Common sense tells us that school climate matters. As educational leaders, how we define school climate determines the policies and practices we choose to implement and measure. The National School Climate Council uses this definition: “School Climate refers to the character and quality of school life. It is based on patterns of people’s experience of school life and reflects: norms, goals, and values, interpersonal relationships, teaching, learning and leadership practices, and organizational structures.” It includes all of the relationships that exist between students, schools, families and the community.

A universal challenge for school board members and superintendents is insuring that these complex relationships are working well; this is a major reason why addressing school climate in a systematic and comprehensive way is important. The School Climate Guide for District Policymakers and Education Leaders is designed to help with that process. This is the tool we need to begin making changes in our districts. CSEE and the National School Climate Council have taken the prevailing research in the field and distilled it into a user-friendly guide to provide educational leaders with an organized and practical way to begin the process of change. The Guide includes useful information such as: the National School Climate Standards; frameworks that demonstrate the relationship between school climate and student achievement; information on how to support practices that enhance student engagement and reduce barriers to learning and teaching; comprehensive measurement tools, and more.
message from the president

“Just as we have standards around academic goals, we need standards around school climate because what gets measured is what gets done. We’re only going to put school climate at the priority level it deserves—which to me is at the top—if we have standards around it and start measuring it.”

—KEVIN JENNINGS, Assistant Deputy Secretary of the US Department of Education in Phi Delta Kappan (PDK) magazine

dear friends,

Now is a truly exciting time for education reform as the Administration defines its priorities and sets new goals for student achievement, spending allocations, and legislative focus. Earlier this month, President Obama released the Federal Budget projections for FY 2011, including an increase of more than $3.5 billion overall. A critical piece of this proposed spending ($410 million) is slated to go toward the new Successful, Safe and Healthy Students Program, which will consolidate programs currently offered under the Office of Safe & Drug-Free Schools. These changes point to a significant shift in focus, with school climate reform becoming one of the main priorities for driving student success. CSEE is proud to have been at the forefront of this effort for many years, and we applaud the government for deepening its commitment to school climate funding and reform.

With these pivotal changes in sight, this issue of School Climate Matters introduces several new and exciting resources from CSEE and the National School Climate Council: National School Climate Standards, a School Climate Guide for District Policy Makers and Educational Leaders; and a School Climate Implementation Road Map. The Standards present a vision and framework for a positive and sustainable school climate that is then reinforced with the supports included in the District Guide and Road Map. Together, these resources will help your school or district align current practices with the shift in federal guidelines and make real progress toward school climate improvement this year. In addition, we are launching a new periodic publication—the School Climate Briefs—which will provide detailed commentaries from experts in the field on key school climate topics. The first in this series is a 2010 School Climate Research Summary.

These tools add to CSEE’s proven supports in this area—including our leading school climate measurement tool, the CSCI—and build directly from our experience working with thousands of educators and students nationwide. In this issue, we bring this work to life with inspiring profiles of two NYC public schools dedicated to building more effective learning communities. We are also thrilled to announce that registration is now open for our 13th Annual Summer Institute (see page 3), which will include a keynote by Assistant Deputy Secretary of Education, Kevin Jennings. Sign up today to learn about the most up-to-date school climate efforts and supports nationwide. We hope to see you there!

As always, we want to learn from you, too. Please tell us what your school or district is doing to actively address school climate needs and let us know how we can help. Share your thoughts at: newsletter@csee.net.

All the best for a positive and productive spring,

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

Your district’s core belief about every student’s ability to learn sets the tone for student success. What do your school board, administration and faculty believe? Do you believe all students can learn?

The School Climate Guide for District Policymakers and Education Leaders will help you to develop a list of questions about your district, and offer possible solutions, recommendations, and access available tools. Do we have a vision for school climate and did we engage the whole community in its development? How do we measure our current climate and our progress? Do we have the right people in place, and do they have the knowledge and training they need? Do our policies and practices support the vision? Answering these questions is essential to creating a strong district-wide foundation that will promote and reinforce success at every level.

It is with confidence that I recommend the School Climate Guide for District Policymakers and Education Leaders to you. You will gain a deep understanding of school climate, the role and responsibilities of school boards and superintendents, and the framework to create effective and sustainable positive school climate for every student.

DOWNLOAD THE GUIDE:
www.schoolclimate.org/climate/districtguide.php

Lou Ann Evans is a member of the National School Climate Council and the District Leaders Network for Civic Engagement and Service Learning, and the past President of the PA Schools Boards Association.
The National School Climate Standards were developed by CSEE, the National School Climate Council, and many other educational, school board, and community leaders. Endorsed by the National School Boards Association, these Standards present a vision and framework for cultivating a positive and sustainable school climate.

This framework is comprised of 5 standards that support the school community:

1. Developing a shared vision and plan for promoting, enhancing, and sustaining a positive school climate.

2. Developing policies that promote social, emotional, ethical, and intellectual learning as well as systems that address barriers to learning.

3. Promoting practices that promote the learning and positive social, emotional, ethical, and civic development of students and student engagement as well as addressing barriers to learning.

4. Creating an environment where all members are welcomed, supported, and feel safe in school: socially, emotionally, intellectually, and physically.

5. Developing meaningful and engaging practices, activities, and norms that promote social and civic responsibilities and a commitment to social justice.

During the 3-day event, you will participate in engaging workshops, expert keynotes, and valuable networking sessions that provide the practical strategies and up-to-date knowledge needed to create a safe and supportive environment for learning.

Take advantage of the $575 Early Bird Special and the Reduced Group Rates:

**REGISTER NOW!**
http://www.schoolclimate.org/programs/si.php

You can also view key speakers, Summer Institute faculty, and information about the benefits of past events.

**The National School Climate Standards**

“The set of National School Climate Standards presented here establishes a baseline of conditions for a learning environment for each child in a way that often is left to chance and that supports ASCD’s vision for it is possible when we educate the whole child.”

**GENE CARTER,** Executive Director, ASCD

**ENDORSED BY:**

National School Boards Association
expert spotlight

Queens Schools Band Together to Improve School Climate: 2 Success Stories

This past fall, CSEE began working with a network of six schools throughout the Queens borough of NY to help them assess and improve their school climate. We met with representative leadership teams from all of the schools in early October to begin the process, and each school administered the Comprehensive School Climate Inventory (CSCI) to their students, parents, and staff to get a deeper understanding of strengths and needs at their particular building. The leadership teams have been working hard since that first meeting to create more positive climates for learning, and we are proud to celebrate their efforts to date! In this issue, we are proud to share profiles of two network schools, PS 155 and MS 72, which developed powerful community engagement programs drawing from their training with CSEE. We will be tracking each school’s efforts and continue to share their stories with you in future issues of School Climate Matters. Congratulations to all the network schools for their continued commitment and their exceptional work to improve school climate!

PS 155: Winter Wonderland
By Tasha Kurs, School Counselor

After meeting for the first time with the Center for Social and Emotional Education, we were introduced to the notion of school climate. Immediately, we formed a School Climate Team and met to discuss ways to boost the atmosphere at PS155.

The “Calendar of Events” plan was an outgrowth of one of our earliest School Climate Team meetings. As we scheduled activities over the course of the school year on our Calendar of Events, we geared these activities towards building school morale and connectedness, something we felt our school community needed.

Knowing that December holidays bring about excitement and cheer, we tossed around the idea of having all PS 155 community members decorate their classroom and office doors. We named this December activity Winter Wonderland and designed a flyer, with some basic guidelines, assigned a start date and distributed it to all community members. This was an invitation to decorate “your” space with winter and holiday themes in mind. Little did we know of the beauty, creativity and magic that would come to be!

The beginnings of Winter Wonderland were quite secretive. We heard rumors about certain grades working on penguins and another floor working on snowmen. As you walked the hallways, you began to see evidences of Winter Wonderland: red and green chain links lining the perimeter of the 4th floor, blue paper covering the walls of the 3rd floor, children bringing giant snowflakes with glitter to morning line up. There were children and teachers painting large murals on the floor, parents decorating the school lobby, the custodial engineer wrapping his door with holiday paper and LOTS OF GLITTER. It was fun and exciting! You began to wonder what these projects were like, and who was doing what, and you couldn’t wait to see the end result.

By week 2, everything came together! It was absolutely marvelous and almost indescribable. Unbeknownst to the School Climate Team, classes naturally collaborated with one another and created one, huge display that covered virtually the entirety of each floor. It was fabulous: Multicultural snowmen, Holiday Manhattan, Penguins,
Gingerbread Town, and Dogteam Story were some of the major attractions.

The end result of Winter Wonderland was that it did in fact invoke positive feelings throughout the entire school community. Students, parents and all staff members fully enjoyed and appreciated the beautiful displays created during this holiday season. It made you feel happy to be in the school building.

Now equipped with our school climate survey report, we are ready to bring our contextual understanding and first-hand experience with research-based data to begin to plan for long-term school improvement.

**MS 72: Real Talk With Teens**

By Annette Welcome, Parent Coordinator

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Real Talk With Teens (RTWT) is an initiative that we developed to counter the negative social influences bombarding our youth. From the style of dressing and language in/outside the school, to the interactions between males and females, it was painfully clear that our children were on a dangerous path; and social outlets like the media are not taking the responsibility to educate young people about the consequences of inappropriate activity.

We noted that students were curious about, gang affiliations, sex, drugs, and alcohol. For example, we recognized behaviors associated with gang life style emerging in the school. Drugs and sex were no longer imaginations of the mind, our teens were experimenting. Even more startling was the fact that our young people—our children—were engaging in such risky behavior without knowing the consequences.

I approached the principal, Ms. Taylor-Brown about RTWT, and we eventually brought the project to reality with the help of our Queens Department of Education contacts, in particular Mr. MckKay, who connected with important community leaders, such as former parole officer Lorenzo Steele, Sgt. Cleare from the NYPD Special Projects Units, and Richard Celestin from the program of Youth Development and Empowerment. Together, our leadership team —Mr. Steele, Sgt. Cleare, Mr. Celestin, assistant principals, guidance counselors, and members from the community board organizations—got together to determine where each of us could make a commitment to informing and mentoring our young people about the consequences of being involved with drugs, sex, alcohol, and gang violence. In planning our approach, we even surveyed the parents, teachers, and students so the topics discussed would be relevant to the youth.

Sgt. Cleare committed to gang awareness week. We hosted an assembly to give students an overview of topics that would be discussed in more detail during individual class visits. Sgt. Cleare informed our students about what it means to be in a gang, behaviors associated with gang activities, and provided visual images to bring to life these realities. The pictures of imprisoned young men/women really hit home for many of our students. Finally, our students were seeing the consequences in a way that did not glamorize the behavior.

Perhaps the most touching moment was when a young man who lives with the temptation to sell drugs approached Sgt. Cleare at the end of the assembly. He not only asked Cleare to offer advice on ways to avoid being a “hustler,” but also asked him to come back and mentor him too. Even though we cannot reach all the youth, the fact that RTWT had an impact on one student was worth all the effort that the MS 72 staff and extended family members put into the making this vision a reality.

The Real Talk With Teens program is most effective as a school-wide initiative that involves students, parents, teachers, administrators, and community organizations like the NYPD Special Projects Unit, for example. Men like Sgt. Cleare are the positive role models that our children need. This program has helped our students to understand the dangers behind risky behaviors and mobilized our entire community to address a major concern. Stay tuned for more updates from this program.

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**share your experience**

**What initiatives and programs have you implemented to create district-wide or school-wide change?**

Email newsletter@csee.net so we can share your work with other districts dedicated to improving their climates for learning.
On the Web
American Association of School Administrations: http://www.aasa.org/
ASCDExpress: http://www.ascd.org/ascd_express/home.aspx

Books
A Comprehensive Guide to Designing Standards-Based Districts, Schools, and Classrooms, Robert J. Marzano and John S. Kendall
Power, Politics, and Ethics in School Districts: Dynamic Leadership for Systemic Change, Francis M. Duffy

The Role of Districts in Fostering Instructional Improvements: Lessons from Three Urban Districts Partnered with the Institute for Learning, Julie A. Marsh
Using Data to Improve Student Learning in School Districts, Victoria L. Bernhardt
The Future of Schools: How Communities and Staff Can Transform Their School Districts, Merrelyn Emery
Breaking Through: Transforming Urban School Districts, John Simmons
Against the Odds: Insights from One District’s Small School Reform, Larry Cuban, Gary Lichtenstein, Arthur Evenchik, Martin Tombari, and Kristen Pozzoboni
Managing School Districts for High Performance: Cases in Public Education Leadership, Edited by Stacey Childress (Author), and Susan Moore Johnson (Author, Editor), Allen Grossman (Author, Editor), Richard F. Elmore (Author, Editor), Stacey Childress (Editor)
Designing School Systems for All Students: A Toolbox to Fix America’s Schools, Robert J. Manley
Realization: The Change Imperative for Deepenig District-Wide Reform, Lyn Sharratt and Michael Fullan

NEW!
School Climate Implementation Road Map
This resource is designed to support school leadership teams in measuring and improving school climate in ways that support student and adult learning.

School Climate District Guide for Policymakers and Education Leaders
http://www.schoolclimate.org/climate/districtguide.php
This guide contains: an overview of school climate research; improvement best practices; policy options that encourage, support and reward implementation of positive school climate standards; and frameworks and tools that you can use from the district-level. Visit us on the web to request a copy.

School Climate Guidelines
http://schoolclimate.org/guidelines/
CSEE now has an entire section of its website dedicated to providing research and resources for school leaders who are committed to supporting student learning and positive youth development.

Congratulations Bethlehem Elementary!

BETHLEHEM ELEMENTARY is the winning school behind the Stand Up to Bullying Video Contest. Visit CSEE’s blog at http://blogs.csee.net to watch Bethlehem’s video!

This contest was designed for the BullyBust Partner Schools Program, a free initiative that provides schools with the supports they need to reduce bullying and promote upstander behavior in school. Sign up for our Partner Schools Program at www.bullybust.org.

WEBINAR:
Social and Emotional Learning: Making a Case in an NCLB World!
February 25, 2010
7 PM EST
RSVP at Edutopia.org
Finding Grants in Tough Financial Times

By Alison Dichter, Development Director, Center for Social and Emotional Education (CSEE)

As a fundraiser I know all too well how challenging it is to raise money—especially in these uncertain times. However, despite the difficult financial climate, education remains a top funding priority. The United States Department of Education is committed to providing resources to help our nation’s schools develop and grow. While there have been a number of grant opportunities benefitting states and districts, there are a many that offer schools an opportunity to apply for funds, as well. While researching funding opportunities, I would also encourage you to peruse the foundation center’s website at www.foundationcenter.org and see if there are any grantwriting seminars in your area. Most are free and could provide you with valuable information, techniques and suggestions on how to go about the grantwriting process (which can be a very tedious and daunting procedure).

On the Department of Education’s website, www.ed.gov, the list of grant opportunities is constantly updated. Since the grants are extremely competitive, I would suggest checking the site regularly to see if anything new has been posted and to make sure deadlines are met.

Recently, $650 million was allocated for the i3 (Investing in Innovation Fund) designed to support research-based innovative programs that help improve outcomes for students. School districts and groups of districts can apply for these grants. The funding will be awarded across three categories of grants. Below are these three categories, along with contact information for questions about these competitions:

**Scale up Grants**

*This category is focused on programs and practices with the potential to reach hundreds of thousands of students. Applicants must have a strong base of evidence that their program has had a significant effect on improving student achievement.*

**RFP came out:** December 21, 2009  
**Proposal Due:** March 22, 2010  
**Award Announcement:** May 21, 2010  
**Funding Available:** $30,000,000- $50,000,000 (5-10 awards)

**Validation Grants**

*This category applies to existing, promising programs that have good evidence of their impact and are ready to improve their evidence base while expanding in their own and other communities.*

**RFP came out:** December 21, 2009  
**Proposal Due:** March 22, 2010  
**Award Announcement:** May 21, 2010  
**Funding Available:** $5,000,000-$30,000,000 (30-50 awards)

**Development Grants**

*This category is the smallest of all three and is designed to support new and high-potential practices whose impact should be studied further.*

**RFP came out:** December 21, 2009  
**Proposal Due:** March 22, 2010

In addition to the i3 funding opportunities, the Office of Safe and Drug-Free Schools (OSDFS) has also introduced a grant specifically designed for districts and schools focused on school climate improvement.

**Improving the Climate for Learning**

**RFP comes out:** April 10, 2010  
**Proposal Due:** May 28, 2010  
**Award Announcement:** July 28, 2010  
**Funding Available:** TBD (136 awards)

STAY TUNED TO CSEE’S BLOG, http://blogs.csee.net, for more updates on funding and grant opportunities for district-level change and school climate improvement.
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