

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
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**NoVo Foundation gives \$6 million to Chicago-based Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning  
Buffetts call for social and emotional learning in every US school**

**CHICAGO:** NoVo Foundation, led by [Jennifer](#) and [Peter Buffett](#), has announced a \$6 million investment in social and emotional learning (SEL) through a gift to the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL). Based in Chicago, CASEL is the world's leading organization supporting social and emotional learning as an essential part of education from preschool through high school (Pre-K-12). The gift responds to CASEL's recent summary of the research, which finds that social and emotional learning can significantly raise students' scores on standardized achievement tests, build attachment to school, improve interpersonal attitudes and behaviors, and decrease negative behaviors, such as violence and substance abuse.

“CASEL has the capacity to look at all of the different approaches to social and emotional learning and say this works, this doesn't work. I couldn't think of a better place to put our funds than with an organization that can really see the overall picture,” says Peter Buffett, who co-chairs NoVo Foundation with his wife, Jennifer Buffett. “Our hope is that CASEL's work will bring a version of social and emotional learning to every school in every state.”

Often called “the missing piece” in school improvement efforts, the field of social and emotional learning (SEL) reflects the growing recognition that healthy social and emotional development advances children's success in school and life. CASEL research shows that schools can teach children core skills in self-awareness, social awareness, self-management, relationship building, and responsible decision-making, integrated with core academic subjects, and that

children who develop these social and emotional competencies are more successful at school, at home, and in their communities.

CASEL President [Roger P. Weissberg](#), PhD describes the impact of social and emotional learning in terms of how it affects children’s classroom performance. “If a child is confused or challenged by a homework assignment, they need to know how to ask teachers for help. They need to know how to work and learn well in groups. They need to set goals and manage their time. Social and emotional learning programs teach children self-management skills that emphasize clear goal setting and step-by-step planning to accomplish goals, how to anticipate and overcome obstacles, and how to calm themselves when they’re frustrated, so they can focus on how to do better.” Weissberg, who is Liberal Arts & Sciences Distinguished Professor at the University of Illinois at Chicago concludes, “When children have these skills, their self-confidence, their connection to school, and their classroom behavior all improve – and so does their academic achievement.”

CASEL has set standards for well-designed SEL programming, which call for sequential and developmentally appropriate lessons and effective school policies from preschool through grade 12. SEL skills should be delivered through explicit instruction, positive and personal relationships with teachers, and caring and supportive classroom environments, in schools where educators receive ongoing SEL professional development, and families and schools partner to promote children's social, emotional, and academic success. CASEL’s work on standards is reflected in the Illinois Children’s Mental Health Act (2003), which recognizes social and emotional development as an integral part of the mission of schools, and by state learning standards developed and approved for all Illinois school districts by the Illinois State Board of Education, in response to this legislation.

Jennifer Buffett, NoVo Foundation president and co-chair, says investing in social and emotional learning supports the foundation’s mission. “NoVo is striving to move away from a culture and a society based on domination and competition to a society based on partnership and collaboration. One of the best ways to do that,” she says, “is in schools – supporting teachers and students to be emotionally and socially sound and capable and competent and whole.”

“NoVo’s gift signals that a leading foundation recognizes that social and emotional learning is a critical endeavor,” observes CASEL Executive Director [Lindsay Friedman](#), “and that if we really want to change the way we support and educate and raise children to live in a global society, we have to develop their social and emotional competencies.” NoVo funding comes at an opportune moment, she says: “There’s so much energy and momentum behind this work around the country, and NoVo will help us maintain that momentum as we move toward putting social and emotional learning on the national education agenda.”

Originally an informal collaborative, CASEL was established in 1994 by Daniel Goleman, author of *Emotional Intelligence*, educator/philanthropist Eileen Rockefeller Growald, and like-minded colleagues Timothy Shriver, Mark Greenberg, Linda Lantieri, and David Sluyter. The group pioneered a collaborative model that convenes experts from diverse fields to share their work and bring the science of social and emotional learning to the Pre-K-12 education agenda. CASEL built the field of SEL based on scholarly research demonstrating that 1) human *relationships* are central to learning; 2) schools *can teach* children to manage their emotions, build healthy relationships, and make safe, ethical choices; and 3) *acquiring social and emotional skills* promotes greater success in school, at home, and in the community.

In 2006, CASEL emerged as an independent not-for-profit organization dedicated to the belief that the science of child development provides the foundation for effective classroom pedagogy and

sustainable school improvement. CASEL provides a forum through which diverse collaborators come together to help define the future of social and emotional learning and to build international networks of scholars and educators engaged in research, teaching, professional development, policy, and advocacy that supports the field.

Although historically NoVo Foundation has been very quiet about its giving, Peter Buffett believes it's important to call attention to the CASEL gift. "Not enough people know about social and emotional learning and CASEL's work," he says. "Sometimes giving the money is enough. But sometimes advocacy behind the money can be even more valuable."

*For more information, please contact the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning at 815 W. Van Buren, Suite 210, Chicago, IL 60607. Phone: 312-784-3888 [www.casel.org](http://www.casel.org)*

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## **Biographies of CASEL and NoVo Foundation Principals**

**Roger P. Weissberg**

**President**

**Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL)**

Roger P. Weissberg is president of the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL). Weissberg previously served as CASEL's first executive director. As president, he is responsible for developing and directing external relations, maintaining liaison with collaborating organizations, establishing new partnerships, and developing CASEL's policy initiatives.

For the past three decades, Weissberg has trained scholars and practitioners about innovative ways to design, implement, and evaluate family, school, and community interventions, and his work has been recognized with the field's top awards. In 2000, he received the American Psychological Association's Distinguished Contribution Award for Applications of Psychology to Education and Training, and 2004 the Society for Community Research and Action honored him with the Distinguished Contribution to Theory and Research Award. In 2008, he received the "Daring Dozen" award from the George Lucas Educational Foundation, recognizing him as one of 12 people who are reshaping the future of education.

Weissberg received his PhD from the University of Rochester. He has authored approximately 200 publications focusing on preventive interventions with children and adolescents and has written curricula on school-based programs to promote social competence and prevent drug use, high-risk sexual behaviors, and aggression. His *Social Competence Promotion Program for Young Adolescents* received a model program designation from the Center for Substance Abuse Prevention and from the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention.

Weissberg has served as president of the American Psychological Association's Society for Community Research and Action. He co-chaired an American Psychological Association Task Force on Prevention: Promoting Strength, Resilience, and Health in Young People. He is a recipient of the William T. Grant Foundation's five-year Faculty Scholars Award in Children's Mental Health, the Connecticut Psychological Association's Award for Distinguished Psychological Contribution in the Public Interest, and the National Mental Health Association's Lela Rowland Prevention Award.

Weissberg is a Liberal Arts and Sciences Distinguished Professor of Psychology and Education at the University of Illinois at Chicago.

**Mary Utne O'Brien**  
**Vice President for Strategic Initiatives**  
**Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL)**

Mary Utne O'Brien is Vice President for Strategic Initiatives of the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL), where she is responsible for developing and launching new directions and projects for CASEL. She was the lead author of CASEL's *Safe and Sound: An Educational Leader's Guide to Evidence-Based SEL Programs* (2003) and *Sustainable, Schoolwide, SEL: Implementation Guide and Toolkit* (2006). She directs CASEL's work in Transformational Educational Leadership Development, and edits CASEL E-Blast, the organization's periodic electronic newsletter on SEL research, practice, and policy advances.

Before joining CASEL, in 1999, O'Brien led research on the implementation and impact of school-wide social and emotional learning in a Chicago suburban elementary school district; consulted with Harvard's Project on Human Development in Chicago Neighborhoods, and wrote Chicago's five-year Strategic Plan for HIV/AIDS Prevention 1999-2001. She also wrote major sections of Chicago's Violence Prevention Strategic Plan, which was cited by CDC as a national model for such planning. In 1999, she wrote the Project Safe Start grant, which resulted in a five-year, multi-million dollar award to the Chicago Department of Public Health from the Department of Justice.

O'Brien received her PhD in sociology, with a focus on research methods and social psychology, from the University of Wisconsin-Madison, and has written numerous scholarly articles and reports of her work. O'Brien is Research Professor of Psychology and Education at the University of Illinois at Chicago.

**Lindsay J. Friedman**  
**Executive Director**  
**Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL)**

Lindsay J. Friedman serves as executive director of CASEL, undertaking this appointment in October 2008. As executive director, she provides organizational leadership and oversight to administration, program development, marketing/communications, and resource development for the organization.

Friedman has worked in the anti-bias education field for more than 18 years. Most recently, she was Senior Associate Education Director and the National Director of the Anti-Defamation (ADL) League's A WORLD OF DIFFERENCE Institute, a leading provider of anti-bias and diversity education programs and resources used by schools, universities, corporations and community and law enforcement agencies in the United States and worldwide. In this capacity, Friedman oversaw ADL's national education efforts and collaborations, including professional development, program development and evaluation, and strategic planning for the Education Division. In 2008, Lindsay led efforts to launch the Institute's first web-based professional development course for educators.

Friedman been a consultant and trainer at hundreds of schools and organizations, and has presented at numerous national conferences guiding teachers in effectively addressing bias and prejudice in the classroom. She has written numerous anti-bias manuals for teachers and students, and co-authored a chapter on the Institute's work for *Education Programs for Improving Intergroup Relations* (2004). She recently collaborated on a chapter on *School-Based Anti-Hate Initiatives* for a book on hate crime prevention scheduled for publication in 2009.

Lindsay holds master's in Education from the University of Vermont in Burlington.

**Jennifer Buffett**  
**President and Co-Chair**  
**NoVo Foundation**

Jennifer Buffett serves as president and co-chair of the NoVo Foundation, based in New York. The NoVo Foundation focuses on the empowerment of women and girls in healthy relationship to men and boys, re-infusing social and emotional learning as an essential support for academics for all children, and fostering strong local living economies.

Jennifer Buffett is responsible for NoVo's strategic direction and chairs its Grants Committee. She has guided both NoVo's \$30 million, five-year program with the International Rescue Committee to help rebuild education systems and end violence against women and girls in post-conflict West Africa, and its \$100 million grant-making partnership with the Nike Foundation, "The Girl Effect," which advances economic empowerment for adolescent girls in the developing world and seeks to show that the answer to ending poverty is investing in and protecting the world's girls.

Ms. Buffett's other efforts at NoVo include building the organizational capacity of Women for Women International. A recent recipient of the Hilton Prize for Humanitarian Organizations, Women for Women International helps women in war-torn countries rebuild their lives and their nations.

Ms. Buffett began her philanthropic work in 1997, when her in-laws, Susan and Warren Buffett, placed Jennifer and her husband, Peter, in charge of the charitable fund now known as NoVo Foundation. Her earlier work focused primarily on the environment, arts, and social services in Wisconsin and included launching the Wisconsin Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health Association to advance practice and policy around young children's healthy social emotional development. In 2006, Warren Buffett pledged more than \$1 billion in Berkshire Hathaway stock to the fund, and the Buffetts commenced a strategic planning process that led to NoVo's current focus on women and girls.

Jennifer Buffett has a B.A. in journalism and communications from the University of Wisconsin.

**Peter Buffett**  
**Co-Chair**  
**NoVo Foundation**

Peter Buffett co-chairs the NoVo Foundation, with his wife, Jennifer Buffett. In this capacity, he has helped guide the foundation's strategic plan, which calls for fostering a transformation in global society from domination and exploitation to collaboration and partnership, empowering women and girls as the primary agents of change. The Buffetts believe that providing social and emotional learning to all children and nurturing the growth of local living economies is essential to this paradigm shift.

Peter Buffett is an established musician, composer, and producer. Born in Omaha, Nebraska, Buffett began his career in San Francisco writing music for commercials. After recording four

albums for Narada Records, he signed with Epic and then Hollywood Records, and issued four additional releases. His Emmy award winning CD, *Ojibwe*, was released on his own label, BisonHead.

Highlights of Peter Buffett's film and television work include the *Fire Dance* scene in the Oscar winning film *Dances with Wolves* and the entire score for *500 Nations*, the 8-hour CBS miniseries produced by Kevin Costner. His theatrical production, *Spirit – The Seventh Fire*, was located on the National Mall for the Smithsonian's opening of the National Museum of the American Indian. *Spirit – The Seventh Fire* combines Imax scale film and imagery, native dancers, and a live band to tell the story of one man's journey to reconnect with his heritage and the land on which we live. Most recently he has collaborated in songwriting with Akon, the world-renowned Senegalese American hip hop singer-songwriter and record producer.

In 2008, Peter and Jennifer Buffett received the Clinton Global Citizen Award for their "visionary leadership and sustainable, scalable work in solving pressing global challenges." Presenting the award to the Buffetts, President Clinton said, "The Buffetts are leading an inspirational campaign to improve the status of women and girls across the globe. Their innovative approach to philanthropy has leveraged the capacity of existing organizations to affect real, positive change."

*For more information, please contact the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning at 815 West Van Buren, Suite 210, Chicago, IL 60607. Phone: 312.784.3888*  
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