Our nationwide bully prevention effort, BullyBust: Promoting a Community of Upstanders, provides free supports to help students and adults take a stand against bullying and create a positive community of upstanders. Since its 2009 launch, more than 2,500 partner schools and over 1 million students across the country have joined the effort to stand against bullying.

To overcome negativity and promote safe and supportive schools, prevention must be considered a community-wide and ongoing effort. A number of youth across the nation are working on this effort by committing positive and meaningful upstander acts.

We want to hear from you! Each year, a national contest is held to honor the great work and extensive learning taking place in schools across the nation.

NSCC is thrilled to announce the theme for this year’s contest: I Am an Upstander!

How can your school participate? Youth ages 13-18 are invited to participate and share through a video or artwork submission how they are showcasing upstander behavior and promoting an environment where kindness and respect for others matters. The contest will run from October 1st to November 1st and is open to U.S. middle and high school students.

Stay tuned! Additional contest details and regulations will be available on the BullyBust site and also provided by email. In the meantime, join the Upstander Alliance movement on the BullyBust site (www.bullybust.org/upstander) to stay in the loop and gain inspiration from other upstanders nationwide.

For now, start brainstorming with your classrooms and think about the most creative way to share your message. Have fun and remember to show us your style!
The new school year is underway, and we hope you and your students are working together each day to create a climate that is safe, engaging, and truly builds the foundational supportive relationships necessary for success. Our team spent the summer developing new resources, and collaborating with key partners nationwide to further the conversation on school climate improvement. There are a number of key updates I’d like to share with you from this time:

• In July, we hosted our 16th Annual Summer Institute, and also convened our inaugural Policy Institute, which brought together 60 representatives from the leading school improvement policy and practice organizations nationwide. Over the course of an exciting day-long meeting, these leaders explored the critical components to successfully translating policy into practice for sustained school climate improvement. You can learn more about the day, and find out how to stay involved at www.schoolclimate.org/programs/policy-institute.php.

• Later this fall, NSCC will be launching the latest version of our premiere school climate survey tool, the Comprehensive School Climate Inventory (CSCI). Version 4.0 will include some important updates and refinements including the addition of a social media scale, and items focused on moral and ethical learning. Visit www.schoolclimate.org/programs/csci to learn more about this critical resource.

• NSCC’s on-demand interactive learning site, the School Climate Resource Center (SCRC) is now live! Get expert advice on essential school improvement topics—from bully prevention and youth leadership to infusing SEL into the curriculum and school-community partnerships, gain best practices and a process-based road map, and participate in community discussions with educators nationwide in the Connect section. Learn more at scrc.schoolclimate.org.

This issue of School Climate Matters is full of the voices of our community showcasing how they are enacting effective school climate improvement as part of their core practice—from a District leader in Missouri (p. 3) to youth who are owning bully prevention efforts in New Jersey (p.4-5). You will also learn of our exciting work across the globe from our Education Director, Richard Cardillo (p.6), and our important research work to expand school climate assessment and ensure the most inclusive school environment for all students (p.7). As always, we want to hear from you! Please share your thoughts, experiences, and requests for future issues to us at newsletter@schoolclimate.org.

Thank you and all the best for a wonderful fall!,

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

Be a #BMGLiveOutLoud Upstander this October!

SCC’s nationwide BullyBust campaign: Promoting a Community of Upstanders is proud to announce its latest partnership effort with Boy Meets Girl (BMG), a stylish and young contemporary clothing brand. Led by Founder and Creative Director, Stacey Igel, Boy Meets Girl has been a constant supporter of BullyBust with its #BMGLiveOutLoud Campaign promoting youth leadership and its dedication to representing BullyBust as its Upstander Ambassador since 2009. BullyBust and BMG share a mission to empower students and adults to promote upstander behavior in their communities.

In recognition of these efforts and in support of October National Bully Prevention Awareness Month, Boy Meets Girl® will be donating 20% of the proceeds from its signature cozy item “Old School Coco Hoodie” through November 30th to benefit BullyBust and our work in schools nationwide. Support the cause in style today: http://boy-meets-girl-usa.myshopify.com/collections/coco-hoodies/products/coco-hoody. BullyBust thanks BMG for its unwavering support!

TO LEARN MORE ABOUT BOY MEETS GIRL AND BULLYBUST, VISIT www.boymeetsgirlusa.com OR www.schoolclimate.org/bullybust.
The School District of Clayton is a public school district located in Clayton, MO comprised of an early childhood center, three elementary schools, one middle school and one high school serving about 2,500 students. Dr. Milena Garganigo is the face of school climate leadership in her community. As the former assistant principal of Wydown Middle School, she spearheaded a school climate assessment using the Comprehensive School Climate Inventory Survey (CSCI). Now, as the assistant superintendent of teaching and learning for the School District of Clayton, Dr. Garganigo is once again leading the efforts to improve school climate at a district level. Noting successes and challenges from her old post, Dr. Garganigo has collected a portfolio of “learnings” to rally a district of school community members around the 5-stage improvement process of school climate to once again begin administering the CSCI.

Making Meaning of School Climate Data

The Wydown Middle School climate assessment, originally done in 2009, revealed all student and personnel grades regarded social-emotional security as an issue. Leading the list of challenges were trends of bullying behavior, exclusion and insensitivity for the feelings of others. More than a semester was set aside to dig deeper into the comprehensive data. From that, an advisory program connecting 10 students per teacher was developed. Staff members would follow students year-to-year to build a connected community and gain knowledge of how students were growing and changing over time. Sharing experiences across grade level during regular check-ins supported the program. Wydown also created a school-wide initiative of service projects. With a family fun night and school carnival, they raised enough to grant two wishes for their chosen organization, The Make a Wish Foundation. Celebrating birthdays as a group, sitting together at lunch and after school trips all enforced an environment where deliberate connections were being made. School personnel were vigilant about ensuring each student felt the impact and at one point, asked each student to note on an index card the staff member they felt the most connected to. No student would be left behind they promised. The work at Wydown continues with the foundation Dr. Garganigo has started.

Building the Foundation for Sustained Improvement

With Dr. Garganigo’s transition to district leadership at Clayton, a school climate push began with three elementary schools. This time, Garganigo was able to take assessment to a larger scale by contemplating her style of leadership. She had logged past experiences and gained insight into the impact a school assessment could make on the entire community. She imagined transitioning from being the central point person for school climate to now becoming a facilitator and mentor to others who would be taking the ropes of leadership.

Dr. Garganigo centered herself as the liaison; going from building to building to inform school leaders about the benefit of assessment and providing guidance for next steps. She says, “We want to be able to analyze district-wide data to pilot larger initiatives that will trickle from one school to the next. To be able to track progress, successes and challenges using longitudinal data is the ultimate purpose.”

Shared Leadership

Dr. Garganigo assumes the role of both teacher and collaborator. She says, “We needed to make a commitment to this and make climate improvement a part of every school day. We had professional development days to brainstorm ideas and develop a protocol for analysis of data.”

Her style of introducing assessment included several leading questions with leadership teams: What do you see? What do you make of it? What connections do you see with what you’re observing in the school building? What else are we surprised or wondering about? Principals and leaderships are paving their own way with support. Individual sessions with principals to dig deeper into results allows for time to connect. She notes, “If I sense discomfort with the data or if we had a troubling area, I co-facilitate a meeting or help develop a way to share findings with the larger community. Assuming roles and dividing tasks is central to our work here.” Dr. Garganigo’s work with her leadership team is ongoing.

We look forward to supporting her leadership efforts as Clayton continues its school climate improvement work.

DR. MILENA GARGANIGO
School is where they begin to learn the essential social and emotional skills such as communication, cooperation, empathy, and reflection. To learn these effectively, students need an environment where they feel accepted and safe. Problems such as bullying can interfere with this—students may be afraid, anxious and even terrified of their peers because they don’t know when and if they will be bullied. Bullying is both psychological and physical, where you feel nervous and also suspicious of the intentions of your peers. This trauma distracts students from a successful learning experience. Adding to this, victims seclude themselves from others in the same school society, which sometimes leads to being ignored or facing rumors and name-calling. Gradually, the victims become alienated in the school. To them, their school climate couldn’t be any worse.

Yena Kwak is currently a 10th grader at Tenafly High School. Her story, From Middle School Student to Bully Prevention Advocate, appeared in the June 2013 issue of School Climate Matters. The piece featured her perspective of the bullying climate of her then school, Tenafly Middle School, and her desire to engage and encourage students to become active upstanders. Here she describes her personal experience as a student and as a representative at NSCC’s Summer Institute. Read on for ways educators across the nation can support youth facing similar struggles.

Learning and Growing

Students sometimes just don’t know what they need

Perfect Solutions Don’t Exist

Bullying, in my opinion, has no perfect solution. Many schools emphasize talking to adults when bullied, but I think this keeps the bully victim quiet. From around the age of ten and up, students become embarrassed and unwilling to talk to adults. They think they are mature enough to solve bullying problems by themselves and that time will solve everything. Also, and this is from my own experience, they’re afraid of exclusion.

When I was bullied in my previous school, I did consider consulting the school counselor, but I decided against it because I was scared. I thought if I “tattled” on my so-called friends, I would become completely friendless and excluded. I never thought about making new friends because everyone seemed to be involved in separate cliques. I definitely knew it would be difficult to squeeze into a new group of friends. So, I maintained my silence and tried to ignore the bullying. I had little success with this.

When I was in the 6th grade, I was involved in a group called “peer leaders” where students helped other students overcome bullying. I found it easier to help others than to help myself. Even after becoming a satisfactory peer leader, I couldn’t solve my own issue. The problem was the peer leader program educated students to help others but it didn’t teach the peer leaders how to deal with bullying if it happened to them.

What Can You Do?

Adults in my school did the best they could to support students.
Students sometimes just don’t know what they need or, if they do know, they don’t know how to communicate the feeling. I believe the best way the adults can help bullied students is to be mindful of things going on around the school, especially in the cafeteria. From my experiences, I would say the first step to have students support one another is first breaking the mindset of having separate, private cliques. This is especially a problem among girls. A student involved in a clique may make friends with other students but once that student is surrounded by her clique, she becomes much more comfortable communicating their personal problems.

Eliminate the thought that school supervisors exist only to punish bad behavior

If adults help students break this mindset, new friendships can be formed in the more receptive school society. Another way to help the students is to eliminate the thought that school supervisors exist only to punish bad behavior without wanting to know more about what happened and why it happened. If staff members connect with students outside the classroom in a different situation such as playing a sports game or being available after school to talk, student perspective changes and students become more open to communicate their personal problems.

I thought if I “tattled” on my so-called friends, I would become completely friendless and excluded.

In addition to breaking student opinion, students need to know how hard their teachers are working to improve the school climates. This summer, I attended NSCC’s Summer Institute. From a student point of view, I was extremely touched by the determination of the school leaders to improve their school climates and address bullying problems in their communities. I was very grateful for the invitation and felt included as a student representative. Sometimes students need to know that staff are as concerned (if not more) about the problems students are facing. This is something important I learned from the Summer Institute. If I could, I would share with students one thing: I would tell them that their school leaders are striving very hard to achieve the goal of creating the best school climates possible.

Yena’s Corner: How Adults Can Best Connect with Youth

Students need ongoing support from adults to face bullying issues. Here are some ways you can support youth in your building:

1. Students want and need adults to intervene but we don’t always know how to say it. We don’t want to be known as the “snitch” but we also need a trusted adult. Don’t make me name names. Sometimes an offer to listen is all we need.

2. Cliques do exist in schools. Connecting with other students is difficult and it sometimes even feels forbidden. Remind us that yes, we are different but we probably share more similarities than we think. Encourage students to say hello or sit with a new group at lunch. I just learned about Mix It Up at Lunch, a national campaign asking kids to step out of their comfort zones during lunch. Learn more and sign-up for this October 29th event: http://www.tolerance.org/mix-it-up/what-is-mix

3. Share with us. Connect with us outside the classroom. Knowing you were where we are today does help and makes us feel more comfortable sharing with you.

share your voice!

Know any students interested in contributing to our school climate blog or newsletter? We’d love to hear from them!

Contact us at newsletter@schoolclimate.org.
There is a Spanish phrase that states: “El mundo es un pañuelo.” Literally, this means “the world is a handkerchief”! However, it speaks to the idea that this is truly a small world where there are more similarities than differences regardless of where we travel or with whom we interact. The really important “stuff” in life joins us together rather than divides us. This phrase was never so true for me as this last month of August. At the request of the U.S. State Department in Washington, D.C., I was invited to be both a learner and a teacher collaborating with various groups in both Chile and Peru. Under the auspices of the U.S. Embassies in both countries, I lectured, taught, and addressed issues of school climate improvement, school violence, bullying and cyberbullying, and school-community partnerships to students (from elementary level to university level), teachers, universities, research-based non-profits, governmental agencies and law enforcement groups.

In a very short amount of time, I was fortunate to be in the cities of Lima and Puno in Peru as well as in the cities of Santiago and La Serena in Chile. In both countries I was honored to meet with the Ministers of Education and members of their teams to explore systemic solutions to improve school climate. Both countries have a tremendous desire to concentrate on educating the whole child and engage students socially, emotionally, civically as well as academically.

How humbling to work with and learn from students participating in civic and social movements that are truly transforming both countries. How amazing to dialogue and plan with classroom teachers who are just as preoccupied as their North American colleagues with their intent to educate the whole child. And how energizing to offer seminars and collaborate with university students who are just about to embark on careers in education.

Though many of the day-to-day realities differ from those in the States, both Peruvian and Chilean schools are committed to developing student voice, harnessing the power of true inclusion for all in their schools and engaging all in the school community with the transformative process of improving school climate.

I am most grateful to the representatives of the U.S. State Department who sponsored my trip. My collaborations with other nonprofits, government agencies, think tanks, universities, and schools on all levels resulted in a tremendous amount of resources generated to ensure that this passionate work continues long into the future. Thanks to technology, there are already follow-up teleconferences and Twitter Chats planned to keep in touch and keep sharing. And I am especially indebted to students from both Peru and Chile who continually demonstrated that, truthfully, “el mundo es un pañuelo.”
Books
Bazelon, Emily.
*Sticks and Stones: Defeating the Culture of Bullying and Rediscovering the Power of Character and Empathy*
New York: Random House, 2013

Bazelon takes readers on a journey into the world of teenage mean behavior and its harsh consequences. Follow along as she takes readers to the main stations of bullying: the school cafeteria, social media networks, etc. Along the way, Bazelon urges understanding of bullying behavior and what defines it to effectively create solutions.

Meyer, Stephanie, et al.
*Bullying Under Attack: True Stories Written by Teen Victims, Bullies, & Bystanders*
New York: HCI Teens; 1 edition, 2013

Share with your classroom this inspirational edition of first-person accounts written and told from the perspective of teenagers. These narratives detail experiences from the various roles of bully, bully-victim and bystander. NSCC thanks Bullying Under Attack for including BullyBust: Promoting a Community of Upstanders campaign in their extensive resource section. We are proud to be part of such inspiring work promoting reflection and change.

NSCC Resource
School Climate Resource Center (SCRC)
src.schoollclimate.org

The SCRC is an interactive, on-demand learning site providing school communities with a personalized and targeted professional development experience. With guided, flexible and timely resources featuring learning modules and research-based guidelines from leading school climate experts, school leaders now have the opportunity to take ownership of their professional development.

research in action

NSCC Collaborates with Project UNIFY Special Olympics

This fall, NSCC was excited to begin collaboration with Special Olympics Project UNIFY on a comprehensive one-year School Climate Pilot Research Project. This exciting collaboration will examine the link between school climate and the social inclusive characteristics of school communities. Project UNIFY began development of this pilot in recognition of the growing research linking school connectedness, respect for diversity and quality of relationships with achievement and overall school satisfaction.

To define the role of social inclusion as a driver for positive school climate, our leading assessment tool, the Comprehensive School Climate Inventory (CSCI), will be administered to 12 Project Unify schools across the nation believed to be representative models of implementing excellent social inclusion efforts. These schools will be compared against 12 non-Project UNIFY schools with similar demographic makeup that have opted to participate in the study.

As an addendum, a new social inclusion survey scale will measure how social inclusion efforts are related to rates of bullying and in particular, to students with disabilities. It will also illustrate how students, parents and school leaders understand social inclusion, how it is helpful, and what challenges exist to actively support school climate informed infusion efforts.

This pilot project is part of a large initiative to support a forum of school community leaders sharing experiences, insights and recommendations to identify effective strategies to integrate social inclusion opportunities. As we continue this work throughout 2014, NSCC and Project UNIFY look forward to analyzing and reporting key findings to support a nationwide movement to ensure the most inclusive environment for all students and the community.
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