

Secondary Schools Panel Discussion 2

Planning

The first set of topics that we are going to discuss is going to be how you built your plan. So they all went through a year-long training series and involved three full days and three two-hour sessions held after school. They formulated team and came with a systematic approach that was approved through our institutional review board in each of their participating districts and what I was hoping we could start off with is just some general thoughts or comments about what that planning year was like as you were building your whole three tiered model of prevention, what your faculty thought about the possibility of behavior screeners, what people thought about the possibility of actually reinforcing kids for doing the right thing. So tell me a little bit about what that planning process like. Our first year was really difficult. We had a core group of people that were very thoughtfully chosen by the people. We're going to move forward with this and they were big picture thinkers as well as detail oriented folks and I think that that's a critical piece to make sure that your team is blended with people who can kind of see the whole scope. That team kind of anchored the idea of PBS at independence because when we went to our faculty to discuss this there was a lot of animosity. We're in high school and people felt like we shouldn't have to reward kids for doing what they're supposed to do. That was a consistent theme that we kind of hit over and over again. People felt like at this point it's their fault if they don't know if it's their parents fault if they don't know and so as that anchored team had to keep going back, these are the things that are frustrating us as a faculty what if we approached it from this angle these are the things that are keeping our kids from being successful, what if we approached it from this angle. So we just kind of had to keep coming back to it and back to it. The key piece of it for us was finding people throughout that first year that we kind of talked to secretly they were like our little we were the plants and their lives to grow this program and so we talk to them when nobody else was around and then they could kind of go have the conversations with the bigger thing and that was something that I wish somebody had known to tell us when we were doing it because I think looking back those were the people who helped us figure out how we spread the word instead of trying to approach it with a hundred faculty we found ten that we felt like we are sources in and that was very helpful. One of the things that we did and I did this with Gary and Bryan our principle but we decided that we were going to involve the total staff in making decisions so what we did was I did some really easy sheets that had questions like what behaviors would you like to see changed? what do you think we can do to change those behaviors? and we actually based our school rules and everything off that inventory that we got from schools so that's how we started our program with total staff involvement and then as we build our PBS team we took one out of each grade level that would spread that word. So that we had one real positive person pushing at the grade level 1 in 6th grade, 1 in 7th, and 1 in 8th who were basically our liaison to say hey this is what we are thinking about doing and this is a really great idea and really being the cheerleader and sponsor for that grade level. We started several years ago and I think the hardest thing for us was we got lost in the details of the very beginning we were very interested in doing everything correctly and following a pattern in making sure that we did everything as prescribed. So to speak and that's really not what has made a successful at all once we kind of got past that and said you know 80%-85% of our kids are doing exactly what they're supposed to do every single day. We need to cut loose have a good time make sure that those kids are rewarded. The hardest things to sell for teachers is we're adding something else to your plate and that's where the animosity comes in. I think because Tennessee by in

large is going through lots of changes teachers, principals at every level, the bar has been upped. So to add another program to add something else was kind of the hardest sale. So the way that we approached it was asking "Do you remember why you got into teaching?", "Do you remember the fun stuff? Do you remember the kids? Do you remember your experiences in school? and what were those?, What was positive about what you did when you were a kid?" and once we started remembering what we like to do, which was a lot of Field Days and trips and fun stuff that we got to do. Mine was making tacos in the kitchen when tacos came out. I come from a little country school so those things were extra special. I never heard of that before. I still love tacos. They are one of my favorite foods but it was the things that were not prescribed in our school day that everybody remembered and everybody loved about school so then we had to figure out how do we get back our love of that the things that we remembered that made us love school and how do we reward our kids who are doing the right things every day and how do we build this by taking their energy their positive energy from them instead of them taking all of the energy from us and that was the biggest thing and once we kind of got into that this isn't costing you anything. We reward, we will fund this, we will work, we want you to have a good time with the kids and we want the kids to have a good time in our building and once we could sell it from that frame which was a pretty easy sale then then we did really well and our teacher's bought in but it is still a struggle. Teachers get in that low mode of I'm overwhelmed its taking all my energy and so we have to constantly rebuild that and we have had a really good thing happen in our building in the last little bit where some of our teachers who have been teaching for years have said I see what you're doing. I appreciate that I have become negative in the classroom. I've gotten to where I just not sure if this is what I want to do and I want to be a part of your team because I think it's time that we do something positive and that has been a huge testament to the examples like you said the hand-picked people that you have come through that we've said "Ok, We have the most energy, we have to get this done," you know we have to support our faculty and once we started supporting our faculty it was so much easier for them to support our kids and that's where we wanted to be and that's our approach. Our implementation is new and the year that the lead team spent in the training we also laid the groundwork with the faculty by sharing with them online videos and bringing back information from our training sessions and preparing them to see this coming they were very much on board we have about nine hundred students in our school about 70 faculty members but we've grown together over the years and we saw this as a next step for us to approach discipline in a different manner the lead team was composed of a variety of people who represented different talents and gifts on our faculty and who could be enthusiastic about the message and for us asking the faculty to bring to the table what their concerns were about student behavior to rank those concerns we compared them to the discipline referrals we were getting and we worked through a matrix together. So that long before the implementation took place we were immersed in it and excited about it and prepared forward and I think the amount of time we spent on the front end has paid off well it's hard to believe actually looking back how much resistance you can have to telling your teachers were going to reward kids are doing what they're supposed to do but now here several years down the road I will cite one of our teachers that didn't sign off on the original plan several years later ended up being the head of our PBS team for two or three years. So we can get people to come around another thing that come up again over and over through the years this plan is not working this plan is not working you know this kid it's not supposed to work for everybody the primary plan is only supposed to work for about 85 percent. We've got ours up to about 90. So, I really want to tell my teachers go on in this isn't going to work for everybody there is going to be a small group of kids that aren't going to do the work they're going to get

in trouble and that's why we'll talk later about the secondary and tertiary plans. You know, the other thing I think that I would sell with let teachers more it's just basic behavior management that we can't punish kids into doing the things we want them to do that really punishment is only going to stop them from doing bad things but we can't punish him into doing their homework, we can't punish them into studying and we can't punish them into being respectful and if I were to go through it again I might sell that a lot a lot stronger from the beginning and then the other thing is and it really helped us work with Vanderbilt pretty much every year with a new plan for us we actually just went through the beginning training this year because our district's implementing it but it really helps every year we went to Vanderbilt. They come out at the end the year we evaluate our plan and what we need to do to make this different what we need to do to make it better can we change this and we've made pretty major change is pretty much every year. Every year I think of it as a new plan. So basically, as they gone through their construction of the full plan it is really important to spend time developing relationships with teachers getting their feedback it's not something you can teach your faculty through 1 minute introductions at faculty meetings over the course of the year. They need time to process this they need to be heard they need to have an opportunity to give feedback into this plan because essentially this will become like a constitution for your school so what that means is that the primary plan you are going to use data to make decisions about what you want terms of behavior and it's going to be reflected in the expectation matrices and that's going to be guiding the positive behavior support framework for this school and it's going to be tied into what social skills curriculum you teach or what character development plan you teach and it's going to be linked to your academic expectations for teachers and for kids. So when this plan is developed it has to be developed with input from all your main constituencies and you don't really want to have everybody who is a cheerleader on your team you want everybody's voice to be heard and like Gary said it's very important to revise your plan at the end of every year because you're going to learn new things about what worked and what didn't work but it is critical to never revise your plan in the middle of the school year because if you change in the middle of a school year you have nothing you can evaluate because you don't know what is working if you keep changing your plan. So we look at like amendments so this becomes the constitution for your school you make amendments during the summertime and then you have an opportunity get the buy in and feedback from new teachers and new administration that joins your staff. So once the plan is implemented a reason why we take an entire year to do that planning is to give people time to get comfortable with these shifts and we look at this as one structure this comprehensive integrated three tiered model which we refer to as CI3T is going to be a way you coordinate everything that you do in your school. So it's not going to be an add-on. So every extra support in your building whether secondary or tertiary going to show up somewhere in this blueprint for your school and everything that you're doing school-wide is going to show up in that blueprint. So that if your superintendent of your you know if your state department asks, tell us what's going on in your school this document becomes everything that you are doing.