FROM A NATION AT RISK
to A NATION AT HOPE

THE ASPEN INSTITUTE
NATIONAL COMMISSION ON SOCIAL, EMOTIONAL, & ACADEMIC DEVELOPMENT
“In every collective human endeavor there comes a moment. In education that moment is now.”
The Science:

“The power of the social brain has been totally underestimated. It’s the driving force in cognition; it’s the gateway to learning.”

Patricia Kuhl
University of Washington

“The process of building knowledge is an inherently emotionally connected, deeply subjective experience.”

Mary Helen Immordino-Yang
University of Southern California
The Demand

• 9 out of 10 teachers believe social and emotional skills can be taught and benefit students

• More than 90 percent of parents think schools have a role in reinforcing the development of these skills.

• At least two-thirds of current and recent high school students believe attending a school focused on social and emotional learning would improve their relationships, academic learning, and preparation for life.

• 8 in 10 employers say social and emotional skills are the most important to success and yet are also the hardest skills to find.
The Policy Context

“State and local policymakers have a unique opportunity to help prioritize and support the whole learner, particularly in this time of resurgent state and local authority over education.”

A Policy Agenda in Support of How Learning Happens
MEMBERS | A coalition of more than 200 educators, youth and parent groups, scientists, policymakers, community leaders

MISSION | Engage and energize communities in re-envisioning learning to encompass its social, emotional, and academic dimensions so that all children can succeed.

OUTCOMES | 
- Two and a half years of listening, learning, and creating consensus
- Recommendations and action steps across research, practice, and policy
The National Commission Team

**Commission**
- Mr. Jorge Benitez, co-chair
- Dr. Linda Darling-Hammond, co-chair
- Dr. Tim Shriver, co-chair
- Dr. James Comer, Honorary co-chair

**The Funders Collaborative**
- Council of Distinguished Scientists
- Council of Distinguished Educators
- The Aspen Institute Youth Commission
- Parent Advisory Panel

**The Partners Collaborative**
- Youth Development Work Group
- Equity Work Group
• Visited four communities engaged in this work (Cleveland, Nashville, Tacoma, Austin).
• Heard from the advisory bodies and partners.
A Youth Development Work Group was created to ensure that the “community” ring had a voice in shaping the final reports and recommendations.

The group also created its own issue brief.

Youth Development Work Group Recommendations

• Include youth development partners in setting a clear vision.
• Strengthen and expand adult capacity.
• Create and support engaging learning settings throughout the day and the year.
• Provide systems and supports to maintain partnerships.
• Leverage resources efficiently and equitably.
An Equity Work Group was created in partnership with UnidosUS and National Urban League to ensure that the final reports and recommendations focused on the needs of each and every student.

**Equity Work Group Recommendations**

The Equity Work Group coalesced around a commitment to equity that entails:

- **Achieving equitable outcomes for all students** through identifying, understanding, and reducing disparities in student performance across lines of race and opportunity.
- **Ensuring access to equitable learning environments** in which each and every student can thrive because the educational approach is developmentally appropriate and responsive to their needs, assets, and cultures.
- **Aligning and allocating resources**—funding, training, time, and community capacity—**more efficiently and equitably** to create a cohesive PreK-12 education ecosystem that can support all students holistically through ensuring equitable access to opportunity.
What We Did: Creating Consensus
What We Did: Spurring Understanding & Change

Putting It All Together
Curriculum that addresses the social and emotional dimensions of learning helps all students thrive academically and prepare for challenges beyond school.

Supporting the Whole Teacher
Developing educators’ social and emotional skills lays the foundation for success with students.

SCHOOL-COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS
Joining forces to support the learning and development of all students.

Making the Case
This publication is the first.

Making the Case
This publication is the second of several reports on the whole-school culture and student development.

Supporting the Whole Teacher
Developing educators’ social and emotional skills lays the foundation for success with students.

Making the Case
This publication is the second of several reports on the whole-school culture and student development.

Making the Case
This publication is the fourth in a series of reports on the whole-school culture and student development.

Making the Case
This publication is the fourth in a series of reports on the whole-school culture and student development.

Supporting the Whole Teacher
Developing educators’ social and emotional skills lays the foundation for success with students.

Making the Case
This publication is the second of several reports on the whole-school culture and student development.

Making the Case
This publication is the second of several reports on the whole-school culture and student development.

Making the Case
This publication is the second of several reports on the whole-school culture and student development.

Making the Case
This publication is the second of several reports on the whole-school culture and student development.

Making the Case
This publication is the second of several reports on the whole-school culture and student development.
The Four Graphics

Where and When Learning Happens
Expanding our understanding of all the places and times young people grow and learn
The ecosystem graphic, created early on to reflect the general importance of a wide range of entities, was updated to emphasize the roles local community actors play in supporting learning and development.

**Local Community**
- Youth Development Organizations
- Local employers
- Health and Social Services
- Faith-based and Civic Organizations
The final graphic summarizing how SEL (or SEAD) can be explained acknowledges the broader competencies, mindsets and values.

It also makes the distinction between cognitive skills and academic content. This was an important win.
The Practice Base for How Learning Happens

**LEARNING SETTINGS**
Learning and development are influenced by the familial, community, and societal contexts in which students grow. Learning settings that support young people's comprehensive growth often focus on 3 essential elements.

- Teaching and practicing social, emotional, and cognitive skills
- Embedding social, emotional, and cognitive skills into academic learning
- Safe and relationship-based learning environments

**STUDENT EXPERIENCE**
These settings lead to learning experiences where young people are more likely to be engaged and grasp complex academic content.

- Engagement, ownership, and purpose
- Sense of belonging and connection to community
- Rigorous academic content and learning experiences

**STUDENT OUTCOMES**
The evidence shows that students who experience these learning settings are more likely to achieve success both now and in the future.

- Academic success and educational attainment
- Civic and community engagement
- Workforce and career readiness
- Life well-being
The graphic curated by the YD Work Group offers a more nuanced perspective on where and when learning happens that improved the dialogue with K-12 leaders.

The graphic is included in the research brief and the final report.
“A movement dedicated to children’s social, emotional, and academic well-being is reshaping learning and changing lives...On the strength of its remarkable consensus, a nation at risk is finally a NATION AT HOPE.”
A Nation at Hope: Recommendations

- Set a vision for student success that prioritizes the whole child.
- Transform learning settings so they are physically and emotionally safe and foster strong bonds among students and adults.
• Change instruction to teach students social, emotional, and cognitive skills. Embed these skills in academics and schoolwide practices.

• Build adult expertise in child and adolescent development.
A Nation at Hope: Recommendations

- Align resources and leverage partnerships across schools, families, communities to address the whole child.
- Shift the research paradigm by forging closer connections between research and practice.
What We Did Well

• Created a broad coalition
• Stayed neutral
• Developed practical resources

• Developed a final report & launch with the right tone and substance
Where We Fell Short

- Engaging and profiling young people
- Addressing equity implications
- Being bold
- Planning post-Commission next steps