



# Tennessee Behavior Supports Project

at Vanderbilt University

Including Families and Communities in your School's RTI<sup>2</sup>-B Framework

JULY 2017



This guide was produced by Tennessee Behavior Supports Project at Vanderbilt University—one of three projects across the state funded by the Tennessee Department of Education to provide training and technical assistance to schools as they address social and behavioral needs of students. This brief was authored by Abbie Jenkins, Becky Shafer, Blair Lloyd, and Erik Carter.



Schools are being trained in Multi-Tiered System of Supports across the country. The goal of Multi-Tiered System of Supports is to proactively meet the academic, behavioral, and social needs of students in a unified framework based on values held by the school and community. Response to Instruction and Intervention for Behavior (RTI<sup>2</sup>-B) is an example of a Multi-Tiered System of Supports being implemented in many schools in Tennessee.



A school-wide plan helps faculty, staff, families, and community members have a clear understanding of what is expected of students at school, and what they can do to help children thrive socially, academically, and behaviorally. All stakeholders, including families and community members, should be included in the implementation of the plan. In this practice guide, we will share practical ideas and advice from schools throughout Middle Tennessee for involving family and community members in a school's RTI<sup>2</sup>-B plan.

There are many different avenues for involving family and community members in a school-wide plan. These include (1) encouraging family and community representation on the RTI<sup>2</sup>-B leadership team, (2) establishing school and family partnerships, (3) promoting school-wide initiatives and events, (4) providing training and resources to family and community members, (5) partnering with

family and community organizations, and (6) publicly acknowledging family and community members for supporting the school-wide plan.

## Encouraging Family and Community Representation on the RTI<sup>2</sup>-B Leadership Team

We encourage schools to include a family and/or community representative on their RTI<sup>2</sup>-B leadership team. Many schools involve a family member who is already active in parent organizations. For example, one school included a Parent Teacher Organization (PTO) member on their team. The PTO now helps implement the faculty and staff acknowledgement system by rewarding them for acknowledging appropriate student behavior. The PTO also helps with dissemination by sharing information about the school plan to other



families and members of the community. In addition to these roles, encouraging family and community representation on the team can promote their involvement in decision-making and can lead to valuable feedback related to the family and community components of the RTI<sup>2</sup>-B plan.

## Establishing School and Family Partnerships

Incorporating a school and family partnership into an RTI<sup>2</sup>-B plan can be mutually beneficial. Research shows that strong family involvement in schools can lead to greater academic achievement.<sup>1</sup> Effective school and family partnerships

involve an established system for communicating information about policies, procedures, and expectations. For example, at the beginning of each school year, information could be sent home about the RTI<sup>2</sup>-B plan. This could be shared with all families, and could be in the form of a parent letter. In addition to the parent letter, schools could distribute a home-based behavioral expectations matrix that aligns with the school's matrix. Allowing parents an opportunity to implement the same expectations at home helps to promote consistency between settings. Schools can also provide positive feedback and personalized contact with family members. For example, faculty and

staff might acknowledge appropriate student behavior by calling a parent and telling them how their child helped another student at school that day. In addition to rewarding students, positive contacts with families, such as phone calls or emails to inform them of their child's appropriate behavior, help to foster positive relationships between staff and families. This practice breaks the common cycle in which schools only contact families when problems emerge or to report negative feedback on their child's academic, social, or behavioral performance at school.

## RTI<sup>2</sup>-B Home Matrix

Liberty Elementary School, Franklin Special School District

	Getting up in the morning	Getting to school	Clean-up time	Time to relax	Homework time	Mealtime	Getting ready for bed
H HELP OUT	Make your bed Clothes in hamper	Have your backpack lunch, notes, keys	Do your chores	Clean up after yourself Play quietly	Put your things In your backpack when finished	Set the table Put dishes away	Brush your teeth Dirty clothes away
O OWN YOUR BEHAVIOR	Get up on time Get cleaned up and dressed on time	Be ready to leave on time	Clean up after yourself	Ask before you borrow Ask to change stations	Complete your homework on time Do your best!	Use kind words and "I statements" Recognize mistakes and apologize	Get to bed on time!
M MANNERS COUNT	Try a morning SMILE! Thank your parents for helping.	"Thanks for the ride" "Have a nice day"	Ask politely for help	Respect others things Offer to share	Ask for help respectfully "Thanks for the help"	Please and thank you Use your napkin	End the day with nice words and thoughts
E	V	E	R	Y	D	A	Y



## Promoting School-Wide Initiatives and Events

Promoting initiatives and special events are important for disseminating a school's plan. Social media, the school website, and take-home materials are useful tools to inform families and the community about positive changes happening at the school. For example, schools can include the behavioral expectations on their website, use social media to promote events, make magnets displaying school-wide expectations, and highlight assemblies that family and community members can attend on school calendars. Schools might also share successes by including RTI<sup>2</sup>-B progress updates in school newsletters or by making announcements at plays, sporting events, and other community-based activities.

## Tweet from Highland Park Elementary in Maury County



Highland Park  
@HPEStigers

Follow

Enjoying some dance party time with RTI-B winners! Keep getting those pawsitivity tickets!  
**#beready #bekind #besafe**



LIKES  
4



## Get families and the community involved in your plan!

- **Include family/community representatives on your school's RTI<sup>2</sup>-B leadership team**
- **Send letters to families**
- **Make announcements at plays, sporting events, or other extra-curricular activities**
- **Set up a RTI<sup>2</sup>-B table at the next family open house**
- **Share updates in school or district newsletters**
- **Involve the community in fundraising and donations**
- **Invite families and communities to monthly assemblies**

## Providing Training and Resources to Family and Community Members

It is important for schools to provide training and resources to all stakeholders, including families and communities. For example, schools could host a family open house or a "Welcome Back Bash." At these annual events, school representatives might provide a formal overview of the RTI<sup>2</sup>-B plan or host a RTI<sup>2</sup>-B table. A brief overview of the plan could also be included in the family handbook for those who are not able to attend the open house or are new to the school. For example, schools could train the community center that serves students for before and after-care in Tier I practices.

## Partnering with Family and Community Organizations

Partnering with existing family and community organizations is a great way to promote the school-wide plan through fundraising. Fundraising is one avenue for providing tangible incentives as part of student or staff acknowledgement systems, and may also be used to print various materials for dissemination. Support from families, community members, and local businesses can promote fundraising efforts, dissemination of the plan to the broader community, and recruitment of volunteers to help with RTI<sup>2</sup>-B events. Schools can further involve the community by inviting them



to support assemblies, sporting events, and any other school activities. Many local businesses are willing to partner with nearby schools and donate time and resources toward specific initiatives. A great way to inform potential partnerships is to distribute annual surveys to community members to identify interests, talents, and volunteer availability.

## Publicly Acknowledging Family and Community Members

Just as students and school staff members should be acknowledged for participating in the school's RTI<sup>2</sup>-B plan, so should families and community members who get involved and help promote the plan. Schools can show their appreciation by simply making sure that everyone feels welcomed when

walking into the building. Schools could create banners for businesses that help with fundraising, which is a great way to advertise the business and the school's plan. They could also host a raffle at a family night or recognize involved family and community members in their school newsletter, on their websites, or on social media.

Involving families and the community in a school's RTI<sup>2</sup>-B plan can help promote sustained implementation. The overarching goal of each school's RTI<sup>2</sup>-B plan is to help students learn appropriate behavior while succeeding academically. Having systems and procedures in place to meaningfully involve all stakeholders in this process not only benefits students but also fosters positive and collaborative school climates.

## For Further Reading:

Darsch, C., Miao, Y., & Shippen, P. (2004). A Model for Involving Parents of Children with Learning and Behavior Problems in the Schools. *Preventing School Failure, 48*(3).

Muscott, H. S., Szczesiul, S., Berk, B., Staub, K., Hoover, J., Perry, P. (2008). Creating Home-School Partnerships by Engaging Families in Schoolwide Positive Behavior Supports. *Teaching Exceptional Children, 40*(6), 7-14.

OSEP Technical Assistance Center on Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports. (n.d.). Retrieved from [www.pbis.org](http://www.pbis.org)

Simonsen, B., Sugai, G., & Negron, M. (2008). Schoolwide positive behavior supports: Primary systems and practices. *Teaching Exceptional Children, 40*(6), 32-40.

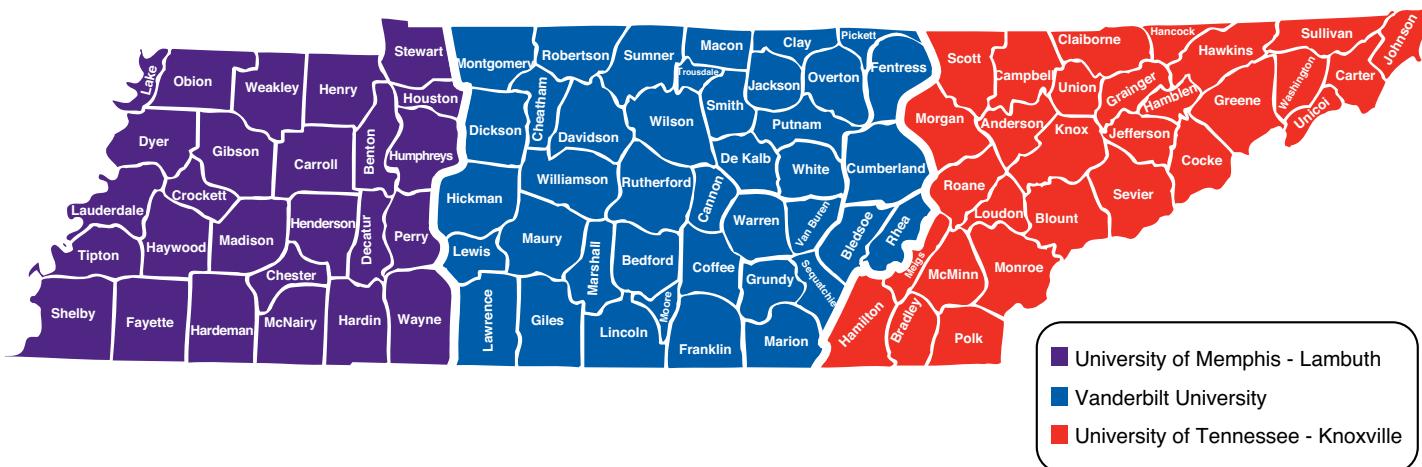
## Endnotes:

<sup>1</sup>Darsch, C., Miao, Y., & Shippen, P. (2004). A Model for Involving Parents of Children with Learning and Behavior Problems in the Schools. *Preventing School Failure, 48*(3).

Graphic services supported in part by EKS NICHD Grant U54 HD083211 to the Vanderbilt Kennedy Center for Research on Human Development, vkc.mc.vanderbilt.edu



## Tennessee Behavior Supports Project by Region: 2015-2020



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 (RTI<sup>2</sup>-B).

To locate the project assigned to your region, see below.



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