



Social and Emotional Learning: Ready! Creating a National Initiative

**CASEL 2009 Forum
December 8-9, 2009
Washington, DC**

Summary and Follow-Up

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

2010



Contents

Executive Summary	2
Part I: Forum Summary and Key Points	3
A. About CASEL	3
B. About Social and Emotional Learning (SEL)	3
C. Goals of the Forum	4
II. Major Presentations.....	5
A. What We Know About SEL—Effects and Impacts	7
B. Spotlight: Jefferson County, Kentucky, Public Schools	8
C. Exemplary Practices for the National Implementation of SEL.....	10
D. Spotlight: Anchorage, Alaska, Public Schools	11
E. Policy and Advocacy for the Whole Child.....	12
F. The Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning Act of 2009 (HR 4223).....	13
III. Strategic Planning and Action Steps.....	14
A. Working with Districts: Model Sites and Going to Scale	14
B. Preparing Adults to Promote Children’s Social and Emotional Learning	15
C. Partnerships with Educational Organizations and Movements	15
D. Policy and Advocacy Strategies to Advance SEL.....	16
E. Communications and Building a Movement	17
Part II: Next Steps and Follow-Up	
I. Introduction	18
II. Federal and State Policy	18
III. Working with SEL Program Providers.....	19
IV. Developing a Network of School District Administrators and SEL Coordinators	19
V. Advancing SEL Assessments	19
VI. Creating the “Big Tent” of Partners to Promote Children’s Social, Emotional, and Academic Growth	20
VII. CASEL Strategic Planning	20
VIII. Conclusion	21
Appendixes	
A. Sponsors	22
B. CASEL Board of Directors	22
C. Participant List.....	23
D. References.....	26
E. Acknowledgements.....	26

Executive Summary

On December 8 and 9, 2009, the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) convened nearly 100 leaders from the worlds of education, scientific research, government, and philanthropy for a forum in Washington, DC titled “Social and Emotional Learning: Ready!” CASEL has been an international leader in the field of school-based social and emotional learning (SEL) since it was founded in 1994. The main goal of the event was to create a framework for taking SEL to scale in schools across the country and to initiate steps toward a nationwide SEL initiative.

The forum was preceded by a dinner on December 8 during which the participants had an opportunity to meet each other, interact, and learn about the context for the next day’s discussions. In brief presentations during the dinner, hosts Jennifer and Peter Buffett of the NoVo Foundation welcomed the guests and spoke of their enthusiastic support for social and emotional learning. Brooklyn, New York high school student Patrice Mistretta gave a moving account of how social and emotional learning at her school has helped her to become a motivated and successful student. And Crystal Bell, principal of Chicago’s Ella Flagg Young School, regaled the audience with a lilting melody about social and emotional learning that has become like a theme song for her students. At intervals during the dinner and the next day’s meetings, performances by musicians from the Children’s Orchestra Society offered a background for contemplation and a vivid reminder of young people’s skill, talent, and creativity.

The major work of the forum took place on December 9 during a full day of information sharing and brainstorming about specific actions to take. Timothy Shriver, chairman of CASEL’s board of directors, served as moderator. He introduced CASEL’s Theory of Change as a framework for building a national SEL initiative and invited all meeting participants to join CASEL in supporting the expansion of evidence-based SEL programming. Daniel Goleman, one of CASEL’s founders, reflected on CASEL’s achievements during the past 16 years and expressed excitement about future directions. Panels of leading scientists and educators highlighted the latest advances in SEL research, practice, and policies. Milton Chen of the George Lucas Educational Foundation premiered a video highlighting the groundbreaking SEL programming in the Jefferson County (Kentucky) Public Schools. And Congressmen Dale Kildee and Tim Ryan described the Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning Act of 2009 (HR 4223), which was introduced with bipartisan support in Congress the day before. During the luncheon, CASEL co-founder and venture philanthropist Eileen Rockefeller Growald offered a personal view of social and emotional learning both from her perspective as a parent and the earliest meetings that led to CASEL’s founding.

During the afternoon the participants divided into groups to address specific strategies for creating a national SEL initiative, followed by report-outs to the large group. Many of the suggested strategies are already in progress. They include advancing federal and state policy; creating a network of evidence-based SEL program providers; establishing a professional learning community focused on school district SEL implementation with district administrators and SEL coordinators; developing SEL assessment tools and systems; engaging a variety of collaborators in the SEL movement; and systematic strategic planning for broad-based, high-quality implementation of SEL programming from preschool to high school. Development of the national SEL initiative has begun.

This report is divided into two parts. Part I summarizes the forum’s major segments and highlights. Part II describes activities currently under way to translate the recommendations from the forum into meaningful action. The report concludes with appendixes listing the major sponsors, the forum participants, and citations.

Part I: Forum Summary and Key Points

A. About CASEL

CASEL was established in 1994 as a collaborative that convenes experts from diverse fields, including child development, education, psychology, and neuroscience, to share their work and leverage the science, theory, and practice of social and emotional learning (SEL) to improve pre-K-12 education. CASEL works closely with international teams of educators, researchers, philanthropists, policymakers, and child advocates to foster the development of diverse SEL-based teaching and learning approaches.



Daniel Goleman, author of Emotional Intelligence and one of CASEL's co-founders

A short list of CASEL achievements includes: (a) introducing and describing SEL in the groundbreaking book *Promoting Social and Emotional Learning: Guidelines for Educators* (Elias, Zins, Weissberg, et al., 1997); (b) linking SEL to academic performance by reviewing studies and publishing volumes such as *Building Academic Success on Social and Emotional Learning: What Does the Research Say?* (Zins, Weissberg, Wang, & Walberg, 2004); (c) establishing standards for best SEL practices and identifying outstanding SEL programs through *Safe and Sound: An Educational Leader's Guide to Evidence-based Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) Programs* (CASEL, 2003); and (d) collaborating to develop educational policies such as the Illinois SEL student learning standards (http://isbe.net/ils/social_emotional/standards.htm).

Today CASEL is an independent, not-for-profit organization whose mission is to make evidence-based social, emotional, and academic learning an essential part of education, from preschool through high school. CASEL plays the roles of strategist, convener, collaborator, and supporter, interacting with top leaders and thinkers to advance SEL research, practice, and policy. CASEL is committed to bridging the gap between research and practice and advocating for policy changes firmly rooted in the real-life world of schools.

B. About Social and Emotional Learning (SEL)

Abundant scientific evidence supports the premise that emotion drives attention and learning, social relationships create a sense of belonging and attachment necessary for effective education, and social and emotional factors are at the core of a child's ability to manage stress and develop the motivation to achieve.

Discussions about the best ways to promote student success often distinguish between the academic and social-emotional aspects of learning. We now know from scientific research that these two kinds of learning are inextricably linked – that our emotions and our relationships affect how and what we learn. Effective SEL programming coordinates educational strategies to enhance social-emotional development and school performance. SEL skills can be taught, modeled, practiced, and applied to diverse situations so that students use them as part of their daily repertoire of behaviors. In addition, many programs help students apply SEL skills in preventing specific problem behaviors such as substance use, interpersonal violence, and bullying.

Research has identified five broad areas of social and emotional competence central to children’s optimal development (Goleman, 1995; CASEL, 2003):

Self-awareness—accurately assessing one’s emotions, values, strengths, and capacities.

Self-management—managing emotions and behaviors, persevering in overcoming obstacles; setting and monitoring progress toward achieving personal and academic goals.

Social awareness—showing empathy and understanding for others; recognizing and appreciating individual and group similarities and differences.

Relationship skills—establishing and maintaining positive relationships based on cooperation; preventing and constructively resolving interpersonal conflict.

Responsible decision-making—making constructive choices about personal and social behavior.

Addressing these five areas is critical to helping children develop the skills and values essential to creating a caring and respectful learning community and classrooms where young people actively experience democracy and citizenship.

C. Goals of the Forum

Through the forum, CASEL sought to build support and new ideas for a national expansion of evidence-based SEL programming as a strategy for school- and district-level change. A central goal of the forum was to engage many diverse colleagues and organizations in this effort and move forward in creating a national SEL initiative.

In structuring the forum, CASEL envisioned a strategy for a national SEL initiative that would include several specific components.

Increasing public and political will. A national expansion requires a national movement. Although there is growing recognition of the benefits of SEL, a nationwide SEL effort must be catalyzed by effective advocacy and communications that elevate SEL as a priority and bring parents, teachers, and others more squarely into the movement. This includes helping kindred movements see how SEL can serve as a unifying framework that increases school and student capacity to achieve an array of valued outcomes, including improved academic achievement, student engagement, and citizenship and workplace skills.

Involving state and federal policymakers. Targeted policies can channel public demand for SEL toward an explicit focus on student outcomes, caring relationships, respectful school communities, and implementation of high-quality, evidence-based strategies. Such policies can also create supporting flows of government funding.

Involving public school districts. Taking SEL to scale requires district superintendents and school boards to adopt and implement SEL as catalyst for school improvement and as part of their districts’ curriculum frameworks. District-level adoption can lead to the systemic changes (e.g., alignment across grades, curricular integration, teacher and principal professional development, and budgetary prioritization) that are essential to delivering and sustaining desired outcomes.

Acknowledging the critical role played by teachers and principals. The success of SEL implementation relies on teachers and principals to create personal, supportive, and respectful learning environments and to deliver SEL programs in their classrooms and schools, regardless of the many challenges they face on a day-to-day basis.

A successful expansion strategy will engage and support teachers and principals in developing a deep understanding of the conceptual framework and delivery of regular SEL instruction. Many teachers experience benefits from SEL programs that include greater classroom impact, higher job satisfaction, and stronger bonds with students. Sharing these experiences in credible ways is an important element of a national SEL strategy.

Involving SEL providers and increasing their capacity. To deliver the benefits of SEL to many more students and school communities, evidence-based SEL program developers and providers must expand their reach significantly while maintaining fidelity to the models that deliver desired student outcomes and school change.

Accepting that the SEL field faces many challenges and still has much to learn through research and practice. Success will require greater alignment in the field and a true collective effort to move SEL to the next level. The field's experience and evidence base is less developed at the district level than at the school level. The development of SEL assessments will play a prominent role, as will a robust evaluation agenda to complement a growing body of knowledge about district-level SEL implementation.

II. Major Presentations

The 2009 forum was moderated throughout by Timothy P. Shriver, the chairman of CASEL's board of directors and CEO of Special Olympics. Many other CASEL founders and leading collaborators participated in key roles. Prominently featured in forum presentations and discussions were CASEL co-founder and venture philanthropist Eileen Rockefeller Growald; Daniel Goleman, the author of *Emotional Intelligence*, an international best-seller that introduced the concept of social and emotional learning to the general public; Penn State SEL researcher and prevention expert Mark T. Greenberg; Linda Lantieri, director of the Inner Resilience program; and CASEL President Roger P. Weissberg, Distinguished LAS Professor of Psychology and Education at the University of Illinois at Chicago. The presenters are listed for each of the summaries that follow. The Appendix offers a complete list of the forum participants.

Timothy Shriver opened the forum with a keynote address that highlighted his experiences as the coordinator for social and emotional learning programs in the New Haven, Connecticut, public schools and his role as a leader of CASEL and the SEL field generally.

Shriver referred to a PowerPoint slide (Figure A, next page) describing CASEL's Theory of Change as a framework for building a national SEL initiative. In line with this framework, Shriver explained, the forum was designed to create discussion of the following components of a national SEL initiative:

- **Developing a wide-scale communication and advocacy strategy** that engages stakeholders, supports a collective vision, and channels the SEL movement's energy into educational transformation through high-quality, coordinated SEL programming.



CASEL board chair and forum moderator Timothy P. Shriver

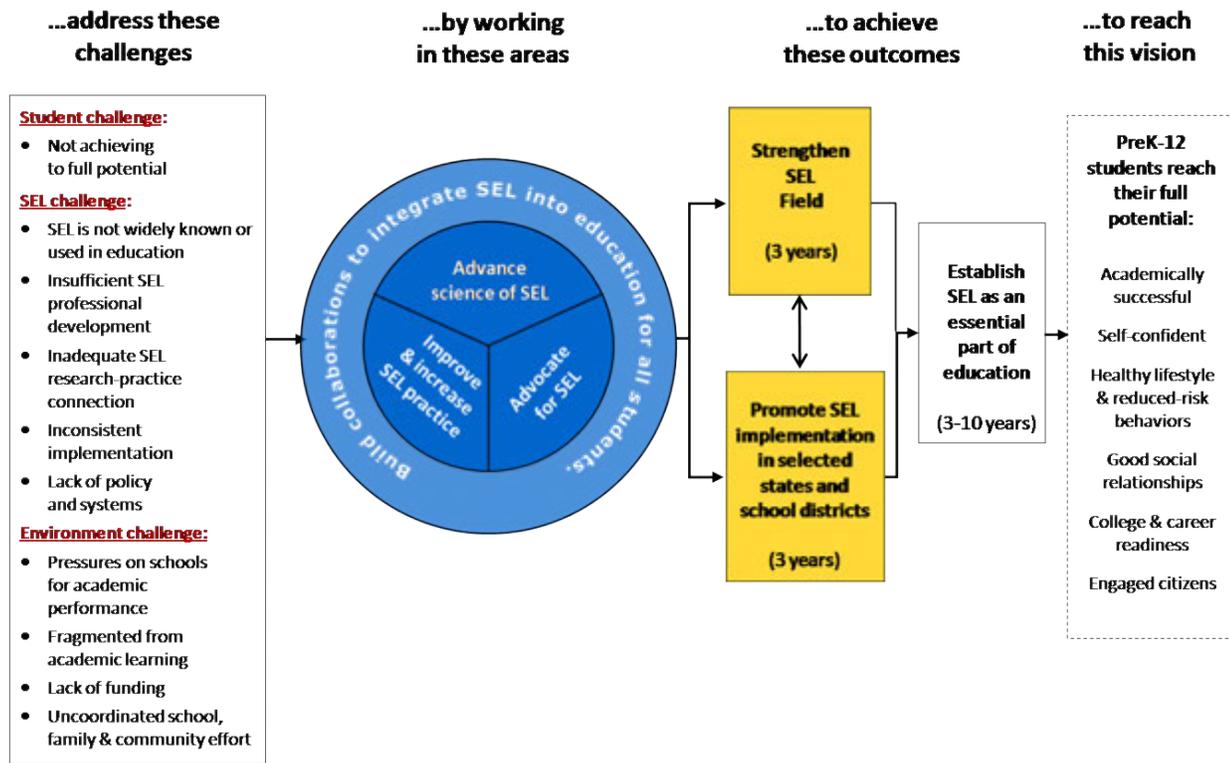
We are at a tipping point. Our children are growing up in a world of violence, division, alienation, and stress. Among high school students, one in six consider suicide, 30 percent experience multiple risk behaviors, and 30 percent say they've been drunk within the last month. Our goal today is to begin building a movement dedicated to creating knowledgeable, responsible, and caring children and communities—to help children have the knowledge they need to be successful, the compassion and values they need to care about others, and the skills they need to be responsible citizens.

—Timothy P. Shriver

- **Advocating for state and federal policies** that support high-quality SEL, e.g., state standards, embedding SEL into the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, the authorization of federal and state funding streams.
- **Developing cooperative, reciprocal learning partnerships with a few large school districts** that focus on creating systemic changes, demonstrating the student outcomes and positive school change we believe possible, and evaluating what works in delivering these outcomes.
- **Building organizational structures and tools to support a much greater number of districts** that may seek recommendations on how to implement high-quality SEL in their districts.
- **Engaging and supporting teachers and principals** in adopting, delivering, and benefitting from effective SEL programming as a lever for positive school change.
- **Partnering with leading education organizations** to infuse SEL awareness and demand in the field. Such organizations might include teacher preparation and placement organizations; school networks and turnaround organizations; related movements such as whole child education, differentiated instruction, and community schools; and parent and teacher associations.

Figure A

CASEL’s Theory of Change is to:



A. What We Know About SEL—Effects and Impacts

Introduction: *Daniel Goleman*

Presenters: *Roger P. Weissberg, Mark T. Greenberg, John Easton*

CASEL President Roger Weissberg began the session by asking, “What do the various high-quality SEL programs represented at this forum have in common?” One answer provided by CASEL’s extensive research on the subject: They offer sequenced, active, focused, explicit programming that emphasizes children’s social and emotional development as an important outcome. In high-quality programs, adults and students model and practice the SEL skills being taught. There is also a focus on developmental and cultural appropriateness and community building. Students have meaningful opportunities to contribute to their class, their school, and their community. They are active participants in the learning process, not passive recipients of information and facts.

Weissberg went on to summarize key findings from recent research on SEL (Durlak et al., in press). These include:

- **Improved academic achievement**, including increases of an average 11 percentile points for students involved in SEL programming versus students who do not experience SEL.
- **Improved school attitudes and behaviors**: SEL instills greater motivation to learn, deeper commitment to school, increased time devoted to schoolwork, better classroom behavior, and improved attendance and graduation rates.
- **Fewer negative behaviors**: Among students receiving SEL instruction, disruptive class behavior, noncompliance, aggression, delinquent acts, and disciplinary referrals decrease significantly.
- **Reduced emotional distress**: Reports of student depression, anxiety, stress, or social withdrawal significantly decrease among students receiving SEL instruction.

Mark Greenberg, a member of CASEL’s board of directors and a nationally known expert in prevention-focused research at Penn State University, began by pointing out that although the scientific evidence of the impacts of SEL was not compelling when he began working in the field 29 years ago, it is compelling now. Communities, school districts, and citizens are not waiting for more science, he said. They’re yearning for a new vision that promotes children’s development as caring and competent citizens and promotes academic outcomes.

The challenge today, Greenberg said, is to focus on both the policy and the practices of taking SEL to scale. Implementation needs to occur not only at the level of the classroom but at the organizational level of the school and the district. That kind of systems-level change requires sufficient planning and multiple years of support. “This is a new and different business for most schools,” Greenberg said. “Most schools have not developed the infrastructure necessary to plan, to implement, to monitor, to evaluate, and to sustain quality SEL programs and practices.” A key ingredient of such change, Greenberg said, will be SEL specialists to support the process at all levels of district operations.

For many years we told schools, “If you focus on kids’ social and emotional development, it’s good for their citizenship and it’s not going to hurt their academic performance.” Now there’s been a paradigm shift. Our research has shown that with SEL we have a “two-fer.” If students were in the 50th percentile in achievement test scores and they had an SEL program, they would go up to the 61st percentile. That is substantial because many of the educational interventions that focus only on academic performance are at about this level, too.

— **Roger P. Weissberg**

Many districts are realizing we can’t do “spray and pray”—flying in, doing workshops, and then leaving and expecting that a change process has really been initiated. We know that doesn’t work. We need to think deeper. And deeper means we need to think carefully about infrastructure.

— **Mark T. Greenberg**

Institute of Education Sciences Director John Easton emphasized that in order to be “much more than the sum of their programs,” schools need to become learning organizations that study what they’re doing, evaluate their progress, and adapt their programs accordingly, making changes based on evidence. Having studied elementary schools in Chicago extensively, he said, he believes the single most important factor related to long-term school improvement is the ability of adults to work together to solve students’ problems and to collectively accept responsibility for children’s academic and social and emotional learning. A correlate of this is the need for “relational trust.”



John Easton, director of the Institute of Education Sciences

Another key to school effectiveness is “the idea of program coherence.” Programs need to be integrated, coordinated, and aligned. This kind of coherence requires an ability to work together, try new things, and trust both one’s colleagues and the leadership of the school. An important factor contributing to trust in schools, Easton said, is the ability to develop strong links with parents and the community.

B. Spotlight: Jefferson County, Kentucky, Public Schools

Prominently featured in the CASEL forum was the school district of Jefferson County, Kentucky. The district includes Louisville and, with approximately 98,000 students, is the 28th largest in the country. In recent years it has been closely watched by supporters of SEL because it has undertaken one of the most ambitious district-wide SEL initiatives to date.

The district’s superintendent of schools, Sheldon H. Berman, who for many years was a member of CASEL’s Leadership Team, highlighted Jefferson County’s SEL programs and accomplishments, which are known locally as “CARE for Kids.” Another forum participant was Milton Chen, executive director of the George Lucas Educational Foundation (GLEF). The premiere showing of a new GLEF film about SEL in Jefferson County was a high point of the forum.

Long before moving to Jefferson County, Berman was widely known as a proponent of SEL and service-learning in his role of schools superintendent in Hudson, Massachusetts, a small district in the Boston suburbs. During his 12-year tenure in Hudson, his focus on SEL-related systems change led to an impressive turnaround in student achievement and community support for the schools.

In describing Jefferson County’s SEL initiative, Berman emphasized that the issue of implementation is a perennial challenge to advocates of effective school-based SEL. Building a comprehensive program like the one in Jefferson County requires a number of elements, he said. They include:

- An organizing framework and a comprehensive vision.
- A district-wide approach that emphasizes high-quality SEL programs.
- A determination to implement SEL system-wide—as opposed to implementation on a school-by-school basis.
- Clear policies that support SEL at all levels of the system.

The goal of the Jefferson County initiative is to create a sense of community in each school, pre-K-12. “This work is really about relationships formed in the context of community,” Berman said. “Democracy is simply a way of making decisions. Community is a way of building cohesion around those decisions so people care about each other and the decisions have meaning to everyone involved.”

To build community, according to Berman, requires developing respectful and supportive relationships, opportunities for students to contribute, and an emphasis on common values and goals. Drawing on his experience in Hudson, Berman developed a theory of action for the Jefferson County schools. Prominently posted in every school and distributed to every teacher, it states:

When we collaborate to -

- Create caring and culturally-responsive classroom communities;
- Provide high-quality, personalized instruction that challenges and engages students in authentic work;
- Ensure equitable access for all students to a consistent, world-class, inquiry-based curriculum; and
- Prepare leaders to engage in collaborative strategies to move this shared vision forward...

Then –

All students graduate with:

- A high level of academic performance;
- Strong character development and civic engagement; and
- Enhanced health and wellness...

So that –

All students are prepared to:

- Achieve their goals;
- Follow their dreams; and
- Create a more just society.



*Jefferson County, Kentucky,
Superintendent of Schools
Sheldon Berman*

In an environment of standards, accountability, and testing, we have to continually remind ourselves that there is actually a larger mission.

— Sheldon H. Berman

“As I see it, the social curriculum is as important as the academic curriculum,”

Berman told the forum audience. “An elementary teacher wouldn’t say, ‘I don’t teach math.’ And a teacher shouldn’t be able to say, ‘I don’t teach social development’—because we all teach social development.”

An important component of the Jefferson County SEL initiative at the elementary level is morning meetings—a community-building time that sets the climate for the classroom. Another is implementation of high-quality SEL curricula. The initiative also includes home-to-school activities that stimulate conversations and strengthen the link between the classroom and the students’ families. In line with the initiative’s focus on civic engagement and active student involvement in the learning process, every grade level engages students in service projects. Continual, focused assessment is another component.

Referring to the school district’s in-depth research, Berman compared high implementers of the SEL initiative with low implementers. In every curricular area, the high implementers and the high-implementation schools outperformed the low-implementation schools academically. In addition, more students in the high-implementing schools received “proficient” and “distinguished” scores in standardized achievement tests in reading and math.

“Social and emotional learning is about engaging the learner,” Berman said. “Our students are not only more engaged in their learning. They’re also beginning to understand the meaning of the common good, appreciate that their actions have consequences for others and the community at large, and develop a sense of relatedness to and responsibility for the larger human community. A caring school community gives our students a vision of the way the world can be.”

C. Exemplary Practices for the National Implementation of SEL

Introductory Remarks: *Mary Utne O’Brien*

Presenters: *Linda Darling-Hammond, Sheldon Berman, Crystal Bell*

Linda Darling-Hammond, a professor of education at Stanford University and a leading adviser on education to the Obama transition team, emphasized that for SEL to succeed at the school level, the expectations and norms of SEL must be incorporated into “everything the school does.” That includes the academic curriculum, classroom management and disciplinary policies, and the way student assessments are conducted—“All of those things have to be organized together around the notion of developing the whole person.”

In the course of her career, beginning in New York City nearly 20 years ago, Darling-Hammond said she has observed or been involved in a number of schools that take this approach and have had significant success with students. One of the most recent, a charter high school in impoverished East Palo Alto, Calif. (“it’s as different from Palo Alto as it can be”) sends 90 percent of its students to college. “Every student has an adviser who is connected to the family, every adviser has about 15 kids, students are involved in authentic performance and research submissions, and so on. All of this is evaluated by a common rubric which, in every class, every year, looks at personal and social responsibility along with critical and creative thinking, communication, and applications of knowledge.”

For schools like these to succeed, Darling-Hammond said, teachers need to have a full understanding of SEL. They need to know how to manage their own emotions and be mindful of what they’re feeling. Research has shown that underprepared teachers are more likely to use punitive, rejecting disciplinary techniques. They’re much more likely to over-identify children, especially children of color, for special education, for disciplinary action, and for suspensions and expulsions. They lack the skills to teach problem-solving behaviors, and they often misinterpret what children do and say. Thus, the extent and quality of teacher training are critically important for teachers in such settings to succeed.

We know SEL works under the hothouse conditions of researchers in schools making sure programs are implemented faithfully. But the real question is what happens when you go from the nurturing conditions of the lab to the hurly-burly, complex, under-resourced, constantly stressed world of today’s schools and districts? Making SEL work in schools is more than putting in a program on Tuesdays and Thursdays. We’re talking about whole school and, more important, whole district approaches.

— **Mary Utne O’Brien**



Linda Darling-Hammond, Professor of Education, Stanford University

Sheldon Berman described his school district’s approach to implementing and sustaining high-quality SEL programming since he became superintendent of the Jefferson County, Kentucky, public schools in 2007. Berman’s presentation is summarized beginning on page 8.

Crystal Bell, the principal of Chicago’s Ella Flagg Young School, scarcely needed an introduction. The previous evening, as part of the introductory dinner program, she had offered an inspiring account of her work with SEL, leaving the audience humming her own original “Social and Emotional Learning” theme song, which is well known among the school’s students. The school is one of ten Chicago Public Schools that participated in a State of Illinois three-year SEL pilot effort for 84 schools conducted jointly by the Illinois State Board of Education, the Illinois Children’s Mental Health Partnership, and CASEL.

Her daily mission, Bell said, is to instill the value of SEL in her school’s faculty and all their students—“one student at a time.” A key to making this successful is for all school staff to model and reinforce the respectful, considerate, thoughtful behaviors and self-control that SEL embodies. One idea that drives all of her work, Bell said, is the image of young people hanging out on a notorious corner in her neighborhood regularly populated by gangs. “My goal,” she said, “and I talk about it all the time, is to make sure my students do not wind up on Division and Mason. SEL programs in our schools can help to prevent that.”

D. Spotlight: Anchorage, Alaska, Public Schools

Carol Comeau, superintendent of schools in Anchorage, Alaska, brought more than two decades of experience with district-wide SEL implementation to the table. Since initiating SEL programming in 1998 through adoption of the Resolving Conflict Creatively Program, Anchorage has expanded its support of SEL in a variety of ways. According to Comeau, “It’s successful because it’s evolving and adapting.”



Carol Comeau, Superintendent of Schools, Anchorage, Alaska

With a school population of nearly 50,000, the Anchorage schools include a wide range of racial-ethnic groups and recent immigrants, many of whom came to Alaska in search of promised wealth only to find economic difficulty and hardship. Substance abuse in the community is a perennial problem, and Comeau noted that children from families with problems often see their schools as a “safe refuge.” In addition to fostering academic achievement, the schools’ focus on SEL helps to promote a caring, accepting climate, celebration of diversity, and positive ways to resolve conflict.

Key components of SEL in Anchorage include:

- **A governing framework.** In Anchorage the Search Institute findings on developmental assets in young people play a key role. Based on research into factors that affect the well-being of children and youth, the Search framework identifies 20 “external assets” (e.g., a caring school climate, positive relationships with adults, and positive peer influences) and 20 “internal assets” (e.g., bonding to school, caring and concern for others, a sense of personal responsibility, and other social-emotional skills). Throughout, the emphasis is on developing students’ assets and enhancing their strengths.
- **District-wide SEL learning standards.** Although the individual schools have considerable leeway, all schools are expected to help their students meet the SEL standards and engage in regular assessment of their progress.
- **School-wide plans.** Each school develops its own plan for SEL implementation and climate improvement following district-wide guidelines.

- **An emphasis on assessment.** The extensive SEL assessment efforts in Anchorage include an emphasis on social and emotional skill development in students’ annual assessments of individual progress and school-wide assessments of school connectedness, implemented annually in grades 5-12.
- **A central office SEL coordinator in the curriculum planning department.** Rather than viewing SEL as an add-on, Anchorage emphasizes that the SEL coordinator’s role is to work with other curriculum planners to integrate SEL into all aspects of the curriculum at all levels.
- **Professional development activities to support SEL.** District professional development opportunities are planned and offered regularly to help the schools achieve the SEL goals outlined in their school improvement plans.
- **Development of a cadre of educational leaders.** In conjunction with the American Institutes for Research, the district is implementing a professional development and assessment project focused on strengthening the SEL leadership skills of a cadre of 24 school principals, one-quarter of all the principals in the district.

“You have to embrace SEL and put your own district resources into it,” Comeau said. “It doesn’t mean you can’t kick-start this initiative with grants or some other method, but at the end of the day, to keep it going, you have to be willing to invest the resources and put it into your district operating budget. That’s a real challenge in these times.”

E. Policy and Advocacy for the Whole Child

Introductory Remarks: *J. Lawrence Aber*

Presenters: *Congressman Dale Kildee, Congressman Tim Ryan, Joan Lombardi*

A major highlight of the forum was the presentation of new federal legislation titled the Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning Act of 2009 (HR 4223). It was introduced on December 8, 2009, with the bipartisan authorship of Congressman Dale Kildee (D., Mich.), Congressman Tim Ryan (D., Ohio), and Congresswoman Judy Biggert (R., Ill.). The bill would provide \$35 million annually for grants to school districts for SEL implementation, a national SEL resource center, and a national evaluation of the program. See page 13 for a summary.

Introduced and moderated by New York University Professor of Applied Psychology and Public Policy J. Lawrence Aber, this session focused primarily on the new legislation and ways to influence leadership at the federal level.

The bill’s senior author, **Congressman Dale Kildee**, explained why he believes SEL is so important to children’s success in school and life. “In today’s increasingly competitive economy, our children deserve more than an academically challenging environment,” he said. “They need 21st century learning skills and creative thinking, and they need that in an environment that promotes social and emotional learning.”

Congressman Kildee urged the forum participants to become involved in supporting the legislation. “You’ll do more to make sure this legislation is done well than the members of the Committee on Education and Labor will,” he said. “We need your expertise and your devotion to this issue. We look forward to working with you.”



Congressman Dale Kildee, senior author of HR 4223, the Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning Act of 2009

By making social and emotional learning part of every child’s education, we are giving the next generation the skills they need for productive and confident lives.

— **Congressman Dale Kildee**

Congressman Tim Ryan, co-author of the legislation, described SEL as having the potential of a “forced multiplier,” involving teachers, parents, and students alike in creating a positive educational environment that promotes young people’s success. He contrasted this with high levels of conflict “in every aspect of our society”—on television, in politics, in video games, and in people’s daily interactions. “This legislation is the antidote to that,” he said, “so I look forward very much to working with you.”

Drawing on her decades of involvement with federal education policymaking and her current perspective as Deputy Assistant Secretary in the Administration for Children and Families (ACF), **Joan Lombardi** began by describing the mood in Washington as a “transforming moment in education.” As the liaison between the Department of Health and Human Services and the Department of Education for early childhood development, Lombardi said she is optimistic that important kinds of interagency cooperation will move forward, beginning with early childhood education and ultimately affecting all levels from pre-K to high school. “The academic and social-emotional gaps start very early,” she said, “so we have to start the process prenatally and at birth. Across the two departments we are working hand in hand on a ‘birth to eight’ agenda that will then move forward throughout the school years.”



Joan Lombardi, Deputy Assistant Secretary, Administration for Children and Families

Lombardi said it will be important as education reform agendas and interagency initiatives unfold to maintain SEL as a priority. One opportunity will be the pending revision of the Head Start performance standards. ACF supports a national center on the social and emotional foundations of early learning—“It’s an effort to bring state teams together around social and emotional development, and it has to connect with what you’re doing in the schools.” Also, every state is currently working on professional development plans for early childhood professionals. “There are lots of opportunities,” Lombardi said. “I’m ready to work in any way I can to help bring this issue into the agencies.”

F. The Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning Act of 2009 (HR 4223)

HB 4223, the Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning Act of 2009, authorizes the U.S. Department of Education to establish programs and allocate funds to:

- **Establish a National Technical Assistance and Training Center for Social and Emotional Learning**
Authorizes the Secretary of Education to provide technical assistance to states, school districts, and community-based organizations on the effective implementation of social and emotional learning standards and programming. The center will also provide ongoing high-quality professional development for school leaders and teachers and conduct research on best practices.

We’re in the throes of an enormous transforming moment in education.

— **Joan Lombardi**

- **Provide Grants to Support Evidence-Based Social and Emotional Learning Programming**

Authorizes five-year competitive grants to states and school districts to work with the national technical assistance center to develop and implement social and emotional learning initiatives.

- **Conduct a National Evaluation of School-Based Social and Emotional Learning Programming**

The Secretary of Education will conduct an independent evaluation of grantees to determine the program’s impact on student achievement, attainment and behavioral outcomes.

III. Strategic Planning and Action Steps

During the afternoon the participants divided into five working groups to discuss strategic planning and action steps for building the national SEL initiative. The large group then reconvened, and a representative of each group summarized the group’s discussion and recommendations. The following summaries combine the reports from the small groups and the notes taken by recorders assigned to each group.



A. Working with Districts: Model Sites and Going to Scale

Introductory Remarks and Facilitation: *Mark Greenberg*

Initial Comments: *Carl Bell, Connie Cuttle, Maurice Elias,*

J. David Hawkins, Eric Schaps

Report Out: *Carol Comeau*

Jennifer Buffett of the NoVo Foundation with Jefferson County, Kentucky, Superintendent of Schools Sheldon Berman

Summary of Recommendations

- Building an effective district-wide SEL initiative requires an investment of the district’s own resources and a long-term commitment of time and money.
- The message that SEL will enhance academic achievement should be central to communications about SEL throughout the district.
- District-wide standards and assessment methods should be built into the plan.
- SEL should be implemented district-wide and at all grades, Pre-K-12.
- District-wide implementation of SEL should be planned as a sustained effort over a minimum of three years, preferably at least five years.
- To sustain a successful district-wide initiative, support for SEL is needed from a broad-based community-wide coalition that understands the importance of SEL and wants effective SEL programming for all children.
- The SEL initiative is more likely to succeed if it starts in several schools, not just one school, and if those schools are highly receptive to SEL.

This is a pivotal moment. As a society, we’ve put so much emphasis on mechanistic approaches to education. We can’t just keep squeezing kids in the hopes of better performance. SEL works because it emphasizes a context where children know they are seen, heard, and valued. It’s fundamental, and needs to be infused across the educational experience.

— **Jennifer Buffett**

B. Preparing Adults to Promote Children’s Social and Emotional Learning

Introductory Remarks and Facilitation: *Linda Lantieri*

Initial Comments: *James Comer, David M. Osher, Aaron Stern*

Report out: *Sara Rimm-Kaufman*

Summary of Recommendations

- Adult role modeling of appropriate SEL behaviors should be a primary focus of support for SEL.
- Adults themselves—teachers, administrators, and other adults who work with children—need social and emotional support. Personal support systems for adults should be part of creating a caring school community and building an atmosphere of respect and trust.
- Support for SEL should be system-wide and at all levels—from the superintendent to the principals to teachers. Families are also an important component of the system.
- Effective methods are needed to assess and improve teachers’ own social and emotional skills. When teachers need to improve those skills, professional development opportunities and coaching should be readily available.
- An important emphasis of professional development in an SEL-focused system should be on relational skills and relationship building.

C. Partnerships with Educational Organizations and Movements

Introductory Remarks and Facilitation: *Roger Weissberg*

Initial Comments: *Peter Benson, Martin Blank, Joan C. Duffell, Heather Harding, Michael H. Holthouse*

Report out: *Molly McCloskey*

Summary of Recommendations

- To create a “big tent” for the SEL movement, it will be important to focus on outcomes that can be shared and supported from many different perspectives. SEL should be viewed as both a governing idea and as a set of outcomes for young people, not just a specific type of program or educational strategy.
- It’s important to bring together the providers of SEL programs and services in a unified effort to support the nationwide SEL initiative. This requires extensive organizing, networking, and information sharing.
- SEL materials and information should be made widely available at minimal or no cost. It is critically important to identify the most cost-effective ways to spread the word about evidence-based SEL programming.
- Examples of organizations to involve include leading education associations, national and state organizations that advance evidence-based educational practice (e.g., American Psychological Association), the Coalition for Community Schools, the Search Institute, Teach for America, the America’s Promise Alliance, the National Collaboration for Youth, and the Bush Foundation, which is supporting innovations in teacher preparation.
- To stimulate interest in SEL, the initiative should develop and widely publicize an Excellence in SEL award.

D. Policy and Advocacy Strategies to Advance SEL

Introductory Remarks and Facilitation: *J. Lawrence Aber*

Initial Comments: *Paul Growald, Lillian Pace, Edward Zigler*

Report out: *Sharon Lynn Kagan*

Summary of Recommendations

At the federal level:

- The current context for federal policy is “tremendously fertile.” Although the group was enthusiastic about the potential for HR 4223, they agreed the support of well-placed Republicans in Congress will be needed.
- HR 4223 should also be viewed as an element of the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) and No Child Left Behind (NCLB).
- In addition to ESEA and NCLB, significant federal funding from Race to the Top, the Investing In Innovation (i3) Fund, and the Workforce Investment Act will be available. SEL should be a transcendent theme that finds expression in all of these.
- The reality is there may be competition among different pieces of legislation with common themes related to SEL. A strategy is needed that will promote unity around the various interconnected bills.
- To ensure the sustainability of a national SEL initiative, advocates should enlist the support of the private sector in addition to the federal government.
- It would be naïve not to recognize that some individuals and organizations are actively opposed to SEL and related movements. We need to know who our opponents are.
- To anticipate and counteract potential opposition, a national media campaign is needed that will raise the general visibility of SEL and promote its benefits to children and schools.
- A “pre-strategizing” conference would be helpful to review the available data about SEL and identify future research needs, particularly with regard to cost-benefits and “return on investment.”
- It’s important to position SEL within the context of the accountability movement by continually emphasizing the power of SEL to improve children’s academic achievement.
- CASEL should find a prestigious conservative to back SEL. This could lead to “unlikely” allies and support—for example, among evangelicals, who might be attracted to SEL’s service-oriented goals.

At the state level:

- Teacher certification procedures should be changed to require course work in SEL. In-service education is important, but pre-service education is more important.
- SEL should be incorporated into state learning standards.

E. Communications and Building a Movement

Introductory Remarks and Facilitation: *Daniel Goleman*

Initial Comments: *T. Berry Brazelton, Joshua Sparrow, Jennifer Buffett, Milton Chen, Susan Zelman*

Report out: *Goldie Hawn*

Summary of Recommendations

- All of the group's recommendations should be viewed in the context of a major media campaign to build awareness about SEL. The campaign should incorporate innovative communications and media approaches such as social networking and not be limited to conventional broadcast media.
- The content of the message needs careful consideration. Different versions of the message about SEL may be needed for different audiences, but the basic idea should be consistent throughout. We should be inspiring people about SEL and not appear to be "selling" it.
- SEL addresses specific issues and problems. It can be helpful to put it in the context of what young people are experiencing today—for example, teenage depression, suicide, and dropout.
- Market research will be needed to test campaign messages and determine what resonates.
- Models and stories of success will help to convey the value of SEL.
- Parents and families are an important segment of the audience and should be addressed in terms that are meaningful and relevant to them.
- A broad awareness campaign should involve diverse potential allies and partners such as doctors, law enforcement leaders, and the business community. The national initiative should reach beyond the world of education.



Michael Holthouse of the Holthouse Foundation for Kids and Goldie Hawn of the Hawn Foundation

Part II: Next Steps and Follow-Up

I. Introduction

Far from being the start of a national SEL initiative, CASEL's 2009 forum was a high-level strategy session focused on steps toward a national initiative already under way. It was also a means of broadening the participation of educational leaders needed to support SEL for a national initiative to be effective. An important assumption of CASEL's board of directors and consultants in planning the forum was that CASEL does not have all the answers. Collaboration of many different educational leaders, policymakers, and organizations will be central to the initiative's success. This part of the report highlights several interrelated activities CASEL has undertaken in conjunction with launching the national initiative.

II. Federal and State Policy

The Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning Act of 2009 (HR 4223) is summarized on page 13.

CASEL is working closely with staff from the offices of Representatives Kildee, Ryan, and Biggert to provide information about SEL research findings and best practices. We are also working with Ellin Nolan of Washington Partners and colleagues in major leadership positions to maintain continual communication with the sponsors of the legislation and to develop a network of information sharing and support. Regular updates about the legislation may be found on CASEL's website: www.CASEL.org.

According to a recent letter from Congressman Kildee's office, the legislation has garnered support from the following organizations and associations, in addition to CASEL:

- American Council for School Social Work
- American Federation of Teachers
- American Psychological Association
- Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD)
- American School Counselor Association
- Coalition for Community Schools
- First Focus
- National Association of School Psychologists
- National Association of Secondary School Principals
- National Education Association
- National Middle School Association
- School Social Work Association of America

With funding from the Buena Vista Foundation, CASEL has initiated a systematic scan to determine the extent to which SEL skills are included in preschool and K-12 student learning standards across all 50 states. Over the next two years, CASEL will work with state boards of education and educator organizations to establish research-based developmentally based standards highlighting what students should know and be able to do in the realm of social and emotional learning.

III. Working with SEL Program Providers

Beginning with the publication of *Safe and Sound: An Educator's Guide to Evidence-Based Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) Programs* in 2003, CASEL has consistently advocated the inclusion of strong evidence-based SEL programs as an element of effective SEL implementation. *Safe and Sound* identified 22 of these programs as "SElect" programs—those that are comprehensive in their SEL coverage, their documented impacts, and the staff development they provide. With funding from the NoVo Foundation, CASEL will update *Safe and Sound* between 2010 and 2012.

In February 2010, CASEL also convened the first meeting of an SEL Program Provider Work Group. The group is co-chaired by two leading SEL authorities, Eric Schaps and Joan Duffell, and includes representatives of many of the leading CASEL SElect programs. It will continue to meet for at least the next two years.

The primary purpose of the Program Provider Work Group is to advance the field of social and emotional learning by building SEL providers' capacities to (a) achieve high-quality implementation of effective SEL programs and (b) take effective SEL programs to scale nationally.

Potential Work Group products include:

- Compendia of "lessons learned" about program design, effective training and coaching models, school practices and policies related to SEL, assessment and accountability practices related to SEL, integration of SEL with academic learning, and coordination of SEL programming with mental health supports.
- Implementation guidelines for SEL providers.
- Implementation guidelines for school personnel.

IV. Developing a Network of School District Administrators and SEL Coordinators

CASEL is reaching out to a nation-wide network of district administrators and SEL coordinators who will comprise a District SEL Implementation Work Group similar to the Program Providers Work Group. This group will be co-chaired by national SEL authorities David Osher and Jennifer Miller. We have received nominations of more than 30 districts across the country that are engaged in programming to promote the social, emotional, and academic growth of students.

In addition, CASEL and collaborating colleagues are working to develop a proposal for a major district-wide SEL initiative that will offer an in-depth test of SEL scaling-up and assessment strategies. Several leading school districts already involved in SEL implementation have been identified as part of this initiative, and discussions are under way to include these districts in a grant application for major multi-year funding.

V. Advancing SEL Assessments

The need for effective SEL assessment tools has been a CASEL priority for many years. Several interrelated CASEL projects to advance this work are currently under way. These include:

- **Preschool and Elementary School SEL Assessment Work Group.** This collaborative effort is being co-directed by Roger Weissberg at the University of Illinois at Chicago (UIC) and Susanne Denham of George Mason University, with funding from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, the Kirlin Charitable Foundation, the Rauner Family Foundation, and the University of Illinois at Chicago (UIC). The primary objective is to disseminate information to educators and policymakers about state-of-the-art assessment strategies for the social, emotional, and academic learning of preschool and elementary-school students. A 15-member project work group will produce a variety of publications and guidelines as well as an SEL Assessment Toolkit for Educators.
- **Illinois SEL Standards and Assessment Tools.** In 2004, as part of a statewide SEL and children’s mental health initiative, the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) adopted standards and benchmarks for social and emotional learning. To advance SEL assessment efforts, the Illinois Children’s Mental Health Partnership, the Illinois State Board of Education, and the UIC SEL Research Group are collaborating with a 25-member Illinois SEL Assessment Work Group comprised of educators and researchers to develop SEL assessment strategies that are scientifically sound, feasible to use, and helpful in guiding SEL planning and practice by school teams. CASEL recently joined with the Marzano Research Laboratory to develop rubric assessments aligned with the Illinois SEL Standards. These assessment tools are currently being reviewed by the SEL Assessment Work Group, educators, and developmental psychologists.
- **Teacher and Student Ratings of SEL.** CASEL and the SEL research team at UIC are initiating efforts to advance the assessment of social and emotional skills and competencies through the development of teacher ratings and student self-report ratings. These will be aligned with the Illinois SEL Standards. The goal is to produce a scientifically sound SEL rating system that can be easily utilized by teachers and students. The process will also provide teachers with recommendations on how to further develop student social and emotional competencies based on the assessment results.

VI. Creating the “Big Tent” of Partners to Promote Children’s Social, Emotional, and Academic Growth

The need to develop and cultivate partnerships across a broad spectrum of policymaking and educational leadership—to create a “big tent” for SEL and related movements—was a major theme at the 2009 forum. CASEL and collaborating partners and colleagues are currently engaged in discussions about how to meet this goal.

VII. CASEL Strategic Planning

CASEL has been a major international leader in the SEL movement since its founding in 1994. In the past two years our organization has grown significantly, acquired major funding from the NoVo Foundation, and established a separate not-for-profit entity, now complemented by the SEL Research Group at the University of Illinois at Chicago.

To assist with a thoughtful and orderly process of organizational expansion, CASEL has engaged the Bridgespan Group in San Francisco, which specializes in helping nonprofit and philanthropic leaders to develop strategies and build organizations that inspire and accelerate social change. Bridgespan is working closely with CASEL’s board of

directors, NoVo Foundation leadership, and key staff to develop and refine a long-term strategic plan. Major elements of the plan involve ways CASEL can help to advance the SEL field generally and the national SEL initiative in particular.

Progress reports on both CASEL's own organizational development and the national initiative will be provided through regular CASEL e-blasts and on our website, www.CASEL.org.

VIII. Conclusion

A national SEL initiative cannot succeed without strong support from educational leaders, policymakers, and the larger community. CASEL was founded on a basic principle of collaboration, and collaboration continues to be one of the pillars of our organization, our success, and our ability to lead.

More than anything else, the 2009 forum was another effort to expand our partnerships and enlist the support of new collaborators. That will always be the way we do things as an organization.

We invite you to consider yourself and your organization a part of this movement, to stay in touch with us, to share your ideas, and to help us build a better future for young people.

APPENDIXES

A. Sponsors

CASEL thanks the generous supporters of the 2009 forum:

- Academy for the Love of Learning
- Ann and Jerry Nerad
- Eileen and Paul Growald Family Fund
- Fetzer Institute
- Holthouse Foundation for Kids
- Kirlin Charitable Foundation
- Lucasfilm Foundation
- NoVo Foundation
- The George Lucas Educational Foundation
- William Blair & Company, LLC

Special Thanks To:

The Children's Orchestra Society

This outstanding group of young musicians based in Manhasset, Long Island provided musical interludes throughout the forum. Founded in 1962, the organization is dedicated to "teaching children the language of music" and to presenting young musicians, through orchestra and chamber music presentations, to other children and to well-established artists. The Society grew from an 18-member ensemble in 1984 to more than 200 student members composed of four orchestras, a chamber music department, musicianship classes, and private lessons in piano, guitar, and all orchestral instruments.

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E. Acknowledgements

CASEL expresses its thanks to Hank Resnik, the lead writer for this document. In addition, we appreciate the written contributions of Pamela McVeagh-Lally, Ron Rabin, John Ruddy, Tyler Thornton, Andrew Wade, and Roger Weissberg.