



Center for Educational Improvement, Yale Program for Recovery & Community Health Receive \$2.8M Dept. of Education Award

Funding supports an immediate and direct response to the urgent mental health needs of American children; establishes a network of trauma-skilled educators

VIENNA, VIRGINIA, UNITED STATES, October 26, 2022 /EINPresswire.com/ -- The [Center for Educational Improvement](#)¹ (CEI), in collaboration with Yale University Department of Psychiatry's [Program for Recovery and Community Health](#)² (Yale PRCH), received a \$2.8 million award as a part of new investments made by the U.S. Department of Education under the [Supporting Effective Educator Development](#)³ (SEED) program. The Compassionate School Leadership Academy (CSLA) project, a joint endeavor led by CEI Executive Director, Dr. Christine Mason (Co-PI) and Yale PRCH faculty, Dr. Maria O'Connell (Co-PI), Dr. Martha Staeheli (Project Director), and Dr. Janis Tondora (Director of Systems Change), builds upon a four-year partnership that CEI and Yale PRCH established as part of the Mental Health Technology Transfer Center, School-Based Mental Health Initiative funded by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration.

With this SEED investment, nearly \$1 million will be disbursed during the first year to support an immediate and direct response to the urgent mental health needs of American children by establishing a nationwide network of educational leaders trained in Compassionate School Practices (CSPs.) The project is further supported by a match of in-kind and related services, with a 25% match of \$985,000 over the course of the three-year project from TeachLink, CEI, the Michigan Elementary and Middle Schools Principals Association, and participating schools.

The mission of the CSLA project is to prepare school leaders in high-need districts to be culturally responsive and proactive in implementing trauma-conscious practices in the classroom. The COVID-19 pandemic, coupled with a changing sociopolitical landscape, a children's mental health crisis, and school budget constraints, has compounded problems in the classroom. According to the National Center for Education Statistics' (NCES) most recent survey findings (https://nces.ed.gov/whatsnew/press_releases/09_27_2022.asp), as of August 2022, staff at 53% of all public schools reported feeling understaffed entering the 2022-23 school year, and 69% said that a lack of qualified candidates was a prevalent challenge to hiring educators. Moreover, the COVID-19 pandemic and its associated social isolation, human loss, and economic instability have overwhelmed American youth, resulting in a 31% increase in emergency room visits for mental health reasons. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reports (<https://www.cdc.gov/suicide/facts/index.html>) that death by suicide is now the second leading cause of mortality for those ages 10-14, and the third leading cause of death for those ages 15-24.

Our work is bolstered by our first-hand knowledge from hundreds of educators who are building teams of caring, compassionate staff based on a conscious awareness of the needs of children and youth."

— *Christine Mason, PhD, CEI Executive Director*

According to Dr. Martha Staeheli, the CSLA Project Director, "we intend to apply lessons learned from our four-year collaboration with CEI—where we brought mental health providers and educators together to strengthen supports for children with the most serious emotional and behavioral challenges in New England—to combat the challenges faced by students and teachers and prepare leaders to create inclusive, identity-safe learning environments for their students and develop students' social and emotional skills from the ground up."

In describing the importance of the CSLA, Dr. Christine Mason, CEI's Executive Director who will serve as Co-Principal Investigator on this project, referenced a recent book she co-authored with Dr. Staeheli, *Compassionate School Practices: Fostering Children's Mental Health and Well-Being*, that lays out a broad framework for the initiative, explaining that "our work is bolstered by our first-hand knowledge from hundreds of educators and schools who are building teams of caring, compassionate staff based on a conscious awareness of the needs of children and youth." Quoting from that book, she continues:

"We know that educators, even as they are overworked, provide a haven of safety and security for children who leave the school building to return to home environments complicated by poverty, racism, abuse, neglect, substance misuse, and mental illness. And while these caring adults can make all the difference in a single child's life, a few educators cannot move mountains that must shift to establish a safe, more equitable and just future."

The U.S. Department of Education awards innovative grants to address nationwide teacher shortages and to help ensure long-term investments in school development programs across the country. New investments under the SEED program include 22 new three-year grants totaling more than 60 million dollars.

CEI and Yale PRCH are pleased to launch this initiative in collaboration with the following partners: Metis and Associates, TeachLink, Michigan Elementary and Middle School Principals Association, Social Emotional Learning Alliance for Massachusetts (SEL4MA), Michigan Virtual, and the National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP).

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The Center for Educational Improvement (CEI), established in 2009, is a 501(c)3 non-profit dedicated to supporting and uplifting schools through Heart Centered Learning and leadership. An intentional collaborative of educators and researchers, CEI identifies, curates, develops, and scale-ups sustainable practices that nurture family and community connectedness, well-being, equity, and justice.

Yale Program for Recovery and Community Health promotes social justice and health equity through community driven and partnered approaches in research, evaluation, education, training, and policy development. PRCH works to transform behavioral health, health programs, agencies, and systems to be culturally responsive, recovery-oriented, and equitable in their facilitation of recovery and social inclusion practices with individuals, families, and communities. Our mission is rooted in our commitment to collaboration, flexibility, responsiveness, creativity, and person-first approaches.

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¹ <https://www.edimprovement.org/>

² <https://medicine.yale.edu/psychiatry/prch/>

³ <https://oese.ed.gov/offices/office-of-discretionary-grants-support-services/effective-educator-development-programs/supporting-effective-educator-development-grant-program/>

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