

*Why All Schools Must Be Schools of  
Social-Emotional Competence and Character*

**Maurice J. Elias, Ph.D.**

**Dept. of Psychology, Rutgers University**

**Director, Rutgers Social-Emotional and Character Development Lab  
([www.secdlab.org](http://www.secdlab.org))**

**Co-Director, The Academy for Social-Emotional Learning in Schools  
[SELinSchools.org](http://SELinSchools.org)    [Sel.rutgers.edu](http://Sel.rutgers.edu)**

**[maurice.elias@rutgers.edu](mailto:maurice.elias@rutgers.edu)**

**[www.edutopia.org/user/67](http://www.edutopia.org/user/67)**

**Keynote, New Jersey School Boards Association Annual Workshop,  
Atlantic City, NJ, October 25, 2017**

# What is Needed to be College, Career, Community, & Life Ready... in 2028?



[www.youtube.com/watch?v=uqZilO0YI7Y](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uqZilO0YI7Y)

We are preparing our students for an uncertain future! But one constant will be the importance of caring interpersonal relationships.

A person is a person  
through  
other  
persons.  
–Bantu



■ What do we know with certainty?

- *To thrive in the 21st century, students need more than traditional academic learning. They must be adept at collaboration, communication and problem-solving, which are some of the skills developed through social and emotional learning (SEL). Coupled with mastery of traditional skills, social and emotional proficiency will equip students to succeed in the swiftly evolving digital economy.*
- Report of the World Economic Forum, 2016, p. 4
- <https://www.weforum.org/reports/new-vision-for-education-fostering-social-and-emotional-learning-through-technology>

# We Must Shift Our Focus

## ■ Preparation for College Completion “+” and Career Continuity

*Ready, Willing, and Able*— Savitz-Romer & Bouffard

*Closing the Revolving Door*— Rutgers Collaborative  
Center

“Simply passing the accountability assessment is not enough for them to navigate this complex world”

(Metz Elementary Principal)

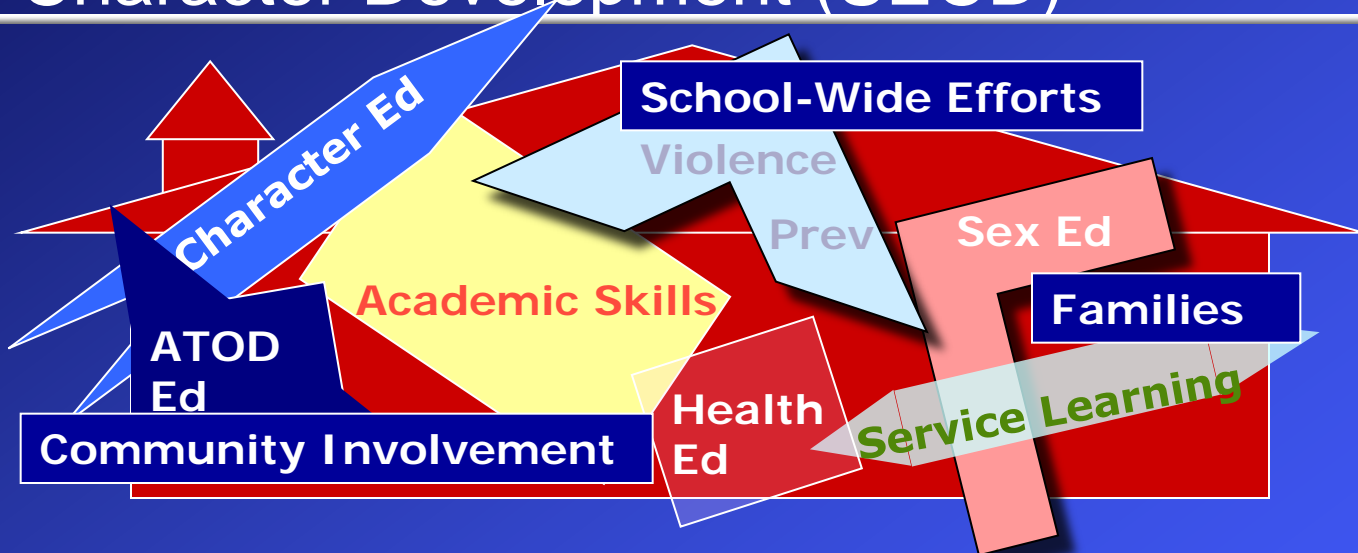




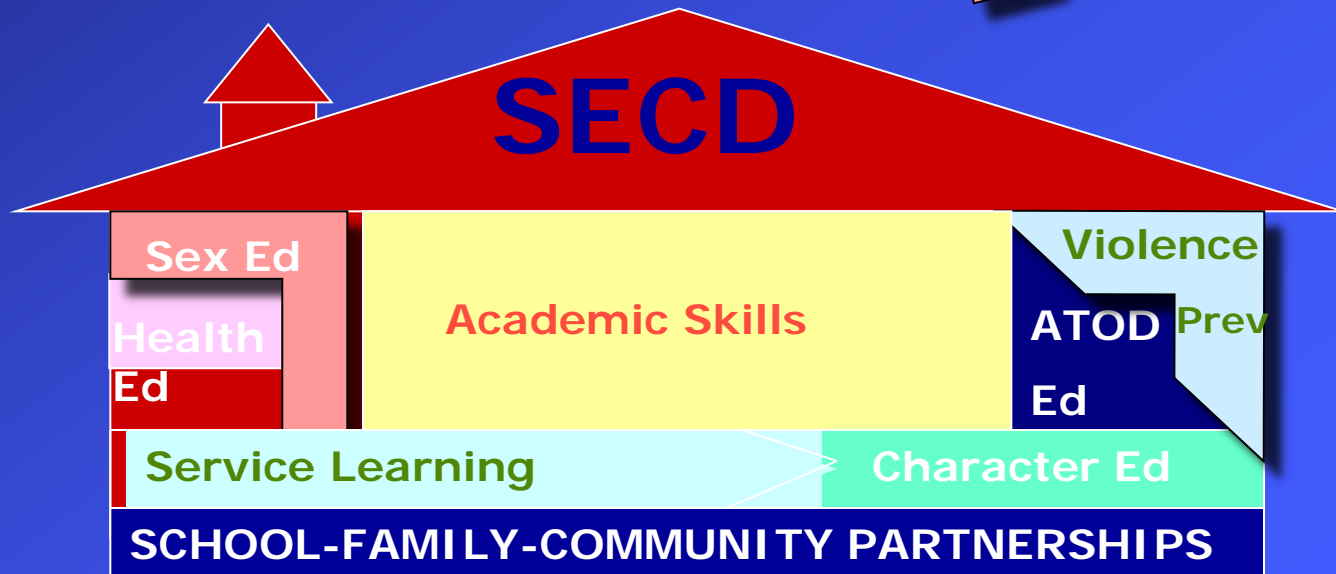
*Social-emotional and character  
competencies are as basic,  
foundational, and essential to  
academic achievement as  
reading competence*

# We must Turn our Jumbled Schoolhouses into Places that Synergistically Promote Social-Emotional and Character Development (SECD)

A Jumbled and Fragmented Schoolhouse



A School of Social-Emotional & Character Competence



## ***The Task is One of Ethical and Moral Responsibility and Educational Equity***

It must be **guaranteed** for children to be in a positive school climate and to systematically learn social-emotional competencies and character virtues essential for life, college, and career success. It cannot be optional.

For the future, educational equity and excellence require full **preparation for the tests of life**-- academic, civic, social-emotional, and character-- **not mainly a life of tests.**

If You Had a Magic Wand, What Values Would  
You Wish Your Children Would Internalize  
Forever?

■ Friendship

■ Peace

■ Wisdom

■ Beauty

• Long Life

• Riches

• Popularity

• Family

# We Know How to Succeed

- State and National Schools of Character, including many in New Jersey
- NJ State Board of Ed Resolution for SEL
- Examples of best-practices models for SEL skill development
- Articulation of Principles for Culture of Health, Safety, Support, and Achievement in Schools
- Successful, Feasible, In-Practice Models for Ongoing Implementation Support and Continuous Improvement (e.g., NJ SSN's)

# What Kind of Schools Do you Want for YOUR Grandchildren?



# NJSHACC Guidelines for Truly Achieving Schools

## The Culture of a Learning Organization: Echoes of Dewey

- **INSPIRING**.....*of one another*
- **CHALLENGING**.....*take risks to improve*
- **SUPPORTIVE**.....*collective efficacy*
- **SAFE AND HEALTHY**.....*others' keepers*
- **ENGAGED**.....*collaborative norms*
- **RESPECTFUL**.....*no-fear communication*
- **COMMUNITIES OF LEARNERS**...*set and pursue goals for learning together*

■ See: <http://selinschools.org/new-jersey-culture-and-climate-coalition/>

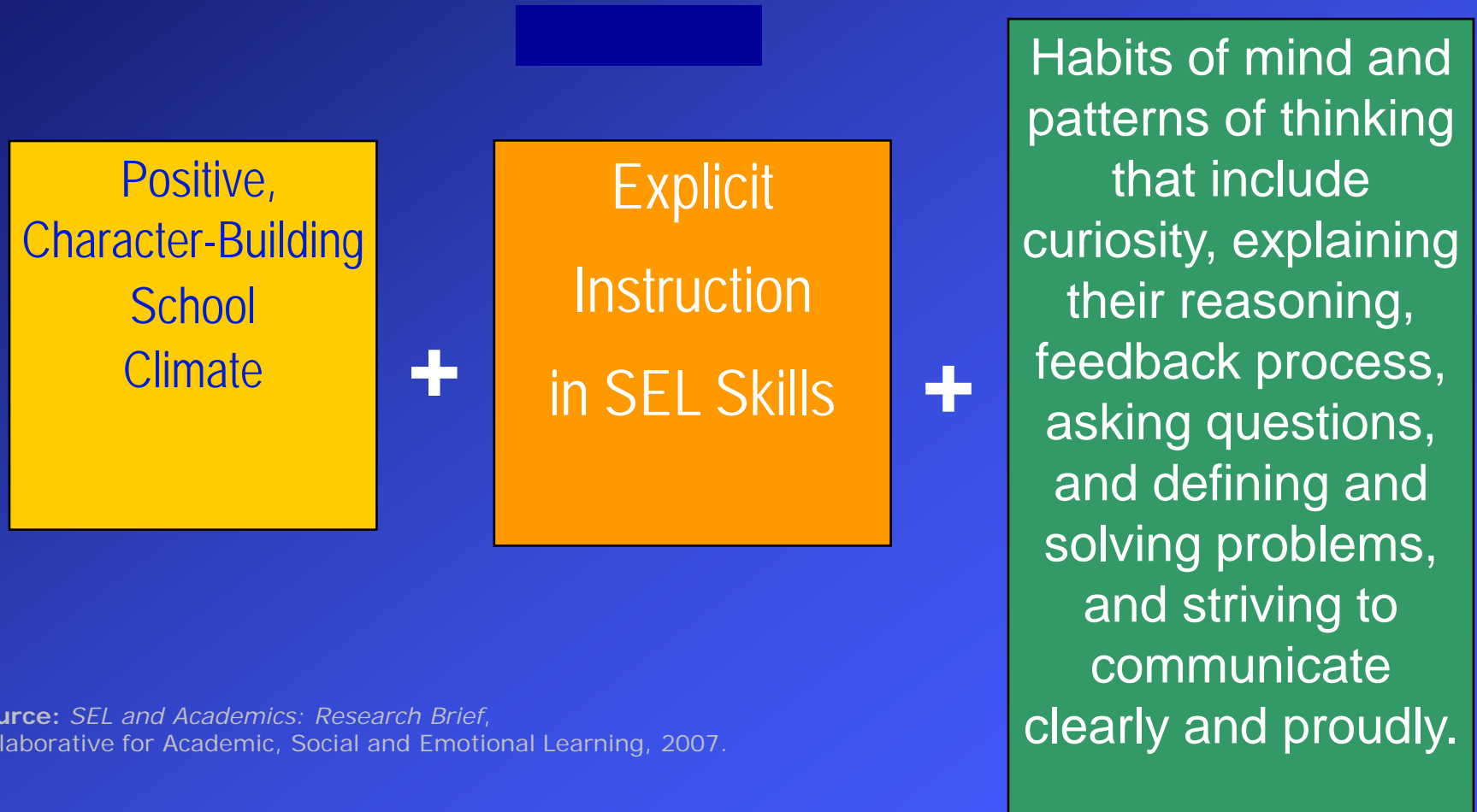
# Successful Organizational Guidelines- Schools and Units

- *Have a conversation at your tables regarding the dimensions of the NJ SHACC Guidelines:*
- How would you assess whether a classroom was following each of the guidelines?
- How would you assess whether or not your school was following each of the guidelines?
- *For both students and adults, how would you make your schools- **all aspects of them--** more Inspiring? Supportive? More of a Community of Learners?*



# How Students Can Truly Achieve: Climate, Character, and SEL Competencies

True achievement in school and in life integrates the intellectual, emotional, and social facets of learning. These are inextricably interconnected.



**Source:** *SEL and Academics: Research Brief*, Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning, 2007.

We Need an Integration of Social-  
Emotional Competence and Character

**MOSAIC**

*Mastering Our Skills And Inspiring  
Character*



*If Skills are the propellers,  
Virtues are the rudder.  
The Journey of Life  
requires both.*

# Positive (Noble) Purpose: William Damon

The intention to accomplish something that is both:

Personally meaningful

In service of a greater, non-destructive good

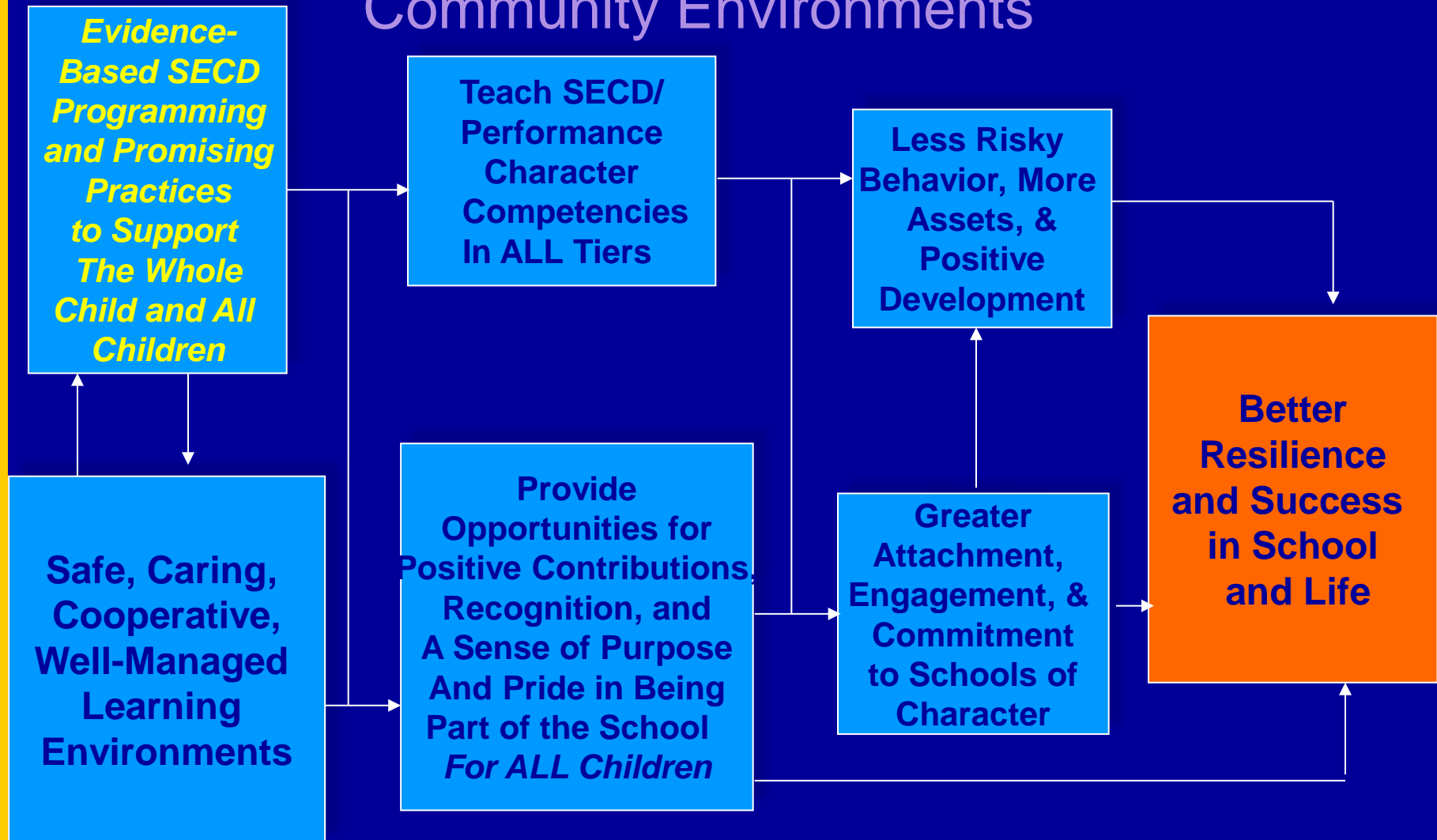
# Students (and Staff) Want to Think About and Talk About Purpose

- *In your classes and in your life you may have learned about and encountered people with a strong sense of purpose. Similarly, you might feel your own sense of purpose. In a five-paragraph essay, that includes an introduction, three body paragraphs, and a conclusion, please respond to the following:*
- *What is your definition of purpose?*
- *What might be your purpose? Why?*
- *How would someone know that is your purpose in life?*

# Help Students Identify Their Broad Priority/Values in Multiple Intelligence Projects and Products

- What is one rule that you believe is important to live your life by, that gives your life meaning and purpose?
- If you could change one thing about yourself, what would it be?
- Is there some situation or place that you think is unfair/makes you upset/you can't stand?
- If we lived in a perfect world, how would people behave differently than they do now?

# Resilient Schools and Students Come from a Confluence of SECD and Supportive School and Community Environments



# Benefits of SECD

## Good Science Links SECD to the Following Student Gains:



- Social-emotional skills
- Improved attitudes about self, others, and school
- Positive classroom behavior
- 10-11 percentile-point gains on standardized achievement tests

## And Reduced Risks for Failure:



- Conduct problems
- Aggressive behavior
- Emotional distress

**Source:** Durlak, J.A., Weissberg, R.P., Dymnicki, A.B., Taylor, R.D., & Schellinger, K. (2011). The Impact of Enhancing Students' Social and Emotional Learning: A Meta-Analysis of School-Based Universal Interventions. *Child Development*. (available at [www.caseli.org](http://www.caseli.org)) and M. Berkowitz & M. Bier, *What works in character education*. (Washington, DC: Character Education Partnership, 2006) (available at [www.characterandcitizenship.org](http://www.characterandcitizenship.org).)

# Small Steps Toward a Great Journey:

How Shall We Proceed to Get to  
Where We Know We Must Go?





# Successful 21st Century Schools Understand and Emphasize:

*Systematic, comprehensive, and effective approaches to school-wide SECD are an essential component of **all** students' academic and life success*

*We must turn what seems Incredible into Inevitable and what seems Inconceivable into Achievable*



# Essential Features of SECD Programs

- They are not just programs— they must be part of a multiyear school improvement strategy
- Provide a common language
- Flexibility with consistency
- Specific lessons focused on SECD
- Opportunities for integration across all subjects via skills, themes, core virtues



# Academy for Social-Emotional Learning in Schools: *SELinSchools.org*

- Overarching goals are to address the gap in professional development of school leaders and diverse education professionals that exists today and to create a community for on-going mentoring, resource support, and sharing of experiences from walking the talk!
- The Academy offers a two certificate programs connected to a virtual Professional Learning Community:
  - Certificate for School Leadership in Social-Emotional Learning and Character Development. (*SELinSchools.org*)
  - Certificate for Direct Instruction of Social-Emotional Learning and Character Development. (*sel.rutgers.edu*)
- Academy Overview Video: <http://novo.cse.edu/>



Academy for  
**SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL**  
Learning in Schools



# Courageous Leadership Needed

- To look into the future with realism and commitment in a short-term political environment requires courage.
- To change course requires courage
- To provide the structural, budget, and personnel supports needed requires courage

# Courageous Leadership Needed

- For adults to model the changes at the Board level, in the district office, and in all school-related services areas requires courage.
- To move to an orientation of communities of learners in a spirit of continuous improvement, with no fear of data, and to see one-another as resources with untapped positive potential acting as rainbows in students' and colleagues' clouds requires courage.

# The Paths to Purpose: Service, Inspiration, Finding a Calling

*One thing I know: The only ones among you who will be really happy are those who will have sought and found how to serve.*

Albert Schweitzer

It did not really matter what we expected from life, but rather what life expected of us.

Viktor Frankl

*Everyone can be great because everyone can serve.*

Martin Luther King, Jr.

# Contact Information

- Maurice J. Elias, Ph.D. , Rutgers University
- Director, Rutgers Social-Emotional and Character Development Lab and The MOSAIC Project  
([www.secdlab.org](http://www.secdlab.org), [sel.rutgers.edu](http://sel.rutgers.edu))
- Co-Director, Academy for Social-Emotional Learning ([SELinSchools.org](http://SELinSchools.org))
- School Support Network of the United Way NNJ:  
[http://unitedwaynnj.org/ourwork/ed\\_youthempower\\_schoolsupportnetwork.php](http://unitedwaynnj.org/ourwork/ed_youthempower_schoolsupportnetwork.php)
- [Maurice.Elias@rutgers.edu](mailto:Maurice.Elias@rutgers.edu) and [www.Edutopia.org/user/67](http://www.Edutopia.org/user/67)