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**SPARKLER LEARNING LAUNCHES EARLY CHILDHOOD SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL LEARNING INITIATIVE, BIG HEART WORLD, IN PARTNERSHIP WITH NOGGIN, NICKELODEON'S INTERACTIVE LEARNING SERVICE**

*The National Head Start Association, Campaign for Grade-Level Reading, Zero to Three, AppleTree Institute, and More than a Dozen Other Partner Organizations Collaborate on Big Heart World to Focus America on Social and Emotional Learning for Young Children*

**NEW YORK** — Sparkler Learning today launched the Big Heart World initiative in partnership with Noggin, Nickelodeon's interactive learning service for preschoolers, and in collaboration with partner organizations focused on early childhood education and social and emotional learning. Big Heart World (BigHeartWorld.org) is a free and publicly available resource that aims to help parents and educators address the pressing social and emotional needs that young children have right now during COVID-19 and to provide action-oriented tools and resources that help grown-ups support children's healthy social and emotional development. The Walton Family Foundation is generously supporting Sparkler's Big Heart World work.

"Social and emotional learning helps children understand who they are, make friends, and make the world a better place," said Julia Levy, executive director of Sparkler Learning. "Social and emotional learning is always important, but after more than a year of stress and fear, isolation and distance, it's a top concern for parents, educators, and communities. We're proud to be working with Noggin and many amazing partners to help parents and educators grow big-hearted, resilient kids with Big Heart World."

The Big Heart World initiative will roll out monthly content focused on the following core areas of social and emotional learning:

1. Learning About Me — Awareness of self: identity & belonging, feelings and self-regulation.

2. Learning About You — Awareness of others: empathy, appreciation of diversity.
3. Learning About Us — Relationships with others: interpersonal strategies.

Starting today, the Big Heart World website will share free and publicly available resources in English and Spanish. New resources, aligned with monthly themes, will roll out each month.

These include:

- **Noggin’s Big Heart Beats Album** — original songs and music videos by emerging and established artists to help grown-ups support their preschoolers’ development through music.
- **Big Heart Beats Extensions** — behind the tunes interviews with artists, coloring books, activity prompts, and other materials to help parents and educators help their children explore and learn from the Big Heart Beats Album songs.
- **Little Kids, Big Hearts podcast** — a new podcast, which helps parents and educators introduce big topics in social and emotional learning to their children. The podcast is hosted by an early childhood educator and social-emotional learning coordinator. It will explore what it means to have a big heart with episodes focused on identity, friendship, and community.
- **Big Heart World Activities** — Games, activities, and art projects that can help parents practice different SEL skills with their young children.
- **Big Heart World book recommendations and SEL vocabulary**, both of which are lists that will grow each month.
- **Events and discussions**, including music classes and panels. The first panel discussion is Thursday, April 15 with The 74.
- **Expert articles** with news and advice that adults can use to support children’s social and emotional wellness.

“Tending to social and emotional health is a fundamental part of helping young people learn and grow, and it’s more important now than ever,” said Caryl M. Stern, Executive Director of the Walton Family Foundation. “Today’s youth are living a virtual reality: It can be easy to forget, after all these months, how massively life has changed for them. The Walton Family Foundation is honored to work and learn alongside the Big Heart World initiative and its efforts to address the social and emotional needs of students, with the help of their families and communities.”

“Parents and young children have been through an unprecedented period of stress,” said Michael Levine, Senior Vice President, Learning and Impact for Noggin. “Fortunately, most have built a skill set that promotes resilience and coping mechanisms to help their kids thrive in an unpredictable world. Sparkler Learning has assembled world class partners to provide a remarkable toolkit for navigating the new normal. We are thrilled to help Big Heart World reach every family with these vital resources.”

Big Heart World launch partners include the following organizations: Abriendo Puertas; AppleTree Institute; BetterKids; Bright by Text; The Campaign for Grade-Level Reading; Children’s Museum of Manhattan; Educare; FirstBook; LitLab and Kidappolis; The National Head Start Association; The Primary School; Public Prep; SEL4US; Start Early; Too Small to

Fail; and Zero to Three. These collaborators are sharing content with Big Heart World's web-based hub. They are also sharing Big Heart World resources with the parents, caregivers, and educators in their communities — from hosting music classes to sharing the parent/caregiver and educator guides.

“The National Head Start Association is proud to partner with Sparkler to bring Big Heart World's creative and educational content to Head Start and Early Head Start children across the country,” said Yasmina Vinci, Executive Director of the National Head Start Association. “Especially as families seek resources to support their children's social and emotional development as we continue to navigate the pandemic, we are excited to share the many benefits that come from learning through music. Social-emotional learning is a critical piece of Head Start's model of comprehensive early childhood education and Big Heart World will offer programs a valuable resource in facilitating healthy development in this domain.”

“Social-emotional learning is the foundation to living a life of joy — where we have the skills to manage our feelings and stressors, bounce back from obstacles, and connect with others in loving and supportive relationships. Parents have a huge role to play in this learning, starting on day one, through the everyday moments they share with their children,” said Rebecca Parlakian, Senior Director of Programs, Zero to Three. “What we don't talk about enough is how parents need support too — helping children with social-emotional learning isn't always easy. Luckily, there are lots of tools — and some tricks — parents can use to make this early learning joyful for children and easier for grown-ups!”

“First Book is so excited to partner with Noggin and Sparkler to bring their 'Big Heart' philosophy to children in need across the country. For First Book, it has never been more important to help children not only to see themselves as they learn, but also to see others who look and live differently; to understand and appreciate a different point of view. We are thrilled to share this mission with Noggin,” said Becki Last Last, Chief Programmatic Officer for First Book.

“Every parent wants what is best for their child, so Start Early works with families with young children to help promote healthy social and emotional learning during their critical first five years,” said Diana Rauner, the president of Start Early. “We are excited to partner with Big Heart World, which will offer our families access to resources they need to help their children develop to their highest potential.”

“Social emotional development and learning is critical for our youngest learners as it strengthens self-awareness, supports children in learning to manage their emotions and helps them build healthy relationships,” said Cynthia Jackson, Executive Director of the Educare Learning Network. “We are excited to partner with Big Heart World, which will offer parents and families an evidence-based resource to help continue social emotional development and learning at home.”

“Today, more than ever, young people need social and emotional learning skills, such as identifying emotions, empathy, understanding cultural differences, and problem-solving, to tackle the challenges of COVID and in the face of systemic racism and biases that too often interfere with their learning and wellbeing,” said Nova Biro of SEL4US.

“Social-emotional learning lays the foundation for all later learning,” said Abby Carlson, Director of Research and Impact at AppleTree. “These early experiences and relationships are key to children's strong academic and personal outcomes.”

“Now, more than ever, we need to find ways to talk about our big feelings with our children,” said Laura Gonzalez Reed, Co-Founder & CEO of Kidappolis. “COVID-19 has been an emotional roller coaster for all of us. So it's great that there are ways we can help caregivers find fun and interactive ways to share feelings with their children and learn together.”

**Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter:** @BigHeartWorld

**Website:** [www.BigHeartWorld.org](http://www.BigHeartWorld.org)

**CONTACT:** [news@playsparkler.org](mailto:news@playsparkler.org)