



## Climate Committee Final Report 2010-2011 César Chávez Elementary School

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### Summary

The 2010-2011 school year proved to be a transition period for the Chavez Climate Committee in several ways:

- Transition from a more narrowly focused conflict resolution/bullying prevention program to a broader interest in social climate
- The institutionalization of the committee under district climate committee policy and guidelines.

### Committee Projects

#### *The Climate Survey*

Drawing upon the bullying prevention survey that had been administered in the 2009-2010 school year, the Climate Committee agreed to create a new survey for parents, teachers, and students that would gauge overall social climate including friendship, leadership, school connectedness, academic aspiration, and bullying. The school district's coordinator of school climate activities, Mel Lewis, took an active interest in the climate survey and attended the initial meetings. The district became interested in using our survey as a model for the other elementary schools. The survey sub-committee began meeting in December to draft a new survey with the intention of the survey being administered in February. The survey was delayed due to concerns at the district level regarding certain aspects of the survey wording, the overall length of the survey, and the content of certain questions. The district also required active consent from parents/guardians for students to participate. By April the sub-committee had completed a revised survey and began uploading the three surveys to Survey Monkey and Principal Beck volunteered to translate them into Spanish. The district then informed the committee that passive consent from parents would be acceptable. Due to delays in the translation process, student testing, and end of the year activities the survey was not completed in time to be administered for the 2010-2011 school year. As of this report the English surveys are complete but the committee still waits for the Spanish translations. The committee is disappointed with the numerous delays that prevented the survey from being completed by the parents, students, and staff. The committee hopes that the survey will be implemented in the 2011-12 school year without further delays.

#### *Counselor Hire and Kelso*

In December 2010 the school began the process of hiring a new counselor to work with the K-3 students on Kelso's Choices and the 4-6 students in small-group sessions dealing primarily with friendship issues. A counselor was hired in early 2011 but left the job soon after and was not replaced. The committee would like to know if there is currently a job listing posted with the district to fill this position. Principal Beck volunteered to take on teaching Kelso to the lower grades for this school year and is willing to teach Kelso to the K-3 students next year as well. The committee has not yet heard from Principal Beck on whether and how the new implementation of Kelso went in the spring. The committee was in agreement that a counselor should be hired for the 4-6 grades for the fall, as soon as a SIPAT budget is approved. The committee would also like clarification on whether the counselor, if hired in time, could also be teaching Kelso's Choices.

### *Promoting Student-School Connectedness*

- Student Council: Under the leadership of teachers Sara Caulfield, Jose Bermudez and Maite Sureda and much enthusiasm from the student body, a student council was established. Information sessions and candidate workshops were held in April and May. Elections for officers were held in May 2011 in addition to a car-wash fundraiser. Student were also given the responsibility to use two hallway bulletin boards to post news regarding the student council and to promote school spirit.
- Monthly Assemblies: Principal Beck is planning to hold special assemblies next year to promote school connectedness. Having visited other elementary schools in the district she is encouraged by the types of assemblies that are organized, planned, and lead by intermediate students. These assemblies also promote responsibility, character building, and positive behavior by "rewarding" students for good works, kindness, and other worthy attributes.

### *4th Grade Transition from MME*

Last year an effort was begun to increase support provided to incoming 4<sup>th</sup> grade Marguerite Montgomery Elementary transfer students and their families in their transition to Cesar Chavez Elementary. In order to help student acclimate to Chavez and a new social environment, interested parents, students, and teachers helped create welcome books for the new students, assigned buddy families, and hosted a summer picnic and tour of the school. Chavez parent, Amy Duffy, and counselor Susie Carell organized a welcome picnic. Amy Duffy purchased cookies and took a group of involved/friendly incoming 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> graders over to the school to lead tours and answer student and parent questions. Amy supervised this group of students and briefly welcomed the new MME families to our school. Susie mentored the 4<sup>th</sup> grade buddies on how to make their new classmates feel welcome and facilitated a few group games to help the kids get to know each other. They had name tags for all of the kids and families and the kids loved looking at their binders which contained artwork and welcome letters from 3<sup>rd</sup> grade CCE students and class photos. Amy believes the binders were key, because they provided an on-going resource tool for the kids to use as they made this transition and many transition families told us the same. The event was very well attended, and feedback indicated that both students and families felt like it was an important part in their transition experience. Welcome binders are currently being prepared for the incoming 4<sup>th</sup> grade transfer students but due to lack of time and resources, we were not able to recruit buddy families or plan a summer welcome picnic this year. The newly formed student council plans to have a welcome event and tour for the transfer students early in the new school year.

### *Diversity Training Workshops*

The Climate Committee sponsored the first in a series of diversity training activities by hosting the locally produced documentary, *From the Community to the Classroom*, with the film's producer and Chavez parent, Jann Murray-García. This inspiring film details the efforts of Davis High School students to create a positive school climate and combat racism after an instance of racial bigotry. In attendance at the film screening was Mike Kanna, the Race and Social Justice teacher from DHS and several of his students. Dr. Murray-García will continue the diversity training series with workshops on talking to children about race and bullying.

### *SIPAT and the Climate Committee*

During this school year we were pleased to have a diverse membership on the climate committee including an administrator, a teacher, and a site council member in addition to parents. An area of improvement for next year would be increased communication and collaboration with SIPAT. We hope to have more SIPAT members involved in the climate committee and would like more open dialogue between the groups in order to assist one another on developing and implementing projects. The committee would like to suggest a liaison between the climate committee and SIPAT as a way for both groups to keep abreast of each other's projects and to offer assistance when needed.

### **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)
- The creation of more extracurricular activities (such as a Chess Club for example) that can be supported by parents
- Recruiting parent volunteers for existing programs such as the choir and migrant center welcome, the transition of students from Montgomery, class picnics, and alternative recess.
- More outreach to kindergarten families including a picnic in late summer.
- A school climate section could be added to the CCE display case and updated by students
- Additional playground supervision and the adoption of Playworks (through SIPAT)
- Future parent education events (with potential collaboration with other DJUSD schools)
- Peer to peer programs such as cross-age buddies and conflict managers
- Inclusion of exercises such as yoga that would help students focus their energy
- A greater emphasis on the transition to middle school for six graders in terms of peer and social relationships, friendship, and expectations
- An exit survey for parents who elect to remove their children from Chavez prior to sixth grade. The survey should address academic and social concerns.

### **Conclusion**

The 2010-11 school year was, overall, a productive year for the newly formed climate committee. In addition to beginning 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 and also attract more members.

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

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