff.

They also expressed that implementing consistent behavioral expectations within the home context may be difficult for some families because factors within the family system create barriers (e.g., parents working multiple jobs, divorced parents having different expectations).

We also have a lot of parents who work evenings, and so their proper social skills is coming from older siblings who may not be demonstrating it, either. So again, the parents...not necessarily don't have the skills to teach; they're not always available to teach if we have a lot of single-parent homes or things like that.

Participating teachers also expressed the understanding that culture shapes how families approach behavior management in the home.

I would say within the culture and their economic class, I would say that the higher economic class will look a little bit more closely at everything as being a behavior

problem, whereas some of the Hispanic cultures, the baby boy is never going to be a problem. He is angelic and next to Jesus.

The discussion of culture included the recognition that culture also affects how students respond to their teachers' attempts to manage their behavior at school.

And I think in the same aspect, when you pull in the deaf culture to it all, our students, we're hearing, "We're not deaf." We've had several students that are like, "Yeah, I'm not going to talk to you because you're not as deaf as my mom and dad."

In addition, participating teachers noted that cultural/language differences between teachers and families affect the family-teacher relationships.

We get some students, especially of like Middle Eastern and like Asian descent, where the girl students in those... You're trying your best to like get them to communicate with you and they just won't because at home, a lot of those cultures, they're not supposed to communicate and so you're like....

At the family business, and phone calls were transferred to his cell phone so that he could take orders at home. He was the only one that spoke English, so both. So we have language and economics here, and I guess the value of academics over... They don't see the correlation of academics and business, so... .

In sum, while some barriers are out of teachers' control, it is important to recognize the factors that can hinder partnerships.

Discussion

Summary of Findings

The purpose of this study was to examine elementary school (PK-6th grade) teachers' perspectives on factors that influence their ability to partner with families for enhanced student

behavior. Key findings were that home-school communication that lacked positive messages about students were less effective in engaging families, and that written communication in isolation was limiting; to effectively partner with families, teachers should also be in direct communication via face to face interactions, or phone calls. Teachers also expressed that some families' lack of basic parenting skills and training precluded their ability to be a partner and collaborator in addressing students' behavior. Teachers expressed a desire to have relationships with families that are grounded in trust and respect, but identified numerous barriers that they perceived difficult to overcome in achieving such relationships, such as parents believing their children over the teacher, using sarcasm/anger toward the teacher, and having a lack of knowledge and skill related to addressing problem behavior at home. Teachers expressed a willingness to go above and beyond in helping their students and families, and a desire to have families understand that their work is not just a "job" that they are carrying out.

Discussion of Findings

The current study found that teachers perceive many barriers to home-school communication about student problem behavior. This finding is supported by other research. For example, in examining barriers and solutions for improving family engagement, Baker et al. (2016) found that parents' learning about student problem behavior after the incidents and that notes that teachers sent home about their children were largely about problems, not strengths. In the current study, our teacher participants expressed similar viewpoints that that positive notes home are important in building partnerships with families.

The findings of our study suggest that cultural barriers influence home-school communication about student behavior. Similarly, Gillanders, McKinney, and Ritchey (2012), who studied partnership from the parent perspective, found that cultural barriers such as

language, family dynamics, and views about discipline and behaviors affected partnerships between families and teachers. While the current research examined teachers' perceptions, findings across our study and Gillanders et al. are congruent. The mothers who participated in the Gillanders et al. study reported finding communication with teachers easier when the teachers came from the same cultural and socioeconomic background as themselves. Since it is more likely than not that teachers and families will be from different cultures, these findings raise the question that is unanswered in the existing data: Did the teachers in our study feel the same as the families in the Gillanders et al. study, in that forming partnerships with families of have similar backgrounds is easier than forming partnerships with families from similar backgrounds?

Another key finding of the current study was the perceptions of family-teacher partnerships. Participants subscribed to the notion that teachers should not be the only responsible party for students learning; families should be available to provide teachers with information about their child, follow through with expectations at home, and attend school events. While participating teachers used the word "partner" to describe the relationship they desired, their comments suggested that they define "partnership" differently than what is accepted in the early childhood field. Turnbull, Turnbull, Erwin, Soodak, and Shogren (2015) defined partnership as a "relationship in which families (not just parents) and professionals agree to build on each other's expertise and resources, as appropriate, for the purpose of making and implementing decisions that will directly benefit students and indirectly benefit other family members and professionals" (p. 161). Participating teachers did not discuss shared decision-making or collaborative problem solving, nor did teachers suggest that families had expertise or resources that benefit students' programming or inform instruction. Participating teachers' comments suggested that they defined partnership largely as families following through and

complying with their recommendations. Their descriptions of partnership align with outdated views of parent involvement in which parents are viewed as in need of remediation, which is addressed by teachers (Amatea, 2016; Kuhm, Marvin, & Knoche, 2017; Mapp & Hong, 2010).

A key rationale for the current study was the limited research on teacher perspectives related to building partnerships with families to support students' positive behavior. In their examination of teachers' perspectives about family-school partnerships within special education, Bezdek, Summers, and Turnbull (2010) found that there was a discrepancy between the language that participating teachers used to describe their relationships with families and their actions, the former being partnership-oriented and the latter aligning more with an expert/parent involvement model. The most relevant of Bezdek et al.'s findings to the current study is the theme they identified as the "Goldilocks perception," which they described as the balance between too much and too little parental involvement. When parents crossed the boundaries and questioned the teacher's expertise, the teachers found the families too involved. However, when parents did not participate in any activities or see them as important, teachers saw them as not involved enough. The teachers participating in the current study expressed similar ideas that parents did not have time to put forth or the resources to assume a partnership. However, the participants did not talk about the effects of too much familial engagement. Bezdek et al. also found that teachers blamed parents, and this blame led to a decrease in trust within partnerships. Within the current research, participants often felt alone in addressing problem behaviors since parents would dismiss their concerns or were perceived as lacking the skills to keep the partnership going. Often, this dismissal and feelings loneliness could be contributed to blaming the parents for not contributing to the partnership.

Interestingly, participating teachers did not consider parents' perceptions of school services as a factor contributing to their level of engagement in their children's education. This is contrary to research examining family engagement from parents' perspectives. For example, Rodriguez, Blats, and Elbaum (2014) found that "parents' views of schools' efforts are intertwined with their views of the quality of services provided to their children" (p. 91). The families in the Rodriguez et al. study chose to partner with teachers based on the extent to which their children were progressing in school. As student progress decreased, families responded with more involvement in school efforts. Perhaps given the Tiers 1 and 2 context within the current study, there were minimal concerns and therefore parents perceive a minimal need to become engaged.

Implications

During the coding process, the author team developed actions and strategies that teachers may implement in their collaboration with families. These actions and strategies were not explicitly stated in the codes but were rather implied.

From the data, we gleaned actions that may serve to enhance home-school communication within a SWPBIS model. This can include notes home, hosting celebrations (SWPBIS reward party, hall of fame), and allowing the child to turn around his or her behavior. When teachers communicate with families, they should be clear about behavioral expectations for students. Teachers can also reach out to parents using classroom apps such as ClassDojo or Remind 101. The families' responsibilities are to check for communication sent home and to send communication back to parents, creating a two-way communication model.

Actions that would lead to enhanced parental efficacy and understanding about social-emotional and academic learning include ensuring a rich home context for social-emotional

learning, home-based instruction of social skills, and student-family relationship building. Home contexts are important for social-emotional learning since families discuss behavioral expectations at home and try to align them with the expectations at school. Families are responsible for modeling and teaching their children acceptable behaviors, as well as holding their children accountable for these behaviors across contexts. Building student-family relationships allows primary caregivers to interact with their child and other children for social and emotional growth.

Teachers and families both have roles when working as a team. The teacher's roles include having an open door policy to invite families to participate in school events, assigning tasks for parents to do at home if they cannot come in to school due to their schedules, sending notes home about positive behavior, using the word "we" rather than "you" or "me," and setting a positive tone in the beginning of the school year. The families' roles are to be open to teacher suggestions, follow through with consequences given at school, communicate directly to the teacher about any concerns, and support instructional decisions made by teachers.

Oftentimes, teachers find themselves doing more than what is stated in their job description. We classify this action as going above and beyond. Actions within this theme include teachers offering resources (Parent University) for families to gain skills, attending extracurricular activities to show support and encouragement, host reading nights, and connecting on a personal level with families.

Study Limitations

In the current study, the author team did not directly observe the family-teacher interactions that participants mentioned in the focus group meeting. Therefore, the data are limited to teachers' descriptions and perceptions outside of real parent-teacher interactions and

contexts. Additionally, this study is limited in that it did not include the perspectives of family members. Finally, even though the districts included in the study were implementing SWPBIS at the time of the study, the extent to which they were implementing positive behavior supports with fidelity is unknown.

Conclusion

The current study offers research-based knowledge about the effectiveness of family-teacher engagements to create equal partnerships. Through partnerships and communication, both families and teachers are more prepared in dealing with behavioral outcomes. Results from teacher focus groups show that teachers have faced barriers in building these relationships and maintaining communication. However, suggestions and actions can be gleaned from the data that will help families and educators improve their partnerships in pursuit of enhanced student behavior.

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Appendix

Table 1

Structural	
Category	Holistic code
Improving home-school communication about student behavior	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Families do not respond to their attempts to contact them about their child and do not show for meetings at the school. 2. Limitations of daily-home school communication... miscommunication due to language barriers, the nature of written communication (lacks tone, body language), and using the student as the mediator (e.g., student fabricating or embellishing the truth, denying the teacher's account of a situation that happened at school). 3. Finding ways to communicate directly with families about behavior, is an important strategy to offset these limitations, and that communication applications offer such a platform. 4. Include positive comments about student behavior—comments that students would be proud to show their parents—were included in the written communication 5. Ensure that their written comments were linked with the SWPBIS behavior matrix.
Ensuring parental efficacy and understanding about social-emotional and academic learning at home and at school	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Families lacking basic parenting skills 2. Families accept their child's behavior as just who their child is/a part of their child's personality or general make-up 3. Parents' lack of understanding that behaviors are learned and can therefore be shaped by the reinforcements within the environment. 4. Families dismiss concerns about their children's problem behavior because of their children's age. 5. Families lack an understanding of how teachers manage behavior within the classroom and the extent to which problem behavior that may seem "normal" or "mild" outside of a classroom context (e.g., talking out or out of seat behavior) has significant consequences for student learning within the classroom context.

Relational	
Category	Holistic code
Going Above and Beyond	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Teachers to help families gain the skills they need to support student social-emotional and academic learning that is beyond the job description
Working as a Team	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Parents work with them in meeting the social-emotional learning needs of students. 2. Parents believed their child's account of the incident over the teacher's account. 3. Interactions they have with family members about student problem behavior was met with sarcasm, anger, defensiveness, or dismissal of their concerns.

	<ol style="list-style-type: none">4. Parents' lack of knowledge/skill related to behavior management in causing these attitudes.5. Parents feel alone in addressing student problem behavior.6. Parents understand that teaching is not just a "job"
Recognizing Confounding Factors	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Families, unlike teachers, do not have behavioral training.2. Implementing consistent behavioral expectations within the home context may be difficult for some families because factors within the family system create barriers (e.g., parents working multiple jobs, divorced parents having different expectations).3. Culture shapes how families approach behavior management in the home.4. Culture also affects how students respond to their teachers' attempts to manage their behavior at school.5. Cultural/language differences between teachers and families affect the family-teacher relationships.