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PRESS RELEASE

Schuylkill Technology Center Highlighted as a National Model for Creating a Positive School Climate

Pottsville (January 8, 2019) —Schuylkill Technology Center (STC) was one of six schools selected for a year-long research project by the National School Climate Center (NSCC) to study efforts to improve school climate. The research culminated in a new **Lessons from the Field** report which shares best practices for creating safe, engaging school communities. The report is available at <https://schoolclimate.org/summit>.

The report highlights the Schuylkill Technology Center's commitment to project-based learning, its student ambassador program and its "exceptional" inclusion of students with disabilities.

One of the lessons from the field is the use of project based learning to support positive school climate. Students at Schuylkill Technology Center participate in vocational training for a portion of the school year. Students spoke to researchers about the gratification they experienced as a result of creating things in school, as well as the opportunities to build relationships, tackle new challenges and collaborate on projects.

The report also commended the Schuylkill Technology Center for creating peer support groups for issues impacting students such as the loss of a parent and its commitment to conflict resolution.

"This NSCC School Climate Initiative provided an opportunity for STC to identify opportunities to improve our school and cultivate an atmosphere of mutual respect," said Stacey Minahan, Assistant Director of Career and Technical Education.

NSCC conducted focus groups and site visits, and interviewed district leadership and staff at six school districts – Center City Public Charter Schools (Washington D.C.), Monroe-Woodbury School District (NY), Parkway School District (MO), Schuylkill Technology Centers (PA), Simpson County Schools (KY), and West Sonoma Union County High Schools (CA) – to develop a collection of best practices for creating safe, engaging school communities. The Lessons from the Field Report outlines seven key lessons learned from the school districts during this work:

- 1) Innovative, collaborative leadership galvanizes school community engagement

- 2) Committed and trusted adults are necessary catalysts for change and central to student success
- 3) Confronting the challenge of conflict deepens trust among students and teachers
- 4) Project-based and service learning stimulate greater inclusion & engagement
- 5) Social-emotional learning integration enhances classroom practice
- 6) Representation of all student voices is key to striving towards equity
- 7) Peer-to-peer support structures instill leadership and strengthen student bonds

The report notes several challenges that still exist such as addressing socio-political issues, leadership turnover, continuing strong SEL instruction in middle and high school, and engaging the school community. The report also provides guidance for research, policy and practice moving forward.

The report was spurred by a 2017 summit convened by NSCC and Facebook for Education. The Connecting Communities of Courage: Building Inclusive, Safe, and Engaging Schools summit sought to address the mismatch between the needs of school communities and the policies, research, and resources available to build inclusive, safe, and engaging schools. NSCC's Communities of Courage report recapping the event is available at <https://schoolclimate.org/summit>.

“Creating a positive school climate – one in which students and adults are engaged, supported and respected – can improve both academic and positive life outcomes for young people. This is the goal of our work at the National School Climate Center,” said Whitney Allgood, CEO of the NSCC. “Our year of research with Schuylkill Technology Center provides powerful, thought-provoking insight in their important work to improve school climate.”

About STC

STC is an accredited career and technical school comprised of 12 public school districts in Schuylkill County: Blue Mountain, Mahanoy Area, Minersville, North Schuylkill, Pine Grove, Pottsville, Saint Clair, Schuylkill Haven, Shenandoah Valley, Tamaqua, Tri-Valley, and Williams Valley. STC serves students in grades 9-12, operates on two academic cycles (August – January & January – June), and has two campuses located in Mar Lin, PA (South Campus) and Frackville, PA (North Campus). STC offers 21 programs of study that combine classroom theory, hands-on application, and access to state of the art equipment. The programs are designed to promote lifelong learning that prepares students for successful entry into the workforce or higher education at the postsecondary level. For more information about the programs and services available at STC, please visit www.stcenters.org, or contact Stacey Minahan, Assistant Director, at minas@stcenters.org or Chris Groody, Assistant Director, at cgoody@stcenters.org.

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