

# The Ripple Effect: Rethinking Middle School Student Leadership

The growing mental health crisis among youth demands that those of us who work with and care about young people learn to be effective advocates for our students—and that we teach our young people how to advocate for themselves, develop meaningful relationships, and contribute to their communities.

Looking for a proactive approach to building a positive school culture, Bow Memorial School, a midsize public middle school, chose the [Ripple Middle School Student Leadership](#) training program. Bow Memorial's school counseling team knew that a welcoming and supportive learning environment is critical to students' wellness and growth, and they wanted to take ownership of this goal and share it with students in a fun and engaging way.

With limited time and resources, the educators at Bow Memorial found that Ripple Student Leadership training aligned with their priorities and their need for a structured yet flexible program.



## SCHOOL

### **Bow Middle School**

Bow, New Hampshire

## CHALLENGE

Building a positive school culture for middle schoolers

## PROGRAM

Ripple Middle School Advisory

## PILOT BREAKDOWN

- 24 students
- 75% 5th graders / 25% 6th graders
- 13 female / 11 male

## SESSION STRUCTURE

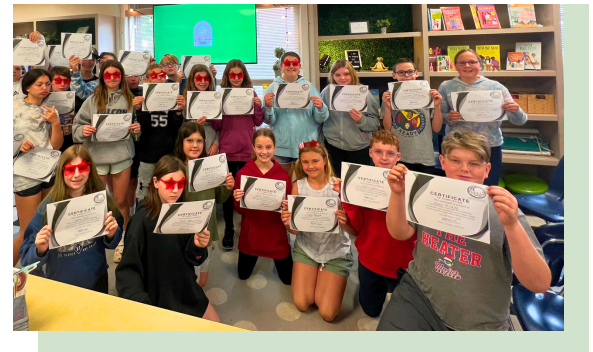
Welcome & Warm Up  
Group Check-In Chat  
Recap of Previous Session  
Video  
Reflection  
Activity  
Summary & Group Cheer

## Program features that appealed to Bow Memorial include:

- Minimal teacher/counselor prep
- High student engagement via activities and reflections
- A printable student reflection guide
- Content tailored to different types of learners
- Flexible curriculum, which can be broken into four different time blocks and adapted for different-size groups
- Expansive and inclusive definition of leadership that highlights opportunities for all students to contribute
- Specific strategies for building connection and belonging
- Tools and techniques that teach honest self-assessment, accountability and responsibility, conflict resolution, and ways to identify supportive resources

After participating in the program, students' view of themselves as leaders and their confidence in their leadership skills rose dramatically, according to program surveys, **with 75% of students identifying as leaders, compared with 8% of participants who identified as leaders before the training.**

Students reported meaningful growth in communication, mentoring, boundary setting, and care for others, all skills that will enable them to contribute to a positive school culture. Of the 24 participants, 19 said they will "definitely" apply their newfound skills to their clubs, activities, and interests.



*The Ripple Leadership four-module program is making it easy (and fun!) to train all middle schoolers in our building to lead with a step-up, step-back mentality and to make an action plan for making a positive difference at school and beyond.”*

*—Beth Corkum, Coordinator of Wellness & Equity in School Administrative Unit 67*