Special Keynote Address by KEVIN JENNINGS
Assistant Deputy Secretary of the US Department of Education, Office of Safe & Drug-Free Schools

During this three day institute, participants will learn about:

• A continuous process for measuring and improving school climate that recognizes and supports the whole child and the whole school community
• Recent research and best practices in social, emotional, and civic education and school climate improvement efforts that support effective bully prevention, pro-upstander behavior and academic achievement
• Practical and helpful classroom, school-wide, and school-home-community interventions that support safety, engagement, supportive and respectful relations and democratically informed communities.

Register Now for CSEE’s 13th Annual Summer Institute: July 6th–8th in NYC
Creating the Foundation for Comprehensive School Climate Reform
Promoting Safe, Healthy, Engaged, and Democratic K-12 School Communities
Fordham University, New York, NY

REGISTER TODAY to reserve your spot for 3-days of practical workshops, engaging discussions and valuable networking sessions with experts from across the country! Registration closes Friday, June 19.

To DOWNLOAD THE FULL BROCHURE or REGISTER for the 2010 INSTITUTE, visit: http://schoolclimate.org/programs/si.php.

“The CSEE Summer Institute is the best intensive learning experience I am aware of with regard to creating a positive climate for safe, caring, and supportive schools that promote the academic and social-emotional competencies of students.”

—MAURICE ELIAS,
Rutgers University, Founding Member, CASEL Leadership Team
As another school year comes to a close, now is the ideal time to reflect on a critical area of school climate that often gets overlooked in the flurry of activity during hectic school days: our own professional working relationships as educators. Positive adult social, emotional and civic behavior provides an essential foundation for creating safe, supportive, engaging and helpfully challenging school climates. Yet, we often spend time working to cultivate this behavior in our students, before we have fully learned how to effectively “model” it in our actions and words each day.

In this issue, we highlight several important efforts in the area of “reflective practice” to help you build a professional working team within your school community. Steven Strull shares key tips on developing professional learning communities (p.7), growing out of his work with the Coalition for Essential Schools Critical Friends efforts. This has been one of the most recent and successful efforts to support educators being “teachers and learners” together. Ann Meyers and Cat Greenstreet share the important work of Parker Palmer and his Courage to Teach model that supports adult reflection, learning and renewal (p.3). In our Schools In Action highlight, we provide concrete tips and a process framework for implementing social, emotional, and civic educator training, showcasing the experiences of teachers in a Bronx-area middle school as they become “living examples” of these behaviors (p.4-5). As always, you’ll find a bevy of great resources to expand your learning on this topic (p.6).

We hope this issue is a valuable guide for you and look forward to hearing your thoughts! Please send your comments or questions, and share what your school is doing to create a positive, healthy, and engaged climate for learning to: newsletter@csee.net. Don’t forget to register for our 13th Annual Summer Institute, July 6-8th, which will provide an excellent foundation for school climate improvement whether you are just beginning or are looking to enhance current efforts. We look forward to seeing you there!!

Best wishes for a safe, fun and productive summer,

Jonathan Cohen, Ph.D., President and Co-Founder

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Exciting New Resources for Bully-Bust Partner Schools Program

BullyBust and the Broadway musical WICKED have joined forces to promote National Bully Prevention Month!

Through the creation of bully prevention materials and educational activities that draw from WICKED’s inspiring story of Elphaba and Glinda (the witches of Oz), BullyBust will launch a number of new resources to be used by schools across the country during National Bully Prevention Month in October 2010 and through the 2010/2011 school year.

Click here to read the press release about this partnership!

End-of-Year Engagement Activity:
“I am an Upstander because . . . ”

Engage your students and adults in an empowering exercise to share why (and how) they are upstanders against bullying using our prompts by either written or video submissions. This simple end-of-year engagement activity will help sustain momentum you’ve created in the 2009/2010 school year, and keep your students focused on bully prevention throughout the summer.

Your submissions have the potential to be incorporated into a new BullyBust video that will be used during National Bully Prevention Month in October 2010 to promote upstander efforts!

To join the Partner Program and get the BullyBust Partner School Activity Guide so you can start this project now! All submissions must be received no later than Friday, June 25th, 2010!

TO JOIN the Partner Schools Program and get free resources: www.bullybust.org/partner
Creating Trustworthy School Environments

Cat Greenstreet and Ann Myers, National facilitators for the Center for Courage & Renewal

Where do we find professional development opportunities specifically designed to create safe, supportive, welcoming environments? How do we, as educators, cultivate our own capacities to enhance and sustain positive school environments?

Over a decade ago, a select group of public school teachers from Michigan were invited to the Fetzer Institute for a program facilitated by Parker J. Palmer, a sociologist and a Quaker. Since then the movement has grown to be a highly effective collaborative learning experience for school leaders, educators from other levels, health care professionals, lawyers, clergy, and business leaders. Through the Circle of Trust® approach, participants are able to strengthen their identity and integrity, the connection between “soul and role,” as Parker articulates it. Those involved repeatedly in these experiences cultivate the overall ability to communicate effectively with others and to help create positive school climate change.

Where most workshops promoting social-emotional capacities in our students focus on the why and the how, the Courage to Teach®/Courage to Lead® retreats focus on the who. They provide the opportunity for us to experience trustworthy space through specific reflective practices: deep listening, both to the one’s self and to the others in the circle; responding by asking open-honest questions instead of fixing, saving, advising, or setting people straight (an all too common way we communicate); and thinking in a paradigm of paradox, of “both-and” instead of “either-or.” Through this activity, teachers experience a new way of relating to themselves and to each other in the formation of a healing community.

Participants never feel pressured to contribute since our touchstones or guidelines rely on invitation, never demand. It is, however, important to invite everyone’s participation, not only those who naturally speak more easily. Our touchstones also include welcoming silence and being present. The flow of courage workshops involves both solitude and sharing in community. Time for solitude is getting more and more difficult in a culture that values speed over silence, activity over stillness, doing more than being.

Central to the retreats is the Clearness Committee, an over 400-year practice that originally developed from the belief in the power of the “inner teacher,” the small voice within each of us that is our true guide. In this practice, a focus person sits with a group of four to six others for two hours. In that time, she takes about ten minutes to outline the issue that she needs to think about more deeply, and the others ask open-honest questions for an hour and a half. An open-honest question is one that we don’t know the answer to. We tend to ask questions that are actually cloaked advice, unconsciously designed to direct the conversation or decision: for example, “Have you ever thought of seeing a chiropractor for that?” assumes that I know what you need to do, and this kind of discourse is rarely fruitful since only the person himself knows what needs to be done. Excellent issues for Clearness Committee can be something that touches our personal life and well-being along with our work in the world; it may be a transition issue or a relational one. We learn from these experiences a new way to support one another.

Courage to Teach/Courage to Lead seasonal retreats serve educators and others committed to both personal and professional growth and renewal. Participants are invited to speak honestly about their lives and to listen and respond to each other and to themselves with encouragement and compassion, rooted in deep listening. By joining these circles of self-reflection, solitude, small group sharing, and large group sharing, participants experience what we aspire to bring to all children—trustworthy spaces where they are learning and engaged.

Cat Greenstreet has been a teacher and educational leader. She is currently serving as the Interim Lower School Chair at the Rudolf Steiner School in Manhattan.

Ann Myers is a teacher and an educational leader. She is currently Associate Professor in the School of Education at the Sage Colleges and is the Director of the Doctor of Education program in Educational Leadership.

Cat and Ann are national facilitators for the Center for Courage & Renewal. For more information about this work, see www.couragerenewal.org.

Using the open and honest question model

It can be helpful to use an open and honest question model if someone has an issue and wants to think through it by listening and responding to others questions. The person posing an open, honest question does not anticipate a particular answer and is not seeking to advise, fix or lead. Open and honest questions are useful because they can assist the focus person to access his/her “inner teacher” and tap into the best answer for themselves.

How to ask open and honest questions?

• Craft questions that are brief and to the point
• Be careful not to carry the personal story of the questioner in the wording or unintentionally prompt a particular resolution
• Questions can be asked about the person’s feelings and the facts of the situation to elicit deeper understanding
• Questions do not have a right or wrong answer and cannot be answered by a “yes” or “no”
Adult social, emotional, and civic learning has always been a foundational aspect of our professional development and Summer Institute work at CSEE. Social, emotional, and civic learning programs within schools, however, are often targeted exclusively at students. The underlying motivation for this difference often comes from the administration’s observation that teachers are having trouble with classroom management and/or that the students themselves are presenting particularly difficult behaviors throughout the school environment.

These initiatives can take the forms of conflict resolution programs, infusing SEL skills development into existing curriculum, character education programs, peer mediation programs, behavior reward systems, or restorative justice programs. If well delivered by staff, these programs can bring about real change in a school environment. It is an all too common experience, though, that these programs begin with lots of energy and investment and taper off due to the disinterest of the staff meant to deliver and run them.

When a new program is brought in to solve existing problems there is urgency behind getting it off the ground, the belief in its success, and the hope for a quick turnaround of difficult behaviors. However, too often teachers who are already stressed to the limits of their time and energy grow disheartened with the added responsibility of delivering and running another program. They become disappointed that student behaviors do not change quickly enough. And, they feel frustrated that yet another “quick fix” has failed.

There are many reasons why SEC programmatic efforts often begin with a “bang” and are not sustained. We have found that one of the more common reasons is that the adults are not involved with parallel and complementary adult learning efforts. It is a strange and sad oversight that while we endlessly ask teachers to nurture and support students in their social, emotional, and civic growth, we have very few social, emotional, and civic supports in place for the teachers themselves.

A New Model: The Emotionally Responsive Classroom Curriculum and its Support Adult Social, Emotional and Civic Learning

At Castle Hill Academy in the Bronx we have developed a new model for transforming school climate that focuses on adult social, emotional, and civic learning first. The core of this model is an original curriculum entitled The Emotionally Responsive Classroom that is written specifically for teachers. The units of study include an Introduction to Conflict Theory, Intrapersonal Skills, Non-Verbal Communication, Empathic Models, and Cultural Fluency. CSEE and I suggest that adult learning is a fundamentally important and necessary aspect of effective school climate improvement efforts.

Teachers at Castle Hill are using the curriculum to help develop personal awareness and new social, emotional, and civic skills. They are moving through the curriculum at paces that suit them as individuals including picking and choosing individual areas of interest or meeting in groups and debriefing around various exercises.

In addition, I visit the school weekly to offer one on one support to teachers who are working with the curriculum. This support can take many forms. At times, we will discuss a teacher’s experience of exercises in a given unit and brainstorm new techniques to address social, emotional, and civic issues within the classroom. On other visits, I model lessons for students which help a teachers translate and teach others about the skills he or she is exploring. And, at times, there is simply discussion that deepens a teacher’s understanding of his/her own emotional state on the job.
How This Approach Differs

This approach differs greatly from student-centered programs by providing direct and consistent support to teachers around the social, emotional, and civic issues that arise on a daily basis in their jobs. Rather than ignoring these adult issues, this approach attempts to bring them to the forefront by providing teachers with a safe forum in which to work on developing awareness and new skills in these areas.

Too often teachers are told they are doing something wrong without ever being offered a no fault area to explore their own strengths and weaknesses. Adult social, emotional, and civic learning is attempting to carve out a place where teachers can grow and change in relation to some of the most sensitive and difficult demands of their job.

The Emotionally Responsive Classroom curriculum is now being independently evaluated by researchers from Fordham University. Based on this formative assessment we will revise the curriculum this summer. And, we look forward to working with new groups of school personnel next fall to further this foundational aspect of school climate improvement efforts. You can learn more about this valuable training on page 6 of this newsletter.

Four Key Steps to Recognizing and Addressing “Triggers”

Vallie Geier, CSEE fellow

When thinking about your own classroom, it is very helpful to develop the ability to identify moments or situations in which you become “thrown” (e.g. upset, really frustrated, or hurt). As Kristin explained, it is very important for adults to take the time to reflect and learn ways to develop better social, emotional and civic skills. Recognizing what “throws” us is a critical first step in this process. Here are four steps to developing the skills necessary to manage moments when you are “thrown”, “de-skilled” and/or overwhelmed:

1.) What actions or events make you feel “thrown”?
Think back to the last time you were “thrown” and try to figure out what you and/or others were doing before you felt this way. What were you doing in your classroom right before it occurred? For example, were you trying to start a lesson but your students would not stop talking? This first step is essential because you are developing awareness about your own actions and situations around you.

2.) Reflect on how you felt and how you reacted to the particular situation
Be open to what seems clear—and not clear—about what was “triggered” here. We all have triggers! Sometimes, for example, a given student may remind us of someone from the past who “got under our skin”. Or, we may—understandably—feel so frustrated that we have made the same request repeatedly to a given student or group of students that we begin to “boil”. These moments of frustration can rapidly “morph” into anger.

3.) Think about ways to manage your being “thrown”
If you know what actions or events trigger this experience, then you can begin to try different methods to manage it. For example, it can be helpful to stop what you are doing and take a few deep breaths. This pause can help you clear your head and will help you put the situation in perspective. It can also be helpful to develop a plan about what you will do if you become “thrown”. Remember it takes time to develop the skills to control your anger and it is important to remember that you probably will need different schemes for different situations. It can be helpful to talk with a colleague who you really trust about this.

4.) Use this as a teachable moment for students
It is important to help your students understand that “feeling thrown” is a normal experience but that you can learn the skills to manage this emotion more effectively. If you get frustrated, for example, in your classroom, realize that this can be turned into a positive learning experience by explicitly teaching your students about what triggers frustration and that this can lead to a fight or flight response. It is also helpful to learn how to communicate your feelings to your classroom in a way that does not upset the flow of your teaching. This type of discussion with your students can positively change the climate of the classroom because you are teaching them how to develop emotional skills.

This has been adapted from Stuart, K.P. & Cohen, J. (2009.) Emotional Responsive Classroom: Tools for Teachers to Improve Classroom Climate. Center for Social and Emotional Education
Explore these useful articles, recently published books and web resources to learn more about professional working relationships. If you’d like to share related resources, please email us at newsletter@csee.net.

Books

The Emotionally Intelligent Teacher
Ann Arbor, MI: Quest Education

Trust in Schools: A Core Resource for Improvement
New York: Russell Sage Foundation

Building Inner Preparedness in New York City Educators post-9/11. Excerpt from: Ever after: Teaching difficult issues through difficult times

The Facilitator’s Book of Questions
New York: Teachers College Press

Instructional Rounds in Education: A Network Approach to Improving Teaching and Learning
Cambridge, MA: Harvard Education Press

Experience & Education
Dewey, J. (1938)
New York: Touchstone

New York: Teachers College Press

Articles

The Emotionally Intelligent Workplace
http://www.amazon.com/Emotionally-Intelligent-Workplace-Intelligence-Organizations/dp/0787956902/ref=sip_rech_dp_7

The Ripple Effect: Emotional Contagion and Its Influence on Group Behavior
Barsade, Sigal G. 
Administrative Science Quarterly, 47(4), 644-675.

The first “R”: Reflective capacities
Cohen, J. (1999)
Educational Leadership, Vol. 57, 1, 70-75.

Why Social and Emotional Learning for Educators?

The Prosocial Classroom: Teacher Social and Emotional Competence in Relation to Student and Classroom Outcomes
Review of Educational Research, 79, 491-525

Websites

Center for Courage and Renewal
http://www.couragerenewal.org/parker

featured program

Building Adult Social, Emotional and Civic Competencies:
Negotiation and Collaborative Problem Solving

This workshop is designed to help educators and administrators develop new ways to effectively work together. Designed as a series of connected trainings, this program focuses on adult negotiation and collaborative problem solving abilities: the foundation for effective school reform. Life and learning is a process of negotiation and collaboration. The skills and dispositions that support adults being able to pay attention to “What do I need now?” “What are my goals and how can I work with others to achieve these goals in the best way?” shapes our lives. Research has shown that school reform efforts rest on the adults’ capacity to effectively work together. Participants will receive a wide range of information, guidelines, tools and resources.

To find out how the Negotiation and Collaborative Problem Solving program can serve your school or district, call us at (212) 707-8799 or write to us at info@csee.net to learn more about our Professional Development Services.
Creating Effective Professional Learning Communities

Steven Strull, *Coalition for Essential Schools’ Critical Friends Groups*

The teachers are sitting around a table with water, half-finished cups of coffee, pretzels, and some fruit roll-ups. It is 12:47 and they have exactly 59 minutes left for their common planning period. And all 8 of them know what to do.

Maria, a high school social studies teacher in this 7-year-old small school that shares a campus with 4 other small schools is also in her 7th year of teaching. She is the designated facilitator for this “professional learning community (PLC)” and she opens, as she always does, by saying “Connections are now open.” **Connections** is a protocol used to open the meeting where folks can share whatever is currently on their mind. It allows the community to take notice of each other and share openly as a way of preparing for the work and learning that is the point of this session.

Eight minutes later, Maria says “connections are now closed” and spends the next 4 minutes debriefing the process with her group. There are 47 minutes left—just enough time for a Consultancy. For this protocol, Daniel is the presenting teacher and Estelle is facilitating. Daniel is a third year math teacher and he has a dilemma of practice, specifically how to blend the constructivist inquiry approach that is the pedagogical expectation of this school and the pressure to prepare the children to pass the algebra Regents examination. Estelle is a 28-year veteran who was exasperated from the failed large comprehensive neighborhood high school 6 years ago. While reluctant at first to re-start her career, she has found comfort in this professional community and has embraced the reforms, her colleagues, her practice, and her children. (Schools, when slated for closure, phase-out one grade at a time while the new small schools replacing them are phased-in one grade at a time.) Estelle and Daniel met for 20 minutes during their preparation period the day before and Daniel has written bullet points to organize and consolidate his thinking.

Estelle reviews the process of the protocol and reminds everyone that for the Consultancy to be effective, three things must be true for Daniel:

1. **His dilemma must be real**—it is culled from his practice and recent experiences;
2. He truly **does not know how to resolve his dilemma**; and,
3. He must be **willing to change his behavior in order to resolve his dilemma**

**Groups of teachers, working together, will be better for students than the best teacher working alone**

Daniel presents his dilemma for 5 minutes and his colleagues ask him clarifying and probing questions for the next 10 minutes. After **probing questions**, Estelle reminds Daniel that he is not to participate verbally for the next 15 minutes—his PLC will speak about Daniel’s dilemma offering **warm and cool feedback** coupled with concrete suggestions. Daniel listens and takes notes, highlighting things that strike him as particularly helpful or off-base. For the next 5 minutes Daniel reflects openly about what he heard, what surprised him, and what next steps he is considering. Estelle leads a debrief of the process and closes the protocol. With 7 minutes left in the period, Maria asks who would like to present and facilitate at next week’s meeting. A few hugs and niceties later, the teachers are off to their next class and Daniel, as well as the others, has a lot to think about.

The work these teachers are engaged in, while generically now called professional learning communities, is a direct outgrowth of the **Coalition of Essential Schools**’ and the **Annenberg Institute for School Reform’s Critical Friends Group** (CFG) approach. Though various organizations have taken up this work the protocols are now maintained by the **School Reform Initiative**.

It is well documented that teaching is an isolating endeavor. In the typical factory model high school, teachers are separated from their colleagues for most of the day, gathering perhaps in the teachers’ lounge and occasionally during PD sessions. The work that Maria, Estelle, Daniel, and their colleagues are engaged in, though, is meant to interrupt that norm and create a professional community, specifically because it leads to conversations that have the capacity to increase teacher certainty, commitment, and effectiveness thus leading to increases in student achievement.

The work of the Coalition developed as the answer to a seemingly simple essential question: if teachers could take responsibility and be accountable for their own professional development, what would they create? The answer was a Critical Friends Group and the work described above is an example, in practice, of that answer.

It is built on a set of beliefs that what adults do together in schools matters—and not because it makes the teachers feel better; it matters because it makes them more efficacious; irrespective of whatever the efficacy norm is. **Teachers, like all humans, are learners and schools ought to be places where teachers learn as well as teach.** Like all learners, they benefit from a well-crafted lesson plan with objectives that contribute to their lived experience and a set of beliefs premised on the notion that groups of teachers, working together, will be better for students than the best teacher working alone.

The practice takes root in schools with shared understandings and agreements around how adults behave with each other and how that behavior affects the school’s community and ultimately student achievement. My own experience informs me that the exact approach matters less than the way of knowing. How we are with each other as professional educators bears a direct correlation on how well the school functions, and ultimately, how well children achieve. It’s not the only factor, but it can be the most important.

Steven Strull currently facilitates a pre-service principal preparation experience called LEAP (Leaders in Education Apprentice Program) for 300 schools in the New York City Department of Education. Previously, Steven served as a Local Instructional Superintendent for the Department and as a Leadership Coach with the NYC Leadership Academy. Formerly, Steven directed the National School Reform Faculty, creators of the Critical Friends Group approach.
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