

A photograph of a classroom with several students sitting at their desks. The room is filled with educational posters and papers on the walls. The image has a green tint. A white text box with a drop shadow is positioned in the upper left quadrant, containing the text 'United States of America'.

United States
of America



Social and Emotional Learning as a Basis of a New Vision of Education in the United States

Linda Lantieri

Abstract

This report outlines the journey taking place in the United States over the past few decades to implement high-quality social and emotional learning (SEL) programming as a regular part of kindergarten to grade 12 education. It will describe the challenges and barriers to learning for children growing up in the US today compared to the past and why social and emotional learning is taking hold, and will look at which trends in American education have shaped policy over the past decades and laid the groundwork for the social and emotional learning movement and the founding of the Collaborative for Social, Emotional, and Academic Learning (CASEL). Finally, it will consider what it looks like to further the vision of SEL when an entire state, school district and individual school commit to moving this agenda forward.

In addition, it will examine closely three areas: the state of Illinois, which was the first state to adopt a policy for incorporating social and emotional learning into its educational program; the Anchorage School District in Alaska which has been actualizing a vision of SEL as a basic part of their district's mission for close to two decades; and Public School 24 in New York City— one of many schools in the US that have incorporated SEL into every aspect of their school's curriculum and culture.

The report will conclude with some thoughts about steps we still need to take in the United States to make SEL a household term and the accepted way we educate American children.

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People know all too well what smarts (intelligence) without social skills looks like in kids. It can look like individuals who are obsessed with their own success and status, but are indifferent to the plight of others. It can look like youth who are unable to sustain employment because they cannot get along with their coworkers. It can look like the many young people who resort to an array of self-destructive behaviors because they are unable to communicate their pain and grief and confusion to anyone else.

Education Commission of the States
Issue Paper

I. Introduction

Children and young people throughout the world are being educated in an extraordinary time in human history. Society and life experiences of children have dramatically changed during the last century. Today, news from around the globe is available in an instant. Through various media and technology, the average student in the United

Michigan. And increasingly, the global market requires an ability to navigate differences, work effectively in teams, and get along with others across language and cultural barriers. As our planet shrinks, the problems of the environment, health, economic disparity, nuclear weapons, war, and terrorism have further reaching and interconnected efforts. Essentially, children growing up in the US will not only inherit the world's problems; they are now touched by them as they unfold.

It is against this backdrop that the field of education in the US and elsewhere has still continued to deem academic competence, particularly in reading and math as measured by prescribed standards and test scores, as being of utmost importance. At exactly the point in human history when our young people need to acquire a broader set of skills and competencies in order to cope effectively with their daily lives and lead us into a complex and uncertain future, a narrow, inadequate vision of education is still being offered to so many of the world's children. Fortunately, there is evidence that a sea of change is upon us - a new way of thinking about what it

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States has immediate access to ideas and people from all over the world. The US economy is as dependent on what happens in China as on what happens in the state of

means to be an educated person. This new vision of education recognizes that it is essential that we nurture young people's hearts and spirits along with their minds.

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A strong public demand is arising in the US for schools to implement effective educational approaches that promote not only academic success but also enhance health, and prevent problem behaviors. A US poll of registered voters released by the Partnership for 21st Century Skills in 2007 reported that 66% felt that students needed a broader range of skills than just the basics of reading, writing and math. 80% said that the skills that students need today to be prepared for the jobs of the 21st century are very different from what was needed 20 years ago.¹

Today there are more and more examples in the US of schools that are paying attention to children's social and emotional learning (SEL) as a basic part of their school's culture, structure, pedagogy and curriculum frameworks. Imagine a school where:

- The uniqueness, diversity and inherent value of every individual is honored, and education of the whole child is a basis for a lifelong process.
- Students recognize and manage their emotions, solve their own conflicts on the playground and feel safe enough to discuss concerns with their teachers and classmates by taking an active role in school improvement and governance.

- The school staff pays more attention to equipping students with the skills they need to approach the "tests of life" rather than having their students' school experience be composed of "a life of tests".

- The school leader shifts from a centralized concept of power to approaches that help individuals and groups in the school to self-organize and cooperatively problem solve.

- School spirit comes as much from collaboration, connection and engaging classroom practices as it does from winning a football game.

- A coordinated, well-planned and evidence-based social and emotional learning program is seen as not an either/or choice in terms of a student's potential for academic success but rather as one enhancing the other.

The dream school described above is not out of our reach. This kind of school is becoming more and more of the norm, not the exception, in American education. Thousands of schools in the US- according to the latest data, 59% of schools in the US have some form of social and emotional learning curricula at various stages of implementation-² are adopting researched based social and emotional learning programs in the con-

text of safe and supportive school, family, and community learning environments in which children feel valued, respected, connected and engaged in their learning. Why are more and more US school systems embracing this expanded vision of education? What are the challenges we face and what do we need to do to move this vision of education forward?

This report outlines the journey taking place in the US over the past few decades to implement high-quality social and emotional learning (SEL) programming as a regular part of kindergarten to grade 12 education. It will describe the following:

- The challenges and barriers to learning for children growing up in the US today compared to the past and why social and emotional learning is taking hold.
- The trends in American education that have shaped policy over the past decades and laid the groundwork for the social and emotional learning movement and the founding of the Collaborative for Social, Emotional, and Academic Learning (CASEL).
- What it looks like to further the vision of SEL when an entire state, school district and individual school commit to moving this agenda forward. We will take a closer look at:

A | The state of Illinois, which was the first state to adopt a policy for incorporating social and emotional learning into its educational program.

B | The Anchorage School District in Alaska which has been actualizing a vision of SEL as a basic part of their district's mission for close to two decades.

C | Public School 24 in New York City- one of many schools in the US that have incorporated SEL into every aspect of their school's curriculum and culture.

The report will conclude with some thoughts about steps we still need to take in the US to make SEL a household term and the accepted way we educate American children.

II. An Overview of Trends in American Education and Why SEL is Crucial

A | Description of the Educational System in the United States

The US system of education is complex, multi-dimensional and one of the largest systems of education in the world. Since the population of the US is increasing, so is enrollment at all levels of education both public and private. The country is divided into over 15,000 independently operated school districts headed by superintendents and more than 80,000 individual schools headed up by principals.³

The governing structure of the US educational system consists of each school district having a local school board. Each of the 50 states has a chief state school officer, a governor, and a state legislature. There are six regional accrediting agencies and one US Department of Education, which is in charge of national initiatives that include funding and other compliance issues.⁴ There are vast differences in race/ethnicity, wealth, religion, age, and density between the various states. Although the National government contributes only 10% of each state's total education funding, they issue about 90% of the commands.⁵

Children are expected to attend free compulsory education from first grade (about six years old) to 12th grade (about 17-18 years old).⁶ There are 54,000 elemen-

tary schools, which usually cover grades pre-kindergarten – grade 5 and 18,000 secondary schools, which are sometimes composed of middle schools (grades 6-8) and high schools (grades 9-12). There are different variations in the way the 12 years of schooling are divided up depending on the amount of children in any given neighborhood. Pre-kindergarten and kindergarten are not universal yet.

There are about 49 million students attending public schools and another 6.1 million who are in private/independent schools where families need to pay tuition fees. Currently there are about 1 million children being home-schooled.⁷ The number of chil-

In 1900 in the US, only about 7% of Americans had a high school diploma and about 75% lived on farms. Today, it's 3% living on farms and about 75% with high school diplomas.¹⁰ The average public school in 1900 enrolled 40 students, and the size of the average school district was 120 students. Today, an average elementary school enrolls more than 400 pupils, and a typical high school enrolls more than 2,000 pupils. In 1900, schools were more economically, racially, and ethnically homogeneous.¹¹

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dren ages 5-17 who spoke a language other than English in the home more than doubled between 1979 and 2005 with 1 out of 5 school age children speaking a language other than English in the home today.⁸ Thirty-eight percent of public school students are minority or children of color. However there are only 10% secondary school teachers, 14% elementary teachers, 16% principals and 4% superintendents who are of a minority background. The pedagogical staff is composed of 2.8 million public school teachers and about 70,000 principals who are the heads of the schools.⁹

disparities in US society. Of the 301,139,947 people living in the US,¹² there are over 40 million Americans who move each year with about 7 million school age children. However, we have no tracking system yet that follows a student who moves from state-to-state.¹³

Kindergarten teachers say that about 20% of children entering kindergarten do not yet have the necessary social and emotional skills to be "ready" for kindergarten. Of very low income children, as many as 30% may not have the necessary skills.¹⁴ About a third of today's students do not graduate from high school after four years. In 2003, 88% of

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Asians ,85% of whites, 80% of blacks, and 57% of Hispanics had a high school diploma. The US now ranks 10th in percentage of youth who graduate from high school. We were first about 30 years ago.¹⁵

After high school there is the option of work or postsecondary education if one has a high school diploma. Some students may enter a technical or vocational institution. There is the community college option, which is usually for two years or a four-year college or university option. The average four-year college-student – whether they go to a public or private college – will graduate with a minimum debt of 11,860.58 EUR (\$18,000 USD).¹⁶

B | Challenges American Young People Face. SEL as a Solution

Our experience as children was vastly different from the world our children face. Today's world includes all kinds of stressors that didn't even exist when we were growing up. As an elementary teacher during the 1970s and later as an administrator in New York City schools, I started to notice that young people's social and emotional development seemed to be on a serious decline. I was seeing children coming to school more aggressive, more disobedient, more impulsive, more sad, more lonely. In fact, psychologist Thomas Achen-

bach, from the University of Vermont, confirmed my observations. His groundbreaking study of thousands of American children, first in the mid-1970s and then again in the late 1980s, proved this to be true. America's children – from the poorest to the most affluent – displayed a decline across the board in their scores on over forty measures designed to reflect a variety of emotional and social capacities.¹⁷

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The 2005 Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS), the most current year available, revealed a large percentage of American high school students are involved with substance abuse, risky sexual behavior, violence, and mental health difficulties. For example, 16.9% of high school students seriously considered attempting suicide; over 40% used alcohol;

close to 30% had ridden in a car with someone who had been drinking within 30 days of the survey; and almost 20% carried a weapon some time during the past month.¹⁹

Threats to learning can be found on the home front as well. Young people today have virtually uncensored media access through the Internet, cable television, and music outlets; they are bombarded as never before by commercial messages that tout unceasing consumption and glamour as the route to happiness. Young people today are far less

In the past, the dominant paradigm in response to this decline in American children's social and emotional capacities focused on trying to identify the risk factors that caused this antisocial behavior. There were almost two decades of school-based "prevention wars," like the "war on drugs". In the last two decades we have witnessed a healthy paradigm shift. Researchers and practitioners are studying the concept of resilience – the innate ability we all have to self-correct and thrive in the face of life's challenges. Bonnie Bernard, a pioneer in the field of strength-

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likely than previous generations to have adults around them in their non-school hours, as mothers' labor-force participation has grown from 10% in the 1950s to more than 78% in 1999.²⁰ As of 2004, more than half of all children will grow up in a home without a biological father present.²¹

According to the 2006 Indicators of School Crime and Safety report from the National Center for Education Statistics, 27% of schools report daily or weekly bullying incidents. In 2005, more than a quarter of students ages 12-18 reported being bullied within the past six months, with 58% of these students bullied once or twice during that period, 25% bullied once or twice a month, 11% bullied once or twice a week, and 8% of students bullied almost every day.²²

based approaches, has helped us take a look at how young people's strengths and capabilities can be developed in order to protect them from the potential harm that these circumstances represent.²³

Despite, and perhaps because of, the challenges young people face, growing evidence suggests that a key component in meeting educational goals for children, academic as well as social, is social and emotional learning (Greenberg et al., 2003).²⁴ Top-quality research studies have shown that students in schools that use an evidence-based SEL curriculum significantly improve in their attitudes toward school, their behaviors, and their academic performance. Almost 30 studies have shown that SEL programs result in student improvements in achievement test

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One major multi-year study found that by the time they were adults, students who received SEL in grades 1-6 (6 to 11 years of age) had an 11% higher Grade Point Average, significantly greater levels of school commitment and attachment to school at age 18, and greater school success. The retention (hold-back) rate of students who received SEL was 14%, versus 23% of control students required to repeat a grade; they showed a 30% lower incidence of school behavior problems at age 18, a 20% lower rate of violent delinquency at age 18, and a 40% lower rate of heavy alcohol use at age 18.²⁶

C | Why Social and Emotional Learning is Essential

A growing body of research suggests that helping children develop good social and emotional skills early in life makes a big difference in their long-term health and well-being. Studies have shown that children's social and emotional functioning and behavior begin to stabilize around the age of eight, and can predict the state of their behavior and mental health later in life.²⁷ In other words, if children learn to express emotions constructively and engage in caring and respectful relationships before and while they are in lower elementary grades, they are more likely to avoid depression, violence, and other serious mental health problems as they grow older.

School systems throughout the United States are starting to realize that SEL more than pays for itself in benefits to individual children and society. Providing children with comprehensive social and emotional learning programs characterized by safe, caring, and well-managed learning environments and instruction in social and emotional skills addresses many of these learning barriers. School attachment (a sense of connectedness and belonging) is enhanced, risky behaviors reduced, and academic achievement is positively influenced.

Many schools in the US have begun to see the value in creating (1) *school conditions* and (2) *student capacities* that support learning and interpersonal effectiveness that SEL provides. For many educators today, it is about changing and managing school environments or climates—in the classrooms, in the hallways, on the playing fields, and in clubs. And it is about developing skills and knowledge in students that maximize their potential for optimal performance, human connection, and relationship effectiveness. These are skills like recognizing and managing our emotions, developing caring and concern for others, establishing positive relationships, making responsible decisions, and handling challenging situations constructively. These skills, for example, allow children to calm themselves when angry, make friends, resolve conflicts respectfully, and make ethical and safe choices.

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Students who are given clear behavioral standards and social skills, allowing them to feel safe, valued, confident and challenged, will exhibit better school behavior and learn more. This statement is of monumental importance as we attempt to improve the outcomes of public education in the US. In fact, SEL skills and the supportive environments in which they are taught seem to contribute to the resiliency of all children—those without identified risks and those at-risk of or already exhibiting emotional or behavioral problems and in need of additional supports.

Daniel Goleman has contributed much to our thinking about the need to nurture the social and emotional lives of children. In his groundbreaking book *Emotional Intelligence* (published in 1995), Goleman summarized the research from the fields of neuroscience and cognitive psychology that identified EQ - emotional intelligence - as being as important as IQ in terms of children's healthy development and future life success. He wrote:

One of psychology's open secrets is the relative inability of grades, IQ, or SAT scores, despite their popular mystiques, to predict unerringly who will succeed in life. . . There are widespread exceptions to the rule that IQ predicts success - many (or more) exceptions than cases that fit the rule. At best, IQ contributes about 20 per-

*cent to the factors that determine life success, which leaves 80 percent to other forces.*²⁸

Goleman's work helped educators, including myself, understand the importance of emotional intelligence as a basic requirement for the effective use of one's IQ - that is, one's cognitive skills and knowledge. He made the connection between our feelings and our thinking more explicit by pointing out how the brain's emotional and executive areas are interconnected physiologically, especially as these areas relate to teaching and learning. The prefrontal lobes of the brain, which control emotional impulses, are also where working memory resides and where all learning takes place.

Educators and parents alike are now much more aware that when chronic anxiety, anger, or upset feelings intrude on children's thoughts, less capacity is available in working memory to process what they are trying to learn. This implies that, at least in part, academic success depends on a student's ability to maintain positive social interactions. Schools across the US today are beginning to systematically help children strengthen their EQs by equipping them with concrete skills for identifying and managing their emotions, communicating effectively, and resolving conflicts nonviolently. These skills help children to make good decisions,

to be more empathetic, and to be optimistic in the face of setbacks.

The hopeful news is that schools and parents, working together, can play pivotal roles in supporting children's healthy development in dealing with their emotions and their relationships. In the US, this is referred to as *social and emotional learning* because these are skills that can be learned and mastered,

risk behaviors such as: teens' use of drugs and alcohol, dropping out of school, unwanted teen pregnancies, and other pitfalls of adolescence. These effects are related to children's social and emotional development by focusing on a single problem or issue such as preventing substance abuse. However, SEL provides educators with a common language and framework to organize their activities. SEL is an inclusive approach

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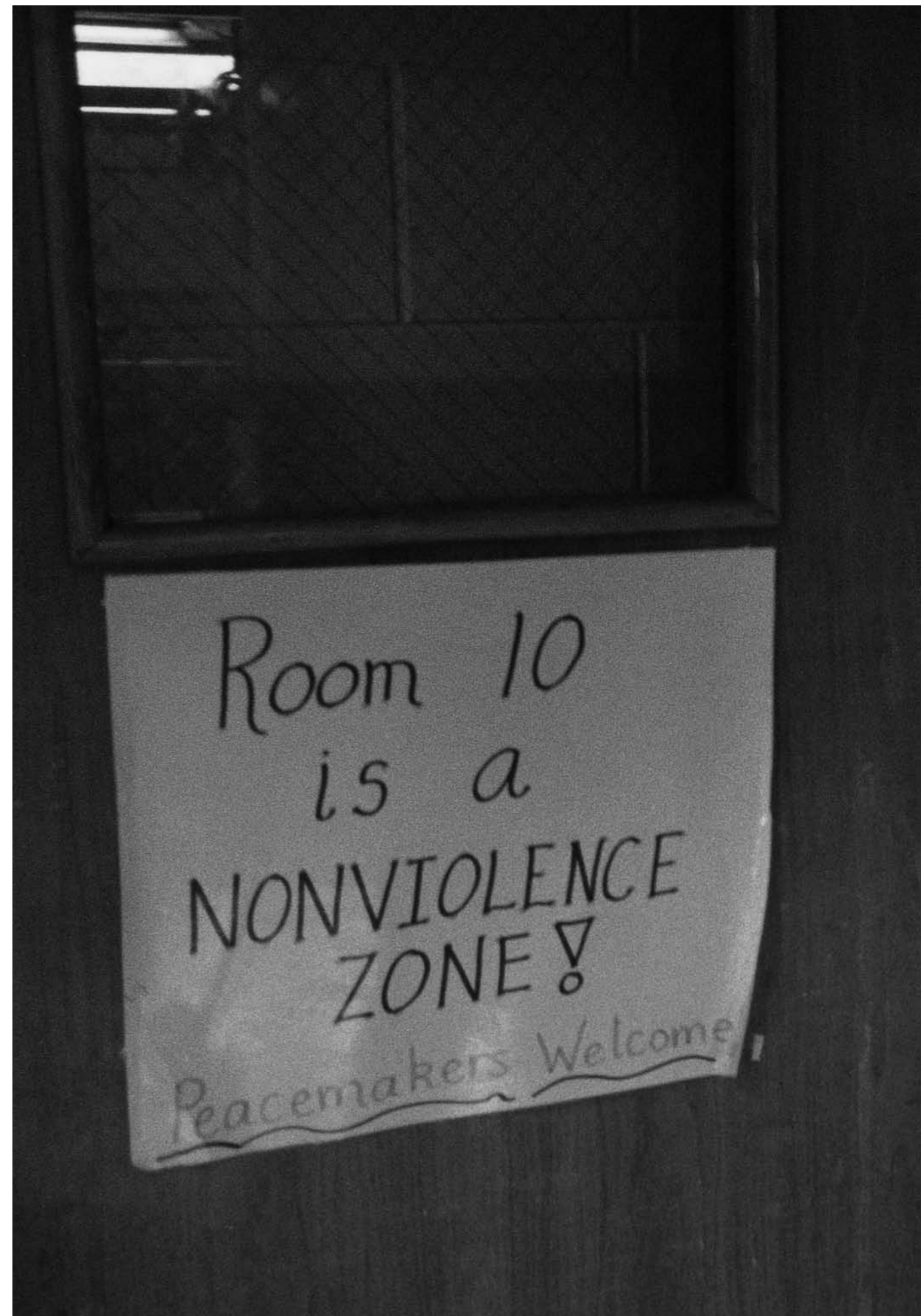
every bit as much as language or mathematics or reading can be. Furthermore, teaching academic skills and social and emotional skills is not an either/or proposition. In fact, there is a great deal of research evidence to indicate that students perform better when academics are combined with SEL.²⁹ When social and emotional skills are taught and mastered, they help children succeed not just in school, but in all avenues of life.

The SEL movement in the US is related to other national youth development and prevention initiatives, such as character education and school-based health promotion programs. But it is significantly different because it systematically addresses the numerous social and emotional variables that place youth at risk for school failure, such as a lack of attachment to a significant adult or the inability to manage emotions. Many of the early social and emotional learning efforts in schools were developed to combat

that covers the entire spectrum of social and emotional competencies that help children to be resilient and successful learners. In fact, when the W. T. Grant Foundation commissioned a study of all such programs to see what actually made some of them work (while others did not), the teaching of social and emotional skills emerged among the crucial active ingredients.

D | The Founding of the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL)³⁰

CASEL has been at the forefront of moving the social and emotional learning agenda in education forward in the United States. Therefore it will be described in some detail here. Started in the US, CASEL has been providing national and international leadership for educators, researchers, and policy makers to advance the science and practice of social and emotional learning since 1994.



Their organizational vision and mission guide all that they do:

VISION: We envision a world where families, schools, and communities work together to promote children's success in school and life and to support the healthy development of all children. In this vision, children and adults are engaged, life-long learners who are self-aware, caring and connected to others, and responsible in their decision-making. Children and adults achieve to their fullest potential and participate constructively in a democratic society.

MISSION: To establish social and emotional learning as an essential part of education.

CASEL investigates the best ways to advance children's social and emotional learning and provides training to educational leaders and school staff in how to make SEL the foundation for academic success, disseminating research findings on the most effective practices and programs to educators, researchers, and policy makers. Working in collaboration with other organizations, CASEL promotes the principle that safe, supportive learning communities are an essential component of effective school reform.

CASEL was inspired by the vision of its co-founders, educator-philanthropist Eileen Rockefeller Growald and former *New York Times* science writer Daniel Goleman, best known for his numerous books on emotional intelligence. In 1994, Growald, Goleman, and collaborators convened leading educators and researchers to discuss effective whole-school change practices that incorporate rigorous scientific research. Out of this meeting came both the term "social and emotional learning" and an organization – CASEL – to gather and disseminate reliable information about evi-

dence-based SEL strategies and to translate scientific knowledge into high-quality educational approaches for all students.

During its first decade, CASEL defined the field of SEL in the text, *Social and Emotional Learning: Guidelines for Educators*, published in 1996 by the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD) and sent as a member benefit to over 100,000 educational leaders. CASEL established the research base for the field of SEL, publishing the essential characteristics and documented benefits of high-quality, evidence-based SEL programs for children. The US Department of Education funded CASEL to review and create an objective guide to SEL programs. The resulting document, *Safe and Sound* (2003), sold out 15,000 copies and has been downloaded from CASEL's website over 150,000 times.

CASEL research syntheses established the link between these programs and greater attachment to school, less risky behavior, and more student assets, leading to better academic performance and success in school and life. The CASEL text summarizing much of this work is *Building Academic Success on Social and Emotional Learning: What Does the Research Say?* published in 2004 by Teachers College Press. Most recently, in partnership with urban, suburban, and rural schools in different parts of the country, CASEL has developed strategies for using SEL as an organizing framework for coordinating all of a school's academic, prevention, health promotion, and youth development activities. Knowledge and products developed from this work are combined with applications of the latest research in systems change, leadership development, and program implementation in the 400-page CASEL document, *Sustainable Schoolwide SEL: Implementation Guide and Toolkit* (2006), which sold out its first printing of 2,000 copies and serves as the core element of CASEL's national training program.

CASEL also advises districts, states, and countries, providing technical assistance and training on policy approaches to support SEL and systems for expanding practice on a broad scale.

In the past two years CASEL has conducted 23 sell-out two-day school and district trainings with 300 school teams (representing several hundred thousand students) from across the US as well as Australia, Spain, and Canada. In 2007, noting the research base for SEL and CASEL's role in the field, UNICEF contracted with CASEL to lead an evaluation of their Child Friendly Schools model, to assure better attention to student social and emotional development.

CASEL is having widespread influence on school practices, policies, and professional development throughout the world. Their website (www.casel.org), where papers and reports from CASEL's and others' projects are posted, attracts visitors from throughout the world. In addition, periodic reports are shared with the more than 10,000 subscribers to CASEL's electronic newsletter, *CASEL Connections*. CASEL is unique in education today. It is an organization devoted to improving education by bridging theory, research, and practice—and to pursuing the goals of school improvement and student success through continuing dialogue and collaboration with educators.

III. Case Studies of Implementing SEL in a State, a School District, and an Individual School

A | The Implementation of SEL in the State of Illinois³¹

The state of Illinois in the US, with a population of 12,831,970³² is making history. It has taken the lead in defining social and emotional learning, determining what works to support SEL in their 4,533 schools,³³ and setting standards for SEL for an entire state and the 2,097,503 school

children it serves. In December 2004, the Illinois State Board of Education was the first US state to publish Standards for Social Emotional Learning. The ten standards, with benchmarks for different age levels, present Illinois educators with a challenge – and an opportunity. Illinois' SEL goals and standards address content and outcomes essential for the school and life success of all students. The state of Illinois is now at the forefront of tackling some of the big questions in SEL implementation:

- How do we implement the Illinois SEL standards in a high-quality way?
- How do we sustain the process?
- How do we know if we are being effective in reaching our goals for students?

In asking these questions of themselves as a state and working to answer them, Illinois is becoming a model of what can happen in other US states and other countries around the world.

Their SEL journey began in 2003, when the Illinois Children's Mental Health Task Force, comprising over 100 state agencies and organizations, released a report documenting that current mental health services for children fall far short of addressing the needs of Illinois children. The report stated the following:³⁴

- 70%–80% of children in need don't receive appropriate mental health services.
- 25%–30% of American children experience school adjustment problems.
- 32% of children (including toddlers) at 10 Chicago childcare centers are deemed to have behavioral problems.

70%-80% of children in need don't receive appropriate mental health services; 25%-30% of American children experience school adjustment problems; 14% of students 12-18 years of age report having been bullied at school in the six months prior to being interviewed; and at least 1 child in 10 suffers from a mental illness that severely disrupts daily functioning at home, in school, or in the community

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The report further stated that services were fragmented and the state lacked any short and long-term plans to address these issues. It called for reform to the existing mental health system to ensure that the full range of children's social and emotional needs are addressed across the continuum of prevention/promotion, early identification/intervention, and treatment (Illinois Children's Mental Health Task Force, 2003). Following this report, the state of Illinois passed the Illinois Children's Mental Health Act to provide comprehensive, coordinated mental health promotion and prevention, early intervention, and treatment services for children from birth through age 18. This act stated the following.³⁵

Every Illinois school district shall develop a policy for incorporating social and emotional development into the district's educational program. The policy shall address teaching and assessing social and emotional skills

and protocols for responding to children with social, emotional, or mental health problems, or a combination of such problems, that impact learning ability. Each district must submit this policy to the Illinois State Board of Education by August 31, 2004.

Section 15 (b) of the Illinois Children's Mental Health Act of 2003 (PA 93-0495).

The intent of Section 15(b) was to ensure that school districts and schools incorporated the social and emotional development of all children as an integral component to the mission of schools and view it as critical to the development of the whole child, and necessary to academic readiness and school success. This would have to involve the development and strengthening of evidence-based prevention, early intervention, and treatment policies, programs, and services for all children in regular and special education.

To address mental health promotion and prevention, Section 15 of the Act required the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) to develop and implement a plan to incorporate social and emotional development standards as part of the Illinois Learning Standards (then consisting of English Language Arts, Mathematics, Science, Social Science, Physical Development and Health, Fine Arts, and Foreign Languages).

The purpose of the directive was described as for "enhancing and measuring children's school readiness and ability to achieve academic success." Standards on student social and emotional development were then developed with the technical guidance of CASEL. A broadly representative group of educators and parents with expertise in instruction, curriculum design, and child development and learning contributed to these standards and they were put into effect in December 2004.

The standards described the targeted competencies for students in grades K-12 in the area of social and emotional learning. They were based on the following SEL components as outlined by CASEL: to recognize and manage emotions; care about others; develop positive relationships and handle conflict; to make good decisions; and behave ethically and responsibly.

The following is a summary of the Illinois SEL Standards.³⁶

Goal 1: Develop self-awareness and self-management skills to achieve school and life success

- A | Identify and manage one's emotions and behavior
- B | Recognize personal qualities and external supports
- C | Demonstrate skills related to achieving personal and academic goals

Goal 2: Use social awareness and interpersonal skills to establish and maintain positive relationships

- A | Recognize the feelings and perspectives of others
- B | Recognize individual and group similarities and differences

- C | Use communication and social skills to interact effectively with others
- D | Demonstrate an ability to prevent, manage, and resolve interpersonal conflicts in constructive ways

Goal 3: Demonstrate decision-making skills and responsible behaviors in personal, school, and community contexts

- A | Consider ethical, safety, and societal factors in making decisions
- B | Apply decision-making skills to deal responsibly with daily academic and social situations
- C | Contribute to the well-being of one's school and community

CASEL assisted school districts throughout the state of Illinois as they began to consider how to implement the standards at their individual schools. Since CASEL had already reviewed 80 SEL programs that met basic criteria and identified 22 that are especially strong and effective, school districts already had a "consumer report" to use. They were able to use CASEL's guide *Safe and Sound* to find descriptions and ratings of these programs on the strength of the scientific evidence of their positive impact on student behavior, their instructional design, and other qualities that made SEL the foundation for effective learning.

Through the Illinois Governor's office, CASEL was actually funded to support the implementation of SEL-based prevention programs in collaborating school sites across the state. Currently, CASEL provides SEL training and technical assistance to the Illinois State Board of Education and Regional Offices of Education and 86 state-funded schools in their efforts to implement SEL broadly in schools across the state. These 86 schools

represent the diversity of the state: inner-city schools with a high African American or Latino population of students, suburban schools with varying degrees of racial and economic diversity, and some rural schools as well. They are all committed to developing a strong, evidence-based practice of school-wide social and emotional learning and prevention and to serving as “model sites” of SEL in the state.

Schools collaborating with CASEL under this initiative received direct consultation, professional development, data collection and analysis support, so that they are able to eventually develop their own effective practice of evidence-based, integrated programming for students’ social and emotional development. This cooperative effort not only has been benefiting current students at these schools but also has built a foundation for SEL practice throughout Illinois. Drawing upon the Illinois experiences as a model, CASEL now collaborates and consults with other states and countries to implement evidence-based SEL programming on a wide scale.

The groundbreaking legislation that mandated SEL standards in Illinois went a long way towards making clear to schools and teachers what they should focus upon to promote children’s social and emotional development. Adoption of SEL goals and standards signaled the commitment of the State of Illinois to highlight social and emotional learning as an essential part of preschool through high school education in all schools, providing a solid foundation for children’s success in school and life. Full scale implementation of these standards will call for bold leadership in their schools and communities. With the help of CASEL, the state is playing an active role in providing information about the latest evidence-based SEL practice, effective guidance, and support to administrators, teachers, and student support personnel as they establish local programming to address the educational needs of all students.

Whatever program a school chooses, successful implementation of SEL requires certain basic, cross-cutting factors that school districts in Illinois are becoming more and more aware of. They are the following:

- *Strong Leadership:* Active and public support from the school principal and other educational leaders has a significant impact on the quality of program implementation.
- *Integration of core SEL concepts with all school activities:* Bringing an SEL lens to all school-related activities helps students to see the relevance of SEL lessons to many aspects of their lives.
- *Professional development:* To be truly effective, professional development needs to be ongoing, collaborative, reflective, and based on knowledge about adult learning.
- *Assessment and evaluation:* Ongoing evaluation enables schools to improve SEL instructional practices and determine if they are actually making a difference in children’s lives.
- *Infrastructure:* High-quality SEL programs are supported by ongoing social marketing of the effort to stakeholders, a strong financial or resource base, and school-family-community connections.

Implementation of the Illinois SEL Standards will not happen overnight. It is a complex, iterative process, a journey where the path may look muddy even when the vision of the end is clear. For most schools, it takes three to five years to choose and implement a program to build SEL skills, integrate SEL with academic programming, and forge supportive school-family community partnerships. Es-

tablishing social and emotional polices and standards makes Illinois a national leader in providing a foundation to guide and support educators as they enhance the social, emo-

Upon entering Russian Jack, I notice a sign on the entrance doorway. It reads, “Our mission at Russian Jack, a school of cultural diversity, is to en-

For most schools, it takes three to five years to choose and implement a program to build SEL skills, integrate SEL with academic programming, and forge supportive school-family community partnerships

tional, and academic growth of students. The success of the policies and standards, however, rests on educators who have the challenging task of integrating positive youth development programming that addresses the social and emotional needs of students into their already ambitious academic programs. This is a pivotal moment for educational leaders throughout the state of Illinois. Their success will be instrumental in the success of many other places in both the US and the wider world.

B | The Implementation of Social and Emotional Learning in the Anchorage School District in Alaska³⁷

Russian Jack Elementary School, Anchorage, Alaska, May 1993
(Linda Lantieri’s journal entry)³⁸

It is springtime in Anchorage, Alaska. This is my first trip to Russian Jack Elementary School but my eighth trip to the Anchorage School District (ASD) since 1988 when I first started to assist this school district in paying attention to children’s hearts along with their minds. Russian Jack has been part of the Resolving Conflict Creatively Program (RCCP) for four years now. The sun is bright and warm; the flowers are blooming in contrast to the not-so-distant mountain peaks that peer over the city with a winter-wonderland splendor.

sure that each student is actively involved in their learning, while developing a sense of self and becoming a productive citizen who will contribute to society in a meaningful way.”

Already I have a sense of this school. I continue down the hallway, taking in my new surroundings. To the right there’s a large glass display case. Inside are a myriad of art projects, bright colorful masks, and drums. A sign above reads, “These masks and drums are representative of the culture of the Inuit people of Alaska. They were made by our Young Ambassadors, students dedicated to promoting a deeper understanding of the rich cultural diversity of the children at the Russian Jack Elementary School.”

Donna, the school’s principal of six years, welcomes me. I had met Donna once before, at an RCCP advanced training for administrators a few years before. Donna offers to take time out of her busy schedule to take me around the school. She talks about her school and how they’ve implemented RCCP. Heading up the stairs towards the second floor, I see a huge banner with the letters P-E-A-C-E – large, multicolored letters sewn over a pastel backdrop. It is magnificent.

Young people must read this several times a day as they go back and forth to the library and their classrooms; adults read it too.

Teachers and children alike greet us as we visit classrooms and observe them at work. They are working in groups, talking and sharing ideas. Classroom walls display several indicators that Resolving Conflict Creatively Program is in place at this school. "Put-up" charts (giving examples of the opposite to put downs) line walls. Words such as "I-Messages" and "Active Listening" are listed as tools to be used for communication in the classroom. There is calmness in the air, not the frenzy one can sometimes feel in schools.

Recess begins. Donna is called to the office. I head out to the playground. It is a warm and clear day. The sun is up and shining almost all day at this time of the year. The children are playful and carefree. Mediators stand by in the lunchroom and outdoors. Several times a conflict begins to erupt, but mediators intervene immediately. I am told that the library mediation room is available in case it gets too cold to mediate outside.

Throughout the day, children and teachers share their experiences with me. They talk about Russian Jack proudly and openly. They talk about the benefits they see since RCCP has been at their school. They support their mediators, who they feel are helping to create a culture of nonviolence at this school. Young people talk highly about their teachers, principal, and mediation program. They feel safe at this school. "It's a good school," says Nikita. "Not like my other

school where kids used to fight all the time."

These images from Anchorage offer hints of what can happen when the kind of educational vision we have been talking about is put into practice. Little did I know then what I know now – that the Anchorage School District (ASD) would lead the way for school districts across the US to commit to implementing social and emotional learning standards and benchmarks for incorporation into a school district's academic program. How did the ASD arrive at this place? What can we learn from them that can inform other school systems throughout the US and the world to make SEL a core part of the mission and vision of an entire school district?

Anchorage's SEL journey began in December 1987, when Tom Roderick, Executive Director of a nongovernmental organization Morningside Center for Teaching Social Responsibility, was asked to write an article on the topic of children and violence for the contemporary issues section of *Educational Leadership*, a well-known and respected educational journal in the US. Tom wrote a wonderful article tracing the history of conflict resolution in schools and highlighting our work in New York City with the researched based SEL program he and I co-founded – the Resolving Conflict Creatively Program (RCCP). He titled his article "Johnny Can Learn to Negotiate." Since *Educational Leadership* is a journal that almost every principal in America subscribes to, we became national news and began to receive many inquiries. One of them was from the Anchorage School District in Alaska, saying that they were ready to sponsor a course in "peace education" in three weeks! My first thought was "Are you kidding? How could something that was developed in urban New York City be of any use to a school system in Anchorage, Alaska?" However, I also had a sense that what we were doing in NYC was



In an era in the US where the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act is forcing schools to concentrate on increasing students' test scores rather than engaging them in a world in which they will succeed, the Anchorage School District was able to foster an overall learning environment in which social and emotional learning is central to its mission

going to catch on around the country and that we needed to humbly share what we had been learning. By the end of the day I called them back to say yes.

Flying into Anchorage airport, the earth blanketed in white, the imposing mountains at a distance, I wondered whether this was a crazy idea - a big mistake - or whether our grass roots origins in New York City, teaching young people how to manage their emotions and resolve conflict nonviolently, had a certain universality regardless of the distance and differences that separated these two places.

In retrospect I understand how important it was to go to a place like Anchorage. Had I not expanded to the Anchorage School District next with our SEL program, I suspect it would have taken me a long time to realize that this kind of work could take hold in any school environment that was concerned about these issues - urban, suburban, or rural. Today, the ASD is the nation's 88th largest school district, with about 50,000 students - nearly 40% of Alaska's school children. Over 30% of ASD students live in poverty. Increasingly diverse, ASD now has a 50% minority population; 84 languages are spoken in their schools. The ASD has the largest population of Alaska natives in the state. While they are proud of their ethnic diversity, they are also experiencing the pains of a large achievement gap and a huge dropout rate.

Anchorage became the only other school district in the country besides the New York City Schools where I would become a part of their team for many years. I feel privileged to be at the cutting edge of their educational efforts as they make such a deep impact in the field of SEL. In the summer of 2007 I made my 28th trip to the ASD over the past two decades. It has been such a joy to work with such an amazing group of people who are changing the vision of education for the whole country. Here is their story.

The Anchorage School District's SEL Journey of Success

In an era in the US where the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act is forcing schools to concentrate on increasing students' test scores rather than engaging them in a world in which they will succeed, the Anchorage School District was able to foster an overall learning environment in which social and emotional learning is central to its mission. How did they get their families, community, and school board not to dismiss this kind of curriculum as "soft and touchy-feely" and help them recognize that social and emotional learning can be part of a rigorous and achievement-oriented education? We have much to learn from their example.

In August 2006, the Anchorage School Board in Alaska became the first school district in the US to unanimously approve the implementation of SEL standards and

benchmarks for incorporation into the district's academic program. How was this diverse urban school district with a teaching staff of 3,500 able to make this significant commitment to such a holistic vision of education for the 50,000 students it serves? Their story involves the courageous leadership of their dynamic superintendent Carol Comeau, forward-minded thinking on the part of the wider leadership of the district, and a long term democratic decision-making process committed to building staff and community understanding and support for these efforts.

The ASD has had an expansive view of what skills a graduate needs to be ready for the 21st century for almost two decades now. During 1988-1998, they became committed to implementing a few different research-based SEL programs, including RCCP, in many of its schools well before most school systems were even thinking in terms of prevention. During this same period of time, the district was also introduced to the work of the Search Institute in Minnesota who had identified 40 "developmental assets" young people need to be successful. The more of these assets young people had in their life, the Search Institute research found, the more likely they were able to grow up healthy, productive and caring.

School board members and superintendents statewide started to be trained in the Developmental Assets Framework. Michael Kerosky, Supervisor of Anchorage's Safe and Drug-Free Schools Program remembered how important this was: "It was a radical shift for us. Instead of focusing on stopping negative risk behavior, we were focusing on building young people's strengths. Exposure to this training also convinced the top that this kind of approach made sense. We also each knew intuitively from working with young people that this approach would work."

The ASD engaged teachers, staff, principals and the wider community in many meetings to begin to identify which of the external developmental assets the family, school, and community were already providing their young people and which of the internal assets they were strengthening through implementing researched-based SEL programs. The Developmental Assets Framework became common language at the ASD. Every new teacher was exposed to this training along with bus drivers, security guards, and school secretaries. The entire community was involved in reflecting on the social, emotional, and ethical state of the children they served. As Michael Kerosky reflected back he said that "adopting SEL benchmarks was based on the resiliency work that had been done before. That created the fertile ground for this work to not be seen as 'social engineering', as it had been looked upon by many a decade earlier."

In 2004, another important milestone happened in Anchorage's SEL journey. Their Superintendent Carol Comeau, in an effort to consistently infuse the Search Institute's Developmental Assets framework district-wide, convened a team of people to design an action plan. The team conceived of the Social and Emotional Learning Six Year Plan. The plan had as its main premise the goal of having SEL as an integral part of the curriculum frameworks of the entire district. To ensure that this plan would move forward, the school district committed itself to creating a new position at the district level entitled *The Social and Emotional Learning Curriculum Coordinator*. Victoria Blakeney, a veteran high school teacher who had been actively incorporating SEL in her high school English curriculum was selected for the position. In 2007, in a show of support, the school board voted to absorb the SEL Curriculum Coordinator's salary, previously grant funded, into the general fund.

Under Vickie's direction, a district-wide steering committee was created to help drive the SEL initiative forward. The academic curriculum frameworks of the ASD was and still is primarily standards-based, which means that for each subject that is taught, there are specific grade level appropriate competencies that students are expected to become proficient in. These are known as "benchmarks" – competencies that are easily measurable and observable in students. Therefore the first task of the SEL Steering Committee was to write SEL standards and benchmarks to bring before the school board. The purpose of this strategy was to ensure that the teaching of social and emotional learning skills would be considered as important as any of the other curriculum area students in the Anchorage School District were expected to learn.

At this stage of their planning, the ASD Steering Committee reached out to the Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning (CASEL). At that point CASEL was experienced and committed to advancing the science and expanding the practice of SEL in schools, school districts and at state level policy. In fact, the benchmarks and standards Anchorage created were inspired by CASEL's work in the state of Illinois. The ASD Steering Committee also spent two years looking at what other districts were doing and engaged each other in reflective conversations about what they really wanted for their students in the social and emotional learning domain. They got input from staff and the community and finally drafted their own version of the benchmarks and standards. In fact the Steering Committee creatively devised an approach to organize and communicate what they were trying to do by using the four components of SEL as outlined by CASEL which are: self-awareness, social awareness, self-management and social management. Vickie describes the process:

I remember a great moment in our group when one of the steering committee members realized that the four quadrants that make up the goals for SEL could correspond with certain headings: Self-Awareness = "I am..." Self-Management = "I can..." Social Awareness = "I care..." Social Management = "I will..." This resounded with all of us, and from then on, the task seemed easier. We could use as our pneumonic the phrase, "I am, I can, I care, I will."

Once the committee drafted the standards, they aligned them with their corresponding Developmental Asset, to honor the framework that had already been established in the district. From there began a year's worth of listening sessions; editing, informing, and trying to make the standards approachable to all of their stakeholders. On August 14, 2006, after an hour-long question and answer session, and with much excitement, the Anchorage School Board adopted the implementation of the SEL standards.

During the following year, Vickie continued to work to align the standards with many of the other existing programs and curricula that were being used so that teachers could see which of the standards were being taught, and which needed more focus. For example, the Resolving Conflict Creatively Program (RCCP) was being implemented in quite a few of their elementary schools, so Vickie brought together a team of RCCP teachers and they evaluated the RCCP curriculum through the lens of which SEL standards were being directly taught, and in which lessons they were being taught. A similar alignment was done for the district-adopted health curriculum, their middle school Aggressors, Victims, and Bystanders (AVB) Program, and 12 other programs or curricula currently being implemented in the district including the elementary reading curriculum.

The long term goal for the school district is to figure out how many of the SEL standards teachers have the potential of teaching by using their existing curricula and which ones they need to find more ways to support. More and more of the schools in Anchorage are self-selecting to add a research-based SEL program to their school day. The next task ASD is working on is figuring out how they will assess whether students have mastered the SEL skills. The ASD sees their work as "putting the assets into action." However the adoption of these standards does also seem to be empowering the various individual schools to address SEL more intentionally and pro-

at their practices, showing them how culturally responsive they currently are, and how they can move further down the continuum. Both tools (the continuum and the SEL standards) are being used at various professional development offerings at conferences and trainings around the district.

At least one team from every school in the district has now been trained in the use of both. Vickie is also an active member of various initiatives in the wider Anchorage community. For example, she serves on committees around Anchorage aimed at closing the achievement gap and ending racism as it ex-

It became apparent to the school district that they weren't going to really help students thrive in their SEL skills if they didn't focus on providing them with a culturally responsive environment in which to learn, given how culturally diverse their student body was

grammatically. In order to support the deepening of the work around the SEL standards, the school district decided to select two elementary, two middle, and two high schools to be SEL pilot schools. These pilot schools are helping the SEL Coordinator to determine what resources or support schools need, and then Vickie works to provide that for the pilot schools as well as all of the other schools in the district.

It also became apparent to the school district that they weren't going to really help students thrive in their SEL skills if they didn't focus on providing them with a culturally responsive environment in which to learn, given how culturally diverse their student body was. Therefore Vickie worked with the district's Culturally Responsive Education Action Committee, spear-heading the design of a Culturally Responsive Teaching Continuum. This continuum provides teachers with a look

ists in their community. ASD is currently working on developing a district-wide plan to roll out diversity training to all of their school personnel. They have found that SEL and cultural responsiveness work can be a perfect match in both building a strong sense of self-awareness and a willingness to deal with a formerly taboo subject matter-racism.

Since the Anchorage School District is so at the cutting edge of SEL implementation in a systemic way, they are also realizing that it is important for them to objectively know what efforts are working and what the impact is. As a result, they have designed some assessment tools to gather data and gauge their successes. For example, ASD staff helped to write survey questions that the American Institutes for Research adapted for inclusion in an Alaska School Climate and Connectedness Survey (SCCS; Kendziora, Osher, & Spier, 2005). The student version measures

three school climate scales: High Expectations, School Safety, and School Leadership; as well as four connectedness scales: Respectful Climate, Peer Climate, Caring Adults, and Community Involvement. The staff version of the survey supplies an overall climate factor that is the mean of six scales: School Leadership, Respectful Climate, Staff Attitudes, Parent and Community Involvement, Student Involvement, and School Safety, plus reverse-coded Student Delinquency and Drug and Alcohol Use scores.

ASD's School Climate and Connectedness Survey (SCCS) has become a key resource to help the district continue to get a sense of how successful they are with their SEL commitment. This survey is given yearly to all students grades 5-12, as well as to teachers and parents. It provides a baseline for each school, showing how students and staff rated the above constructs prior to any SEL intervention, how staff is affecting the climate and culture of the school, and whether students are self-reporting improvement on their social and emotional skills.

ASD also designed a Culturally Responsive Survey, which was administered to all of their bilingual students K-12. The students were asked to rate their experiences in their schools in terms of diversity issues. Principals and teachers are using the results of these two surveys to design school action plans that will help address the most prevalent needs in their school communities. They are also in the process of designing a third assessment tool to be used specifically for teachers. The goal of this assessment tool is for teachers to take an in depth look into their current practice and rate themselves in terms of how well they are modeling social and emotional skills for their students and providing them with the best possible environment in which to learn these skills. ASD would like to use this tool to get pre- and post data from this assessment and be able

to rate the effectiveness of the professional development opportunities being offered by how much change teachers are making in their practice.

Finally, ASD is also developing a Standards Based Report Card for social and emotional learning. Currently their traditional report card has a place to score things like citizenship, responsibility, etc. However, the scoring is arbitrary and nearly meaningless to teachers and parents. Therefore, a new report card is being designed with rubrics that will rate the 15 SEL standards individually, giving teachers clear indicators by grade level (K-6) to help them to determine whether the student is learning and applying that standard to their life.

The ASD staff is aware that in order for the SEL Report Cards to be beneficial to students, teachers, and parents, the design of the rubrics and professional development that will accompany them has to be very carefully done. They expect to use the report cards as a communication tool to better a student's chance of receiving the practice and skills they need. The Standards Based Report cards are also an effort to provide students with a more consistent experience from school to school. Finally, if teachers are required to assess specific skills in their students, they are more apt to teach those skills in the classroom. As the SEL Coordinator, Vickie's job is to provide them with the resources, training, and tools necessary to do just that.

ASD continues to be a national leader in pioneering school climate implementation and research, incorporation of Developmental Assets (Search Institute, 2000), and development of SEL standards and benchmarks for integration into curriculum, instruction and assessment. The implementation of intentional SEL is a priority of the School Board and superintendent, and has been carried out at the grassroots level with development

and buy-in from schools, teachers, parents, and site administrators. Over the past decade the school district has accomplished great things and inspired many school districts across the US to make SEL a priority.

ASD's leadership and personnel are firmly in support of implementing sustainable district-wide SEL for their students. The district has long been on the cutting edge of this type of reform effort. Superintendent Carol Comeau is recognized as a national leader in SEL reform and serves on CASEL's Advisory Board. ASD's Assistant Superintendent,

C | The Implementation of Social and Emotional Learning at P.S. 24

The Dual-Language School for International Studies in New York City³⁹

Public School 24, also called the Dual-Language School for International Studies (Spanish and English), is an exemplary example of a school in which academic instruction, social and emotional learning, and mental health services are fully integrated for the benefit of students, their families and teachers. This elementary school for children four to 12 years of age is located in the heart of a largely

“Attending to social and emotional needs is critical. Students need to feel good about themselves to learn. If we want them to be risk-takers intellectually, we need to help them feel safe in school and at home. The more we address emotional needs, the fewer discipline problems we’ll have. This is not only right to do morally; it’s a strategy to get kids to achieve academically”

Christina Fuentes, Principal PS24

Rhonda Gardner, volunteered on the original SEL steering committee, serving a pivotal role in the writing of the ASD SEL Standards and Benchmarks. Because of the level of their investment, the ASD has drawn national attention to the field of SEL. In 2007, the George Lucas Education Foundation filmed an onsite documentary of ASD's SEL initiative for the online magazine *Edutopia*. Superintendent Comeau presented their work on SEL at the Council of Great City Schools and the CASEL Forum in 2007. Many nationally known SEL leaders and practitioners support and collaborate with the ASD on the work they are doing. This national support has helped to ensure that their implementation of SEL is high quality.

Latino (Hispanic), working class neighborhood called Sunset Park in the borough of Brooklyn in New York City. Nearly half of the school's 839 students are learning English. Most emigrated from Mexico, the Dominican Republic, Ecuador and other countries in Spanish-speaking Central and South America. There are some children of Chinese background as well. About 90% of the students are eligible for free or reduced-price lunches, which is a clear indicator that they are from low-income families. New York City has more than a million public school students and 1,400 public schools. The student population of the entire school system is diverse: 32.5% Black, 39% Latino or Hispanic, 14% Asian, and 14.5% white.

Upon entering the school building, signs of a child-centered approach to teaching and learning are evident. PS 24's walls are covered with colorful children's artwork. Teachers aren't screaming in hallways or classrooms, and the lunchroom has lots of noise, but the children are engaged and mannerly. "Visitors to our school often comment about the warmth and respect students and adults show for each other here," says Christina Fuentes, the principal.

PS 24 has been implementing research-based social and emotional learning programs since the school opened its doors in 1997. Explains, Fuentes: "Attending to social and emotional needs is critical. Students need to feel good about themselves to learn. If we want them to be risk-takers intellectually, we need to help them feel safe in school and at home. The more we address emotional needs, the fewer discipline problems we'll have. This is not only right to do morally; it's a strategy to get kids to achieve academically."

PS 24 has partnered with a nongovernmental organization, Morningside Center for Teaching Social Responsibility, to carefully implement their SEL curriculum. Morningside Center was founded in 1982 by educators concerned about the dangers of nuclear war. Their mission is to help students and teachers learn creative, nonviolent ways of dealing with conflict and cultural differences.

Virtually all of the teachers have received professional development in SEL through the Resolving Conflict Creatively Program (RCCP), one of the longest running research-based kindergarten - grade 8 SEL programs in the US. Some of the teachers have also been trained in a newer SEL program called the 4Rs (Reading, Writing, Respect, and Resolution) Program, which integrates conflict resolution into reading, writing, and speaking skills for grades K-5. Each unit of the 4R's curriculum begins with a teacher reading a

book aloud to the students. Students practice SEL skills in the context of understanding the story and its context to their lives. Currently this program is undergoing an extensive three-year scientific evaluation and initial results are very promising. Through both of these efforts, the teachers at PS 24 are able to provide regular instruction for their students in SEL skills (for example: active listening, dealing with feelings, assertiveness, negotiation, mediation, dealing well with diversity, and making a difference).

In addition, the school has approximately 40 trained peer mediators (4th and 5th graders) to help their classmates talk out problems and arrive at solutions. Mediators receive a three-day training and learn a specific 17-step mediation process. Once trained, they work in teams of two, usually during lunch or recess. They wear peer mediator T-shirts when they are "on duty". The mediators always have an adult coach, usually a parent, who has also been trained in the process. The coach is nearby in case a problem should arise that they need help with.

Some of the mediators also become "Peace Helpers" who go into kindergarten through third grade classrooms to set up "peace corners" to help the younger students address problems that arise by resolving conflict non-violently in the peace corner. A peace corner is a place where a student can go for a few minutes if he or she is upset or having a conflict with someone. Peace helpers are available on request to sit with the upset students to help them feel better or work things out. At PS 24, every kindergarten through grade three classroom now has a peace corner and peace helpers. The school also operates an after-school program, PAZ ("Peace from A to Z") every school day of the year for some 360 students.

In the spring of 2007, some upper grade students got specialized training to become



part of a “diversity panel” that shared their cultural stories and experiences with various classrooms in the school as part of the school’s first ever “Diversity Week”. Teachers were asked to discuss diversity in their classrooms every day during that week and the student diversity panel helped by making classroom presentations.

When Heather shared her story in one classroom, she explained to her fellow students:

It was hard for me in my old school. People made fun of me because I have only one hand. So I started playing sports - basketball, football. And when I got better at it, they started to leave me alone.

Jason described his experience being African American with the following remarks:

I was in the park one day with my mom and her boyfriend. And I was bored, because only younger kids were there. And then three white kids came into the park that were my age. I asked if I could play with them. And they said, “No, we won’t play with you.” And I asked them why. And they said, “Because you’re black”. I went away and I thought about it. And I thought that they were wrong, that it shouldn’t make any difference what color my skin was. So I went back over to them and told them that.

Many other aspects of PS 24’s curriculum promote SEL. For example, the school’s dual language program helps the many new immigrants make an easier adjustment to their new country. Students read books of their own choosing, write from their life experience, and practice their communication skills in group discussions which fosters SEL skills as well.

Of course, there are some children at PS 24 who need extra help in SEL (as there are children who need extra help in reading or math). For 2nd and 3rd graders who are continually getting into trouble during lunch and recess, a staff developer from Morningside Center and the school’s guidance counselor provide “lunch clubs,” in which three or four of these challenging younger students are paired with older peer mediators to form a group that meets once a week for six weeks or more to check in with each other and get extra practice in SEL skills. For example, in these sessions they might role-play how to be strong without being mean in specific situations. The lunch clubs have resulted in significant improvements in the behavior of many participating students. To address the needs of youngsters and their families who need even more support, the school has a relationship with Lutheran Medical Center – a local mental health agency, which provides trained therapists and counselors to work with families.

A few years ago, PS 24 chose to become an “empowerment school”. Empowerment schools, in the new structure and governance of the New York City Department of Education (NYC-DOE), get more autonomy in exchange for greater accountability. The DOE piloted a fairer and more nuanced accountability system in the empowerment schools in 2007. In this new process, called “value added”, cohorts of students are tracked and their progress measured from year to year, schools are compared with other schools that have similar student populations, and schools receive a letter grade (A through F).

In the 2006-2007 school year, evidence came flooding in that all of PS 24’s efforts in terms of how they were teaching their children was having a major impact, not only on the school climate at their school, but on students’ academic performance. The NYC – DOE rated PS 24 “exemplary” in closing the

achievement gap. It accomplished this by Latino students in the lowest third in English Language Arts rising to higher levels of achievement in English Language Arts and by all English language learners rising to higher

out their school day as they do at PS 24, they learn concepts and skills in a deep and genuine way that truly belongs to them. As David Elkind wrote, “once growth by integration has been accomplished, it is difficult

When children actively engage in meaningful, relevant learning experiences throughout their school day as they do at PS 24, they learn concepts and skills in a deep and genuine way that truly belongs to them

levels of achievement in mathematics. They received a B+, one of the highest grades among schools rated. The school also received outstanding scores on the NYC-DOE’s Learning Environment Survey. PS 24’s survey responses were above average in every category (academic expectations, communication, engagement, safety and respect).

In its most recent Quality Review Report, the NYC-DOE gave PS 24 its highest rating, calling it a “well-developed school” in all five areas evaluated. The report noted that:

The school has developed excellent partnerships with organizations dedicated to conflict resolution and peace mediation. Students as young as kindergarten age are trained as peacemakers and mediators. There have been no suspensions this current school year and only one last year (...) Children are happy, feel safe, and take an active role in their daily learning. Students who were questioned felt respected by all teachers and were able to name not one but several individual staff members who they trusted.

When children actively engage in meaningful, relevant learning experiences through-

- if not impossible - to break it down” (Elkind, 1998).⁴⁰ Creating an effective school-based SEL program that teaches young people how to intervene mindfully and respectfully in conflict situations and to make ethical choices in their own personal and social behavior requires the kind of instruction that goes beyond just telling students what they ought to know and how they ought to behave. It requires a pedagogy of active learning that enables students to recognize and practice the skills and ideas they have learned in the classroom in real life situations.

The children at PS 24 are fortunate to participate in a school program with such an approach, one that is infused throughout the school, where children learn a variety of SEL skills for managing their emotions and resolving conflicts creatively and nonviolently. The SEL skills at PS 24 are taught differently at different developmental levels, but the curriculum begins in kindergarten and continues throughout. Here is one powerful example of this kind of learning in action.

Classes were in session and the halls almost empty. A teacher first noticed the little boy - small but chunky, maybe a second grader, then two other boys, a bit older, walking near him. One of the two called out: “Hey,

Effective SEL programming includes instruction in and opportunities to practice and apply an integrated set of skills, learning environments characterized by trust, implementation that is coordinated classroom, school-wide, out-of-school, and at-home learning activities, systematic and sequential programming through every grade level, developmentally, and on-going evaluation for continuous improvement

*Fatty! You stink up the soccer field!
You suck at soccer!"*

The object of the taunt took a deep breath and squared his shoulders, then turned to face his attackers.

"You're right," he said. "I'm not good at soccer. And you are really good – one of the best in the school. But you know what? I'm really good at art. I can draw almost anything."

The air seemed to go out of the boy who had hurled the insult, and he said: "You're not so bad. Want me to show you some moves after school?" Then the pair walked off in another direction, the little guy still standing near the teacher. "Gimme five!" she said to him, acknowledging how he had handled the situation. This teacher also found the second grader's teacher and let her know what he had done.

The boys in the above situation had SEL instruction for at least a couple of years at their school. The boy who was insulted practiced some important and standard techniques for managing his emotions and handling the conflict. First, he paused and

took a slow, deep breath. This is a technique taught to children to help them control their emotions when they realize they are about to be "high-jacked" by strong feelings. Then he gave a "put-up" (the opposite of a put-down) to his attacker and himself, reminding them both of something positive about each, thus leveling and elevating the encounter. The put-ups also cued the children to the SEL teachings they were a familiar with as well, further invoking past learning about handling conflict. As a result, what might have been the start of days, months, or even years of conflict between the younger boy and two older oppressors, was quickly diffused and turned into a positive encounter.

SEL is being used as a framework for school improvement at PS 24. The school focuses both on teaching social and emotional learning skills and creating and maintaining a safe, caring learning environment. PS 24's students are being provided with sequential and developmentally appropriate instruction in SEL skills, and structured opportunities for them to practice, apply, and be recognized for using these skills throughout the day. Their SEL efforts have all of the essential components of successful evidence-based school-wide SEL programming.

Effective SEL programming includes:

- Instruction in and opportunities to practice and apply an integrated set of cognitive, affective, and behavioral skills.
- Learning environments characterized by trust and respectful relationships.
- Implementation that is coordinated and reinforces classroom, school-wide, out-of-school, and at-home learning activities.
- Systematic and sequential programming from preschool through every grade level.
- Developmentally and culturally appropriate behavioral supports.
- On-going monitoring and evaluation of implementation for continuous improvement.

Currently, PS 24 is one of thousands of schools in the US proving that a school does not have to choose between promoting academic achievement and fostering good citizenship in the context of a caring learning community. A new vision of education that values young people's hearts, spirits as well as their minds is beginning to take hold. Adults and children at PS 24 are partners in creating a positive school environment. The children are developing their leadership skills, and have skills in social and emotional learning that they will use for the rest of their lives – at home, at school, on the street, at work, and as citizens.

As we prepare our children to meet the challenges of living and working in the 21st century, all children deserve the kind of education practiced and modeled at PS 24. Our future depends on it.

IV. Conclusion

The United States has been the first home of the social and emotional learning movement in education in the world. At least some component of this approach is used in more than half of the thousands of schools in the US. Over the last decade, this humanizing wave in American education has inspired many other parts of the world to follow. As this report outlines, many other countries are using SEL curriculum. Today SEL is being incorporated in some form in schools under diverse titles such as "emotional literacy", "social and emotional education", "life skills", "citizenship education", and "character education".

In Singapore, the Ministry of Education launched a nationwide SEL program in 2006 and UNESCO formulated ten basic SEL principles⁴¹ in a statement issued in 2002 to ministries in 140 countries.⁴² The ten basic principles are summarized in the table below:

1	Learning requires caring
2	Teach everyday life-skills
3	Link social-emotional instruction to other school services
4	Use goal-setting to focus instruction
5	Use varied instructional procedures
6	Promote community service to build empathy
7	Involve parents
8	Build social-emotional skills gradually and systematically
9	Prepare and support staff well
10	Evaluate what you do

The SEL movement is one of the most promising trends in the field of education that we have witnessed in a long time. It seems to be the "missing piece" in bolstering academic success and preparing young people for the challenges they face in the 21st century. The challenges the movement faces now are to tackle the barriers that may obstruct more widespread adoption.

Educational leaders in our country are still largely uninformed about the research findings concerning the value of social and emotional learning and how best to integrate and sustain it as a central component of their curriculum, policies and practice

What will it take for social and emotional learning to be fully incorporated into the American education system as a norm not an exception? Firstly, we need to get the word out. Educational leaders in our country are still largely uninformed about the research findings concerning the value of social and emotional learning and how best to integrate and sustain it as a central component of their curriculum, policies and practice. Although scientific evidence and know-how is available, this information is not effectively utilized in most American schools. A strategic communications plan is needed at every level of American society to inform school administrators, teachers, parents, and the public about the positive short and long-term impacts of SEL. CASEL needs to take a lead in publishing and broadly disseminating reports summarizing SEL programming impacts and continue to update their “consumer’s guide” of evidenced-based SEL programming.

Secondly, in order to broadly adopt an SEL vision of education, there needs to be a model established to train large numbers of people to train others in these approaches. Again CASEL’s role here is essential in making SEL more widespread in the US. It would be helpful for example for CASEL to experimentally evaluate their resource *Sustainable School-wide SEL: Implementation Guide and Tool Kit* and continue to provide technical assistance to other states toward school-side SEL implementation. Currently school personnel struggle with choosing, implementing and

sustaining effective SEL programs and need help to move forward.

Thirdly, there is insufficient science and knowledge on how to best assess SEL outcomes. CASEL needs to play a role in further refining and field-testing rubrics for guiding and measuring SEL practices and program implementation. SEL report cards for parent-teacher-student conferences need to be designed and evaluated.

Finally, in order for SEL implementation to be widespread within states and countries, the actions of educators alone are not sufficient. Policy work is required to guide states and countries to systematically and broadly implement and sustain evidence-based SEL programming.

Amidst the challenges the US faces in educating its children, we are also in a time of great hope and possibility. The SEL framework - if broadly adopted - would do much to improve the educational system in the US. We owe it to our children to help them be fully prepared for the challenges and opportunities that they will experience. I end with the words of Pablo Casals:

Each second we live is a new and unique moment of the universe, a moment that never was before and will never be again. And what do we teach our children in school? We teach them that two and two makes

four, and that Paris is the capital of France. When will we also teach them what they are? We should say to each of them: Do you know what you are? You are a marvel. You are unique. . . And when you grow up can you then harm another who is, like you, a marvel? You must cherish one another. You must work - we all must work - to make this world worthy of its children.

Pablo Casals

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