



Climate Committee Final Report 2014-2015 César Chávez Elementary School

Summary

The 2014-15 CCE Climate Committee continued to work on projects from last year including the climate survey, first-grade lunch/recess supervision, and development of a first-grade natural play area. This year the climate committee also completed the Parent Resource Library project.

Committee Projects

Parent Engagement Nights

In an effort to increase participation and streamline monthly meetings, for the 2014-2015 school year, the CCE Climate Committee scheduled three evening workshops for families, teachers, and staff on various topics related to school climate. The first event on September 23, 2014 focused on community-building and increasing parent involvement. For the second presentation on January 28, 2015, we invited Kate Snow, DJUSD Climate Coordinator, and Laurie Stillman, CCE parent and student development consultant, to present on gender inclusive schools and parenting. Based on the large attendance and volume of requests for practical tips and more information, the committee proposed holding a follow-up workshop. However, because of scheduling conflicts, as well as other circumstances, we were not able to organize a third family engagement night. Looking ahead, we hope to kick-off the 2015-2016 school year with an updated gender inclusive presentation that includes a panel of speakers and addresses feedback from the previous event.

Closed monthly meetings proved productive for discussing agenda items and developing projects in an uninterrupted and timely manner. In the past, meetings were on occasion disrupted and prolonged as parents and guardians attended in order to share pressing concerns. During the past year, family members relied on email to inform committee co-chairs directly of any issues related to school climate. Given the success of the monthly closed meetings and community-wide events, we will maintain this schedule for next year.

Climate Surveys

Beginning in February 2015, the committee administered three separate surveys to families, staff, and students in grades 3-6. The surveys, which were available in both Spanish and English, measured perceptions and experiences related to school connectedness, friendship, conflict/bullying, and safety. Based on responses from previous surveys, this year we modified the family survey to better understand and assess the concerns and needs of parents and guardians. Roughly 28% of families and half of all upper grade students participated in the survey. As in past years, the committee has shared data from the surveys with CCE staff, teachers, and families, as well as district personnel. The committee will continue to analyze data for recommendation and planning purposes and will post a report available for download

at <http://www.ccesipat.com/index.cfm/programs/climate-committee/>. For Fall 2015, the district plans to contract Youth Truth to conduct a baseline assessment of students' climate perceptions for grades 3-12. As a committee, we have discussed terminating the student survey but hope to continue administering the family and staff climate questionnaires in February.

Counselor and Kelso's Choices

In spite of available funding through SIPAT, CCE did not hire a school counselor for the 2014-2015 school year. Katherine Allgood, who had served in the position for the last two years, transferred to Holmes Middle School to work with an age group more aligned with her training and background. In response, the committee pursued various means to retain a counselor or at minimum an individual to introduce Kelso's Choices to kindergarten classes and review the program with first and second graders. Due to district restrictions and the limited hours associated with the position, CCE could not provide a counselor for its students nor extensive Kelso's Choices resources or supports for teachers in the lower grades.

Fortunately, because of the dedication of school personnel, parent volunteers, and community advocates throughout the district, the school board approved the hiring of counselors at all seven elementary schools at .25 FTE or 10 hours per week for the 2015-2016 school year. Dependent on budgetary and other considerations, in mid-June the board will consider increasing the position to .50 FTE or 20 hours per week. During the same time period, the district plans to hold interviews for the positions. Principal Beck will be out of the country during the middle of June and plans to conduct some interviews via telephone with the support of Marguerite Montgomery Elementary School's principal, Sally Plicka. In addition, this year's Climate Committee co-chairs will join the interview committee, as well as CCE teacher, Sara Caufield.

Parent Resource Library

Led by her unwavering vision and perseverance, the climate committee worked with CCE parent and family practitioner, Lisa Baumeister, to create a resource library for families to check out parenting and age-relevant books to promote social and emotional intelligence, friendship skills, respecting differences, and other childhood concerns. All 100+ books are highly recommended by local therapists and psychologists, as well as nationally recognized organizations, such as Welcoming Schools and the Center on the Social and Emotional Foundations for Early Learning. When possible, both Spanish and English versions are available. Families, with the help of Avid Reader which offered books at a discount, purchased or donated titles from the committee's wish list. SIPAT generously purchased the remaining books and the Círculo de Lectura program graciously agreed to house the library in their book exchange room. Once the library was up and running, we began publicizing the service and will continue to do so the following school year.

First-Grade Programs

First-Grade Lunch/Recess Volunteers

The move from the self-contained kindergarten play area to the “big playground” is overwhelming for some first-grade students at the beginning of the year. To assist this new population and address concerns voiced by first-grade families in earlier climate surveys and during meetings, the climate committee implemented a volunteer program a few years ago. This year, Lisa Severino, organized family members and coordinated a daily schedule to ensure that at least one to two parents or guardians were always available to help supervise students at lunch and during recess. In addition, Principal Beck continued the practice of separating first through third graders at lunchtime during the first few weeks of school. By allowing each grade to eat in the MPR, she is able to introduce or reintroduce lunch and recess rules in a more contained and cooler environment, as shade is limited around the outdoor lunch tables during late August and early September.

Currently, the climate committee does not have a coordinator for next year’s volunteer supervision program. As in previous years, the committee had expected to discuss the program during the “Transition to First Grade” information night to generate interest and recruit potential participants. Despite our requests this year, we were not included. Based on longitudinal analysis of climate survey comments, we have concerns about the demise of the program. To safeguard its continued positive impact, outgoing co-chair, Anastasia Panagakos, has agreed to serve as interim volunteer coordinator with the help of some of this year’s family supporters.

First-Grade Natural Playscape

With a budget of \$2,000 from SIPAT and enthusiastic approval from the district’s Facilities, Maintenance, and Operation, the climate committee continued to pursue implementation of the first-grade play area, which Eric Xu, UC Davis landscape architecture graduate, designed for CCE last year as part of his senior’s thesis. With the much-anticipated renovation of CCE’s north wing this summer, the district has agreed to allocate some resources to launch the project by redirecting lawn sprinklers, de-sodding the designated area, laying down a weed barrier, and transporting and distributing wood chips mid-June. Under the guidance of CCE parent, Ryan Deering, the committee hopes to enlist a cadre of volunteers to install a rock garden with several large boulders, a border of tall native grasses, and redwood beams to foster creative and diverse play using natural materials before the start of school at the end of August.

Collaborations

DJUSD

Climate committee members continued to appreciate and take advantage of opportunities to work with teachers, staff, administrators, and other parent volunteers across the school district on issues around school climate. Members participated in quarterly district climate committee meetings, as well as district-wide parent engagement meetings. During the Third Annual DJUSD Parent Engagement Night on April 3, 2015, members presented a workshop on past

and current CCE Climate Committee projects. Members also attended forums regarding the Local Control Accountability Plan (LCAP) and district board members.

SIPAT

Continuing the previous year's close working relationship with SIPAT, climate committee co-chairs attended several SIPAT meetings to provide updates and request funding for various projects. SIPAT President Jenna Makus and Vice-Presidents Cassie Hartzog and Lisa Severino provided much appreciated assistance and support. Such collaboration resulted in consistent communication between the two groups and regularly updated information about the committee's efforts on SIPAT's website and e-communications.

Future Goals

1. Implement and complete the first phase of the first-grade natural playscape before the start of the 2015-2016 school year.
2. Identify a coordinator for the first-grade family volunteer program, train participants, and maintain support for the program.
3. Continue participating in site-specific and district-wide meetings and events related to school climate.
4. Increase communication with CCE Site Committee.
5. Stay connected to Play Works and Brainology programs for sixth grade classes.

Conclusion

Overall, the 2014-15 school year was another productive year for the climate committee. We completed the CCE Family Resource Library; continued working on long-term projects, such as the climate survey and counselor advocacy; facilitated discussions on how to create a safe and inclusive school community; and initiated execution of new ventures, including the first-grade play area. We are confident that next year's committee will continue long-term efforts, implement new projects, attract more members, and maintain collaborations with SIPAT and other school groups. After five years of outstanding commitment and work, Anastasia Panagakos will retire as co-chair. CCE parent, committee member, and student development consultant, Laurie Stillman, has graciously agreed to step in as co-chair. Thank you to Anastasia for her incredible service and welcome to Laurie!

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