ORI LEARNING

A White Paper on Strengthening Emotional Well-Being in Secondary Education

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report highlights the urgent need for structured emotional health support in middle and high schools, presenting Ori Learning as a research-based, scalable solution.

- **Problem:** Adolescents face rising emotional health challenges (anxiety, stress, disconnect), yet schools lack consistent, accessible tools for emotional skill development, with traditional interventions often falling short.
- **Solution**: Ori Learning offers an evidence-informed emotional well-being curriculum for grades 6-12.
- **Research-Based Design:**
  - **CASEL-Aligned:** Ori Learning's curriculum aligns with CASEL's five emotional well-being competencies (self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, responsible decision-making).
  - **Neuroscience-Grounded:** Uses adolescent developmental neuroscience insights to support emotional regulation and decision-making.
  - **UDL Principles:** Embeds Universal Design for Learning (UDL) for accessibility, ensuring content is available to diverse learners through features like text-to-speech and translation.
- **Implementation & Flexibility:** Ori Learning fits easily into various instructional settings (front-of-class, self-paced, live participation) with ready-to-use teacher guides and progress dashboards.
- **Proven Effectiveness:** A third-party study (ESSA Level III) of 1,829 students found a significant positive correlation between engagement with Ori Learning and improved emotional well-being outcomes.
  - Completing all 25 lessons led to 11% higher emotional well-being scores.
  - Engaging with extension activities, unit projects, and reflection questions also showed significant improvements.
- **Conclusion:** Ori Learning provides a timely, evidence-based, and practical solution for schools to integrate emotional development into daily instruction, fostering supportive learning environments and improving student well-being.

BEYOND ACADEMICS: PRIORITIZING EMOTIONAL HEALTH IN SCHOOLS

Educators nationwide are witnessing a sustained rise in emotional health challenges among middle and high school students. Adolescents today report elevated levels of anxiety, stress, and disconnect from school environments (U.S. Department of Education, 2022). As students navigate academic demands alongside personal and social pressures, schools are expected to meet a growing range of behavioral and emotional needs.

Despite this urgent reality, many schools lack structured accessible tools to integrate emotional skill development into the daily learning experience. Traditional interventions—such as sporadic counseling sessions or one-time assemblies—often fall short of providing the consistent practice required for meaningful, long-term impact. At the same time, educators—already stretched thin—need resources that are not only evidence-based but also practical and adaptable for classroom use (Rose & Meyer, 2002).

The need is particularly acute in secondary settings, where emotional health needs may go unaddressed due to stigma, time constraints, or a lack of developmentally appropriate materials (CASEL, 2020). Without proactive, embedded support, students are more likely to disengage from learning, struggle with peer relationships, and experience behavioral challenges that further disconnect them from school (Cipriano et al., 2023).

This context demands a scalable, classroom-ready approach to emotional well-being—one that can be delivered with fidelity, adapted to diverse learners, and integrated into existing instructional routines. Developers designed Ori Learning to meet this need.

ORI LEARNING, A RESEARCH-BASED SOLUTION FOR TODAY'S CLASSROOM

Ori Learning offers a scalable, evidence-informed emotional well-being curriculum for students in grades 6–12. The program draws from decades of research in education, psychology, and neuroscience to deliver instruction that is developmentally responsive, equitable, and instructionally practical. By grounding its design in research-based, emotional well-being frameworks and accessible instructional principles, Ori Learning provides educators with tools to address emotional health directly in the classroom—without requiring extensive new training or infrastructure.

CASEL-Aligned Curriculum

At the heart of Ori Learning is its program alignment with the five emotional well-being competencies defined by the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL): self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making (CASEL, 2020). These competencies are linked to a wide range of positive outcomes including improved academic performance, better peer relationships, and reduced behavior problems (Mahoney et al., 2018; Durlak et al., 2011; Taylor et al., 2017). Programs based on these competencies improve academic performance by an average of 11 percentile points, while also fostering lasting gains in students' behavioral and emotional development (Durlak et al., 2011).

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Ori's curriculum is sequenced and scaffolded to build these competencies over time. Each unit includes brief, interactive lessons, extension activities, and projects that invite students to apply their learning to real-life situations. Embedded reflection prompts and pre- and post-assessments offer opportunities for self-reflection and progress monitoring.

Grounded in Adolescent Development and Neuroscience

The program's design also reflects insights from developmental neuroscience. Adolescence is a critical window for developing emotional regulation and decision-making skills due to the mismatch between the maturing limbic system and slower-developing prefrontal cortex (Albert et al., 2013; Steinberg, 2008). This imbalance can increase impulsivity and emotional reactivity, underscoring the importance of explicit instruction in emotional self-regulation and responsible decision-making (Crone & Dahl, 2012).

Ori Learning supports students in developing emotional skills—such as identifying emotions, managing impulses, and building empathy—through scaffolded, developmentally-appropriate experiences that reinforce consistent practice. A 7th-grade lesson might begin with an anonymous poll asking students to select an emoji that matches their current energy level. The lesson then guides them through a 3-minute 'Name It to Tame It' activity where they identify the physical sensations associated with that feeling, directly applying insights from neuroscience on emotional regulation.

> "As a high school Transition Teacher, **using the Transition Curriculum in my classes has been an incredibly rewarding experience**… The program offers a wide range of transition-focused lessons and resources that are thoughtfully designed to build the skills students need for success after high school."
>
> — Miranda Begay, Transition Teacher

Equity Through Universal Design for Learning (UDL)

Ori Learning also embeds Universal Design for Learning (UDL) principles to ensure accessibility for all students. UDL is a research-based framework that promotes multiple means of representation, engagement, and expression to accommodate diverse learning needs (Rose & Meyer, 2002; CAST, 2024). By integrating built-in supports such as text-to-speech, translation, visual scaffolding, and self-paced content delivery, Ori Learning minimizes barriers to participation and promotes inclusivity.

Contemporary research affirms UDL's value in reducing structural inequities in classroom learning by making content accessible across varied linguistic, cognitive, and sensory needs (Al-Azawei et al., 2016; Becht et al., 2020; Rao et al., 2021). Ori's platform-based delivery operationalizes these guidelines, making emotional well-being instruction accessible to a broad and diverse student population.

A Unified, Instructionally Embedded Model

What distinguishes Ori Learning is not only its research alignment, but also its ability to integrate emotional skill-building into the daily school schedule. Teachers deliver content through front-of-class, live participation, or self-paced modes. Lessons are supported

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with ready-to-use teacher guides, discussion prompts, and implementation dashboards that track student engagement and performance.

By integrating CASEL's competencies, insights from developmental neuroscience, and the principles of Universal Design for Learning, Ori Learning delivers an emotional well-being program that is both research-driven and practical for everyday classroom use.

> "I appreciate how **ORI Learning has been consistently providing quality content for our students**. As an ESS School Counselor, I enjoy having all the lessons available and get to have our students discover themselves... This has helped our students be confident in themselves and learn more about their needs, their strengths and their individual self as a student with a disability."
>
> — Kaygene Jackson, ESS School Counselor

HOW ORI LEARNING WORKS IN SCHOOLS

Ori Learning isn't just a powerful emotional well-being curriculum; it's designed for effortless integration and sustained success within your school or district. It fits easily into various instructional settings, offering flexible delivery modes—including front-of-class, self-paced, and live participation—to align with existing classroom schedules. This design minimizes teacher workload while supporting consistent integration of emotional well-being instruction.

Teachers are equipped with ready-to-use guides, embedded assessments, and real-time dashboards to monitor student progress. The platform includes features like text-to-speech, translation, and interactive response formats, ensuring accessibility for all learners. With its combination of research-based content and intuitive tools, Ori Learning helps schools create inclusive, emotionally supportive learning environments.

Our commitment to success extends throughout the entire partnership:

- **Discover:** Connect with the sales team to explore how Ori Learning can specifically support a district's strategic priorities. During this initial call, Ori Learning will discuss your specific goals—whether it's enhancing IEP transition planning, improving attendance, reducing behavior infractions, or addressing academic challenges—and align its support accordingly.
- **Plan**: If a phased approach is preferred, Ori Learning will help design a pilot that supports the intended outcomes.
- **Implement:** A dedicated Customer Success Manager will guide onboarding and build a customized rollout plan. This includes a kickoff and planning meeting, a structured 9-week onboarding process with training, data integration, and milestone check-ins.
- **Sustain:** Ori Learning provides real-time data insights, usage tracking, and quarterly business reviews and performance reports to ensure long-term success and continuous improvement, alongside ongoing support via live or on-demand trainings and capacity-building workshops.

STUDENTS USING ORI LEARNING HAVE IMPROVED EMOTIONAL WELL-BEING

To evaluate Ori Learning's effectiveness, a third-party research firm conducted a correlational, treatment-only study in a suburban New Jersey school district during the 2023–24 academic year. The study followed ESSA Level III design requirements and was implemented by 15 educators and 1,829 students in grades 9–12 (Hunt & Styers, 2025).
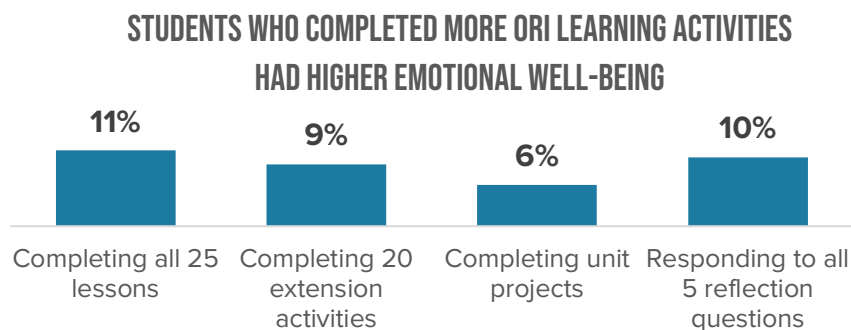
Student Participation and Engagement

Students completed an average of 12 out of 25 available lessons, with 38% completing all five curriculum units. Many also engaged in optional content, completing an average of 20 extension activities and seven end-of-unit projects. Over half of all students responded to reflection questions designed to assess their readiness to apply emotional well-being strategies.

Key Outcome Findings

Statistical analysis revealed a clear, positive relationship between students' use of Ori Learning and their emotional well-being. As students completed more lessons, projects, and reflection activities, their well-being consistently improved.

STUDENTS WHO COMPLETED MORE ORI LEARNING ACTIVITIES HAD HIGHER EMOTIONAL WELL-BEING

Completing all 25 lessons	Completing 20 extension activities	Completing unit projects	Responding to all 5 reflection questions
11%	9%	6%	10%

Specifically:
- Students who completed all 25 lessons had 11% higher emotional well-being scores than those who completed only five lessons.
- Completing 20 extension activities (half of the total available) was associated with a 9% increase in emotional well-being.
- Students who completed unit projects had up to 6% higher emotional well-being scores than those who completed none.
- Responding to all five-unit reflection questions was associated with a 10% improvement in emotional well-being scores.

These findings were statistically significant ($p < .05$) and consistent across grade levels. By controlling for prior academic achievement and classroom influences, the study strengthens confidence that increased engagement with Ori Learning is associated with meaningful growth in students' emotional well-being competencies.

CONCLUSION AND CALL-TO-ACTION

The mental health crisis impacting today's youth demands immediate action from schools. Ori Learning is not just a solution; it's an urgent necessity. By implementing Ori Learning, your school can immediately enhance its capacity to address the escalating emotional well-being challenges facing students, equipping them for sustained success.

Ori Learning provides a timely, evidence-based program that seamlessly integrates emotional skill development into the daily curriculum, even amidst limited time and resources. Its flexible delivery models, CASEL-aligned curriculum, and robust implementation support empower educators to foster crucial emotional growth in every student.

Recent research demonstrates that engagement with Ori Learning directly correlates with meaningful improvements in student emotional well-being. Furthermore, the benefits of comprehensive social-emotional learning programs like Ori Learning extend far beyond immediate gains. Studies show that sustained engagement with initiatives like Ori Learning can lead to remarkable long-term outcomes. These anticipated outcomes include improved social-emotional skills, positive attitudes, better social behavior, enhanced academic performance, and a reduction in emotional distress and behavioral problems (McCormick et al., 2021; Taylor et al., 2017).

Don't wait. Empower your students and educators to thrive. Choose Ori Learning as the scalable, research-informed cornerstone of your school's mental health strategy.

Ori Learning offers flexible pricing options designed to meet the needs of classrooms, buildings, and districts. **To receive a customized quote based on your specific goals and student population, please contact our sales team at sales@orilearning.com to schedule a call.**

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