

Testimony of Kristen Ann Record
Physics Teacher; Bunnell High School Stratford
2011 Connecticut Teacher of the Year
Stratford Education Association Vice-President for Secondary Schools
Before the Education Committee
**Re: HB 5378, An Act Concerning The Integration of Social-Emotional Learning in
Programs of Professional Development for Educators in Connecticut**
March 9, 2020

Good afternoon, Senator McCrory, Representative Sanchez, Senator Berthel, and Representative McCarty, and distinguished members of the Education Committee.

My name is Kristen Record. I am a resident of Bridgeport and have taught physics at Bunnell High School in Stratford for the past 20 years. I am the Stratford Education Association Vice-President for Secondary Schools and Connecticut's 2011 Teacher of the Year.

I am an advocate for the integration of social emotional learning (SEL) at all grade levels. I also firmly believe that SEL should not solely be taught in our schools as a separate topic, exclusively through an advisory program or special activities. Rather, it should be integrated directly into academic learning. In fact, last year I participated in a research project run by the Center for Curriculum Redesign about how teachers can teach SEL competencies in the context of content instruction—for example, how one might overtly teach resilience or problem-solving or empathy in the context of physics, math, or music curriculum. Thus, I am very supportive of efforts to provide educators with high quality SEL professional development. However, as a classroom teacher, I know that we need to approach the SEL needs of students far more comprehensively than simply through an hour of professional learning.

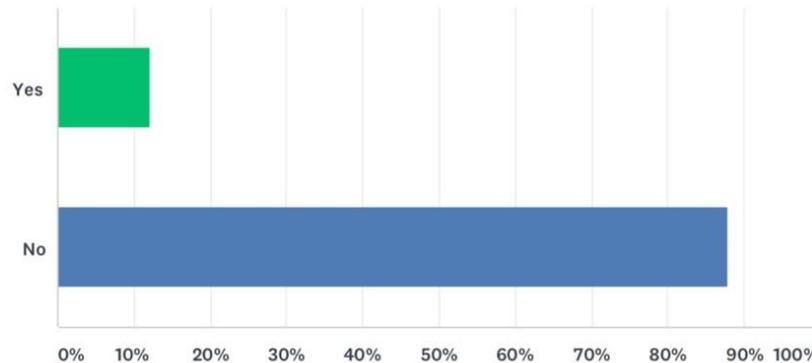
In developing a plan to systematically address the social emotional needs of the whole child, a district must consider a variety of questions and concerns. Placing professional learning up front, before a district has a chance to create an implementation plan, risks compromising our efforts before we even start.

So many children in our public schools are in crisis from factors far beyond the control of educators, and so much more is needed to support these students than an hour of professional learning. In a survey conducted last year by *Education Week*, 43% of teachers said they had difficulty "finding ways to help students who appear to be struggling with problems outside of school." As a high school teacher, I can say this is so very real to me. In the fall, when CEA, AFT, and WFSB Channel 3 joined forces to survey Connecticut teachers on a variety of topics, this same struggle was highlighted in our state:

CEA and AFT Teacher Survey

Q10 Do you feel equipped to deal with your students' mental health challenges?

Answered: 1,411 Skipped: 0

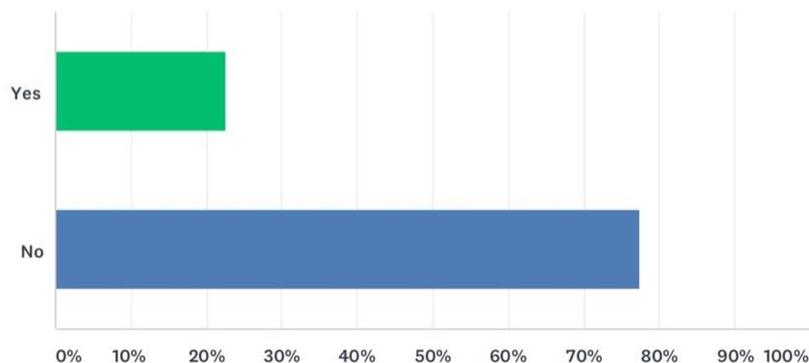


Unfortunately, in that same Ed Week survey, almost half of teachers reported that they couldn't call professionals such as school counselors, psychologists, or social workers when they needed them - 46% stated they "somewhat" or "completely" disagreed their schools had adequate support services from those individuals. This is also something I face on a weekly basis in my school; it is the reason I strongly believe that ratios for social workers, school psychologists, and school counselors in Connecticut's schools should meet national standards (for social workers and school counselors, the student-to-teacher standard is 250:1; for school psychologists, it is 500-700:1). In fact, speaking as the chairperson for contract negotiations for the Stratford Education Association, we have tried to negotiate for these ratios to be written into our contract for the past six years, to no avail. Thus, the results of the CEA/AFT/WFSB survey on that same topic were of no surprise to me.

CEA and AFT Teacher Survey

Q9 Is there sufficient support for students' mental health needs at your school?

Answered: 1,411 Skipped: 0



Addressing the needs of our most at-risk children will take a comprehensive and holistic response that goes far beyond professional learning. I thank you for raising this important issue for discussion and urge you to consider bolder actions, such as those proposed in CEA's Safe and Compassionate Learning Initiative, that was discussed by Kate Field.

Thank you.