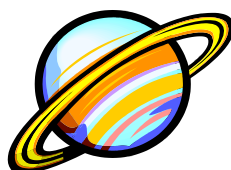


Effective Support Systems for Students with Behavioral Challenges: What Makes the Difference?

- The system has an articulated set of beliefs, values or assumptions about what motivates behavior and the factors and variables that support long term behavioral change.
- The system has identifiable and measurable goals.
- The system collects and uses data to guide decision making.
- A student centered team meets on a regular basis. Roles and responsibilities are clearly understood, agreed upon and periodically reviewed.
- The team is well facilitated, has multiple strategies for conducting dialogue and discussion conversations, and pays attention to their collaborative work. Communication loops are open and effective.
- The system has a wide range of supports, resources, and interventions, both formal and informal, that are congruent with the goals, outcomes and underlying values of the system.
- The system has adequate resources and support.
- The system strives for flexibility and self-correction.
- The system remembers that the goal is for the system to fit the student, not the student to fit the system.



Why Do Many Support Systems for Students with Behavioral Challenges Often Fail to Achieve Desired Goals?

The system operates with unexamined beliefs and assumptions about why students chronically misbehave and how long term behavioral change is supported. Some examples of common held but not examined beliefs are:

- The expectation that rules change behavior. Rules do not change behavior, action changes behavior.
- The belief that somewhere there is a commonly agreed upon view of unacceptable behavior as well as a common set of consequences that, if only consistently applied would cause long term behavioral change.
- The myth that consequences by themselves change behavior rather than at chronic misbehavior is almost always an attempt to communicate about unmet basic needs associated with mastery, belonging, attention, power and control, generosity, etc. Unless an understanding of what is motivating the behavior and need satisfying supports are made available, it is unlikely that consequences alone will effect long term behavioral change.
- The reason why students continually misbehave is because they want to or they think they can get away with it.
- The reason why students continually misbehave is because the system is not tough enough.
- The reason why students continually misbehave is because poor parenting, poverty, etc.
- The reason why students continually misbehave is because they do not want to learn.
- The reason why students continually misbehave is to drive adults crazy.

Roles and responsibilities of team members are not clearly defined or shared.

Ineffective communication loops dominate the system.

Data is either not collected or if collected, it is not used to guide decision-making.

Blame, judgment and “admiring the problem” dominate either the system or the team.