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in brief

Student Learning Supports - The Ohio State Board of Education has approved a Comprehensive System of Learning Support Guidelines. To read these guidelines and explore more standardized supports from state-level trailblazers, visit http://blogs.csee.net.

CSEE Receives Education Award from APA! - CSEE was awarded the Interdisciplinary Psychoanalysis and Pre-K-12 Education Award by the American Psychoanalysis Association. Special recognition was given to CSEE president Jonathan Cohen for his exemplary work in the field. Press release posted at http://www.apsa.org.

Communing for the Cause: CSEE’s Bully Buster Cocktail Reception

In January, CSEE supporters, board members and staff gathered together in the regal dining hall of New York’s Spence School for our annual fundraising event, Bully Buster 2009. Thanks to your support the event was a huge success and we were able to raise both funds and awareness for a very important cause.

Our silent auction included a wide array of exciting prizes including hot-seat tickets to sporting events and Broadway shows, and remarkable student internship opportunities at places like Major League Gaming and Deutsche Bank as well tours of the MET, the NYSE and Time Magazine. Amid the cocktails and delicious hors d’oeuvres, CSEE staff also sold raffle tickets, and then gave away special prizes such as book baskets for children and family-sized gift certificates at popular New York restaurants.

But the highlight of the evening was celebrating the success of our special guests: students from Castle Hill Middle School in the Bronx. Over recent months, CSEE has worked closely with Castle Hill and their extremely dedicated leadership team to measure and improve their school climate through the Comprehensive School Climate Inventory (CSCI) and through school-wide bully prevention programs. One of the school’s recent projects was an anti-bullying essay & art contest, and CSEE was delighted to congratulate the winners of the contest at the event.

When the students shared their insightful essays aloud, the crowd was truly moved. (To view video clips, visit our blog: http://blogs.csee.net.)

Castle Hill principal, Harry Sherman, also spoke about the work he and Assistant Principal Bryant Jackson are doing to improve their school climate through service learning opportunities, curriculum-infused character education and professional development training. As they leverage their school strengths to bridge barriers to a positive school climate, they pave the way for other schools just beginning the process— and it’s very exciting to see their huge improvement and positive change. (continued on pg. 2)
In only a couple of months, 2009 has already seen a number of important changes to the education landscape, from President Obama’s appointment of Arne Duncan as Secretary of Education to the recent passage of the Stimulus plan, both of which will have far-reaching implications on our educational spending and priorities going forward. As we navigate these new waters, CSEE will continue to provide essential resources and supports to ensure that we maintain our nation’s critical focus on school climate improvement, and we hope you will join us in this effort.

To that end, I recently moderated a panel discussion with the National School Board Association on the current state and future plans of school climate reform. The heart of the discussion focused on core recommendations that states and districts can adopt to close the gap between school climate research, policy, and practice. To learn more about this pivotal event, download the full presentation, and find out how you can get involved, visit: http://blogs.csee.net.

In this issue of School Climate Matters, we take a closer look at one of the most pressing issues in schools today—the challenge of motivating and retaining disaffected youth. Our feature story shares key tips from the UCLA Center on Mental Health in Schools and outlines ways to reengage these students before it is too late (p. 4-5). We also highlight CSEE’s exciting work in the field on this topic, helping a group of dedicated after-school leaders strengthen their skills to better support high-risk youth (p. 3), and we include a list of valuable resources to explore for more in-depth guidance and information (p. 6). As always, this issue also pinpoints essential funding sources for your school or community to launch the programs and projects that will most benefit your students.

CSEE also has wonderful news to celebrate:
• Our Annual Bully Buster Fundraiser was a huge success! You can read about the inspiring activities from the night and hear directly from students on how they “Stand Up to Bullies” in this issue and at: http://blogs.csee.net. There’s still time to show your commitment to CSEE’s Bully Buster Efforts—DONATE NOW to our School Climate Counts Fund or make an online bid for top-tier action items at www.csee.net.
• CSEE’s school climate assessment & improvement work continues to grow in schools across the country. In 2008, the Comprehensive School Climate (CSCI) was administered to 11,000 students, more than 2,000 parents, and almost 4,000 staff members in elementary, middle, and high schools nationwide.
• In addition, we’ve supported hundreds of educators and administrators make significant progress through professional development workshops customized to meet their particular needs.

We are continuing to build our community and want your voice to be represented! Please take a moment to share your experience on successful activities you use to reengage disaffected students (see page 3). We will share best practices and lessons learned in the next issue. Thank you for your continued interest and support!

All the best for a positive and productive spring,

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

(continued from pg. 1) Our work at CSEE would not exist were it not for the passionate supporters devoted to our students’ success. Thanks to all of our friends, new and old, for coming to the event and getting involved. And, if you couldn’t make it, you can still make a difference—visit us online to bid on more exciting auction items—including a cruise to Rome and Greece, an internship to Battery Parks Conservancy and a week’s stay at any Ultimate Vacations spot. You can also donate directly to the School Climate Counts fund, a fund that supports schools taking that important first step to improving the climate for learning—measuring the current school climate. For more information, visit our website at www.csee.net.

THANKS TO OUR SPONSORS —

message from the president

dear friends,

THANKS TO OUR SPONSORS —

Boy Meets Girl®

A special thank you to Boy Meets Girl (BMG) for donating “Stand Up” t-shirts for the event gift bags. For those who missed the event, visit our website in the coming months to purchase your own “Stand Up” to bullies t-shirts. All proceeds go directly to CSEE’s anti-bullying school programs.
Conflict Resolution at Work

Recently I had the opportunity to work with 30 after-school leaders from Good Shepherds, a prominent youth development agency that works with vulnerable youth in New York City. During our time together, I conducted a two-part workshop series exploring flexible problem-solving and conflict resolution for youth. Topics included, “Becoming aware of emotional intelligence,” “Reflecting on how we portray ourselves to students,” and “Talking about our inspirations”—all topics relevant to re-engaging disaffected youth.

Through the discussion and exercises, we learned a lot about what inspires today’s youth and about the factors that derail learning. Here are three guidelines that I have personally developed for re-engaging, re-affecting, and re-invigorating disaffected youth:

1. Take a Deep Look at Yourself.

Engaging disaffected youth first requires a gut-level reality check. As an educator aiming for deep-learning, it is vital that you get in touch with and challenge the underlying assumptions you carry into the classroom. How much were you different from your participants when you were their age? What is it that makes you alike? What do you find most fulfilling about your role? The deeper you look at yourself, the more likely it is that students will unpack and try-out your suggestions in their unique contexts.

2. Reduce your Psychological Distance.

Affecting disaffected students requires a more intimate dialogue than any standard lecture can accomplish. Students can easily sense, in a “here we go again” fashion, when facilitators erect an emotional wall in the guise of professionalism. This is an immediate turnoff in a world of individuals who are by nature “disaffected.” Get out from behind your podium, sit with your students, and don’t be afraid to check-in about how they are feeling. Make mindfulness exercises part and parcel of your instruction, and be honest about how you are feeling. Are you excited to see that people are taking rigorous notes, moving forward in their seats and coming up to you after class with great questions? Are you a little upset because you’re not sure that the instruction is resonating as much as you had hoped? Be yourself, be honest, and strive to get closer with your students.

3. Increase your Flexibility for Unusual Facilitation.

Invigorating students is a process that begs educators to model imagination and creativity. By virtue of their generation, younger students are looking for something different, daring and exciting. What are your most critical “sound-bytes”? How and where can you place them for maximum impact? Can you convey your connections with participants through brief personal stories, which you feel comfortable sharing? By no means should you ever relinquish your sense of decorum or professionalism. However, you might begin to consider pushing yourself outside of your own status quo. Reaching disaffected youth not only requires interaction, but requires “Pop”, including the ability to capture learning moments spontaneously, and the ability to celebrate and speak to participants’ personal narratives extemporaneously. Strive to engage participants at every turn, and make sure that by increasing your flexibility you remain genuine, professional, and aligned with your unique facilitation style.

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As educators or parents, what activities do you use to engage disaffected kids? Share your successful strategies or projects: newsletter@schoolclimate.org.
Over the last fifty years, psychological scholarship has brought renewed attention to motivation as a central concept in understanding learning and attention problems and student disengagement from classroom learning. This work is just beginning to find its way into applied fields and programs.

One line of work has emphasized the relationship of learning and behavior problems to deficiencies in intrinsic motivation. Such work clarifies the value of interventions designed to increase:

- feelings of self-determination
- feelings of competence and expectations of success
- feelings of interpersonal relatedness
- the range of interests and satisfactions related to learning

Activities to correct deficiencies in intrinsic motivation are directed at improving awareness of personal motives and true capabilities, learning to set valued and appropriate goals, learning to value and to make appropriate and satisfying choices, and learning to value and accept responsibility for choice.

The main point for emphasis here is that engaging and re-engaging students in learning involves matching motivation. Matching motivation requires an appreciation of the importance of a student’s perceptions in determining the right mix of intrinsic and extrinsic reasons. With specific respect to working with disengaged students, there are four general strategies we recommend:

1. **Clarify student perceptions of the problem** – Talk openly with students about why they have become disengaged. This will help you plan steps for how to alter the negative perceptions of disengaged students and prevent others from developing such perceptions.

2. **Reframe school learning** – In the case of those who have become disengaged, it is unlikely that they will be open to schooling that looks like “the same old thing.” Major reframing in teaching approaches is required so that these students (a) view the teacher as supportive (rather than controlling and indifferent) and (b) perceive content, outcomes, and activity options as personally valuable and obtainable. It is important, for example, to eliminate threatening evaluative measures; reframe content and processes to clarify purpose in terms of real life needs and experiences and underscore how it all builds on previous learning; and clarify why procedures can be effective—especially those designed to help correct specific problems.

3. **Renegotiate involvement in school learning** – New and mutual agreements must be developed and evolved over time through conferences with the student and where appropriate including parents. The intent is to affect perceptions of choice, value, and probable outcome. The focus throughout is on clarifying awareness of valued options, enhancing expectations of positive outcomes, and engaging the student in meaningful, ongoing decision making. For the process to be most effective, students should be assisted in sampling new processes and content, options should include valued enrichment opportunities, and there must be provision for reevaluating and modifying decisions as perceptions shift.

4. **Reestablish and maintain an appropriate working relationship** – This requires the type of ongoing interactions that creates a sense of trust, open communication, and provides personalized support and direction.

To maintain re-engagement and prevent disengagement, the above strategies must be pursued using processes and content that:
minimize threats to feelings of competence, self-determination, and relatedness to valued others
maximize such feelings (included here is an emphasis on a school taking steps to enhance public perception that it’s a welcoming, caring, safe, and just institution)
guide motivated practice (e.g., providing opportunities for meaningful applications and clarifying ways to organize practice)
provide continuous information on learning and performance in ways that highlight accomplishments
provide opportunities for continued application and generalization (e.g., ways in which students can pursue additional, self-directed learning or can arrange for additional support and direction).

All this argues for moving school culture toward a greater focus on intrinsic motivation and on rethinking the overemphasis on social control practices. The Center at UCLA has developed a variety of resources to aid with each of these concerns (shared in the Resource Corner on page 6).

Clearly, there is much to do, and it all can’t be done at once. Priorities must be set. A first priority is ensuring there is a welcoming induction and ongoing support that facilitates staff and student school adjustment and performance. School-wide strategies for welcoming and supporting staff, students, and families at school every day are a major facet of creating a caring and supportive school and classroom climate and a culture of caring—one where staff, students, and families interact positively with each other and identify with the school and its goals.

Howard Adelman is professor and center co-director at UCLA. Email him at Adelman@psych.ucla.edu.
Linda Taylor is center co-director at UCLA. E-mail her at Ltaylor@ucla.edu.

resource corner

Explore these useful articles, recently published books and web resources to learn more about engaging our youth. If you’d like to share related resources, please email us at newsletter@schoolclimate.org.

Articles

What Schools Can Do to Welcome and Meet the Needs of All Students and Families
http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/WELMEET/welmeetcomplete.pdf

Welcoming and Involving New Students and Families
http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/welcome/welcome.pdf

Working Collaboratively: From School-Based Teams to School-Community-Higher Education Connections
http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/worktogether/worktogether.pdf

Classroom Changes to Enhance and Re-engage Students in Learning
http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/qf/classchange_tt/classroomfull.pdf

Re-engaging Students in Learning
http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/qf/reengage_qt/

About Motivation
http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/practicenotes/motivation.pdf

Natural Opportunities to Promote Social-Emotional Learning and Mental Health
http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/practicenotes/naturalopportunities.pdf

Welcoming Strategies for Newly Arrived Students and Their Families
http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/practicenotes/welcomingstrategies.pdf

Marva Collins’ Way: Returning to Excellence in Education
Collins, Marva Collins and Tamarkin, Civia (1990)
New York, NY: Penguin

Your Child’s Strengths: Discover Them, Develop Them, Use Them
Fox, Jenifer M.Ed. (2008)
New York, NY: Viking Press

Happiness and Education
Noddings, Nel (2003)
New York, NY: Cambridge University Press

How Was Your Day at School?: Improving Dialogue about Teacher Job Satisfaction
Eklund, Nathan (2009)
New York, NY: Search Institute Press

Websites & Programs

Center for Mental Health in Schools
http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu
The School Mental Health Project (SMHP) was created to pursue theory, research, practice and training related to addressing mental health and psychosocial concerns through school-based interventions.

StrengthsExplorer
https://www.strengthsexplorer.com
The Clifton Youth StrengthsExplorer is a program based on 40 years of science and thousands of studies of the talents of individuals. From this rich history of research, StrengthsExplorer was created to help youth, ages 10-14, discover and develop the unique talents within them.

Youth Communication
http://www.youthcomm.org
Youth Communication is a nonprofit teen writing program and publisher of resources for educators.

Search Institute
http://www.search-institute.org/assets
Search Institute works with schools to promote positive youth development. Featured on their website are practical tools people can use to promote positive “assets” such as support, empowerment, honesty, responsibility and more.

VIA Strengths Survey for Children
www.authentichappiness.org
The Positive Psychology Center at the University of Pennsylvania has an online testing site to assess key strengths in adults and children. For children, administer the VIA (Virtues in Action) Strength Survey for Children to assess character strengths.

new! CSEE resources

Visit our new home!
www.schoolclimate.org
Our new website is filled with new resources and ways to get involved.

Schools in Action
http://blogs.csee.net
Visit CSEE’s blog to read about schools and districts making important strides in school climate improvement.

Your Voice Matters
newsletter@schoolclimate.org
What is your school or district doing to improve your school climate? Email us!
funding support
Small Initiatives with Big Potential

Often times, as school teachers or administrators we have ideas for small but very innovative programs to support a compassionate and secure environment for our students. It can be as simple as buying a particular curriculum that infuses important social and emotional skills into classroom learning or implementing a school-wide initiative like the CSCI to measure and improve school climate.

However, with shrinking budgets and tough times ahead, many school principals are reluctant to use valuable financial resources to support programs that, in the long run, can have a significant impact in student learning and achievement.

So, how can you find support for your school climate improvement projects? One place to go to is www.donorschoose.org. DonorsChoose.org was pioneered by teachers at a Bronx public high school in the spring of 2000. Charles Best, then a social studies teacher, saw first-hand the scarcity of materials in our public school classrooms and the profound impact of this scarcity on kids’ education. Looking for a way to address this problem, he sensed an untapped potential in people who were frustrated by their lack of influence over the use of their charitable donations. DonorsChoose.org, a website connecting classrooms in need with individuals who want to help, was born.

If you are a bit more adventurous and would like to try your hand at writing a grant, there are a few sites that will alert you to upcoming opportunities:

Foundation Center’s Philanthropy News Digest
http://foundationcenter.org/pnd/
The Foundation Center’s Philanthropy News Digest has a great section called “RFPs (Requests for Proposals) that highlights upcoming grant proposal requests.

Chronicle of Philanthropy
http://philanthropy.com/
The Chronicle of Philanthropy has a section called “Deadlines” which allows you to view upcoming grant deadlines by subject.

Finally, in each issue of its newsletter, CSEE features one great grant opportunity. For more information on resources to how to write grants, visit our previous issues at www.schoolclimate.org/about/newsletter.

Accepting Applications for the 2009 AWARDS

Are you an educator with a class project that is short on funding but long on potential? Do you know a teacher looking for grant dollars? ING Unsung Heroes® could help you turn great ideas into reality for students. Each year, 100 educators are selected to receive $2,000 to help fund their innovative class projects. Three of those are chosen to receive the top awards of an additional $5,000, $10,000 and $25,000.

Applications for the 2009 awards are now available. The application deadline is April 30, 2009.

Each year 1 in every 4 children is bullied in our schools.

Make a real difference today. Donate now to the School Climate Counts Fund. 100% of your gift will go directly to help a school in need measure their climate for learning. For every $2 donation, you will help one child’s voice be heard.

Learn more:
www.SchoolClimate.org/
SchoolClimateCounts
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