



In recent weeks, all of us at CASEL have gathered in solidarity with the Black community and protestors around the world. We express our outrage at the brutal killing of George Floyd and countless others, and at the many acts of injustice, systemic racism, and violence aimed at people of color. Many of us led conversations, participated in protests, and stood on the front lines for Black Lives Matter, for equity, and for justice. And we know there is much more to do.

We believe that there is no system more important than education to ending racism and dismantling the systems that condone racist acts. We at CASEL hold fast to the belief that our work must actively contribute to antiracism and to all forms of prejudice reduction. We need an education system that supports children and adults in building on their interests and talents, building positive identities, eliminating biases, building positive communication and relationships across differences, and co-creating communities where all individuals can thrive. We need a community development system in which parents and families are healthy, feel supported, and are engaged as partners. We need a system that helps young people develop all their social, emotional, academic, physical, and spiritual capacities. In turn, they can feel the power of their own dreams, the trust that comes from caring relationships with others, and the hope of their own futures. We need a system that is free of punitive and destructive practices.

In the days since Mr. Floyd's death, we at CASEL have rededicated ourselves to the work we've begun but that is seriously unfinished: diversity, equity, and inclusion at every level of our organization and at every level of our collaborative. As an organization committed to walking our talk, CASEL is building individual and collective equity consciousness and leadership for racial equity capacity among all CASEL staff. Last year, we launched a "CASEL Equity Committee" to support our internal organizational leadership team and staff to evaluate, design, and implement policies and practices to create an inclusive, equitable, and thriving organizational culture. This includes a commitment to hiring practices and staff development on diversity, equity, and inclusion. We recognize that this work is ongoing and that there is much more to be done.

We are accompanying this dedication with concrete actions to contribute to the broader

fighting toward racial equity and collective well-being. A few of our key efforts that have been and are currently underway include:

- 1. Transformative SEL aimed at educational equity.** CASEL is leading collaborative efforts with partner organizations to develop a transformative SEL framework with important implications for promoting identity, agency, belonging, and civic engagement among children, youth, and adults. We are updating and improving our theories of action, guides, and resources to reflect transformative SEL and the integration of SEL with cultural competence in professional learning; the role of SEL in promoting agency and action; educational approaches to integrate equity frameworks into systemic change strategies; the ways SEL can help support children who have experienced trauma; coordination between SEL strategies and mental health promotion approaches; and more.
- 2. Systemic implementation to create equitable learning environments.** CASEL continues to clarify and improve our systemic approach to SEL. Systemic SEL aims to create equitable learning conditions that actively involve all PreK to high school students. These conditions require aligned policies, practices, and resources at the state and district level to enable schools and communities to enhance the personal and professional capacities of adults to create a culture that fosters caring relationships and supports coordinated school-family-community partnerships to ensure collective well-being.
- 3. SEL and Equity partnerships to deepen understanding.** For the past four years, CASEL has convened an Equity Work Group with SEL and Equity leaders from school districts and organizational partners across the country with the goal of advancing the equity mission. We collaborate on best practices to implement SEL in service of educational equity and excellence. We are also collaborating with more than 30 organizational partners to create and share resources that support adults and students as they return to school during these challenging times of social, health, and economic turbulence.
- 4. Lifting up expert voices on issues of equity and diversity.** Through weekly webinars, a curated resource library, and social media channels, we share important perspectives from leading researchers, practitioners, and policymakers. These include: expertise and guidance on issues of equity and diversity; building community and positive relationships; self-care, stress management, and mindfulness; educational teaching and parenting practices to promote social, emotional, and cultural competencies; strategies for addressing systemic oppression and racism; strategies to evaluate and continuously improve SEL programming and practices; and more.

These are but first steps. And not enough. Even as we write these words, we know that educators, family and community members, and children are hurting and angry about events around us and among us. Questions abound. As does anger, confusion, and even despair.

In the days ahead, we at CASEL will prioritize and continue to invite educators all over the world to showcase the power of social and emotional learning as a means to help us process anger, find purpose and agency, and engage in meaningful actions. These are critical skills at all times, but especially now. And we invite all of our collaborators and partners to join us in listening to each other, however difficult the conversations, to identify bold new strategies to improve and advance our work together, and most importantly, to model the critical reflection and sustained effort required as we work to fulfill the resounding pledge that Black Lives Matter now, and forever.

We will not rest until every child is treated with the dignity they deserve. Everyone. No exceptions.

Sincerely,

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