NSCC 14th Annual Summer Institute

Please Join NSCC and the City University of New York, School of Professional Studies on July 12th-14th, 2011 for the 14th Annual Summer Institute in New York City!

Promoting Safe, Healthy, Engaged & Democratic K-12 School Communities

SPECIAL KEYNOTE ADDRESS by KEVIN JENNINGS,
Assistant Deputy Secretary of the US Department of Education, Office of Safe & Drug-Free Schools

The Annual Summer Institute is an event you won’t want to miss! Each year we bring together educators, district and state leaders, researchers, policy-makers and parents from across the nation to support the development of school climate improvement plans that promote safe, caring and civil schools.

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. This year, we are excited to introduce three unique strands focused on: building level teams, district teams, and state education teams: supporting learning, connections, and teachings that promote effective school climate practice. Your strand group will become a unifying thread throughout the institute to help you explore and share policy goals, challenges, strategies and effective best practices with others in similar organizational roles.

“Outstanding speakers and group discussion, building on the policy supposition that safe school climate can be achieved only if schools foster children’s social-emotional development. Teachers, administrators and policy makers worked side by side to develop viable strategies for change. This powerful event strongly influenced my state policy work.”

—THOMAS R. BROOKS, JD,
Director of Policy and Research Analysis, Connecticut Commission on Children

REGISTER TODAY!
www.schoolclimate.org/programs/si.php

You can also view the full brochure, learn about key speakers, and hear voices from past events.
Queens: NSCC Continues to Make Strides Towards Change

In the last three months, Queens, NY has experienced dramatic increases in “upstander behavior”. NSCC proudly continues its collaboration with PS/MS 200, PS/MS 105, PS 48 and MS 72 and with vibrant, exemplary and engaging youth voice in all activities, there is a strong commitment to continue breaking the bully-victim-bystander cycle in all school communities. The efforts in all the schools, in the words of one administrator are “not at all like a canned, cookie-cutter curriculum or program but much more like a movement.” Indeed, all the school climate work in the four Queens schools focuses on the common goal of creating safer and more supportive learning environments for all. But the means by which we reach this are varied and reflective of each school community.

At present, PS/MS 105 has dedicated their energies to creating systems to empower faculty in fostering school climate improvement in all their classes. Additionally, there are two classes that have decided to take a “deep dive” into concentrated and specialized lessons that promote upstander behavior. Students are working with NSCC staff and employing a “constructivist” approach to these lessons. They are using real life situations and daily events to inform how we approach resolving conflicts, promote school climate improvement and empower classmates to take a stand in diverse issues.

MS 72, realized that the strongest resources in their building are the students themselves. So, in an effort to develop and encourage student voice, there are exciting plans to introduce a strong peer mediation program into the school. The students themselves noted that “we are a community and it is our responsibility to resolve our conflicts”. Training is beginning shortly and by the end of this academic year, there will be a highly qualified cadre of peer mediators providing a powerful service to their fellow classmates.

Members of the PS 48 school community are all too aware that the last thing to take root in an already very busy school would be a “stand-alone” school improvement program. So all teachers and administrators in the building re-visiting their code and sequence in all content areas and provided input as to where school climate improvement could and should be infused. This is making the program much more natural and much more practical.

PS/MS 200 is really taking to heart the idea that, in matters of school climate improvement, it truly does “take a village”. The school has recently finished administering the Comprehensive School Climate Inventory (CSCI) and are all ready to investigate how the results can direct social-emotional and civic learning going forward. There has already been a family workshop on preventing teasing and bullying both at home and in school. And teachers are anxious to incorporate a common language and common approaches school wide to foster a sense of belongingness and ownership by all members of the school community.

NSCC has proudly begun its partnership with The Leadership Program (TLP) in all four Queens schools as well. A dedicated trainer from TLP will be in each school with a dedicated group of 30 students per school for ten sessions this semester. Their work will both commence and culminate with school-wide assemblies to bring attention to relevant themes and topics around school climate improvement.

So much of the tremendous work in the “Queens Cluster” is due to strong collaborations, great sharing of best practices, a steady “cross-fertilization” from school to school, and a commitment to honor the voices of our students in all of our work. We have every hope that this incredible work will have a ripple effect for all parts of New York City and beyond.

Jonathan Cohen, Ph.D., President and Co-Founder
National School Climate Center

Dear Friends,

Here at NSCC, we are gearing up for a very busy and exciting Spring filled with important advancements in our school climate work. We are delighted to bring you this latest issue of School Climate Matters, which highlights some of our most significant projects and shares key resources to help you move this school year forward - with strong, collaborative work relationships (See Promoting a “No Fault” Framework on p.4-5), field-tested school climate tools (See the Resource Corner on p. 6), and valuable insight into funding streams that can support your own improvement efforts (See Funding Opportunities on p. 7).

School climate assessment has become a major focus in recent months due to the Federal Government’s heightened commitment to supporting the non-academic aspects of school life that are just as critical to ensuring our students’ success in school – and in life – as reading, math, and science. NSCC has been at the forefront of this conversation since our inception and we are deeply inspired by the efforts now being undertaken by schools, districts and States across the nation to make school climate reform the priority it deserves to be. In our Research in Action piece on p. 3, we note the latest studies on this topic, including an analysis conducted by the Social Development Research Group that underscores the value of NSCC’s Comprehensive School Climate Inventory (CSCI) as a valid, reliable, and highly effective school-wide assessment. Developed over the last nine years, the CSCI has become a leading school climate measure in the field, and we are honored to share our expertise in this area with the State of Iowa and other networks of schools and districts nationwide in order to create the safest and most supportive environments for our children and the adults who help them achieve.

We are especially enthused to announce that registration is now open for our 14th Annual Summer Institute, which brings together educators, researchers, policy-makers, and community members from across the country for a three-day, intensive training on the latest school climate news and resources. Please visit www.schoolclimate.org/si today to learn more about this exceptional opportunity and reserve your space. We look forward to learning with you this summer in NYC!

Best wishes for a productive, positive, and inspiring spring,

Jonathan Cohen, Ph.D., President and Co-Founder
National School Climate Center
The National School Climate Center (NSCC) is proud to be partnering with the Iowa Department of Education to develop a new school climate survey for the State modeled after NSCC’s own valid and reliable Comprehensive School Climate Inventory (CSCI). Iowa was one of 11 States awarded Federal funding for the Safe and Supportive Schools grant earlier this year, and contracted with NSCC to provide detailed survey design and data system support throughout the four-year project.

The Safe and Supportive Schools competition was launched in 2010 to provide states with federal assistance that supports the development of rigorous measurement systems to assess individual school climates and promote focused programmatic interventions for the most challenged schools. As Assistant Deputy Secretary of Safe and Drug-Free Schools in the US Department of Education, Kevin Jennings notes, “In order for students to achieve, schools must provide safe and supportive learning environments. We are committed to supporting State efforts to foster a safe learning environment that promotes success for our nation’s youth because we know that, without it, the safety, well-being, and future potential of our young people is at risk. Those efforts must begin with reliable data, and the goal of the Safe and Supportive Schools grant is to help States secure and utilize such data.”

NSCC is excited to be part of this significant effort to make school climate a clear priority within our education system and looks forward to playing an important role in shaping the systems and supports that will be most valuable to States, districts and schools as they meet this goal, based on our long-standing, effective work in this area.

New Compelling Research Underscores the Benefits of the CSCI:

The Comprehensive School Climate Inventory (CSCI) is one of the leading school climate surveys in the field today. It is a research-based, valid and reliable tool that has been used by thousands of schools and districts nationwide to measure and improve the climate for learning and has been used at the State-level as well. With the CSCI, you can quickly and accurately assess student, parent, and school personnel perceptions to create an in-depth profile of your school community’s particular strengths and needs, and get the detailed information necessary to make informed decisions for lasting improvement.

“The CSCI is a scientifically-based set of measures that provides a comprehensive picture of a range of school climate dimensions, from students, staff and parents. It is web-based and user-friendly and the best school climate measure on the scene today.”

—MARVIN W. BERKOWITZ, PH.D.
Sanford N. McDonnell Professor of Character Education; Co-Director, Center for Character and Citizenship, University of Missouri-St. Louis

Developed in 2002, the CSCI was vetted by three independent survey experts in 2006 to confirm its reliability and validity: Madhabi Chatterji, Ph.D; Associate Professor of Measurement, Evaluation and Education, Teachers College, Columbia University; Chrys Dougherty, Ph.D., Director of Research, National Center for Educational Accountability; and Kathy Burgoyne, Ph.D., Senior Director of Capacity Building, Research, and Evaluation Comprehensive Health Education Foundation. In more recent research, the CSCI has been further recognized as an outstanding school climate measurement tool:

• In a 2010 study of 102 school climate surveys, only three were found to meet American Psychological Association criteria for being reliable and valid. The CSCI was one of these three, and the only measure to be yoked to a series of field-tested guidelines and supports focused on using data to promote meaningful and lasting school climate improvement (Gangi, 2010).

• In a 2011 study conducted by the Social Development Research Group (commissioned by the Raikes Foundation), 73 measures were evaluated for their reliability, validity, and effectiveness as a school-wide assessment of the social and emotional well-being of middle school youth. Of the ten instruments that were identified as being reliable, valid and aligned with SEL research, the CSCI was the only school climate measure recommended. (Haggerty, Elgin, & Woolley, 2011).

To learn more about the CSCI and its extensive array of improvement-focused supports, visit: www.schoolclimate.org/climate/practice.php.
In our work with schools, districts, and networks of schools we have discovered that the single most common and seriously problematic ‘force’ that complicates school climate reform is a culture of distrust and blaming amongst educators. In a way, it is common sense that if the adults don’t trust one another and/or fall into “blaming” that this will undermine educators creating a shared vision and then developing and carrying out instructional and/or school wide improvement efforts to make our school even safer and more civil. Tony Byrk and his colleagues discovered this very finding in what may be the most sophisticated empirical and ethnographic series of studies about school improvement efforts in Chicago (Bryk & Schneider, 2002; Bryk, Sebring, Allensworth, Luppescu, & Easton, 2010). In their work, they found that more trusting relationships were the “glue” to hold and support effective school reform efforts. In a variety of ways, they describe how schools that were characterized by distrust and blame were dramatically less able to further school improvement efforts.

Think about what happens when you blame someone else. “It’s their fault! Not mine!” We feel angry and disappointed. People or groups do let us down sometimes and, people do need to be accountable for their actions. If I forget something and/or if I make a mistake, I can and need to take responsibility for this, which may include consequences. However, too often school personnel only blame and we don’t take steps to learn from our mistakes and focus on our primary task: to support student learning and students’ healthy development.

There are many reasons why school personnel so often “fall into” a blaming position. First, it immediately “takes us off the hook”—it is “their” fault and not mine! Second, there are often simmering union-administration tensions that can foster adversarial relations. Another important reason is that too often people don’t talk about what kind of school we want ours to be. In fact, this is the first standard in the National School Climate Standards: Developing a shared vision and plan for promoting, enhancing and sustaining a positive school climate (www.schoolclimate.org/climate/standards.php). This simple step creates a foundation for everyone in the school community learning together about the kind of school community they really want theirs to be (Cohen, 2010). When we develop this kind of vision, we are creating a platform to then conduct a gap analysis: what is our vision, what is our current reality and what is the gap (if any) between our vision and current reality? It truly does take the “whole village” to raise healthy children. Supporting the “whole village” or teams learning and working together is the foundation for school climate reform.

When we ‘blame’ we stop being a team: James Comer was the first to talk about what it means to adapt a “no fault” framework. A “no fault” framework refers to the idea that people in a community agree to take responsibility for what they have done (and/or not done!) with a shared intent to (1) learn from what we have done well and not so well and (2) to work together to improve school life (Comer, 2005).

Developing a ‘no fault’ framework overlaps with the idea of authentic learning communities” or “communities of practice” (www.ewenger.com/theory/). A “no fault” framework is also an important implicit component of the “Communities That Care” prevention model that is supported by the US Department of Education (http://ncadi.samhsa.gov/features/ctc/resources.aspx)

An integral component in establishing a “no-fault” framework is the creation of a highly effective professional learning community (PLC). Professional learning communities establish norms, values,
and goals that encourage and support collaborative and courageous leadership, academic, social, emotional and ethical learning, and on-going reflection, and evaluation.

Claudia Zuorick (2010) has written a wonderful description about blaming and moving towards a more trusting, collaborative problem solving climate. And, The Power of Nice (Thaler, & Koval, 2006) describes very similar issues in the world of business.

Establishing a no fault framework is challenging! There is no simple formula that educators can follow that fosters this. Recognizing this fact, NSCC has made the development of strategies that build on “your” schools history, strengths and needs an important and foundational component of our annual summer institute (www.schoolclimate.org/programs/si.php).

Key Tips for Fostering Great Trust and Collaborative Working Relations

When school leaders are thinking about how to structure group conversations, consider the following ideas:

1. **Make a renewed commitment** to your school’s mission statement. As an organizing focus, review your school’s mission statement as a team to ensure that it does reflect what your school community most wants for its students/children. Literally printing your mission statement on letterhead and as a header for meeting agendas can be a powerful way to ground all conversation, teaching and learning and projects in your mission statement.

2. **Embrace the power of protocols:** A protocol consists of agreed upon guidelines for a conversation. This type of structure permits very focused and productive conversations to occur. Consider using protocols to foster a meaningful and collaborative group process. The National School Reform faculty has a range of wonderful protocols designed to do just this. Our new School Climate Implementation Road Map is also filled with protocols designed to support school communities navigating the school climate improvement process.

3. **Share leadership:** Turn over staff meetings to the staff. Remember that it’s not about power; it’s about creating a shared vision, trust, and a shared responsibility for common goals.

4. **Develop critical friends:** There are a small but growing number of frameworks that support educators being “teachers and learners” together in ways that powerfully support adult learning and greater trust. See the Resource Corner on page 6 for more supports on how to create these networks.

5. **Be open** about how challenging this no-fault process is! It is easy to say ‘trust others’ but for many reasons, it is often hard to practice. It is helpful to be explicit about how this is a goal and to recognize as a team that this is an inherently challenging process that will take time and effort to master.

6. **Practice, practice and practice:** Just as we know that practice fosters essential learning for students, the same is true for adult learners and teachers. Practice being open and collaborative with students, at home, as well as with colleagues and administrators. By making this an essential part of your everyday, it will become a more fluid part of your day!
Websites

The National School Reform Faculty
www.nsrfharmony.org/resources.html
Here you will find protocols to foster a meaningful and collaborative group process.

Courage and Renewal
www.couragerenewal.org
Supportive frameworks that encourage educators being “teachers and learners” together in ways that powerfully support adult learning and greater trust.

Appreciative Inquiry Commons
http://appreciativeinquiry.case.edu/intro/definition.cfm
Here you can find a collection of definitions of Appreciative Inquiry which have developed over the years. This interactive site invites you to quote these definitions or develop your own. The site also allows for feedback and understanding how people respond to it as its users are encouraged to share them with clients, students, colleagues, and inquirers.

Appreciative Inquiry-Focused Online Collaboration
www.icohere.com/orgdevelopment_inquiry.ht
Check out a combination of advanced digital collaboration systems in combination with appreciative inquiry. This network of employees, partners, customers and other stakeholders focuses on capturing and sharing best practices, creating next practices, delivering Al-focused learning and development, driving change and reducing costs.

Case Studies
www.ovationnet.com/casestudies.htm

Conflict Resolution Glossary
http://glossary.usip.org/
Glossary of Terms for Conflict Management and Peacebuilding. This glossary grew out of the development of courses for USIP’s new Academy for International Conflict Management and Peacebuilding, the education and training arm of the Institute.

Books & Articles

Trust in Schools: A Core Resource for Improvement
Russell Sage Foundation Publications, NY

Organizing Schools for Improvement: Lessons from Chicago
University of Chicago Press, Chicago

The Power of Nice
Crown Business, NY

The Road Out of Blame, Schools: Studies in Education
Vol. 7/No. 1, pp. 122–139

The New Standards for Learning, Principal Leadership
Vol. 10/No. 1, pp. 28–32
Cohen, J. (2010)
If you would like to see a copy of this, please write to jonathancohen@schoolclimate.org.

NSCC Receives Generous Community Donations!

Recently, NSCC’s BullyBust campaign received generous donations from two wonderful companies; TIME Inc. and Fashion to Figure by Michael Kaplan. Through their annual TIME to Give Back campaign, Time Inc. raised money by allowing individual employees to donate a day’s pay to the cause of their choice, and BullyBust was one of six non-profits included in the campaign. Michael Kaplan generously donated a portion of one day’s sales from his booming Fashion To Figure business to BullyBust. NSCC and BullyBust would like to send a warm thank you to all who helped donate and make these generous donations happen.

Photo at right: Michael Kaplan presents check to National School Climate Center President, Dr. Jonathan Cohen; Chief Operating Office, Darlene Faster; and Development Director, Alison Dichter.
School Climate Funding Opportunities

While funding remains a challenge for many schools, the federal government has made school improvement a top priority. The Elementary and Second Education Act (ESEA) funds primary and secondary education but forbids a national curriculum. Funds are authorized for professional development, instructional materials, resources to support educational programs, and parental involvement promotion. Information on specific funding is as follows:

**TITLE 1:**
To qualify as a Title 1 school, a school typically has around 40% or more of its students that come from families that qualify under the United States Census's definitions as low-income, according to the U.S. Department of Education. Schools receiving Title 1 funding are regulated by federal legislation. Provides the following grants:

- **Basic Grants:** funds to LEAs in which the number of children counted in the formula is at least 10 and exceeds 2 percent of an LEA's school-age population.
- **Concentration Grants** flow to LEAs where the number of formula children exceeds 6,500 or 15 percent of the total school-age population.
- **Targeted Grants** are based on the same data used for Basic and Concentration Grants except that the data are weighted so that LEAs with higher numbers or higher percentages of poor children receive more funds. Targeted Grants flow to LEAs where the number of school children counted in the formula (without application of the formula weights) is at least 10 and at least 5 percent of the LEAs school-age population.
- **Education Finance Incentive Grants (EFIG)** distribute funds to states based on factors that measure:
  - A state's effort to provide financial support for education compared to its relative wealth as measured by its per capita income

- The degree to which education expenditures among LEAs within the state are equalized. (grant information from [www2.ed.gov/programs/titleiparta/index.html](http://www2.ed.gov/programs/titleiparta/index.html))

**TITLE 2A:**
Teacher Improvement “Programming”

- Funds cannot be used for direct student instruction or to purchase materials for student use. Funds must be used to measurably raise student achievement, particularly the achievement of low-performing students, schools and teachers.
- Applicants must be able to show that the activities carried out under Title II, Part A are:
  - Tied to challenging state and local standards
  - Based upon a review of scientifically based research
  - Have a substantial, measurable, and positive impact on student achievement
- All activities must be based upon:
  - A local needs assessment
  - Scientifically researched practices
  - Disaggregated data
  - Targeting the lowest performing schools, teachers, and students
  - These activities must be used as part of a broader strategy to eliminate the achievement gap that separates the low-income and minority students from other students. Professional development activities must be coordinated with other federal, state, and local programs
- Private/nonpublic schools may receive only professional development under Title II, Part A. Private/nonpublic schools receive services equal to their equitable share which is a per-pupil amount. No funds may be given to the private/nonpublic school, only services. (Title II-A information from [www.opi.mt.gov/Pub/eGrants/TitleII-A_GeneralInformation.pdf](http://www.opi.mt.gov/Pub/eGrants/TitleII-A_GeneralInformation.pdf))

**TITLE 4:**
Safe and drug free schools and programs to support the creation of opportunities for academic enrichment during non-school hours for children, particularly students who attend high-poverty and low-performing schools.
- No specifics about funds/attaining grants regarding this area
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