Enhancing Student Learning and Achievement through Social, Emotional and Character Development
Senate Briefing * May 12, 2001

Presenters’ Bios

**Patrick Aaby, Ed.D.**
Dr. Aaby has over 25 years in public education as both a teacher and administrator. During his career he served as an advisor on prevention issues to the Governor and as a Chief Advisor to the Lt. Governor of Washington State. He was also elected to the Washington State PTA Board of Directors as their State Legislative Director. Dr. Aaby has also chaired the Washington State Community Mobilization Board, where he worked with local schools and coalitions statewide to assess student, family, school, and community needs. In addition to this he served as a negotiator/facilitator to integrate and align school and community resources to more effectively reduce risk factors and enhance protective factors associated with substance abuse, youth violence, juvenile delinquency, teen pregnancy, and graduation rates. Related to this, Dr. Aaby has extensive experience providing technical assistance to school districts and community coalitions by using survey and incident data to determine school and community needs, implement programs and improve student and community-based outcomes. Dr. Aaby is currently serving as Policy Advisor for the Committee for Children, a non-profit working globally to prevent bullying, violence and child abuse.

**Maurice J. Elias, Ph.D.**
Dr. Elias currently serves as Professor and Director of Clinical Training, Psychology Department, Rutgers University; Academic Director of Rutgers’ Civic Engagement and Service Education Partnerships Program as well as coordinator of Rutgers’ internship program in Applied, School, and Community Psychology. Dr. Elias is a past recipient of the Lela Rowland Prevention Award; the Ernest McMahon Class of 1930 Award for service to New Jersey and the American Psychological Association/Society for Community Research and Action’s Distinguished Contribution to Practice and Ethnic Minority Mentoring awards. Dr. Elias’ work has earned him a reputation nationally and internationally with his time divided between lectures, television and radio program and print. He devotes his research and writing to the area of social-emotional and character development in children, schools, and families. He writes a blog on Social-Emotional and Character Development (SECD) for the George Lucas Educational Foundation at www.edutopia.org.

**Susan Gorin, CAE**
Since 1993, Susan Gorin has been the Executive Director of the National Association of School Psychologists (NASP), a membership association with over 26,000 members, located in Bethesda, MD. NASP works with colleague associations in education, health, and mental health to advocate for positive school climates, student supports for learning, adequate funding for programs and professional development, and policies and practices that reduce barriers to learning. Prior to her role at NASP, Susan was on the staff of the Council for Exceptional Children (CEC) for over 18 years. Susan also serves on the board of the Children’s Institute, a national organization dedicated to strengthening the social and emotional health of children, and on the professional advisory board of the National Center for Learning Disabilities (NCLD), whose mission is to ensure that children, youth, and adults with LD have every opportunity to succeed in school, work, and life. Susan has been a certified association executive (CAE) since 1986; she has a B.S. in elementary and special education from Boston University, and a M.A. in social foundations of education from the University of Virginia.
**Linda McKay**
McKay has been a leader in the field of character education for more than 20 years. She has worked with schools, parents, students, businesses and foundations across the country. From 2003 through 2009, she served as a senior advisor for character education in the U.S. Department of Education’s Office of Safe and Drug Free Schools. There she led the Department’s efforts to conduct rigorous evaluations of federal grants to support character education in schools. Linda has co-authored numerous publications about character education and ethical decision-making. For her leadership in developing a high school ethics program she received the Special Salute Award from the U.S. Chamber of Commerce. Linda has served as a member of several national boards and commissions dedicated to promoting civic participation, service learning, ethics and moral education. She was a founding member of the Character Education Partnership, Washington, DC and currently serves on their board. She now works as a national advocate for social and emotional learning and character education in America’s schools.

**Kristen Pelster**
Kristen Pelster has been in the education field for over 18 years. She is currently the principal of Ridgewood Middle School as well as the Leader for Character Education in the Fox School District in Arnold, Missouri. Prior to becoming principal she taught at the elementary school level and served as an elementary assistant principal. She received her Master’s degree in Education Administration from the University of Missouri, St. Louis (UMSL). Ms. Pelster’s passion for character education began when she graduated from UMSL’s Leadership Academy for Character Education (LACE) in 1999. She also served as Area-Chair of the District Leader’s Council for CHARACTERplus and as a board member for the Friends of CHARACTERplus Board. Both Kristen and Ridgewood Middle School have received numerous honors: in 2006 Ridgewood was named a National School of Character and in 2009 the Fox district was named a National District of Character by the Character Education Partnership, Washington, DC. Ridgewood was also featured in a USA Today article entitled, “What Can Schools Do.” She was named the St. Louis Area Middle School Assistant Principal of the Year in 2003 and Principal of the Year in 2008.

**Ramona Treviño, Ph.D.**
Ramona Treviño is the Chief Academic Officer for the Austin Independent School District. Dr. Trevino has over 25 years of experience and study in the areas of early childhood, special education, school leadership, policy and planning, and urban academic planning. She was the founding principal and the CEO of the University of Texas Elementary School; the first university charter school. Under her guidance the school earned an Exemplary rating by the Texas Education Agency in both 2007 and 2009. As a teacher she worked for the Department of Defense’s Independent Schools and the United States Bureau of Indian Affairs. She completed her B.S. in 1981 from Wheelock College in Boston, and her M.Ed. and Ph.D. from the Educational Administration Department at the University of Texas at Austin’s College of Education, where she is currently an assistant clinical professor. As a Fellow in the University of Texas Division of Diversity and Community Engagement she developed and coordinated the Urban Education Project with the College of Education.