Students seldom have a role in school decision-making processes and usually have even fewer opportunities to participate in school improvement efforts. Schools with high levels of meaningful student involvement tend to have six key characteristics that relate to their school culture.

Six Key Characteristics
1. School-wide approaches
2. High levels of student authority
3. Interrelated strategies
4. Sustainable structures of support
5. Personal commitment
6. Strong learning connections
## Six Key Characteristics

The following elements are consistently identified in schools where students and adults commonly agree that there are high levels of meaningful student involvement.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristic</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Example</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. School-wide approaches</td>
<td>All students in all grades are involved in decision making and advocacy initiatives regarding the RTI²-B framework.</td>
<td>Students are shown school-wide data during their advisory or homeroom period and discuss ideas for how to make improvements together as a class.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. High levels of student authority</td>
<td>School faculty validate students’ ideas, knowledge, opinions, and experiences to improve the school.</td>
<td>Schools use the ideas generated by students during advisory. They communicate to students that all ideas were reviewed; identify which ones will be incorporated; and continue to ask for feedback.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Interrelated strategies</td>
<td>Students are given learning, teaching, and leadership opportunities in the school to make sustainable school improvements.</td>
<td>Student leadership teams learn about RTI²-B and work with the RTI²-B team to update the Tier I Implementation Manual and teach their peers components of the plan in multiple ways.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Sustainable structures of support</td>
<td>To promote meaningful student involvement, the school creates and amends policies and procedures.</td>
<td>Schools provide a variety of ways for students to offer input and become involved with the Tier I plan. These opportunities are regularly scheduled and communicated.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Personal commitment</td>
<td>Students and adults acknowledge that to improve their RTI²-B framework, they need to have a mutual investment.</td>
<td>Students are able to have meaningful, structured, and frequent collaboration with adults where their ideas become part of the Tier I plan.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Strong learning connections</td>
<td>Student involvement is connected to classroom learning and is relevant for both teachers and students.</td>
<td>Elective courses are offered for credit to facilitate collaboration with adults. Examples include Leadership for interested students or Freshman Academy for all Freshman.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Adapted from *Fletcher (2005)*
Benefits of Student Involvement

Including students in the RTI\textsuperscript{2}-B process will create a lasting and positive impact on the Tier I plan. One benefit to involving students is improved student buy-in. Students have unique knowledge and perspective about their school that adults cannot fully replicate.\textsuperscript{1} By gathering input from and involving students in the Tier I plan, school staff move away from “doing things to students” to “working with students.”\textsuperscript{3} Giving students a voice in school priorities and initiatives is an effective way to improve student outcomes and allows for messages to be shared in student friendly language.\textsuperscript{3,4} In addition, finding creative ways to seek student input and involve students in the process provides opportunities for student leadership.\textsuperscript{3}

Summary

Throughout planning and implementation, schools need to make sure that they are involving students in Tier I of RTI\textsuperscript{2}-B. Ensuring students are involved improves student buy-in, establishes that adults are “working with students” instead of “doing things to students,” shares messages in student friendly language, and provides opportunities for student leadership.

For Further Reading


Endnotes


\textsuperscript{3}Good, C., & Lindsay, P. (n.d.). *Student voice: Strategies to involve students in PBIS* [PowerPoint slides]. Retrieved from http://www.pbis.org

The Tennessee Behavior Supports Project (TBSP) is funded by the Tennessee Department of Education and consists of three regional support contracts: University of Memphis – Lambuth Campus, Vanderbilt University, and University of Tennessee – Knoxville. TBSP is responsible for providing training and technical assistance to schools as they address the behavioral needs of students through Response to Instruction and Intervention for Behavior (RTI²-B). To locate the project assigned to your region, see below.

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