

JOINT POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS OF EDUCATION ORGANIZATIONS CONCERNING SUPPORT FOR SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL LEARNING DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC SCHOOL CLOSURES AND BEYOND

Coronavirus SEL Education Resources: [CASEL](#); [Committee For Children](#)

APRIL 29, 2022

The undersigned organizations representing educators, parents, school-based professionals, out-of-school time providers, education researchers, and education organizations are committed to supporting students, educators, and their families who are reeling from the disruption caused by the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. Schools have cancelled classes for the remainder of the academic year or moved instruction online. Plans for summer learning programs as well as plans for fall instruction and placement are uncertain. During these unprecedented times our interconnectedness has never been more clearly on display, while our inequities are equally apparent. As has been seen time and again, social and emotional learning (SEL) competencies offer a powerful means to support one another – children and adults – during both normal and challenging times. Now, educators and students are being called on to demonstrate empathy and resilience, build relationships across distance, and to utilize their collective resolve to strengthen our schools and our communities. In this time of great need, we the undersigned organizations, call on Governors to utilize the emergency relief funds granted to them by the federal government to provide the SEL resources to educators and students at all levels that are a necessity for their success now more than ever.

SEL plays a critical role in preparing young people for success in college, careers, and life. In the classroom and in out-of-school settings, high quality SEL programs have been shown to reduce behavioral problems, improve students' sense of belonging, increase school attendance, and promote academic achievement. Building a strong SEL foundation, which the [Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning \(CASEL\)](#) notes is “the process through which children, youth, and adults acquire and effectively apply the knowledge, attitudes, and skills necessary to understand and manage emotions, set and achieve positive goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain positive relationships, and make responsible decisions,” is also critical for students, teachers, and families struggling to cope with acute, chronic, and historical traumatic stresses. In recent years we have seen education and political leaders at the local, state, and federal levels embrace SEL as an effective strategy to support academic success as well as to ensure schools are safe and that students recover from traumatic events.

As early as 2018, the [Secretary of Education's Supplemental Priorities and Definitions for Discretionary Grant Programs](#) included a priority for “Fostering Knowledge and Promoting the Development of Skills that Prepare Students to be Informed, Thoughtful, and Productive Individuals and Citizens,” which is essentially SEL by another name. The very first recommendation of the [Final Report of the Federal School Safety Commission](#) was that “States

should provide resources for their schools to help create a positive school climate where students feel connected to, rather than isolated from, their teachers and fellow students.” However despite this culture shift, educators are still not receiving the SEL support they need for themselves and their students. For example, an April 2020 PDK International poll shows that teachers are in as much need of SEL support as students, with nearly forty percent of teachers requesting SEL guidance but less than five percent of administrators providing such support. SEL researchers are seeing a spike in the need for SEL resources as well. The lack of support may have created a significant spike in demand for SEL resources from other places as CASEL has seen a 72% increase in users accessing their website within just a 3 week span in March and 5x the number of users participating in their webinars. These numbers represent just a fraction of the increasing demand for SEL resources that educators and families are seeking out.

The COVID-19 Pandemic is impacting life for educators and families in every state and county across the country. Whether in a low-income urban school district or a rural county, students and educators across the country are all dealing with the stress and anxiety associated with disrupted lives. To ensure that student learning loss is minimized while taking steps to keep students safe and healthy, many districts across the country are experimenting with online learning en masse for the first time. The enormous shift to online learning actually makes SEL, and systemic implementation of SEL across schools and districts, more important than ever to ensure educators are taking care of themselves while providing encouraging, safe, and supportive school communities now online that continue to focus on student’s strengths, necessary tiered supports, and positive relationship development.

It is essential that states use funds provided by Congress to support high-quality SEL skill building opportunities for both students and educators as addressing SEL needs will be critical to help reintegrate educators and youth back into school settings both virtually and in-person throughout the summer and fall. The bipartisan *Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security (CARES) Act* included a \$30.75 billion Education Stabilization Fund that would run through the Department of Education to states, with \$3.01 billion for a Governor’s Emergency Education Relief Fund, and \$13.5 billion for K-12 flowing directly to states and districts. While the law gives states and locals flexibility to address the individual needs of their districts, the law specifically calls out using funds to support the social and emotional needs of constituents. **Therefore, to ensure that funds are used appropriately and effectively to support the continuity of student engagement through SEL, we offer the following recommendations, which while comprehensive, are not exhaustive.**

- Prioritize SEL for all school and district continuing education plans to ensure students and teachers “re-enter” school effectively and ready to learn. This includes identification of existing and supplemental resources that may be provided in-person or at distance.
- Increase funding for evidence-based programs that foster safe and stable learning environments that prevent and mitigate the effects of trauma, including through social and emotional learning. These programs include support for the whole child such as full community schools, out-of-school time programs, and safe and healthy student supports such as Title IV-A, Project Aware, and Project SERV programs that utilize SEL resources.

- Prioritize professional development funding, both remote and in-person, for school teachers and leaders such as that authorized under Title II of ESSA. These funds can be used to train on multi-tiered support systems (MTSS), professional learning communities, and adult SEL supports that help teachers build their own SEL core competencies.
- Allow funds to support community based organizations that provide evidence-based SEL supports, such as afterschool programs.
- Allow funds from across agencies to be combined with SEL funding to target students in need of support who are impacted by compounding traumas and adverse childhood experiences such as those stemming from instability in housing and nutrition, lack of access to mental health resources, connection with the child welfare system, or inadequate access to digital resources.

In conclusion, the Governors Emergency Education Relief Fund is extraordinarily flexible and designed to enable governors to decide how best to meet the needs of students, schools (including charter schools and non-public schools), postsecondary institutions, and other education-related organizations in each state. We, the undersigned organizations, recognize the mounting decisions state leaders must make with finite resources. However, we implore state leaders to recognize that leveraging federal funds so that children and families of all backgrounds across the country's 133,000 public schools can engage and access SEL educational resources should be a priority during this crisis. The success and well-being of our nation's next generation of leaders depends on it.

Signed by:

7 Mindsets Academy, LLC

ACT, Inc.

Afterschool Alliance

American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education

American Psychological Association

American School Counselor Association

Aperture Education

Arizona Department of Education

ASCD

Atlanta Public Schools

Atlantic Education Consultants

Author/Consultant

Big Picture Learning

Bridging Voices in Our Community

California Social-Emotional Learning Alliance

Centennial Middle School - Boulder
Center for Health and Health Care in Schools
Center for Responsive Schools
Center for the Collaborative Classroom
Center for the Promotion of Social and Emotional Learning
Center for the Study and Prevention of Violence, University of Colorado Boulder
Center on Capacity Building for Minorities with Disabilities, University of Illinois at Chicago
CenterSource Systems
Chicago Public Schools
Citizen Schools
Civic
Cleveland Metropolitan School District
Cloverdale Counseling Center
Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL)
Committee for Children
Community and Youth Collaborative Institute (CAYCI)
Competent Kids, Caring Communities
Confident Parents, Confident Kids
Conscious Discipline
Consistency Management®
CREATE for Education
Creating Caring Communities
CT Commission on Women, Children, Seniors, Equity & Opportunity
Devereux Advanced Behavioral Health
E3: Education, Excellence & Equity
EDGE Consulting Partners
Education Reform Now
EduMotion
EL Education
Espelage Research Addressing Violence in Education (RAVE) lab
First Team Productions, Inc.
Forum for Youth Investment

FuelEd Schools

GiveThx

Greater Good Science Center at UC Berkeley

I Can Problem Solve

Inner Explorer

Inner Strength Foundation

INSIGHTS Intervention, LLC

Kinful

LiFEsports at The Ohio State University

Love In A Big World

Massachusetts Consortium for SEL in Teacher Education (MA SEL-TEd)

Mindful Practices

Mindfulness Without Borders

Mindset Works, Inc.

MindUP | The Goldie Hawn Foundation

Momentous Institute

Move This World

National Afterschool Association

National Association of School Psychologists

National Black Justice Coalition

National University / Sanford Harmony

North Shore Animal League America

Office of Child Development, University of Pittsburgh

Oklahoma State Department of Education

Partnership for Children and Youth

PDK International

Playworks

Positive Action

Public Advocacy for Kids (PAK)

Pure Edge, Inc.

Purpose Prep

R J Rabin & Associates

Respectful Ways Social Emotional Learning Program

Rethink Ed

Saddleback Educational Inc.

Sandy Hook Promise

School Culture and Climate Initiative

School-Connect: Optimizing the High School Experience

SEL Consulting Collaborative

SEL Launchpad

SEL Providers Council

SEL Rising, LLC

SEL School Consulting, LLC

SEL4CA

SEL4IL

SEL4NJ

SEL4NY

SEL4OR

SEL4PA

SEL4US

SEL4VT

Six Seconds

SOAR Learning, Inc. / SELskills.com

Social Decision Making

Social-Emotional and Character Development Lab at Rutgers University

Society for Child and Family Policy and Practice

Sown To Grow, An SEL Reflection Platform

Stillness Rocks, Mindfulness Education

Teach For America

Teach Plus

Teach Plus Massachusetts & Rhode Island

Teaching Empathy Institute

Teaching Well

Teachstone, Inc.

TESOL International Association

The Center for Citizenship and Social Responsibility

The Education Trust

The Random Acts of Kindness Foundation

The Social-Emotional Learning Alliance for Massachusetts, Inc.

The Society of Clinical Child and Adolescent Psychology, American Psychological Association, Division 53

Tisch College Initiative on SEL & Civic Engagement at Tufts University

Tribes Learning Communities, Inc.

Tunkhannock Area School District - Intermediate School

Tunkhannock Primary Center SEL CLass

University of St. Francis

University of Virginia

William Penn School District

With Peace in Mind

Wyman Center, Inc.

xSEL Labs