



TRANSCRIPT

Video:

Now You See Us: Youth Helping Adults to Better Understand Youth Behaviors

NARRATOR

A growing body of research shows that listening to youth voices can be a powerful approach for improving school-based student supports. With an opportunity to contribute, students offer the adults who work with them fresh insights about what’s working—or isn’t working—as well as ideas for rethinking policies and practices. A workshop led by members of the California School-Based Health Alliance Youth Board brings this approach to life. They were featured presenters at a convening of California’s Central Valley educators and health care providers who came together to learn about trauma-informed practices and building resilience.

IRMA ROSA VIERA

Hi, my name is Irma Rosa Viera. I’m currently 19 and going to California State University, Northridge.

MICHE’LE BAILEY

Hi, my name is Miche’le Bailey. I am 22 years old and I attend West LA College.

NARRATOR

They co-facilitated the workshop Now You See Us, which aimed to deepen adults’ understanding of the youth they work with. It focused on the importance of listening to youth voices and valuing youths’ lived experiences to strengthen change efforts and then addressed how educators, health care providers, and other support providers can tap youth as a resource to strengthen the quality of the health and mental health care they urgently want and need. Peter Le coordinates the Youth Board, which engages young people to advocate for improved school health policies and practices.

PETER LE

The Youth Board’s role in improving health and mental health care access is to serve as the statewide liaison for the youth who experience a severe trauma, stress, that would otherwise go unspoken. Our Youth Board serves as the voice for young people who wouldn’t otherwise be able to express their daily life conditions. Youth-adult partnerships are crucial in this work, especially as it relates to mental health care access. I think that we as adults play a very important role in helping young people recognize their role and their power.



MICHE'LE BAILEY

We were inspired to create this workshop because we wanted to be the bridge between youth and adults and to let adults and youth know that there doesn't have to be a gap, that we're all coming together for a common goal and that's to make sure that we're all safe and healthy.

NARRATOR

During the workshop, the youth facilitated activities that encouraged participating adults to check their assumptions about youth behavior and to reflect on authentic first-person accounts from youth who felt unheard and unsupported by the adults caring for them.

IRMA ROSA VIERA

But it gets better and this is where we come in because these stories don't have to continue. You don't have to have another student in your classroom say, "My teacher isn't listening to me." And this is what we're really working toward.

NARRATOR

There were also opportunities for participants to share promising ways they work with youth and to receive advice from the youth facilitators.

IRMA ROSA VIERA

We just wanted to really work with you guys and maybe on tips on how to better create that dialogue and create safe spaces where students can really approach you.

PARTICIPANT 1

So, I think one of the biggest things I'm going to take back is just making sure to have that supportive environment where young people can feel open to be able to share what's going on in their lives. Not making assumptions about them, but really giving them that chance to open up and tell us what they're going through.

IRMA ROSA VIERA

What adults really need to understand is that we really do want to talk to you.

MICHE'LE BAILEY

They also need to understand that the ways students cope and react to situations might be the only way that they know how. And so if we lend a helping hand or a listening ear, we can really make an impact on ways that adolescents come to us for help or the way the adolescents change their behaviors.

Healthy youth and successful students really need adults to be their allies. My advice to adults is to make sure that they're providing all the resources necessary for you to want to come



forward and say, “Hey, can you help me with this situation?” For youth to know that there are safe spaces around for them, even though that the adults in their life probably aren’t creating them, that there are other adult allies that they can rely on.

PARTICIPANT 2

One thing that I learned from today was just the language that we use with the kids. Just making sure that we’re there for them and that we truly understand how they’re feeling, what they’re going through.

IRMA ROSA VIERA

What makes me feel really hopeful about adults is they’re asking very engaging questions on like, “How can I do this?” and “I’m already doing this, but what more do students need?” Through the workshop I saw the faces like lighting up and you could just see that they were really thinking about the students and their lives and like, “I can do this. This is something I want to do.” And I think that’s what really stuck with me and that’s what I really wanted to happen.

It is okay not to know what to do. Support can come in many different ways; and just as this little plant is growing with every support that you give your students, they will also grow one step at a time.

PETER LE

This was an amazing opportunity for adults to hear directly from the young people and for the young people to be experts and to show adults that, hey, young people absolutely know a whole lot that we don’t.

NARRATOR

To learn more about structured ways to incorporate youth voice into school improvement efforts, including how to make school-based health more responsive to youth needs, we’ve listed resources that offer practical advice and tools that work. One of these resources is this tool, *Speak Out, Listen Up!* which includes multiple tools designed to help students and adults work together in new ways to address pressing issues and make lasting change. To learn more about how these tools have been used, contact us at relwest@wested.org.