DATA-BASED DECISION MAKING AND THE SWIS FACILITATOR PROGRAM:

EXPLORING THE REALITIES OF PRACTICE

by

ALAN COOK

A DISSERTATION

Presented to the Department of Educational Methodology, Policy, and Leadership
and the Division of Graduate Studies of the University of Oregon
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of
Doctor of Education

June 2023

DISSERTATION APPROVAL PAGE

Student: Alan Cook

Title: Data-Based Decision Making and the SWIS Facilitator Program: Exploring the Realities of Practice

This dissertation has been accepted and approved in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Doctor of Educational Methodology, Policy, and Leadership degree in the Department of Educational Methodology, Policy, and Leadership by:

Julie Alonzo	Chairperson
Heather McClure	Core Member
Rhonda Nese	Institutional Representative

and

Krista Chronister	Vice Provost for Graduate Studies

Original approval signatures are on file with the University of Oregon Division of Graduate Studies.

Degree awarded June 2023

DISSERTATION ABSTRACT

Alan Cook

Doctor of Education

Department of Educational Methodology, Policy, and Leadership

June 2023

Title: Data-Based Decision Making and the SWIS Facilitator Program: Exploring the Realities of

Practice

Collecting data for the purpose of decision making has become an integral part of the landscape of education in the United States over the past decade. Many educators are swamped with such an overwhelming amount of information that it can be difficult to sort and analyze, leaving them floundering under wave after wave of data. The SWIS facilitator role was created to assist school districts with implementation and sustained use of SWIS applications. The facilitator works with schools initially to meet SWIS program readiness and then shifts to more of a coaching role to improve the use of SWIS for data-based decision making. One of the main goals of this study was to examine the differences between the expectation of the SWIS facilitator role as it is envisioned in the PBIS framework and the reality of the role in the field, specifically as it pertains to issues of equity. This exploratory mixed-methods study sought to answer the following research question: *How does the ideal concept of the SWIS facilitator role compare with the realities of the actual role for facilitators working in the field?* This research will inform facilitator training practices moving forward.

CURRICULUM VITAE

NAME OF AUTHOR: Alan Cook

GRADUATE AND UNDERGRADUATE SCHOOLS ATTENDED:

University of Oregon, Eugene
Clayton College and State University, Morrow

DEGREES AWARDED:

Doctor of Education, 2023, University of Oregon
Master of Education, 2008, University of Oregon
Bachelor of Science in Music, 2007, University of Oregon

AREAS OF SPECIAL INTEREST:

Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports
Educator Professional Development
Equity
Online Learning
Data-Based Decision Making & Problem Solving

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE:

Research Assistant, University of Oregon, 4 years

Classroom Teacher, Junction City, 2 years

Classroom Teacher, Waco, 2 years

Classroom Teacher, Lebanon, 6 years

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This dissertation is dedicated to my wife, Tara, who always encourages me to chase my dreams.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF FIGURES

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION AND LITERATURE SYNTHESIS

Collecting data for the purpose of decision making has become an integral part of the landscape of education in the United States over the past decade. Educators are expected to collect academic data to measure student ability and growth as they identify students at risk and implement multi-tiered systems of support (MTSS) to help students succeed (Every Student Succeeds Act, 2015). Educators are becoming more skilled at and capable of analyzing these academic data, identifying students who may need additional support, and implementing efficient and effective interventions to achieve their desired outcomes. In addition to academic data, however, educators are also expected to collect behavioral data. The intention is that this behavioral data be examined for patterns and other predictors, enabling educators to prevent disruptive behaviors before they start. This process of collecting data and analyzing it to make decisions is known as data-based decision making or DBDM (Center on Response to Intervention, retrieved on May 11, 2022.).

Although behavioral data are as vital as academic data, most schools have only rudimentary systems in place to analyze such data and choose research-based interventions to reduce behaviors that put children at risk. Additionally, many educators are swamped with such an overwhelming amount of information that it can be difficult to sort and analyze, leaving them floundering under wave after wave of data (Bettesworth et al., 2008). Compounding the problem, most educators receive little to no training on the topics of data collection, data-based instruction, or data-based decision making (Albritton & Truscott, 2014; Bettesworth et al., 2008; Mandinach & Gummer, 2016; Schildkamp & Poortman, 2015). This lack of knowledge leads educators to doubt their skills in data collection, analysis, and interpretation (Schildkamp & Poortman, 2015).

Some educators may fear data analysis, while others simply may have not received adequate training to gather and disaggregate data for effective use (Bettesworth et al., 2008). Professional development in the areas of basic measurement principles, data collection, and data analysis paired with ongoing peer support and coaching was shown to increase educators' ability to use data for decision making (Bettesworth et al., 2008).

Exclusionary Discipline: Why We Need Data-based Decision Making

Exclusionary discipline, defined as any type of school disciplinary action that removes or excludes a student from their usual academic setting, carries with it several risks for students. Although a causal connection between instances of exclusionary discipline and decreases in academic outcomes has not been established, several studies have documented a positive correlation (Losen et al., 2015; Sullivan et al., 2014). Students who are removed from the academic setting as a form of discipline often struggle academically more than their peers who remain consistently in class. Excluded students are less likely to graduate from high school (Losen et al., 2015). In addition, suspension from school increases the likelihood of future incarceration. Suspension from school strongly correlates with an increase in student risk for involvement with the justice system (Losen et al., 2015). Although national data-collection efforts do not rigorously track the number of students incarcerated by race and disability, the Office of Special Education Programs' (OSEP) data show significant disparities. Losen et al. (2015) reported that, nationally, 19% of students with disabilities were Black, yet fully 50% of the students with disabilities incarcerated within correctional institutions were Black.

These troubling findings are even more worrisome because educators mete out exclusionary discipline disproportionately. Students who qualify for special education services, Black students, and students from lower SES backgrounds are much more likely to experience

exclusionary discipline practices than their peers who do not share these demographics (Fenning & Rose, 2007).

The Tangled Web of Disproportionality

Despite extensive studies over the past 30 years raising concerns about socioeconomic and racial disparities in discipline and special education, few systematic explorations of possible explanations have been conducted (Skiba et al., 2002). Losen et al. (2015) looked for patterns as students move through the school system, reporting differences in disparities in suspension data at different school levels. At the elementary level, the risk of suspension for students with disabilities was 4.1%, twice the risk as their non-disabled peers. This number jumped to 19.3% at the secondary level versus 9% for non-disabled peers. When considering race in the equation, the disproportionality increases: 31% of Black students who had a disability at the secondary level also had a recorded suspension (Losen et al., 2015).

Losen et al. (2015) posit that several factors contribute to such disproportionality. The first factor is a differential exposure to inexperienced teachers: Novice teachers generally have relatively low classroom management skills, which may contribute to the higher likelihood of student suspension. Less-experienced teachers may be more likely than more experienced teachers to refer minority students for special education evaluation. Minority students are more likely than white students to be taught by novice teachers, and this connection seems to contribute to the disproportionate exclusionary discipline for Black students and Black students with disabilities (Losen et al., 2015).

The ways in which many factors (e.g., student demographics, school setting, community composition) weave together to compound the challenges some students face is also addressed in the National Academy of Sciences (2002) publication *Minorities in Gifted and Special*

Education. Similar to the Losen et al. (2015) findings, the National Academy of Sciences suggested that the school experience leads to racial disproportionality in academics and behavior that lead to special education referrals in part because schools with higher concentrations of low-income, minority children are less likely to have experienced teachers.

The Issue Extends Beyond School

The disparate treatment experienced in schools by students with disabilities, Black students, and students from low SES backgrounds contributes to the clogged school to prison pipeline, where students of color subsequently experience further discrimination in education, employment, housing, and rights (Annamma et al., 2014). Although some students from these communities go on to thrive despite the harsh circumstances they face, many of them and their families do not escape the systemic barriers surrounding them.

Those who do end up charged with a crime may experience further disproportionality in the consequences they receive in court. Kincaid and Sullivan (2019) linked juvenile court and educational records of 230,760 students to demonstrate the involvement of students with and without disabilities in the juvenile court system. Students with disabilities faced more serious charges than their peers without disabilities and were more likely to be recommended for a higher degree of offense.

Moving Forward: A Focus on the Future

Education needs to shift to overcome these disproportionate outcomes. By creating an environment that is conducive to equity work, professional development coaches can deliver effective instruction on equitable and culturally responsive practices to reduce disproportionality (Gion et al., 2022). Sullivan et al. (2014) suggest proactive care to minimize the disparate effects on already vulnerable populations. The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) calls

for the use of functional behavioral assessments and research-based systems such as PBIS

(Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports) to address behavioral difficulties; however,

educators do not currently implement these systems on a large scale. Race, gender, and disability

intersect to amplify a student's risk of exclusion, creating national and local policy issues

(Sullivan et al., 2014). Fenning and Rose (2007) suggest shifting from issues related to the

student (e.g., severity of offense, SES) and focusing more on using data to create proactive

school discipline policies to benefit all. This strategy incorporates proactive models of Positive

Behavioral Interventions and Support (PBIS), clear descriptions of behaviors, and professional

development around ways that students meet requirements for classroom removal (Fenning &

Rose, 2007).

PBIS, PBISApps and SWIS: Using Data to Solve Problems

Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) is an evidence-based framework

to improve and integrate all the behavioral data, systems, and practices affecting student

outcomes. This framework is comprised of three different tiers of supports for students. Tier 1

data, systems, and practices lay the foundation for PBIS and are available for all participants.

With an emphasis on prosocial skills and proactive support, efforts at Tier 1 are aimed at

preventing unwanted behaviors before they happen. Tier 2 supports are provided for students

who are not successful with Tier 1 supports alone. The goal of Tier 2 supports is to help students

who are at risk for more serious behaviors before those behaviors start. These supports usually

involve some sort of small group intervention of 10 or more students and are more focused than

the universal supports of Tier 1. At most schools, up to 5% of students are not successful with

Tier 1 and Tier 2 supports alone. These students receive more intensive, individualized support at

Tier 3 to improve their behavioral outcomes. These systems usually include a multidisciplinary

team, formal fidelity and outcome data collection, and expert behavior support.

Along with the varying tiers of support, school staff need the tools and skills to collect, organize, and analyze data at the building level. Many schools currently utilize information system software to collect and record academic and behavioral data electronically. One of the first and most used pieces of software for behavioral data tracking is known as SWIS, or School-Wide Information System created by PBIS Applications. PBIS Applications (PBISApps) is a not-for-profit educational software company embedded in a research unit at the University of Oregon called Educational and Community Supports (ECS). PBISApps was created in 1999 when Dr. Rob Horner hired a student to help him create a system where office discipline referrals could be entered and analyzed. The goal of the organization is to support educators to create better learning environments for students through a system of data coaching and a web-based data collection system. The organization is structured into several different teams that create solutions that bridge the gap between research and practice, helping educators to make more informed decisions at the building level.

Although PBIS has been a long-standing framework for improving outcomes for staff and students, school personnel are not always trained in the efficient analysis of data and how to use those data effectively in a data-based decision-making team to increase positive outcomes. The SWIS facilitator acts as a trainer at the beginning of implementation and then shifts to the role of a data coach. This structure helps to support and maximize the data portion of the PBIS framework. The SWIS facilitator is expected to work alongside the PBIS coach to teach and train school staff on the use of the SWIS Suite of behavior tracking tools as well as PBIS implementation across all three tiers. As schools and districts implement the PBIS framework, they depend on skilled facilitators to guide their work. SWIS facilitators train school personnel to

use the various data software from PBIS Applications. They also coach educators on data-based decision-making teams at the school building level (May et al., 2021).

The SWIS facilitator role was created to assist school districts with implementation and sustained use of SWIS applications. The facilitator works with schools initially to meet SWIS program readiness and then shifts to more of a coaching role to improve the use of SWIS for data-based decision making. A school district will typically train one to two facilitators to support schools, and this role may be combined with other roles such as a PBIS coach. Facilitators complete a three-day training program based on application use, data coaching, and equity considerations. Typical responsibilities for a facilitator include working with key district and school staff to ensure accurate data collection, training users at the building level on how to use the software for data-based decision making, and working with district personnel to integrate data, systems, and practices into the school's culture (May et al., 2021).

Educator Expectations vs. Reality

One of the main goals of this study is to examine the differences between the expectation of the SWIS facilitator role as it is envisioned in the PBIS framework and the reality of the role in the field. Idealized images of teachers and classrooms have spilled out into television studios, movie theaters, homes, and playgrounds (Weber & Mitchell, 1995). Movies about teachers, for example, often portray them as unsung heroes changing the lives of their students forever. Even though these movies are unrealistic, people are often drawn into teaching because of the ways in which teachers are portrayed in such films (Delamarter, 2019). Often, these same idealistic images of teaching can lead to intense frustration when new teachers enter the classroom and are confronted with the realities of practice (Delamarter, 2019). Teacher preparation programs have a responsibility to help educators bridge the gap between their expectations of the role and the

realities of the classroom.

Recent research has helped to identify a number of strategies that may help to close the gap between educator expectations and reality. A main step in overcoming this gap is to determine exactly what those expectations are. A strategy to help identify these expectations is to have the educator sketch out a picture of what their ideal classroom would look like (Delamarter, 2019). Another method to help preservice teachers bridge the gap between expectations and reality is to help them recognize the ways that most Hollywood teacher movies use specific language and situations to emphasize emotional outcomes (Delamarter, 2015). Then the ability to recognize and critique inaccurate narratives can transfer to their own internal beliefs (Delamarter, 2015). Another strategy that may help to close this gap and increase facilitator effectiveness is participation in a professional learning community as part of their training (Prenger et al., 2017). When local support is lacking, participating in a professional learning community may help to increase the effectiveness of acquiring new skills (Prenger et al., 2017).

Just as educators in the Delemarter study have a gap between the expectations of their ideal role and the realities of the classroom, SWIS facilitators also share this mismatch. Despite the importance of the facilitator role, prior to this study no evaluation existed comparing the *intended* role for SWIS facilitators to the *reality* of the facilitator role in schools around the world. I conducted this exploratory mixed-methods study to identify the current realities of the SWIS facilitator role with the goal of informing recommendations to guide future facilitator training.

This topic is both personally and professionally relevant to me because I work at ECS as a Research Assistant, and part of my work involves providing training for SWIS facilitators. I conducted this study to answer the following research question: *How does the ideal concept of*

the SWIS facilitator role compare with the realities of the actual role for facilitators working in the field? This research will inform facilitator training practices moving forward.

CHAPTER II

METHOD

Research Design

I conducted an exploratory mixed-methods study to gain information about the role of SWIS facilitators in the Pacific Northwest. Mixing different methods is a concept that originated with the studies of Campbell and Fiske in 1959. By mixing quantitative with qualitative methods, I hoped to reduce possible biases inherent in singular methods as well as triangulate data (Creswell, 2018). An exploratory study was appropriate at this time because no one has yet studied this topic. My goal was to determine how the ideal concept of the facilitator compares to the daily realities SWIS facilitators experience, with a focus on equity. More specifically, I used a variety of data sources including surveys and focus groups to gather information about the role of SWIS facilitators and the degree to which their actual work matches the expectations of the role. The quantitative surveys informed the qualitative focus groups, another advantage of using a mixed methods approach (Creswell, 2018).

Setting and Participants

This study was conducted in the fall of 2022, using a convenience sample of 27 out of just over 2,000 currently active SWIS facilitators working in the United States. To qualify for this study, a potential participant needed to be a certified SWIS facilitator currently supporting at least one site. Recruitment emails were sent out via state training coordinators inviting the facilitators to take part in a survey. The survey was sent to responding facilitators who matched the participant description. I asked the facilitators to complete a survey comparing the reality of their current facilitator position to the ideal position identified through an earlier document

10

analysis.

To help encourage participation, two days after the email with the link to the survey had been sent, a reminder email was sent to facilitators by state training coordinators. This email thanked all who had already completed the survey and reminded facilitators that there was still time to complete the survey. After two weeks, I officially closed the survey window and downloaded the responses.

Participants for the facilitator focus groups were recruited from the facilitators who responded to the original survey. To be eligible to participate in the focus group, facilitators must have had at least three years of experience in the role.

Data Collection Instruments and Procedures

I used two sources of data for this study: surveys and focus groups. As described above, the number of participants varied based on the data collection method. In all cases, participants completed an informed consent form, as required by the IRB protocol under which this study was run.

Surveys

The surveys used in this study consisted of 12 questions designed and produced using the Qualtrics survey platform. The survey included demographic questions to gather participant data on name, gender, and highest level of education completed as well as the number of years the participant had been in education, the number of years they had spent as a SWIS facilitator, and their current role. The final four questions consisted of Likert scale responses to gather information about the participants' perception of their current role and how it compared to the ideal role described in facilitator training. See Appendix A for the full survey.

Focus Groups

The focus groups took place using the Zoom video conferencing software, which enables participants to see each other electronically and interact in real-time conversation. A consent form was provided through email before the focus groups started to ensure that participants understood that data from the focus groups would be used as part of a research study. This consent form was also read aloud at the start of the focus group, and participants were reminded that their participation was voluntary and that they could withdraw from the study at any time without penalty. Verbal consent to participate was solicited from each potential participant before we began the focus group discussion.

The Zoom platform recorded the focus group discussions for later analysis. The names of all participants were de-identified in all materials associated with this study prior to analysis. Once the focus group began, I guided facilitators through a list of four questions to determine their thoughts on their current role as a SWIS facilitator, the ideal skills and experience that a SWIS facilitator should have, and what sort of training they would need to bridge the gap between the ideal role and their current role. Throughout the focus groups, I asked clarifying questions to check for understanding as well as paraphrasing or summarizing responses for clarification as a form of member checking. I also extended an invitation to connect afterwards for a follow-up meeting if anyone had any questions or wanted to continue the conversation at a later time. See Appendix C for the invitation sent to participants and Appendix D for a full list of the focus group questions.

Data Analysis

This study included both quantitative and qualitative data. The data from each survey were downloaded from the Qualtrics platform prior to running descriptive statistics and T-tests.

For the qualitative data analysis, I followed Creswell's (2018) method of qualitative data analysis. The data were organized and sorted based on both the source of the data as well as emergent themes. I then coded the data and looked for interconnected themes. I represented those interconnected themes through illustrated examples and selected quotations and then drew conclusions based on the interconnected themes.

CHAPTER III

RESULTS

Results are presented first for the survey responses and then for the focus groups.

Survey Data

The SWIS Facilitator Survey received 27 total responses. Three surveys were incomplete, so their responses were removed from the dataset. The first two questions of the survey consisted of the informed consent and email address collection. All 24 respondents included in the dataset agreed to the informed consent document. The next four questions gathered demographic data. Of the 24 respondents included in the survey results, 21 (88%) identified as female and 3 (12%) identified as male. Because SWIS is mostly used in elementary schools, this difference was to be expected due to the disproportionate number of female educators to male educators at the elementary level. Of the 24 respondents, one (4%) had obtained a bachelor's degree, 19 (80%) had obtained a Master's degree, and four (16%) had obtained a Doctorate degree. Most of the respondents had been in the field of education for more than a decade. Twenty-one respondents (88%) had more than 11 years of experience in education while 3 respondents (12%) had been in the field between 5 and 10 years.

The next question was about the current role of respondents. These roles ranged from building-level behavior specialists to university researchers. Most of the roles centered around a coaching position such as a district data coach, district or state level PBIS coordinator, or teacher on special assignment (TOSA). Several respondents were working in research at the university level.

The experience level of being a SWIS facilitator also ranged widely. Most respondents reported that they had been a SWIS facilitator for more than 5 years, with 7 having more than 11

years of experience. Six respondents had between 1 and 4 years of experience and only 2 respondents had less than 1 year of experience.

The next series of questions centered around the topics of time allocation, initial facilitator training, and skill level of identifying and addressing disproportionate discipline practices (See Figure 1).

Figure 1 key:
- How well does your current role allow enough time for your facilitator support duties?
- How well do you feel your current role as a facilitator matches the role of the facilitator that was presented during your initial training?
- After being a facilitator in the field, how well do you feel that your initial training was sufficient for you to be successful in your role?
- How prepared do you feel about identifying and addressing disproportionate discipline after completing SWIS facilitator training?
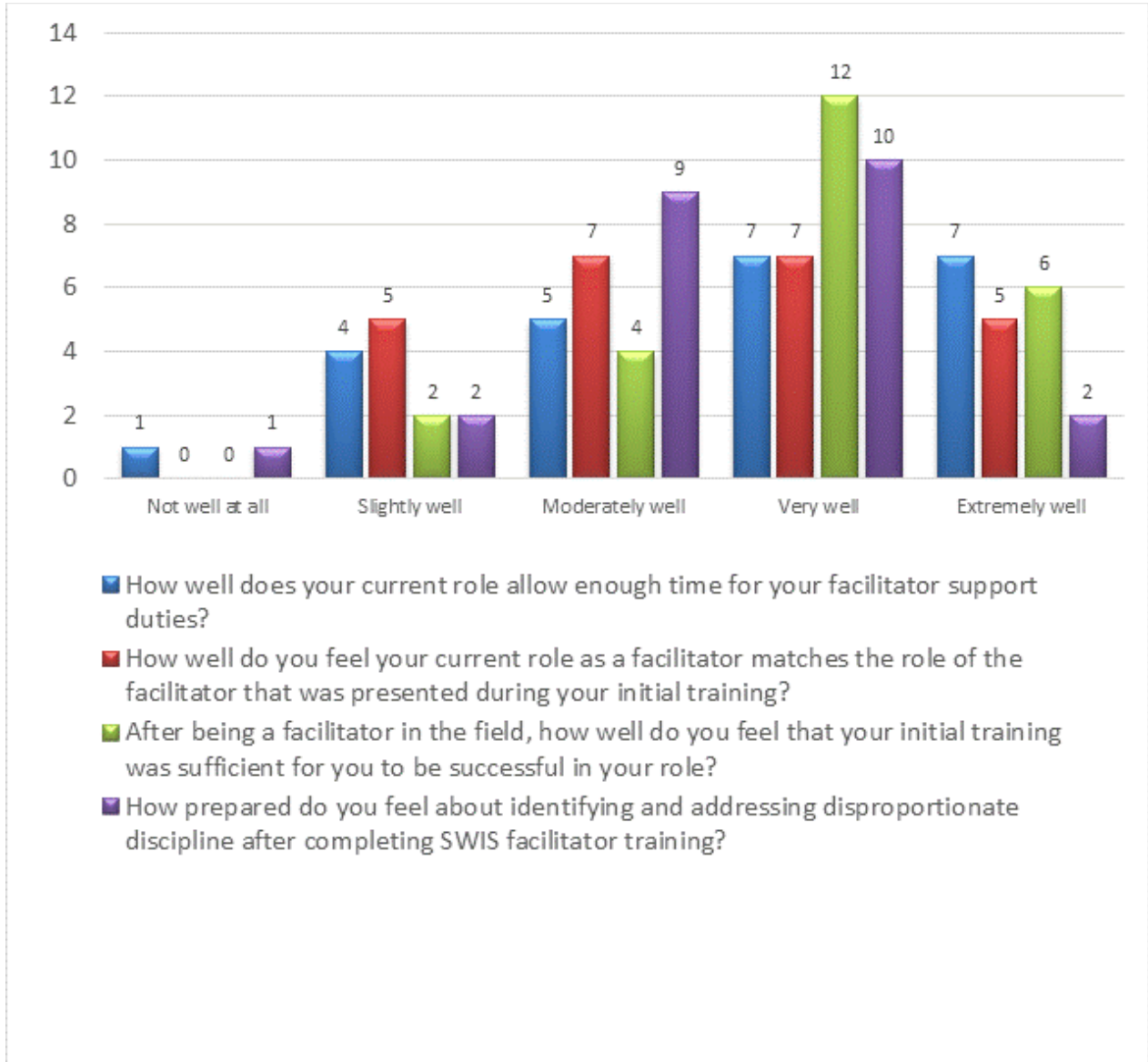
Figure 1: Survey Results

The first question of this section asked how well the respondent's current role allowed

15

enough time for their facilitator support responsibilities. SWIS facilitators gave a wide range of answers, with one respondent (4%) answering *not well at all*, four respondents (17%) answering *slightly well*, five respondents (21%) answering *moderately well*, seven respondents (29%) answering *very well*, and seven respondents (29%) answering *extremely well.*

The second question in this section asked respondents to provide their opinion of how well their current role as a SWIS facilitator matched the role of the facilitator that was presented during the training. None of the respondents answered *not well at all*, five respondents (21%) answered *slightly well*, seven respondents (29%) answered *moderately well*, seven respondents (29%) answered *very well*, and five respondents (21%) answered *extremely well*.

The third question centered around SWIS facilitators' opinions on how well their initial training prepared them for the realities of their current situation. Again, none of the respondents answered *not well at all*, two respondents (8%) answered *slightly well*, four respondents (17%) answered *moderately well*, twelve respondents (50%) answered *very well*, and six respondents (25%) answered *extremely well*.

The final question in this section asked the respondents about how prepared they felt about identifying and addressing disproportionate discipline practices. One respondent (4%) replied *not well at all*, two respondents (8%) answered *slightly well*, nine respondents (38%) answered *moderately well*, twelve respondents (42%) answered *very well*, and two respondents (8%) answered *extremely well*.

The final two questions on the survey asked participants to provide short answer responses. The first question asked how the SWIS training could be modified to better prepare facilitators to meet the needs of their actual roles. Nine facilitators (38%) agreed that some sort of follow-up training would be helpful. One facilitator responded, "Follow-up coaching support is

important because there is so much information during the initial training." Another respondent stated, "I wasn't sure what I needed until after the training. Maybe a required follow up 3-6 months later would be great!"

Four facilitators (17%) were looking for more real-world situations that they could use in their own training. "More mock scenarios for facilitators in training to practice would be helpful," stated one facilitator. Another facilitator answered, "We need more structured time in the training with contextualizing implementation for our schools."

Four respondents (17%) mentioned that the issue was not necessarily with the training, but rather with the systems and practices in their district being inconducive to success in this role. One facilitator stated, "I don't know that there is anything specific that can be done, from the perspective of the training, to better prepare facilitators to meet the needs of their actual roles. I, personally, feel that the training meets the needs of how to fulfill the roles and responsibilities of the facilitator. The breakdown, unfortunately, is within the organizational context and being able to help embed the time for trained facilitators to be able to adequately fulfill those roles and responsibilities. So, in that light, it might be an organizational leader or systems training for directors and others responsible for program oversight."

Overall, the feedback was positive, with five facilitators (21%) mentioning the excellent and detailed training as well as a large library of support documents and videos online. "I think the SWIS facilitator training was very comprehensive and helpful. I felt very well prepared. The continued support from PBIS Apps also helps," stated one facilitator. Another facilitator responded, "I felt that the training was very detailed and did an excellent job in preparing me to be a facilitator."

The last question on the survey asked how the training could be modified to better

prepare facilitators for leading efforts to address disproportionate discipline. Thirteen facilitators (54%) answered that additional resources and support in the form of ongoing professional development on the topic of equity would be helpful. "When I was trained 4 years ago, there was not as much time spent on this. So, perhaps a quick "lunch and learn" every 3 months would be helpful for people virtually to get updates and learn new features while being able to have some Q&A time for facilitators," answered one facilitator. One facilitator stated, "Providing additional resources related to conversations/coaching for equity would be great."

Five facilitators (21%) suggested that more time be spent during the training on the concepts of disproportionate discipline. One respondent answered, "Slow down through the Equity reports section. Have participants identify a data point in demo data and then write one realistic action step they could take as a SWIS facilitator to support a site or district leader in sharing and responding to the data." Another facilitator stated, "It went so fast. It really requires practice to get familiar with the equity reports. Even then, I don't know that I feel equipped for how to address disproportionate discipline, but rather how to identify if and where it exists."

Seven facilitators (29%) mentioned the realities of difficult conversations related to race and equity and the need for more support on facilitating those conversations. "The challenge is in guiding staff through uncomfortable emotions. I find it unrealistic to expect SWIS training to provide the counseling training that would be beneficial in those uncomfortable conversations," stated one facilitator. Another facilitator answered, "The training gives enough support to access the needed data, however this is a complex issue and there is additional support needed in how to utilize and discuss the data with school sites, as well as additional strategies which fall outside SWIS."

Focus Groups

As a follow-up to the SWIS facilitator survey, invitations were sent out to participate in a focus group to dig deeper into some of the research questions. Two focus groups were held, consisting of four facilitators in the first group and two facilitators in the second group. The second focus group consisted of two facilitators who had SWIS facilitator experience ranging from one to more than fifteen years. One participant was working at a state-level coaching position, and one was working within a district-level coaching position. These focus groups were conducted via the Zoom virtual meeting platform and were recorded for the purpose of analysis. The first focus group lasted for 36 minutes, and the second focus group lasted for 27 minutes. The groups began with introductions, and then I asked the questions, one at a time, while facilitating the conversation and gathering feedback from the participants. I present the themes of the results of each focus group along with quotations from participants that support the theme.

Focus Group Results

The first two questions consisted of asking about the initial SWIS facilitator training and what were the most and least beneficial parts of that training. One of the positive themes that was common among the participants was that they appreciated the amount of time that was apportioned to practice using the program. Another theme that emerged was the appreciation of the use of real-world examples in the training. One participant said, "I remember different kinds of scenarios and that felt authentic – to be able to then practice those to be prepared to support schools in that kind of role."

One participant said that they used the Drill Down tool in SWIS very frequently. The Drill Down tool is a tool within the SWIS application that allows the user to sort and filter their discipline data to focus on a specific behavioral issue at the school. This person commented,

"…to see just in general, without our outliers, what does our information look like. It's actually been really beneficial, because without the one outlier with 35 referrals, everybody is kind of at a normal level." Another participant believed that the nuts and bolts of navigating the application and strategies to use the data were helpful in the training.

One of the least helpful parts of the training for one participant was the reiteration of basic competency and fluency within the application. They noted, "…it was very kind of scripted, almost taking you from the bottom floor up. Like, let's assume you don't have any knowledge about SWIS and let's build that competency…And so for me, having had the prior exposure to SWIS…it felt very repetitive, and wasn't necessarily eye-opening." This participant went on to clarify that his training took place 17 years ago and that his perceptions of his original training might not match up with the current training experience.

Another part of the training identified by participants as less helpful was the lack of differentiation in the training. One participant said, "I know about the dashboard. I know how to pull up reports. I know how to do this, so almost differentiating between, like a SWIS training for absolute beginners, who don't even know how to navigate the application to maybe a SWIS training like you know SWIS. Now, here's the training to be a facilitator if you have some experience with SWIS."

I then asked about how well their current role matched up with the role of the facilitator described in the initial training. One recurring theme was that all the participants were in different roles at the time of the study than they were when they were first trained. "My current role doesn't exactly match a facilitator role as far as what I'm doing professionally. I'm not in the schools or the districts, but I am available as a facilitator when a school or district needs it," one said. Another participant mentioned that the state initiatives had shifted and that SWIS was no

longer a priority. Since this shift, the participant ceased facilitator activities and transitioned to a leadership role.

Answers from the second focus group supported the idea of more closely matching roles. "It matches pretty good for me," said one participant. "I have four sites that we just started doing it with this year. I'm giving them time and helping them to understand the data." Another participant echoed that theme, "It's very much a part of my role in supporting schools. We have about 17 schools using SWIS, so supporting them with utilizing the data, looking at the data, getting into the drill down, looking at patterns and trends. It's very much a part of my day-to-day role and support to the schools, especially around MTSS and PBIS."

The final questions both addressed disproportionate discipline: how the participants felt the training prepared them for identifying and addressing the issue in schools and what were some ways that the training could be better when it comes to that aspect. Although the participants felt like their initial training was effective in teaching facilitators how to access the data, they noted that actually using the data for decision making and solution development in schools was a different issue. On participant shared, "I don't necessarily know that I was prepared to help whoever is in the building driving the efforts foster that that level of communication. I'm reflecting back on my own time as a building administrator. Whenever I put some SWIS dispro data up in front of my staff and asked a very open and charged question of 14% of our student population is responsible for 80% of our referrals. What does that tell us? The immediate backlash, because we weren't there as culture in our building was, 'Why are you calling us racist?'" Along the same theme, another participant stated, "How do I feel confident in my skills, and having a crucial conversation, or a courageous conversation? That's not necessarily something that's covered *per se* in the training… it's like, here's the data. Go forth and do good

21

work with it, but not how to like. Manage some of those conversations."

Another participant said, "I could use a refresher. That's what I was gonna say. I felt really prepared after the training. I was excited, and then it's one of those things, use it or lose it, and I didn't use it." Another participant mentioned that they had noticed more and more coaches coming to training and seeking out that information specifically. "I didn't talk about it either as a trainer or even as a facilitator, because I didn't understand the reports when they first came out, and so it was kind of like, oh, yeah, there's these like ethnicity reports that we're not going to talk about that… now it's a little bit more front and center. And actually, people are seeking it out when they first come to the training."

One participant started the conversation with, "I would say I understand how to do it. I understand how to identify the disproportionate discipline. After though, we don't use it so much right now because our data is really baseline. We just started it not too long ago. But I would feel confident going into a meeting and saying, 'Hey look! We're over-identifying in this area!'…those conversations, we just really haven't gotten into them yet because we don't have a decent amount of data really." Another participant said, "I could have those same conversations around disproportionate discipline and looking at that data to have those conversations, whether it's through ethnicity or gender, I haven't really had to. Being in a community that isn't as diverse in the rural areas I support, though there are some that we do have. Hispanic/Latino families due to being more of an agricultural area."

The conversation then shifted to the demographic makeup of individual schools and how culture can be celebrated and addressed through Tier 1 PBIS systems and practices. One participant suggested having a modified equity activity that was more personalized. "So, you show how you use the disproportionality of the graph, but maybe also having people come to the

22

training with what their make-up is for their school or their district to talk about. How would you use these graphs based on the diversity in your building? Show them how to work through it and then build that activity for how they then apply that learning to their current situation." Another participant agreed, "I think just having it with more of a real-life situation for them in the schools that they're working with. That would be more beneficial."

At this time, I asked if anyone else had anything else they would like for me to know about their facilitator experience, but no one had any extra comments. I thanked the participants, and we concluded the focus group.

CHAPTER IV

DISCUSSION

Because the results of the survey and focus group analysis separated into different categories (role of the facilitator and addressing disproportionate outcomes), I address those findings in separate sections. In the first section, I discuss the findings related to my main research question (*How does the ideal concept of the SWIS facilitator role compare with the realities of the actual role for facilitators working in the field?),* and I elaborate on the concept of addressing disproportionality in the second section.

On the Mark? Maybe

One of the main goals of my research was to explore how the preconceived idealized concept of a SWIS facilitator as described in SWIS facilitator training materials matches the realities of the actual role of facilitators working in the field. Many educators experience a disconnect or an expectation gap when entering the field (Delamarter, 2015). I was curious to discover whether SWIS facilitators shared that experience of a substantial difference between the training they receive and their actual role in the field. Most of the respondents for the survey and the focus groups were veterans with more than 11 years of experience in the field of education, with the majority of those participants having more than 5 years of experience as SWIS facilitators. Most of the survey participants indicated that their current role as a facilitator matched the role of the facilitator that was presented in their initial training *very well* or *extremely well*. In the focus groups, some conversation was had around the idea of longevity in the field related to this question.

Nearly all of the respondents in the focus groups had changed positions since their initial training, so they were not necessarily directly working to support schools any longer. While not

supporting schools directly, many of these facilitators found ways to incorporate the SWIS facilitator skillset into their new roles and continued helping schools and districts efficiently and effectively collect and analyze behavioral data. This collection of data at the classroom level is critical to evaluate the progress towards achieving the goal of creating equitable discipline policies and practices for all students (Fenning & Rose, 2007). Most participants also believed that they had plenty of time for their facilitator support duties as well as believing that their initial training was sufficient for them to be successful in their role. All these items had a median response of *Very Well* with a standard deviation of one spanning from *Moderately Well* to *Extremely Well*. It is reassuring as a SWIS facilitator trainer to discover that most of the facilitators surveyed believed that the training was sufficient for them to be successful.

When asked about how the SWIS facilitator training could be improved to help better match their roles, participants answered with a wide range of ideas. Several responses referred to the need for follow-up coaching afterwards. Currently, the training is a stand-alone training. Although there are many coaching resources available after the training, including a two-hour refresher course, these are currently voluntary and are not required for new facilitators. From some of the answers given on the survey, it seems that there are some facilitators who might not be aware of the additional trainings offered through PBISApps. One respondent recommended that perhaps the training could be cut into two parts: One basic training course and then a deeper dive once the participants have had more experience with the role of the facilitator. By spacing out the professional development into smaller doses, we may be able to increase the effectiveness of the attainment of new knowledge and skills (Carpenter & Butler, 2022).

Another main theme that emerged in the surveys was that of the need for more real-world scenarios. Spending less time on the mechanics and theory of the "why" behind the application

and more specific training on how to transfer and adapt this information to be useful in differentiated school settings may be beneficial. The efficient collection and analysis of data paired with ongoing training focused on behavior management is vital to transfer these professional development concepts to the classroom (Fenning & Rose, 2007). The need for networking amongst facilitators was also evident with several respondents asking for an online webpage or forum for SWIS facilitators to connect and network. Research supports that participating in a professional learning community may increase effectiveness of skill application, especially when there is limited local support (Prenger et al., 2017).

Another theme that became clear throughout the course of this project was the need for a retrospective analysis of the current training materials and program. The current course was intended to train facilitators to help SWIS Suite users to use the application for entering referral data, analyzing that data, and creating solutions based on that analysis. The focus on using this data to make improvements through the lens of equity has been more recently implemented over the last few years. Although the training touches on equity work and how to dig into the referral data to analyze them for disproportionate discipline, the bulk of the work centered around equity lies outside of what the SWIS facilitator training can address. Realistically, the need for additional equity professional development is one that extends beyond the scope of the SWIS facilitator training.

Equity Work: Easier Said Than Done

When the conversation shifted to the topic of addressing equity issues in education, many of the respondents answered in a similar fashion. Although they felt the initial training was adequate, the skills of discussing equity and tackling the problem of disproportionate discipline in schools waned over time. Many facilitators referred to the need for refresher training on the

concept of equity and how to use the equity reports embedded within the SWIS application. Similar to the facilitator refresher course mentioned in the previous section, there are resources provided by PBISApps in the form of videos, articles, and live webinars on this topic. The fact that this was a reoccurring suggestion leads me to believe that there are many facilitators who do not know about the availability of these resources. More resources and professional development opportunities are needed for guidance on discrimination in discipline, specifically with regards to traditionally marginalized student groups (Losen et al., 2015). The fact that particular subgroups of students, including students of color and students with disabilities, experience exclusionary discipline at a much higher rate than their peers suggests an urgent need for additional remedies for policy and practice that will help to address the needs of these vulnerable students (Losen et al., 2015).

In the focus groups, the conversation shifted to the theme of transference. Although facilitators generally reported feeling as though the initial training was effective in teaching them how to use the tools within SWIS to identify disproportionality, they indicated that next steps were unclear. Some facilitators stated that they were comfortable with their skill set within the application but were not as comfortable when it came to bringing those concerns to the schools they support. One survey respondent stated that the real challenge is guiding staff through those uncomfortable emotions and that the SWIS facilitator training would not be able to realistically provide the counseling training that would be beneficial in those uncomfortable conversations. This theme was echoed in the focus groups by several facilitators discussing how addressing equity is a complex issue and that much of the work that needs to be done is around building a community and an environment that is open and willing to have those challenging discussions. Building this environment around a cornerstone of effective instruction on equitable and

culturally responsive practices can increase equity in the rates of acknowledgement and reprimands for Black students (Gion et al., 2022). Given the evidence of negative outcomes associated with exclusionary discipline, great care must be taken to minimize these outcomes and to prevent this disparate impact on vulnerable student groups (Sullivan et al., 2014).

More professional development is needed around the next steps involving these difficult conversations related to equity. Although such work may be outside the scope of what the team training SWIS facilitators is equipped to tackle, providing schools with resources and suggestions for how they might gain skill in this area appears to be important. Based on my findings from this study, this is an area in which our facilitators are requesting help.

One way to use data to guide conversations around structural racism is detailed in a framework known as ERASE, which focuses on racial prejudices and on how to create an environment for staff to peel back the layers of a problem to plan for meaningful change (Myers & Finnigan, 2018). The first step of the ERASE framework is to *examine* the student data and disaggregate these among student groups. The second step is to *raise* questions about the data to get the staff talking about the reasons they think such disproportionate outcomes exist. The next step is to *ascertain* the causes of the disproportionality along with best practices and research-based solutions. *Selecting* strategic solutions is the next step, which may include additional staff training, hiring additional staff, and revisiting vision statements. The final piece of the puzzle is to *evaluate* progress by periodically re-examining the data sets and making adjustments so that identified issues are addressed efficiently (Myers & Finnigan, 2018).

Another resource for guiding this work is the 5-point intervention approach as outlined by McIntosh et al. in 2018. This approach acknowledges that there is no single strategy that is sufficient to produce sustainable change. A multi-component approach is necessary to reduce

issues of disproportionate discipline. The first step of this approach is to collect, use, and report to the staff on disaggregated discipline data. These data can be added to monthly team meetings to help keep equity as a highlighted focus. The next step is to implement a behavior framework that is preventative, multi-tiered, and culturally responsive such as PBIS. This will help to support all students and staff and has been shown to reduce significantly the amount of disproportionate discipline in schools implementing PBIS with fidelity. Another step in the process is to use engaging instruction to reduce the opportunity gap. All students must have access to effective academic instruction. Developing proactive discipline policies with accountability for disciplinary equity is another vital piece. These policies will help schools and districts to create clear, actionable procedures for enhancing equity at the building level. The last step of this process is to teach strategies for neutralizing implicit bias in discipline decisions. There are specific situations in which implicit bias is more likely to influence discipline decisions. These situations are known as vulnerable decision points and can be altered by creating a self-review routine to identify and neutralize the effects of implicit bias (McIntosh et al., 2018).

Adding references to the ERASE framework and McIntosh et al.'s 5-point intervention approach to the resources available to SWIS facilitators can help address a need the field has clearly articulated. Based on the feedback I received in this study, it is possible that ECS researchers might want to expand the focus of our work to include more guidance for schools struggling to address the disproportionate discipline they uncover using SWIS data.

Threats to Validity

There are several threats to internal validity, including an historical pandemic, selection bias, and attrition. In addition, the fact that I work for ECS is a potential confound in this study.

History. This study was conducted during the global COVID-19 pandemic. This

pandemic has affected schools in ways that we cannot yet measure, and it quite likely impacted my study as well. The pandemic not only slowed the progress of schools, but it also slowed the level of support which facilitators were able to provide. During the 2020-21 school year, many schools were so busy with mandates and shifting curricula that SWIS facilitators were not utilized. Traditional systems, structures, and practices were modified because of the pandemic, and thus a typical environment was not possible.

Selection Bias. The sample was one of convenience. Although all facilitators who meet the inclusion criteria were invited to participate, participation was voluntary, and it is possible that those who responded to the survey or volunteered to participate in the focus groups differed from those who declined the invitation. I am unable to control who participated, but I described the sample with as much detail as possible to assist in determining the degree to which participants are representative of SWIS facilitators in general. Given the voluntary nature of the sample selection and the small sample size, caution is warranted in terms of the degree to which findings will generalize to SWIS facilitators.

Attrition. Attrition is another potential threat to internal validity in this study. Although the invitation to participate in the study was sent to hundreds of SWIS facilitators who met the eligibility criteria, almost all of them opted out of participating. The participation rate is 24 out of 2,000 or 1.2%. Three potential respondents began the survey but failed to respond to all questions, so their data were removed prior to analysis, leaving me with a small sample of 24 survey participants. Due to the small number of participants, the results of this study should be interpreted with extreme caution.

Personal Bias. As mentioned previously, I work for ECS and thus my perceptions might be biased by the expectations I bring to this study. In addition, participants might have been

hesitant about sharing their thoughts with me, concerned that doing so might in some way impact their relationship with ECS or the PBIS network. To account for this potential confound, I consciously sought evidence of contradictory findings during my coding of the qualitative data and diligently conducted member checking during focus groups. In addition, I emphasized my sincere desire to learn from the lived experiences of SWIS facilitators, uncensored by what they might think I wanted to hear. Although these steps cannot remove this threat entirely, I hope they reduced its impact.

Implications of the Findings

Despite the limitations described in the previous section, this research may have important implications for the future of SWIS facilitator training. With dozens of new facilitators trained every month, it is vital that the training not only be efficient and effective, but also meet the diverse needs of the facilitators working in schools and districts around the world.

Recommendations for Training Updates

Although many of the SWIS facilitators stated that the initial facilitator training was adequate, there are some recommendations for training updates based on this research. One recommendation is differentiating the training based on experience level. Currently, there is only one SWIS facilitator training for all participants. Whether the participant is brand new to SWIS or has been using SWIS for 15 years, all participants receive the same training. Differentiating the training based on SWIS experience would provide more effective training for all participants. Those participants with less experience could spend more time and emphasis on how to use the application, navigation, and basic coaching aspects, while those participants with more experience could dig a little deeper into the aspects of data-based decision making, equity, and next steps with their districts.

The next recommendation is to boost the visibility of support resources from PBISApps. Many facilitators in this study recommended that a booster or refresher training be available for SWIS facilitators as well as additional training on equity and data-based decision making. All of these trainings and resources currently exist and are offered at no cost through PBISApps. As previously stated, I believe that there are many facilitators who either do not know about these resources or do not have time to take advantage of them. A quarterly facilitator update communication paired with increased social media exposure might help to inform SWIS facilitators about all of the various support resources that are available.

Another recommendation for the facilitator training would be to create more real-world scenarios. This could be done in several ways. The creation of vignettes and case studies within the training could be helpful for facilitators to understand how the skills could be transferred to their setting. Facilitators can also be asked to bring some actual data from their schools to analyze and brainstorm along with the trainers at PBISApps. This approach would give them some concrete next steps that would be personalized to their schools rather than case studies that may or may not closely match their particular situations.

Recommendation for a Community of Practice

During the course of this study, several SWIS facilitator communities of practice were created. Starting in the Northeast, an online forum was hosted, and facilitators were invited to share their experiences, brainstorm solutions, and get information on various topics related to SWIS. Hosted by the regional trainers, this community of practice regularly includes more than thirty facilitators, with more joining every session. Based on the blueprint used in the Northeast, PBISApps has created a Northwest SWIS facilitator community of practice in conjunction with the Northwest PBIS Network. Several facilitators mentioned that it would be helpful to have a

forum or website where they could connect and network with other facilitators in their area. These communities of practice provide a centralized online meeting space to serve that need. With the success of the Northeast and Northwest communities of practice, other regions in the United States are looking into creating their own SWIS facilitator communities of practice based on the models that we are using.

Recommendations for Equity Work

When asked about the impact of the SWIS facilitator training on equity work in schools, nearly all of the facilitators in this study stated that they felt comfortable with how to use the SWIS platform for determining disproportionality in school discipline; however, they were not sure where to go from there or were intimidated by the daunting conversations around race, gender, etc. in their districts. There are several possible recommendations for improving professional development in these areas.

In addition to the many resources on the PBISApps website, another resource for addressing equity issues within school systems is the Center for PBIS, a technical assistance center which has the main purpose of improving the capacities of state educational agencies, local educational agencies, and schools to establish, scale-up, and sustain the PBIS framework (Center, 2023). At www.pbis.org/equity, there are many resources to help reduce the risk of disproportionate outcomes for student groups with a concentration on the reduction of the risk of exclusionary discipline. Two of the resources that could be highlighted and used for facilitator support are *A 5-Point Intervention Approach for Enhancing Equity in School Discipline* (McIntosh et al., 2018) and *Using Discipline Data within SWPBIS to Identify and Address Disproportionality: A Guide for School Teams* (McIntosh et al., 2021) which are in the Equity publications section.

In the former publication, McIntosh et al. describe a 5-point intervention system to be embedded within a school's existing PBIS system. This system includes points such as using disaggregated data for decision making; implementing a preventative, multi-tiered, culturally responsive behavior framework; incorporating engaging instruction to reduce the opportunity gap; developing policies around accountability for disciplinary equity; and teaching strategies for neutralizing implicit bias in discipline decisions (McIntosh et al., 2018). The latter publication describes a four-step process for school teams to help them to identify problems with disciplinary disproportionality, further analyze the related discipline data, implement an action plan to address the identified problem, and use formative and summative evaluation to determine if the plan is working (McIntosh et al., 2021).

This review of schoolwide discipline data is critical to evaluate the efficacy of schoolwide policies and procedures, potentially measured by the type and number of office discipline referrals and the impact of discipline policy on traditionally marginalized student groups (Fenning & Rose, 2007). Once this evaluation is complete, SWIS facilitators can work with the schools they support to help create a collaborative discipline team to examine discipline practices and promote professional development to create more proactive discipline policies to benefit all students (Fenning & Rose, 2007). By effectively promoting these resources and providing much-needed professional development, PBISApps can better support the needs of facilitators who are struggling with bridging the gap between thinking about equity issues and making action plans to tackle those issues in the schools they support.

Another implication for the training team and equity resources would be to create an extended course on the topic of equity. Using the aforementioned equity resources located on the PBIS technical center website, I have begun to brainstorm plans for a week-long equity course to

help provide some of the missing pieces of equity professional development for our facilitators as well as our users. This professional development will help to start building the foundation so that SWIS facilitators can begin to have those courageous conversations around equity data-based decision making. One resource that was identified as a need was a readiness checklist around equity. Many schools are in different places when it comes to building a community and culture to welcome this difficult work. This checklist will help facilitators identify some of the pre-work that needs to be done to prepare for systemic change at the school and district levels.

Conclusion

Although educators have been analyzing academic data for decades, the process of analyzing behavioral data is relatively new and becoming more and more commonplace in the field of education. In this study, I set out to explore how the realities of the facilitator role in the field might differ from the ideal role of the facilitator that was presented during the initial training. I also wanted to explore the confidence of facilitators when it pertained to having discussions about equity in the schools they support. Although I found the role of the facilitator to closely match the ideal role presented in the initial training, I also found that facilitators are in need of additional professional development in the areas of data-based decision making and particularly solution development pertaining to disproportionate discipline and equity issues. This exploratory study highlights the realities of the SWIS facilitator in the field as well as the need for changes to current training practices. By implementing changes in SWIS facilitator training in addition to promoting resources to help facilitators with tackling the issues of equity in the schools they support, PBISApps can effectively and efficiently support facilitators in the field.

Appendix A

Survey Questions

1. I have read the informed consent and agree to participate in this research study. (Yes/No)

2. Gender - (Short Answer)

3. Education

    a. High School or Equivalent

    b. Associate Degree

    c. Bachelor's Degree

    d. Master's Degree

    e. Doctorate

4. Current Role in School– (Short Answer)

5. Number of years in education

    a. Less than one year

    b. 1-4 years

    c. 5-10 years

    d. 11+ years

6. Number of years as a SWIS facilitator

    a. Less than one year

    b. 1-4 years

    c. 5-10 years

    d. 11+ years

7. How well does your current role allow enough time for your facilitator support duties?

    a. Not well at all
    b. Slightly well

      c.   Moderately well
      d.   Very well
      e.   Extremely well

8. How well do you feel your current role as a facilitator matches the role of the facilitator

    that was presented during your initial training?

      a.   Not well at all
      b.   Slightly well
      c.   Moderately well
      d.   Very well
      e.   Extremely well

9. After being a facilitator in the field, how well do you feel that your initial training was

    sufficient for you to be successful in your role?

      a.   Not well at all
      b.   Slightly well
      c.   Moderately well
      d.   Very well
      e.   Extremely well

10. How prepared do you feel about identifying and addressing disproportionate discipline

    after completing SWIS facilitator training?

      a.   Not well at all
      b.   Slightly well
      c.   Moderately well
      d.   Very well
      e.   Extremely well

11. How can the SWIS facilitator training better prepare facilitators to meet the needs of their

    actual roles?

12. How can the SWIS facilitator training better prepare facilitators for leading efforts to

    address disproportionate discipline?

Appendix B

Focus Group Questions

1. Looking back on the training that you received as a SWIS facilitator, what do you think were the most beneficial parts?

2. Looking back on the training that you received as a SWIS facilitator, what do you think were the least beneficial parts?

3. Does your current role match with the role of a facilitator described in the training? What are some things that you wish you would've known during training?

4. How prepared do SWIS facilitators feel about identifying and addressing disproportionate discipline after completing SWIS facilitator training?

5. How can the SWIS facilitator training better prepare facilitators to meet the needs of their actual roles and better prepare them for leading efforts to address disproportionate discipline?

6. Are there any other aspects of being a facilitator that you'd like to share?

Appendix C

Letter to Survey Participants

Date: _____

Good Afternoon,

My name is Alan Cook, and I am part of the PBIS Applications training team at the University of Oregon. I am currently working on a research project for my dissertation that is intended to give us information about what we can do to provide the best support and training for our SWIS facilitators across the country. I would like to know more about your background, experience as a facilitator, and thoughts on what is currently working well and what might be improved in terms of the training we provide to SWIS facilitators.

The first part of my study involves a short online survey, which includes just 13 questions. It should take no longer than 5 minutes to complete, and all data will be de-identified prior to analysis to protect your confidentiality. The second part of my study will involve focus groups. Currently, I am only asking for your participation in the survey and a full informed consent form will be required before participating.

I plan to use the survey results to find more ways to support SWIS facilitators in the field as well as find more effective and efficient ways to train facilitators in the future. Please have the survey completed by end of day _____.

Thank you for your help,

Alan Cook

Appendix D

Letter to Focus Group Participants

Date: _____

Good Afternoon,

My name is Alan Cook and I am part of the PBIS Applications training team at the University of Oregon. Thank you for your participation in the facilitator survey. I would like to invite you to participate in a 30-minute focus group to dig a little deeper into the reality of the role of a facilitator. The focus group will be held on _____ at ____PST and a full informed consent form will be required before participating.

Please let me know if you are able to attend by end of day _____.

Thank you for your help,

Alan Cook

Appendix E

Equity Resources

- PBIS National Technical Assistance Center Equity resource library - https://www.pbis.org/equity
  - This library contains tools, publications, presentations, and videos to help educators learn more about promoting equity.
- PBISApps Equity Reports overview - https://www.pbisapps.org/resources/videos#equity-report
  - These videos provide an overview on how to effectively use the equity reports within SWIS to reduce disproportionate discipline.
- PBISApps Teach by Design blog and Expert Instruction Podcast - https://www.pbisapps.org/resources/teach-by-design
  - Accessible resources to share with staff for ongoing PD. Includes topics around equity and minimizing disproportionate discipline.
- CASEL (Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning) resources - https://drc.casel.org/sel-as-a-lever-for-equity/equity-resources/
  - Equity resources through a Social and Emotional Learning lens.
- Oregon Office of Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion resources - https://www.oregon.gov/ode/students-and-family/equity/Pages/default.aspx
  - State of Oregon specific page on educational equity resources.
- US Department of Education Equity page - https://www.ed.gov/equity
  - Information on the federal Equity Action plan

References

Albritton, K., & Truscott, S. (2014). Professional development to increase problem-solving skills in a Response to Intervention framework. *Contemporary School Psychology, 18*, 44-58. doi: 10.1007/s40688-013-0008-0

Annamma, S., Morrison, D., & Jackson, D. (2014). Disproportionality fills in the gaps: Connections between achievement, discipline, and special education in the school-to-prison pipeline. *Berkeley Review of Education*, *5*(1), 53-87. https://doi.org/10.5070/B85110003

Bettesworth, L., Alonzo, J., & Duesbery, L. (2008). Swimming in the depths: Educators' ongoing effective use of data to guide decision making. *Handbook on data-based decision making in education*. 286-303.

Carpenter, Pan, S. C., & Butler, A. C. (2022). The science of effective learning with spacing and retrieval practice. Nature Reviews Psychology, 1(9), 496–511. https://doi.org/10.1038/s44159-022-00089-1Center on Response to Intervention (May 11, 2022) Data-based decision-making definition. American Institutes for Research. Retrieved from: https://rti4success.org/ resources/mtssrti-glossary-terms#MTSS

Center on PBIS (2023). Positive Behavioral Interventions & Supports [Website]. www.pbis.org.

Creswell, J. W., & Creswell, J. D. (2018). *Research design (5th ed.)*. Sage.

Delamarter, J. (2015). Avoiding practice shock: Using teacher movies to realign pre-service teachers' expectations of teaching. *Australian Journal of Teacher Education, 40* (2).

Delamarter, J. (2019). *Proactive images for pre-service teachers: Identity, expectations, and avoiding practice shock. London*, UK: Palgrave Macmillan.

ESSA (2015). Every Student Succeeds Act of 2015, Pub. L. No. 114-95 § 114 Stat. 1177 (2015-2016).

Fenning, P., & Rose, J. (2007). Overrepresentation of African American students in exclusionary discipline the role of school policy. *Urban Education*, *42*(6), 536–559. https://doi.org/10.1177/0042085907305039

Gion, C., McIntosh, K., & Falcon, S. (2022). Effects of a multifaceted classroom intervention on racial disproportionality. School Psychology Review, 51(1), 67-83. https://doi.org/10.1080/237296 6X.2020.1788906

Losen, D., Hodson, C., Ee, J., & Martinez, T. (2015). Disturbing inequities: Exploring the relationship between racial disparities in special education identification and discipline. *The Center for Civil Rights Remedies at the Civil Rights Project*, *5*(2), Article 15.

Mandinach, E.B., & Gummer, E.S. (2016). What does it mean for teachers to be data literate: Laying out the skills, knowledge, and dispositions. *Teaching and Teacher Education, 60*, 366-376.

May, S., Ard, W., Todd, A., Horner, R., Glasgow, A., Sugai, G., & Sprague, J (2021) School-wide Information System 7.5.9 b138. University of Oregon, Eugene, Oregon.

McIntosh, K., Barnes, A., Eliason, B., & Morris, K. (2014). Using discipline data within SWPBIS to identify and address disproportionality: A guide for school teams. OSEP Technical Assistance Center on Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports. www.pbis.org.

McIntosh, K., Girvan, E. J., Horner, R. H., Smolkowski, K., & Sugai, G. (2018). A 5-point intervention approach for enhancing equity in school discipline. OSEP Technical Assistance Center on Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports.

Myers, L.C., & Finnigan, K.S. (2018). Using Data to Guide Difficult Conversations around Structural Racism.

National Research Council (2002). *Minority Students in Special and Gifted Education*. Washington, DC: The National Academies Press. https://doi.org/10.17226/10128

Prenger, R., Poortman, C. L., & Handelzalts, A. (2017). Factors influencing teachers' professional development in networked professional learning communities. Teaching and Teacher Education, 68, 77–90. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2017.08.014

Schildkamp, K. & Poortman, C. (2015). Factors influencing the functioning of data teams. *Teachers College Record, 117*, 1-42.

Skiba, R. J., Michael, R. S., Nardo, A. C., & Peterson, R. L. (2002). The color of discipline: Sources of racial and gender disproportionality in administration of school punishment. *The Urban Review*, *34*, 317–342.

Sullivan, A., Van Norman, E., & Klingbeil, D. (2014). Exclusionary discipline of students with disabilities: Student and school characteristics predicting suspension. *Remedial and Special Education*, *35*(4), 199–210. https://doi.org/10.1177/0741932513519825

Weber, S., & Mitchell, C. (1995). 'That's funny, you don't look like a teacher!': Interrogating images, identity, and popular culture. New York, NY: Routledge.