

September 29, 2015

The Honorable Lamar Alexander
Chairman
Health, Education, Labor and Pensions
Committee
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Patty Murray
Ranking Member
Health, Education, Labor and Pensions
Committee
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable John Kline
Chairman
Education and the Workforce Committee
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Bobby Scott
Ranking Member
Education and the Workforce Committee
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairmen Alexander and Kline and Ranking Members Murray and Scott:

On behalf of the undersigned national organizations that support the development of academic, social and emotional competence for all students, we ask that as your Committees prepare to begin conference negotiations to reauthorize the *Elementary and Secondary Education Act* (ESEA), we urge you to maintain the language found in Titles I, II and IV in S. 1177, the *Every Child Achieves Act* (ECAA), related to strategies that help establish learning environments to improve students' academic and nonacademic skills which are essential for school readiness and academic success. In addition, we urge the Committees to maintain the definition of Professional Development found in H.R. 5, the *Student Success Act*, which includes building teacher, principal, and other school leader capacity in addressing the social and emotional development needs of students.

Scientific research continually shows that getting the best outcomes for students requires building academic *and* social and emotional skills. According to the CDC, students who feel more connected to school are more likely to have positive health and education outcomes. To accomplish this goal, the CDC recommends that schools "*provide students with the academic, emotional, and social skills necessary to be actively engaged in school.*" Additionally, a national survey of teachers indicates that teachers believe that social and emotional learning (SEL) improves academic performance, school climate, and culture, and prepares students for college, career, and life success (Bridgeland et al., 2013). Further, a recent cost-benefit analysis of SEL programming indicated that there is an eleven dollar return for each dollar invested in SEL programming (Belfield et al., 2015)

Social and emotional learning (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. These abilities are teachable and many risky behaviors (e.g., drug use, violence, bullying and dropping out) can be prevented or reduced when multiyear, integrated efforts are used to develop students' social and emotional skills.

In addition, there are a variety of evidence-based programs that can be integrated into school curriculum, instruction, and culture. A landmark meta-analysis of 213 SEL programs with a combined sample of more than 270,000 students clearly established the effectiveness of social and emotional programs across a number of areas critical to the success of students. Students scored 11 percentile points higher on standardized achievement tests, a significant improvement, relative to peers not receiving SEL programming. They also demonstrated greater pro-social behavior, fewer problem behaviors, and less emotional stress.

In a complex and increasingly challenging world, it is essential for young people in the United States to gain every competitive advantage available. To achieve this goal, it is also critical to provide professional development, technical assistance, and support to district and school personnel to ensure that they are implementing evidence-based SEL programming for preschool to high school students with the highest quality.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Afterschool Alliance	Learning to BREATHE
America Forward	Mind Up
America's Promise Alliance	Mindful Schools
American Psychological Association	Morningside Center for Teaching Social Responsibility
Association for Middle Level Education	National Association of Elementary School Principals
Atlantic Education Consultants (Student Success Skills)	National Association for Secondary School Principals
Buck Institute of Education	National Association of School Psychologists
Center for Health and Health Care in Schools	National Association for Social Workers
Character.org	National Association of State Directors of Special Education
CHARACTERPlus Programs	National Forum to Accelerate Middle Grade Reform
Civic Enterprises	National School Climate Center
Collaborative Classrooms	New Teacher Center
Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning	Niroga Institute
Committee for Children	PATHS Education Worldwide
Curry School of Education	Positive Action
Engaging Schools	Responsive Classrooms
Futures without Violence	Rutgers Social-Emotional Learning Lab
I Can Problem Solve	School Social Work Association of America
Illinois Children's Mental Health Partnership	Student Success Skills
Illinois Principals Association	Turnaround for Children
Inner Resilience Program	Wingspan, LLC