



MENTOR

SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT IN EARLY ADOLESCENCE:

Tapping into the Power of Relationships and Mentoring

Recommendations for POLICYMAKERS AND FUNDERS

Whether we engage with youth in classrooms, on the basketball court or on the school bus, research and best practices suggest that students' relationships with peers and caring adults are a key vehicle for learning critical life skills, like teamwork, communication, and coping with and expressing feelings¹.

MENTOR's recently released guide, *Social and Emotional Development in Early Adolescence*, shares specific information about the relationship-based strategies, including mentoring, that show promise for cultivating social and emotional learning for young adolescents, both in school and out-of-school time settings. Identifying specific relationship-based strategies that promote social and emotional learning for students in the middle grades will ensure that students receive the necessary supports to maximize their social

and emotional learning potential and lay the foundation for healthy development and relationships as they grow, increasing their chances of future academic, career, and life success.

This guide summarizes the existing research findings about how relationships can help foster social and emotional development for

young adolescents, and provides examples from the field that illustrate relationship-based practices that can be applied and scaled in schools, after-school programs, and community-based settings to enhance opportunities for social and emotional learning. Finally, it concludes with recommendations for school, district and youth development practitioners,





researchers, funders and policy-makers, to help them identify solutions that can be customized in their communities. Ultimately, this guide seeks to help youth development professionals across settings understand the power of relationships to support students socially and emotionally, identify promising practices that can be scaled, and increase access to these supports for young adolescents in communities across the United States. The full text of the MENTOR Guide for SEL can be found at [web address].

REFERENCES

Aspen Institute National Commission on Social, Emotional, and Academic Development (2019). From a nation at risk to a nation at hope: Recommendations from the National Commission on Social, Emotional, & Academic Development: Executive Summary. Retrieved from <http://nationathope.org/>

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ENDNOTES

¹ASPEN Institute National Commission on Social, Emotional and Academic Development, 2019; Nagaoka, Farrington, Ehrlich, & Heath, 2015; Schwartz, Kanchewa, Rhodes, Cutler, & Cunningham, 2016.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR POLICYMAKERS AND FUNDERS

Policymakers and funders are positioned to support and initiate systemic changes that can promote positive social and emotional outcomes for young adolescents, including:

- Funding or advocating for funding for relationship-based approaches to social and emotional learning.
- Providing more dedicated attention and funds to the middle grades and early adolescence.
- Incorporating more licensure or endorsement requirements around understanding young adolescent learning and development for educators and administrators in the middle grades, and provide pathways for school and district professionals to engage in continuing education around relationship-building and social and emotional learning.
- Supporting the recommendations put forth by the Aspen Institute's National Commission on Social, Emotional and Academic Development, including greater cross-sector collaboration and partnerships between youth development organizations, schools and districts, providers of social and emotional learning programming, and grantmakers.
- Increasing awareness of existing local, state and federal funding opportunities that can be leveraged to support relationship-based social and emotional programming for adolescents.