



Remarks of Lynne Munson
Founder and CEO, Great Minds
CASEL Founders Dinner — *Celebrating 25 Years*
October 2, 2019

Congratulations, CASEL, for 25 years of insisting that our schools instill compassion, trust, confidence, and kindness in students.

Great Minds may be an unfamiliar name to some here tonight.

We are a group of educators from every rank in the profession and every part of the country who share a belief in education as an essential ingredient of a great democracy. Together, we create core curriculum materials that power math, English, and science classrooms nationwide.

When we give teachers a curriculum that is exceptional and accessible, we tear down barriers for all students—including those facing social and emotional challenges, students who struggle with dyslexia, English learners, and students with few print materials at home and who have no one to take them to libraries and museums.

Great Minds curricula celebrate knowledge, respect the craft of teaching, and acknowledge the true capabilities of students. Importantly, we integrate reflection, collaboration, relationship building, and responsible decision making throughout our content.

That's why we have been part of the SEL movement. The competencies are entwined throughout our work.

There is an elementary school outside Denver that uses Great Minds' ELA curriculum, which we call *Wit & Wisdom*. Here's how one fourth grade teacher describes *Wit & Wisdom's* impact:

"My shyest girl brought in a huge collection of poetry she had written after school, proudly performing her work with ... energy and expression ... to a class that overwhelmed her with praise and acceptance."

"My boy with a writing IEP who had been afraid to scribe even a sentence in the beginning of the year projected his four-paragraph essay for his peers to critique, and not one student mentioned the spelling errors in nearly every word."

Here are some stats: At the start of the year only 4 percent of students in this fourth grade class were reading on grade level. By the winter 25 percent were on grade level, and climbing. Three-quarters of the students speak English as a second language. Two speak no English. The household income in this district is the lowest in Colorado.

Their teacher went on to say: "Some of these children doubt whether school is a place for them, especially in the face of more immediate needs. Physical well-being and mental health are relentless areas of concern. It's amazing what kids can do once they feel competent and successful." Indeed.

When we combine high expectations with social and emotional support, we have the recipe for success that every child requires because, as I know we all agree, "Every child is capable of greatness."