

In Memoriam
Rachael Kessler (1946-2010)



Together with so many of our colleagues in the field of social and emotional learning, we mourn the passing of Rachael Kessler on January 27, 2010.

Rachael was the founder of the PassageWorks Institute in Boulder, Colo., the author of *The Soul of Education* (ASCD, 2000), a ground-breaking book on ways to transform public education, and a highly esteemed leader for positive school change. She also co-authored *Social and Emotional Learning: Guidelines for Educators* (ASCD, 1997), the first book to define and describe the field of social and emotional learning. Rachael spent more than 20 years as an educator, author, speaker, and consultant on issues related to the need for emotional intelligence, social competence, and spiritual meaning in our classrooms, workplaces, and everyday lives.

In 2007 Rachael wrote of her progress at PassageWorks:

Our team sees a new openness to models that are truly transformative. Instead of skepticism and resistance, we are witnessing growing interest in:

- Nurturing and renewing teachers;
- “Personalizing” schools so that classrooms and school culture move deliberately towards caring, respectful communities of learning and belonging;
- Supporting students in their times of transition so the destabilizing force of change can empower them rather than lead to fragility and regression;
- Developing tools for supporting focus, concentration, inner peace, and interpersonal harmony in an era of overload, polarization, chaos, and heightened anxiety;
- Demonstrating through brain research the link between the emotional intelligence of students and teachers and achieving the core objectives of public schools;
- Tapping into the reservoir of wisdom, creativity, and leadership in our youth in order to revitalize communities across generations.

Rachael was a conscientious shepherd of PassageWorks, and the organization continues to thrive under outstanding leadership. To learn more about PassageWorks, visit their [website](#) or read Rachael’s seminal paper, [Grief as a Gateway to Love in Teaching](#).