

The Director's Link

Published by the McCormick Center for Early Childhood Leadership at National-Louis University

Winter 2011

If you've visited many other early childhood programs, you know that each has its own distinct personality. Some seem to exude warmth and sunlight from the moment you walk in the door. The director and teachers are spirited and energetic. They radiate a sense of confidence and enthusiasm about their work. When they interact with children, families, and each other, they are warmhearted and supportive.

In other settings, though, stormy conditions seem to permeate the air. The mood may be competitive or harsh. Spontaneous laughter is infrequent and complaints about roles and responsibilities, general work conditions, and, of course, *those parents*, are frequent.

Each program's unique personality and characteristics certainly affect the quality of work life for staff. Organizational theorists refer to the distinct atmosphere that characterizes work settings as its *organizational climate*. The use of a weather metaphor seems appropriate because some centers are distinctly sunny, warm, and nurturing, while others are stormy and unpredictable.

Take a moment to think about the climate of your program. What does the weather forecast look like for your center?

Why Organizational Climate Is So Important

Most of us do not stop to analyze the organizational climate of our workplace, but the climate does influence our behavior, our feelings about our jobs, and how comfortable we feel in expressing our opinions. Without question, the climate of our programs impacts how well we are able to perform our responsibilities and the quality of our day-to-day interactions with children, parents, and co workers.

Although organizational climate may be relatively easy to sense even in a brief visit, the concept is not easy to define. It is made up of many dimensions, including the perceptions, attitudes, beliefs, and values of all the individuals in a work setting—a composite of personalities and the leadership that guides them. Your role as director and the decisions you make as a leader have a big impact on staff's perceptions of the organizational climate of your program.

Organizational climate is not the same as *psychological climate* or *job satisfaction*, which are people's perceptions of the degree to which their own *individual* needs and expectations are being met. Organizational climate, on the other hand, describes workers' *collective perceptions* of conditions that exist in the workplace.

The ten dimensions described in the table on page 3 arise from a practical sense about how early childhood centers differ, and are consistent with present theoretical knowledge about individual and group behavior in organizations. There is certainly some overlap between these ten dimensions, as the categories are not meant to be mutually exclusive.

Taking steps to improve your center's organizational climate is an effective way to increase staff morale, enhance program quality, and perhaps even reduce teacher turnover. Several studies have found a significant relationship between staff commitment and organizational climate. In a field plagued with high turnover, it makes good sense to direct our attention toward establishing work environments that foster high levels of commitment.

One important characteristic of a healthy climate that inspires commitment is a warm, caring relationship among administrators, teachers, and support staff. Your program may be a business, but it is a *people* business. As such the relationships established among your staff

How's the Weather in Your Center?

By Paula Jorde Bloom,
Ann Hentschel, and Jill Bella



Continued on page 2

are at the core of the success of the program. As the distinguished scholar Roland Barth states, "Teachers and administrators demonstrate all too well a capacity to either enrich or diminish one another's lives and thereby enrich or diminish their program."

Measuring Organizational Climate

As director, you probably have an overall impression of when things are going well or not so well, but you may lack specific information on just which areas of the program contribute to those impressions. The information gleaned from conducting an organizational climate assessment will help you clarify those vague feelings and define more precisely how different dimensions of your center are perceived.

Your staff's perceptions of the center's work climate are a good source of information not necessarily because they reflect objective reality, but rather because how staff perceive their experience is what is important. Measuring their perceptions of the quality of their work life can help explain why and where things are going well and identify where changes may be needed.

Conducting an organizational climate assessment is an effective way to increase staff involvement and target areas that will improve overall morale and performance.

The McCormick Center for Early Childhood Leadership has developed two tools to assist you in your organizational climate assessment efforts. The short version of the *Early Childhood Work Environment Survey* (ECWES) is available to download from the McCormick Center's website (<http://cecl.nl.edu/evaluation/oca.htm>). Feel free to reproduce copies to use with your staff. Remember, however, that this short, informal survey provides only a global

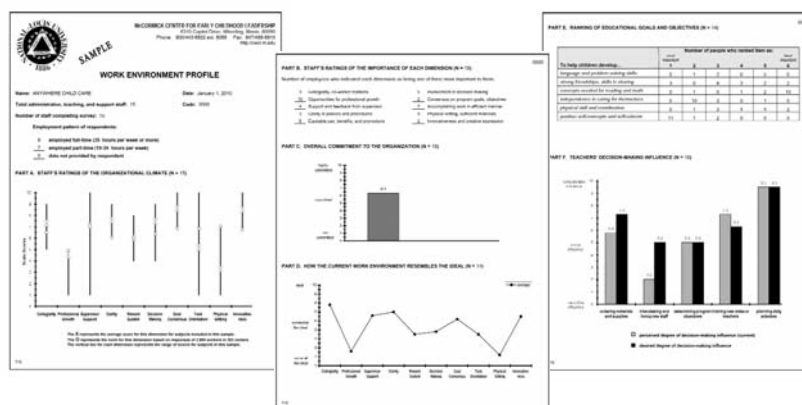
assessment of organizational climate; it should not be used to interpret organizational functioning in each of the ten dimensions separately.

Periodically, you may decide that you want a more systematic, standardized assessment of your center's work climate, one that provides a more comprehensive analysis of organizational functioning. If so, the long version of the *Early Childhood Work Environment Survey* may suit your needs. Copies may be ordered from and scored by the McCormick Center for Early Childhood Leadership. A nominal fee is charged for the surveys and the computer-generated profile. All records and results remain confidential. Ordering information is available on the McCormick Center's website (<http://cecl.nl.edu/evaluation/order.html>). A Head Start version and a Spanish version of the survey are also available.

The ECWES is designed for use by all administrators, teachers, component coordinators, and support staff who work in a paid capacity more than 10 hours a week in a program for young children. Centers with fewer than five employees will probably find the survey less helpful because the results tend to vary only slightly with so few respondents.

The ECWES takes approximately 15 minutes to fill out. When completed, surveys can be sent to the McCormick Center for tabulation of the results. In approximately six weeks, a Work Environment Profile will then be sent back to your organization summarizing the combined ratings for all participants. In this way anonymity is ensured for each individual respondent.

The profile includes graphic representations of staff perceptions of current organizational practices, their level of commitment, and their perceptions of how their current work setting compares to their ideal.



The *Director's Link* is made possible by funding from the Illinois Department of Human Services (IDHS) and the McCormick Foundation, and is distributed free of charge to early childhood directors in Illinois.

Address corrections should be directed to:

McCormick Center for Early Childhood Leadership

6310 Capitol Drive • Wheeling, Illinois 60090

Phone 800-443-5522, ext. 5056

Fax 847-465-5910

E-mail cecl@nl.edu

Web Site <http://cecl.nl.edu>

Michael W. Louis Endowed Chair

Paula Jorde Bloom
paula.bloom@nl.edu

Executive Director

Sue Offutt
sue.offutt@nl.edu

Faculty and Staff

Carmen Adamczyk	Kara Lehnhardt
Giovanni Arroyo	Martha Owens
Jill Bella	Liliana Perez
Linda Butkovich	Kathleen Radice
Melissa Casteel	Lorena Rodriguez
Lisa Ellis	Kathleen Rousseau
Lila Goldston	Kim Roscoe
Ann Hentschel	Paula Steffen
Kia Hill	Teri Talan
Donna Jonas	Debra Trude-Suter
Tarah Kadzielawski	Barbara Volpe
Robyn Kelton	Vasilya Waddell
Heather Knapp	Migdalia Young

Director's Link

Editor	Donna Jonas donna.jonas@nl.edu
Layout	Burkat Design

Advisory Board

Kay Albrecht	Holly Knicker
Vince Allocco	Tom Layman
Blakely Bundy	Karen Ponder
Bee Jay Ciszek	Kathy Ryg
Leonette Coates	Luz Maria Solis
Jerry Cutts	Margie Wallen
Stacie Goffin	Lana Weiner
Ed Greene	Cass Wolfe
Luis Hernandez	Tanya Woods

Our Mission

The McCormick Center for Early Childhood Leadership is dedicated to enhancing the management skills, professional orientation, and leadership capacity of early childhood administrators. The activities of the Center encompass four areas: training and technical assistance, program evaluation, research, and public awareness.

<http://cecl.nl.edu>

Continued on page 3

Ten Dimensions of Organizational Climate	
Collegiality	The extent to which staff are friendly, supportive, and trusting of one another. The peer cohesion and esprit de corps of the group.
Professional Growth	The degree of emphasis placed on staff's professional growth. The availability of opportunities to increase professional competence.
Supervisor Support	The degree of facilitative leadership providing encouragement, support, and clear expectations.
Clarity	The extent to which policies, procedures, and responsibilities are clearly defined and communicated.
Reward System	The degree of fairness and equity in the distribution of pay, fringe benefits, and opportunities for advancement.
Decision Making	The degree of autonomy given to staff and the extent to which they are involved in making centerwide decisions.
Goal Consensus	The extent to which staff agree on the philosophy, goals, and educational objectives of the center.
Task Orientation	The emphasis placed on organizational effectiveness and efficiency, including productive meetings, program outcomes, and accountability.
Physical Setting	The extent to which the spatial arrangement of the center helps or hinders staff in carrying out their responsibilities. The availability of supplies and materials.
Innovativeness	The extent to which the center adapts to change and encourages staff to find creative ways to solve problems.

Forecasting the Weather

Conducting an organizational climate assessment is not an end in itself, but rather the first steppingstone toward action. Simply assessing attitudes is not sufficient to increase staff morale and commitment to organizational goals. But diagnosis and evaluation of the results can give direction to your actions. When directors use survey results to work with their staff to bring about change, staff feel empowered and commitment to the center is strengthened.

Tuning in to the factors that impact the

organizational climate of your center is not a luxury. It is the essence of what it means to be an effective leader guiding and shaping the quality of work life for those who give so much to others. Good directors know how to forecast the weather. They are not passive about the factors that influence organizational effectiveness, rather they play an active role in shaping climate indicators.

Paula, Ann, and Jill are the authors of *A Great Place to Work: Creating a Healthy Organizational Climate* (www.newhorizonsbooks.net) from which this article was adapted.

School climate is much like the air we breathe—it tends to go unnoticed until something is seriously wrong.

– H. Jerome Freiberg

Planning Ahead

Professional Development Opportunities

Family Child Care Institute—What About Those Stars? Using the FCCERS-R and BAS to Promote Quality in Family Child Care

March 5 and May 14, 2011

Family child care providers who participate in Quality Counts, the Illinois Quality Rating System (QRS), demonstrate a commitment to providing quality care to young children and their families. This institute, funded by the Illinois Department of Human Services (IDHS), will focus on indicators in the *Family Child Care Environment Rating Scale-Revised* (FCCERS-R) and the *Business Administration Scale for Family Child Care* (BAS) that have been identified as challenging for providers. Understanding how to interpret and achieve these indicators will help you identify and make meaningful changes in your program.

Participants will have an opportunity to hear several providers describe their Quality Counts program-improvement journey using the FCCERS-R and the BAS to achieve a QRS star rating. Illinois QRS specialists will also be on hand to offer tips and strategies for preparing your program for a QRS assessment. Spanish-speaking providers will have an opportunity to engage in conversation with bilingual assessors. The institute facilitator will be Barb Volpe, an assessor and training specialist for the McCormick Center.



Using the FCCERS-R to Promote Quality in Family Care

Date: Saturday, March 5, 2011; 8:30 am – 4:00 pm

Location: McCormick Center for Early Childhood Leadership, National-Louis University, 6310 Capitol Drive, Wheeling, IL

Using the BAS to Promote Quality in Family Child Care

Date: Saturday, May 14, 2011; 8:30 am – 2:00 pm

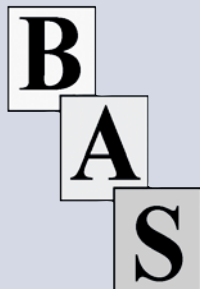
Location: Westin Chicago North Shore, 601 North Milwaukee Avenue, Wheeling, IL

Fee: \$199, includes both days, texts, materials, and meals (continental breakfast and lunch)

Participants may receive undergraduate credit by paying an additional fee, completing a project, and engaging in an online discussion about best practices in family child care.

Business Administration Scale Assessor Reliability Training

March 28– 30, 2011 or August 15–17, 2011



The *Business Administration Scale for Family Child Care* (BAS) is a valid and reliable tool for measuring and improving the overall quality of business and professional practices in family child care settings. The BAS is applicable for multiple uses including program self-improvement, technical assistance and monitoring, training, research and evaluation, and public awareness.

This assessor reliability training is designed for organizational consultants, resource and referral specialists, family child care network supervisors, and college instructors who are interested in improving the quality of business and professional practices in family child care settings. Participants will learn how the BAS can be used to set goals to incrementally improve business practices that result in better communication with parents, financial stability, reduced risk in operating a home business, and compliance with legal requirements.

Location: McCormick Center for Early Childhood Leadership, National-Louis University, 6310 Capitol Drive, Wheeling, IL

Fee: \$750, includes texts, materials, and meals

Participants may receive graduate credit by paying an additional fee and completing course assignments.

Professional Development Opportunities

Technology Training for Early Childhood Administrators Playing It Safe in the Digital Age

Computers, smart phones, e-mail, and social media may make our lives easier, but they also make early childhood programs vulnerable to a host of new problems. This session addresses some of the issues associated with operating an early childhood program in the digital age. Learn how digital devices impact your staff and families and discuss strategies to bring your program's policies and procedures up to speed. Topics include:

- How to protect yourself and others online
- Options for keeping data safe
- How to avoid online scams, viruses, and malware
- How to set permissions in social networking sites to keep private information private

No past social networking or advanced computer skills required. This one-day workshop will be offered in three locations.

Fee: \$45 per session

Date: March 18, 2011, 9:00 am – 4:00 pm

Location: National-Louis University, 1000 Capitol Drive, Wheeling, IL

Date: March 24, 2011, 9:00 am – 4:00 pm

Location: Parkland College, 2400 West Bradley Avenue, Champaign, IL

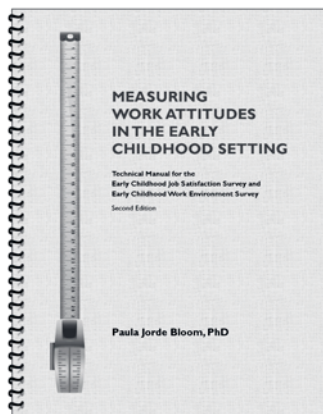
Date: April 1, 2011, 9:00 am – 4:00 pm

Location: Kishwaukee College Conference Center, 21193 South Malta Road, Room A221, Malta, IL

Register online at: <http://cecl.nl.edu/training/workshops.htm>.



For more information about these professional development opportunities and a list of local hotels, please contact Debra Trude-Suter at 800-443-5522, ext. 5056 or debra.trudesuter@nl.edu. You can also register online at <http://cecl.nl.edu>.



Just Published

MEASURING WORK ATTITUDES IN THE EARLY CHILDHOOD SETTING

Technical Manual for the Early Childhood Job Satisfaction Survey and the Early Childhood Work Environment Survey (Second Edition)

By Paula Jorde Bloom, PhD

Measuring Work Attitudes in the Early Childhood Setting provides a framework for understanding and evaluating early childhood environments from the perspective of the adults who work in those environments. It is intended for early childhood administrators who are looking for practical ways to improve the quality of work life for their staff and for researchers interested in conducting scholarly investigations of job satisfaction and the organizational climate of early childhood programs.

Measuring Work Attitudes in the Early Childhood Setting introduces the reader to two assessments, the Early Childhood Job Satisfaction Survey (ECJSS) and the Early Childhood Work Environment Survey (ECWES). Technical information on the development of the instruments, data on reliability and validity, and national norms are presented as well as examples of practical and scholarly applications. The book concludes with a chapter about organizational change and lessons learned from different intervention initiatives.

8 ½ x 11, spiral bound, 120 pages, \$25. Available from the McCormick Center for Early Childhood Leadership, National-Louis University, 847-947-5063, <http://cecl.nl.edu/public/orderform.pdf>.

LEADERSHIP Connections

May 12 - 14, 2011

Online registration now open!

Go to <http://cecl.nl.edu/training/lc.htm> for more information on the conference and the special study tour/conference option.

Location: Westin Chicago North Shore
601 North Milwaukee Avenue
Wheeling, IL

Fee: \$375 before February 1, 2011
\$400 February 1 - March 31, 2011
\$450 April 1 - 30, 2011
\$500 after May 1, 2011

Discounts are available for groups of 10 or more.

**For more information about registration or sponsorship opportunities,
contact Donna Jonas at 800-443-5522, ext. 5058 or donna.jonas@nl.edu**

*Happy New Year from our
family to yours...*

The faculty and staff of the McCormick Center for Early Childhood Leadership

Carmen Adamczyk, Giovanni Arroyo, Jill Bella, Paula Jorde Bloom, Linda Butkovich, Melissa Casteel, Lisa Ellis, Lila Goldston, Ann Hentschel, Kia Hill, Donna Jonas, Tarah Kadzielawski, Robyn Kelton, Heather Knapp, Kara Lehnhardt, Sue Offutt, Martha Owens, Liliam Perez, Kathleen Radice, Tanya Rafrat Lorena Rodriguez, Kim Roscoe, Kathleen Rousseau, Paula Steffen, Teri Talan, Debra Trude-Suter, Barbara Volpe, Vasilya Waddell, and Migdalia Young

