



## **Climate Committee Final Report 2011-2012**

### **César Chávez Elementary School**

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#### **Summary**

**The 2011-12 CCE Climate Committee continued to work on projects from last year including the climate survey, parenting workshops, and transition teams.**

#### **Committee Projects**

##### **The Climate Survey**

Three separate climate surveys were administered in February 2012 to parents, staff, and students in grades 3 through 6. The surveys, which were available in both Spanish and English, measured perceptions and experiences related to school connectedness, friendship, conflict/bullying, and safety. The committee was pleased with the overall participation which included 75% of parents, almost all of the staff, and over 325 students. The committee is grateful for the support of Principal Beck and her staff in implementing and supporting the survey and the parents and students for their input. The committee met with the staff in April 2012 to discuss the initial survey results and give the teachers the data that was specific to their grade level.

The committee will continue to work on the data for future use as well and has posted a report that is available for download on the SIPAT website: <http://www.ccesipat.com/index.cfm/programs/climate-committee/>. Principal Beck will also put the climate surveys on the school's official community calendar as a way of alerting parents and staff that the survey will take place again in February 2013.

##### **Counselor Hire and Kelso's Choices Program**

In the spring of 2011, a counselor was hired to service the fourth through sixth grade classes at Chavez; however, she left after only a few days on the job due to some confusion regarding the number of hours and payment for this position. We were unable to hire another counselor for the remainder of the 2010-2011 school year, or the start of the 2011-2012 school year. Principal Beck volunteered to take on the additional responsibility of implementing the Kelso's Choice Program in the primary grades for 2011-2012. This problem solving program was not realized in either the 2010-2011 or 2011-2012 school years.

In December 2011, Principal Denise Beck, Climate Committee Co-chair Amy Duffy, and Teacher Gail Mitchell interviewed three candidates for the approximately four hours per week counseling position funded by SIPAT for 2011-2012. There were a total of 24 applicants for this position. Many applicants were local (Yolo/Sonoma counties), but none were internal DJUSD applicants. A desired counselor candidate was identified but not hired because the candidate's current position and hours were increased, making it impossible for her to fill both positions. This was a discouraging process for our school and a big loss for our students.

The CCE Climate Committee was frustrated at the prospect of not having a counselor in place to support students and staff for a second school year, and established the following goals to ensure that a counselor would be in place by August 2012-2013. First, we agreed to request an increase in funding

from SIPAT to fund at least a 10 hours per week counseling position which would address the needs identified in grades 4-6 (topical small groups, friendship skills groups, and individual/group counseling), as well as implement the Kelso's Choice Program for grades k-3. Second, we decided to pursue a joint counselor position with Pioneer Elementary which would increase the counselor hours to between 18 and 22 hours, thus attracting better candidates and increasing the probability that we will be able to fill the position.

At our January climate meeting, the committee also agreed to approach the district about making both the Kelso's Choice Program and school counselors a priority for all elementary schools in an effort to promote the district policies of alignment and equity. Several committee members contacted the other elementary schools to learn about, and collect data on, their site resources and programs. The climate committee believes there is a strong need for the district to act upon its commitment to alignment and equity given the disparity in access to counselors and a comprehensive peer problem solving program among DJUSD elementary schools.

In May, Principal Denise Beck informed the committee she was working with Principal Brayton at Pioneer, as well as the appropriate district office staff, to get the counselor position posted as soon as possible. Unfortunately, the counselor hiring process was again stalled due to the uncertainty at the district level regarding pink slips for teachers and counselors. Principal Beck shared that at this point it is still unclear which positions will be funded, and which positions will be eliminated for 2012-2013. Denise assured the committee that the two principals and the district will have a timeline for the hiring process in early June. Climate Committee Co-Chair Amy Duffy expressed her willingness to participate in counselor planning meetings and interviews over the summer vacation. The committee continues to hope that we will have a shared counselor in place at both Chavez and Pioneer by the beginning of the 2012-2013 school year.

### **Promoting Student-School Connectedness, Social Skills, Healthy Students**

- **Student Council**: In its second year, the newly formed student council continued to support student engagement and school spirit with assemblies, school spirit days, and other activities. The Climate Committee wishes to thank Sara Caulfield for her efforts serving both on the climate committee and with student council. The student council was helpful in promoting the climate survey to parents with their thermometer posters.
- **Playworks**: The Climate Committee recognizes the hard work of Raychel Kubby Adler and other parents and staff for bringing and implementing the Playworks program to our school. The program has given students a new perspective on play and broadened their social skills sets as well. The committee recognizes the value of Playworks and hopes to support it next year. Based on climate survey results the playground remains the most likely venue of student conflict and Playworks is making positive changes to student play.
- **Running Club**: The Climate Committee recognizes the hard work of Debbie Beauchamp and other parents and staff for organizing the successful CCE Running Club. Dozens of children participated in running after school and were awarded token running feet for their efforts. The committee applauds these efforts to help keep the students healthy and engaged with their school.

#### **4th Grade Transition from MME**

In December 2011, the Climate Committee established a transition subcommittee to create a consistently implemented plan for the annual transition of fourth grade students moving to Chavez from the K-3 Montgomery Spanish Immersion Program. The goals for the subcommittee included: inviting MME families, parents, students to participate in CCE school activities; as well as for CCE students and families to spend time at MME to build connections between the two SI programs. We agreed that the transition committee should include parents and staff from both SI school sites.

In March 2012, the transition subcommittee chair, Amy Duffy, and Principal Denise Beck shared with the Climate Committee what has been done in past years to support new fourth grade students in having the smoothest possible transition to Chavez. Transition support has varied greatly since the MME SI program began. Some past supports have included: having CCE-MME SI pen pals in 3rd grade, inviting MME SI 3rd graders to come visit their pen pals at CCE and take a school tour with Principal Beck, having CCE 3rd graders create welcome books with photos and information about CCE students and CCE school culture, having CCE-MME buddy families that spend time one-on-one supporting both students and parents with the school transition, and having a back-to-school gathering with buddy families and older CCE students who had made the transition from MME in past years. At this gathering, the buddies played games, looked through their welcome books together, and shared cookies. The older CCE students shared advice about having a smooth start to 4th grade and making new friends, and they took all in-coming 4th grade students on a tour of the upper grade school wing and play yard. The back-to-school transition gathering was facilitated in 2010 by CCE Counselor Susie Carrell and Climate Committee Co-Chair Amy Duffy.

Principal Denise Beck also shared what had already happened this year, and her own plans for the 2012 4th grade transition, at our March climate meeting. Students in Esther Burnside's 3rd grade class were pen pals with the MME 3rd grade class this year. Teacher Esther Burnside and Principal Denise Beck coordinated a field trip of MME and CCE third graders to Central Park where they visited the Webber Museum and also participated together in Playworks games. On May 9th the MME third graders came over to Chavez to spend the whole day together, tour the school, and have lunch. Denise Beck also shared that she would have a stand-alone MME transition parent meeting, in addition to the annual Transition to 4th Grade parent meeting. Principal Beck's goal was to go beyond discussing just course work, and include more on how fourth grade functions in terms of rotations and moving classes for different teachers. She also planned to invite MME parents whose children had transitioned from MME in past years to share their experiences with the incoming parents.

By our May meeting, there was some confusion regarding the future of the MME SI program. Climate Committee members shared what they had heard about DJUSD's plans to either start a school-wide dual immersion program, or expand the MME SI program by adding a 4th grade immersion class. Our climate committee agreed to continue to focus on what is known and what we can do. We again discussed our desire to host a back-to-school transition orientation for all incoming 4th graders since the 4th grade transition can be difficult. The idea would be for all incoming 4th graders to visit and meet the teachers and their classrooms just prior to the start of school. It is our hope that the yet-to-be-hired counselor will be able to work with our committee and the CCE staff to help facilitate this transition event.

Addendum: As of the June writing of this annual report, there is now more confusion on our committee about the district's plans for MME SI. Members of our committee have had conversations,

and seen MME SI parent emails, which seem to indicate that the district is planning to expand the MME SI program by opening 4th and 5th grade SI classes at MME for the 2012-2013 school year. We have not received official notification from Principal Beck, or school district staff, about any Spanish Immersion program changes. At this point we do not know whether or not to expect MME SI students to transition to CCE for 4th grade in the coming year.

### **Transition to First Grade Playground Supervision**

The playground transition for first graders can be difficult and it was identified by concerned parents early in the school year that there appeared to not be enough supervision for the first critical months of school. In the past a first grade parent has unofficially coordinated extra playground supervision among the parents but this did not happen this year. The climate committee and Principal Beck agreed that institutionalizing a transition position would be useful in coordinating playground parents. As of May 2012 a parent, Marsha Baird, has taken on the role as playground coordinator for the next school year and has begun the process of recruiting volunteers to have in place for the first day of school and beyond. The committee thanks her for her efforts and will continue to work on playground transition issues next fall.

### **Diversity Training Workshops**

The Climate Committee sponsored a workshop on girl bullying with Chavez parent and pediatrician, Jann Murray-García. The workshop was attended by approximately 90 people from eight different Davis schools. Dr. Murray-García detailed how girl bullying is often times about manipulating relationships between girls and using the relationship as the weapon itself. A synopsis of the workshop can be found on the climate committee webpage:

<http://www.ccesipat.com/index.cfm/programs/climate-committee/>. She has agreed to continue offering workshops next year, the committee would like to do a follow up workshop that allows for discussion of the issue and solutions.

### **SIPAT and the Climate Committee**

During this school year we were pleased to have a diverse membership on the climate committee including an administrator, three teachers, and several parents. The climate committee and SIPAT have created a close working relationship and several climate committee members attended the SIPAT general meetings to give updates and gather feedback. SIPAT provided hospitality support with the bullying workshop, helped spread the word and encourage participation in the climate surveys, and is now hosting the Climate Committee's webpage on their website. SIPAT and Climate Committee have also worked closely in the attempt to get a counselor hired at Chavez for the coming school year. The climate committee is pleased with the close relationship with SIPAT and hopes this will continue.

### **Future Ideas**

Several ideas were presented to the committee that may be of interest for the future:

- Creation of effective, consistent social skills programs that meet the needs of 4-6th grade students (in collaboration with teachers and a counselor)
- A greater effort to assist and sustain the school gardens
- Future parent education events (with potential collaboration with other DJUSD schools)
- Peer to peer programs such as cross-age buddies and conflict managers

- A greater emphasis on the transition to middle school for six graders in terms of peer and social relationships, friendship, and expectations. A panel presentation in January with a junior high administrator, parents, students, and Spanish immersion teacher from Emerson.
- A monthly meet and greet coffee hour with the principal, SIPAT board, and climate committee in order to increase access and communication with parents.
- A formalized liaison position with SIPAT

### **Conclusion**

The 2011-12 school year was, overall, a productive year for the climate committee. In addition to continuing work on several long-term projects such as the climate survey and student council, the committee also served the purpose of bringing together parents and school staff to network with one another and share ideas and concerns about school climate. It is the hope of the climate committee that next year's group will continue this work, implement some of the new ideas, and also attract new members.

### **Comments or questions about this report may be directed to:**

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