



# Kaiser's RISE Program

*Spokane Districts Among Early Adopters as Resilience in School Environments (RISE) Resources Now Available Nationwide at No Cost*

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## **PRINCIPAL EVALUATION CRITERIA**

*Creating a Culture, Ensuring School Safety,  
Engaging Families and Communities*

**A** recent survey found that 70 percent of teens think anxiety and depression is a “major problem” for their generation. Meanwhile, nearly half of K-12 teachers report daily stress levels rivaling those of nurses and physicians.

That’s why Kaiser Permanente, in partnership with Alliance for a Healthier Generation, is expanding the Resilience in School Environments (RISE) program to

address trauma and stress at more than 25,000 schools nationwide by 2023. Last fall, Spokane Public Schools and West Valley School District #363 were among the early adopters bringing RISE to life in our state.

RISE provides a comprehensive set of on-site and virtual resources, at no cost, for school staff, teachers and districts to mitigate the underlying factors of stress in schools and develop strategies and practices that foster more positive school environments. RISE has been piloted

in schools in California, Colorado, and Georgia since 2017.

“What initially interested me was the idea of staff well-being and taking care of teachers,” said Rachel Sherwood, principal at Bemiss Elementary in Spokane. “We have amazing teachers, but compassion fatigue and the vicarious trauma they experience from hearing our students’ stories makes it a very intense job. I want them to have their own buckets filled so they can give to students and continue to do the good work they do for a long time.”

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Cicely White, MD, a Kaiser Permanente pediatrician in Spokane, said, “Just as I underscore the importance of self-care for the parents of the children I care for, it’s important that schools prioritize well-being for school teachers, staff, and administrators in order to be most effective in helping children learn and succeed.”

Adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) – traumatic events that include abuse, neglect, or household dysfunction that can affect a child’s ability to flourish and function – are widespread. In the United States, 64 percent of children experience at least one ACE before the age of 18, and 13 percent experience four or more ACEs.

“Most of our students are living in highly stressful environments, and they bring that with them to school, along with an inability to regulate emotions, problem solve, or handle conflict,” said Sherwood. “Our

teachers are charged with the task of helping them learn, and also of trying to help them rewire some of their neurons so they can be calm and not hypervigilant about what might be stressful or scary around them.”

## ASSESSING STRENGTHS AND OPPORTUNITIES

RISE isn’t a one-size-fits-all initiative. Participating schools start by answering questions in the RISE Index, a digital tool assessing what each school or district is doing well and where they can make positive changes to their policies, practices, and environments.

After completing this initial assessment, schools can choose from a variety of offerings that best suit their needs, including on-site coaching by program managers, customized virtual tools, and other online learning modules. As of November 2019, more than 500 schools have started the RISE Index



Rachel Sherwood, principal of Bemiss Elementary in Spokane is committed to promoting mental health among her staff and students.

and more than 100 have started a RISE Action Plan to help guide their activities.

“We learned from the RISE Index that there are a lot of things we’re already doing well,” said Sherwood. “Our teachers are well-trained in trauma-informed practices and attachment theory, for example. But one thing I’d like to focus on is improving the physical environment of our school, to make it feel warmer and less institutional, so both students and staff feel good when they enter the building.”

“For over a decade Healthier Generation and Kaiser Permanente have partnered to help schools create sustainable, meaningful improvements to health and wellness,” said Melissa Carpenter, RISE program manager at Healthier Generation. “Through RISE, we’re extending that support to enable schools to meet the health needs of the whole child, while fostering happier, healthier staff in the process.” ■

Learn more:

[www.healthiergeneration.org/RISE](http://www.healthiergeneration.org/RISE)



Kaiser Permanente pediatrician Cicely White, MD (L) and KP Thriving Schools Program Manager Jill Patnode (center) talk with Principal Rachel Sherwood about plans for bringing RISE resources to Bemiss Elementary.