In August 2012, NSCC and Winston Preparatory Schools entered a collaborative 2-year relationship to carry out two research projects analyzing the connection between student success and learning disabilities. NSCC’s President, Jonathan Cohen, Ph.D. and Research Director, Amrit Thapa, Ph.D., the principal investigators of the projects, have joined efforts with administrators and members of the Winston school community to understand the trends and factors contributing to the success and challenges faced by students identified as learning disabled (LD).

This area of research is relatively untapped with few studies available to thoroughly investigate this bridge and the long-term outcomes for these students. The foundation of NSCC’s work supports healthy and positive school climate through a balance of social-emotional, ethical, and academic needs. Gathering sustainable findings from this project will create a whole picture of how this mission can be extended to all students equally with insight into the most supportive services needed to accommodate LD students.

The project will track a group of approximately 90 graduates from 2002-2012 who were identified as LD during childhood and enrolled at the Winston Preparatory School. To understand the lives of these graduates over time, four data points or prime points in time will be analyzed:

(a) 9th grade, date of entry into Winston
(b) 12th grade, graduation year
(c) 5 years after graduation
(d) 10 years after graduation

Answers will be sought to the following questions:

- What factors promote or prevent the success of individuals with learning disabilities?
- Do these factors change over time?

(continued on page 2)
We have faced many challenges and unthinkable heartache in recent months as an education community and as a nation. There has never been a more urgent time for us to come together in renewed dedication to our nation’s youth. Earlier this month, President Obama outlined his wide-reaching gun control proposal, which included a request for Congress to release $50 million to train mental health workers who support youth, and another $50 million to help 8,000 more schools implement plans to create “more nurturing school climates” (in addition to the 18,000 schools currently focused on this agenda). These are important steps that will help students and parents/guardians as well as educators being attuned to the essential social, emotional and civic as well as intellectual dimensions of learning and school life.

At NSCC, our commitment to achieve our mission, and make every school a safe, supportive, positive environment for students to learn and thrive is unwavering. School climate is an essential aspect of student success, one that has been recognized by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Federal Government, and States across the nation. Together, we can create the foundational conditions needed for schools to succeed, but it takes every single one of us—students, parents, educators, and community members—working in concert to make real, lasting improvements.

This issue of School Climate Matters highlights just how this work is being accomplished—from an important research project on the effect of school climate on students with learning disabilities in NYC (p.1) to comprehensive school climate reform efforts at a district in Pennsylvania (p.3). You’ll see how our work has grown into new regions, including an exciting partnership with the World Bank and Education Ministry in Peru (p. 5). We also continue to be inspired by the communities of Upstanders expanding across the country, and note a particularly powerful coalition in Howard County, MD (p. 6). Finally, Conditions for Learning Coalition leader, Jon Terry, provides a valuable look at the current education policy landscape, and key insight into what we can expect in the upcoming months.

We hope this is a helpful issue for your own work. Please share your stories, comments, and ideas for future issues with us at newsletter@schoolclimate.org. Thank you for all you do every day to make our schools and communities stronger.

Best wishes,

Jonathan Cohen, Ph.D., President and Co-Founder
National School Climate Center
NSCC is honored to collaborate on a district-wide school climate improvement effort with The Albert Gallatin Area School District in Uniontown, PA. The Albert Gallatin Area School District is located in the southwestern portion of Fayette County, Pennsylvania and includes six elementary schools, two middle schools and one senior high school.

District and school leaders opted to take a coordinated and integrated approach to all school climate improvement reform with the objective to fully represent voices from student, parent and personnel populations. As part of our all-inclusive model to fully evaluate school climate, both success and challenges, NSCC began these efforts by administering the Comprehensive School Climate Inventory Tool (CSCI) to all students, staff and parents from the district. Further ongoing support has consisted of staff professional development trainings conducted by NSCC’s Director of Education, Richard Cardillo. After extensive and collaborative pre-planning and strategic evaluation of the particular needs of the schools, the initial trainings have essentially covered how to implement and leverage NSCC’s 5 Stage School Climate Improvement Model to transform the Gallatin school community. In specifics, these trainings have covered:

- School Climate 101: How to prepare for long-term and sustained school climate improvement efforts, including effectively collaborating as a school for maximum change and effectiveness
- How to acknowledge equity issues and the reality of power and privilege concerns without isolating or targeting specific student groups
- Best practices of classroom management and how to offer differentiated instruction to accommodate all students’ learning styles
- Hands-on practice preparing lessons and protocols to foster school climate improvement
- Identifying methods to engender more inclusion of student voice in the school community
- Enabling students to become “action-researchers” and active school leaders harnessing their voices to support school and communities with initiatives such as the NSCC Upstander Alliance

Both NSCC and the Albert Gallatin Area School District are committed to making this a sustainable effort with long-term results. As a pre-cursor to our School Climate Resource Center (SCRC) supports, the school is now sharing all materials and best practices from their work on a shared documents page available to all personnel. Gallatin is a prime example of how a successful school climate requires the work of pulling together and engaging various voices to truly merge social-emotional, academic and ethical skills.

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, founder and administrator for social emotional learning/character education programs, senior member of community-based organizations, 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.
Following months of campaigning and over $8 billion in campaign expenditures, voters decided to return the status quo to Washington, DC, for the next two years. President Obama returns to the White House, Democrats strengthen their majority in the U.S. Senate and Republicans maintain control of the U.S. House.

With this election, change will struggle between many competing voices. This will ultimately have an impact on education policy and most importantly, have the potential to shift the importance of developing positive school climates across the country. At the U.S. Department of Education, Secretary Duncan and his team will have their hands full over the next few years. While the first four years of the Obama Administration focused on doling out billions of dollars of funding through new programs such as Race to the Top and School Improvement Grants, the next four years will largely focus on showing that these programs have been successful.

In Congress, attention will focus on the overdue reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), emphasizing equal access to education. Unfortunately, the House and Senate have very different ideas for what should be included in reauthorization and competing thoughts on the federal role in education policy. A compromise bill making it to the President’s desk sometime in the next two years is possible, but not likely. The downside shows a divided Congress requiring White House pressure to move forward on any contentious issue. On the upside, The Obama White House is very content to keep issuing ESEA waivers to States and not have the meddlesome Congress get in the way of setting education policy.

In addition to the ESEA reauthorization bill, efforts over the next few years should focus on infusing school climate and social-emotional language into existing funding streams focused on K-12 innovation and reform. For example, the recent $400 million Race to the Top—District competition forces all applicants to incorporate performance measures that include “at least one grade-appropriate health or social-emotional leading indicator of success” for each of the population categories. Grantees will be required to track the selected indicators and use the data to target its resources. I will be working to include similar language and requirements in all related competitive grant programs focused on improving K-12 schools.

Jon Terry is president of Capitol Youth Strategies LLC and leads the Conditions for Learning Coalition. He can be reached at jon.terry@capitolyouth.com.
NSCC Collaborates with the World Bank to Improve School Climate in Peru

By Darlene Faster, NSCC Chief Operating Officer

This fall, NSCC was excited to begin a collaboration with the World Bank and the Peru Ministry of Education to administer our leading assessment tool, the Comprehensive School Climate Inventory (CSCI), to 24 primary and secondary schools in Lima and Callao. More than 2000 students in these jurisdictions participated this past November, and the data is currently being analyzed to provide detailed reporting on key findings.

The World Bank in Peru created this pilot in recognition of the growing body of empirical research that shows positive school climate is associated with and/or predictive of increased academic achievement and student learning, positive youth development, effective risk prevention/health promotion, decreased student drop-out rates, increased teacher retention rates and instrumental in bettering job readiness skills. As a result of these findings, many other national and international groups recommend school climate reform as a data driven strategy that promotes healthy relationships, school connectedness and dropout prevention.

This pilot project is part of a larger World Bank initiative to directly address school climate, and respond to the particular needs of communities in order to create more effective and supportive environments for learning. The intent is to expand this project to a wider network of schools throughout the country in the upcoming school year. NSCC looks forward to supporting the World Bank in leading the development of a successful school climate improvement process for all Peruvian students, educators, and parents.

NSCC Honors Clem Coulston: Youth Advocate and 2012 Upstander of the Year

Clem Coulston, recently named 2012 Upstander of the Year at NSCC and BullyBust’s Annual Event: Share! Create! Unite! on October 22, 2012, is the author of this passion. Currently a student at the University of Delaware, Clem embodies this message through the work and active roles he has pursued to encourage real understanding and acceptance of one another. His push for this objective began early with coaching for the Special Olympics in high school. His observation of the injustices those with disabilities faced evolved to a complete mission to become an upstander as well as educating others to promote upstander behavior. As the founder of Student voice, an organization that brings together youth nationwide to discuss education, public policy, and youth empowerment, Clem has focused his efforts on engaging today’s youth for positive social change.

Instead of turning to Twitter for celebrity gossip or clever status updates, Clem uses social media tools as a powerful agent for change. Since July 2012, Clem has been engaging youth in weekly Twitter Chats using the hashtag #stuvoice. Topics for the Monday night chats have included, “What defines a student in the 21st century?” and “How can students determine which education policies to support?” Clem’s social media efforts have allowed students, educators, parents and organizations to join together in tackling these meaningful questions.

“Never give up! Change can be a scary thing, but through support and empowerment, it can and IS possible!”

Clem truly gets how positive experiences can translate into a positive self-perception. We are so proud to see his continued work embodying what a true upstander is and know his dedication and passion will reach others inspired to make a lasting change.
Standing up against the increasing rate of teen suicides and cyberbullying incidents in Howard County, Maryland, adults and youth have come together in an effort called One-Howard-County. I started this venture alongside my wife, Catherine, to create a unified community committed to ending bullying through promotion of upstander behavior and messages of acceptance and tolerance for others.

With local partners like the Choose Civility Initiative by the local library, One-Howard-County has also launched initiatives with National School Climate Center, Yahoo!, the City of Sunnyvale Department of Public Safety, ASCD, and others. Hosting family nights in libraries to educate and build awareness and donating copies of the award-winning children’s book, One, by Kathryn Otoshi to every elementary school media center are just a few of the ideas we’ve engaged in. Recently, One-Howard-County brought 40 students, teachers, and adults to the musical WICKED in Baltimore, where attendees experienced the show and had a chance to meet cast members to discuss bullying. Progress, we hope, is booming with a push to build Upstander Alliances of youth and adult leaders in every high school.

Students from the Howard County Association of Student Councils (HCASC) are leading their own efforts to reduce bullying and steer other students from the dangers of the digital world. The shared vision for the program and its future is evident by the student-driven projects such as designing a One-Howard-County t-shirt with #Upstander across the front.

One such leader, a sophomore recently named Howard County Youth Volunteer of the Year, Athena Khan, has said, “Bullying is an issue that we find important and extremely relevant to students across the county. Having witnessed, discouraged, and reported instances of cyberbullying, I realize the importance of public awareness of cyberbullying in both adults and youth.”

We are proud of the success made thus far and look forward to a larger community of students joining us to positively impact those around them.

The Howard County initiative wouldn’t be possible without strong student leaders leading the anti-bullying message. Be part of their mission to promote acceptance and reduce bullying in every school across the country—Start an Upstander Alliance Team at your school today! Find free tools to help with this effort at: www.bullybust.org/upstander.
Every year, the State Farm Youth Advisory Board funds up to $5 million to youth-led service learning projects to solve issues important to State Farm and communities across the United States and Canada. Grant requests can range anywhere from $25,000 to $100,000, and are completed online ONLY through the Youth Advisory Board website, found here: www.statefarmyab.com/apply. Education institutions and nonprofits are both eligible to apply.

Funding areas include:
- Financial Literacy
- Access to Higher Education/Closing the Achievement Gap
- Community Safety and Natural Disaster Preparedness
- Environmental Responsibility
- Societal Health and Wellness Issues

Deadline for submissions is May 4 at 5:00 pm Central Time.

Our annual fundraiser in NYC on October 22, 2012 was a huge success! We are honored by the outpouring of support and amazed by the inspirational stories and lessons from our BullyBust leaders. Clem Coulston, our 2012 Upstander of the Year earned the honor with his youth activist work promoting the role of student voice and his continued passion for social change. Cassandra Bankson, our newest BullyBust Ambassador turned her experiences of bullying into a bright future of modeling.

Severely bullied by classmates for her acne condition, Cassandra retreated into seclusion and began sharing make-up lessons via YouTube as a way to share her story and lessons. After much recognition for her strength and tips, the former bullied student now stands as a confident woman with a modeling contract, a schedule full of media appearances and a cosmetics line in the works.

The experiences of Clem and Cassandra show positivity and progress can prevail in the face of negativity. We thank them for their energy and dedication! They are keeping the upstander message alive for all those struggling with bullying behavior.

Be sure to stay connected to our website, Facebook and Twitter for continuous updates of resources and coverage of the wonderful work our partners and schools are doing to promote upstander behavior!
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