

CHECK-IN/CHECK-OUT TEACHES SKILLS FOR SUCCESS

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A Thesis Presented to

The Faculty of Humboldt State University

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts in Education

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May 2018

## ABSTRACT

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Struggling students benefit significantly from access to a mentor, who can encourage them and positively reinforce desirable social behavior while helping them learn skills to be successful in society. In some American schools, the Positive Behavior Systems of Intervention and Support (PBIS) is used to encourage youth to learn these skills. The system is broken up into three tiers: Tier I, Tier II and Tier III. Eighty percent of students fall into Tier I and can meet desired school expectations without additional supports. Fifteen percent of students at PBIS schools fit into the Tier II category and exhibit low-level, chronic behaviors that are disruptive. To help reduce these behaviors, students are referred to a Check-in/Check-Out (CICO) program. They are paired with a mentor, who ideally, meets with them daily to encourage them to meet the day's behavior goals and then rewards them for meeting the goals. This study analyzes the impact of a Check-in/Check-out mentoring program at a rural, K-8 school in Humboldt County. Staff interviews conducted with staff members at the school site provided insights into the effectiveness of the CICO program. Staff members indicated that the CICO program did help alleviate undesirable behavior and foster a greater sense of connection to the school community for CICO students.

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## INTRODUCTION

Every child and youth in America benefits from access to a mentor. Some youth and children may not have access to adult mentors that can help them learn skills to become self-reliant as adults. They may experience hunger, neglect, abuse, family instability, homelessness and other factors that make it difficult to learn skills that will allow them to be stable in adulthood.

In 2012, the Census reports that more than 8.5 million children were living in single parent households, reducing the opportunities for parental mentoring. Four and a half million live below the poverty line with over 7.5 million under 200% of the poverty line. The challenges presented by social conditions often lead to school failure. In 2013, 5.6 million youth ages 16-24 were not in school or were unemployed and one in five American youth did not finish high school in 2013 (Ernst & Young, 2015) One avenue that is worth exploring in addressing this situation is school-based mentoring.

According to MENTOR: The National Mentoring Project organization, the organization found that youth who might not complete high school who are mentored have a better chance of attending college, participating in positive activities and being volunteers in the community.

Even though America has so many resources, too many youth are affected by poverty and community violence and have trouble finishing their education and finding a career. Unfortunately, about a third of youth will not have access to a mentor. The MENTOR organization, which has been operating since 1990, has tried to close this

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mentoring gap, by establishing connections with those who could mentor youth, developing mentor programs and providing resources to groups that could mentor.

MENTOR argues that we must do more to help youth face their challenges, develop personally and educationally and find employment (Ernst & Young, 2015).

MENTOR defines mentoring as people in society guiding and educating youth to help them find satisfying careers, leading to a stable social foundation and citizens who can follow their dreams and serve others (Ernst & Young, 2015). The direction of youth's lives can be changed through mentoring or "using the power of human relationships to provide youth with the guidance, support and opportunities they need to thrive." (Ernst & Young, p. 3, 2015)

Youth mentoring of the sort supported by MENTOR began when the Big Brothers (later Big Brothers/Big Sisters of America) organization was established in the early 1900s as a response to the introduction of juvenile courts. Mentoring became more widespread in the 1990s. Research done in the 1990s showed that the Big Brothers/Big Sisters (BBBS) model of mentoring worked for youth. It could cause youth behavior and attitudes to change and contribute to their well-being. The media attention that the research on the BBBS model of mentoring received, helped mentoring to go from a small charitable cause to a potential solution for serious social ills (Ernst & Young, 2015). Federal and state governments began to invest in mentoring programs in the first decade of the twenty-first century, which allowed the concept of mentoring to expand further into schools, juvenile justice institutions, churches and youth employment programs. Different kinds of mentoring began to emerge, such as mentoring in groups, peer

mentoring and online mentoring. Some companies began asking their employees to mentor youth and civic organizations took up the challenge.

### Check-in/Check-Out

Check-in/Check-out is a mentoring program used in some schools that use Positive Behavior Systems of Intervention and Support. It is low-cost and can be implemented quickly. Each student in a Check-in/Check-out program is assigned a mentor, who positively interacts with the student each day and checks in (talks about how the child is feeling, what happened outside of school, etc.), encourages the child to meet his/her goals and checks with the child at the end of the day about their progress providing small tangible rewards (e.g., snack) to the child if goals are met. The goal is to influence the child in a positive way and encourage the child to change low-level disruptive behaviors in the classroom to behaviors that garner more positive attention.

In this qualitative study, a Check-in/Check-out program in a rural K-8 school in Humboldt County, California was studied to ascertain if Check-in/Check-out could be an effective mentoring program in a small, rural school setting. Fifteen percent of the student population was enrolled in the CICO program at some point during the 2016-2017 school year. Six staff members from the school were interviewed about the Check-in/Check-Out program.

The following section explores the history behind the Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS) system in schools, explains the structure of the PBIS system and provides clarity about the Check-in/Check-Out program.

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### Research Question

Do instructors and/or administrators experience positive effects from the CICO program?

LITERATURE REVIEW

*When educating the minds of our youth, we must not forget to educate their hearts.*

*--The Dalai Lama*

Introduction

To be ready to face a 21<sup>st</sup> century world, students must be prepared socially and emotionally, not just academically. Schools that effectively implement a system of Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS) arm students with the social, emotional and behavioral skills they need to succeed in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. This literature review includes a study of previous research and related literature and will discuss the No Child Left Behind Act's lingering effects on learning and school culture, social-emotional learning, the inception of PBIS, the three tiers of PBIS, and, specifically, the Check-in/Check-Out PBIS intervention strategy. This review will close highlighting the evidence of how the Tier 2 Check-in/Check-out intervention strategy can be an effective way to teach students how to succeed in a 21<sup>st</sup> century classroom.

No Child Left Behind

In 2001, President George W. Bush signed the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB). President Bush expressed his high hopes for this new law in January 2001: "These reforms express my deep belief in our public schools and their mission to build

the mind and character of every child, from every background, in every part of America” (U.S. Department of Education, 2002, p. 10). The law was intended to boost student achievement and change school climate, as well as increase the quality of teaching. States were required to measure whether students had achieved progress in reading and math each year by designing and implementing standards-based assessments for grades three through eight.

In turn, school districts were allowed to use federal funds with more flexibility. Schools were required to submit their tests results in the form of a school report card, also know as Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) (U.S. Dept. Education, 2002). The definition of AYP is the minimum level of progress a school district must make each year, according to the rate of growth in the percentage of students who reach what each state defines as academically proficient (Fusarelli, 2004).

No Child Left Behind changed school cultures in numerous ways. Some positive effects of NCLB include closing some of the achievement gap between subgroups of students, giving disadvantaged students more resources to improve achievement, improved data and reporting and tracking systems, and better-developed educational policies for students (Fusarelli, 2004).

However, NCLB also created a punitive culture for schools. If a school’s AYP fell below expectations from one school year to the next, the school faced assistance from the state, then corrective action and possible restructuring (U.S. Department Education, 2002). If a school district failed to make their AYP for two years in a row, students could choose to transfer to another school, with transportation provided by the district. Also, if

a school district did not meet all the AYP goals, the school district would be labeled as a failing school or district. It was all or nothing. For example, Durant Middle School in Wake County, North Carolina achieved 27 out of 29 AYP goals, except for raising reading and math scores for English as a Second Language students. Yet, it was labeled a failing school (Fusarelli, 2004).

In addition to creating a punitive school culture, to avoid the risk of losing federal funding, NCLB often caused school administrators and teachers to focus most of their efforts on achieving a passing score on a test, while eliminating programs and curriculum that did not have a direct impact on test scores. English and Steffy (2001) assert that the idea of a balanced curriculum was lost with NCLB. The curriculum was not the only compromise made under NCLB. Jones, Jones and Hargroves (2003) discovered that teachers' creativity and flexibility also decreased under NCLB, with limited time and opportunities for students to think critically, explore their world and become better people. English and Steffy (2001) stated that "the unintended effect of hammering school districts with test scores is to flatten the curriculum, reduce diversity, reward minimal performance with commendations and reduce initiative to engage in reform" (p. 13).

No Child Left Behind also had the unintended outcome of influencing some states to lower their standards to avoid sanctions, creating inequity nationally because some states had high standards and high levels of failing schools and others had lower standards and fewer failing schools (Fusarelli, 2004).

No Child Left Behind created learners that were test takers, who were not challenged above what was expected on the test, and ultimately learners who were bored

and restless (Fusarelli, 2004). NCLB's emphasis was exclusively on academic learning, but in the post NCLB era, the focus is changing to educating the whole child, which means meeting children's social and emotional learning needs as well.

### Social-Emotional Learning (SEL)

One way to prevent the escalation of problem behavior is for schools to incorporate a social-emotional learning (SEL) program into their overall curriculum. The Collaborative for Academic and Social Emotional Learning guide states that "social and emotional learning involve the processes through which children and adults acquire and effectively apply the knowledge, attitudes and skills necessary to understand and manage emotions, set and achieve positive goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain positive relationships, and make responsible decisions" (CASEL, 2013, p. 4).

Kilgus and Taylor (2014) indicate that students who struggle to develop basic social emotional skills often have impaired academic performance, restricted ability to form relationships with peers and more problem behaviors. Students who receive lessons in social-emotional learning can improve their academic learning and decrease their problem behaviors, which has a direct and positive impact on school climate. For example, when a Washoe County school district in Nevada focused on teaching social-emotional skills, there was an increase in reading and math scores. The director of research and evaluation in the Washoe County School District stated that the district's students are "less likely to be suspended, more likely to attend school, and they graduate at a higher rate than students who didn't have those competencies" (Fink, 2016, para. 2).

As discussed in the previous section, the No Child Left Behind Act caused some schools to narrowly focus on reading and math instruction. If only reading and math instruction are emphasized, social-emotional learning development is diminished, causing some students to flounder academically because of social-emotional problems (Kilgus & Taylor, 2014).

Ideally, social-emotional skills should be introduced and taught by family members in a caring setting. However, some students' social-emotional learning is interrupted by various factors such as poverty, trauma and limited parenting skills. Adolescents who have disrupted social-emotional learning may exhibit negative behavior and decreased academic learning. Implementing social-emotional learning in schools has a demonstrated positive impact on academic achievement. According to Durlack, Weissberg, Dymnicki, Taylor and Schellinger (2011), building social-emotional competencies increased some students' academic achievement by an average of 11 percentile points.

This social-emotional learning research is also relevant to current issues in education, such as preventing bullying and improving school safety, as well as improving student behavior. SEL emphasizes tiered skill building. An administrator might decide to include SEL curriculum to support efforts to improve academics, safety, mental health and bullying. By improving these areas with SEL curriculum, the school climate simultaneously improves (Kilgus & Taylor, 2014).

According to the Collaborative for Academic and Social Emotional Learning (2013), there are five competency components to SEL. The first is self-awareness:

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recognizing one's strengths and limitations. The second is self-management: staying in control and persisting through challenges. The third competency is social awareness: understanding and empathizing with others. The fourth competency is relationship skills: being able to work in teams and resolve conflicts. The fifth competency is responsible decision-making: making ethical and safe choices. Kilgore and Taylor (2014) assert that "enhancing these skills supports improved school climate, behavior management and academic performance" (p. 15). The Check-in/Check-out program that will be discussed later focuses on helping students learn the skills that Kilgore and Taylor mention.

One program that works hand-in-hand with social-emotional learning curriculum to educate the whole child is the Positive System of Interventions and Supports (PBIS).

### PBIS

Gottfredson and Gottfredson (2002) did a study of over 1,200 schools. After tabulating the results of their survey on prevention activities in schools, they found that many schools were not spending enough time preventing problem behaviors. Schools were responding to disruptive behaviors by using punishment-based strategies: in-and-out of school suspensions, expulsions, office referrals and time-outs. They recommended that schools should improve organization and integration of prevention efforts and include them in the normal school operations. This included improving the training and quality of prevention activities and training regular school personnel to operate the programs rather than bringing in outside specialists. They advocated collecting data and

having local school personnel analyze the data and use it to improve prevention programs.

In 1997, the Individuals with Disabilities Act was reauthorized, and a grant was provided to create the Center on Positive Behavior Intervention and Support. The center was created to provide schools with support to students with behavioral disorders. Because the University of Oregon had a history of research in supporting students with behavioral disorders, they received the grant to develop a PBIS center. At first, the center just focused on giving schools information about behavior interventions for students with behavior disorders. Later, the university's National Technical Assistance (TA) Center on PBIS changed its focus to the school-wide behavior support of all students, with an emphasis on implementation of best practices and systems. The center focused on preventing problem behaviors, making data-based decisions, explicitly teaching social skills, implementing programs and systems school-wide, using research-based practices and focusing on student outcomes (Sugai & Simonsen, 2012).

PBIS is defined as a framework for “enhancing the adoption and implementation of a continuum of evidence-based interventions to achieve key academic and behavioral outcomes for all students” (Sugai et al., 2000). Sugai and Horner (2009) noted that the emphasis is on PBIS being a process or approach, rather than a curriculum. The continuum emphasizes that evidence and research-based behavioral practices are organized in a multi-tiered system of support. PBIS is also described as an approach that “provides the means of selecting, organizing and implementing these evidence-practices

by giving equal attention to (a) clearly defined and meaningful student outcomes, (b) data-driven decision making and problem-solving processes and (c) systems that prepare and support implementers to use these practices with high fidelity and durability” (Sugai & Horner, 2009, p. 4). Guillory (2015) notes that the underlying reason behind the creation of PBIS is the connection between social behaviors and academic achievement. When students engage in behavior that distracts them from learning, it is harder for them to be successful academically. PBIS, is designed to reduce undesirable behaviors and allows more time for students to improve academically by establishing a positive behavior environment.

According to Sugai and Horner (2009), there are four necessary elements in PBIS. The first is that data is collected and analyzed to create measures that can monitor performance progress over time. The second element requires those who are implementing PBIS to establish outcomes and priorities based on the data. The third element involves choosing interventions and supports that have been shown to achieve the desired outcomes and that can be adapted to the setting in which PBIS is being implemented. The final element consists of systems of supports put in place to make sure that those implementing PBIS have the skills and capacity to accurately and thoroughly implement it. The final element also uses data to adapt supports and implement interventions matched to specific student needs. Sugai and Horner (2009) also advocate for the smallest number of behavioral interventions with the greatest effectiveness and applicability be used in five different settings: school-wide, in the classroom, in the non-

classroom (common, non-instructional contexts), in the family, and with individual students.

PBIS consists of three levels or tiers of supports. The first tier (Tier 1) includes universal supports, which are implemented school-wide for all students in the school. About eighty percent of students will respond to the supports in Tier 1 and will not need additional resources or supports. The second tier (Tier 2) includes more intensive supports such as instruction in small groups, a more individual schedule, small incentives and Check-In/Check-Out to students who still exhibit problematic behaviors after receiving Tier 1 supports. About fifteen percent of students overall will respond to Tier 2 supports. The third tier (Tier 3) consists of individual supports for students that do not respond to Tier 1 and Tier 2 interventions. Teachers and other service providers conduct a functional behavior assessment (FBA) and determine individual supports based on the FBA results. Around five percent of students require the Tier 3 supports. If a student does not respond to Tier 3 interventions, a special education referral might be necessary (Bennett & Cramer, 2015). All tiers are “characterized by (a) formatively collected student performance data on responsiveness to the immediate environment and interventions, (b) data decision rules used to evaluate student responsiveness, and (c) intervention decisions and adaptations based on student performance” (Sugai & Horner, 2009, p. 229).

### Tier 1

The United States Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) Technical

Assistance Center on Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (2010) mentions seven principles that need to be included in Tier 1 supports to be effective. Tier 1 needs to include the belief that appropriate behavior can be taught to all children, that it is necessary to intervene early before problem behavior occurs and that there needs to be a multi-tiered system of supports. Also, Tier 1 must use interventions based on research that are validated scientifically, monitor student progress to determine which interventions work for students, and use data to make decisions. Finally, assessments of daily office discipline referrals by day, where the referrals took place and whether interventions are helping to curb referrals need to be an ongoing part of the process.

Using Tier 1 supports in PBIS moves the school system from being a reactive system to a proactive and preventative system. It also helps staff present a more united front because they are using “common language, common practices and consistent application of positive and negative reinforcement” (“Tier 1 Supports,” n.d., para. 9).

Tier 1 PBIS supports include rules, procedures and physical arrangements that school staff create and teach to prevent undesirable behavior before it starts. The staff determines the physical areas of the school where the expectations are taught, such as the gym, classrooms and library, and decide what the 3-5 behavioral expectations look like in each physical area, and what routines need to be taught for that area to ensure behavioral expectations are met.

After expectations and routines are determined for each physical area, the school staff determines how to teach the routines and behaviors to students. Some schools create an expectation station for each area and take students there and model how to

behave appropriately in each area. Some schools show a non-example of what not to do and then model the appropriate behavior with students practicing the appropriate behavior. The school staff gives ongoing and direct feedback to students about the behavior they modeled and lets them know if any adjustments need to be made.

When all students are aware of the appropriate behavior that is expected for each physical area of the school, the school staff determines how to “catch” students behaving appropriately and reinforce the positive behaviors. The PBIS website asserts that specific praise is very important to encourage appropriate behavior to continue (“Tier 1 Supports”, n.d., para 12). Token systems or tickets for appropriate behaviors are also used.

The PBIS website notes that research has shown that using Tier 1 supports causes significant reductions in students being sent to the office for disciplinary reasons and works for over 80% of all students in a school. This eliminates referrals to the office for minor reasons and allows time to focus on bigger discipline issues. In addition, because Tier 1 uses a system to document behavior, schools can determine which students need additional interventions and move those students into Tiers 2 and 3 (“Tier 1 Supports”, n.d., para 15).

## Tier 2

The PBIS website includes a Tier 2 supports Frequently Asked Questions page that defines Tier 2 supports as those that are created to provide intensive or targeted interventions to students who do not respond to Tier 1 supports. These supports are more intensive since a smaller number of students need them and these students might escalate

to more serious behaviors if Tier 2 supports are not used. Tier 2 students need more support than Tier 1 students and less support than Tier 3 students. Some schools refer students for Tier 2 interventions when they have been seen in the office more than twice.

In Tier 2, interventions are simple and more individualized, involving small groups of students. Interventions might include programs such as a social skills club, Check-In/Check-Out (CICO) or a Behavior Education plan.

Normally, an assessment is done to identify what the problem behavior is and why the student might be doing it (otherwise known as a Functional Behavior Assessment or an FBA). A support plan is developed for the student that uses individualized assessment-based intervention strategies, such as teaching new skills to replace inappropriate behavior. The physical environment is rearranged to prevent inappropriate behavior and encourage appropriate behavior, monitoring behavior and evaluating the efficacy of the plan is ongoing. Tier 2 supports are developed with a team, involving school staff, family members and other involved service providers.

Some features of the Tier 2 interventions include the following: they take little effort by teachers to implement, interventions are flexible, the student chooses to participate, enough resources are provided to implement the Tier 2 interventions, they can be quickly accessed and are continuously available. Also, a student's behavior is constantly monitored for decision-making ("Tier 2 FAQs," n.d. para. 8).

Tier 2 supports are deemed successful if there are measurable and improved changes in the student's behavior and quality of life. Progress-monitoring and direct

observations help to determine the success of Tier 2 supports and also help to determine the need for Tier 3 support.

### Tier 3

When students reach a Tier 3 support level, supports need to be very individualized, tailored to each student's specific need and situations. Tier 1 (school wide) and Tier 2 (targeted group) supports should already have been implemented. It takes a team of school staff and outside service providers to administer Tier 3 interventions, which are comprehensive and involve several elements. The goal of supports at the Tier 3 level is to reduce problem behaviors and teach students the skills to adapt to situations at school and provide ways for the student to increase his or her quality of life. Similar to Tier 2, a Functional Behavior Assessment is conducted to determine the problem behaviors and intervention strategies based on assessment. The difference with Tier 3 is that the focus is on a single individual's needs, instead of a small group and the approach is personal, flexible and focused ("Tier 3 FAQs," n.d., para. 1-3).

Tier 3 interventions are required when a student misses school for an extended period of time due to suspension or when the student's behavior interferes with his progress in school. Behavioral support teams are collaborative and include those who "know the student best, have a vested interest in positive outcomes, represent the range of environments in which the student participates and have access to resources needed for support" ("Tier 3 FAQs," n.d., para. 6).

Tier 3 goals are built on a "positive long-term vision for the student, based on information given from the student, the student's family and the support team" ("Tier 3

FAQS,” n.d., para. 7). Also, a plan to deal with crisis situations is developed with student and staff safety in mind.

When a student’s behavior improves, along with their quality of life in an observable manner, then Tier 3 supports are deemed to be successful.

PBIS’s tier system allows all levels of students to be taught behavioral expectations and receive the level of support necessary for them to be successful at school and improve their quality of life. A Tier 2 intervention that builds resiliency and positive connections in students is the Check-In/Check-Out system and the focus of this research.

#### Check-In/Check-Out (CICO)

Cameron and Sheppard (2006) argue that students, who have limited personal contact with adults in a traditional school setting, may become alienated from school if adults at school do not demonstrate an interest in them. Many students only have limited personal interactions with adults during the school day. In a study done by Cameron, Sheppard and Odell (2005), they found that teachers often distanced themselves from students that they saw as challenging or threatening. It is these very students, however, who need the most contact with caring adults. Without contact from caring adults, students may distrust school staff and become disengaged from the academic instruction, as well as harboring feelings of rejection (Hyman, 1990). Sugai and Horner (2008) concluded that punitive actions by educators correlate with decreased academic achievement and higher antisocial behaviors. Mcevoy and Welker (2000) argue that

there is a strong connection between antisocial behavior and academic failure, and that effective schools have a high expectation for academic achievement, shared mission among staff members, a commitment to assess appropriately, conviction that all students can learn and progress and provide a safe learning environment as perceived by students.

PBIS utilizes culturally and socially appropriate interventions in which the student's unique learning history is emphasized. Staff members seek to find out why problem behavior exists and try to improve student behavior over a long period of time (Giani, 2008).

Good relationships at school are important for student success there (Giani, 2008). Also, "reinforcing student behavior is important in conditioning students to behave in a manner which will allow the student to be both socially and academically successful" (Koumas, 2015, p. 55).

According to Crone, Horner and Hawken (2004) the Check-In/Check-Out (CICO) Tier 2 intervention, also known as a Behavior Education plan (BEP) is for students who demonstrate persistent problem behavior in classroom settings, but not dangerous or violent behavior (typically 15 percent of students). These students do not respond well to school-wide behavior expectations or to preventative practices in the classroom. CICO helps to prevent problem behavior and helps staff to reach out to students before they are in crisis and have escalated their problem behavior.

CICO is designed to be efficient and cost-effective because school resources are diminishing. It can be implemented within 3-5 days of identifying a problem and usually takes up no more than 5-10 minutes of teacher time a day and 20-30 students can be in

the CICO program at the same time. In fact, Crone, Horner and Hawken (2004) advocate that CICO is the most effective if ten or more students need Tier 2 intervention. CICO provides “daily support and monitoring for students who are at-risk for developing serious or chronic problem behavior” (Crone, Horner & Hawken, 2004, e-book). It uses many principles of positive behavior support, such as “(1) clearly defined expectations, (2) instruction on appropriate social skills, (3) increased positive reinforcement for following expectations, (4) contingent consequences for problem behavior, (5) increased positive contact with an adult in the school, (6) improved opportunities for self-management and (7) increased home-school collaboration” (Crone, Horner & Hawken, 2004, e-book).

CICO includes a daily check-in/check-out system that gives the student immediate feedback on his behavior via a Daily Progress Report (DPR) and more positive adult attention. The behavior expectations are clearly defined and students are given instant and postponed reinforcement when they meet these goals. Parent support is encouraged because a copy of the DPR is sent home each day for parents to sign and students to bring back to school the next day. The points earned on the DPR are recorded by a CICO monitor each day and evaluated every few weeks to decide if CICO should continue as is, be modified, or faded out (Crone, Horner & Hawken, 2004). Campbell and Anderson (2008) indicate that CICO consists of the following pieces: a student meets with the CICO coordinator at the beginning and end of the day to set goals for the day and review how it went, a DPR is generated on which the teacher gives the student

points for meeting goals at certain times during the day for meeting goals and feedback, and provides tangible and intangible rewards for earning a certain number of points.

There is evidence to support the claim that CICO is effective in reducing problem behavior where students are in CICO because of problem behavior related to adults or peers. In a study of 24 middle school students from a school of 542 middle school students in grades 6-8, students with five or more discipline referrals in a semester or a teacher nomination for CICO were assigned to a CICO program. To start the program, students signed a behavioral contract written by the CICO team. After that, each morning students would check-in at the front office, get their DPRs, and give it to teachers at the beginning of each class period. At the end of the class period, the teachers would assign points on the sheet depending on if the student met, partially met or did not meet the five school-wide expectations. At the end of the day, the students would come back to the office with their DPRs and receive a small treat if they received enough points for the day. A copy of the DPR was then sent home with the students for parents to look at and sign. Close records of DPRs were kept in the office. The results indicated that if students were in the CICO program because of problem behaviors maintained by adult attention (80% of students improved) or peer attention (66.7% of students improved) there was an overall improvement in student behavior. If students were in the CICO program because of task avoidance, there was markedly less improvement (March & Horner, 2002). In another study of 19 students at three K-5 elementary schools, in the Northwestern United States, the researchers found that 13 of the 19 students (68 percent) showed a decrease in major office referrals while participating in the CICO program. Also, 8 out of 12

students for whom minor office referral data was available showed a decrease in minor office referrals (67 percent). The authors of the study also suggested that students who have peer or adult related problem behavior are more likely to benefit from CICO than those with escape related behavior (Filter, Benedict, McKenna, Horner, Todd & Watson, 2007). In a small study of four students at an elementary school, all students showed a decrease in problem behavior due to participating in the CICO program (Todd, Campbell & Meyer, 2008). The limitations of both studies were the small samples of students in the studies.

Myers and Briere (2010) conducted a study of CICO at a larger school site, an urban middle school in southeastern New England, consisting of around 1,000 students in grades 5-8. The school had a 98% rating on the PBIS fidelity index, indicating a very high-fidelity rate in the implementation of PBIS. Seventy percent of students were on free or reduced-lunch and nearly thirty percent of students spoke a language other than English as their first language, as well as sixty-five percent of students identifying as minority students. The implementation of PBIS had reduced office referrals overall, but twenty-five percent of students kept receiving office referrals for low-level, chronic problems. The authors of the study implemented a CICO program over three years and found a decrease in problem behavior and office referrals. Students benefitted from the daily contact with adults, having clear expectations and rewards. This study was done with a significantly larger student population and the results were similar to the smaller studies--CICO is effective at reducing problem behavior.

In a more recent study done by Miller (2013), she evaluated four elementary students in two K-5 schools in the southeastern United States. Each school had received about 96% on the PBIS fidelity index. Each of the four elementary students participated in a CICO program for several weeks and showed not only a decrease in problem behavior, but also an increase in academic engagement. As part of the experiment, the CICO program was stopped for a few weeks and students experienced an increase in office referrals and decreased academic engagement. When CICO was reinstated, there was a decrease in office referrals and an increase in academic engagement.

### Conclusion

The No Child Left Behind Act created school cultures where schools focused on students being able to make progress on yearly math and English language arts tests. During the first decade of the twenty-first century, the focus of school curriculum was narrowed academically because of NCLB. Students' emotional and social well-being was not included in the curriculum, which may have contributed to a deficit in social and emotional skills. Outside factors, such as low socio-economic status and family instability, also contributed to this social and emotional skills deficit. Schools understood that it was necessary to educate the whole child, not just reading and writing. This led to the development of social-emotional learning curriculum. Schools found that students who learn social-emotional skills are more successful in the classroom socially and academically. Alongside social-emotional learning (SEL), schools began to implement Positive Behavior Systems of Interventions and Support (PBIS). The PBIS intervention

system was started because of a revision in the American Disabilities Act (IDEA), which asked school districts to find ways to positively reinforce good behavior in students with disabilities.

The University of Oregon developed PBIS as a positive reinforcement system that was successful for students with disabilities. As a result, PBIS later expanded to include whole schools. PBIS consists of three tiers of supports, Tier 1, Tier 2 and Tier 3. Tier 1 includes universal supports that are school-wide. Expectations are clear to students and students are praised for meeting the expectations and rewarded. Tier 2 students comprise 15 percent of the student population that does not respond well to Tier 1 interventions. Tier 2 interventions are continuously available, low-cost, easy to implement and easily accessible for at-risk students who have low-risk, chronic problem behavior. Tier 3 interventions are used for up to five percent of a school population that does not respond to Tier 1 and Tier 2 supports.

Students who participate in PBIS and specifically in the Check-In/Check-Out (CICO) program, are taught skills that increase their chances to succeed in the classroom, as seen in studies cited in this literature review. At schools that have implemented PBIS with high fidelity, daily positive adult attention, combined with clear expectations, goal-setting and positive reinforcement are a low-cost, effective and individualized way to reduce problem behavior for students in the Tier 2 category.

CICO is an intervention to reduce discipline referrals, increase desired behaviors in the classroom and arm students with social, emotional and behavior skills to succeed in

the 21<sup>st</sup> century. It is a mentoring program that teaches students skills to help them be successful in a school environment.

How effective is a CICO program in a small school? The methodology of CICO research will be outlined in the next chapter.

#### Initial preparation for the study

The researcher was the CICO coordinator at a K-8 school in Humboldt County, California during the 2016-2017 school year. The school consisted of 100 students in grades K-8. The student population of the school was fifty percent Native American, twenty-five percent Hispanic and twenty-five percent Caucasian. All students qualified for free or reduced lunch. The CICO program was administered to students in grades K-5, whose teachers had indicated they needed the Tier 2 CICO support by submitting a Request for CICO form. The form was reviewed by the CICO coordinator to determine if the student desired adult attention and if the student was exhibiting low-level, high-frequency disruptive behaviors in the classroom, which could possibly be reduced by enrollment in the CICO program. If the student did not respond well to adult attention or was exhibiting escape-maintained behaviors, other alternatives to CICO were considered for the student, since CICO's purpose is to reduce disruptive behaviors in students who respond to adult attention and do not exhibit escape- maintained behaviors.

Once the CICO coordinator determined that a student qualified for CICO, students' parents or guardians were contacted by the classroom teacher who explained what the CICO program was, how it was administered and asked the parents or guardians

if they would be interested in enrolling their student in the CICO program.

Parents/guardians who indicated that they wanted their student enrolled in the CICO program signed a permission slip to allow the student to participate in CICO. The student was then asked if he or she wanted to participate in the CICO program. If the student gave his or her assent, the student was enrolled in the CICO program. The student could stop the program voluntarily at any time.

At the time this study began, five students, or five percent of the school's population was enrolled in CICO. Since CICO is meant to be a short-term, low cost way to reduce disruptive behavior, not all the students who had been enrolled in CICO since the beginning of the 2016-2017 school year were currently enrolled in the CICO program at the time of the study. A total of twelve students were enrolled in the K-5 CICO program at varying times from September 2016 until June 2017. Of the twelve students, nine students were determined to be successful in the CICO program by consistently getting 80 percent or more of their points on their Daily Points Sheets (DPS) and earning daily or every three days incentives. These nine students graduated from the CICO program and were able to maintain appropriate behavior in the classroom after they graduated with just Tier 1 supports. Two students were consistently not receiving 80 percent or more of their points on their Daily Points sheets and it was determined by the CICO coordinator that these students needed individualized (Tier 3) supports. These students were referred to the school psychologist and other outside agencies for individualized support. One student moved shortly after starting the CICO program, so he was dropped from the program.

How CICO was administered at the K-8 school

At the K-8 school in Humboldt County, the 2016-2017 school year was the second year that the CICO program was administered. During the 2015-2016 school year, the CICO coordinator was the counselor at the school. The counselor was a K-5 CICO mentor two days a week and other staff members were K-5 CICO mentors three days a week. CICO mentors were determined to be staff members that CICO students felt comfortable with and that the CICO coordinator felt could be a positive influence on students. Students would travel to the room of the CICO mentor in the morning to receive their Daily Points Sheets (DPS) and to discuss their three behavior goals for the day. Students were given one specific behavior goal in the areas of Be Safe, Be Respectful and Be Responsible. Be Safe, Be Respectful and Be Responsible were the general goals outlined for Tier 1 students. Students received points for meeting with the CICO mentor. Students then gave the DPS to the classroom teacher and the classroom teacher would assign points for three distinct periods of the day: Morning, Mid-morning and Afternoon. The student would then bring the DPS to the assigned CICO mentor at the end of the day to discuss how the day went and whether the student had received 80 percent or more of the possible points for the day. Every Friday, during the last 30 minutes of the day, the counselor would have all the CICO students meet in her room to play games and get prizes for the points earned during the week.

When the 2016-17 CICO coordinator began preparing to administer the CICO program, teachers and other staff members indicated that the 2015-2016 CICO program

was chaotic. Students would forget to check-in or check-out with the assigned CICO mentor, Daily Point Sheets were lost and class time was lost on Fridays during the time CICO students met with the counselor. Teachers and staff expressed a desire to have less staff members administering the CICO program and to have students miss as little class as possible.

The 2016-17 CICO coordinator worked at the K-8 school in Humboldt County, California four days a week, Tuesday-Friday. On the days that the CICO coordinator was working, the CICO coordinator was the only CICO mentor for CICO students. On Mondays, the students' own classroom teacher was the CICO mentor for students. On Mondays, students stayed in class, checked-in with their classroom teacher soon after school started, received a Daily Points Sheets (which has three specific behavior goals, one in each area of Be Safe, Be Respectful, Be Responsible) and points for checking in, and then received points throughout the day. Kindergarten and first grade students had seven time periods in which they could earn points on their Daily Point Sheets. Second to fifth grade students had five time periods in which they could earn points on their Daily Points Sheets.

At the end of the day on Mondays, students met with the classroom teacher in the classroom and reviewed the Daily Point Sheet to see if the student received 80 percent or more of possible points. If the student received 80 percent or higher of possible points, the student received a daily incentive. Students were given back their DPS and given a CICO Home Sheet to take home to parents. On the CICO home sheet, the CICO coordinator indicated whether students met their goal or not, commented on any

significant occurrence from that day related to CICO behavior and asked for a parent signature to indicate the parent had read the report. If the student brought back a CICO home sheet the next day with a parent signature, the student received two Caught Being Good tickets to spend at the student store, which is open twice a week. Students can buy small items (such as toys or a snack) with the Caught Being Good tickets, which are used to reinforce students that meet the Tier 1 expectations of being Safe, Respectful and Responsible.

On Tuesday through Friday, the CICO coordinator followed a specific CICO routine each day. She traveled to each CICO student's classroom in the morning and pulled the student out of class for 1-3 minutes to sit on the bench that is directly across from the student's classroom in the hallway, so that she could speak privately with each CICO child. She talked positively with the student, reminded the student of the specific behavior goals, gave the student points for checking in, and gave the student two Caught Being Good tickets for a signed CICO Home Report, then sent the student back into class. The classroom teacher assigned points for the time periods after check-in during the remainder of the school day, until it was time to check-out. The CICO coordinator returned to the student's classroom shortly before dismissal time, pulled the student out of class and sat with the student on the bench across from the student's classroom. She reviewed the student's day and the points earned on the DPS to determine if the student earned more than 80 percent of the possible daily points. If the student earned more than 80 percent of the possible daily points, the student received a daily incentive, which consisted of either a bag of goldfish, a small packet of M&Ms or two Jolly Rancher

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candies. The student also earned one day towards a three-day goal incentive. If a student earned 80 percent or more of possible points on three separate days, the student earned a bigger incentive, such as Caught Being Good tickets, time to play games in the computer lab with the CICO mentor, extra recess with a friend or a candy bar. The student was given the points sheet and a CICO Home Report to take home to show parents or guardians. If the student did not receive eighty percent of daily points, the student did not receive an incentive and the student was encouraged to try again the next day to reach his behavior goals.

## METHODS

This study will examine the strengths and weaknesses of a Check-in/Check-Out program at a rural school through interviews with six staff members at the school. Four teachers, an aide and an administrator at a K-8 school in a Northern California District were the participants in the study.

### CICO Study

The CICO coordinator verbally asked staff members participating in the CICO process if they would be willing to participate in a CICO research study. After gaining verbal consent, the CICO researcher prepared letters of informed consent for the four teachers, the superintendent/principal and the classroom aide. The letter stated that interviews would be audio recorded and that direct quotes might be used. All four teachers, the superintendent/principal and the classroom aide signed the letter of consent. Four of the respondents were female and two of the respondents were male. Two of the respondents were just beginning their career in education and had taught for one or two years. Two teachers had taught over fifteen years. One had been at the school site for five years and the other had been at the school site for nineteen years. One respondent taught Transitional kindergarten and Kindergarten students. Another respondent taught first grade. Two other respondents taught 2<sup>nd</sup>/3<sup>rd</sup> grade and 4<sup>th</sup>/5<sup>th</sup> grade respectively. One respondent was the superintendent/principal of the district, who had taught for over 20 years before becoming an administrator at the school. At the time of the interviews, it

was the administrator's third year. An aide who worked in the 2<sup>nd</sup>/3<sup>rd</sup> grade classroom, who worked directly with CICO students was also interviewed. The kindergarten teacher worked with 4 CICO students during the year. The first grade teacher had three students in CICO during the year. The 2<sup>nd</sup>/3<sup>rd</sup> grade teacher had three CICO students in CICO, and the 4<sup>th</sup>/5<sup>th</sup> grade teacher had the most students enrolled in the program during the year at 5 students.

Interviews were conducted in the CICO coordinator's office after school hours. Each interview was conducted privately during May 2016 and June 2016, with only the CICO coordinator and each individual participant involved in the interviews. To insure confidentiality, each participant was assigned a pseudonym, respectively, subject A, subject B, subject D, Subject E and subject F. The actual identities of each participant were only known to the CICO coordinator and the CICO coordinator's university committee chair. The identities were kept in a file in a locked cabinet. The interviews were each audio recorded using a program called Smart Record on an iPad. The recordings were available only to the researcher. Interviews varied in length from 11-20 minutes, depending on the length of the answers that participants gave to the research questions. Identical questions about CICO were given to all four teachers. Questions varied slightly for the administrator and the classroom aide because their participation in the CICO program was slightly different than the teachers. Transcriptions of the interviews were carefully done by the CICO coordinator and printed out under the A-F pseudonyms.

During each interview, the CICO coordinator asked research participants 15 questions regarding CICO. Participants were asked about what they thought of the CICO program, what they thought about incentives, goals, mentors, the effectiveness of the CICO program, the time consumed and how they thought students experienced the program. The answers were typed in password protected files, as well as audio recorded. All interviews were coded and compared. The data that was gained from this is analyzed in the next section.

## RESULTS

As I read through the interview data, some themes began to emerge. The first of these is consistency. Respondents appreciated the consistency of the CICO program, especially during the 2016-17 school year. All participants expressed the importance of having consistency in the CICO program. They explained that this year's CICO program had gone more smoothly with the CICO program coordinator available to administer CICO on Tuesday-Fridays. The year before, when the CICO program coordinator was only available two days a week and had to rely on other staff members the other three days of the school week to administer the program, staff felt that the program was less consistent. The second/third grade teacher expressed it this way: "I think consistency is important, having the same person...daily or as frequently as possible. Last year, when ...our CICO coordinator was only on campus two days a week, it kind of made it hard to have one person consistently checking them in in the morning and then checking them out and then the other days would fall upon the teacher...and to be honest with you, sometimes I forgot. So, I think's more of a consistency issue to have one person be able to do that as often as possible throughout the week...Last year, we had a 2 day a week person and then somebody else for the other three days. I don't think it was nearly as smooth as having this year, the one and the four days, that way there was a real feeling of consistency with the program." The first grade teacher agreed: "I think consistency is important having the same person, daily or as frequently as possible during the week. Last year, when...our CICO coordinator was only on campus two days a week...it kind

of made it hard to have one person consistently checking them in in the morning and then checking them out and then the other days would fall upon the teacher and to be honest with you, sometimes I forgot...I think everyone in education has students' best interest at heart, but I think it's more of a consistency issue to have one person be able to do that as often as possible throughout the week." An aide also expressed how that she felt like the expectations were clear for how to administer CICO at the school. "It makes it easy that we all know what we're talking about. We're all on the same page. We all know what CICO is. It works the same for every kid."

Another theme that emerges from the data is that it matters who the mentor is for the CICO program. The participants agreed on the importance of having a CICO mentor available to children who could form a good relationship with the children in the CICO program, who is not the student's classroom teacher. The fourth/fifth grade teacher mentioned that she thought who the CICO mentor is matters because "I think relationship is a big part of it. Because part of Check-in and Check-out is discussing behaviors and talking about what they might have done differently...I think that's hard to do if you're doing it with somebody that you don't have a good relationship with...I think it needs to be somebody who can reach the students..." The aide and administrator also echoed those same sentiments. The aide said that students would not open up to someone doing CICO "with someone that they don't have a bond with." The administrator said: "It matters a lot. I think you have to have somebody who has good standing with the students, also who's trusted by the child and finally, somebody who's not too close to the action. I think the classroom teacher's not the best for CICO. It should be somebody that

has some distance, and so, is not pressing too hard on the personal fronts that might have happened during the school day.” A few staff members expressed the frustration they felt trying to give enough attention to each individual student in their classes. The second/third grade teacher mentioned that “having a person who has that dedicated time to be able to do it, because on the Mondays that you weren’t on campus, it was like one more thing...honestly, if that’s just added on top of my other duties, it’s not going to be done well, because even if I’m trying my hardest to channel cam and just be in the moment with that child...I’m sorry, but I’m still worried about what the other 19 are doing, and you know, the fact that I’ve got to prep this, this and this to keep everybody on track, so having someone who that’s part of their job description, I think is critical...”

In general, the interview respondents agreed that the positive attention students received during the daily morning check-in and the daily end of school day check-out sessions was good for CICO students. The staff reported that students benefitted positively from the individual attention they got from the CICO program coordinator. The administrator stated, “I think they like the personal attention. They appreciate, ‘Hey, there’s somebody paying attention to me and working with me on goals.’” The administrator also mentioned that he thought the attention students received from the CICO mentor helped to reduce the amount of office referrals CICO students received after being enrolled in the CICO program. The fourth/fifth grade teacher said students like the positive attention because “even if it’s only two minutes (referring to the Check-out process), it is two minutes that you’re the only person that matters in the world...”

Respondents were asked questions about students' CICO goals. These goals were set for all students in the CICO program during the 2016-2017 school year. The interview data indicates that it might be best to set goals for primary CICO students and to help older students set their own CICO goals. When asked about whether students should have any input into setting their goals, staff members that taught or worked in grades Kindergarten-third grade felt that CICO goals worked better if goals were set for the students. The fourth/fifth grade staff member and the administrator felt that CICO goals would work better for CICO students if students had a part in the goal-setting process. These two staff members felt that soliciting student input would help older students have more buy-in to the CICO program. The fourth/fifth grade teacher said, "I think that they do want to have more of a say...I think that maybe if they took more accountability for what those goals were...with supervision...that they might take more ownership of it."

Something else that I found in the data is that students may be more successful in CICO if they are given more chances to earn CICO points throughout the day. Kindergarten and first grade students started the year with a Daily Point Sheet that included five time blocks where students could earn points during the day. This was later modified to seven time blocks. Both the kindergarten and the first grade teachers felt that this modification was a good change for students, and that even more time blocks could have been added. The K/1 teachers mentioned that in order for younger students to feel more successful in the program, it helps to have smaller amounts of time the students can earn points and still make their goal. DPS sheets were not modified for second-fifth

grade students. They still had five time periods to earn points: at check-in, morning, before lunch, afternoon and check-out. The second/third grade teacher and the fourth/fifth grade teacher mentioned that it would have been more beneficial for students if students in grades two through five had had more time blocks to earn points, so second-fifth grade students could have felt as successful as the younger students in meeting their goals. The aide that was interviewed also expressed this point of view. She said, "I understand it would be more work to have smaller time blocks, but I feel like the time blocks that we have...they're too big...I feel like it would be less of a harsh thing for the kid to lose their points if it wasn't a big chunk."

The CICO students had three goals set for them to achieve in three areas: Be Safe, Be Respectful and Be Responsible, which were the three main school rules. The data indicated that three is a good number of goals for students to achieve. All staff members, except for the first grade teacher, liked the amount of goals that were set for students. The first grade teacher thought that his students would benefit from a bigger number of goals so that they could earn more points. Though the number of goals seemed to be about right, it appears that the goal categories needed to be modified to help students be more successful in CICO. In the interviews, staff members expressed dissatisfaction with the categories of Be Safe, Be Respectful and Be Responsible. They said that goals would be easier for students to achieve if the goals did not have to fit into these categories, as the lines between these categories seemed blurred when students lost points. The fourth/fifth grade teacher expressed frustration with assigning points on the DPS sheet, when she wasn't sure if undesirable student behavior fit into the Be

Respectful or Be Responsible category: “It’s too simplistic and vague...the lines are so blurred...what do I put?” She thought that refining the goals would help students be more successful: “I feel like there is the capability of making it a little more fine-tuned, that could make them feel a little more successful.”

One of the surprising results that came out of the data was the staff members’ dislike of points earned during the morning check-in and the afternoon check-out. During the 2016-17 school year, CICO students received points automatically when the students would check-in and check-out with the CICO mentor. These points counted toward the students meeting their goals, because the CICO coordinator felt checking in and out were an important part of the CICO process. If a student refused to check-in or out, they would lose their check-in/check-out points. During interviews, however, most staff members expressed concern about the automatically earned points. The second/third grade teacher and the fourth/fifth grade teacher, as well as the aide in the second/third grade classroom, stated that the automatic points were problematic. They said that students could still meet their goals on days when their behavior was not as good as they felt it should be to get a reward for getting at least 80% of their DPS points. There were thirty points possible on the 2<sup>nd</sup>-5<sup>th</sup> grade DPS, and the morning check-in and afternoon check-out points accounted for six of the possible points. The staff members felt like these automatic points did not help the student be more successful in the program, because a CICO student would not have to put in as much effort to achieve the goal of 80% of possible DPS points. The second third grade teacher said: “With my one student, he was smart enough to realize that he didn’t have to do all the things we wanted

him to do, he could do a certain number and then he knew he could blow it and he'd still have enough points.”

Another theme that emerged is that incentives were an important and necessary part of the CICO program, but that when students received rewards from the CICO program, it could cause problems with Tier I students because the school did not have a similar incentive program in place for Tier I students. Also interesting was that a few staff members mentioned that incentives were important, but that the praise students received was also important in the CICO program. When asked if incentives were an important part of the CICO program, staff members agreed that incentives were a necessary part of the CICO program and that students would not be as willing to try to get 80% of the possible DPS points for the day without incentives. The daily incentives being offered were small food items, such as two Jolly ranchers, a handful of M&Ms, a bag of goldfish, etc. Also, if students could get 80% of their DPS points three days in a row, they could get incentives such a free play time outside with a friend or 15 minutes of computer time with the CICO coordinator or caught being good credits to spend at the student store. The second/third grade teacher, the fourth/fifth grade teacher and the aide mentioned that the CICO rewards could be problematic, because students in Tier I were not receiving incentives similar to CICO students so these staff members felt like undesirable behavior was being rewarded, while students that could follow school expectations without additional supports did not receive similar incentives. When asked if it would help if the school implemented similar incentives for Tier I students, these staff members thought that the CICO program would be perceived in a more positive

light by students not enrolled in the CICO program. The fourth/fifth grade teacher mentioned one student who would do just enough to get the automatic points and some points to meet her goal, receive her reward and then be rude to other students in her class, teasing them about not getting a reward. The school administrator mentioned that he felt incentives were important at the beginning of a student's enrollment in the CICO program, but that later on, intrinsic motivation to change behavior and praise from adults, specifically the CICO coordinator, mattered more in a CICO student's success. The aide also stated: "I think mostly, they like their reward at the end of the day, but I don't believe that it's all the reward either...they are happy they've won their prize, but they do also feel good they had a good day and that people are recognizing that they had a good day."

The data also indicated that CICO should not be a static, unchanging program. Modifications should be made to the program as needed. Each staff member had a suggestion for how to improve the CICO program at the school, and each suggestion was different. The kindergarten teacher mentioned that she thought CICO might be a program that would be better administered to 1<sup>st</sup> grade and above. She thought if CICO was done in kindergarten that it should be done with smiley and frowny faces and that some parts of the day should not be counted towards the daily goal. She mentioned a similar thing had been done at the school where she student taught and it was successful. The kindergarten teacher mentioned that the point system was confusing for kindergarteners and that even with the smaller seven period time blocks, kindergarten behavior changes so fast, it was hard to keep up with it on the point sheets. She liked the

idea of having kindergarten students have their own once a week lesson, to help students learn social-emotional skills that would help them be successful in the classroom. The first-grade teacher mentioned that he thought the CICO forms should be available on Google Drive, so that teachers could access the forms on their own and have better access to CICO data. The CICO forms and data for the 2016-17 school year were only available from the CICO coordinator. The second/third grade teacher wanted to meet more often as a CICO team to discuss CICO data and make changes if necessary to goals, incentives, etc. Meetings with the CICO coordinator and teachers happened informally throughout the year. What the second/third grade teacher mentioned about CICO meetings to review CICO data is recommended for CICO programs; it did not happen in this check-in/check-out program due to time constraints.

Additionally, the fourth/fifth grade teacher and the aide mentioned that more parental involvement in the program would be good, making sure that students take home the DPS sheet and get it signed and bring it back. DPS sheets were sent home every day with CICO students, but the DPS forms were rarely brought back signed by parents. The administrator mentioned that the CICO program would benefit from better protocols on when to exit a student from CICO, either because the student was shown to be successful in consistently getting at least 80 percent of his DPS points, or the student was not benefitting from Tier II interventions and might need Tier III interventions.

ANALYSIS

As mentioned above in the results section, the data from the interviews conducted with the staff at the K-8 rural school in Humboldt County during the 2016-17 school year seem to indicate that the strengths of the CICO program at this school, and the most effective parts of the CICO program, were the relationships the CICO coordinator developed with students, the consistency of the CICO program, the positive reinforcement students received during the CICO process and the availability and clear expectations of the program. These strengths of the CICO program had positive effects on the staff at the school.

Bayer, Grossman and Dubois (2017) asserted that the closeness of the mentor relationship between a mentor and a student helps a student academically because if a student feels cared for, it helps them academically. Also, Giani (2008) stated that good relationships at school are important for student success. Each staff member that was interviewed mentioned the positive effect that the CICO coordinator's relationship with students had on student behavior. Staff members indicated that students trusted their assigned mentor and that it contributed to their success in meeting their goals and decreasing undesirable behavior. This contributed to a more positive atmosphere in classrooms where students took part in the CICO program.

Staff members also mentioned that the CICO program this year was more consistent than the year before. They mentioned that the availability of the CICO coordinator to meet with students four days a week, instead of two days a week,

contributed to a greater stability in the program and a positive outcome for students. Nine out of twelve students in the CICO program successfully completed the CICO program and were exited from the program. Staff members mentioned this year was less chaotic with fewer mentors. Staff members were grateful to have a staff member just dedicated to CICO, so that they could dedicate more of their time to the other students, knowing that the CICO students were receiving the extra attention they needed. This shows the effectiveness of the CICO program, since staff members felt that they could devote more time helping other students. Cameron and Sheppard (2006) argue that students who have limited personal contact with adults in a traditional school setting may become alienated from school if adults at school do not demonstrate an interest in them. The CICO program at this school helped Tier II students feel more connected to school.

Most staff members agreed that the praise and rewards students received from the program helped students' behavior to get better. The staff mentioned that the individual attention CICO students received at the beginning and end of each school day helped the student to feel like he or she was cared for, which helped the students want to meet goals and change behavior. This also shows the effectiveness of the CICO program because students' attitudes and behaviors changed for the better. Sugai and Horner (2008) concluded that punitive actions by educators correlate with decreased academic achievement and higher antisocial behaviors. Students did not experience punitive actions by the CICO coordinator and had better results. The second/third grade teacher said, "There's...some days that you know, I haven't really even spoken to a kid until like recess or something and so this program has allowed me to focus more on my other

objectives and know that that kid is getting that extra bit of love and attention that they need.”

Mcevoy and Welker (2000) said that effective schools have a high expectation for academic achievement and a shared mission among staff members. The aide said that she appreciated the clearly outlined expectations and ease of implementing the CICO program. She felt that all parties involved in the CICO program, including the staff, students, parents, administrator and CICO coordinator understood what the CICO program was, what the goals and expectations were for students as well as what rewards students would receive. Other staff members supported this conclusion.

Overall, the CICO program had a positive effect on the students that were enrolled in the program, based on the interview data. It was an effective mentoring program, especially when it was modified to include more periods of time that students could earn points. The first grade and kindergarten teachers indicated that more blocks of time to earn points made it easier for students to be successful.

In grades two through five, where the Daily Point Sheets were not modified to include more periods of time to earn points throughout the school day, the second/third and fourth/fifth grade teachers indicated they felt frustration with the large blocks of time. Also, staff members indicated that because the school did not have a well-developed system of rewarding students at the Tier I level, that when CICO students received rewards, it could cause problems because Tier I students did not receive similar rewards. Teachers thought if the school implemented a reward system for Tier I students similar to

the CICO rewards, that it might reduce resentment in Tier I students and a sense of entitlement in CICO students.

In addition, staff members mentioned that they were frustrated with students automatically receiving points for checking in in the morning and checking out in the afternoon. They felt like this skewed the results, so that students were able to achieve their goals more easily and might meet their goals too quickly. Staff members felt like if more time periods were added to the DPS sheet and the automatic points were taken away, that it would more accurately reflect students' efforts to reach the goals.

Also, staff members did not want behavior goals for CICO students to have to fit into the school's Be Safe, Be Respectful, Be Responsible rules. They felt like it made CICO goals too vague or hard to implement with students.

The weaknesses of the rural K-8 CICO program that made the program not as effective as it could have been were the goals being tied to the school rules, the automatic points for checking in and out, the lack of a similar reward system for Tier I and CICO students and a smaller number of time periods for second-fifth grade students. If all of these items were adjusted, it would help the CICO program to become even stronger.

## CONCLUSION

In general, this K-8 CICO program had the most important elements of an effective CICO program in place. The program was organized in a way that all participants understood the expectations for the program. The CICO mentor that was chosen to work with students was able to form close relationships with students that allowed students to feel comfortable with the mentor and allowed the mentor to encourage students to achieve their behavior goals, with positive results, since nine out of twelve CICO students, or three-fourths of the students in the program, successfully exited out of the program. The staff members felt good about having a person outside the classroom who could effectively mentor students and give them the extra attention they needed, which was not possible for the classroom teacher to do. The program was consistently administered, which contributed to its effectiveness, too.

In the future, further CICO studies could be done on the effectiveness of CICO programs as school-based mentoring programs. Also, more studies could be done to examine whether there is a correlation between academic success and participation in CICO.

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