

RIPPLE

RIPPLE: Reducing disparities and Implementation strategies to Promote Proactive Learning Environments


Sustainability Guide

Through RIPPLE, our vision is to transform Iredell-Statesville Schools into a model district for trauma-informed education using a comprehensive Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) framework that integrates trauma-informed care practices to improve academic and behavioral outcomes for high-need K-12 students.

<https://www.issnc.org/about/awards-and-achievements/education-innovation-research-grant>



RIPPLE Sustainability Guide



Significant strides were made through the EIR RIPPLE project, with 1,024 staff members across 21 target schools completing Trauma-Focused Professional Development and related trainings to better address student needs, and improve classroom environments.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The RIPPLE project is funded by the U.S. Department of Education through the Office of Elementary and Secondary Education's Education Innovation and Research (EIR) Program—Early-Phase Grants from October 2019 to June 2025. Its vision is to transform Iredell-Statesville Schools into a model district for trauma-informed education by implementing a comprehensive Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) framework that integrates trauma-informed care practices to improve academic and behavioral outcomes for high-need K-12 students.

GOAL 1

Use the MTSS structure to implement a trauma-informed interventional approach to improve educational outcomes for high-need K-12 students through: Universal screening using grade-specific assessments (ACE, PNAS, CRS); Evidence-based Tier 1 programs including Second Step (K-5); Safe School Ambassadors (6-12); Capturing Kids Hearts; Restorative Justice; and Tiered interventions progressing from classroom-based support to small group sessions to intensive individual therapy.

GOAL 2

Provide professional learning for educators to develop awareness and understanding of the impact trauma has on student achievement and behaviors building educators' capacity to recognize and implement a trauma-informed interventional approach for high-need students: Training five staff members per school in Trauma-Informed Care using a train-the-trainer model, delivering appropriate training to address underlying issues affecting teacher expectations, supporting social-emotional learning through embedded professional development, and using data-driven continuous improvement through monthly TI-MTSS team meetings.

PROGRAM STRATEGIES

The RIPPLE project comprises four major components designed to reshape the culture and systems of Iredell-Statesville Schools:

1. Multi-Tiered Systems of Support Framework (MTSS): This framework implements a three-tiered approach beginning with universal screening and school-wide prevention programs at Tier 1, progressing to small group interventions facilitated by SAP Coordinators and Children's Hope Alliance at Tier 2, and culminating in individual trauma-focused cognitive behavioral therapy and specialized support services at Tier 3.

2. Professional Development and Coaching: Our comprehensive professional development program delivers trauma-informed care training through the Tell-Show-Practice Coaching model, facilitates weekly professional learning communities, and conducts summer institutes for TI-MTSS teams.

3. Comprehensive Support Services: We provide extensive support through Behavioral Specialists who conduct assessments and interventions, Social Workers who deliver wraparound services at a targeted 1:250 ratio, Student Assistance Program Coordinators, and established partnerships with Children's Hope Alliance and Easterseals.

4. Continuous Improvement Systems: Our improvement process includes monthly TI-MTSS team meetings, quarterly Data Days for review and planning, ongoing implementation fidelity monitoring, and regular collection of stakeholder feedback through surveys and conferences.

CONTRIBUTIONS

Through the creation and implementation of RIPPLE, Iredell-Statesville Schools has made the following contributions to research, knowledge, practice, and policy:

- Implementation of an innovative trauma-informed MTSS framework that integrates behavioral, academic, and social-emotional supports
- Development of a comprehensive screening system using grade-specific trauma assessments
- Creation of a tiered intervention model that combines evidence-based programs like Second Step, Safe School Ambassadors, and Capturing Kids Hearts
- Integration of trauma-informed practices into standard educational approaches
- Implementation of culturally responsive practices and professional development
- Creation of new partnerships between education and mental health services
- Implementation of data-driven decision-making through TI-MTSS teams
- Development of a replicable model for districts seeking to implement trauma-informed practices

RIPPLE: Sustainability Planning Process

We formed a cross-functional sustainability committee to determine our ability as an organization to continue the effective RIPPLE project strategies when the grant expires. This team was comprised of district leadership, key personnel, and our external evaluation and capacity building experts .

Recognizing that a successful sustainability plan includes strong leadership, a clear direction and vision of what needs to be implemented, genuine commitment from community stakeholders, collaboration in the schools, district, and community, organizational capacity and infrastructure, and financial and non-financial resource alternatives, our team worked with The Evaluation Group.

As the team worked toward sustainability planning, we determined which components are absolutely necessary for our district to continue, which strategies are nice to have, and which strategies will no longer be needed upon the conclusion of the grant.

Program Strategies

MUST KEEP ~ FINANCIAL	MUST KEEP ~ NON-FINANCIAL
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Behavioral Specialists Student Assistance Program Coordinators Social Workers Professional Development for Trauma-informed Care 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> MTSS team structure and protocols Partnership with Children's Hope Alliance
NICE TO HAVE	NOT NEEDED AFTER THE GRANT ENDS
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Implementation supplies Computers Data collection and monitoring systems 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Initial training materials once staff are trained Start-up implementation guides

RIPPLE: Sustainability Planning Process

Financial Plan

STRATEGY	COST	PLAN
Behavioral Specialists (3)	\$5,112 per month per Behavioral Specialist	After 6/30/2024, fund locally, through other grants, or through Title IV funds
Student Assistance Program (SAP) Coordinators (2)	\$5,331 per month per SAP	After 6/30/2024, fund locally, through other grants, or through Title IV funds
Social Workers (2)	\$4,100 per month per Social Worker	After 6/30/2024, fund locally, through other grants, or through Title IV funds
Professional Development for Trauma-Informed Care	\$580 per month	After 6/30/2023, incorporate professional development into other grants or local funding

Our financial plan was developed through a careful process of resource leveraging, and identifying commitments and partnerships. The Financial plan outlines key strategies essential to our project's success, including staffing positions and a sustainability plan for funding these positions beyond the initial grant period. This approach ensures the continuity of these critical roles and services through local funding, future grant applications, and allocation of Title IV funds. Additionally, we have addressed ongoing professional development needs, particularly in Trauma-Informed Care, by incorporating these trainings into our district-funded professional development plan after the EIR grant ends. This comprehensive financial plan demonstrates our commitment to the long-term implementation and sustainability of the key components of RIPPLE.

RIPPLE: Sustainability Planning Process

Focusing on the essential components, we developed an action plan for each strategy. The following Action Plan has been determined in identifying clear deployment steps, persons responsible, results or measures to know if the steps were accomplished, and a timeline for implementation. Recognizing the important gains that we have accomplished through RIPPLE, our sustainability committee created an action plan to embed key strategies into our day-to-day work and leveraged local resources and human capital to continue this initiative after grant funds expire.

Action Plan

STRATEGY	DEPLOYMENT STEP	RESPONSIBLE	Start Date	End Date
Behavioral Specialists	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Include in local budget for 2025-26 • Discuss best fit for schedule with personnel allocation with Principals 	Jessica Smith	In Progress	6/30/25
Student Assistance Program (SAP) Coordinators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Include in local budget for 2025-26 • Discuss best fit for schedule with personnel allocation with Principals 	Jessica Smith	In Progress	6/30/25
Social Workers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transfer funding for Social Workers to the RESOLVE SBMH grant for 2025-27 • Discuss best fit for schedule with personnel allocation with Principals 	Jessica Smith	In Progress	6/30/25
Professional Development for Trauma-Informed Care	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transfer funding for PD to the RESOLVE SBMH grant for 2025-27 • Determine PD plan for 2025-27 • Discuss PD plan schedule with each school Principal; conduct trainings • Use Train the Trainer Model 	Jessica Smith	In Progress	6/30/25