



NC Resilience & Learning Project

Project Overview

The Public School Forum of North Carolina launched the NC Resilience & Learning Project in 2017. The program emerged from the Public School Forum's Study Group XVI on Expanding Educational Opportunity in NC that examined the high prevalence of traumatic experiences in childhood, particularly among students living in poverty, and how that affects educational outcomes. The Project is modeled on the work of pioneers in the field of childhood trauma/Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) and its impact on student learning that have achieved early success creating and implementing trauma-informed instructional practices in schools.

The goals of the project are to increase awareness among educators of the impact of Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) on student learning; to improve school climate by creating a trauma-sensitive environment; to improve the approach of educators and school communities to student discipline, particularly for high-need students; and to improve the coordination of services among schools, other school-based actors, and social service providers to mitigate the impact of ACEs on student learning and behavior by building student self-regulation skills and resiliency within inclusive learning environments.

We are currently working in 8 districts and 17 schools across NC and have new funding to begin some initial training work with an additional 4 new districts this school year as well.

Project Approach

The underlying implementation of the Project includes three core components: (1) creation of a Resilience Team, a core group of staff who lead and champion the initiative; (2) training for all school staff, with enhanced training for the Resilience Team; and (3) intensive coaching across the school year to support trauma-sensitive strategy implementation. These components are based on lessons from pioneering programs and the principles of "Creating and Advocating for Trauma-Sensitive Schools" (Cole et al., 2013), guided by ongoing consultation with this book's authors.

Pilot Year

The project initially launched its pilot year in the 2017-2018 school year in two school districts in a total of three schools – Edgecombe County Public Schools (Pattillo Middle School and Stocks Elementary School) and Rowan-Salisbury Schools (Koontz Elementary School). On the ground work began in each school in August of 2017. Each school established their own Resilience Team comprised of the principal, student services staff, and a handful of teachers. These teams met 10-12 times throughout the year to create goals and an action plan of trauma-sensitive strategies to address their greatest needs and build a safer and more supportive learning environment.

Each school also received in-depth training for their Resilience Team members as well as whole school training for all staff. This broad training fosters unifying language, understanding, and expectations to promote climate and culture change, and helps staff recognize the neurobiological foundations of students' disruptive behaviors. Lastly, a Project coach was present in each school every other week to observe school challenges and successes, meet with the Resilience Team, brainstorm solutions to emerging problems, coach problem-solving strategies, and provide implementation support.

Strategies and programs that the three pilot schools implemented as part of their new trauma-sensitive plan included calm-down spaces in each classroom, restorative discipline practices, new self-care initiatives for staff, mindfulness breaks, school-wide self-regulation messaging for students, and a check-in/check-out buddy program for students with high numbers of office referrals.

Through interviews and focus groups, we received the following qualitative quotes and feedback from our pilot year schools:

"Instead of having a chaotic environment that feeds INTO the school, we are building an organized caring effort that extends OUT of the school."

"When you see teachers chatting in the break room, it used to be just a venting session. Now they are problem-solving and brainstorming ideas."

"Teachers feel more empathic and students notice it. Students are more respectful in class and have far fewer blow-ups."

"Great for whole staff to have same information and understand possible reasons for misbehavior."

"Facilitated resilience team meetings are critical to keep the work moving forward and on the front burner."

"At the same time, great to have facilitators that let staff take the lead rather than telling them 'what to do.'"

2018-2019 School Year

With additional funding, the Project has expanded into eight total districts (including continuing in Edgecombe and Rowan-Salisbury) and is working in a total of 17 new schools this school year as well as continuing to provide support to the 3 pilot schools. The districts and schools are as follows:

Pilot schools from last year:

Pattillo Middle School – Edgecombe County Public Schools
Stocks Elementary School – Edgecombe County Public Schools
Koontz Elementary School – Rowan-Salisbury Schools

2018-2019 new schools:

Phillips Middle School – Edgecombe County Public Schools
Princeville Elementary School – Edgecombe County Public Schools
Baskerville Elementary School – Nash-Rocky Mount Public Schools
Benvenue Elementary School – Nash-Rocky Mount Public Schools
River Road Middle School – Elizabeth City-Pasquotank Public Schools
PW Moore Elementary School – Elizabeth City-Pasquotank Public Schools

Hollister Elementary School – Halifax County Schools
Scotland Neck Elementary School – Halifax County Schools
Cooper Elementary School – Johnston County Public Schools
West Smithfield Elementary School – Johnston County Public Schools
Greene County Intermediate School – Greene County Public Schools
North Rowan Elementary School – Rowan-Salisbury Schools
Isenberg Elementary School – Rowan-Salisbury Schools
Overton Elementary School – Rowan-Salisbury Schools
Hurley Elementary School – Rowan-Salisbury Schools
Broadview Middle School – Alamance-Burlington Schools
One more Alamance-Burlington School TBD by district

**Please see the table included at the end of the document for full demographic data on each partner school.*

Additionally, the Project just received funding to complete a shorter version of the program with four districts in southeast North Carolina:

Duplin County Schools
Jones County Public Schools
Pender County Schools
Sampson County Schools

The work in these four districts will include initial training for staff district-wide, community viewings of the “Resilience” documentary, and working with individual schools who are interested in the Project to build readiness.

The Forum was able to hire two new program coordinators, one based in the Rowan-Salisbury area and the other based in eastern North Carolina. Each are working directly in schools allowing for expansion of the program this year.

The model remains the same from our pilot year with some small changes based on lessons learned from last year such as doing more all-staff training and engagement to keep staff members who are not a part of the Resilience Team involved in the process throughout the year, improving the quality of our training curriculum with new content and interactive activities, and spending more time at the beginning of the year working with district and school leadership to ensure buy-in and readiness from selected schools.

Current Partners

The Forum is spearheading the project as lead partner. Select North Carolina school districts will participate in the project as partners based on their strong interest in the subject matter, exemplary district leadership, diversity, and potential for scale within the Initiative and eventually to other counties throughout the state. The district partners are listed in the section above.

The Trauma and Learning Policy Initiative (TPLI), a nationally recognized collaboration between Massachusetts Advocates for Children and Harvard Law School is providing expertise to the Forum as the project is fully developed. TLPI advocates for trauma-informed school policies and works directly

with schools, providing training and technical assistance. TLPI has assisted in the creation and execution of training programs, and will be an implementation advisor for the pilot programs

The Center for Child and Family Policy at Duke University also serves as a key thought partner in designing our model and creating curriculum in this pilot year. With additional funding, they will conduct an independent evaluation of the Project. To the extent feasible while maintaining the independence of the evaluation, Project partners will consult with Forum staff on program implementation, drawing on their rich experience working with and evaluating the few existing model programs focused on mitigating the impact of ACEs on learning within schools and other educational settings.

Funders for the Project are:

- ChildTrust Foundation
- John M. Belk Endowment
- Belk Foundation
- Kate B. Reynolds Charitable Trust
- WakeMed Foundation
- Rowan-Salisbury Schools
- NC Center for Safer Schools (School Safety Grant from DPI)

Demographic Data by Partner School

School	Classroom Teachers	Students	Free & Reduced Lunch	Economically Disadvantaged	Race
Greene County Intermediate	31	488	100%	70%	Indian: 1% Asian: 0 Hispanic: 36% Black: 36% White: 25% Pacific Island: 0 2 or more: 2%
West Smithfield Elementary	43	476	Greater than 90%	92%	Indian: 0 Asian: 1% Hispanic: 55% Black: 29% White: 12% Pacific Island: 0 2 or more: 3%
Cooper Elementary	46	572	60-65%	62%	Indian: <1% Asian: 1% Hispanic: 25% Black: 36% White: 33% Pacific Island: 0 2 or more: 5%

Scotland Neck Elementary	14	224	100%	85%	Indian: 0 Asian: <1% Hispanic: 9% Black: 54% White: 1% Pacific Island: 1% 2 or more: 0
Hollister Elementary	14	172	100%	67%	Indian: 56% Asian: 0 Hispanic: <1% Black: 42% White: <1% Pacific Island: 0 2 or more: <1%
PW Moore Elementary	25	381	Greater than 90%	71%	Indian: <1% Asian: 1% Hispanic: 9% Black: 64% White: 21% Pacific Island: 0 2 or more: 4%
River Road Elementary	35	560	60-65%	66%	Indian: <1% Asian: 1% Hispanic: 9% Black: 31% White: 37% Pacific Island: <1% 2 or more: 4%
Baskerville Elementary	21	337	Greater than 90%	89%	Indian: 0 Asian: 0 Hispanic: 3% Black: 93% White: 2% Pacific Island: 0 2 or more: 1%
Benvenue Elementary	39	620	Greater than 90%	64%	Indian: 1% Asian: 4% Hispanic: 1% Black: 70% White: 12%

					Pacific Island: <1% 2 or more: 3%
Princeville Elementary	16	214	100%	86%	Indian: 0 Asian: 0 Hispanic: 15% Black: 79% White: 4% Pacific Island: 0 2 or more: 1%
Phillips Middle	11	124	100%	78%	Indian: 0 Asian: 0 Hispanic: 11% Black: 82% White: 7% Pacific Island: 0 2 or more: <1%
Overton Elementary	28	394	Greater than 90%	63%	Indian: <1% Asian: <1% Hispanic: 11% Black: 54% White: 24% Pacific Island: 0 2 or more: 10%
Hurley Elementary	34	496	Greater than 90%	54%	Indian: 0 Asian: <1% Hispanic: 31% Black: 35% White: 30% Pacific Island: 0 2 or more: 4%
North Rowan Elementary	38	535	Greater than 90%	59%	Indian: <1% Asian: 2% Hispanic: 14% Black: 43% White: 33% Pacific Island: 1% 2 or more: 7%
Isenberg Elementary	30	404	Greater than 90%	58%	Indian: <1% Asian: 5% Hispanic: 20%

					Black: 55% White: 13% Pacific Island: <1% 2 or more: 6%
Broadview Middle	58	742	Greater than 90%	69%	Indian: <1% Asian: 1% Hispanic: 51% Black: 37% White: 7% Pacific Island: <1% 2 or more: 41%
2nd Alamance School TBD					