



Success

Timely tips to improve student achievement

January 2020

Captain's Council teaches personal and community leadership to athletes

Norwood City's Norwood High School launched a program to help develop leadership skills among student-athletes. The group, called Captain's Council, was formed to allow students an opportunity to focus on their personal growth and community leadership. For more, go to <http://links.ohioschoolboards.org/SU600>.

Students learn hands-on skills in unique technical education program

Lakeshore Compact Construction Management Program — a partnership of Mentor EV, Wickliffe City and Euclid City schools — is in the business of renovating and flipping homes to teach 24 hand-picked students carpentry, trades and business skills required for home construction. For more, go to <http://links.ohioschoolboards.org/SU601>.

Students with visual impairments embrace science

Carla Curran, a guest teacher at the Perkins School for the Blind in Massachusetts, works to help students with visual impairments experience science in ways that don't depend on sight. Curran uses larger-than-life 3D models, sonic graphs and touch-based activities to spark curiosity in students, some of whom go on to pursue STEM careers. For more, visit <http://links.ohioschoolboards.org/SU602>.

Teacher starts courses with 'thinking inventory'

Karen Harris, a high school English teacher, engages students in higher-order thinking by first leading them through a "thinking inventory." The inventory includes a series of 10 essential questions that tap into students' lived experiences that subsequently inform classroom lessons. For more, visit <http://links.ohioschoolboards.org/SU603>.

Schools' food waste adds up

Approximately 530,000 tons of food may be wasted each year in U.S. schools, according to a report from the World Wildlife Fund. Efforts are underway to curb cafeteria waste, including the Food Waste Warriors program, which helped participating schools cut food waste by an average of 3%, with the top three schools slashing food waste by more than half. For more, visit <http://links.ohioschoolboards.org/SU604>.

Teachers use real-world examples to teach climate change

Some Missouri teachers are incorporating climate change into lessons using real-world examples. Teachers say students are very interested in the topic, so it is being covered in required high school science courses. For more, visit <http://links.ohioschoolboards.org/SU605>.

Student achievement in-depth

Each month, **Success** brings you a research brief or in-depth article to discuss with board members and administrators.

How reading is really being taught

The Education Week Research Center surveyed approximately 670 K-2 and special education teachers and 530 education professors who teach reading courses. The findings — among the first to look at teacher and teacher-educator knowledge and practices in early reading across the country — tell an illuminating story about what’s happening in classrooms, including what teachers do and don’t know about reading and where they learned it.

The study, called [Getting Reading Right](#), explores the challenges teachers face in bringing cognitive science to the classroom. **Liana Loewus**, an assistant managing editor for Education Week, reported the study was timely, given that recent scores on the nation’s report card show that just 35% of fourth-graders are proficient readers — and that the gap between low and high performers has grown.

The survey showed that 75% of teachers working with early readers teach three-cueing, an approach that tells students to take a guess when they come to a word they don’t know by using context, pictures and other clues, with only some attention to the letters.

Similarly, more than a quarter of teachers said they tell emerging readers that the first thing they should do when they come to a word they don’t know while reading is look at the pictures — even before they try to sound it out. And yet, as the research primer in this report details, those techniques are not backed by science. They’re methods employed by struggling readers; proficient readers attend to the letters.

The survey revealed teacher confusion between phonemic awareness and letter/sound correspondence. Only about half knew that students can demonstrate phonemic awareness by segmenting individual sounds in a word orally.

Likewise, teachers were asked about their philosophy of teaching early reading. Sixty-eight percent said “balanced literacy,” while 22% chose “explicit, systematic phonics (with comprehension as a separate focus).” Balanced literacy has no single definition, though there is agreement among most balanced literacy advocates that comprehension and immersion in authentic texts are key.

Predominant thinking suggests that, yes, students need some phonics, but not too much or they will become disengaged. And yet, many studies over many decades have shown that systematic, explicit phonics is the most effective method for teaching early readers. And a much-validated framework, known as the Simple View of Reading, says that reading comprehension is reliant on both decoding and language skills. A student cannot understand a text that he or she cannot accurately decode.

For more information and a link to the study, visit <http://links.ohioschoolboards.org/SU606>.

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