NSCC’s vision has remained constant: to support the development of student social, emotional, civic and intellectual skills. In full support of this mission, NSCC is thrilled to announce the launch of the School Climate Resource Center (SCRC), an interactive, on-demand learning site providing school communities with a personalized and targeted professional development experience.

Research links positive school climates to increased academic success, higher teacher retention, decreased violence and stronger graduation rates. Cultivating this positive environment is no small venture. Shared leadership, a solid vision for school climate improvement and a commitment to learn from fellow colleagues and educators are important drivers for successful outcomes. With the SCRC, school communities can take ownership of these outcomes using guided, flexible and timely resources.

Aligned with the latest practice-based expertise, the SCRC provides a host of customized and interactive learning tools to support every stage of the school climate improvement process to promote community-wide understanding of school reform efforts. Schools may now manage the pace of their learning experiences and encourage all school community members to become leaders of their professional development.

Featured content includes:

- **School Climate Improvement Road Map**
  Detailed guide supporting the entire community to address and master key tasks and challenges of the 5-stage school climate improvement process

- **Learning Center**
  Expert voices and interactive learning modules promoting safer and more supportive schools on key topics including: Breaking the Bully-Victim-Bystander Cycle, Infusing Social-Emotional Learning, Promoting School-Community Partnerships and more

- **Best Practices**
  Research-based and field-tested guidelines outlining “what works” from recognized education and school climate leaders

- And much more . . .

For school communities seeking a free SCRC experience, the Connect section option promotes the exchange of ideas and best practices with fellow administrators, teachers, and leadership teams about topics relating to school climate reform.

**LEARN MORE!** Visit [scrc.schoolclimate.org](http://scrc.schoolclimate.org) for more information. Register by July 15th for a special introductory rate of $900 for a FULL YEAR of access to the SCRC for you and up to 25 school team members! You can also receive discounted rates on a wide array of NSCC’s complementary resources, including our leading school climate assessment tool—the CSCI, in-person professional development, and more.
We know how hard you’ve been working all year to create the best school community for your students. Now that summer has arrived, you can take the time to pause, reflect, and renew, and that is what this issue of School Climate Matters is designed to help you do:

• In the Expert Spotlight (p. 4-5), read a motivating piece by Administrator and EdWeek blogger, Peter DeWitt, about how educators can use the summer to effectively reinforce their school climate efforts year-round.

• On p.3, NSCC’s Education Director shares practical tips on how to make the most of your “Summer School” to best support the transition back to a positive school in the fall.

• In our Schools In Action feature (p.6), you can read an inspiring piece about how one student has helped transform her school into a community of positive Upstanders in Tenafly, NJ, and get concrete tips on how to translate that passion in your school.

Finally, we are thrilled to announce the launch of our latest resource, the School Climate Resource Center (scrc.schoolclimate.org), which is an interactive, on-demand learning site to support educators through the comprehensive, research-based school climate improvement process. Filled with practice-based tools, expert guidance, and community engagement, the SCRC is a critical resource to ensure long-lasting success. We look forward to welcoming you to this new and exciting community!

As always, we want to hear from you! Please share your stories, feedback, and needs for new resources with us at newsletter@schoolclimate.org. We are a community that grows stronger together, and we value your input in how to best support your school climate improvement efforts.

We hope to see you at our Summer Institute in NYC this July 9-11th! Learn more at schoolclimate.org/si!

Wishing you a restorative and joyful summer,

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

NSCC’s Latest School Climate Practice Brief: Early Childhood Engagement & Assessment

The National School Climate Center (NSCC) announces the release of the latest in its series of School Climate Practice Briefs for Implementation and Sustainability – School Climate and Engaging Students in the Early Grades. This latest brief highlights critical strategies to engage and assess youth voice in lower-primary grades (PK-3).

Co-authored by Terry Pickeral from Cascade Educational Consultants, Connecticut Department of Education’s Jo Ann Freiberg, and NSCC’s Education Director Richard Cardillo, the Early Grades Practice Brief responds to an essential need in the field to ensure a strong foundation for positive school climates at the earliest stage of a student’s learning and development. As the authors note, “The early grades (PK – 3) are the cornerstone and foundation upon which subsequent learning, development and achievement is built. Therefore, it is critical to develop, enhance and sustain a school/program climate that is safe, equitable, engaging and supportive for students and the educators who work with them.”

This second School Climate Practice Brief builds on the first series of 11 briefs that present the latest in research and best practice for effective school climate reform from experts at leading organizations including Harvard Graduate School of Education, the National Dropout Prevention Center, Special Olympics Project UNIFY, among other top tier contributors.

The School Climate Practice Briefs for Implementation and Sustainability are vital tools that will aid policymakers and education leaders in creating and sustaining positive, safe, equitable and engaging school climates. To view the complete set of briefs, visit www.schoolclimate.org/publications/practice-briefs.php.
Most of us in education generally arrive at the end of an academic year “running on empty.” We eagerly await a prolonged rest from the pressures and demands of school and anticipate a quieter, less frenzied, pace. It’s time to relax!

As we recharge our batteries, it’s also great to know that there are many, many things we can do to maintain the momentum that we worked so hard to establish in the area of school climate improvement. More than anything, the summer allows us time to reflect deeply on our efforts for the past year. How different things look when we are not caught in the frenzied state of attending to the demands of daily school life. There’s no need to dread a “summer school for school climate”! And there’s really no make-up work that needs to be assigned. However, if we remember the most fundamental parts of why we have focused energy on school climate improvement in the first place, we’re that much less likely to be able to help others develop socially and emotionally.

While we can tend to become myopic in our vision of school climate improvement, it’s great to be able to pull back and see our work in a much larger sphere. We want our schools to be more caring places. Yet, we want our schools to be more caring places so we can all make the world around us a more caring place! Let’s remember that our ultimate successes are not only going to be measured on an 8:00am to 4:00pm schedule. We engage in this work with the ultimate quest for more equity, more social justice, and more empathic approaches to life in general. Let’s try to make the summer a time to focus on the “macro” rather than the “micro.” Let’s try to make the summer a time to grow inwardly, deepen our resolve, appreciate the gift that we are to others, and look at school climate improvement from a much wider lens! A happy summer to all.

REFLECT: What went well this year? We often think first about the areas we could’ve improved or the times we could’ve done better. While these are important to remember, don’t forget to give yourself kudos for the success areas too. Create your own informal assessment and outline how you were able to achieve success. Did you have a supportive staff team? Did your students play a special role and help you push your initiative? Remembering the positive moments is a great motivator to develop new and creative ideas for the fall.

GET CREATIVE: Educators learn from educators. Join a professional learning network or create your own community to exchange ideas. NSCC’s School Climate Resource Center Connect section (scrc.schoolclimate.org) is an excellent example of a free resource encouraging educators to share ideas and success stories. Other options may include blogs or the popular site, Pinterest, allowing you to pin and build ideas from other educators. Be creative!

BE S-M-A-R-T: Create specific, measurable, attainable, relevant and time framed goals to guide your expectations for the year and to determine how your goals will be achieved. Don’t forget to account for the unexpected and keep in mind that although not all goals will be reached in one year, you now have a reference list to target your focus.
During the summer, principals and teachers reflect on the past year and begin thinking about ways to improve their practices in the coming year. I’m often conflicted with the summer because I love the slower pace but I really miss the kids and staff. Even my secretary, who is the face of the building, works part-time, which means that I work in isolation.

Working in isolation is great because we can collect our thoughts and get our creative juices flowing, but too often our new ideas go untested with the very population we are working with each day. The variables that complicate the plan may not have existed when we developed the plan in the first place. Creating a plan is easy, but following through is hard.

Although school buildings without students and staff can be a very lonely place, the work still continues. We need to find ways to improve the work we did the year before, and one area that always needs improvement is school climate. In School Climate Matters (2013), Nirvi Shah wrote, “School climate is associated with positive child and youth development, effective risk-prevention and health-promotion efforts, student learning and academic achievement, increased student graduation rates, and teacher retention.”

It doesn’t matter how great we feel about our school climate—there are staff and students who may not feel as comfortable or as pleased. Perhaps it’s a student who does not feel safe or doesn’t have a supportive peer social group or maybe it’s a staff member who feels they must be a rule follower, rather than a risk taker because of the way the building is operated. Despite our best efforts, we have children and adults who are not fulfilling their maximum potential, and the effort to remedy this begins with us.

Climate Control
Whitaker says, “When the principal sneezes, the whole school catches a cold. This is neither good nor bad; it is just the truth. Our impact is significant; our focus becomes the school’s focus” (2003, p.30). It’s just that simple. What we do as leaders matters to our staff, students and parents.

Thapa says, “Research supports the notion that a positive school climate promotes students’ abilities to learn. A positive school climate promotes cooperative learning, group cohesion, respect, and mutual trust.” As educators, we know that working with kids is never boring, and it shouldn’t be, which is why the job is so interesting and challenging. As an elementary school principal, I often find that this is the first time they make big mistakes and have growing pains.

As school leaders, it’s not our job to always discipline students;
it’s our job to help counsel them through the issues. We need to build trust with all stakeholders. Building trust happens in every conversation that we have with a student or a staff member. In the words of Stephan Covey, we invest in emotional bank accounts where we make deposits and sometimes make withdrawals.

**Summer Work**

When people think of school climate their thoughts may go directly to bullying, but bullying is just one aspect of school climate. School climate is about proactively building a climate that prevents discipline issues before they start. A positive school climate engages students and gives them the tools they need to survive for the future. It’s also about having supports in place for when they do make mistakes.

School leaders and staff encouraged by school climate efforts can use the summer to come up with new ventures to support students. There are a variety of ways school leaders and teachers can do this over the summer, including:

**Advisory Groups:** Develop a system where every staff member has a group of students they will follow from the moment they enter the building until the day they leave to go to the next school level. This will work at the elementary, middle, and secondary school levels.

**PAC:** Create a Principals Advisory Group that includes stakeholders from each grade and subject area. Over the summer, recruit staff and meet with them to create an agenda for each month of the following year.

**Assemblies:** Have school assemblies every other month or every quarter. Do reader’s theatre or something fun that focuses on school climate.

**One Book, One School:** Create a whole school or whole faculty book club and focus on books about creating a positive school climate. Whether it’s a chapter book about bullying or a faculty book about school climate, having one solid spotlight has many benefits.

Summer is often a good time to reflect on how to help make proactive interventions and supports stronger. The important step is not writing the ideas down, but actually following through. It’s now easy to create a plan and easy to follow through.


Peter DeWitt, Ed.D. has been a principal in Upstate, NY since 2006. Before becoming a principal he taught elementary school for eleven years. His syndicated blog *Finding Common Ground* is published by *Education Week* and he is a freelance writer for Vanguard Magazine (SAANYS). His articles have appeared in education journals at the state, national and international level. He has written for *Principal Magazine*, *Education Week*, *Educational Leadership*, *The Huffington Post*, *ASCD Whole Child*, *Connected Principals*, *Smartbrief*, and *ASCD Express*. He has been an educational consultant on News Channel13 and has appeared on a wide range of other forums, including PBS and ABCnews.com.
Yena Kwak is a 15 year old 9th grader at Tenafly High School. In many ways she is a typical teenager navigating her first year of high school, exploring new interests and balancing schoolwork with afterschool activities. Her thoughtfulness becomes evident when she describes her arrival from South Korea five years ago and her initial experience as an ELL student. Fast forward to 7th grade at Tenafly Middle School (TMS), a 6-8 school in Tenafly, New Jersey. Her transition from student to bully prevention advocate began here with a class assignment to write a persuasive essay. Yena spoke about anti-bullying efforts that pushed urgency and, at times, a bit of shock. She never imagined her words would have such impact. Her opinions traveled to the Superintendent and the Board of Education and discussion sparked. Within weeks, a new student-led bully prevention partnership was developed with Yena at the center.

What Works, What Doesn’t

There was the assembly featuring BMX riders rather than bystander behavior, excluding other student feelings. We needed to change that.”

Miriam and Yena met every lunch period for six weeks. They reviewed NSCC’s Upstander Alliance moderator and student toolkits (part of NSCC’s BullyBust: Promoting a Community of Upstanders campaign) for guidance. Miriam pored over the pages with Yena. She recalls, “I wanted Yena to have a voice and co-lead the effort. We used the toolkit as a starting point and exchanged ideas of what it means to be an upstander and how to relay this message to others.” Together they created TMS Upstanders, a program responding to patterns of bullying behavior through education, awareness and respect. Students would be responsible for attending meetings, contributing ideas and volunteering to implement student activities.

Yena says, “I remember hanging TMS Upstanders posters with Ms. d’Adolf in the empty hallway on a late Friday. I never told her but that really meant a lot to me-she spent all those hours with me and cared. I felt like we were keeping this moving, together.”

Thirty open-minded students came to the first Upstanders meeting. Yena brought the group mission to life for her classmates. The brainstorming has yet to stop since that first meeting. From organizing a talent show, to placing boxes around the school so students could anonymously report bullying incidents, the efforts ranged from small to large and appealed to students of various interests. They vowed to use their activities to promote awareness and action.

So What?

TMS hasn’t found one solution; their stance is to use the right mix of student voices, resources and mentor support. Yena left the halls of TMS but the mission of the Upstanders group remains the same: remedy multiple layers of bullying behavior and adjust the core messages students are receiving. Tenafly Middle School reports students are learning to communicate and coordinate ideas and think long-term about projects. It’s an ongoing process, but it’s getting there.
Join us as we bring together educators, district and state leaders, researchers, policy-makers and parents to promote effective school climate improvement efforts. During this 3-day event, you will gain concrete classroom and school-wide resources from leading education experts, learn best practices from schools and districts nationwide and participate in valuable networking sessions. This year, an optional 4th day event on July 12th, Creating a School Climate that Engages the Gifts and Talents of Students with Learning Disabilities, is also available. For a full brochure of Summer Institute offerings and to register, please visit www.schoolclimate.org/si.

To hear more voices from past and future Summer Institute presenters and participants, visit our school climate blog: blog.schoolclimate.org

Register Now: The Deadline for Summer Institute 2013 is Quickly Approaching!
July 9-11, 2013
@ The Winston Preparatory School, NYC

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Websites
Service Learning Helping Teens Benefit Through Giving
www.rootsofaction.com/helping-teens-get-the-most-from-summer-service-learning/
All youth should continue learning during the summer. Service learning, an organized program combining instruction with service in the community, gives kids the opportunity to link classroom lessons to real world situations. Read more for suggestions of how to guide the summer interests of your teen.

Action Research Meets Summer Reading
www.pbs.org/teachers/librarymedia/aasl/gordon.pdf
A true story of how action research affected the reading program at one Massachusetts high school. Rethink summer reading with this thoughtful guide encouraging students to read and write year-round.

The Random Acts of Kindness Foundation
www.randomactsforkindness.org/lesson-plans-pilot-program
Building and sustaining positive classroom environments is a critical part of school climate improvement. Plan your fall curriculum using a new series of lesson plans and activities developed by The Random Acts of Kindness Foundation to teach kindness in the classroom.

* NSCC Resources *
BullyBust: Promoting a Community of Upstanders Campaign
NSCC’s bully prevention tools help the entire school community develop the skills needed to sustain a positive school environment. Find free tools to support this effort at www.bullybust.org/upstander.

Breaking the Bully-Victim-Passive Bystander Tool Kit:
Designed to support school leadership teams and school community members prevent bully behavior and promote upstander behavior in K-12 schools.
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