

# Innovation Fund Award

## Program Overview & Project Descriptions

NoVo Foundation is committed to supporting the spread of innovative social and emotional learning (SEL) practices in schools and districts nationwide and we know practitioners have some of the most inspiring and effective ideas out there. The Innovation Fund provides modest support to teachers to support innovations in their classroom practice that foster social-emotional skills in students in grades K-12. This fund celebrates classroom teachers working to integrate SEL, elevates great work already underway and stimulates creativity in districts with long-standing SEL investments.

The Innovation Fund, managed by Rockefeller Philanthropy Advisors and Education First, aims to seed teacher-led projects that foster social-emotional skills in students in grades K-12. We sought proposals from individual educators or teams of educators seeking to improve students' social-emotional skills either at the classroom- or school-level in fresh or innovative ways. The fund received a total of 430 applications from 164 districts in 34 states and granted 23 innovation awards to teachers and teams of teachers in 14 states.

Funded projects represent teachers and students at all grade levels. These classroom teachers work across all subject areas, and winning proposals include projects with a focus on art, student heritage and family engagement. Award recipients overwhelmingly serve in high-needs schools: 19 schools receive Title I funds, have a majority of low-income students or are in the bottom 10% of performance in the state.

We are excited by the work ahead and pleased to share the following short descriptions of each project.



## **NoVo SEL Innovation Fund Awardee Project Descriptions**

### **Anchorage School District (AK)**

Wendler Middle School in Anchorage, Alaska is the top 3<sup>rd</sup> most diverse middle school in the nation. We are proud of our weekly 50 minute advisory program that focuses on improving our student's academic standards, building our school community, building social and emotional learning and ensuring that every student has an adult advocate. My advisory will be focused on Alaska Native Female students to encourage them to own their learning and be proud of their cultural backgrounds by participation in a variety of activities such as artwork, living off the land, mentors, elders, successful native female woman as guest speakers, and field trips that will help them to identify with their native cultures such as the Youth and Elders Conference, Alaska Federation of Natives gathering, Native Youth Olympics and the Alaska Native Heritage Center. My hope is that advisory will encourage female native students to improve; attendance, grades, behavior and be proud of an ancient culture that is uniquely theirs.

### **Atlanta Public Schools (GA)**

The Harper Archer Middle School Mentoring program is committed to improving the total health and wellness of the students at Harper Archer Middle School. The program will embrace Social Emotional Learning (SEL) as a key component to helping disadvantage youth at our middle school reach their full potential. Once these mentees have mastered the objectives in our SEL program they will become student SEL leaders in the school. They will mentor pre-identified seventh and six grade students. Students will participate in a series of classes, workshops and field trips which embraces and helps them use Social Emotional Learning components in a real world settings.

### **Austin Independent School District (TX)**

Clifton Career Development School is excited to continue our work in SEL innovation in partnership with NoVo Foundation and Rockefeller Philanthropy Advisors. Our goal is to create a unique, interdisciplinary experience for students training to be members of the workforce upon graduation. Clifton students will use their technical knowledge to teach each other how to think critically about where their food comes from and the effect that food has on their bodies and minds. Through varied learning experiences including independent study, work-based projects, and community partnerships, our students will explore how food is produced from the seed to the plate in a local context. Moreover, they will learn about the benefits of locally, seasonally, and organically produced foods before having the opportunity to present their findings to stakeholders in the community. Please follow our progress on Twitter! #CliftonSEL

### **Bridgeport Public Schools (CT)**

Luis Muñoz Marin School, Bridgeport, CT is participating in the district-wide rollout of the RULER/SEL Program. Our project called "Shaping Emotional Leaders" will begin the year by building a community of Social- Emotional Learning leaders, comprised of teachers, security staff, paraprofessionals, clerical staff, support staff, and students. We plan to build on the knowledge and practice of all R.U.L.E.R. stakeholders at Marin by initiating three projects:

- 1.) Create a R.U.L.E.R. Peer Leaders student team
- 2.) Provide each homeroom with an age- appropriate R.U.L.E.R. toolkit
- 3.) Build a Library of Emotional Intelligence that can be accessed by the school- wide community

Additionally, we will be planning a R.U.L.E.R. kick- off event in the beginning of the year to re-introduce R.U.L.E.R. and inspire student engagement by inviting the whole school on a field trip to view Inside Out at our local movie theater. Follow- up activities facilitated by R.U.L.E.R. team members will support homeroom teachers in building a R.U.L.E.R. environment in their classrooms. We will also be holding a mid- year, school- wide R.U.L.E.R. event and an end- of- the- year R.U.L.E.R. celebration. We believe these projects and events, along with our daily fidelity to R.U.L.E.R. practices, will build an emotionally intelligent community that supports not only the personal and social well- being of our students, but also promotes academic success.

### **Bridgeport Public Schools (CT)**

Waltersville School's Project called, "Together We Can", will help create an emotionally literate school driven by our newly student developed Peer Mediation Team. This project will begin in August of 2016. Last year, our Student Council members wanted to roll out a much needed Peer Mediation Team to give the students a real voice and opportunity to resolve conflicts, plan events and have students take personally responsibility in their academic learning as well as their social emotional learning. By implementing the Together We Can program we will expand the access to Literacy Resources related to feelings and emotions for our students and parents within the classrooms and the library. The Peer Mediation Team will work with each teacher to develop a Meta-Moment Cool Down Station for their classroom to address when something happens and emotions are triggered to prevent escalation and to deal with emotions in a healthy manner. Our school schedule has time planned for peer mediation sessions. Administrators, teachers, parents and students may request a peer mediation session and the trained students will mediate. Everyone in our school will know that emotions matter. They will be able to Recognize, Understand, Label, Express and Regulate their emotions so that our school will be part of a model urban school district that values and celebrates diversity and will be renowned for not only its academic excellence, but its support of the emotional well-being of the school community.

### **Central Berkshire Regional School District (MA)**

In the Fall 2016, Doctors Without Borders/Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) USA will launch *Forced From Home*, a traveling interactive educational exhibit designed to raise public awareness about the plight of the world's 60 million refugees, internally displaced people (IDPs), and migrants. Wahconah Regional High School will send a representative group of students from our school's chapter of the National Honor Society to the exhibit in Boston in order for students to understand the situation in a broader/deeper context and develop empathy for refugees. The students who attend the exhibit will then create a small-scale exhibit locally as well as at the National Honor Society Fall Conference to continue to raise awareness of the issue and expand the sphere of influence of this exhibit to our area. As we are a small school in a rural part of Western Massachusetts, our student population is removed from many of the direct consequences of the refugee crisis and we would like to bring the issue closer to home so that our population can understand the extent of the crisis first-hand and develop empathy for the millions of people who need our support.

**Chicago Public Schools (IL)**

As 8th graders from Chalmers Elementary explore the courageous choices of those who took a stand during the Civil Rights movement, they will have the opportunity to put their historical learning into practice by creating a piece of socially engaged theatre with the support of a local theatre company. During a 10 week residency, teaching artists will work with students to develop their capacity to work together as an ensemble, including crucial commitments to trust, respect, and authentic listening. In the second half of the residency, students will begin to take on leadership roles in writing, revising, choreographing, and performing a dramatic production that draws attention to a contemporary social justice issue.

**Cleveland Metropolitan School District (OH)**

Educator Melissa Marini Švigelj-Smith partners with SPACES, a presenting contemporary art venue, to offer Ms. Švigelj-Smith's students at the Cuyahoga County Juvenile Detention Center the opportunity to expand their classroom model based on gratitude, happiness, and service to others through the creation and appreciation of experimental art. During the school year, CCJDC students are provided monthly access to interactive art experiences through SPACES created by local, national, and international professional artists. SPACES will also facilitate hands-on and discussion-based artistic activities presented by a network of Northeast Ohio nonprofit organizations and artists. Art produced during the collaboration also serves as a source for community service projects for various non profit organizations in the Northeast Ohio area. The partnership combines artistic mediums, creativity, personal reflection, and student voice to increase self-awareness and connections to others.

**Cumberland Regional School District (NJ)**

The Freshman Seminar/Senior Mentoring project at Cumberland Regional High School (CRHS) in Cumberland County, NJ, will support the transition to high school for incoming, academically at-risk ninth-graders. The project will expand and enhance the Freshman Seminar/Senior Mentoring program at CRHS, which partners freshmen with role model Senior Mentors to work together during and outside of class time on character and leadership development, the promotion of positive school culture, and setting and progressing toward goals for academic success. The innovative program facilitates positive outcomes by supporting student development of social and emotional learning skills and competencies as well as effective strategies that promote positive behaviors, academic success, improved school attendance, and on-time graduation. The grant-funded project will include the addition of new components to units within the Freshman Seminar/Senior Mentoring curriculum and the inclusion of activities, guest speakers, and additional team-building efforts to better support the social and emotional learning opportunities provided to CRHS students.

**Davidson County Schools (TN)**

The social and emotional innovation project at John F. Kennedy Middle School aims to provide a culture of self-awareness and self-discovery. Using techniques such as setting a moral compass, managing emotions, and learning the importance of physical and mental health, the Projects initiative will set a standard of healthy alternatives. Students will have the ability to set goals and be intentional about self-monitoring to meet their individual and joint goals. With the support of others in a collaborative effort, positive lasting relationships are established and cultivated.

### **Frontier Central Schools (NY)**

The project I will be completing involves creating a documentary of my students and their experiences as they pursue Passion Projects and develop their online identity by creating a website of their work in my ELA class, and other classes (if they choose). The goal is to create a community of learners who are able to advocate for themselves, are confident in their communication skills, and inhabit a "can do" mindset. The documentary will trace the creation of this type of climate and celebrate the successful completion of a website for each student.

### **Holyoke Public Schools (MA)**

What we know from a strong body of interventionist research with high-adversity families (Mary Dozier and Phil Fisher among the scholars), is that the home matters to a child's socio-emotional and school success. Carol Dweck (2015) provides growth mindset scripts that can be practiced at home and in classrooms. We propose a series of 6 workshops for families of students primarily in our Freshman Academy community that empower them as partners as we acquire and practice socio-emotional skills together. The workshops are also open to the entire Holyoke learning community of up to 1500 families. We hope this active, bi-lingual workshop format will provide an opportunity to build a strong, capable community which can wield an array of socio-emotional tenacities that will improve students' feeling of agency — a resilience that will improve high school graduation rates and promote curiosity at home and at school.

### **Los Angeles Unified School District (CA)**

In recognizing that student success relies on the interdependence between school, family, and community, 24th Street's SEL project is multidimensional. Dimension 1 occurs during the school day, where focus students are provided 45 minutes of daily, targeted acquisition and practice of CASEL's 5 core SEL competencies (Self-Management, Self-Awareness, Social Awareness, Relationship Skills, and Responsible Decision Making). Students also receive training in methods of conflict management, with the expectation that these skills will eventually enable them to act as Peer Mediators. Dimension 2 involves focus students' families and community, through home visits and workshops. This dimension serves to both underscore and foster the role of families in supporting student SEL knowledge and health. Additionally, these meetings provide the opportunity to create and support relationship-building within the wider community.

### **Metro Nashville Public Schools (TN)**

The Innovative SIFE SEL Project is designed to develop a Trauma-Informed SEL framework to support our SIFE (*Students with Interrupted Formal Education*) Program in 1st-12th grade in Metro Nashville Public Schools. Our SIFE program services up to 300 students that often come from refugee situations from, the Congo, Syria, Iraq, Kurdistan, Somalia, Myanmar, Nepal, Burma, El Salvador and Guatemala. Many of our students have recently come from severe traumatic experiences due to war, violence and political turmoil in their home country, separation from family, and new resettlement. We've realize that by thinking outside the box we can develop a program to better meet the needs of our refugee students with chronic trauma and high SEL needs via a) enhancing our current SEL practices with new interventions such as art therapy, breath intervention and trauma sensitive yoga, b) collaborating more intentionally with families, c) building teacher capacity through SEL model classrooms, and d) partnering with district and community stakeholders, and local national organizations. Our goal is to create a strong

SEL framework that supports all of our SIFE students and their families transitioning to school and life throughout their first year in the United States.

### **Newark Public Schools (NJ)**

This year, Speedway Academies will further our commitment to restorative practices by investing in our best social-emotional learning resources--our own students and community. This project seeks to address two key student needs: (1) the need for additional SEL/restorative practices infusion into academia and (2) the all-too-often culturally irrelevant "character education" currently available on the market. We will host the first annual Speedway Academies SEL Incubator—a chance for our 3<sup>rd</sup> – 5<sup>th</sup> grade students to (1) develop project proposals for SEL PD content, interaction mechanisms, and other ideas to improve SEL/RP in our school community, (2) pitch these proposals to a community board, and (3) implement these projects, thanks to the kind partnership with the NoVo Foundation Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) Innovation Fund.

### **New York City DOE (NY)**

The Resilient Scholars Program is the Urban Assembly's approach to Social Emotional Learning. Here at the Urban Assembly School for Wildlife Conversation, we will be focusing on direct instruction three days a week using the School Connect Curriculum, assessment, using the Devereux Student Strength Assessment, and integration using the Resilient Scholars program Matrix. We are particularly excited about the opportunity for our students to utilize these important SEL competencies in their internships at the world famous Bronx Zoo. Our students will maximize their experiences at the zoo by developing their competencies around working in teams and setting and achieving goals. We are honored to have the opportunity to receive this grant to support our students.

### **Noble Network of Charter Schools (IL)**

THE PEACE ROOM is a specially designed place for students to improve their SEL Competencies in self-awareness, management, social awareness, and relationship skills so that students may have a successful learning experience. The PEACE ROOM is a converted classroom designed to instill a sense of tranquility. With a love seat, cozy chairs, pre-loaded MP3 players with nature sounds and even a tropical fish tank, individual students are granted the space and place to practice these SEL competencies. THE PEACE ROOM is also used for all school peer mediation and restorative justice practices. Members our administrative team, our instructional team, and our culture team all work to support students who need to make use of the room during the regular school day. In this way, every adult in the building will be seen as a supporter of students' SEL understanding and learning.

### **Oak Hill United School Corporation (IN)**

For Oak Hill Junior high, we will be utilizing the SEL grant in the following ways. We plan to strengthen staff knowledge of growth mindset and how helping students focus on growth mindset can improve academic performance as well as increase social and emotional skills. Target students will participate in small group instruction in social and emotional learning which will focus on self-regulation, self-awareness, understanding of social situations, and growth mindset. We will be purchasing subscriptions for staff development and student use for the Mindset Works/Brainology program. Another goal we have is to plan family nights with target students to allow them a chance to practice their

social/emotional learning in a real social environment. Students will plan activities and invite others to attend.

### **Tindley Accelerated Schools (IN)**

As Teach Plus Indianapolis Policy Fellows, we are dedicated educators who are passionate about social justice. Our small group community project was centered on children dealing with adverse childhood experiences (ACEs). We had a viewing of the documentary “Paper Tigers” which documented the lives of staff and students of Lincoln Alternative High School in Walla Walla, Washington. The Students at this high school had behavioral issues and poor academic performances and were usually suspended from school. After discovering the studies on adverse childhood experiences (ACEs), the high school changed its approach to handling the students with kindness and in-school suspension versus automatic punitive punishments. As a follow up to the viewing we hosted an event inviting community stakeholders to hold a discussion on the documentary and what we could do to support the students in our Indianapolis schools who are dealing with similar issues. The data gathered from the event made us realize there was a need for additional supports in schools to support students who may be suffering from ACEs. Our group has decided to launch a program to train staff members on how to support students dealing with ACEs. After the implementation of our program, we hope to expand the program to reach more urban youth in our city. The idea would be that every educator in Indianapolis has access to the program so that they can best serve their students. Our project will look to target three of the SEL competencies: self-awareness, self-management, and social awareness. Our hope is by targeting these competencies experience both self-reflection and reflection through dialogue. Our students will build self-awareness of their own experiences and will have the opportunity to connect with the experiences of others, empathize with them, and see beyond aggression and conflict to the underlying needs of their peers.

### **Tumwater School District (WA)**

Tumwater High School will be targeting 9th and 10th grade male students providing them with specific social emotional tools to help them navigate the high school experience and provide them with skills to be career and college ready. We will meet with a small group of students on a weekly basis providing them with direct instruction and counseling on social emotional skills, conduct college campus field trips and regularly monitor academic performance. The goals of this program are to increase school attendance, academic progress and decrease discipline incidents.

### **Washtenaw Intermediate School District (MI)**

Our project is to implement an advisory program and partnerships that scaffolds student skills and directly addresses the at-risk factors of our students using these essential habits and a targeted social-emotional learning advisory curriculum. In tandem with developing a robust curriculum that weaves in common language and elements of social-emotional learning competencies and our identified essential habits, we are also beginning to identify external partners and create training resources for social emotional curriculum needs. Next year we will include professional support for our teachers around trauma-informed approaches for our students, particularly with cognitive behavioral therapy training for all teachers, and build into regular staff meeting times ongoing curriculum work time to incorporate common SEL language, activities, and strategies into the curriculum. Furthermore we want to build and develop a daily advisory team time for our 9th and 10th grade students that give staff and students a greater opportunity to practice that common language, develop coping strategies, and build cohesion as a school community.

**Winston-Salem Forsyth County (NC)**

The ALC (Alternative Learning Center) Enrichment Program will serve as a formative social and emotional learning experience for RJ Reynolds High School students with repeated disciplinary issues. The program will encourage at-risk students to reach a new level of self-awareness and confidence by completing individual and collaborative “Projects without Grades.” After surveying students and learning more about their backgrounds, talents, and interests, I will provide materials and guidance for students to learn more about subjects and skills that interest them, scheduling weekly visits from a variety of community specialists with relevant expertise. Completion of high-interest interactive projects (which may vary from maintenance of a school garden to poetry compilations, art installations, websites and blog posts) will promote social and emotional learning by encouraging teamwork and creating a sense of accomplishment and belonging among marginalized students.