Straight from the source: Ideas about PBIS from Students with Dis/abilities
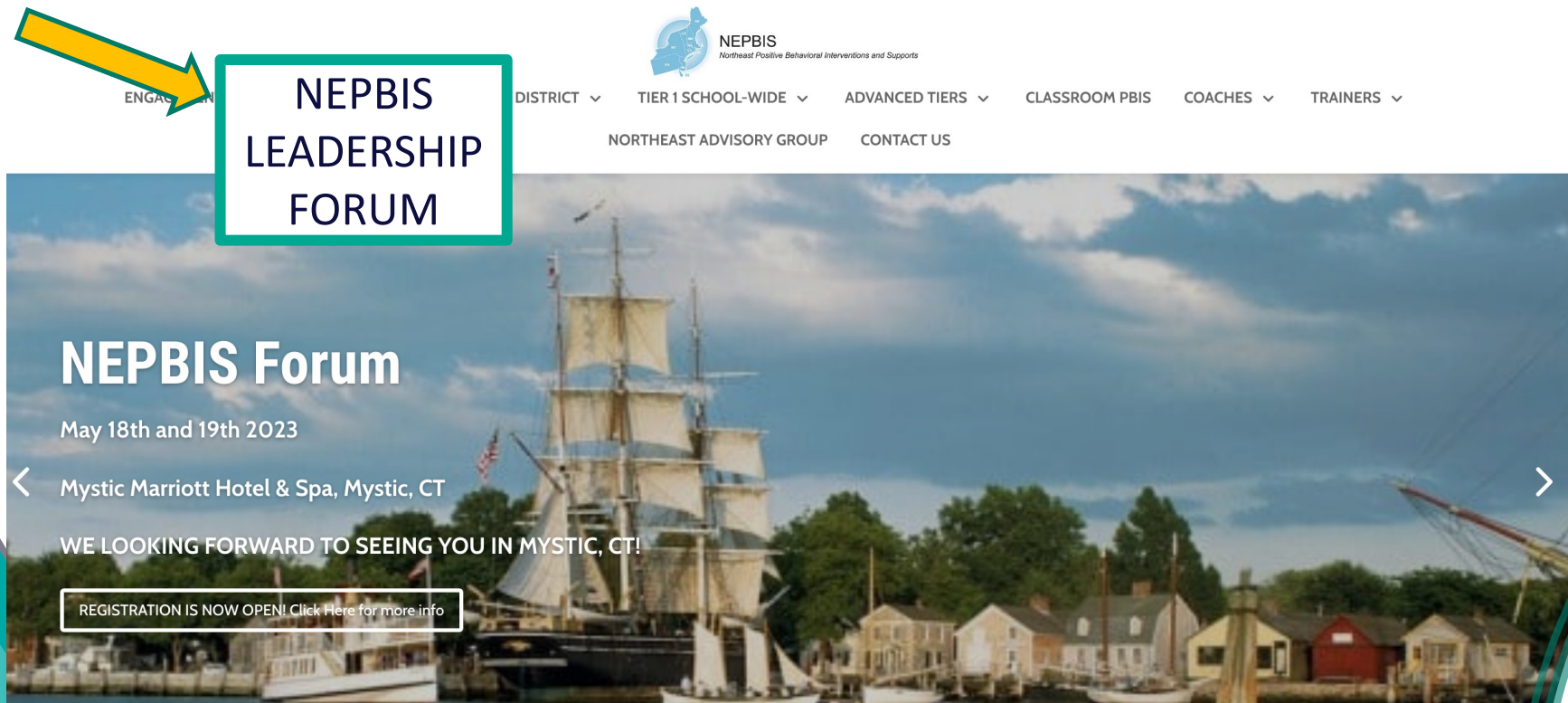
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Access Conference Program and Session Materials at NEPBIS.org

Welcome & Introductions

Who I am:

- Special Educator

- Special Education Director

- General Education Teacher

- Current PhD fellow at UConn

  - Research Interests: Student Voice, Students with Dis/ability labels, Positive Behavior Supports

Who's here?

Session Objectives

Participants will:

- Review 10 Getting Started Steps of PBIS

- Understand focus groups rationale and design

- Map themes from student feedback onto Getting Started Steps

- Reflect on site-specific PBIS implementation considering student perspective

- Identify takeaway(s) to inform future implementation

Review 10 Getting Started Steps of PBIS

GETTING STARTED WITH PBIS

1 Establish an effective leadership team

2 Develop a brief statement of purpose & define outcomes

3 Identify positive school-wide behavior expectations

4 Develop procedures to teach school-wide expectations

5 Develop procedures to teach class-wide expectations

6 Develop a continuum to strengthen demonstrations of expectations

7 Develop a continuum to discourage violations of expectations

8 Develop systems to support staff

9 Use data for decision-making

10 Promote sustainability

Understand focus groups rationale and design

Rationale

- Normal educational practice to seek feedback from multiple stakeholders, including from students

- With this feedback, practitioners can improve implementation so students experience behavior supports and interventions that are…
    - Relevant
    - Effective
    - Efficient
    - Functional
    - Sustainable[1]

"What happens all the time doesn't always work for us"

Rationale continued

- Centering the specific voices of students with dis/abilities, who comprise a traditionally marginalized student subgroup, supports the equity work at the core of the PBIS framework
- Attending to counter-narratives as means to disrupt injustices
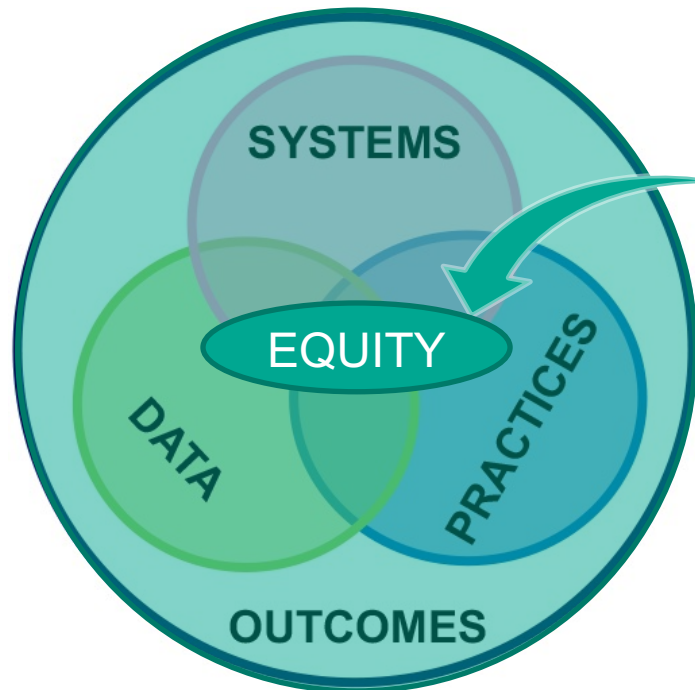
"They keep saying speak up, but when you do, you're not heard"

Study Design: Research Aims

Research Question: To what extent are students with dis/abilities involved in the PBIS implementation process?
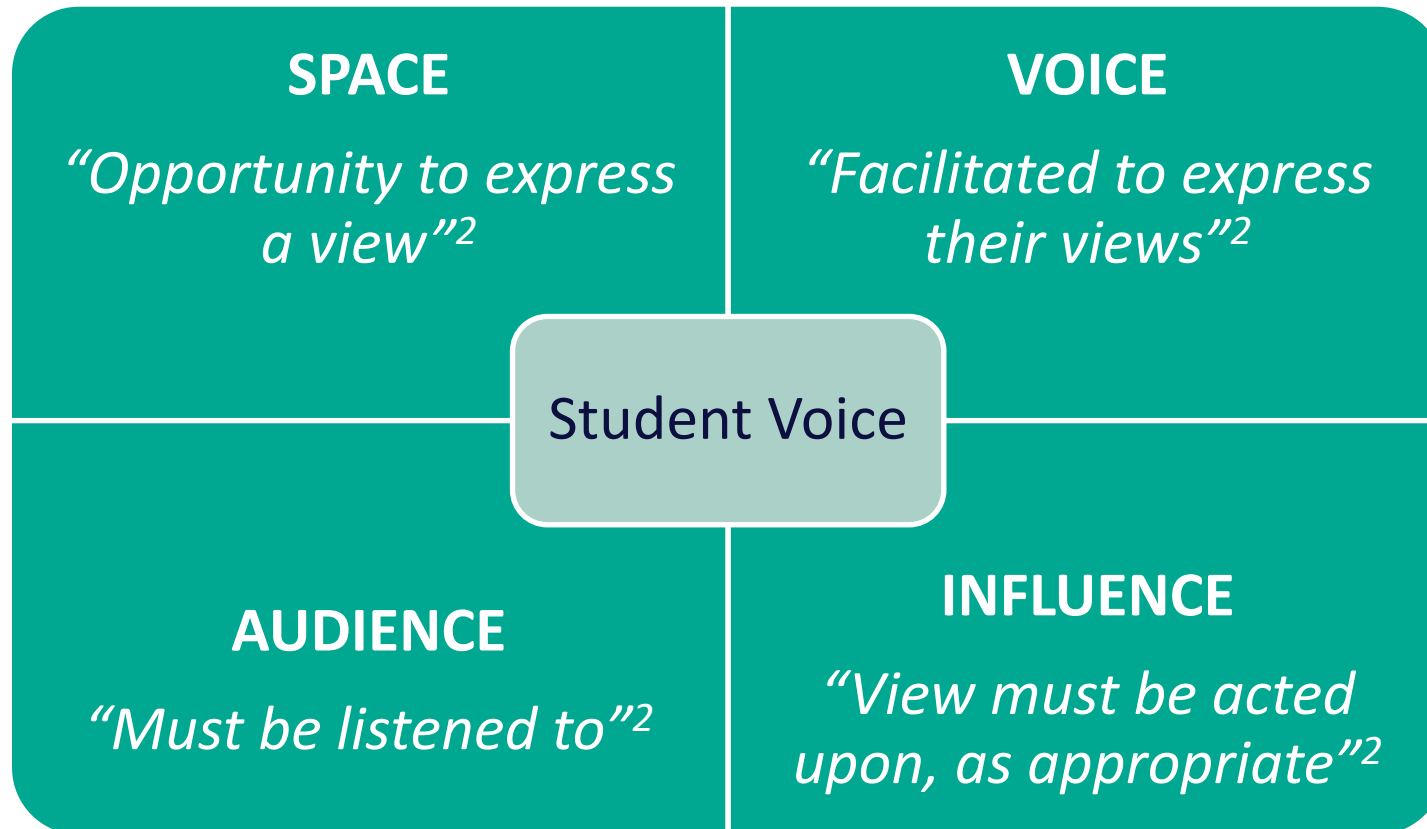
If to a great extent...

- *In what ways have they been involved?*

If to a little extent...

- *What would their ideas be for strategies to increase their meaningful involvement with the PBIS framework?*
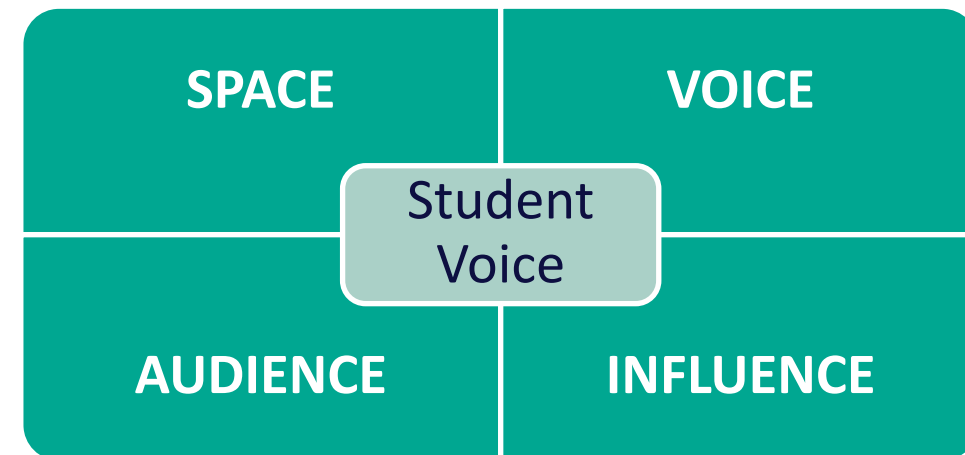
Study Design: Research Aims continued

Research Goal: To elevate students labeled with dis/abilities as **active** and **meaningful** stakeholders in PBIS framework

Study Design: Research Methods

- Focus groups of 3-8 students labeled with dis/abilities in Grades 9-12
  - 45-60 minutes

- Study participants asked to verbally answer informal interview questions about their **involvement in PBIS implementation**

  - Review study rationale & design; check for comprehension

  - Explanation of how students' feedback will be used & shared

  - Verbal student assent & voluntary reminder

  - Opportunity to ask questions & practice

  - $\leq$ 45 focus group protocol questions

SPACE	VOICE
Student Voice	
AUDIENCE	INFLUENCE

Study Design: Research Methods continued

- **No identifying information** collected on involved subjects (e.g., racial/ethnic identification, gender identification, dis/ability label(s))

- Recorded student input using pencil/paper in real-time

  - De-identified anecdotal records of comments, feedback, and ideas

Study Design continued

- **Five** host high school sites across Massachusetts & Connecticut

  - 2 public

  - 1 magnet

  - 1 private therapeutic

  - 1 credit-recovery/therapeutic

- 3-8 students per site
  - total of *n=26* students with dis/ability labels

Map themes from student feedback onto Getting Started Steps

1 Establish an effective leadership team

"The ideas they'll take are from student council, which is biased because teachers already like them"

1 | Establish an effective leadership team

Sample Q: *"What are different ways that you share your ideas with adults at this school?"*

Identified Themes:

- Largely positive perception of peers on student council / government
  - Popularity contest → "Students that teachers like more"
  - Descriptors: "smart," "responsible," "get good grades," "outgoing," "friendly," "easy to talk to"
- No identified student positions on school behavior teams
- Heightened interest to be on school team focused on behavior
  - → "Yes! This type of group could push for more inclusion"
  - → "I think that would be really cool; I would love it"
- Site-specific: wide range in opportunities to share ideas with adults

"There's no way they'd let students be a part of it"

2 Develop a brief statement of purpose & define outcomes

Sample Q: *"[Read school mission statement] Do you know how this mission statement was made?"*

Identified themes

- Lack of knowledge of school mission statement
  - Existence and/or Content → "Oh, there is one?"
- General acceptance of mission statement and perception of high alignment with school culture/climate
  - Identification of exceptions → "For some more than others"
- Shared belief in top-down creation by administration
- Preference for components emphasizing process over product
  - E.g., "Passion" over "Excellence"

3

Identify positive school-wide behavior expectations

"There's not an accessible pathway"

Sample Q: *"Were students asked to help with creating these expectations?"*

Identified themes

- Student recall at or above 60% accuracy
  - Power in acronyms & 3-5 statements over student handbooks
- Lack of awareness in creation (i.e., by who & when)
- Consensus across sites that students were not involved
  - → "Probably not... it would be nice if they'd listen to us a bit more"
- Feelings of tokenism or favoritism
  - → "It's a bit of public grandstanding"
  - → "Only certain kids get asked certain things"

Identified themes continued

- Suggested modifications all addressed **respect**
- Deficit self-regard for potential to contribute
- Site variation in students' identification of collaborative school staff
  - Dependent on school size, class size
  - Counselor roles and availability
  - Preferred teachers and peers versus student perception of persons in power
    - → "There's no direct way to get access to attention"

| 4 | Develop procedures to teach school-wide expectations | 5 | Develop procedures to teach class-wide expectations |

"There's lots done through observing and guess work… I want the teachers to straight up tell me"

| **4** | Develop procedures to teach school-wide expectations | **5** | Develop procedures to teach class-wide expectations |

Sample Q: *"How would you prefer to be taught expectations?"*

Identified themes

- Power of visuals (e.g., banners, signs, tickets/cards)
- Beginning of year versus continuously
- Lack of explicit instruction as cause of confusion & distress
  - → "You learn from being in the trenches… being in a bullet frenzy"
  - → "If you don't know really, you just follow the group that looks cool"
- Reactive and contextually irrelevant instruction frequently identified
  - Push for experiential & small-group learning
- Student-led instruction suggested (e.g., student-created materials/lessons, infomercials, student-led assemblies)

"A-B

"Y

"W

"Th

"I was shocked to hear that I got it! And when I was Student of the Month I got a poster thingy that I have hanging on my wall in my room…"

Develop a continuum to strengthen demonstrations of expectations

Sample Q: *"Can you think of ways that adults at this school notice, acknowledge, or reward students for meeting the school's expectations?"*

Identified themes

- Highest level of student recall at this step
  - Detailed descriptions of point systems, token systems, exchange schedules, earned privileges & items
- Commonly identified: Student of the Week/Month
  - Varied identification systems and eligibility requirements
- Advocacy for more student input
  - Preference of privileges-based reinforcers
  - → "What if we could have a mental health day as a reward?"
- Inconsistent reinforcement → "It depends on the teacher"

"We go here every day and we're not oblivious... I feel like there should be a system that we understand"

"Suspensions for little things are affecting your whole year"

"Suspensions are good for me! That's a day off, baby girl!"

7 | Develop a continuum to discourage violations of expectations

Sample Q: *"What ideas do you have about how your school should respond to violations?"*

Identified themes

- Highest level of student engagement at this step

- Perception of adult suspicion and differential treatment

  - Varied with student regard of administration and faculty

- Sites with 'three-strike' types of systems:

  - Clear student recall of steps

  - Low student satisfaction

Identified themes continued

- Lack of transparency cited as cause for frustration

  - Students largely unaware of actions taken after reporting

    → "I'd want to be involved with things that go on"

    → "I was asked a bunch of questions and then thrown out"

- Several alternative ideas to detentions and suspensions

  → "Counseling sessions... that's the main one we'd recommend"

"We want it! We want to know"

9 | Use data for decision-making

Sample Q: *"What kind of whole-school behavior
data would you find useful to know?"*

Identified themes

- Range of student reporting on surveys administered
  - → "Last year we had a survey about pronouns, is that what you mean?"
    - Behavior and Emotional Screening System (BESS) twice/yearly
    - Google form every few months
- Lack of understanding of whole-school behavior data
  - Staff intention? Analyses of survey results? Future action planning?
- Open loop versus closed loop regarding student feedback to staff
- Online systems identified as accessible format for students
- Interest in increased behavioral data sharing

10 Promote sustainability

"We want to start something, but we need your support to follow through or else it gets forgotten or dropped"

Sample Q: *"What makes it hard for students to be routinely included in these types of conversations?"*

Identified themes

- Perception of PBIS sustainability related to perception of student involvement in implementation
- Concern for fellow students excluded from involvement
  - → "Some kids are only known for **one** choice. They only did the wrong thing once"
- Stereotypes of teenagers as barriers to sustained involvement
- Discomfort with available modalities of student engagement
- Feelings of hopelessness and uselessness
  - → "It's hard for us… we're trying, we just don't do it the same way"
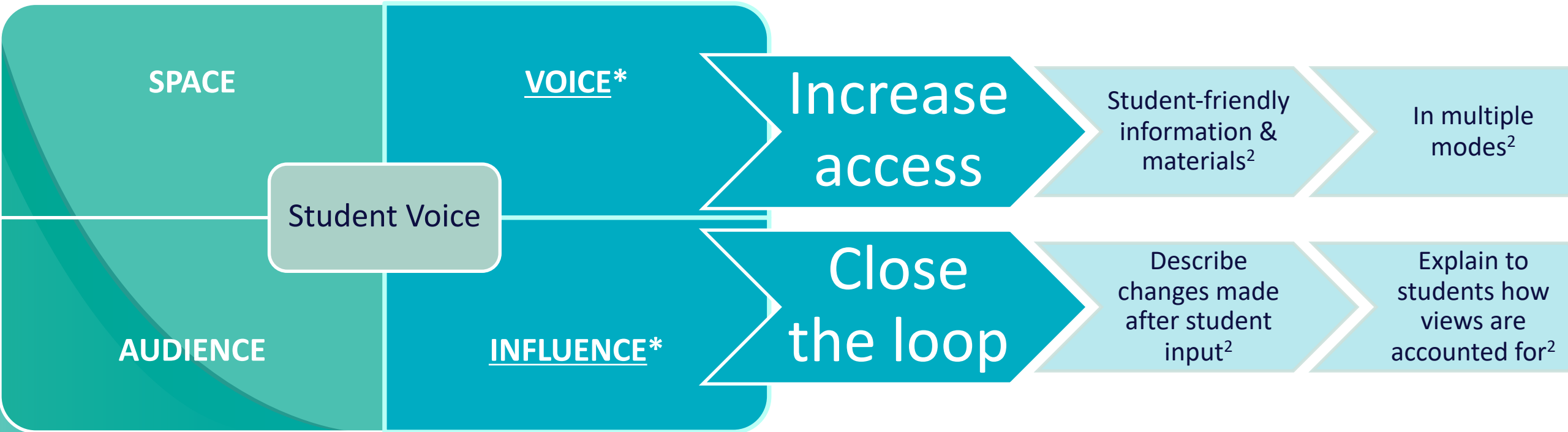- Common reference to quality of teacher-student relationships

Sample Q: *"Do you have any ideas about how to reward teachers?"*

Identified themes

- General impression that school staff is not receiving sufficient supports
  - Concerns expressed for ratios & workloads
  - → "They're overworked and don't get enough praise"
- Connections between workload and regard for students
  - → "Maybe that's why they don't like us enough"
- Provided examples of public teacher rewards
- Desire to be included in voting and staff rewards

Closing Thoughts & Overall Impressions

- Novelty of experience and enthusiasm for topic
- Mental health theme throughout
- Quality of relationships with adult teaching staff & administration
- Heightened concerns for peers with (in)formal behavioral labels within school-wide PBIS framework
- Feelings of confusion/exclusion and desire for understanding/inclusion

SPACE

VOICE*

Student Voice

AUDIENCE

INFLUENCE*

Increase access

Close the loop

Student-friendly information & materials[2]

In multiple modes[2]

Describe changes made after student input[2]

Explain to students how views are accounted for[2]

Reflect on site-specific PBIS implementation considering student perspective

1	Establish an effective leadership **team**

6	Develop a continuum to **strengthen** demonstrations of expectations

2	Develop a brief statement of **purpose** & define outcomes

7	Develop a continuum to **discourage** violations of expectations

Reflect on PBIS from student perspective

3	Identify positive school-wide behavior **expectations**

8	Develop **systems** to support staff

4	Develop procedures to **teach** school-wide expectations

9	Use **data** for decision-making

5	Develop procedures to **teach** class-wide expectations

10	Promote **sustainability**

Identify takeaway(s) to inform future implementation

CLASSROOM IMPLEMENTATION OF PBIS

1.1 Team Composition:

Tier 1 leadership team includes the following roles: 1-2 Tier 1 system coordinators (i.e., coaches), a school administrator, a representative group of educators (e.g., grade level or departmental representation, general and **special education**, certified and non-certified staff), **students**, family members who do not work for the school district, **members from marginalized groups**, relevant community partners (e.g., mental health providers), and individuals who actively provide expertise the following areas [e.g., mental health and trauma, equity, data systems].

1.5 School Acknowledgment:

Educators consistently and equitably implement a written process for delivering behavior-specific praise that is (a) linked to schoolwide expectations, (b) used across settings, (c) documented (e.g., electronically tracked, count of tokens) and (d) **differentiated to meet students' needs** to acknowledge students' academic and SEB skills **in a manner valued by students**.

1.15 Student Engagement:

Tier 1 leadership teams **purposefully and regularly engage students** that are representative of (a) the schools' demographics and (b) any **marginalized groups** in co-designing and actively revising the content and the implementation of foundational Tier 1 practices (items 1.3-1.10) based on the **regular review** of schoolwide and community data.

My sincerest gratitude to…

Dr. Jennifer Freeman,

Collaborating school administrators, teachers, & paras,

The lively, open, and generous students who took part in these focus groups,

and to you all for being here today.

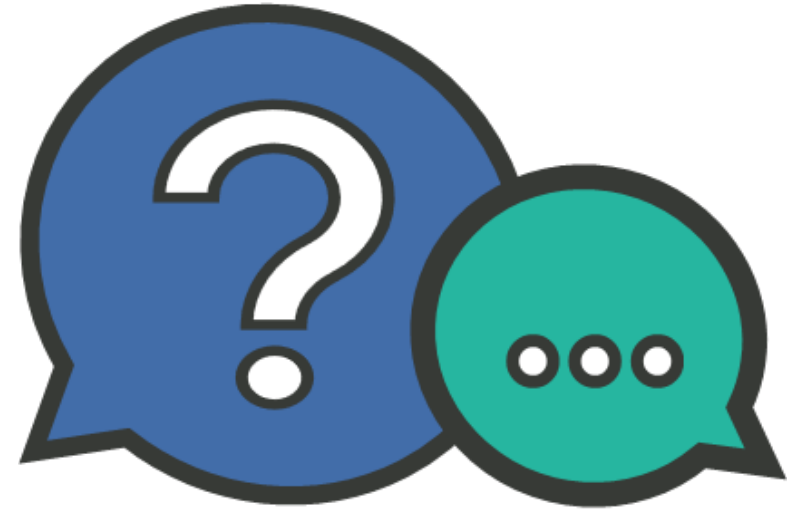# Questions, Comments, Wonderings

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References

[1]Center on PBIS. (April 2022). *Feedback & Input Surveys (FIS) Manual*. University of Oregon. www.pbis.org

[2]Lundy, L. (2007). "Voice" is not enough: Conceptualising Article 12 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. *British Educational Research Journal, 33*(6), 927–942. https://doi.org/10.1080/01411920701657033

Session Evaluation

Your feedback is critical to future planning of this event.
PLEASE take a moment to share your valuable insight!
THANK YOU!

https://bit.ly/NEPBISForum2023