in this issue

• Project UNIFY Empowers Students to Improve School Climate, P. 3
• Schools Nationwide Stand Up to Bullying with BullyBust, P. 4-5
• New Resources from NSCC, P. 6
• Benefit 2010 Recap, P. 6

in brief

NEW School Climate Reference Guide — NSCC’s, President Jonathan Cohen, Ph. D, & Maurice Elias, Ph.D., Professor of Psychology at Rutgers University, created a useful reference guide for the National Professional Resources designed for classroom teachers, principals, superintendents, parents and all who are committed to improving school climate for students in grades K-12. The reference guide is packed with practical and proven evidence-based strategies, including an overview of the School Climate Improvement Cycle, a classroom climate checklist, and other supports: http://www.nprinc.com/refcards/sccl.htm

Students in WI stand up to bullying — Dr. William Hughes, Superintendent of the Greendale School District in WI, highlighted his eighth grade students recently and their extraordinary work in bullying prevention. The students designed an awareness campaign to increase understanding of the impact of bullying and created clear indicators of good behavior. You can view their unique and powerful presentations here: http://wwwCASCADEEDUCATIONALCONSULTANTS.COM/blog.php?id=828817552570095871

Queens, NY Schools Make School Climate Improvement a Top Priority!

Well cultivated roots make extremely sturdy and enduring trees! That’s certainly the model being employed with the continuing work of NSCC in the New York City borough of Queens. Building on the very strong foundational work in six NYCDOE schools that we started last year, NSCC is now honored and eager to collaborate with four school communities from Far Rockaway to Jamaica. This semester we’ve started critical school climate work in PS/MS 200, PS 105, PS 48 and PS 72. Ranging from Kindergarten to Eighth Grade, our aim is to help these schools create a safe, supportive, engaging & helpfully challenging climate for learning. Under the supportive stewardship of Mr. Fred Jones, Senior Program Manager of the 21st Century Community Learning Centers at the NYCDOE, we have received a School Climate Improvement Grant (SCIG) from the Office of Youth and Community Development. This grant will allow us to work deeply and extensively with these four schools to provide professional development, school climate measurement and improvement, student engagement, and parent involvement. In addition, we will collaborate with the Leadership Program in offering services. Three of the four schools have already completed the Comprehensive School Climate Inventory (CSCI), which provided a detailed picture of their particular strengths and needs, and have identified their principal focus to be on breaking the bully-victim-bystander cycle. The fourth school will soon complete the CSCI to understand their school’s complete profile and help define next steps for improvement. With the prospect of discovering how this extremely important work will reduce absenteeism and dropout rates, we are hopeful that a strong start in Queens will pave the way for future expansion into all New York City neighborhoods.

NSCC staff already met with principals from each of the schools and started implementing a school climate measurement and improvement process to support each school in discovering more about their strengths and needs. Additionally, we’ve been fortunate to partner with each school’s Youth Director from their Children First Networks. All four schools have built a Leadership Team representing all segments of the school community, including guidance counselors, mental health
As we head into the holiday season, this is an ideal opportunity to recognize and celebrate the community of teachers, students, parents, and support staff that truly makes our schools shine. We know that the quality of the relationships within our schools directly impact students’ healthy development and their ability to learn, yet this critical aspect of school life tends to be one of the areas we focus on least. And one of the most essential pieces to every school’s positive climate is effective student engagement that challenges, inspires, and connects our students with the larger goals and efforts of the community as a whole. When student voice is valued and integrated into the school decision-making process, a much more powerful opportunity for positive change and sustained improvement is made possible.

In this issue, we share simple, concrete strategies for supporting and improving your school’s youth engagement—from youth leadership expert, Anderson Williams, who shares insightful guidance gleaned from his work with the Special Olympics Project UNIFY (p.3) to NSCC Education Director, Rich Cardillo’s detailed update on our advancing work with a committed network of schools in Queens, NY (p.1-2). We are also thrilled to feature NSCC’s incredibly successful BullyBust campaign, which engaged more than 1,000 schools nationwide in a comprehensive bully prevention effort this past fall (p.4-5). We hope you’ll take time to read the impressive student essays that were submitted as part of BullyBust’s Defying Gravity contest with the hit Broadway show WICKED, and learn from these students’ own words what it means to be an upstander against bullying and build a true community dedicated to ending harmful harassment in schools. We are honored to highlight their efforts in this issue as a very special part of our BullyBust campaign.

As always, we hope you’ll explore the deeper list of resources included in this issue, and look forward to hearing your own thoughts on what bully prevention and student engagement efforts have been most successful for your school community. Please feel free to send your stories, comments, and ideas to newsletter@schoolclimate.org.

Best wishes for a peaceful, healthy and joyous holiday season,

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

Richard Cardillo is the Education Director of the NSCC. Rich has over two decades of experience as a classroom teacher, rural community organizer, public spokesperson, fundraiser, college teacher in Perú and developer of community service learning programs. He is a native of New York, fluent in both Spanish and American Sign Language, and brings an entrepreneurial spirit and vision to his work. He is the past New York Regional Director of Peace Games, Director of Client Services at God’s Love We Deliver in New York and has been a classroom teacher in elementary, middle and high school. Richard received his Masters Degree from Columbia University.
All over the country, young people with and without intellectual disabilities are working for that day when we can stop saying “with and without intellectual disabilities.” They are working for the day when our inherent differences can be so present and accepted that we celebrate them as who and what we are instead of using them to define who and what we are not. With their efforts as part of Special Olympics Project UNIFY, these young people are defying the self-absorbed stereotypes that adults too often apply to them and are instead building just, equitable and inclusive communities and schools for everyone.

Project UNIFY is built upon strategies focused on creating and sustaining education systems, classroom practices, school climates and community engagement that ensure all students develop intellectual, physical, civic and emotional competencies. Specific elements of the Project UNIFY toolkit include the service learning curricula “Get Into It”, Unified Sports® and Young Athletes™ programs, R-word campaigns, youth volunteer training and leadership development opportunities.

Through the focused service-learning strategies of “Get Into It”, students and teachers are putting inclusion into practice and (re)designing and (re) defining inclusion through their own actions and their own motivations, and expanding this work beyond the walls of the classroom and the parameters of the school day. Through the inclusive practices of Unified Sports and Young Athletes, young people are broadening their understanding of equity and learning to live justly. Through their advocacy to end the use of the r-word with the national R-Word Campaign, they are illuminating a vision of just schools that acknowledges and understands that if justice only exists for some then it exists for no one.

In Bend, Oregon, students organized a rally during their lunch period to end the use of the r-word in their school. After school, they took their message into the community, marching and sharing their message at the busiest intersection in town.

In Cape Fear, North Carolina, the student council sponsor is using the “Get Into It” curriculum as core to the leadership training for council representatives. As the sponsor put it, “This curriculum will definitely make them realize they represent a broad range of students, not just their cliques.”

In Westerville, Ohio, because of the advocacy of students and families, Special Olympics athletes will soon receive high school varsity letter jackets in recognition of their athletic efforts and achievements.

As we consider our work around improving school climate, the individual and collective efforts of students involved with Project UNIFY along with the support of their teachers and other adult allies illuminate a reality that we all know well, but can always stand to remind ourselves of: positive school climate cannot exist for some if it does not exist for all. A just, equitable, and inclusive school climate must be practiced daily and in every interaction such that it becomes a way of being for our entire school community.

Anderson Williams currently serves as the Director of Consulting at Oasis Center in Nashville, Tennessee and is a Partner in Cascade Educational Consultants. In 2002 Anderson began working with Community IMPACT! Nashville, now a nationally recognized youth organizing initiative based in East Nashville where he also spent two years as the Director after a merger with Oasis Center. Anderson currently works with several national nonprofits including the America’s Promise Alliance and Special Olympics to help develop both national campaigns and internal organizational structures to support and promote quality youth engagement.

5 Strategies for Creating Just, Equitable, and Inclusive Classrooms

1. **Create opportunities for group decisions:** Open dialogue and group decision-making creates a space to demonstrate a democratic process where compromise rather than competition is critical to coming to a decision.

2. **Democratize the space:** When group decisions or student interaction are key to an effort, move the room around. Change which way is the front, move all the desks to the side, sit on the floor or in a circle, link arms—this process and including students in the plan demonstrates flexibility and a chance for learning from their own process decisions.

3. **Use multi-dimensional group projects and vary the groups:** A good group project should include opportunities to highlight varying learning styles and skills. It should have visual, written, presentation, creative and other components all as equal parts of the project and set up interdependency among the group.

4. **Vary protocols for classroom sharing:** Student sharing in classrooms often comes through talking or writing and often the fastest or the loudest wins the stage. Instead, use reflection and writing time to organize thoughts before sharing, share through visual art without any use of language, share in pairs or small groups, or think of other ways to allow space for the thinker, the talker, and the visual artist to share their ideas using their communications strengths.

5. **Create conflict:** When discussing issues in class, intentionally creating conflict provides a more realistic experience of what a complex “issue” really is. Students taking sides of an issue, not to compete and win, but to come to some collective decision creates a democratic experience that demonstrates the messiness of the process and not just the fact of the idea.
Launched by The National School Climate Center (NSCC) in 2009, BullyBust is a national bully prevention awareness campaign designed to teach students and educators how to transform their schools from a culture of passive bystanders to a community of upstanders against bullying—people who stand up and become part of the solution to end harmful harassment, teasing, and violence in our nation’s schools.

This Fall, BullyBust teamed up with Broadway’s hit musical WICKED to create “Stand Up to Bullying,” a national bully prevention Student Learning Guide and Teacher Tool Kit with lessons designed to raise awareness about the harmful effects of bullying on victims, bystanders and bullies themselves. These new supplements educated students on how to prevent bullying using the inspiring story of the Broadway musical WICKED and real-world examples from the news.

How BullyBust Helps:

Schools across the nation join the BullyBust Partner School Program, which provides concrete classroom activities, guidelines, and resources to help launch a community-wide bully prevention effort. In the past few months alone, the BullyBust Partner School Program has grown four-fold, to support more than 1000 schools and districts today, reaching over 500,000 students across the country in need of bully prevention training and resources. Through our WICKED partnership, this year’s Partner School Program included a “Defying Gravity” essay contest to raise awareness during National Bully Prevention Awareness Month in October. The “Defying Gravity” essay contest was designed to help schools promote upstander behavior in the classroom and allow students to share their stories about how they stood up to bullying in their own lives, drawing on the inspiring story of WICKED. Educators from our Partner School program incorporated these lessons into their classroom curriculum and school-wide efforts throughout the fall. As Debra Leporati from Warwick Valley Middle School notes:

“I spoke with the students about this. Do we want war or peace? If we can teach the children how to deal with conflict in ways that do not exclude but include, that do not break down but build up and empower, then the future can be bright. Thank you for this project. It is important.”

The BullyBust team was overwhelmed by the impressive, thoughtful, and inspiring essays we received from students across the nation demonstrating their courage, empathy and honesty in sharing how they defied gravity and overcame being bullied, prevented others from bullying, or even stopped being bullies themselves. Every student who submitted their story was a shining example of upstanders in action and we will be highlighting many of these voices on our website and in future articles.

Show Your Support

Thanks to our incredible partners, BullyBust is excited to offer you three great ways to take a stand:

**FLIP for Good:** Get a limited-edition custom FLIP designed by WICKED to support BullyBust. For every purchase, $10 will be donated to keep the BullyBust program going strong. View all of the unique designs at: [theflip.com/wicked](http://theflip.com/wicked) and get yours today!

**DEFY GRAVITY Pins:** WICKED has designed a special BullyBust-themed pin to raise awareness for the cause. For every pin sold, BullyBust receives $2.00. Be an Upstander—or get them for your class/school by visiting [www.wickedthemusicalstore.com/Products/Wicked-BullyBust-Pin__WKD-BULLYBUST-PIN.aspx](http://www.wickedthemusicalstore.com/Products/Wicked-BullyBust-Pin__WKD-BULLYBUST-PIN.aspx).

**Experience WICKED:** Take your class to see WICKED live on Broadway! Mention the code “CSEE” when ordering tickets and $5.00 will be donated to BullyBust to support our programs for schools-in-need. For more details, go to [wickedthemusical.com](http://wickedthemusical.com).
JOIN THE MOVEMENT!

Not yet involved in BullyBust?

Here’s how you can BECOME PART OF THE MOVEMENT and show your dedication to help put an end to bullying for good!

Sign the STAND UP PLEDGE at www.bullybust.org/students/pledge and learn how YOU can help prevent bullying.

Share a message of support on the Upstander Commitment Wall to let others know they are not alone:
www.bullybust.org/students/commitment_wall/

Join the community on Facebook and Twitter to stay informed on the latest news—from key bully prevention legislation to grassroots movements—that are making a difference.

Engage Your School by joining the Partner School Program (www.bullybust.org/partner) and get FREE practical resources to start your bully prevention effort today.

The National School Climate Center is proud to provide BullyBust as a valuable component of our comprehensive bully prevention program, and would like to extend our deepest gratitude to all who continue to support this campaign through your awareness and engagement. We are especially grateful to WICKED for their sincere commitment, inspiring partnership and invaluable contribution that made this project possible, and to FLIP camcorders, Newspapers in Education (NIE), Staples, and the Metzger-Price Foundation for their generous support of BullyBust in the past year.

share your voice

We want to learn from you! How does your school community teach students and adults about bully prevention?

Share your best practices with us at newsletter@schoolclimate.org and we’ll include your feedback in an upcoming issue of School Climate Matters.

VOICES FROM THE COMMITMENT WALL

Here are just a few examples of how people are pledging to be upstanders against bullying in their communities:

“I know how hard it is to deal with bullying. I was bullied as a child but I promise it does get better. Just hang in there and know that there are people who are on your side and care.”—KRISTI, Indianapolis

“I stop untrue and hurtful messages from spreading online and in school.”—JESSICA, California

“Bullying is horrible. Nobody should be made to feel like they aren’t worth anything. I take steps everyday to help people if I see them being bullied in school. Let’s DEFY GRAVITY and stop bullying.”—AMANDA, Tennessee

Tell us how YOU are making a difference!

The National School Climate Center is proud to provide BullyBust as a valuable component of our comprehensive bully prevention program, and would like to extend our deepest gratitude to all who continue to support this campaign through your awareness and engagement. We are especially grateful to WICKED for their sincere commitment, inspiring partnership and invaluable contribution that made this project possible, and to FLIP camcorders, Newspapers in Education (NIE), Staples, and the Metzger-Price Foundation for their generous support of BullyBust in the past year.

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Breaking the Bully-Victim-Bystander Cycle Tool Kit
Designed to support school leadership teams and school community members prevent bully-victim behavior and promote upstander behavior in K-12 schools. For more information and our special partner school discount, visit: http://www.schoolclimate.org/climate/toolkit.php

School Climate Improvement Guidelines
NSCC offers 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. Visit: http://www.schoolclimate.org/guidelines/schoolclimateimprovement.php

Measure your School Climate with the CSCI
NSCC offers our Comprehensive School Climate Inventory (CSCI), a nationally-recognized school climate survey that provides an in-depth profile of your school community’s particular strengths and needs, so you can target initiatives where they are needed most. For more details, visit: http://www.schoolclimate.org/programs/csci.php

Youth Sharing Ideas and Tools for Engagement
http://servicelearning.org/youthsite
Features project ideas, videos, resources, inspiration, information on service-learning, and more, all created by youth, for youth. You can see what other kids are doing and get ideas for a service-learning project of your own.

Reference Guide
NEW SCHOOL CLIMATE REFERENCE GUIDE
http://www.nprinc.com/refcards/sccl.htm
This reference guide is packed with practical and proven evidence-based strategies, including an overview of the School Climate Improvement Cycle, a classroom climate checklist, and other supports.

Websites
Service-Learning Ideas and Curricular Examples
http://servicelearning.org/slice
An easy-to-search database full of hundreds of high-quality service-learning lesson plans, syllabi, and project ideas submitted by educators and service-learning practitioners

Facing History and Ourselves
http://www.facinghistory.org/
An interactive website offering strategies, resources and lessons to students and educators in the classroom. The approach teaches students to work together as a team and overcome differences that may be encountered in the classroom.

Creating a Positive Response to Conflict
http://crc-global.org/Creative_Response_To_Conflict/Home.html
Creative Response to Conflict programs give children, young people and adults the skills they need to handle conflict with greater ease and ability. CRC empowers them by teaching nonviolent, creative solutions to conflict and bullying. They offer workshops and online resources to creative conflict resolution.

Benefit 2010
NSCC wrapped up another incredibly successful annual benefit on October 6, 2010 at the beautiful Crimson event space in NYC. With over 100 attendees, a fabulous silent auction and delicious food, NSCC brought in over $90,000 to benefit BullyBust and NSCC other key school climate improvement supports. Elphaba, the green witch from Wicked the musical, created a special video highlighting its partnership and NSCC presented an Outstanding School Climate Award to PS 155, an elementary school in Queens. It was a wonderful evening showcasing the hugely successful BullyBust campaign, and we are grateful to all those who make our continued growth possible.

We’d especially like to thank all of our sponsors—specifically The Psilos Group—for their help in making this the most successful event yet!
In recent months, the harmful effects of bullying have been all too real, with children tragically taking their own lives because of constant harassment. And the question on everyone’s mind has been: how could we let it get this far? Every student deserves a safe place to learn and grow—an environment where they are respected and where their unique qualities are valued and nurtured.

In 2009, the National School Climate Center (NSCC) launched an incredibly successful campaign, BullyBust—a bully prevention awareness program designed to help students and adults “stand up” to bullying and become part of the solution to end harmful verbal harassment, teasing and violence in our nation’s schools. Through our partner school program, we are currently providing free concrete prevention resources to more than 1,000 schools throughout the country, reaching over 500,000 students, and we’re growing rapidly. NSCC’s mission is stronger than ever—and our work is in greater demand. In order to sustain and grow BullyBust’s incredible program, we count on the support of committed friends like you to help us with the important work we are doing.

1 in 4 students say they are unsure of their safety. Please help us bring the critical resources and tools of the BullyBust campaign to every school-in-need. The challenge is ours to meet, and we thank you for supporting us in this necessary mission.

All of us at NSCC thank you for your continued support and wish you all the best for a healthy and happy holiday season.

MAKE A CHANGE TODAY: WWW.SCHOOLCLIMATE.ORG/SUPPORTUS

Your year-end, tax-deductible contribution will directly support NSCC’s comprehensive bully prevention programs in schools nationwide.
NSCC 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, NSCC 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.

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

**NSCC’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.

**NSCC achieves this through:**

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