CSEE Participates in the 20th Annual Ohio Prevention and Education Conference (OPEC)

This November, CSEE helped to organize and direct Ohio’s Department of Education (ODE) 20th annual Prevention and Education Conference. Hundreds of educators, school-based mental health professionals, and community providers from across the state attended two days of workshops & networking centered on promoting effective risk prevention/health promotion efforts as well as safe and civil schools.

ODE’s Executive Director of the Center for Students, Families and Communities, Mary Lou Rush presented a keynote entitled: Climate Counts, Risk Matters: How to Bolster Student and School Achievement. Growing out of recent CSEE-ODE research as well as Ohio’s system of learning supports, this keynote detailed how school climate correlates with school risk factors for student achievement, including unexcused absences, disciplinary problems, and mobility.

Workshops included a wide range of strategies designed to promote effective prevention and health promotion efforts (ranging from a focus on bullying to substance abuse & gambling) within the school as well as school-home-community partnerships.

One particularly important workshop focused on the role of bystanders in targeted school-violence. Growing out of a recent study (May 2008) conducted by the United States Secret Service and the US Department of Education, lead author William S. Pollack, Ph.D. (Harvard Medical School faculty and CSEE senior consultant) described the prevalence of “bystanders” who had prior knowledge about planned violence in almost all of the targeted school-based attacks since 1975. A major finding from this study (www.williampollack.com/) is the impact of school climate on this troubling trend. When school climate was more positive (e.g. when people felt that others were caring, connected and engaged), people were much more likely to come forward. In other words, they were “upstanders” rather than passive bystanders. A central piece of CSEE’s work aims to provide the supports school communities need to create individual, classroom-based, school-wide and school-home-community efforts that promote socially responsible and caring behavior that encourages this type of upstander behavior.

CSEE’s president, Jonathan Cohen also presented on research and best practices that support safe and civil schools. In this session, he outlined the substantive efforts to integrate social and civic learning into school life and presented an overview of five core practices that promote safe and civil schools.

To access related resources and handouts from this conference, please visit the “Safe & Supportive Learning” section of the Ohio Department of Education’s web site at www.ode.state.oh.us.
message from the president

Dear friends,

As we near the halfway mark of another school year, it is important to remember that it really does “take a village” to support positive youth development and children’s capacity to learn. Helping all children achieve at high levels takes a full community commitment, but too often time constraints and inadequate supports limit schools’ ability to focus on this fundamentally important dimension.

This issue is designed to help schools meet the challenge of whole school engagement. We look at ways schools can build effective community connections that enhance learning and create the environment needed to help students truly succeed. In the next few pages, you will find specific tips for building service learning programs by leaders of the Peace Games movement (p.4) and read about CSEEE’s own initiatives to create community-wide bully prevention supports in a Bronx-area middle school (p.3). In addition, Public Education Network director, Arnold Fege, shares an enlightening commentary on the powerful role of the community in helping to creating positive, healthy school climates nationwide. Here are a few tools that support this effort:

- **Civic Index for Quality Public Education**, an online tool designed by The Public Education Network to measure and improve the involvement of various community sectors in working for quality public education. This tool assesses 10 community civic conditions (from parent engagement to higher education partnerships) that must exist outside of schools, and how these factors link with the academic and school climate factors that take place inside schools. The index also includes resources and toolkits communities can use to ‘improve their score’ in any category, engage the public and the media about their data, and more.

- **Communities that Care** is a system developed by J. David Hawkins and Richard F. Catalano that empowers communities to use advances from prevention science to guide their improvement efforts. The Communities That Care Youth Survey is a reliable and valid instrument that measures the incidence and prevalence of substance use, delinquency and related problem behaviors. The system also includes a Tools for Community Leaders guidebook, which lists fifty-six tested and effective prevention programs and policies shown to increase protective factors, reduce risk factors and reduce adolescent problem behaviors in well controlled studies.

- **The Coalition for Community Schools** is an alliance of national, state and local organizations in education K-16, youth development, community planning and development, family support, health and human services, government and philanthropy as well as national, state and local community school networks.

We hope you will find these resources useful in your own community-building efforts.

All the best for a safe, happy, and healthy holiday season,

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

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**tips from the field**

What norms and values do you promote in your classroom?

"After 14 years of teaching in public schools as an art teacher... I have found that children of all ages sometimes form an opinion of themselves depending on what others think of them... well with this said, I have discovered a very instrumental tool that helps neutralize this. Each year in art I launch the opening day with an ice breaker that I call the “swan-or-shack” (instead of the classic ink blot creator!!!) Each student upon arrival to art will look at the ink blot and respond on an index card his/her feeling or interpretation. The concept and purpose is that each child is entitled to his/her own perception and opinion and we are able to learn as a society to respond and even disagree with another's perception constructively; however, we need to do so with a sense of “grace.” I am teaching how to analyze and respond toward artwork and to other aspects of human endeavor or thought."

—LAURA SWAN, Art Teacher, Long Beach Middle School, Long Island, NY

Do you have an idea you’d like to share? Write to us at: newsletter@csee.net and we’ll include your comments in the next issue!
A Middle School in Bronx, NY Addresses Bullying Through Community Service

In our field, service learning is often talked about as a valuable component of student development, but there are important lessons for adults to learn in this process as well. Service-learning combines service tasks with structured opportunities that link the task to self-discovery and the acquisition of essential values, skills, and knowledge content. Marian Wright Edelman, the founder of the Children’s Defense Fund’s, famously said, “Service is the rent we pay for learning.” And that message is at the core of any great educational effort.

Bryant Jackson, an assistant principal at Castle Hill Middle School in the Bronx, embodies this philosophy in his own work through his commitment to serve the students, families and staff of his school. Mr. Jackson first began his service at Castle Hill 8 years ago as a 7th grade social studies teacher. At that time, Castle Hill was an overcrowded school plagued with violence and students who were frequently out of control. As Dean and PBIS (Positive Behavior Intervention and Supports) coordinator, Mr. Jackson helped to transform the culture of the school by reinforcing students’ positive behavior. Now, in his second year as assistant principal, Mr. Jackson notes that his primary role is to help Harry Sherman, the school’s visionary principal carry out his mission of school climate improvement.

Castle Hill’s school climate goals for this year are to further improve student engagement, safety, and respect through increased parent and community involvement, use of violence prevention and conflict resolution programs, peer mediation, bully prevention, and implementation of character education into the curriculum. CSEE has partnered with Castle Hill in its school climate improvement efforts, and is assisting in a school-wide assessment of strengths and needs as well as customized professional development support centered on the goals above.

CSEE and Castle Hill Middle School are also collaborating to implement school-wide bully prevention activities and curriculum that will kick off in January of 2009. Service learning opportunities for youth at Castle Hill are part of a larger effort to thwart bullying, raise awareness of bully prevention, and develop students’ core social-emotional competencies. Castle Hill staff will engage student leaders involved in student government, peer mediation, and the AP Squad to promote awareness of bullying behavior and help pro-social behavior.

In the past Castle Hill students have participated in numerous community service projects, such as a holiday food drive, a penny harvest, and a fundraiser for breast cancer awareness. This year, students and staff will visit a children’s hospital, clean local parks, and work with elderly community members in addition to the bully prevention program.

January is an especially timely month for service learning as the Federal Martin Luther King Day Holiday is now a national day of service. Initiated by Congress in 1994, the King Day of Service seeks to bring people of all ages and backgrounds together to strengthen our community and bridge social barriers. King stated that, “Everybody can be great because everybody can serve.” During this season of thanksgiving, joy, and new beginnings, we can celebrate Dr. King’s memory through service learning.

See page 4-5 for helpful suggestions and additional resources on how your school can build an effective program.

share your experience

What is your school or district doing to help make a difference through service learning this year?
We want to hear from you! Please send your comments to: newsletter@csee.net.
Few people can question the motives of those who espouse "community service." For decades, policymakers have worked to infuse an ethos of service into all aspects of American life, especially schools—and to a significant degree, they have succeeded. According to Learn and Serve America, 64 percent of all public schools in the United States now have students participate in some kind of community service activities.¹

And yet, for all of the best intentions, it is easy for service learning to become a token display of charity.² An effective service-learning project helps both the person doing the service and the community they serve, and it respects the diverse contexts, needs, and resources of everyone involved. In this way, the project contributes to social development, personal and community health, civic engagement, citizenship attitudes and skills, as well as improving academic motivation and achievement.³

In addition, civic engagement and service-learning offer important opportunities for young people to be seen as leaders and peacemakers. Service-learning engages young people with real issues, provides a positive direction and structure for their energy and their anger, and demonstrates to a sometimes hostile older generation that young people are not simply nuisances who mature or move away. However, authentic service-learning must distinguish charity from social change and create projects that engage children and young people in real work that has real meaning for them.

**Some things to keep in mind as you work:**

1. **Service needs context first.** Younger children, especially, need a foundation. Allocate time for conversations about peacemaking, community, and their relationships with each other. Having a frame of reference helps when you finally ask, “So, who in our community needs help? And what can we do to help them?”

2. **Value the process over the product.** Days of service and bake sales are easily digestible and surely add value to communities, but they are different from service-learning. Service-learning means assessing a community’s needs and resources, as well as our roles as members of that community, and that needs far more than a day to do well. Commit to the process, and the outcome will reward your patience.

3. **Reach out.** Once you identify an issue, reach out to partners—individuals or organizations—in the community. This may take extra time and research, but the partnerships will pay dividends. Do a little digging and find people who share your commitment to positive and authentic change and specifically to issues that you have chosen.

4. **Co-create with the community.** It may seem obvious, but check with community partners before getting too deeply into a project. Your idea of how to help may be vastly different from what they need. While it may make for a “better project” if you could take a group of students to the hospital to play, the hospital staff may have different ideas. Remember to
ask—and better yet, brainstorm ideas with your partners—lest you risk donating toys that
only collect dust on a shelf.

5. Showcase your work. Making anonymous donations to a worthy cause appeals to our
sense of humility, but a project to create community change, especially when led by
young people, deserves to be visible. If our goal is to help adults see young people as
leaders, then showcasing young people’s work is a critical part of that process. Invite
families or community members to the school for a potluck celebration for your students.

Authentic service learning is risky. It is possible that in assessing the needs of our communities and our own capacities that a project will “fail” or at least fail to meet our expectations. We need to grant ourselves permission to fail—that, too, is a lesson worth learning—and in so doing work to integrate service as a way of life.

If children are to become leaders, they need practice leading. That means pushing beyond the bake sale or the schoolyard clean-up and learning why families are hungry or why communities are dirty. Community service learning done well and thoughtfully integrated into the fabric of schools is one of the most effective tools that can help facilitate this.

1 http://www.servicelearning.org/what_is_service-learning/media_guide/index.php#16
   (accessed September 10, 2008)

2 An excellent and thought-provoking article about the perils of service learning done poorly is John
   W. Eby’s unpublished manuscript, “Why Service-Learning Is Bad.” For the full article, see
   http://www.messiah.edu/external_programs/agape/servicelearning/articles/wrongsvc.pdf
   (accessed March 28, 2008)

3 Learning In Deed, 2002. For more information or to download the full report, see www.learningindeed.org.

Peace Games is dedicated to ending the escalating trend of violence by teaching children to be peacemakers. Peace Games was founded at Harvard University in 1992 on a simple belief: violence is learned; and if violence can be learned, so can the skills of peacemaking. We now serve children in Boston, Chicago, Los Angeles and New York. Learn more at:
http://www.peacegames.org/

Steven Brion-Meisels is the Director of the Peace Games Institute and responsible for national training, evaluation, and public awareness work.

James Noonan is a Program Specialist in the Peace Games Institute, a role in which he co-authors curricula and other resources, enlists and supports new partners, and coordinates local, national, and international training on peacemaking.
Below you will find recently published books, useful articles, and web resources to help, educators, school leaders, and individuals interested in service learning. We have selected tools to help you learn more about quality service learning programs, ways to share your service learning events, and how to connect with others to implement service learning projects.

**Books**

*A Practical Guide to Service-learning: Strategies for Positive Development in Schools*
Wilczenski, Felicia L. (2007)
New York; London : Springer

*Service-learning—By Degrees: How Adolescents Can Make a Difference in the Real World*
Terry, Alice Wickersham (2007)
Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann

*Service-learning in Grades K-8: Experiential Learning that Builds Character and Motivation*
Thomsen, Kate (2006)
Thousand Oaks, Calif.: Corwin Press

*Multicultural Service Learning: Educating Teachers in Diverse Communities*
Boyle-Baise, Marilynn (2002)
New York: Teachers College Press, c2002

**Articles**

*“Urban Service-Learning: An Authentic Teaching Strategy to Deliver a Standards-Driven Curriculum”*
Sosleu, Elizabeth G and Yost, Deborah S.
The Journal of Experiential Education, 30(1), 36-53

*“The Adventure of Service”*
Avenatti, Jennifer L; Garza, Twila D.; and Panico, Ambrose P. (2007)
Reclaiming Children and Youth, 16(1), 28-32

*“Back to Basics Through Challenge and Adventure”*
Reclaiming Children and Youth, 16(1), 2-6

*“Reducing Academic Achievement Gaps: The Role of Community Service and Service-Learning”*
Scales, Peter C; Roehlkepartain, Eugene C; Neal, Marybeth; Kielsmeier, James C; Benson, Peter L. (2006)
The Journal of Experiential Education, 29(1), 38-60

**Websites**

*Learn and Serve America’s National Service-Learning Clearinghouse (NSLC)*
www.servicelearning.org

Learn and Serve America’s National Service-Learning Clearinghouse (NSLC) offers timely information and relevant resources, thousands of free online resources, the nation’s largest library of service-learning materials, national service-learning email discussion lists, and reference and technical assistance services.

*What is Service-Learning?*
www.CTK.com

A PowerPoint presentation (104K) used at the NSLC “What is Service-Learning?” session held during the 2004 National Conference on Community Volunteering and National Service in Kansas City, June 6-8.

*Learning In Deed Issue Paper: Integrating Youth Voice in Service-Learning*
www.learningindeed.org/tools/index.html

Service-Learning and Standards Toolkit, a new publication from the Compact for Learning and Citizenship (CLC) and the Education Commission of the States (ECS). The Toolkit not only features numerous examples of service-learning curriculum and assessments tied to standards, but draws upon the experiences of service-learning advocates at the state, district and school level in exploring practical issues such as policy, professional development and administrative support. More information at www.ecs.org/clc/

**King Day of Service**

www.mlkday.gov

With thousands of projects planned in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, Guam, and Puerto, the 2009 King Day of Service promises to be the biggest and best ever!

**Teach Peace**

www.teachpeace.net

An online resource network that connects hundreds of teachers across the country by giving them the opportunity to share best practices, pose questions, and share resources.

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**new resources from CSEE!**

**Caring Communities TOOLKIT**

This classroom guide is stocked with lesson plans and practical tips to help you address specific issues such as social-emotional learning, respect for diversity, parent involvement and more! Download it here:
www.csee.net/cctoolkit

**CSEE’s SCHOOL CLIMATE BLOG**

Join us at http://blogs.csee.net and read about the most recent news, trends and best practices related to school climate. Visit us today & share your voice! If you're interested in being a guest-contributor to our blog, email us at newsletter@csee.net.

**You CAN Make a Difference!**

Visit us at www.change.org/csee to view & support our latest fundraising efforts, including a unique opportunity to directly support schools in need by contributing to the School Climate Counts Fund.

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**your voice matters**

What is your school or district doing to help make a difference through service learning this year? Email your insight to newsletter@csee.net.
Connecting communities and schools

“There is a case to be made for directly focusing on community development as an independent force for reform. Regardless of social class, it is hard for good schools to evolve in bad communities. . . . both the school and the community contribute to each other’s development. Two-way inside-outside reciprocity is the elusive key to large-scale reform.”
—Michael Fullan (2000)

There is real concern that the climate of schools today is not conducive to sound child development, teaching or learning. Taken for granted and considered “common sense” at one time, school climate is now emerging as a critical element of school and district organizational and instructional development that far exceeds the physical safety concerns that once dominated this discussion. There appears to be a shift, however, from what’s known as “robust learning expectations” which lasers in on test prep at all costs, and creating a learning climate that incorporates the broader social and emotional needs of students. Efforts by ASCD’s Whole Child program, the creation of United Voices of Education, the development of the School Climate Council led by ECS and the Center for Social and Emotional Education (CSEE), and a host of organizations urging Congress to include measures of school climate as part of the required NCLB state and local report card reflect this growing interest in systemizing school climate.

At the same time that schools and districts are becoming aware of the importance of positive school climate, though, there is a danger in believing that the school is able to do this work in isolation of parents and community. Attempting to create a positive school climate without building relationships between the school, parents and community is unintentionally shutting out valuable resources that enhance the learning environment. This type of thinking tends to reduce the school to a set of technical internal strategies that are unrelated to life skills, foreign to parents and the community, and represented by jargon designed to turn schools into clinics, rather than democratic institutions connected to the pulse and ownership of the community. Placed in a positive context, involving parents, the neighborhood and the community becomes an opportunity for the school to connect the outside and the inside in a full and equitable partnership.

School climate is a democratic issue that provides the school an opportunity to engage community agencies, elected officials, faith-based organizations, students, parents, higher education, business and policy makers in determining the civic behaviors where we all learn together. In collaboration, the school and the community decide on not only what constitutes positive climate, but how ALL members of the community, individual citizens as well as community-based organizations, are responsible in supporting the education of the whole child. The responsibility for children’s educational development then becomes a shared enterprise—the glue that holds together the public nature of public schools.

Arnold E. Fege is director of public engagement and advocacy for the Public Education Network, and a member of the ECS/CSEE School Climate Council.

This article has been adapted from a presentation delivered at the Coalition for Community Schools Conference, Portland, Oregon, May 1, 2008 presented by Arnold Fege and CSEE President, Jonathan Cohen.

December 31, 2008 is the last day to qualify for a 2008 income tax charitable deduction!

Make a gift to the Center for Social and Emotional Education (CSEE) and help create safer and more supportive schools for children nationwide in 2009.

Donate now at: www.csee.net/donate

CSEE accepts a wide range of contribution types including stocks, life income and in-kind gifts. Please consult with your attorney, estate planning representative or tax advisor for more information on how you may benefit by making a charitable contribution in 2008.

CSEE is a public charity exempt from federal income tax under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code.

Contact: CSEE Development Office
Sandra J. Rodriguez, Development Director
1841 Broadway, Suite 713
New York, NY 10023
Phone: 212-707-8799 ext. 11 • Fax: 212-957-6616
Email: srodriguez@csee.net

For more information about CSEE and our work in school climate reform, please visit 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 develop 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