



November 28, 2016

Dear Members of the President-elect Transition Team:

On behalf of the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) and the Committee for Children (CFC), we would like to invite you to learn more about our work to advance social and emotional learning skills which promote success and 21st century competitiveness in the workplace while also advancing classroom learning, teamwork, and academic achievement.

CASEL is the nation's leading organization advancing the development of academic, social, and emotional competence for all students. CASEL's mission is to help make evidence-based social and emotional learning an integral part of education from preschool through high school. CFC is a global nonprofit dedicated to fostering the safety and well-being of children through education and advocacy. CFC is the world's largest provider of research-based educational programs that promote social-emotional skills and prevent bullying and sexual abuse. The organization's curricula reach more than 10 million children in 26,000 schools around the world. As you proceed with setting federal education policy priorities for FY2018 and beyond, our organizations offer our recommendations and this brief overview of advances that are locally driven and supported by Republicans, Democrats, educators and business people alike.

What the Trump Administration can do to Support Student Success in School, Career and Life

Teaching Employability Skills: U.S. competitiveness in the global economy depends on a workforce that has acquired both the technical knowledge needed for the specific occupations and the employability skills required for all jobs. Today, employers in every industry sector emphasize the need for employees with certain foundational skills. These include strong academic fundamentals like reading, writing and math. But equally important to their success now and in the future is their mastery of employability skills like teamwork, problem solving, tenacity and integrity—skills that increase productivity, innovation, and growth for businesses in the 21st century.

Our organizations know that students can be taught the skills necessary to make them successful in the classroom as well as the workplace through evidence-based social and emotional learning (SEL) programs. SEL involves the processes of developing competencies, including self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills and responsible decision-making. These skills help students succeed in school and also prepare them for future roles as citizens, employees, managers, parents, volunteers and entrepreneurs. In fact, more and more business leaders cite social-emotional skills alongside technical savvy or subject-matter mastery in their recruitment criteria.

SEL benefits the economy and even pays for itself many times over. Investments in SEL programs have more than a tenfold return in cost savings to taxpayers. A recent analysis of the

projected economic return from six effective SEL programs found that all of them showed a return on investment. On average, there was an \$11 return on investment for every dollar spent on the intervention, and for some of the interventions, the return on investment was much greater than the initial cost.¹

Improving Career and Technical Education: CASEL and CFC worked with Republicans and Democrats on the House Education and the Workforce Committee to ensure local schools could use funds authorized in the bipartisan *Strengthening Career and Technical Education for the 21st Century Act*, better known as the reauthorization of the *Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act*, to improve and build upon what employers and the Department of Education have termed employability skills, which was approved 405-5 by the House of Representatives last September. We strongly urge the new Secretary of Education to support this effort and this legislation in the 115th Congress.

Supporting Evidence-based Non-academic Strategies: CASEL and CFC strongly support provisions in the bipartisan *Every Student Succeeds Act* (ESSA) that allow states and school districts a great degree of flexibility in the use of educational strategies to provide students with a well-rounded education. SEL is one of the nonacademic strategies that has been shown by research to strongly contribute to a student's academic and career success.

Mounting evidence demonstrates that state education agencies (SEAs), local education agencies (LEAs) and schools are embracing the importance of SEL. This includes:

- A survey of teachers indicating they believe SEL works with diverse groups of students and provides critical foundations for all students to be college, career, community, and life ready (Bridgeland et al., 2013).
- Compelling data from meta-analyses of K-12 SEL programming documenting that SEL improves positive attitudes and social behaviors, reduces conduct problems and emotional distress, and enhances academic performance – including an 11-percentile point improvement in academic achievement performance in program students relative to students in comparison groups (Durlak, Weissberg, Dymnicki, Taylor, & Schellinger, 2011).
- Research-based descriptions of SEL in the new 37-chapter *Handbook on Social and Emotional Learning: Research and Practice* (Durlak, Domitrovich, Weissberg, & Gullotta, 2015).
- Large school districts – such as Anchorage, Atlanta, Austin, Cleveland, Chicago, El Paso, Nashville, Oakland, Sacramento, Oakland, and Washoe County – implementing systemic SEL district-wide.

CASEL and CFC strongly recommend the new Secretary of Education urge states and districts to focus their expenditure of federal funds on evidence-based practice which does not conflict with the call for more flexibility and responsiveness to local needs. Rather it is an opportunity to build upon lessons learned and highlight how states and districts have been able to innovate over the past decade to maximize impact through their own locally developed needs assessments.

Reinforcing New Secretary of Education's Support of SEL: Our organizations believe that the Secretary of Education is uniquely positioned to encourage local educators' efforts to

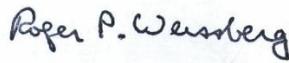
promote positive school climate where students can learn academic fundamentals as well as employability skills through the implementation of evidenced-based SEL curricula. We think this can be supported by robust funding for ESSA’s Title II, Part A to support high-quality teachers, principals and other school leaders, as well as Title IV, Part A, Student Support and Academic Enrichment Grants. As such, we urge President-elect Trump and his nominee for Secretary of Education to support funding for these critical funding streams in his FY 2018 budget.

We understand this is a busy period for the President-elect’s Transition Team, and we look forward to meeting in person with your staff to talk through our organizations’ work and additional ideas for the President-elect that will ultimately contribute to the success of our nation’s children and families. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Sincerely,



Joan Cole Duffell
Executive Director
Committee for Children
Seattle, Washington



Roger P. Weissberg, PhD
Chief Knowledge Officer
Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL)
Chicago, Illinois

ⁱⁱ Belfield, C. Bowden, B., Klapp, A., Levin, H., Shand, R., & Zander. S. (2015). *The economic value of social and emotional learning*. Retrieved from the Center for Benefit-Cost Studies in Education website: <http://cbcse.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/SEL-Revised.pdf>.