



Expanding Social and Emotional Learning Nationwide: Let's Go!

CASEL Forum April 13-14, 2011

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

On April 13-14, 2011, the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) hosted approximately 100 national leaders in the fields of education, scientific research, philanthropy, and policymaking at a forum in Washington, D.C. The third in a series of CASEL events that take place once every two years, the forum was titled “Expanding Social and Emotional Learning Nationwide: Let’s Go!”

The goal of the forum was to stimulate discussion and action related to CASEL’s national initiative to promote social and emotional learning in schools across the country. The national initiative, in turn, is closely aligned with three strategic priorities CASEL is pursuing in partnership with NoVo Foundation, a major sponsor of the forum:

- ◆ *Catalyze breakthrough examples of systemic social and emotional learning in large school districts.*
- ◆ *Build field capacity and develop innovative tools to accelerate high-quality implementation and sustainability of social and emotional learning nationwide.*
- ◆ *Foster widespread demand for social and emotional learning as an essential part of students’ educational experience.*

All of these steps toward building a national movement in support of social and emotional learning were highlighted in a pre-forum document about CASEL’s national implementation plan (<http://casel.org/publications/forum-pre-read>) and throughout the forum. Key points from the presentations and discussions included:

- ◆ A growing body of research documents the benefits of well-implemented social and emotional learning programming on students’ behavior and academic performance.
- ◆ Social and emotional learning is increasingly a focus in policy and practice nationwide.
- ◆ Distinguishing between social and emotional learning and academic learning is a “false choice” because the two are complementary and interdependent.
- ◆ The first three districts in the national initiative—Anchorage, Alaska; Austin, Texas; and Cleveland, Ohio—have made significant progress taking social and emotional learning to scale and integrating it into their standards, curriculum, and instruction.
- ◆ Preliminary findings from CASEL’s scan of policy and practice related to social and emotional learning in 50 states and six U.S. territories have

At the CASEL forum: l. to r, U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan; Eugene Sanders, Cleveland Metropolitan School District; and Meria Joel Carstarphen, Austin (Tex.) Independent School District.



revealed almost universal emphasis on children’s social-emotional development at the preschool level, in contrast to less emphasis at the K-12 level. Even at the K-12 level, however, states are moving in this direction.

- ◆ The U.S. Department of Education, the Department of Health and Human Services, and the Council of Chief State School Officers are encouraging the inclusion of social and emotional learning in their standards and procedures.
- ◆ There is a compelling need to explore ways to communicate about and make the concept of social and emotional learning easily understandable and acceptable to a broad constituency.
- ◆ A critically important next step for social and emotional learning research will be to develop a reliable analysis of costs and benefits.



Rep. Judy Biggert (R-Ill., l.) receives the Mary Utne O'Brien Award from CASEL board member Ann Nerad.



Inner Resilience Program Director and CASEL district consultant Linda Lantieri (r.) with one of the students who led “morning meetings.”

RECOGNITION OF OUTSTANDING CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE FIELD

Several leaders in research, practice, and policy related to social and emotional learning were honored and recognized during the forum.

Mary Utne O'Brien Awards for Excellence in Expanding the Evidence-Based Policy and Practice of Social and Emotional Learning. The awards were presented to Rep. Dale Kildee (D-Mich.) and Rep. Judy Biggert (R-Ill.), who co-sponsored the Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning Act of 2009.

Joseph E. Zins Awards for Action Research in Social and Emotional Learning. Recipients were Celene E. Domitrovich of Pennsylvania State University (Early Career Contributions), Maurice J. Elias of Rutgers University (Distinguished Scholar), and Edward F. Zigler of Yale University (Lifetime Achievement).

BACKGROUND

The first CASEL forum, held in New York City in December 2007, focused largely on recent research demonstrating the importance of social and emotional learning to young people’s academic achievement and success in school and life. The second forum, which took place in Washington, D.C. in December 2009, presented strategies for taking social and emotional learning to scale in schools and districts across the country. The 2011 forum demonstrated, among other things, that in several innovative school districts social and emotional learning is becoming a dominant approach to teaching and learning. The forum offered concrete evidence that the national initiative envisioned in 2009 is already under way and the time is ripe for a national movement to take social and emotional learning to scale.

Since its founding in 1994, CASEL has worked closely with educators, researchers, philanthropists, state and federal policymakers, and child advocates to foster the development of educational approaches focused on children’s social and emotional development. A not-for-profit organization based in Chicago, CASEL convenes experts to share their work and leverage the science, theory, and practice of social and emotional learning to improve Pre-K-12 education.

A recent meta-analysis of more than 200 rigorous studies of school-based social and emotional learning programming, coauthored by CASEL’s president and CEO Roger P. Weissberg and appearing in the January/February 2011 issue of *Child Development*, reported that students receiving high-quality instruction in social and emotional learning demonstrated:

- ◆ *Better academic performance:* achievement scores an

average of 11 percentile points higher than students who did not receive such instruction.

- ◆ *Improved attitudes and behaviors:* greater motivation to learn, deeper commitment to school, increased time devoted to schoolwork, and better classroom behavior.
- ◆ *Fewer negative behaviors:* decreased disruptive class behavior, noncompliance, aggression, delinquent acts, and disciplinary referrals.
- ◆ *Reduced emotional distress:* fewer reports of student depression, anxiety, stress, and social withdrawal.

The 2011 forum underscored the fact that for too long, the social and emotional context of children's learning has been ignored. The time has come for social and emotional learning to be recognized as an important component of education reform.



CASEL president and CEO Roger Weissberg.



James Comer, Yale University (l.), and Rep. Tim Ryan (D-Ohio).

SUMMARY OF DISCUSSIONS, PRESENTATIONS, AND COMMENTS

Opening Dinner: Wednesday, April 13

The forum began with a dinner on April 13 during which the participants had an opportunity to meet each other, interact, and learn about the context for the next day's discussions. Timothy P. Shriver, chairman of CASEL's board of directors and the moderator of the forum, greeted the participants and introduced the evening's hosts, Jennifer and Peter Buffett of NoVo Foundation. The Buffetts welcomed the guests and spoke of their enthusiastic support for social and emotional learning.

This was followed by an activity led by students from Washington, D.C.'s Hyde Addison Elementary School and the school's principal, Dana Nerenberg. All the participants, led by the students at their respective tables, had an opportunity to experience "morning meetings," a core element of many schools' social and emotional learning programming that helps to build community.

After presentation of the Mary Utne O'Brien Awards, the evening concluded with a panel on expanding social and emotional learning to schools throughout the country. The panelists were James P. Comer, professor of psychiatry at the Yale School of Medicine and the creator of the Comer School Development Program; Deborah W. Meier, a senior scholar at New York University and the founder of innovative schools in New York City and Boston; and Congressman Tim Ryan (D-Ohio), a strong supporter of social and emotional learning both in Congress and in his home district.

Presentations, Roundtable Discussions, and Participant Feedback

Thursday, April 14

The main forum sessions on April 14 were divided between a series of panels on key topics, roundtable discussions of the panel presentations among the participants, and opportunities for exchanges among the participants and the panelists in an open dialog.

Social and Emotional Learning and Education Innovation: A Panel Discussion with CASEL's District Initiative Superintendents

Carol Comeau, superintendent, Anchorage School District
Meria Joel Carstarphen, superintendent, Austin Independent School District

The Honorable Arne Duncan, U.S. Secretary of Education
Eugene Sanders, former superintendent, Cleveland Metropolitan School District

Moderator: David Brooks, *New York Times* columnist and author of the current best-seller *The Social Animal*

Moderator David Brooks noted that although research evidence supports the current Administration emphasis on accountability, teacher quality, and testing, "The evidence also supports the importance of the social and emotional aspects of the curriculum. Is there a tension between these two things?"

“I think often these are false tensions and false choices,” replied U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan. “Anyone who thinks that one without the other is going to get us where we need to go as a country really misses the point. You can’t do one without the other.” The Administration is proposing a renewed emphasis on school climate, he added, for the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA).

The participants reflected on the panel discussion in small groups, followed by questions and comments. Key points from the report-out included:

- ◆ Teaching social and emotional skills helps to create and maintain safe, caring, participatory learning environments that students find engaging.
- ◆ The most beneficial social and emotional learning programming provides sequential, developmentally appropriate, and culturally competent instruction in social and emotional skills.
- ◆ If social and emotional learning is viewed only as a way of solving problems like violence and bullying, it is likely to be implemented in a piecemeal way, rather than integrated into a school’s curriculum and climate as a positive aspect of student learning.
- ◆ Systemic district- and school-wide programming is an approach to implementing social and emotional learning in a coordinated manner from preschool to high school. Classroom instruction is reinforced throughout the school day, during out-of-school activities, and at home. Schools, families, and communities work together to promote children’s social, emotional, and academic success.
- ◆ Viewing the current economic crisis as an opportunity ignores the fact that many schools and districts



New York Times *columnist and best-selling author David Brooks moderated the panel on social and emotional learning and education innovation.*



Karen Pittman, executive director, Forum for Youth Investment.

are suffering because of it and are likely to fare even worse in coming years.

- ◆ Until social and emotional learning is part of teacher preparation programs and is given greater priority in in-service professional development for administrators and teachers, incorporating it into the curriculum will be difficult.
- ◆ Assessing students’ and schools’ progress with social and emotional learning will be essential to building the movement.

Fostering Demand for Evidence-Based Social and Emotional Learning in State Education Policy

Presenter: Linda Dusenbury, CASEL’s vice president for research

John Bridgeland, CEO, Civic Enterprises

Elizabeth Partoyan, strategic initiative director for Next Generation Learners, Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO)

Moderator: Ruby Takanishi, president, Foundation for Child Development

Linda Dusenbury began this segment with a summary of preliminary findings from a two-year project in which CASEL is conducting a scan of policies and standards related to social and emotional learning in all 50 states and six U.S. territories. Key points from the presentation included:

- ◆ Almost all states (a total of 48) have social and emotional learning standards for preschool, and 40 use “social and emotional” in the title. Other states refer to “personal and social” learning.
- ◆ The picture is different at the K-12 level. The scan has found three distinct approaches: (1) free-standing standards for social and emotional learning; (2) more focused free-standing standards on one of the dimensions of social and emotional learning such as communication and speaking and listening skills; (3) integration of aspects of social and emotional learning into

other learning standards.

- ◆ To date, Illinois is the only state that has adopted free-standing K-12 social and emotional learning standards. Pennsylvania is considering them.
- ◆ CASEL will convene a working group to develop model social and emotional learning standards and identify states that will implement the standards. The goal is to have 20 states that highlight social and emotional learning in their standards or guidelines by 2015.
- ◆ The newly redesigned CASEL website (www.casel.org) contains maps showing standards across the states.

John Bridgeland said his organization's national survey of the dropout problem revealed that social and emotional factors affect dropping out. "Young people wanted a caring, loving adult in their lives," he said. According to an economic analysis done by Bridgeland and colleagues, nationally the cost of school dropout is \$84 billion annually. Bridgeland called for a "civic Marshall plan" to address President Obama's goal of boosting high school graduation rates to 90 percent by the class of 2020. A broad coalition will be needed to achieve this goal, he said, and CASEL should be part of it. CASEL president and CEO Roger Weissberg accepted the invitation on CASEL's behalf.

Elizabeth Partoyan emphasized the importance of the Common Core standards, which, she said, grew out of CCSSO members "coming to us and saying, 'Help us.'" Identifying how social and emotional competencies are embedded in the Common Core standards should be a high priority for future collaborative efforts, she said.

Comments from the participants included:

- ◆ Successful organizing on behalf of social and emotional learning at the state level will depend on effective interagency partnerships.



Elizabeth Partoyan, strategic initiative director for Next Generation Learners, Council of Chief State School Officers.



Ruby Takanishi, president and CEO, Foundation for Child Development.

- ◆ Data and measurement will be critically important to documenting the effectiveness of social and emotional learning standards and strengthening the movement at both the state and district levels.

- ◆ There is also a need to "tell the story" of how social and emotional learning works. People need to know it is being done and how to do it.

- ◆ The business community is an important ally.

- ◆ Social and emotional learning standards should parallel and be similar to the standards for other areas of the curriculum.

Opening the Doors through Federal Policy

Denise Forte, deputy assistant secretary, Office of Planning, Evaluation, and Policy Development, U.S. Department of Education

Joan Lombardi, deputy assistant secretary and inter-departmental liaison for early childhood development, Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

Maria Worthen, policy adviser, staff of Sen. Tom Harkin (D-Iowa)

Moderator: Larry Aber, Distinguished Professor of Applied Psychology and Public Policy and board chair, Institute for Human Development and Social Change, New York University

Larry Aber initiated the discussion by asking the panelists to address several key questions: (1) Do you see a new opening for social and emotional learning in the current policy climate? (2) What issues present the biggest obstacles to district-level adoption of social and emotional learning? (3) In the current conversation about education reform, how can and should we position social and emotional learning? (4) What are key leverage points for social and emotional

learning in the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA)?

Joan Lombardi began by congratulating CASEL “because I think you’ve come a long way in framing this discussion.” The fact that 48 states have early learning standards for social and emotional learning is significant, she continued. While praising CASEL’s initiative to target schools and districts, Lombardi underscored the need to “re-imagine what a school is,” taking into account the years from birth to eight years old and viewing the school as integrating community-based service providers who are also advocates for children’s health and well-being.

Denise Forte said that Secretary of Education Arne Duncan’s leadership is central to how the Department of Education is approaching education reform. Secretary Duncan continually emphasizes the need to “make sure we’re looking at the whole child,” she said.

Maria Worthen explained that Senator Harkin is in a key position to influence the reauthorization of ESEA as chair of the Senate Committee on Education, Labor, and Pensions. The senator sees the reauthorization process as an important opportunity to address the needs of the whole child. A potential obstacle to widespread implementation of social and emotional learning, she said, is that “social and emotional learning comes in many different forms and can be called by different names.” The important point is to look at all the conditions that need to be present in a school.

Aber then invited the participants to direct questions and comments to the panelists. The comments included:

- ◆ There’s a need for an emphasis on social and emotional learning in the Department of Education’s What Works Clearinghouse and Invest in



Maria Worthen, policy adviser, staff of Sen. Tom Harkin (D-Iowa).



Joan Lombardi, deputy assistant secretary, Administration for Children and Families.

Innovation Fund.

- ◆ If framed and positioned effectively, school-family partnerships incorporating evidence-based strategies to promote the social, emotional, and academic growth of all students may be supported by a broad array of policymakers.
- ◆ Better collection and uses of data will be needed in an era of data-driven assessment and accountability.
- ◆ More effective coordination and interagency collaboration is needed at the federal level.

Moving Research into Action

Introduction: Jennifer Buffett and Robert Sherman, NoVo Foundation

Presentation: Rachel Bellow and Suzanne Muchin, ROI Ventures (Return On Inspiration)

Dave Clayton and Rich Neimand, Neimand Collaborative

Jennifer Buffett began the session by explaining that a core goal of the national social and emotional learning initiative is to bring discussion and awareness of the benefits of

social and emotional learning into the national conversation and establish a prominent place for it in the reform agenda.

Robert Sherman introduced the panelists, explaining that they are all engaged in what should be considered a work in progress at an early stage. “NoVo and CASEL have been working with ROI Ventures and the Neimand Collaborative to explore the brand of social and emotional learning and how it’s understood among stakeholders,” he said. Key points from the presentation included:

- ◆ The group has conducted interviews with a wide range of potential audiences.
- ◆ A major objective of the process is to articulate the value of social and emotional learning in a way that motivates all stakeholders toward widespread ac-

ceptance of its aims and adoption of its methods.

- ◆ A major assumption is that acceptance of social and emotional learning involves an agenda for change.
- ◆ The need to transform pedagogy is central to this change agenda.
- ◆ Different messages about social and emotional learning will be needed for different audiences.
- ◆ One of the most important messages is that social and emotional learning transforms individuals, classrooms, schools, communities, and the larger society.
- ◆ Another key message is that social and emotional learning is the missing ingredient for consistently successful educational outcomes.
- ◆ Superintendents of schools are the primary stakeholders to influence with messaging about social and emotional learning.

The presentation was followed by lively conversation among the participants at their respective tables, followed by comments and questions in the large group. These included:

- ◆ We need to know how to talk about social and emotional learning. We especially need to know how to describe social and emotional learning to diverse audiences. We look forward to a report on next steps with the strategic communication plans.
- ◆ It's essential to communicate that this work can be transformative for education and for children.
- ◆ It is also important to make sure that communications strategies highlight and build from the research base for social and emotional learning.
- ◆ We need to identify the common denominator that helps to prepare young people for college and life. Schools are a necessary part of the partnership, but to sell this as just good for schools is not sufficient.



Jennifer Buffett, NoVo Foundation.



Robert Sherman, NoVo Foundation.

CALL FOR COLLABORATION

Tim Shriver invited comments about insights the participants gleaned from the day's discussions and statements of commitment to join collaboratively with CASEL and NoVo in the national initiative.

Key points from this session included:

- ◆ CASEL will establish a variety of ways forum participants might collaborate to promote children's social and emotional development and academic performance. CASEL staff and board members will follow up with attendees to see how we can support each others' efforts to improve the quality of children's lives.
- ◆ Connecting with children's health agencies and organizations is critical to broaden the constituency for social and emotional learning.

- ◆ It will be important to work with university-based researchers who are developing innovative training approaches and programs related to social and emotional learning.

- ◆ Educational associations and teacher unions should be involved.
- ◆ "Telling the story of social and emotional learning" will be important to elicit the necessary emotional commitment and support.
- ◆ CASEL should work with broad youth-focused partnerships as they define the agenda for positive youth development.

FOLLOW-UP AND NEXT STEPS

CASEL and NoVo Foundation have begun to implement numerous steps to put social and emotional development at the heart of every classroom, school, and district nationwide. We invite all readers of this report to join us as we advance efforts across five strategic areas:

1. **Practice:** Support breakthrough examples of systemic social and emotional learning in large collaborating school districts and socio-demographically diverse affiliated school districts.
2. **Research:** Build a research base for implementing social and emotional learning district-wide and develop innovative tools to accelerate high-quality implementation nationwide.
3. **Collaboration:** Partner with providers of social and emotional learning programs, colleges of education, and professional organizations to support scaling of social and emotional learning.
4. **Policy:** Promote federal and state policies that encourage integrated academic, social, and emotional learning.
5. **Communication:** Communicate strategically to foster widespread demand for social and emotional learning as an essential part of students' education at the school, district, state, and national level.

The 2011 forum generated a variety of strategic tactics to support the national initiative. These include:

- ◆ Working with educational leaders and providers of the most effective evidence-based social and emotional learning programs to create guidelines to scale up high-quality state, district, school, and classroom social and emotional learning programming.
- ◆ Designing and broadly sharing strategic communication approaches to build public and political



CASEL board chair Tim Shriver presents the Call for Collaboration.

will for the national implementation of social and emotional learning.

- ◆ Monitoring and supporting policies that advance social and emotional learning. Examples include (1) the Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning Act of 2011, which has been introduced by Reps. Biggert, Kildee, and Ryan; and (2) the Successful, Safe, and Healthy Students Act (S. 919), introduced by Sen. Harkin,

which authorizes \$1 billion for grants to states to develop comprehensive, data-driven, and evidence-based programs to address critical conditions for learning.

- ◆ Creating distance-learning platforms to expand capacity for pre-service and in-service professional development for evidence-based social and emotional learning.
- ◆ Establishing a group of experts to develop a plan to study and document the costs and benefits of social and emotional learning.
- ◆ Developing national model standards and formative assessment tools to support states in advancing the work of social and emotional learning.

Planning for the 2013 forum has already begun. The next forum will focus on major areas of concern identified during the 2011 forum: (1) advances in systemic district-wide social and emotional learning; (2) assessment of student progress in social and emotional learning, (3) teacher pre-service and in-service education programs related to social and emotional learning, and (4) the costs and benefits of social and emotional learning programming.

Students from Hyde Addison Elementary School.

