



school climate matters

CENTER FOR SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL EDUCATION NEWSLETTER

VOLUME TWO • ISSUE 2

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in brief

CSEE would like to welcome James Williams as the new Senior Professional Development Coordinator! With more than twenty years in education, James brings a wealth of expertise and passion that will enhance our educational services.

In the Fall of 2008, CSEE will launch an SAT Prep Program to provide stress-relief kits, test prep packets, and tutoring to approximately 2000 juniors attending Bronx-area schools. Participating sponsors include Time Inc., and Random House Information Group. To learn more or to support this important effort, please contact: srodriguez@csee.net.

CSEE congratulates its student service-learning participants at Manhattan Bridges High School (pictured at right) for continuing to focus on improving their school's climate and wishes them the best of luck as they graduate!



Register Now for CSEE's 11th Annual Summer Institute: July 8-10th in NYC

**Promoting Safe & Civil K-12 Schools:
Creating the Foundation for Positive Youth Development & Student Achievement
at the NY Society for Ethical Culture-2 West 64th St. at Central Park West**

"CSEE's Institute excelled where many others stumble: bridging the gap between academic/education research and classroom application. I left with strategies for implementation at the school level and a sense of urgency for its purpose. I want to thank CSEE staff for creating a challenging, enlightening and most importantly deeply practical three day Institute."

**—Chase Davenport
Director of School Assessment & Evaluation,
California Charter School Association**

Through engaging workshops, expert presentations, and networking sessions, this three-day institute provides attendees with:

- **Systemic and in-classroom strategies** for improving students' social-emotional competencies and the overall school climate
- **Proven tools** for measuring and enhancing your school's learning environment with targeted, sustained action plans to increase parent engagement, promote effective risk prevention efforts, and improve academic achievement
- **Concrete supports** for assessing fundamental school-based principles such as the code of conduct, crisis plan, and school mission.

Institute attendees can earn graduate credit through the CUNY School of Professional Studies (SPS). See brochure for full details.

To download the full brochure or register for the 2008 Institute, visit: www.csee.net/si2008.

CREATING A CLIMATE FOR LEARNING

message from the president



dear friends,

As we near the end of another school year, it is important to reflect on the core goals and values our school communities endorse. How have we succeeded in supporting students for school—and life—success? And, where is there room for improvement? These are important questions as we consider the new challenges and celebrations our schools will meet in the year ahead.

One of the best ways to critically explore a school's strengths and needs is by participating in CSEE's 11th Annual Summer Institute from July 8-10th in New York City. This three-day event connects leading experts in the field with educators across the country and offers intensive workshops, keynote speakers, and networking sessions to enhance participants' understanding of core social, emotional and ethical learning concepts and school climate improvement efforts. You can learn more about this exciting event at: www.csee.net/si2008 and you will find useful funding sources and strategies for supporting school climate reform on p. 6 in this issue.

At CSEE, we are committed to providing valuable resources in every issue of *School Climate Matters* that will address the concerns all schools face in building effective, successful, and

supportive communities for students, parents, and personnel. This issue features key efforts in the field—from a NYC school's impressive program to address disrespectful behavior and high suspension rates (p. 7) to specific strategies for ending the damaging bullying cycle that is so prevalent in our nation's schools today (p. 3). In addition, *School Climate Matters* brings readers in contact with some of the leading researchers in the field. In this issue, you will learn how to build more balanced school environments that foster student success from the founder of the Five Freedoms project, Sam Chaltain. We hope you will utilize the strategies and information provided to meet specific needs at your own school and encourage you to share your experiences with us along the way by sending an email to: newsletter@csee.net.

Thank you for your continued interest and support. All the best for a positive and relaxing summer!

Jonathan Cohen, Ph.D.
President and Co-Founder
Center for Social and Emotional Education

announcement

CSEE Supports Safe & Civil Schools in Ohio

On June 12th, CSEE in partnership with the Ohio Department of Education (ODE) and the Ohio Safe School Center will present a State wide symposium: *Creating Safe and Civil School Climates to Address the Non-Academic Barriers to School Success*. This exciting "kick-off" event will showcase new resources for Ohio schools related to creating safer and more civil school climates including: a series of regional trainings, on-site technical assistance, and online resources.

At the symposium, participants will learn about:

- **Supportive state-level policy initiatives** from Mary Lou Rush, Ph.D. (Executive Director, Center for Students, Families, and Communities, ODE);

- **Important research and best practices** that support substantive improvement efforts to create safe & civil schools from Jonathan Cohen (Center for Social and Emotional Education)
- **Concerns related to school climate and non-academic barriers to learning** facilitated by Andrea Barker, M.S.W., (Ohio Resource Network); and
- **Emerging resources for assistance and support** from members of ODE, CSEE and Ohio Safe Schools Center.

To learn more about this event, please visit:
www.ebasedprevention.org or email newsletter@csee.net.

The Bully-Victim-Witness Cycle: Strategies to Reduce Bullying and Make Schools Safer, Responsive Learning Environments

We all know that social bullying is a pervasive and profoundly toxic problem for many K-12 schools today. A large body of research confirms what most parents and teachers have known for decades: ongoing bullying and/or victimization undermine children's healthy development and capacity to learn. The question remains, however, what can we do to end the damaging bullying cycle?

For years, CSEE has worked to help schools address this pressing issue through professional development workshops and training as well as publications that translate research into best practices. One of CSEE's ongoing partnerships has been with the Winston Preparatory School in NYC, a middle and high school for students with learning disabilities. The first step for Winston Prep was to get a whole school profile of their learning environment using CSEE's Comprehensive School Climate Inventory (CSCI). Like many of the schools we work with, their school climate findings revealed that social bullying was a more significant problem for students than parents or educators appreciated. As a result, we began working with the Winston faculty and school leaders to implement concrete supports that build on past anti-bullying efforts.

CSEE's anti-bullying supports build on the work of Ron Slaby (Education Development Center and Harvard Medical School) and Stuart Twemlow (Baylor Medical School and the Menninger Foundation), which focuses on the bully-victim-passive bystander cycle. As these researchers note, there is never just a bully and a victim, but also always a witness. Students and adults alike make a decision about whether they will be a passive bystander and collude with the bully-victim problem or decide to be an "upstander" who directly or indirectly says "no" to bullying. Please review the additional resources listed at the end of this article to learn more

about this framework and ways to build a more effective "upstander" culture at your school.

In early May, CSEE began to work with Winston faculty to discover how they might best promote a community of upstanders within the school. In the bullet points below are a series of questions that teachers and administrators grappled with throughout this process. These complex questions can be used as a starting point for initiating helpful conversations with your leadership team on how to build Anti-Bullying programs that meet your specific school needs.

- **How can educators foster "buy in" to the notion that none of us want to be hurt or humiliated and have people just watch as passive bystanders?**
- **How can students and teachers develop 'scripts' or a variety of upstander responses (from directly confronting the bully to telling an adult)?**
- **How can we provide ongoing opportunities for student to practice upstander skills?**
- **How can teachers infuse and reinforce upstander behavior into language arts, social studies and/or history classes?**
- **How can educators recognize and reinforce upstander behavior?**
- **How can parents, teachers and school-based mental health professionals work together to identify students who chronically fall into the role of bully and/or victim?**

When children are bullied in an intermittent but ongoing manner it derails healthy development and a student's capacity to learn. In fact, more and more evidence suggests that this type of harassment leads to significant adolescent and adult psychiatric problems. Recognizing the

role of the witness—be they a passive bystander or an upstander—represents a profound step in our nation's anti-bullying efforts. When we work to develop a community of upstanders, we are comprehensively and much more effectively addressing bully-victim behavior. We are also promoting a key set of social skills and ethical dispositions that—in part—provide the foundation for engaged, responsible and caring citizens in a democratic society.

Related Resources

BOOKS AND PAPERS:

- Charney, R.S.** (1997). *Habits of Goodness: Case studies in the social curriculum*. Northeast Foundation for Children.
- Cohen, J.** (Ed.) (2001). *Caring Classrooms / Intelligent Schools: The Social Emotional Education of Young Children*. Teachers College Press
- Devine, J. & Cohen, J.** (2007). *Making your school safe: Strategies to protect children and promote learning*. New York: Teachers College Press.
- Slaby, R.G., Wilson-Brewer, R., & Dash, K.** (1994). *Aggressors, victims, and bystanders: Thinking and acting to prevent violence. (A violence prevention curriculum for grades 6 - 9)*. Newton, MA: Education Development Center.
- Twemlow, S. & Sacco, F.** (2008). *Why School Anti-Bullying Practices Don't Work*. Rowman & Littlefield

WEB SITES:

- Anchorage School District: <http://www.asdk12.org/MiddleLink/AVB>
- Center for Social and Emotional Education: www.csee.net
- Character Education Partnership: www.character.org
- Developmental Studies Center (DSC): www.devstu.org
- Eyes on Bullying: www.eyesonbullying.org
- Educators for Social Responsibility: www.esrnational.org/Training2001.html
- Facing History/Facing Ourselves: www.facing.org
- Anti-Defamation League: www.adl.org/adl.asp
- UCLA Center for Mental Health in Schools: <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/>

Freedom & Structure: Creating the Right Balance for Student Success

Ask different people to define what it means to be an American in a single word, and you'll likely hear the same answer: FREEDOM. In that one word, we capture the historic, as-yet-unfulfilled promise of the United States. And we name the irresistible human impulse in all of us to be in control of our own destiny, to feel visible to others, and to have a say in determining the shape of the world around us.

Alongside the need to use our core freedoms, there is an equally pressing desire in all of us—for structure, safety and a sense of order to the world.

These two fundamental human needs—for freedom on one hand, and structure on the other—are particularly relevant to our nation's school leaders, who must strike the right balance between the two in order to create healthy, high-functioning learning environments. But what sort of school climate do we optimally want and need to support this delicate balance and set of interacting needs?

“Research confirms that when school leaders value a balance of freedom and structure, they create school climates that best support student learning and civic engagement.”

In my years as an educator, I have witnessed scores of schools that choose, either consciously or unconsciously, to value one of these at the expense of the other. We do not need to choose. It is possible to strike the right balance between freedom and structure. In fact, research confirms that when school leaders do so, they create the conditions for school climates that best support student learning and civic engagement.

Our country needs a system of schools that provide young people with well-structured spaces in which to discover who they are and what they care deeply about. We need schools where adults work collaboratively to create the conditions that will best prepare students for active citizenship and the 21st century workplace. We need trust and transparency to become explicit goals for school improvement. And we need schools to implement democratic practices that extend throughout their communities, and help adults unite behind the shared belief that all children should be seen and heard.

Before that vision can become a reality, we must first ensure that the central elements of our social covenant are also in place in our schools: a clear sense of structure and shared identity on one hand, and an unwavering commitment to individual freedom on the other.

“We need schools to implement democratic practices that extend throughout their communities, and help adults unite behind the shared belief that all children should be seen and heard.”

Kate Quarfordt, a theater teacher at Bronx Prep Charter School in New York City, knows what this delicate balance feels like. Asked to reflect on her school's ongoing work to value individual freedoms and create an orderly environment that improves student learning, Quarfordt observed: “Some of us have learned that—despite what intuition might suggest—structure actually creates freedom. Through experiences implementing democratic principles in the classroom and in the process of co-creating our shared culture, it has become clear that the potential for looseness, play, free thought and creativity is generated when the structures are so tight and elegantly constructed that they become nearly invisible. This has been a fundamental revelation.”

All of us—whether we are students, parents, supporters, teachers or administrators—must become more attuned to these “degrees of freedom,” and to the individual and group needs of the people around us. When we do so, we create the types of schools that confer not just academic diplomas, but also “degrees” of individual freedom, of civic responsibility, and of shared respect for the power and uniqueness of each person's voice.



Sam Chaltain is the founding director of the Five Freedoms Project (www.fivefreedoms.org), a leadership development program for K-12 educators, and the author of *First Freedoms: A Documentary History of First Amendment Rights in America* (Oxford University Press, 2006). His next book, *Degrees of Freedom: A 21st Century Handbook for School Leadership*, will be published this fall. He is also a member of the National School Climate Council.

5 Things You Can Do to Create An Effective Democratic School Community

1. Expand Your Perspective

One way to implement democratic practices is by using comprehensive school climate findings as a springboard for deliberative discussions about your school's strengths and needs. The data will likely engender a collaborative process of digging deeper, prioritizing goals and strategizing how to make the school an even better place to work and learn.

2. Practice Reflection

Great leaders begin with a strong intention, not a set of action plans. If, therefore, you want to encourage a more supportive organizational culture, there's nothing you need to brand, or categorize, or get people to "buy into" right away. The first step is simply to be more intentional about how you reflect on who you are and why you do what you do. Your long-range goal, from an organizational perspective, is to cultivate a climate in which it's safe for all people to create visions, ask questions, offer ideas, and respectfully challenge the status quo. And your daily goal is to model the behavior you want to see in others.

3. Develop Habits

The Critical Friends Group (CFG) process, first developed by the Annenberg Institute for School Reform at Brown University, focuses on developing collegial relationships, encouraging reflective practice, and rethinking the role of school leadership. The process is designed to build a culture of equity and cooperative adult learning—an approach that runs contrary to most adult work environments. "Critical friends take an interest in one another's core beliefs and the commonly held beliefs of the learning community," CFG expert Daniel Baron explains. "They support one another in closing the gap between their beliefs and practices and hold one another accountable for continually adapting their practice to meet the needs of all learners, sharing resources and ideas, and supporting one another as they take risks to improve their practices." (To learn more, visit www.nsrharmony.org.)

4. Apply Skills

Once a faculty becomes skilled in the use of CFG protocols, the principal must continue to allocate sufficient time to sustain a culture of collaboration and appreciative inquiry. In this sense, the leader's primary role is not to tell people what to discuss or how to teach, but to ensure there is space for colleagues to help each other maintain a strong sense of clarity about both the school's shared values and its definition of what constitutes professional practice.

5. Evaluate Progress

CSEE's Comprehensive School Climate Inventory (CSCI) is a needs assessment that measures the way three critical groups in schools—students, school personnel, and parents—perceive the school's overall climate for learning. As CSEE explains, "Building on research and practice and the advice of educators and child development experts, the CSCI has been developed in a scientifically sound manner in accordance with the standards in testing and measurement." Visit www.csee.net/climate/csciassessment for more information.



Finding Critical Support for School Climate Reform in Your School

On July 8th, CSEE will launch its 11th annual Summer Institute. At the Institute school communities will learn important skills that will help them improve their school's climate for learning. However, many administrators and staff are faced with the all important question: How will we pay for these changes?

Some of the funds will likely come from state, local and district funds that have been earmarked for safe and drug-free school programs as well as for teacher professional development programs. However, how do you find support for the type of work that is needed to measure your school's climate and then to implement action plans to improve the climate in your school.

On July 9th, CSEE will offer an optional brown bag luncheon on grant research and writing as part of its Institute to help educators identify funders and secure funding for school climate projects. Below is a preview of what you can expect at the brown bag.

Essentially, support for climate improvement work can come from state and federal funding; foundation and corporate support; as well as from other fundraising efforts that require individual donations such as a fundraising event (this can be as simple as a cake sale or as elaborate as a gala dinner).

Grant Research: Finding a Good Funder

Although there are many grant research tools available, both online and in print, there are a few notable free places to visit on the web to find foundation support for your school climate improvement work. Below is a list of some really great websites to visit to help you seek foundation and government grants for FREE.

- Fundraising Toolkit page at the Funds for Public Schools website (<http://schools.nyc.gov/FundForPublicSchools/ToolsforSchools/FundraisingToolKit/default.htm>) For New York City schools; the foundation list is especially helpful in locating potential foundations for funding support.
- The Foundation Center's online directory is a paid subscription. However, they have an RFP (request for proposals) bulletin that allows you to see a list of foundations seeking proposals and what projects they are looking to fund. <http://foundationcenter.org/pnd/rfp/>
- Grants.gov will guide you federal funds that may support larger projects to improve school climate. It also has links to local and state grant sites.

Grantwriting: How Do I Ask for Money?

- Grant Proposal.com (www.grantproposal.com) has a great site that is filled with information on how to write an effective proposal.
- Schoolgrants.org (www.schoolgrants.org) is a site focused solely on school grant fundraising. It has a number of real grant samples, it also has a section for grant research that is less comprehensive, but still worth visiting with special links for state and federal grant support.
- The Minnesota Council on Foundations (<http://www.mcf.org/mcf/grant/writing.htm>) offers a comprehensive guide to grantwriting.

General Grant Information

- Guidestar (www.guidestar.org) is a great site to research organizations' 990 tax forms. Generally, all foundations must file a 990 form and as part of the form, a list of grants for that year, so you can see the types of organizations (and usually the programs) that were supported for the previous tax year.
- Idealist (www.idealists.org) has many helpful links to resources for both research and grantwriting

CSEE often works with schools that are seeking grant support as a lead applicant or collaborator in the proposal, and is committed to providing guidance and resources to help improve your school's climate for learning.

We will be featuring a grant opportunity in each upcoming issue of *School Climate Matters*. This issue we would like to highlight the **Airborne Teacher Trust Fund**, which supports small school projects including school climate reform with grants ranging from \$2,000 to \$10,000 (www.airbornetrust.com). The online application is very simple and proposals are accepted year-round. You can send any additional questions about your grantwriting efforts by email to: newsletter@csee.net and include "grantwriting" in the subject line.



100% RESPECT! Doesn't Everyone Deserve It?

The answer to this question given by both the students and staff of East Side Community H.S. in Manhattan (and by most any other levelheaded person you might meet) is a resounding yes! That's why our response to a rise in disrespectful behavior towards students and staff during the fall of 2005 led us to do something that would put respectful behavior toward all members of the community on our school's front burner.

Led by Dean of Students, Matthew Guldin, and a group of student leaders throughout the school, the 100% RESPECT! Campaign was developed with an eye toward including everyone in the building in on the discussion about what exactly

respectful behavior looked like. Knowing that people respond more positively to rules/guidelines that they've had a say in creating and that students are very concerned with how they are treated by adults in our building, the RESPECT! Campaign engages everyone in the building in the process of defining what respectful behavior should look like student-to-student, student-to-teacher and teacher-to-students. These discussions take place in advisories (and staff meetings) and the best ideas of everyone are synthesized and presented by RESPECT! representatives from each advisory to their grade for discussion and approval.

"Knowing that the leaders have to listen to our

feedback in addition to us listening to them, makes us feel more respected from the jump," says 12th grade leader Ordaine Ellison. Of course, communication skills must be taught so that staff and teens/pre-teens learn to speak respectfully to each other when they are upset. We've also developed a mediation format called the "No-Excuses Mediation" which focuses on each individual taking responsibility for whatever they've done wrong in a situation and not blaming the other person for their actions.

Our first year's implementation yielded a 45% drop in suspensions and this past year we've added 2 new pieces to our program. The first is called Personalizing the Guidelines and requires each student to commit to working on changing 2 or 3 disrespectful behaviors taken from the 100% RESPECT! School-wide Guidelines. Teachers also participate and resolve to change their practice of teacher-to-student respect in 1 or 2 ways. Finally, we've just begun having school-wide assembly programs where we highlight behaviors that we'd like students to change and present options to them through skits, spoken word and panel discussions.

Having everyone on board has ensured our forward progress, helped students mature, reduced suspensions and opened a new pathway for professional development!

Matthew Guldin is the Dean of Students at East Side Community High School in New York City. If you would like more information and/or want the 100% RESPECT! Campaign to be implemented in your school or in your district, please contact: matthewg@eschs.org or 347-678-8585.

community highlight

The Leadership Program is a dynamic urban organization that enriches lives, emboldens confidence and expands options by building strong leaders in classrooms and communities.

We teach both students and adults how to view and express themselves building skill proficiency to improve their lives and environment: self-esteem and self-image, communication skills, teamwork and bonding, goal setting, personal and social responsibility and conflict resolution. Through this process we help create classroom and school environments that promote personal and social development, cultivate motivation and develop resiliency to reduce negative behaviors.

To find out more, please visit www.theleadershipprogram.com

We do this by providing high quality programming for students and adults through:

- In-class enrichment
- After-school activities
- Parent workshops
- Professional development workshops
- Social work and mental health workshops
- Mentoring & peer mediation
- Conflict resolution & violence prevention workshops

Our youth programs are examined by valid, reliable, field-tested survey instruments, while workshop evaluations assess our adult programming.

**Center for Social and
Emotional Education**
Development Office
1841 Broadway, Suite 1212
New York, NY 10023
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DEVELOPMENT OFFICE:**

Center for Social and
Emotional Education
Development Office
1841 Broadway, Suite 1212
New York, NY 10023

Phone: 212-707-8799 ext. 11
Fax: 212-957-6616
E-mail: srodriguez@csee.net

Sandra J. Rodriguez,
Development Director
Creating a Climate for Learning!

Visit us on the web!
WWW.CSEE.NET

CSEE is an organization that helps schools integrate crucial social and emotional learning with academic instruction to enhance student performance, prevent drop outs, reduce violence, and development healthy and positively engaged adults.

For more than a decade CSEE has worked together with the entire academic community—teacher, staff, school-based mental health professional, students and parents—to improve total school climate.

We continue to help translate research into practice by establishing meaningful and relevant guidelines, programs and services that support a model for whole school improvement with a focus on school climate.

CSEE's vision is that all children will develop the essential social, emotional and intellectual skills to become healthy and productive citizens.

CSEE's mission is to measure and improve the climate for learning in schools to help children realize their fullest potential as individuals and as engaged members of society.

CSEE achieves this through:

- *Advocacy and policy*
- *Measurement and research*
- *Educational services*