



school climate matters

NATIONAL SCHOOL CLIMATE CENTER NEWSLETTER

JULY 2011 • VOLUME 5 • ISSUE 2

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in brief

NSCC Goes to Congress—On May 12th, The National School Climate Center was part of a collaborative effort to inform the US Senate and other policy influencers about the importance of social-emotional learning and character development in schools. For more information on this briefing, please visit our [blog](#).

NEW CSCI Community Scale—The National School Climate Center is proud to announce its newest addition to its school climate survey, the **Comprehensive School Climate Inventory (CSCI)**. The new community-focused survey will aim to recognize the “voice” of community members and leaders and complement the current three versions of the CSCI that look at student, parent/guardian, and school personnel. To learn more about this exciting new scale, please contact nrudewicz@schoolclimate.org.

NSCC on Facebook!—The National School Climate Center will be regularly posting about all of our NSCC programs and outreach on our new [Facebook](#) page. Please check back for news and up-to-date info, and help us spread the word by “liking” us!



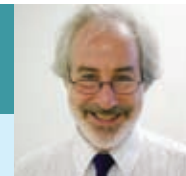
NSCC Conducts Nationwide School Climate/Bullying Policy Scan

Kate Moore, *NSCC Summer Intern*

Anti-bullying awareness is on the rise across the United States, but many politicians and educators are still struggling to address the threat posed by such anti-social behavior. On July 12, 2011 the National School Climate Center officially released the results of a nationwide scan of school anti-bullying and school climate policies. Researchers have found that 45 states (88.2%) have such regulations in place, and that 24 states (47%) have general school climate policies. On one level, this bodes well for efforts to improve school climate. State-wide school improvement efforts reflect a larger national sentiment favoring school safety, as embodied in the pending *Anti-Bullying and Harassment Act of 2011*. On another level, however, the NSCC policy scan also unearthed some important areas for improvement. Only 37 of the 45 states with anti-bullying policies provide technical assistance to administra-

tors and teachers. It is also important to note that 11 states have punitive, intervention-only policies, as opposed to active prevention. Finally, just 6 states have funding to support their policies. Results such as these show that well-intentioned legislation such as the *Anti-Bullying and Harassment Act* will be limited in its influence without the effective, research-based practices, supports, and funding needed to ensure success at the school and district-level. In the coming months, NSCC will be providing additional supports for schools based on these policy scan findings. This work builds on the recommendations outlined in [NSCC's School Climate Standards](#) and [School Climate Challenge White Paper](#). For more on the results of these NSCC scans and to view a comprehensive map of legislation by state, visit <http://schoolclimate.org/climate/policy.php>.

message from the president



“Whole system success requires the commitment that comes from intrinsic motivation and improved technical competencies of groups of educators working together purposefully and relentlessly.”

—MICHAEL FULLEN, *Choosing the Wrong Drivers for Whole System Reform*, April 2011

Dear Friends,

As we head into the summer, many of us close the chapter on this school year and all too quickly turn the page to begin next year’s planning. However, we all know that stopping to intentionally “take stock” from time to time is an important part of progressing—as professionals and as communities. In fact, now is the ideal time for us to come together as educators, parents, community members, and students to make our priorities known and build a cohesive vision for the future. We at NSCC are preparing to do just that at our [14th Annual Summer Institute](#), which brings educators and experts from across the country together for an intensive three-day school climate reform learning experience. We hope to see you there, and we’ve crafted this issue of School Climate Matters to help you think about your role in defining how our schools and students progress.

As the discussion around the reauthorization of the *Elementary and Secondary Education Act* (ESEA) heats up and funding for core education priorities becomes harder to secure, your voice as a true expert in the field is more critical than ever.

In this issue, we are excited to announce the release of major findings from a nationwide School Climate and Anti-Bullying policy scan conducted by our Center. We hope these scans will guide leaders in future policy and practice decisions to realize our collective educational goals for promoting the safest, most productive, and helpfully engaging environment for all students. To support educators in understanding these findings, we are also unveiling an [interactive policy map](#) of current legislation for each state. This issue introduces a new periodic feature, “On the Hill,” which will provide frontline information about key education legislation issues. Our first feature in this series (p.4-5) is written by National School Climate Council member, Linda McKay, and offers step-

by-step guidelines on how to engage your local leaders in the school climate and social-emotional learning initiatives that shape our schools for success. NSCC’s Education Director, Rich Cardillo, also provides an enlightening article on shaping Discipline Codes with school climate in mind, building off of recent public commentary for the NYC Department of Education. All of these pieces highlight one key factor—the role that YOU play in helping to form our educational priorities, whether it is at the national, state or local level.

We are also thrilled to announce that NSCC’s incredibly successful BullyBust campaign, which engaged **more than 1,000 schools nationwide** in a comprehensive bully prevention effort this past fall, will be launching a new student-led effort for the 2011-12 school year (p. 7). We hope you’ll join our community of educators and students at www.bullybust.org, and stay tuned for the launch of our Upstander Alliance Tool Kit this fall: a detailed resource that empowers students to engage their entire community in the effort to prevent bullying—for good.

As always, we hope you’ll explore the deeper list of resources included in this issue (p.6), and look forward to hearing your own thoughts on how you and your school community are helping to affect policy. Please feel free to send your stories, comments, and ideas to newsletter@schoolclimate.org.

Best wishes for a relaxing and joy-filled summer,

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

NSCC’s 14th Annual Summer Institute A Success!

The National School Climate Center hosted one of our most successful Summer Institutes to-date! Our three-day program supported more than 75 school teams, districts and state administrators, as well as other community leaders, such as The Special Olympics Project UNIFY. The Institute focused on developing school climate improvement that support positive youth development, democratic school communities, student learning/achievement and upstander behavior. NSCC welcomed Kristin Harper, Ed.M. Policy Advisor for the Office of Safe and Drug-Free Schools as our Key Note speaker. NSCC would like to thank Dr. Maria Volpe, Alban Veliu and CUNY Dispute Resolution Consortium at John Jay College for their generous sponsorship of our Summer Institute this year. We are so thankful for all their hard work put into helping make our event a success this year!



NSCC President Dr. Jonathan Cohen
and John Jay College's Dr. Maria Volpe

Making School Discipline Codes That Work: School Climate is Key



Recently, the New York City Department of Education invited public commentary on the official Discipline Code and the Bill of Student Rights and Responsibilities. While there was needed and meaningful discussion on the minor emendations to the code, the overarching sentiment of the remarks centered on the methods by which we are approaching discipline in the broader context of school climate. Concerns expressed by school administrators, students, parents, teachers and members of community-based organizations were primarily focused on larger challenges and root causes of a sense of insecurity at school rather than day to day infractions.

When addressing the disciplinary environment of our schools, it is critical to be mindful of the messages we communicate by how we hold students (and ourselves) accountable. And it serves us well to carefully analyze the trends we notice in the data we collect regarding discipline. Some questions to ponder would be:

- **Do our schools reflect draconian discipline policies that foster suspicion and promote blame?**
- **Are we truly believing we create safer environments through the utilization of metal detectors and zero tolerance policies (both of which have been proven NOT to work in study after study)?**

- **Are policies unjustly targeting youth of color and uncovering deeper social justice issues that need to be addressed?**
- **Is the use of excessive police presence in our schools creating unhealthy learning environments?**

In our efforts to promote and sustain safe supportive school communities, it serves us well to steer away from short-sighted solutions that provide quick fixes to discipline issues and, instead, address the root causes of what may possibly be causing a toxic school climate. If a child feels threatened, disrespected, targeted, ignored, or suspected of being dangerous, is it any wonder that optimal academic learning cannot occur? If indeed, we are educating our students to become (as was the tenet promoted by John Dewey) the engaged citizen of tomorrow, is a discipline code that promotes castigation and retribution the best that we can offer? Is this construct the most opportune way to promote a healthy school climate?

There is a growing body of evidence that supports the use of alternate interventions to address discipline practices in a school. Rather than relying on zero tolerance policies, many schools are promulgating restorative discipline and peer mediation models with tremendous results.

As in all things that deal with school cli-

mate improvement, it is well worth the efforts to take the long view in establishing systems to advance our goals. To keep this in our minds during our planning, I will end by quoting the parent of two public school children in New York City who attended the public forums. “We need a system that is less punitive and focused more on getting to the root of the issue to avoid conflict in the future. Children learn what they are taught. Children will continue to act like criminals if we continue to treat them as such”.



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.

On The Hill: Federal Education Support Starts With YOU

How to Make Your Voice Heard

Linda McKay, *National School Climate Council Member*

The federal deficit crisis is having a major impact on public school budgets nationwide. The daily news reports that there is no new money, let alone sufficient support to maintain current federal and state education programs.

It's easy to feel paralyzed by the state of the economy—but it's never too late to take action. At this point, the FY2012 Federal Budget and the reauthorization of the *Elementary and Secondary Education Act* have not yet been finalized. In both cases, elected officials want to promote legislation that supports what their constituents want, which is why now is the time for us as educators to act.

Ultimately, what ends up in a final bill is what has the most support from the most people across America. It is the squeaky wheel that gets the grease. So consider contacting your elected officials in Congress to let them know that social, emotional learning, character education, and school climate is integral to student learning and academic success (see 5 Easy Steps on the next page).

Once you've identified the specific staff person to work with on this topic, you can also share how essential support for social, emotional and character development and creating a positive school climate is to include in the reauthorization of the *Elementary Secondary Education Act*—better known as “*No Child Left Behind*.” The bill has not yet been introduced but both the Senate and House of Representatives are working on the language for the bill. It is important to begin working with your elected officials now to track the bill's process and determine what information they need in order to support your request.

It does not matter if you have never done this before. What matters is that you take your passion for what you believe is essential to create the best education policy this country has to offer and



combine it with a willingness to provide your elected official with the information they need to say “Yes, you have my support. As educators, we are the experts these officials need to hear from, and this is our opportunity to make a lasting, positive difference in the policies that affect our lives and our students.”

FOR MORE SUPPORT crafting specific language to share with Congressional staff members on particular school climate, character education, or social-emotional learning bills, please contact Linda McKay directly at: mckaydc@rcn.com.



Linda McKay has been a leader in the field of character education for more than 20 years. She has worked with schools, parents, students, businesses and foundations across the country. From 2003 through 2009, she served as a senior advisor for character education in the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Safe and Drug Free Schools. There she led the Department's efforts to conduct rigorous evaluations of federal grants related to creating positive school climates, social emotional learning and character education in schools. Linda was a founding and current board member of the Character Education Partnership, Washington, DC and a National School Climate Council Advisory Member. She now works as a national advocate for social and emotional learning and character education in America's schools.



5 Easy Steps to Make Your Voice Count

Advocate for continued support in the FY2012 Labor/Health and Human Services and Education Appropriations Bill for continued funding of the Safe and Supportive Schools Grants. This grant program supports critical school climate, social/emotional and character development in schools.

- 1. CALL** the offices of your United States Senators and your Congressional Representatives and ask to speak with the staff that works in education legislation. Finding the contact information for your elected representatives is as simple as a Google search—or visit <http://www.senate.gov/> and <http://www.house.gov/>.
- 2. TELL** them what issue you are supporting and why you think this is critical to support. Share a concise personal story explaining why it is important to support your schools with federal funds in this area and always include an example of a strong positive result.
- 3. ASK** them for an update of the current status of the FY2012 Labor/Health and Human Services and Education Appropriations bill and ask if funding for this program has been included. There is a good chance they will not know the answer, as this is a small funded grant program, and will need to get back to you with the information. (Tip: you can view text of all legislation and current status at www.thomas.gov.)
- 4. FIND OUT** what other information the Senator or House of Representative member needs to have in order to support this issue. Ask about the best way to provide further information and how you can follow the progress of support for this issue (i.e. email, fax, phone).
- 5. ALWAYS FOLLOW UP** with an email or fax thanking them for their time, restating in a couple of sentences the issue in need of their support, and why this is important to do. The goal is to identify a dedicated staff person to work with you on this issue, and establish a friendly, respectful relationship with them that honors their demanding role.



Save Our Schools March! July 28–31, 2011

Washington D.C. will assemble a march for educators to call to action! For more details and how you can join, visit www.saveourschoolsmarch.org.

share your voice

Now more than ever, the people's voice must be heard in education. **Tell us, in what ways have you or are you planning to reach out to your government officials to make a change? Are there ways you have or can incorporate this into a student-led project?**

We want to hear from YOU!
Share your best practices with us at newsletter@schoolclimate.org and we'll include your feedback in an upcoming issue of *School Climate Matters*.

Websites

Reaching Out to Government Officials

www.senate.gov and www.house.gov

Find your elected officials so that you can play a role in advocating for continued support in the FY2012 Labor/Health and Human Services and Education Appropriations Bill for continued funding of the Safe and Supportive School Grants. Visit www.thomas.gov to view full text and current status of all legislation.

Restitution and Social Development

www.realrestitution.com

A series of resources that collaborate to enhance current educational practices in schools, post-secondary institutions, and community programs. Through extensive collaboration and innovation, Restitution Instructors address discipline by focusing on how young people can correct their mistakes while emphasizing positive solutions.

Engaging Educators in a Move toward Self Discipline

restitutionsocialdevelopment.blogspot.com

Here you can find frequent updates on national and international workshops. Browse through photos from workshops and Restitution projects. Share comments and feedback on articles.

Discipline That Restores

disciplinethatrestores.org

Discipline That Restores is a reproducible step-by-step process to increase cooperation and mutual respect. Using a series of flowcharts and case studies this book blends theory, strategies, studies, and best practices of conflict resolution education.

Support BullyBust and Be an Upstander

www.wickedthemusicalstore.com/Products/Wicked-BullyBust-Pin_WKD-BULLYBUST-PIN.aspx

Get your WICKED-designed DEFY GRAVITY pin to raise awareness for the cause. For every pin sold, BullyBust receives \$2.00 to help bring free bully prevention resources to our nations schools.

Articles

Responsibility and Conflict Resolution

<http://www.realrestitution.com/ya.pdf>

Helping educators come up with a solution for students being responsible for their own behavior.



Resources from NSCC

The School Climate Improvement Plan (SCIP)

NSCC is launching the **School Climate Improvement Plan (SCIP)** model. SCIP is grounded in a five-stage improvement process. SCIP delivers services through a cluster of eight partnering schools. The SCIP Model focuses on training and resources on infusing school climate improvement as well as social, emotional and civic learning practices into already existing frameworks to better guarantee sustainability and continuity. For more information regarding the launch of SCIP contact nrudewicz@schoolclimate.org.

Measuring 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 www.schoolclimate.org/programs/csci.php.

Road Maps that support the establishment of more trusting and collaborative problem solving teams of adults:

The School Climate Implementation Road Map:

Promoting Democratically Informed School Communities and the Continuous Process of School Climate Improvement

A resource designed to support school leadership teams and school community members measure and improve school

climate, this roadmap provides detailed guidance on how to implement the 5 stages, continuous process of school climate.

Cohen, J. & Pickeral, T. (2009). New York, NY: Center for Social and Emotional Education. www.schoolclimate.org/climate/roadmap.php

Breaking the Bully-Victim-Passive Bystander Tool Kit:

Creating a Climate for Learning and Responsibility

Designed to support school leadership teams and school community members prevent bully victim behavior and promote upstander behavior in K-12 schools.

Eyman, W. & Cohen, J. (2009). New York, NY: Center for Social and Emotional Education. www.schoolclimate.org/climate/toolkit.php

BullyBust and *Wicked* Help Students “Defy Gravity” and Become Upstanders



N SCC, Bullybust and *WICKED* would like to congratulate the winners of the “Defying Gravity” essay contest, Ammie, the grand prize winner and our Finalists Natalie, Whitney and Serena. Our Grand Prize Winner Ammie is a freshman at La Crescent High School in Minnesota and this past Spring she traveled to New York City to see *WICKED* the musical LIVE on Broadway. Finalists Natalie is from Warwick New York, Serena is from Cooley Ranch Elementary in Colton, California and Whitney is currently a junior at Meyersdale Area High School. All the winners received *WICKED* gift bags, and a limited edition *WICKED* Flip Camcorders. You can view all the winning essays on www.bullybust.org/educators/essay.

Accompanying Ammie this past spring, was runner up Natalie from Warwick New York. Thanks to the strong efforts of Natalie’s 7th grade teacher Debrah Leporati, Natalie was able to come to New York with her entire 7th grade class. Ms. Leporati used the student supplement and educator tool kit that were included in the program and took them to another level. Her class was able to gain an even better understanding of how they can become Upstanders and help put an end to bullying. Along with incorporating the tool kits into her classroom curriculum, Leporati also held a contest of her own which allowed each student to share how he/she has become an UpStander. *WICKED* heard about the efforts brought forth by the entire class and offered tickets to Natalie and each member of her class. Along with some fundraising, the entire grade was able to come to New York City and see the performance. Additionally, *WICKED* presented a free Bully Prevention workshop that all the students attended during their trip to New York. The workshop outlined the dangers of bullying and the importance of becoming an Upstander. During the workshop, actual performers from the show emphasized the powerful message of *WICKED*



and bully prevention through fun-filled interactive activities. All of the students in attendance also had the opportunity to recite the [BullyBust Upstander Pledge](#). Natalie and several of her classmates collaborated with the actors to create their own endings to scenes where the characters themselves could have become Upstanders. Students also had an opportunity to ask the actors of the show about their experiences with bullying growing up. Both Ammie and Natalie read aloud their winning essays to everyone in attendance, which included teachers, parents of the students and [NBC New York](#) where the workshop was mentioned in a later news segment. BullyBust and *WICKED* are so thankful to all who contributed to making this a great day, along with every student who entered in the contest. Every day, working together we can all defy gravity and stand up to bullying!

“I know now what listening to your heart means and to not just go with what is cool but do what is right.”

—EXCERPT FROM ESSAY



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New York, NY 10018

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED



**National School
Climate Center**

**TO CONTRIBUTE TO NSCC,
PLEASE CONTACT OUR
DEVELOPMENT OFFICE:**

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Phone: 212-707-8799 ext.11
Fax: 212-957-6616

E-mail: adichter@schoolclimate.org

NSCC:

Creating a Climate for Learning!

Visit us on the web!
www.schoolclimate.org

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*