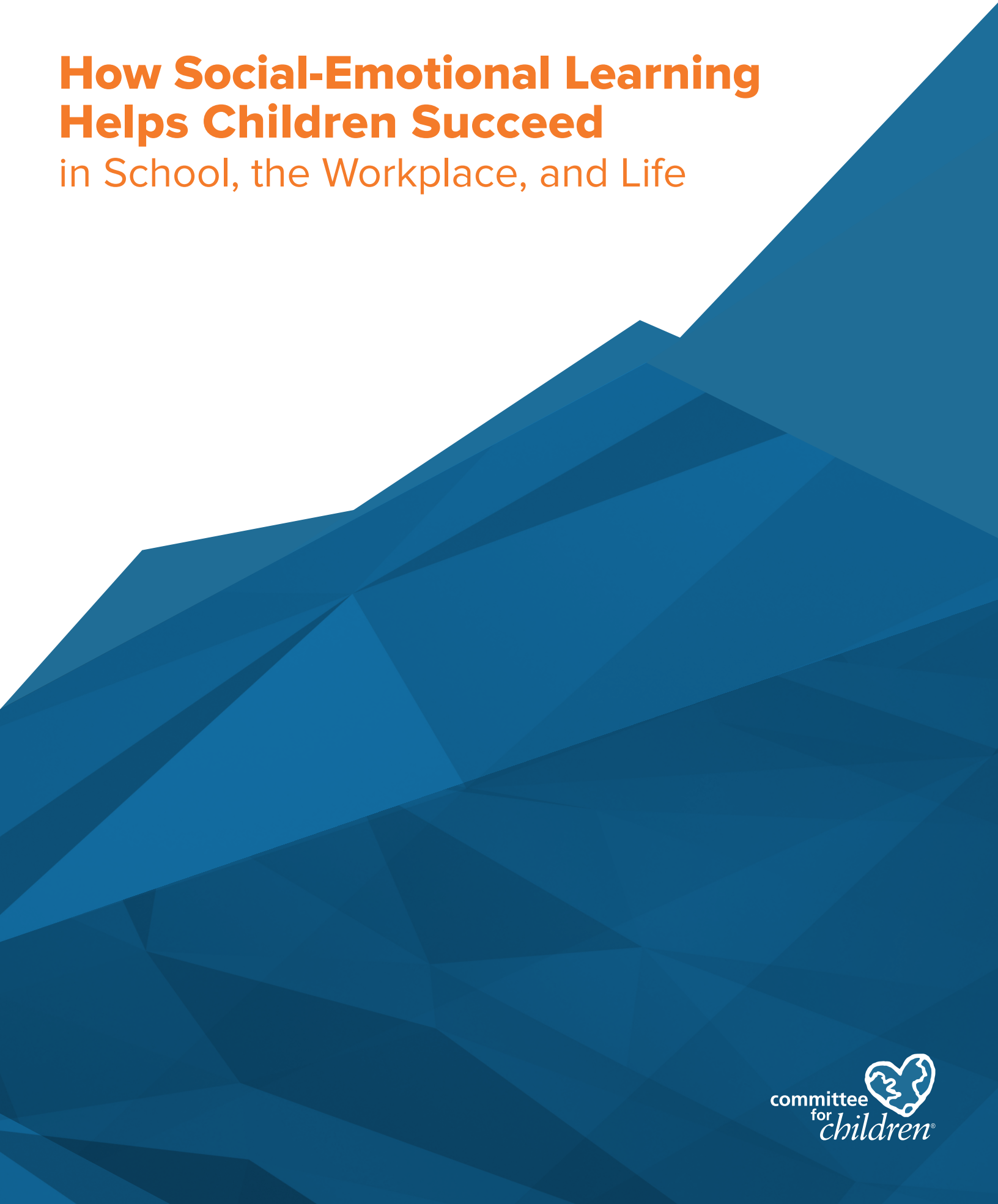
How Social-Emotional Learning Helps Children Succeed

in School, the Workplace, and Life



committee for children®

Global Greatness: How Social-Emotional Learning Helps Children Succeed in School, the Workplace, and Life

By Joan Cole Duffell
Executive Director
Committee for Children

As the leader of a nonprofit organization that strives to help the world's children develop vital social-emotional skills early in life, I am pleased that there's growing demand throughout the economy for employees with affective abilities.

A recent report from an advisory group of U.K. executives and educators was especially heartening because it made clear that non-cognitive skills and attributes such as team work, emotional maturity, empathy, and other interpersonal skills are as important as proficiency in English and mathematics.

This is refreshing thinking.

In so many ways, education policy has been stuck in the manufacturing age, driving schools to turn out people who recite information and pass cognitive tests so they can work on a production line effectively. Meanwhile, business has moved at light speed into the information age. To put it bluntly: Education policy hasn't kept up with the competency requirements of 21st-century work environments.

A good example is the empathy that's needed when we're creating well-designed products. It's not just about coding a functional e-widget. Steve Jobs started this refocus at Apple, and now people increasingly want elegant solutions; so even software engineers need to be able to stand in the customer's shoes today and feel how the end-user will respond to product design. This is a great reason why social-emotional skills are so critical to modern workplaces.

Another reason is that 21st-century work environments are all about cross-functional teaming, collaboration, and integrated design. They're also about working with people remotely, and these diffused work settings put a higher premium on social-emotional competence than old-school work environments ever did: It takes more effort and skill to connect on a human level with someone when you're not in the same room with them.

Social-emotional skills are absolutely essential for 21st-century leaders, too.

More and more, we're seeing that to be a successful boss these days, you simply can't be bossy. You need to be collaborative and convivial. You need to sell ideas to your teams. You need to listen well. You need to be attentive to customers' needs. You need to understand and internalize other's perspectives. And you need to appreciate everyone's problems and concerns and use that data to come up with win-win solutions.

Just as significantly, it's very difficult to demonstrate the cultural competence that's required in the global

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marketplace today if you're not imbued with social-emotional learning.

We now work with people from highly diverse backgrounds—and many of us interact with colleagues from just about every continent on a regular business basis. Indeed, almost every technology company is asking people from Silicon Valley or Seattle to team up with employees or contractors from Mumbai or Shanghai. Sometimes these people work together in the same physical space; and other times they're solving difficult problems together in a web-based setting.

I find these multicultural environments fascinating—and they present a wonderful and rich opportunity for learning, growth, and the development of substantive human relationships.

But these deeper relationships require sensitivity, empathy, social awareness, and an ability to imagine a completely different life experience from our own. When people who work in these environments possess these skills, collaboration can be magical and highly profitable; and when they lack these skills, collaboration can be disastrous with serious and negative bottom-line implications.

The big question we need to confront is whether current policy is allowing educators to prepare our children for today's workplace, and for the future work environments we've yet to imagine.

Despite the fact that technology will play an even greater role than it does now and that multicultural teams will become even more common, the answer to that question is "no."

The sad truth is that many educators aren't allowed the classroom time to teach much-needed social-emotional skills or to test kids for these competencies; and with the exception of just a few states, we don't have policies that support schools in imparting these skills to children.

Yet smart educators know that these social-emotional skills aren't a nice-to-have frill, or an extra add-on. Instead, they're fundamental to a well-educated 21st-century child's future well-being. That's why so many educators are teaching, advocating, and advancing social-emotional learning in spite of education policies.

"Teachers across America understand that social and emotional learning (SEL) is critical to student success in school, work, and life," according to the *Missing Piece* survey of educators, commissioned by the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning:

"Educators know these skills are teachable; want schools to give far more priority to integrating such development into the curriculum, instruction, and school culture; and believe state student learning standards should reflect this priority. Teachers also want such development to be available for all students."

But wouldn't it be so much better if educational policy truly reflected the necessity of social-emotional learning in our schools? I believe so.

Illinois and Kansas have already passed education standards for SEL. In addition, most states include SEL standards for early learning. But these standards often stop at or before the elementary-school level, and we need to address this oversight.

In the end, this is a preparation and prosperity issue—and we would do well to listen to all the empathy-seeking employers out there who are clamoring for employees with social and emotional competency.

This is my view. And I work hard to support it each and every day as executive director for Committee for Children.

But as you'll see when you read through this publication, I'm not the only one who wants to help children use social-emotional learning (SEL) so they can become successful in school, the workplace, and life.

Indeed, in the following pages, you'll hear from some of the most thoughtful, committed, and accomplished people when it comes to SEL.

Be sure to see the essay by R. Keeth Matheny, a teacher in the Austin (Texas) Independent School District, on how teaching social-emotional skills has made a dramatic difference in students' lives.

Spend some time with the piece by Reed Koch, president of the Committee for Children Board of Directors (and a former senior executive at Microsoft). Reed explains why companies should enhance and enrich their employees' social-emotional skills.

I think you'll be nourished by Paul Eaton's illuminating take on how social-emotional learning readies children for their life mission. A retired United States Army general best known for his command of operations to train Iraqi troops during Operation Iraqi Freedom, Paul is uniquely qualified to weigh in on this critical topic.

I highly recommend Matt Segneri's thoughts on empathic and emotionally mindful leadership in business, government, and the nonprofit sector. As director of the Social Enterprise Initiative (SEI) at Harvard Business School, he's in a position to really understand how to be a force for good all over the world today.

There is wisdom in the piece by Roger P. Weissberg, the vice chair of the board of directors and chief knowledge officer at the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional

Learning (CASEL). As always, Roger focuses on the fact that his movement is all about individual children whose lives hang in the balance.

I'm inspired by Meria Joel Carstarphen, the superintendent of Atlanta Public Schools, who talks about the fundamental educational shift from a culture of punitive testing to an emphasis on the whole child.

Dan Kranzler, the founder of the Kirlin Charitable Foundation, touches our hearts when he discusses how social-emotional learning helps people feel a deep sense of satisfaction about the world.

Alonda Williams, a senior director of education at Microsoft, is equally compelling as she assesses SEL and its connective values for us.

And Andria Amador, the assistant director of Behavioral Health Services for Boston Public Schools, moves us to action with her call for proactive and preventive help for students who are hurting.

Taken as a whole, these nine viewpoints, from nine diverse and influential thought leaders, make a profound and powerful case for children with social-emotional skills everywhere.

I hope you're engaged and energized by this special thinking.

And if you have any questions, or would like to discuss any aspect of SEL, please don't hesitate to get in touch with me.

Sincerely,

JCD

Foreword: Social-Emotional Learning Is Essential for Our Nation's Schools

Roger P. Weissberg is Vice Chair of the board of directors and Chief Knowledge Officer at the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL). He is Distinguished Professor of Psychology and Education at the University of Illinois/Chicago as well as NoVo Foundation Endowed Chair in Social and Emotional Learning. At UIC, he also directs the Social and Emotional Learning Research Group.

By Roger P. Weissberg, PhD
Chief Knowledge Officer
Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning

During the past few decades, my colleagues and I have talked with thousands of educators, parents, and students regarding their views about quality education. The conversations focus on two key questions: (1) What do we want children to become, to know, and to be able to do by the time they graduate from high schools; and (2) how can schools, families, and communities work together to ensure that all children graduate to be college, career, and life ready?

The overwhelming majority of respondents call for a balanced education that highlights promoting students' social, emotional, and academic growth. They want students who master academic subjects and are excited about lifelong learning. And they also want students who have social-emotional skills, work habits, and values that provide a foundation for meaningful employment, engaged citizenship, and a happy family life.

"At a time when competition for resources is fierce, there are few initiatives that can boast a record of success like SEL."

The insights and observations within this compendium of thought leaders testify to the enormous potential offered by social-emotional learning (SEL). Imparting SEL skills to children all over the world is the mission of Committee for Children (CFC). And to date, CFC has enabled millions of youngsters across 70 countries to learn how to stay safe, manage their emotions, solve problems, avoid risky behavior, and improve their academics. Most of all, CFC has given them hope for productive, fulfilling lives.

The Committee for Children along with the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL), of which I am vice chair of the board of directors and chief knowledge officer, are dedicated to making SEL an integral part of education from pre-school to high school. Anchoring this mission are five interrelated sets of cognitive, affective, and behavioral competencies that can be transformative:

- **Self-awareness** enables students to recognize the impact of emotions and thoughts on behavior. It includes assessing strengths and weaknesses accurately, leading to a well-grounded sense of confidence and optimism.

- **Self-management** is the ability to regulate emotions, thoughts, and behaviors in different situations.
- **Social awareness** develops perspective about, and empathy for, others; an understanding of social and ethical norms for behavior; and a recognition of resources for support from family, home, and community.
- **Relationship skills** are needed to establish and maintain healthy connections. They include communicating clearly, listening actively, and cooperating, as well as resisting inappropriate social pressure, negotiating conflict constructively, and seeking and offering help.
- **Responsible decision-making** makes possible constructive and respectful choices about personal behavior and social interactions based on ethical standards, safety concerns, social norms, and a realistic evaluation of outcomes in a given situation.

It has been demonstrated convincingly that SEL skills can be inculcated in students of all ages, especially through a variety of active, participatory, engaging methods that range from mentoring to problem-solving modelling.

The key to fostering SEL is collaboration among the following key stakeholders:

- School principals have the opportunity to lead in assessing needs, marshaling resources, and working with teachers and others to integrate SEL fully into the life of the school.
- Teachers are obviously crucial; they are on the frontlines and are best situated to enhance students' social-emotional competence, motivation to learn, and academic achievement through their teaching and management of classrooms each day.
- Student support services professionals can reinforce classroom instruction in SEL skills, work with teachers on classroom discipline issues, and provide the link between students and community-based resources.
- Parents clearly are the lynchpin in supporting their child's development over the long run. Learning about children's developing skills and strengths will help parents recognize and support progress. Moreover, researchers have found that embedding SEL programs within the framework of a formal school-family partnership extends opportunities for learning so that young people effectively apply their social-emotional skills in school, at home, and in the community.

There are many evidence-based SEL programs and strategies that can launch each child over the barricades that separate him or her from academic (and life) achievement. Decades of research clearly demonstrate that effectively implemented SEL programming significantly improves children's academic performance on standardized tests.

Additionally, compared to control groups, children who have participated in SEL programs have significantly better school attendance records, less disruptive classroom behavior, like school more, and perform better in school.

The research also indicates that children who have participated in SEL programs are less likely than children in control groups to be suspended or otherwise disciplined. These outcomes have been achieved through SEL's impact on important mental health variables that improve children's social relationships, increase their attachment to school and motivation to learn, and reduce antisocial, violent, and drug-using behaviors.

Every child is different and every situation is different. But there is always at least one constant: the child must be at the center of the exercise. The connection between SEL and better learning is rooted in a safe and caring environment for the child, with a clear and confident relationship to a teacher. If the school team and the family are consistently and mutually supportive, then the child will develop skills that lead to greater confidence. As a result, the child will be better able to actually engage in learning, dealing successfully with all those distractions that previously prevented it.

The magnitude of the challenge is huge. But the growing awareness of SEL's potential to address that challenge should provide inspiration for us all.

As British Professor Neil Humphry noted, "SEL is currently the zeitgeist in education. It has captured the imagination of academics, policy-makers and practitioners alike in recent years. To many, SEL is the 'missing piece' in the quest to provide effective education for all children and young people."

At a time when competition for resources is fierce, there are few initiatives that can boast a record of success like SEL. As debate rages on about what constitutes quality education, and concerns linger about the performance of American children compared to those elsewhere, it's clear that SEL can have an important impact.

While abundant data provide a firm analytical rebuttal to those who question the need for SEL or its effectiveness, perhaps what we should also always remember is that this movement is all about the individual children whose lives hang in the balance behind the data points, waiting for us to open the gates to successful learning for each and every one of them.

Schools Should Be More Proactive and Preventive in Helping Students with Behavioral Issues

Andria Amador is Assistant Director of the Boston Public Schools Behavioral Health Services. She's served in this position since 2007. Prior to this, she was a school psychologist for the Boston Public Schools. She earned a certificate of advanced graduate study in school psychology from Northeastern University and has a bachelor of science in special education and teaching from the University of Maine at Farmington. She is currently pursuing a doctoral degree in organizational leadership at Northeastern University. Andria is proud to serve as the president of the Massachusetts School Psychology Association.

By Andria Amador
Assistant Director
Behavioral Health Services
Boston Public Schools

School psychologists have historically had a limited role, generally focusing on student eligibility for special education programs.

But we've begun changing that in the Boston Public Schools so that we can concentrate our energy on preventing behavioral issues from taking hold and, if they do take place, intervening early on.

In our efforts to meet the needs of our students, we've also developed a Comprehensive Behavioral Health Model (CBHM) that is being used in 40 of our schools. All 40 schools deploy social-emotional learning (SEL) and a majority of them are using the *Second Step* program.

We strongly believe we need to teach social and emotional skills as intensively and purposefully as we teach reading and math. SEL skills lead to greater academic and life success for children. These skills also teach perseverance, which helps keep kids in school and enables them to push through the tough times all adults experience.

"The sooner we start working with students who are hurting, the better off they'll be."

In addition to SEL for behavioral skills, we also employ Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) to create a strong and constructive culture in our schools and the Behavior Intervention Monitoring Assessment System (BIMAS) to track our programs and perform behavioral screening for all students.

Behavioral screening is especially important. We screen kids academically all the time, but only 2 percent of all schools in the U.S. do formal and preventive behavioral screenings. The other 98 percent wait until behavioral issues start affecting the child's performance and well being in school. At that point the child is either failing or has been sent to the principal's office.

One of the problems with this approach is that we're finding boys of color are over-represented when it comes to acting out, discipline, or disruption problems; and girls are under-represented. And so are all the kids who are depressed or internalizing anxiety.

A better approach is to find the kids who need help early and then get them help—before the problems mushroom, and in order to limit the number of children who are struggling within the school environment.

This new paradigm has proved very effective. Data from 30 of our CBHM schools reinforce the hypothesis that improved student behavior improves test scores and lowers suspensions. And when suspensions decrease, engagement and learning generally increase. At Brighton High School, for example, we have seen a 44 percent decline in suspensions, which is extremely encouraging.

Despite these strong trend lines, a huge issue for us right now is finding funding that will allow us to expand CBHM to additional schools and to form additional mental health partnerships in the community. We've been so fortunate to have rich, meaningful, and sustained partnerships with the Boston Children's Hospital and the University of Massachusetts (Boston) School of Psychology. But we need other relationships like this to better serve our students.

We also must help elected official understand that schools need funding based on their students' mental health needs. The funding for mental health currently goes to behavioral health providers in hospitals and community organizations—not to schools, where it's also required. This lack of funding works against us when we're trying to create alliances in the community.

For their part, insurers need to help support school-based mental health partnerships and improve reimbursement rates for group therapy for students, which is one of the important ways we help create a positive environment for kids in our schools.

The truth is we're too reactive when it comes to helping children with behavioral issues in the classroom. We need the resources that will allow us to be proactive and preventive. The sooner we start working with students who are hurting, the better off they'll be—and the better our schools will become.

We Need to Educate Our Children's Hearts and Minds

Meria Joel Carstarphen, EdD, is Superintendent of Atlanta Public Schools. She brings to Atlanta an impressive record in transformative educational leadership that has led to significant student performance gains. Dr. Carstarphen has nearly 20 years of education and experience in diverse, major metropolitan public school districts, including Austin, Texas; Saint Paul, Minnesota; and the District of Columbia. She leads and provides oversight to Atlanta's 50,000 students; 6,300 employees; and 106 learning sites with a nearly $1 billion annual budget. Dr. Carstarphen earned a doctorate in administration, planning, and social policy, with a concentration in urban superintendency, from the Harvard Graduate School of Education. She also received a bachelor of arts in political science and Spanish from Tulane University and master of education degrees from Auburn University and Harvard University.

By Meria Joel Carstarphen
Superintendent
Atlanta Public Schools

"Educating the mind without educating the heart is no education at all." This is just as true today as it was when Aristotle taught it more than 2,000 year ago. And so, social-emotional learning (SEL) enables us to educate students in whole-child development.

As superintendent of an urban district, I recognize that many of our students come to us without the necessary social-emotional skills they need to become productive adults in a world that is increasingly becoming smaller and flatter. Since these skills can be taught, I feel it is imperative that we as educators do more to teach self-management, relationship building, cooperation, and conflict resolution.

From my perspective, I am responsible for ensuring our public school system provides the type of education that is good for all students, and not just some, and that requires a balance of three things—it's a third, a third, and a third:

- Academic achievement, which involves rigorous course work, high expectations, and success in grades, accountability, and testing
- Practical skills and rich experiences, which brings in co-curricular activities like the fine arts, athletics, world languages, and exposure to career and technical educational environments
- Authentic engagement for all that promotes fairness, goodwill, and well-being

SEL supports all three of these pillars by teaching students goal-setting and communication skills for college, teamwork and problem-solving skills to use in a career, and empathy and emotion-management skills to use throughout their lives.

SEL is the process through which children and adults acquire the knowledge, attitudes, and skills they need to recognize and manage their emotions, demonstrate caring and concern for others, establish positive relationships, make responsible decisions, and handle challenging situations constructively.

As students acquire social-emotional skills, they become more focused on academics and learn to manage all of the other noise around them. SEL

"SEL is not an add-on but a core component of how we approach teaching and learning in our schools."

anchors you in your own behavior so that you can do more and learn more without being as distracted from the educational process.

The Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL), which works on SEL at a national level, conducted a meta-analysis in 2011 and found that systematic SEL implementation with fidelity led to a 9-percentage-point drop in problem behaviors, a 9-percentage-point increase in prosocial skills (meaning managing emotions and conflict appropriately), and an 11-percentage-point increase in reading and math standardized test scores.

Relationships are at the core of SEL—relationships with others, but also, equally important, relationship with self. If you think about it, successful navigation in life (career, marriage, partnerships, family, and friends) is about our ability to successfully manage relationships. External SEL skills as simple as picking up on social cues and internal SEL skills such as being able to regulate our emotions in the face of stresses we encounter are important skills to have.

In my own SEL training, I learned about the distinctive differences between transactional behaviors or interactions and strong relationship management. Strong relationships happen as a result of having quality exchanges, quality time, and frequency.

But equally important is the relationship with self. As you learn to control your emotions and deal with issues both external and internal, you become better prepared to handle personal stress, anger, and other emotions and distractions.

Having said that, I think there is some confusion around what SEL is all about and its importance to learning and child development. There are varied SEL-type programs and strategies that have SEL components, such as character education, which can cause confusion; so we have to do a better job of explaining the full concept.

I think we need to do a better job of ensuring that parents, schools, and communities understand that SEL is not an add-on but a core component of how we approach teaching and learning in our schools.

In the Atlanta Public Schools, our mission is this:

"With a caring culture of trust and collaboration, every student will graduate ready for college and career."

An essential part of this mission is to create that caring culture by teaching our adults the SEL skills they need in order to be able to have healthy interactions with students and then help our students build those skills in their own lives.

SEL lays the foundation when done well and with fidelity. It supports skills all of us need to be successful, happy, productive, and well-adjusted adults. SEL skill sets are often thought of as those "soft skills" many of us of a certain generation received from our parents and grandparents. Unfortunately, our students don't all come to school with these skills. Many of the students in Atlanta Public Schools are economically disadvantaged. Many come from situations of living with chronic stress, meaning that, for them, elevated levels of cortisol are normal, and they remain in the "fight, flight, or freeze" mode all the time.

The good news is that research has shown SEL skills—the ability to manage your emotions and actions, develop good relationships, and make good decisions—can be taught. I have worked with students from all ages, focusing on everything from learning methods to calming down to getting the energy and gumption to finish their school work and achieve their goals. Atlanta's students—and those across the country—can master these skills and become change agents for their communities.

As educators, it is our moral imperative to produce well-rounded citizens. We must ensure that our little people become big people who have the smarts and hearts to be better people than we ever were. They need to have hope and believe they can succeed. They need to have healthy relationships with others and a better sense of self. We must provide them with a suite of tools including organization and time management and social-emotional skills to succeed in education or workplace settings. We can do this. We must do this.

But this fundamental shift in public education is not going to happen with just a few school districts like Atlanta aligned with a foundation focused on such instruction. It has to be a national movement with national leaders.

I think about what it would take for SEL to become part of a national shift in public education. I see parallels with the civil rights movement. The shift away from a culture of punitive testing to a focus on the whole child is a fundamental transformation in education and will require national leaders and large-asset foundations to light the fire and make it happen.

And if there are those who are still not convinced given the evidence that SEL is core to child development, tangible financial benefit has also been documented. A recent report from the Columbia Teachers College, *The Economic Value of Social and Emotional Learning*, reveals a very real economic benefit from SEL, which could be seen in the research even when controlling for the obvious benefits of preparatory work for college and career.

Simply put, there is no downside.

In general, people who are mentally and emotionally healthy, and who have productive and enriching lives, put less stress on our health care systems, our workforce gaps, our schools, and even our criminal justice systems. Imagine the possibilities when fewer people have the need to access supports or make their way through these systems. It's a mind shift that sounds simple and workable if we simply make it a priority. The return-on-investment is there.

Social-Emotional Learning Readies Children for Their Life Mission

Major General Paul D. Eaton is a retired United States Army general best known for his command of operations to train Iraqi troops during Operation Iraqi Freedom. General Eaton served in that capacity between 2003 and 2004, until he returned to the U.S. to become Deputy Chief of Staff for Operations and Training, United States Army Training and Doctrine Command, Fort Monroe, Virginia. He currently serves as Senior Adviser to the National Security Network, a progressive Washington, DC, think tank that focuses on foreign policy and defense issues.

By Paul D. Eaton
Major General, Retired
United States Army

I don't have expertise when it comes to early childhood education. But I do know the downstream return on investment when kids who have received social-emotional learning skills become adults—and it's a much more productive and peaceful society. In fact, a modest investment during a child's early life yields tremendous societal benefits later on.

This is welcome news for those of us in the military who are dedicated to mission readiness, because it means that there will more viable young men and women who can serve their country in all capacities.

Trusted Relationships

When you're training young adults to become soldiers, you have to develop three key components. First, physical fitness, which reinforces confidence; then military skill sets, so they serve effectively; and, finally, what some call the "moral" component, or the ability to work as a trusted and trusting member of a team that also trusts the chain of command and the Constitution.

> **"It's much easier to become a team-oriented soldier if you've learned how to work well with others early on as a child."**

It's much easier to become a team-oriented soldier if you've learned how to work well with others early on as a child. This reinforces trust-based relationships and the kind of emotional maturity we are seeking as we build and prepare the 21st-century armed forces in our country.

Preventing Negative Experiences and Emotions

In the United States, we can vastly improve our society if we start teaching children valuable social and emotional skills as early as possible—the sooner the better.

Kids are such quick learners. I see that whenever I go into my grandson's pre-kindergarten classroom. The three, four, and five-year-olds are so bright and so engaged. It's a delightful age, and we owe it to them—and ourselves—to make sure they have all the opportunities to become socially and emotionally adept.

Solid, Sturdy, and Sensitive SEL

I'm not saying that the military is the only model for our children and our society; not at all. But I am saying that the future of our kids will be greatly enriched and enhanced if we infuse their earliest years with sensitive and thoughtful skills that will help them develop into a healthy, connected, and constructive generation of adults.

Why Companies Should Enhance and Enrich Their Employees' Social-Emotional Skills

Reed Koch is President of the Committee for Children Board of Directors. He joined the board in 2006. He is the former general manager of Assistance Platform at Microsoft. He was also general manager of FrontPage Windows, SharePoint Services, and PhotoDraw at Microsoft. In addition, he served as group program manager, group product planner, and product manager of Microsoft Word. He holds a bachelor of science in liberal arts with a major in mathematics from Reed College.

By Reed Koch
President, Board of Directors
Committee for Children

I believe the private sector should join educators and families by supporting and offering social-emotional learning (SEL).

One reason for companies to get involved in SEL, of course, is financial self-interest.

An Emotionally Intelligent Workforce

Companies know that the route to success today depends in large part on a workforce with as much emotional intelligence as possible. This is a key driver for increased productivity, innovation, and growth. It's also the way enterprises can help employees collaborate better and faster in a competitive global economy that increasingly requires flexibility and sophisticated teamwork.

It's also clear that corporate performance suffers when there is a dysfunctional culture that permits social-emotional conflict among employees to disrupt projects, programs, and plans. Who hasn't been in a meeting that felt like a family fight and accomplished nothing? And who hasn't seen a company pay the price of a bully pushing through his or her idea of what was best?

So there is a definite cost to not having people who are reasonably grounded in social-emotional learning.

How Companies Can Help Employees with SEL

The issue is how companies can enhance and enrich the social-emotional skills of their employees.

Companies like Microsoft, my old employer, for instance, are not going out and aggressively hiring people who have completed formal SEL training programs. Instead, they're often looking for people who have engineering degrees or MBAs, to give just two examples of sought-after professional credentialing.

And I don't think we're seeing the boards of directors at most companies saying, "We need a management team that has an array of finely-tuned social-emotional learning skills running our business."

Sensitizing Company Cultures

However there's a lot of social-emotional education being injected into corporate America's business bloodstream these days. And it's

"Companies know the route to success today depends in large part on a workforce with as much emotional intelligence as possible."

coming from human resource departments, change-management teams, and enlightened executives who are trying really hard to sensitize company cultures to help stimulate and deliver hard financial results.

In many cases, this knowledge is being plucked by consultants from a wide set of readily available offerings. Indeed, if you survey the literature, you'll see that it's thick with books on how to improve performance by improving social-emotional skills.

I think this is a constructive beginning. But we need to go further.

New Data-Driven SEL Research Needed

If possible, we need to use data to analyze and understand the correlation between better SEL skills and increased profitability or shareholder value.

As part of this data-driven research, we also need to identify the specific social-emotional behaviors among corporate employees and teams that most affect company performance—both positively and negatively.

And as another part of this research, we need to ascertain the most effective social-emotional behaviors corporate leaders must demonstrate in order to drive their organizations forward.

Human nature is, to a large degree, qualitative. But I believe we can help companies perform better if we can find ways to gather and assess more meaningful and hard-edged quantitative data about social-emotional behavior in the workplace.

Healthier Workplaces and a Healthier Society

In the end, the question is whether healthier workplaces will lead to a healthier society and a dramatically changed world.

I believe the answer is yes, but only time will tell.

Social Emotional Learning Helps People Feel a Deep Sense of Satisfaction About the World

Dan Kranzler has been a managing partner of eFund LLC, a venture fund that invests in wireless and technology startups, for the past 15 years. Profits from the fund go to children's charities through the Kirlin Charitable Foundation, which he founded with his family. The goal of the Kirlin Charitable Foundation and its offshoot, Seeds of Compassion, is to have a global society that is identified first and foremost by the grace of its empathy and compassion.

By Dan Kranzler
Founder
Kirlin Charitable Foundation

For the last 15 years, our family foundation, the Kirlin Charitable Foundation, has been working with and on the concept of social-emotional learning (SEL), which we call Seeds of Compassion.

At first, people weren't very clear about SEL. Today most people know what it means, and a general appreciation is growing for its critical role and benefits. The real sense of SEL's value is being understood and employed at all levels from early learning through schools and on to business.

SEL is reflected in the regional programs of Kirlin and the Seeds of Compassion organization. Its focus is to help bring children up, beginning at birth, with a deep sense of attachment and connection to family, and expanding this attachment to friends and community through strong social-emotional foundations. This means making sure kids have an awareness of being safe, being loved, belonging, and how they fit into their environment.

"People with social-emotional skills are the kind of people that most businesses need and want to hire."

When we add an understanding of their emotions—how to identify, regulate, and express them—the result is they feel the world is interconnected and worth living in.

Our goal is helping people achieve happiness so they can develop and fulfill their potential. If we're happy with who we are, where we are, and where we fit in, there is joy. And if there's joy, we're interested in doing the right things; we're also feeling connected to and interested in the world and people around us.

We have a great deal more information that can guide us toward a whole and happy life today than we did in the past. We also understand the benefits from this—the reduction in anxiety and stress, for example. And it's clear that how we view our circumstances and react to them, and how we see ourselves contributing to society, community, family, or a company, helps determine our sense of well-being.

We may know more today, but it's still not always easy to achieve that sense of interconnection and well-being. Part of the reason is that we're spending less time with our families, less time in our communities, and less time in places of faith. Technology, which is a good and connective thing

on one level, has, ironically, also gotten in the way of our ability to connect on a human level. As a result, it's often harder to understand each other and ourselves.

One of the only institutions left that can really help is our schools. Unfortunately, though, so many children are starting school at the kindergarten level unprepared. Maybe they haven't been read to; maybe they're word-deficient; or maybe they live in a world of stress and are anxious and have trouble relating to others.

The good news is that schools, and specifically teachers, can help by employing SEL, teaching with compassion and care, and making sure every child has the foundations to understand and regulate emotions, communicate, and respect his or her peers in the classroom and beyond. Children have a tremendous social capacity. But they need help developing it and staying open so they can become confident learners and, ultimately, successful and well-adjusted adults.

Open people with social-emotional skills are the kind of people that most businesses need and want to hire. This is how the best collaboration, creative thinking, and problem solving gets unlocked.

Of course, companies have to have social-emotional practices, too. This is part of "conscious capitalism" (another long and interesting subject), with the objective to make employees feel listened to, comfortable, secure, valued, and respected.

If we can have compassionate schools, we can have compassionate communities, companies, and society. In all cases, social-emotional learning can help enrich people. And if students and employees can feel a deep sense of satisfaction with the world in which they live, then that world is going to be a much better place for all of us in the end—a world identified first and foremost by the grace of its empathy and compassion.

Teaching Social-Emotional Skills Has Made a Dramatic Difference in Students' Lives

R. Keeth Matheny, a former college football coach, is now a teacher and instructional coach in the Austin (Texas) Independent School District. He has helped develop a highly acclaimed course for freshmen students—Methods for Academic and Personal Success (MAPS)—which features a curriculum he has co-authored, "School-Connect." The course and curriculum focus on an engaging and collaborative environment to teach and practice social-emotional skills.

By R. Keeth Matheny
Teacher
Austin (Texas) Independent School District

All students need social-emotional learning (SEL), and they need it desperately, because there's simply not enough instruction for kids in schools on how to make life work.

We work so hard to teach reading, writing, arithmetic, and science, but how many of our students will ultimately end up being scientists? On the other hand, every kid in science class will have to find ways to move successfully through life.

Avoiding Destructive Behavior

Emotional skills—like expressing empathy, managing unhealthy emotions, and inducing positive emotions—are critical for dealing with life. Most of the biggest mistakes we make in life are when we are "emotionally hijacked." If kids grow up lacking these emotional skills, we're going to see increasingly negative and unproductive—even destructive—behavior in our schools and communities.

> **"Over the last four years, we've been able to reduce academic failures by 41 percent and discipline problems by 71 percent in our freshman class."**

Methods for Academic and Personal Success (MAPS)

This is why I teach a course for freshmen, most of whom are labeled "at risk," at a large urban high school in Austin, Texas. The course is called "Methods for Academic and Personal Success." I help students learn how to organize their time and study, as well as how to manage their emotions and build healthy relationships so they can better navigate and connect with the world around them. It's all skill-based. And these are not "soft skills." In my opinion, these are the most critical skills for students' immediate and long-term success.

Why Are Kids Disconnected Today?

To be honest, no one really completely knows why kids seem so disconnected today, but there are plenty of conditions in today's culture that point to likely theories.

Adults work long hours to pay the bills; there are many single-parent homes; but there's also an overload of technology bombarding our kids. Some children experience more screen interaction than personal interaction. The blooming rose of technology has real thorns when it comes to social-emotional skills. If our kids don't get sufficient human interaction, they won't have the opportunity to build social-emotional skills.

Applied Skills Really Matter in the Workforce

Looking out beyond the school years, I believe MAPS is helping our students get ready for the 21st-century workforce, which increasingly depends on applied skills as much as, or more than, knowledge-based skills. If you really boil it down, most people are hired for their ability to make a professional first impression and demonstrate work ethic; and most people are fired for their inability to get along with others. These are skills that must be taught.

SEL—the Data and Results

Being taught social-emotional learning skills in school has had a dramatic impact on students' lives, and there is national data to prove it.

A recent meta-analysis of 213 school-based studies involving over 270,000 students (Durlak, Weissberg, Dymnicki, Taylor, & Schellinger, 2011) found that, compared to controls, SEL participants demonstrated significantly improved social-emotional skills, attitudes, behavior, and academic performance that reflected an 11-percentile-point gain in achievement.

Meanwhile, we did an analysis at our school four years ago and found that over 60 percent of academic failures and over 60 percent of discipline problems were lodged squarely in the freshman class. These were clearly young people entering a new educational world—kids who obviously needed guidance and help. So as educators, we knew we had to do something meaningful and substantive.

And that's when MAPS and SEL made their way into our classrooms and became a vital part of the overall educational picture for us.

The results have been impressive, to say the least.

Reducing Academic Failure and Discipline Problems

Over the last four years, we've been able to reduce academic failures by 41 percent and discipline problems by 71 percent in our freshman class.

Dr. Melvin Bedford, an assistant principal who is very involved with the program at our school, is a huge fan. "This program has changed my job," he says. "I used to deal with three to four freshman discipline referrals a day, and now I often go three to four days without a referral."

The rigor in this course is not the material itself; it's the internalization and application of the material that makes it challenging and effective. Students and their parents regularly report that the application of a lesson or skill from class has enhanced their academic success and improved their relationships.

For me, personally speaking, that's very rewarding.

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.

Leaders with Social-Emotional Learning Skills Are a Force for Global Good

By Matt Segneri
Director, Social Enterprise Initiative (SEI)
Harvard Business School

Matt Segneri, Director of the Social Enterprise Initiative (SEI) at Harvard Business School, has a broad range of leadership experience in the private, public, and nonprofit sectors, most recently at Bloomberg Philanthropies in New York, where he was a senior leader on the Government Innovation team. From 2010 to 2012, Segneri was an advisor to the then-mayor of the City of Boston, Thomas M. Menino. An honors graduate of Harvard College (2004), where he majored in psychology, with additional studies in economics and government, Segneri spent four years (2004–2008) as a consultant at the Monitor Group in its New York and Cambridge, Massachusetts, offices before entering Harvard Business School, where he received an MBA.

I worked in the public, private, and nonprofit sectors before returning to Harvard Business School and assuming my current responsibilities. And over those years, I was struck by the extent to which CEOs and leaders of large organizations truly needed social-emotional learning (SEL) skills in order to fulfill their potential and achieve results for those they served.

SEL is especially valuable for leaders who are in challenging people or workforce situations. If you're leading a private-sector company today, for example, you have to build relationships with demanding customers as well as employees who are trying to come to terms with the broad and sweeping transformation to an information economy. If you're a mayor running a city, you have to establish connective bonds with a diverse cross-section of citizens.

This type of 21st-century leadership requires self-awareness, authenticity, empathy, and the ability to self-manage emotions—especially in conflict situations, during crises, and when under pressure.

"Twenty-first century leadership requires self-awareness, authenticity, empathy, and the ability to self-manage emotions—especially in conflict, during crises, and under pressure."

Leadership today requires empathy to attract, nurture, and retain the best talent, and to meet stakeholders and customers where they are. Empathy is a skill that yields better choices and decisions—based on the needs of others and the needs of the community.

People all over the world are yearning for this kind of leadership right now, where the person responsible for an organization is sincerely engaged and operating as his or her best self.

On a more pragmatic and micro level, leaders without social-emotional skills simply can't motivate or inspire people to collaborate and partner in order to get things done. When you analyze how the world works today, it's all about trust and open, honest communication, such as inclusive discussions and conversations between people who may be in the same office cubicle or across the ocean and continents away. Having SEL competency is a prerequisite for making these dialogues productive and successful.

Helping to educate and develop leaders with these social-emotional skills is infused throughout our

curriculum and community at Harvard Business School (HBS).

One of our faculty members—Bill George (HBS '66), professor of management practice and the former CEO of Medtronic—has really built out our work on authentic leadership. He's written two important books on the topic—*Authentic Leadership* and *True North*. He's also published a seminal article (along with Peter Sims, a management writer and entrepreneur, and Andrew N. McLean, a research associate at Harvard Business School) that explains how the best leaders channel their own personal transformative experiences to access the strength and wisdom they need to help the employees, constituents, or communities they serve.

As Ann Fudge (HBS '77), a member of several corporate boards and a former CEO of Young & Rubicam Brands, told George and his associates: "All of us have the spark of leadership in us, whether it is in business, in government, or as a nonprofit volunteer. The challenge is to understand ourselves well enough to discover where we can use our leadership gifts to serve others."

HBS also offers a course on Authentic Leadership Development (ALD) (www.hbs.edu/coursecatalog/2090.html). The course was originally developed by Bill George; it was once taught by the present dean of HBS, Nitin Nohria; and it's currently taught by Professors Scott Snook and Tom DeLong.

The purpose of ALD is to enable students to embark on paths of personal leadership development. ALD demands introspection, curiosity, and reflection from students, as well as vulnerability and openness to share in class discussions, leadership discussion groups, and one-on-one sessions with peer mentors and the professor.

Finally, the HBS executive education program offers a weeklong immersion in authentic leadership (www.exed.hbs.edu/programs/ald/Pages/curriculum.aspx). Bill George currently teaches in this program.

Empathic and emotionally mindful leadership in business, government, and the nonprofit sector is a tremendous force for good all over the world today. And more than ever, our leaders must serve as vital and connected role models for people everywhere if we're really committed to prosperity, harmony, and an enriched quality of life in the 21st century.

SEL Helps Enrich the World Our Children Inhabit

Alonda Williams is Senior Director for Education at Microsoft. Passionate about technology, social media, and marketing, she specializes in helping major brands connect more deeply with their customers by marketing the right product at the right time to the right audience through the right channel. In addition to Microsoft, she has worked with brands such as Verizon Wireless, Qualcomm, Bertelsmann/BMG, Liz Claiborne, and Essence. She is currently deeply immersed in helping K–12 and higher education institutions use technology to improve learning. Through her publishing company, children's books, and public service, she has also created a personal platform around empowerment and building self-esteem in girls.

By Alonda Williams
Senior Director, Education
Microsoft

I believe we need social-emotional learning (SEL) now more than ever.

Kids today are bombarded at very early ages with information and situations that often invoke an emotional response. Situations can originate from the media or from individuals, and social media can be a positive or negative.

With increases in technology come increases in the speed at which information travels, as well as the access afforded individuals who have harmful intentions.

Fortunately, SEL provides the tools through which children learn to appropriately manage and express emotions. Additionally, it can help keep children safe in potentially dangerous situations.

SEL also improves learning in two ways.

First, in younger age groups, SEL provides tools that allow children to focus more on instruction and less on social situations in the classroom, at home, or in other social environments. Second, children who have been exposed to SEL instruction and effectively trained educators can together achieve meaningful improvements in academic performance.

According to the Center on the Social and Emotional Foundations for Early Learning (CSEFEL), which is focused on promoting the social-emotional development and school readiness of young children from birth to age 5, relationships—especially with nurturing adults—can have a positive effect on academic outcomes. When children feel supported within their family as well as in school they can be more communicative, and this can result in improved academic performance and executive functioning. The role of SEL is especially important in the family, because it provides tools to improve relationships and keeps children secure.

Sadly, most people take SEL for granted and assume these skills are learned by children at home. In addition, the implementation and measurement of SEL is often seen as difficult. But given that SEL is now included in the standards-based instruction mandated by many states and districts, I believe schools are stepping up to take on the responsibility.

"The bottom line is that SEL improves academic outcomes, graduation rates, test scores, and overall quality of life."

The components of an effective SEL program align nicely with the 21st Century Skills Model, which identifies the most important skills children need to be successful in collegiate and contemporary workplaces. Chief among these skills is collaboration.

As the Partnership for 21st Century Learning states:

"Today's life and work environments require far more than thinking skills and content knowledge. The ability to navigate the complex life and work environments in the globally competitive information age also requires students to pay rigorous attention to developing adequate life and career skills, such as Flexibility and Adaptability; Initiative and Self-Direction; Social and Cross-Cultural Skills; Productivity and Accountability; and Leadership and Responsibility."

SEL helps reinforce all of this.

And the bottom line is that SEL improves academic outcomes, graduation rates, test scores, and overall quality of life for those touched by it. With research continuing to show the benefits of SEL, government officials should include SEL as a key component of their education agenda.

On a personal note, I take SEL and its connective values very seriously. And that's one of the reasons why I'm using my influence to empower young girls to live up to their full potential. My motto in this area is: "Change a Girl, Change the World."

Part of my vision is articulated in a children's book I wrote—*Penny and the Magic Puffballs*—which celebrates the differences that make each of us unique while helping girls feel more comfortable, confident, and secure in their skin.

In the end, I agree with SEL's most ardent advocates, who believe that if our children—both boys and girls—can feel better about themselves and what they have to offer, their world (and ours) will be tremendously enriched.