Enhancing Conditions for Student Learning and Academic Achievement through Social, Emotional and Character Education – Legislative Priorities

I. Support Inclusion of Social, Emotional Character Education for Student Success
As Congress works to reauthorize the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, it is of critical importance that Federal policies and practices incorporate strategies for improving student social, emotional and character development that are linked to student success.

II. Legislative Policy Objectives

- Include references to the importance of evidenced-based social emotional learning and character education throughout ESEA in order to strengthen awareness and accountability to the integral link between positive social, emotional, character development and improved student academic achievement.
- Include references to the importance of pre-service and professional development training for teachers and administrators serving grades Pre K-12, that addresses the research, benefits, and use of evidenced-based social, emotional and character development learning programs and strategies in schools.
- Prioritize that school improvement federal funding may be used for the development, implementation, and evaluation of school-wide social, emotional and character development programs across a range of key developmental stages in grades Pre K-12.
- Provide incentives for states to create and adopt accountability standards and measurements that systematically evaluate staff, student and parent perceptions of school climate at least once every two years. At a minimum, evaluations should include assessment of school safety, bullying, and student engagement.
- Provide incentives for local educational agencies to adopt policies that require teachers and other learning support staff to implement and evaluate evidenced based strategies that build social, emotional and character development competencies of all students.

III. Inclusion in Current Legislation

- Title IV 21st Century Schools and specifically clearly stated in the Safe and Supportive Schools Grant Program
- Title I Improving the Academic Achievement of the Disadvantaged
- Title II Preparing, Training and Recruiting High Quality Teachers and Principals

IV. Connections to Proposed Legislation
Bills that have been introduced that fit well with the above recommendations include:

- S. 919 Successful, Safe and Healthy Students Act of 2011 (Sen. Harkin, IA)
- S. 541 Achievement through Prevention Act (Sen. Bennett, CO)
- H.R. 751 Mental Health in the Schools Act (Rep. Napolitano, CA-38)
References