



Recommendations & Key Takeaways from the Inaugural Convening of the National Commission on Social, Emotional, and Academic Development

This brief provides high-level recommendations and key takeaways from the Inaugural Convening of the National Commission on Social, Emotional, and Academic Development. Presented first are the high-level recommendations distilled from the full, three-day proceedings, followed by key takeaways from the Commission's primary advisory groups (the Council of Distinguished Educators and Council of Distinguished Scientist) and from the Commission's "whole village" meeting focused on SEAD challenges and opportunities in K-12 education.

Recommendations from the Full Commission

Two overarching themes emerged that have implications for the roles of the Youth Commission, Parent Advisory, Council of Distinguished Educators, and the Partners Collaborative: (1) The need to frame K-12 education in terms of the broader community and (2) The need to frame SEAD in terms of a social movement or civic endeavor. Beyond those two themes, several recommendations surfaced for the communications plan, and there was a clear request for a Commission subcommittee structure. The following five recommendations elaborate on those themes.

1. Expanding the Ecosystem: Shifting from K-12 Education to the K-12 Education Community

The first theme centered on the need to shift our ecosystem from the K-12 Education Schoolhouse to the K-12 Education Community. Community engagement is essential to effecting meaningful change, in particular for urban schools within communities of color where the broader community is critical to an equity frame. The broader ecosystem also has implications for language and messaging that suggests the SEAD audience should be defined not simply as *K-12 education* but as *the K-12 education community*.

2. Motivating Civic Engagement: Empowering the K-12 Education Community

Engaging the full K-12 community can be best accomplished by generating grassroots awareness and demand for SEAD by creating a social movement. Importantly, the magnitude of this undertaking points to the need to be clear about the distinction between what the Commission can do during its two year life versus what the Commission ultimately recommends be accomplished in order to *fully integrate SEAD*. Clearly, this is not something that the Commission can accomplish in two years. Rather, it is most appropriately thought of as a potential *strategy* to be included in the Roadmap or Framework that the Commission ultimately recommends. If the mission (or desired outcome) of the Commission is *uniting state and local leaders to fully integrate social, emotional, and academic development in K-12 education so that all students are prepared to thrive in school, career, and life*, a key strategy to achieve this would be the creation of a social movement behind SEAD based on grassroots demand for its implementation.

3. Rethinking the role of the Youth Commission, Parent Advisory, Council of Distinguished Educators, and the Partners Collaborative

The current strategy gives primary responsibility to the Partners Collaborative for moving the work forward following the life of the Commission. If we assume a more expanded view of K-12 education to include the K-12 community and also believe that a grassroots movement is critical to widespread implementation, we need to reassess whether the Partners Collaborative is best positioned for advancing the recommendations of the Commission to the implementation phase. Arguably, it is parents, students, and educators who are better positioned to generate grassroots demand and a bottom-up, community approach to implementation. If so, our current strategies to engage these groups are too modest. Finally, there is a risk that the Council of Distinguished Educators (CDE) will be viewed as form over function unless a more robust strategy for reflecting and capturing their feedback is pursued. One approach that should be considered is mirroring the Council of Distinguished Scientists (CDS) strategy of using a steering committee to work with the facilitator to guide the development of the CDE recommendations. A second approach to be considered is merging the work of the CDS with the CDE in an effort to bridge the gap between SEAD research and practice.

4. Communications Plan

Several strategies to refine language, increase awareness, and generate demand for SEAD could improve the communications plan. These include key message testing, parent and youth surveys, white papers authored by members of the Council of Distinguished Scientists, spotlight papers authored by members of the Council of Distinguished Educators, and “Turn the Lights On” documentaries. The complexity of multiple audiences and the need to generate grassroots demand should be the fundamental drivers of the communications plan. To accomplish this, our current plan and funding to engage these audiences needs to be more ambitious.

5. Potential Commission Subcommittees

Effectively, we already have two subcommittees or work groups: the Council of Distinguished Educators and the Council of Distinguished Scientists. If we expand this approach, further subcommittees or work groups can be identified by audience including a youth & parent engagement subcommittee that could leverage the power of youth and parents voices. Similarly, a partners subcommittee would capture the expertise provided by the many institutional and SEAD-aligned organizations that have expressed interest in supporting the Commission. An alternative, or complementary approach, would be to identify functional subcommittees to address communications, policy development, and getting to scale. Most importantly, the subcommittee structure should be aligned with the revised goals for the Commission and potentially be interdisciplinary to capture the richness of the discussion that occurred when the various Commission entities came together on the opening day.