



May 3, 2024

The Honorable Tammy Baldwin
Chair
Senate Labor, HHS, Education
and Related Agencies
Appropriations Subcommittee
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Robert Aderholt
Chair
House Labor, HHS, Education
and Related Agencies
Appropriations Subcommittee
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Shelley Moore Capito
Ranking Member
Senate Labor, HHS, Education
and Related Agencies
Appropriations Subcommittee
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Rosa DeLauro
Ranking Member
House Labor, HHS, Education
and Related Agencies
Appropriations Subcommittee
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Senator Baldwin, Senator Capito, Representative Aderholt, and Representative DeLauro:

As the Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies Appropriations Subcommittee develops the U.S. Department of Education's fiscal year (FY) 2025 budget, the Leading with Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) Coalition – along with state and local organizations – encourage you to fund the Education Innovation and Research (EIR) program at \$269,000,000, consistent with the President's FY2025 budget request, including providing continued support for social and emotional learning grants.

The EIR program was established under section 4611 of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act to support and validate proposed strategies for addressing the most persistent educational challenges to student success, especially the hurdles facing our nation's highest need and most underserved students. In FY2020, Congress created a bipartisan SEL and Whole Child Initiative that included dedicated funding for grants for evidence-based, field-initiated innovations that address student social, emotional, and cognitive needs. Congress funded SEL grants within the EIR program for the past five fiscal years, and we urge you to continue this longstanding bipartisan report language.

- Education Innovation and Research (EIR). – Within the total for EIR, and including continuation awards, the agreement includes \$87,000,000 to provide grants for social and emotional learning. To fulfill the set-asides, the agreement supports the prioritization of high-quality SEL proposals for both the early-and-mid-phase evidence tiers.

The EIR program has supported investments in SEL to improve student achievement and meet the social and emotional needs of students and teachers. These investments include grants that accelerate academic outcomes in specific subject areas; grants that provide teacher professional

development to support student academic, social and emotional needs; grants focused on evidence-based strategies to improve school climate and student engagement, as well as address chronic absenteeism; and grants which foster students' college and career readiness. For example:

- University, state, district, and school partners in **Maine and West Virginia** are using the grants to improve social and emotional and math outcomes for high-need rural and urban students by developing both social and emotional skills and rigorous academic learning.
- **North Carolina** is engaging in an effort called Reading Apprenticeship with 600 educators across 50 rural, low wealth school districts to support students in accelerating literacy achievement and developing SEL skills students need to succeed in school, college, careers, and life.
- School districts in **California, New York, Washington, and Wisconsin** are implementing the Third Quest, a Tier 2 reading intervention for middle school students who read below grade level focused on evidence-based literacy skills which integrate positive behavioral supports to promote students' reading motivation.
- School districts in **Alabama, Arizona, Colorado, Georgia, Kentucky, Maryland, Mississippi, New Mexico, Ohio, Oklahoma, Tennessee, and West Virginia** are implementing blended-learning professional development through the James Madison Legacy Project to prepare teachers with knowledge and pedagogies to effectively improve civic and SEL competencies for students facing persistent achievement gaps.
- School districts in **Florida and Texas** are implementing an instructional coaching system that leverages SEL practices to improve teacher effectiveness in supporting student writing proficiency at middle schools with instructional coaches who support English language arts teachers.
- In **Alabama**, schools are using grant funds to increase 8th graders' SEL skills and improve their academic outcomes as captured through attendance and course grades to prepare them to successfully navigate the transition to high school.

Programs like these EIR SEL grants are critical for supporting students most in need to progress academically and socially, particularly as the pandemic has elevated the needs of many students, educators and families.

Decades of research demonstrate social and emotional learning is critical for students' academic and holistic success and plays a vital role in supporting child and youth mental health and well-being. According to a 2023 meta-analysis, including 424 studies involving 575,361 students, students participating in social and emotional learning at schools had higher "school functioning," including grades, test scores, attendance, homework completion, and engagement.¹ The analysis also found decreases among students in aggression and bullying, anxiety, stress, depression, suicidality. Students also felt safer at schools, reporting higher levels of inclusion, connectedness, and healthy relationships. Similarly, a landmark 2011 meta-analysis found that social and emotional learning increased students' academic performance by 11 percentile points, compared to students who did not participate in SEL.² In addition, cost-benefit research shows

¹ Cipriano, Christina, et al. "The state of evidence for social and emotional learning: A contemporary meta-analysis of universal school-based SEL interventions." *Child Development*, 94(5), 13 July 2023, pp. 1181-1204., <https://doi.org/10.1111/cdev.13968>

² Durlak, J. A., Weissberg, R. P., Dymnicki, A. B., Taylor, R. D., & Schellinger, K. B. (2011). The impact of enhancing students' social and emotional learning: A meta-analysis of school-based universal interventions. *Child development*, 82(1), 405-432.

that for every dollar spent on evidence-based SEL programs studied, on average, there is an \$11 return on investment.³ Furthermore, parents, other caregivers, and teachers also consistently express a desire for students to learn social and emotional skills. According to survey data, 82% of educators said that integrating SEL into the classroom can improve student outcomes.⁴ Similarly, survey data shows 88 percent of parents want their students to learn social and emotional skills such as respect, cooperation, perseverance, and empathy.⁵

When students are supported in growing their social and emotional competence via skill development in self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making, they are more likely to experience academic success, school and civic engagement, health and wellness, and fulfilling careers.⁶ Now is not the time to abandon support to students we know is working. EIR SEL grants play an important role in implementing and scaling evidence-based social and emotional learning practices for supporting and improving student achievement. With continued congressional support, we expect this positive impact to continue for years to come.

Thank you for carefully considering our request. We would be pleased to discuss the SEL grants within the EIR program as the appropriations process unfolds this year.

Sincerely,

Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL)

All4Ed

American Camp Association

American Psychological Association (APA)

American School Counselor Association (ASCA)

Association for Middle Level Education (AMLE)

Committee for Children (CFC)

Communities in Schools of New Mexico

Confident Parents, Confident Kids

Education Development Center

Educators for Excellence

EQuip Our Kids!

National Art Education Association (NAEA)

<https://casel.s3.us-east-2.amazonaws.com/impact-enhancing-students-social-emotional-learning-meta-analysis-school-based-universals-interventions.pdf>

³ Clive Belfield et al., “The Economic Value of Social and Emotional Learning” (Teachers College, Columbia University, February 2015).

⁴ Houghton Mifflin Harcourt (2021). 2021 HMH Educator Confidence Report. Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt. <https://s3.amazonaws.com/prod-hmhco-vmg-craftcms-public/documents/2021-Educator-Confidence-Report.pdf>

⁵ “New National Survey Shows Parents More Comfortable about COVID-19 Risks and Student Well-Being in Schools.” National Parent Teacher Association, 26 June 2022,

<https://www.pta.org/home/About-National-Parent-Teacher-Association/PTA-Newsroom/news-list/news-detail-page/2022/06/17/new-national-survey-shows-parents-more-comfortable-about-covid-19-risks-and-student-well-being-in-schools>.

⁶ “What Is the CASEL Framework?,” CASEL, August 3, 2022, <https://casel.org/fundamentals-of-sel/what-is-the-casel-framework/>.

National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP)
National Association of School Psychologists (NASP)
National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP)
National Center for School Mental Health (NCSMH)
National Council of Teachers of Mathematics (NCTM)
National Equity Project
National Parents Union
Palonow
Pure Edge, Inc.
Respectful Ways
SEL Provider Association
School Social Work Association of America (SSWAA)
Social Emotional Learning Alliance for the United States (SEL4US)
Social Emotional Learning Alliance for California (SEL4CA)
The Urban Assembly