



The Urban Assembly

2022 Joint Legislative Budget Hearing Testimonial

David Adams, Urban Assembly CEO

There is no more important time to ensure that every student has access to social-emotional learning than now. Given the unprecedented mental health crisis brought upon by Covid-19, the enduring need to use social problem solving to navigate community, and the contribution of social-emotional skills to postsecondary readiness, the Urban Assembly encourages the state of New York to prioritize Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) as it continues to refine its budget considerations. SEL is the process through which all young people and adults acquire and apply the knowledge, skills, and attitudes to develop healthy identities, manage emotions and achieve personal and collective goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain supportive relationships, and make responsible and caring decisions. Social-emotional competencies continue to develop throughout our lives and are essential to success in our schools, workplaces, homes, and communities and allow individuals to contribute meaningfully to society.

“One specific skill that I have learned and improved on because of my advisor is Self-Management. I have become more mature and that has helped me develop a growth mindset instead of a fixed mindset. This has made me a better person and made me see the world differently.”

- Dynasty, Student, AIM 1 New Visions High School



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Given the power of this approach, it is clear what is possible if the state acted to ensure the implementation of social-emotional competency-building programs in every school so that students can acquire and apply these necessary skills for development, growth, and success. In order to accomplish this vision, we encourage the state to fund and support the school and district-based infrastructure in the following ways:

- Committed funding after CARES, CRRSA, and ARP to bridge funding cliffs and to create confidence for LEAs to hire Directors of SEL
- Stipends for school-based SEL implementation leads
- Funding for state-level coverings to ensure best practices are disseminated

As a model provider and a network of schools, the Urban Assembly prioritizes SEL in all of our programs and tools in NYC and across the country. We recognize the power of SEL to advance academic outcomes, build citizenship among students, and to empower students in times of adversity, such as now. With a mission of advancing students' social and economic mobility by improving public education, the Urban Assembly provides school support to a network of 23 small, high-performing, career-themed NYC schools. We engage hundreds of public, private, and non-profit sector partners to increase educational opportunities and close the opportunity gap. As a result of our emphasis on SEL, academics, and postsecondary readiness, Urban Assembly students outperform students in other public schools in NYC. City and state data shows that students who join the Urban Assembly begin with greater learning needs and lower academic performance in comparison to other public schools in the city of NYC, but attain significant growth and outperform the rest of the city with a higher graduation, college matriculation, and college persistence rate. This demonstrates both the impact and criticality of SEL for NYC schools.

Increasing funding will ensure the quality of systemic approaches SEL across New York State. Ensuring that students have the tools to bridge gaps and increase empathy among communities. As The



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Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) has recognized, SEL plays in helping children and adults become self-aware, caring, and engaged lifelong learners who work together to achieve their goals and create a more equitable world. As the National Education Association (NEA) also proclaims that SEL skills can help individuals build a sense of self and community, navigate through new and emerging challenges, build resilience, and create powerful connections – all outcomes of great importance as we emerge from the global pandemic.

As the state continues to prioritize elementary and secondary education funding, we ask for its consideration of SEL implementation in schools and districts across the country. We would be happy to provide additional information, research, or thought partnership around SEL at this time and in the future.

About the Urban Assembly

With a mission of advancing students' social and economic mobility by improving public education, the Urban Assembly (UA) is a model provider of school support, supporting a network of 23 small, high-performing career-themed NYC schools. The UA provides school support in 4 key areas to advance student growth: Academics (math and literacy), Leadership, College Access, Career Readiness, and Social-Emotional Learning - as well as Postsecondary Success support in college and career for UA alumni. The UA engages hundreds of public, private, and non-profit sector partners to increase educational opportunities and close the opportunity gap.