

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
March 3, 2009

CONTACT:
Jackie Meyers-Thompson
773-293-7166

**NoVo Foundation gives \$6 million to Chicago-based Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning
Buffetts call for social and emotional learning in every US school**

CHICAGO: NoVo Foundation, led by Jennifer and Peter Buffett, has announced a \$6 million investment in social and emotional learning (SEL) through a gift to the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL). Based in Chicago, CASEL is the world's leading organization supporting social and emotional learning as an essential part of education from preschool through high school (Pre-K-12). The gift responds to CASEL's recent summary of the research, which finds that social and emotional learning can significantly raise students' scores on standardized achievement tests, build attachment to school, improve interpersonal attitudes and behaviors, and decrease negative behaviors, such as violence and substance abuse.

“CASEL has the capacity to look at all of the different approaches to social and emotional learning and say this works, this doesn't work. I couldn't think of a better place to put our funds than with an organization that can really see the overall picture,” says Peter Buffett, who co-chairs NoVo Foundation with his wife, Jennifer Buffett. “Our hope is that CASEL's work will bring a version of social and emotional learning to every school in every state.”

Often called “the missing piece” in school improvement efforts, the field of social and emotional learning (SEL) reflects the growing recognition that healthy social and emotional development advances children's success in school and life. CASEL research shows that schools can teach children core skills in self-awareness, social awareness, self-management, relationship building, and responsible decision-making, integrated with core academic subjects, and that children who develop these social and emotional competencies are more successful at school, at

home, and in their communities.

CASEL President Roger P. Weissberg, PhD describes the impact of social and emotional learning in terms of how it affects children’s classroom performance. “If a child is confused or challenged by a homework assignment, they need to know how to ask teachers for help. They need to know how to work and learn well in groups. They need to set goals and manage their time. Social and emotional learning programs teach children self-management skills that emphasize clear goal setting and step-by-step planning to accomplish goals, how to anticipate and overcome obstacles, and how to calm themselves when they’re frustrated, so they can focus on how to do better.” Weissberg, who is Liberal Arts & Sciences Distinguished Professor at the University of Illinois at Chicago concludes, “When children have these skills, their self-confidence, their connection to school, and their classroom behavior all improve – and so does their academic achievement.”

CASEL has set standards for well-designed SEL programming, which call for sequential and developmentally appropriate lessons and effective school policies from preschool through grade 12. SEL skills should be delivered through explicit instruction, positive and personal relationships with teachers, and caring and supportive classroom environments that offer many opportunities for developing SEL skills. The most effective SEL programs occur in positive, caring school climates, where educators receive ongoing SEL professional development in the field, and where families and schools partner to promote children’s social, emotional, and academic success.

Jennifer Buffett, NoVo Foundation president and co-chair, says investing in social and emotional learning supports the foundation’s mission. “NoVo is striving to move away from a culture and a society based on domination and competition to a society based on partnership and

collaboration. One of the best ways to do that,” she says, “is in schools – supporting teachers and students to be emotionally and socially sound and capable and competent and whole.”

“NoVo’s gift signals that a leading foundation recognizes that social and emotional learning is a critical endeavor,” observes CASEL Executive Director Lindsay Friedman, “and that if we really want to change the way we support and educate and raise children to live in a global society, we have to develop their social and emotional competencies.” NoVo funding comes at an opportune moment, she says: “There’s so much energy and momentum behind this work around the country, and NoVo will help us maintain that momentum as we move toward putting social and emotional learning on the national education agenda.”

Originally an informal collaborative, CASEL was established in 1994 by Daniel Goleman, author of *Emotional Intelligence*, educator/philanthropist Eileen Rockefeller Growald, and like-minded colleagues Timothy Shriver, Mark Greenberg, Linda Lantieri, and David Sluyter. The group pioneered a collaborative model that convenes experts from diverse fields to share their work and bring the science of social and emotional learning to the Pre-K-12 education agenda. CASEL built the field of SEL based on scholarly research demonstrating that 1) human *relationships* are central to learning; 2) schools *can teach* children to manage their emotions, build healthy relationships, and make safe, ethical choices; and 3) *acquiring social and emotional skills* promotes greater success in school, at home, and in the community.

In 2006, CASEL emerged as an independent not-for-profit organization dedicated to the belief that the science of child development provides the foundation for effective classroom pedagogy and sustainable school improvement. CASEL provides a forum through which diverse collaborators come together to help define the future of social and emotional learning and to build international

networks of scholars and educators engaged in research, teaching, professional development, policy, and advocacy that supports the field.

Although historically NoVo Foundation has been very quiet about its giving, Peter Buffett believes it's important to call attention to the CASEL gift. "Not enough people know about social and emotional learning and CASEL's work," he says. "Sometimes giving the money is enough. But sometimes advocacy behind the money can be even more valuable."

For more information, please contact the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning at 815 W. Van Buren, Suite 210, Chicago, IL 60607. Phone: 312-784-3888 www.casel.org