



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.

In the Project's pilot year in 2017-2018, implementation began in two school districts. Now in its third year, the full Project model is being implemented in eight districts and introductory training and consultation is being done in an additional 11 districts spread across the state.

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) through initial consultation and advising from the book's authors during the Project's pilot year.

Project Districts

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 and Rowan-Salisbury Schools. In year two, the Project expanded with new funding into a total of eight districts and 17 new schools led by three Project staff members each located in different regions of the state.

Now, in year three, full Project model implementation is being done in eight districts and 17 new schools with continued support provided to year one and year two schools to help with sustainability and

ongoing implementation. In addition to the Project's core model, other trainings, workshops, and consultation are being offered currently in 11 other districts through a new fee for service program for districts to use professional development funds toward trauma-informed schools training with Project staff.

2019-2020 Full Model Implementation Districts:

Alamance-Burlington School System
Edgecombe County Public Schools
Elizabeth City-Pasquotank Public Schools
Greene County Schools
Johnston County Public Schools
Nash-Rocky Mount Public Schools
Pitt County Schools
Rowan-Salisbury School System

Other districts working with the Project:

Alexander County Schools
Chapel Hill-Carrboro City Schools
Chatham County Schools
Duplin County Schools
Halifax County Schools
Jones County Public Schools
Lee County Schools
Pender County Schools
Sampson County Schools
Warren County Schools
Wayne County Public Schools

Early Feedback

Now that year three of implementation is underway, we have more data and outcomes to track and analyze to see progress overtime. Through the Project's partnership with Duke's Center for Child and Family Policy, we are working closely with a senior research scholar to track reductions in discipline referrals, improvements in attendance rates and test scores as well as overall improvements in school climate and staff knowledge about trauma and its impacts. We will have more data and evaluation summaries available in the coming months but some of our initial feedback through early interviews and focus groups with staff in pilot schools includes the following:

"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.’”

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 Center for Child and Family Policy at Duke University also serves as a key thought partner in designing the model and creating curriculum as well as the lead partner on Project evaluation and research.

Project Funders

ChildTrust Foundation

John M. Belk Endowment

Belk Foundation

Kate B. Reynolds Charitable Trust

Blue Cross and Blue Shield of North Carolina

WakeMed Foundation

Rowan-Salisbury Schools

NC Center for Safer Schools (School Safety Grant from DPI)