Welcome to Success!

Student Achievement Liaisons are a vital link between the OSBA Student Achievement Leadership Team and member boards of education. OSBA wants to increase communication with this special group, so this is the first edition of a monthly newsletter just for Student Achievement Liaisons. Success will feature timely tips to help boards focus on improving student achievement and trends on “raising the bar.”

Add to your agenda

One way to focus on the good things happening in your classrooms is to feature a successful program at board meetings. Make sure your board agenda includes at least one item to showcase academic achievement. Remember, it doesn’t always have to be your top academic program. Recognizing efforts to improve may be more important. Have teachers and students demonstrate and explain the unique benefits of different activities each month. The more students involved, the better. Each child usually brings one or two parents, siblings and grandparents.

Student Achievement Fair

Share your success beyond your community. Plan now to feature one of your outstanding programs at the 2001 OSBA Capital Conference and Trade Show. The line up for the Student Achievement Fair is now being put together. Contact Rob Delane, OSBA deputy director of board member services, for more information.

Key Work of School Boards Guidebook

In this mailing is a copy of NSBA’s Key Work of School Boards Guidebook, compliments of OSBA. This Guidebook is full of information to help your board of education improve student achievement. We know you will find it valuable. Additional Guidebooks may be purchased through NSBA.

Student Achievement Symposium changed

The date of the first 2001 Student Achievement Symposium was moved to Saturday, April 28. This free program will originate in Dublin and can be viewed in Franklin, Perrysburg, Nelsonville and Brecksville. Look for the promotional flier in this mailing.
Each month, Success will bring you a research brief to share with fellow board members. Use them to generate discussion with the board and staff. Additional student achievement information can be found at OSBA’s website: http://www.osba-ohio.org/SpeakUp.html

There is a growing body of research that suggests that parent involvement in a child’s learning can have a positive effect on a student’s academic achievement and reduce the chance of dropping out of school. Some of that research suggests that the greatest predictor of a child’s potential to succeed in school is the educational level of the child’s mother and parental involvement. In an effort to generate answers to a second level of questions on the issue parental involvement’s impact on student achievement, Melanie R. Scott Stein and Ron J. Thorkildsen released their report, Parent Involvement: Insights and Applications from the Research, in April 2000 with the Educational Research Service.

The authors analyzed 50 research articles to answer the following three questions:
1. To what extent is parent involvement related to achievement?
2. What kind of parent involvement has the strongest relationship with student achievement?
3. Do some forms of parent involvement work better with particular parents and children?

Some of their findings include:
1. Parental expectations by a child’s parents are a strong predictor of a child’s achievement in the classroom.
2. Parental involvement is a strong predictor in the amount of homework completed by a child.
3. The children of active parents in school programs did better than their counterparts with inactive parents in school programs.
4. There is a strong positive relationship between those parents who communicate regularly with school officials and their children about schools and the academic achievement of their children.

Although this is very encouraging, what can a school district, board, superintendent, principal or teacher do to influence parental involvement, especially for the children from challenging socio-economic backgrounds? Stein and Thorkildsen, as a result of their research, suggest that “economic disadvantage and cultural differences must be considered in planning parent involvement activities but should not be seen as predictive of failure.”

The authors further suggest that parents of low achievers may need more encouragement, help and guidance to get involved than do parents of high achievers. Thus, districts must try harder to reach the parents of low achievers. The next edition of this research brief will review a National Center for Education Statistics report on the ways schools try to improve parental involvement. The Stein and Thorkildsen report is available for $18 from Phi Delta Kappa International (www.pdkintl.org).
Achievement strategies

One way to help your students do better in the classroom is to help their parents set attainable achievement goals. Here is a tip from Whitehall City Superintendent Judyth Dobbert-Meloy. She suggests parents help their children gain a realistic sense of his or her achievement potential. First parents should reassure their children that everyone has strengths and weaknesses. Have each family member list two things they do well and two things they don't do well. Next, remind each child of significant accomplishments and goals already met. Have each child set a goal and break it into small manageable chunks. Reward the children as they reach those milestones. Children will soon learn that small successes translate into bigger successes. This pattern of achievement will carry over into all areas of study.

Highlight gifted program at board meeting

Before your next board meeting, ask the district gifted coordinator to make a presentation before the school board. Hearing about the new testing and screening requirement for gifted students will surprise a few board members and those attending the meeting.

Have a website?

Many school districts have webpages, but can you remember the last time you visited yours. Ask the staff member in charge to demonstrate the many features of your district's webpage for board members and central office administrators. Is the webpage complementing your district's mission? What is available to the web-surfing public? Is the website doing what you want it to do? Is the website easy to use? Does it reflect positively on the district?

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Student achievement research brief

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What type of activities can a school use to improve parental involvement? According to Parent Involvement in Children’s Education: Efforts by public elementary schools, a study by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), the most widely used activities to involve parents are:

- written information about the school’s performance on standardized tests,
- written interim reports,
- written information about the goals and objectives of the school’s regular instructional program,
- notification about children’s ability placements,
- positive phone calls and notes from teachers when children’s performance improves,
- examples of work that meets high standards,
- homework sign-off forms,
- school-sponsored homework helplines

Findings:

1. Of these eight forms of communication, more than half of the schools surveyed used seven of the eight forms. The least likely used form was a school sponsored homework helpline (24%).

2. 82% to 89% of all schools engaged one of seven activities that helped parents to improve student learning and child-rearing at home. A closer look at this finding revealed that rural schools (78%) were less likely than urban (93%) and suburban (92%) schools to provide parents with information on available community social service agencies.

3. Ninety-three percent of the schools used newsletters or other printed materials to communicate information to parents. Twenty-three percent of the schools used take home video/audio materials.

4. Staff members in 64% of the schools made home visits. Again, rural schools (58%) were less likely than urban (86%) and suburban (83%) schools to engage in this activity.

5. Schools did not share educational decision making with parents in many school activities.

6. More than half (53%) have a resource center for parents to get information on parenting, receiving training opportunities, or get involved in school-related issues.
Success is for you

This newsletter is for Student Achievement Liaisons, who are a vital link between the OSBA Student Achievement Leadership Team and member boards of education. You are the only one in your district receiving Success, so please share it with others.

Add some spirit to your board agenda

Many arts programs are wrapping up their performance projects in the spring, so this is a good time to feature student performances at your board meeting. Invite a musical group to sing or play a couple of selections for the April board meeting. Or, you could have a theatrical group give a reading or stage a short act from a play they are doing.

Boost your boosters

When was the last time you publicly thanked all those community members who so strongly support your schools? Have the leader of your PTA, PTO or academic boosters give a five-minute report to the board on the success of their efforts. Then thank them for all they do to help kids succeed. As a board, write a letter to the editor of your local newspaper thanking those who add so much to your educational program. Consider hosting a breakfast to recognize the contributions of these folks.

“I Tried” Awards

It is easy to honor the students at the top of the class. What are you doing to motivate those good students in the middle? Lucas Local (Richland) Schools has an award for students who raise one grade each grading period (without dropping any grades). The “I Tried” Awards, sponsored by the Academic Boosters, rewards students with certificates and possibly a pizza or ice cream reward at the end of the year.

Student groups needed

Share your successful arts programs. OSBA is looking for school groups to perform at the 2001 OSBA Capital Conference and Trade Show’s Student Achievement Fair. Contact Rachelle Bristol, OSBA deputy director of search services, for more information.
Student achievement research brief

The Fall 2000 ERS Spectrum recognized the success of Triangle Elementary School in Prince William County, Virginia in the article, Organizing schoolwide instruction using a nongraded continuous progress model. Triangle Principal Carolyn E. Haley wrote the article. The program, known as the nongraded continuous progress model, made a significant difference in the academic performance of her students within a short time span.

From 1991 to 1995, the reading scores for her students on the Iowa Tests of Basic Skills dropped dramatically. The number of children eligible for the free and reduced lunch program increased from a little over 20% in 1990 to a little over 60% in 1995. Furthermore, in 1995 the school's child mobility rate was at one of its highest levels (almost 60%) since 1990.

The above factors, and many others, contributed to the school's low academic performance in the past. The lack of strong instructional focus and student accountability were also cited as factors contributing to the school's decline in student achievement since 1990. It was also clear from Haley's analysis that the literacy weaknesses in the primary grades contributed to academic problems in the middle and high school grades.

The poor academic skills also adversely affected the school's culture and morale, according to Haley. She writes, “Students were frustrated and felt as if they were failures. Discipline problems were at an all-time high in the building. More and more students were placed in special education programs. There were five learning disability teachers and one teacher for educable mentally retarded students, which is much higher than the norm for a building of 490 students.”

After the model's implementation, the percentage of students scoring in the bottom quartile for the reading portion of the Iowa Tests of Basic Skills declined from a high of slightly over 41% in 1996 to a low of about 5% in 1999. In one year (1998 to 1999), the number of third graders that scored proficient in the following respective areas also increased: language arts – 67% to 98%, math – 60% to 100%, and information management – 65% to 99%.

To learn more details about the program, please see the Fall 2000 ERS Spectrum: Journal of School Research and Information, volume 18, number 4. Or contact Deborah Perkins-Gough, editor in chief, Educational Research Service, 2000 Clarendon Boulevard, Arlington, Virginia 22201-2908. The telephone number is (703) 248-6226. The e-mail address is dgough@ers.org.

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Success

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Give attendance awards

Based upon the simple concept that kids can’t learn if they are not in school, many districts recognize perfect attendance. For some at-risk students, going to school regularly will increase student learning and achievement. Is that enough motivation? Try honoring perfect attendance by recognition at board meetings, student assemblies or announcements over the PA. Give them a reward, anything from certificates for free hamburgers to a day of independent study. The April 9, 2001 OSBA Briefcase highlighted three Akron City high schools that rewarded students with a chance to skip finals. The results? Attendance is up.

Are your summer intervention programs ready?

Intervention is the key to young at-risk students. What intervention programs does your district offer in the summer? Publicize those programs now, especially to parents of those children who would benefit.

Honor academic achievement in May

The end of the school year is always filled with academic honors assemblies and ceremonies. Be sure the board is represented at each ceremony to underscore the importance you place on achievement and student success. Be sure to highlight districtwide academic success at your May board meetings and encourage the news media to do the same.

Make summertime learning sizzle

Have staff prepare a list of ideas for parents to keep kids learning over the summer. In addition to the usual summer reading assignments, offer suggestions for educational day trips. Some ideas could be to visit historical sites within 100 miles or a state park which has a nature program. Provide information so parents can easily organize a trip to either of Ohio’s Centers of Science and Industry, the Ohio Historical Society or the Statehouse. You can find information for convention and visitors bureaus and local chambers of commerce on the Internet and in the phone book. If you go to Ohio’s tourism home page (http://www.ohiotourism.com/search/) and search for “historical,” you will find 112 possible educational adventures.
Student achievement research brief

Each month, Success will bring you a research brief to share with fellow board members. Use them to generate discussion with the board and staff.

As the summer approaches, many of you are focusing on summer remediation programs and projects to maintain the achievements earned during the school year. You may want to consider the following reading program for your district. The summary below is an excerpt from an article, Seniors for Schools in Massachusetts by Sarah E. Torian, in the 1999 summer issue of The Tutor. The Tutor is a newsletter published by Linking Education and America Reads through National Service (LEARNS). For a copy of the full article, please contact Dr. John D. Stanford, OSBA deputy director of legislative services.

“Seniors for Schools” is a pilot project to improve reading levels in young readers. The primary volunteers of the program are men and women over the age of 55. In the program, these men and women serve in teams to make a significant contribution to help children learn to read.

“Leaps in Literacy” is the Seniors for Schools project in Boston and Brockton, Massachusetts. In that program, 101 students improved, on average, nearly three reading levels (based on Jerry L. John's Basic Reading Inventory). How did the program produce that success?

The heart of every tutoring project is what goes on between the tutor and the child. A well-trained tutor can give a child the one-on-one support and time needed to become a successful reader. But how can projects provide their tutors with the tools they need to do that?

Leaps in Literacy's answer to that question is the Reading Coaches™ model, designed by Mike Houston. Reading Coaches™ is a one-on-one tutoring model that uses vocabulary and reading comprehension activities to address the individual child's interests and reading ability. Houston is fine-tuning the model and works closely with Leaps in Literacy, providing training, helping them work through glitches and learning from their suggestions. “We have a lot of give and take,” explains Gartenberg. “When we pass suggestions on to him that come from our experiences, he integrates them into the program.”

Leaps in Literacy is currently in five schools in the Boston and Brockton area. But they see the project in a broader context. John Bengel, the director of Brockton's City Pride, explains, “My overall aim in Brockton is, in four or five years, to grow the program to serve all 16 elementary schools. But this is even bigger than that. It is a local, state and national effort. We are demonstrating the possibility of people working together in the schools.”

The eight other Seniors for Schools projects are in Cleveland; Kansas City, Mo.; Lake County, Fla.; Minneapolis, Minn.; New York, N.Y.; Philadelphia, Pa.; Port Arthur, Texas; and Portland, Ore.
Adjusting your CIP for next year
Continuous improvement plans (CIPs) need continuous work. Have the district staff member responsible for the CIP report on the successes of the past year's efforts and what adjustments to the plan are contemplated for the 2001-2002 school year. Learn what your district is doing and how the CIP is affecting student achievement. A board presentation is a good opportunity to recognize the community's citizens for their leadership and service on CIP committees.

Academic changes for 2002
Several years ago, Senate Bill 55 raised graduation requirements from 18 units to 21 units. Now, Substitute Senate Bill 94, the budget bill awaiting Governor Bob Taft's signature (at presstime), reduces the requirement to 20 units by eliminating one elective. Ask the curriculum director to explain these changes and how it will affect the district's education program.

Summer library activities
Public libraries across Ohio offer incentives for children to read while on summer vacation. Invite the head of your public library to a board meeting to speak on special summer reading programs. This would be an excellent time to learn more about collaborative efforts between the library and your school district.

Summer school report
Many districts have broad summer education programs. Have the director of your summer school report on district activities. Find out what classes are the most effective in improving student achievement. What can be done to enhance summer school? What remediation courses need to be offered next year? What are the incentives for students to enroll in summer school?

Board improvement
Just as you are continuously improving district operations and student achievement, what are you doing to improve your effectiveness as a board? Summer is a great time for board retreats and self-evaluation.
Student achievement research brief

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Are you looking for ways to improve student achievement? Well, Gordon Cawelti, former executive director of the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development and current research consultant with the Educational Research Service, and a number of researchers wrote a book to try and answer that question. The Handbook of Research on Improving Student Achievement, Second Edition, is designed to identify classroom practices that research has shown result in higher student achievement.

This handbook includes a number of practices from our existing knowledge base about effective teaching and learning. The goal of the Handbook is to help educators in their efforts to expand the instructional arsenal required to address the wide range of interests and aptitudes in today's classrooms.

To make the Handbook most useful to educators, the authors decided it should:

- include both research and classroom implications for each of the practices, as well as references for use by readers desiring more information;
- use a format that allows busy teachers and other school leaders to read the information on each practice in a short period of time;
- provide research on all of the major content areas so that teachers can learn from the research base developed in content areas other than their own.

The 208-page Handbook is divided into 11 chapters: generic practices, the arts, foreign language, health education, language arts, oral communication, mathematics, physical education, science, social studies and staff development. In the July 1999 edition of American School Boards Journal, Cawelti cited the following findings from the Handbook:

The authors identify eight to 10 teaching strategies on each subject in the Handbook, which are proven by research to improve student achievement. Classroom practices that apply to all subjects include parental involvement, graded homework, direct teaching, aligned time on task, tutoring, cooperative learning, mastery learning and teaching of learning strategies.

For a copy of the Handbook contact the Educational Research Services Information Center, 2000 Clarendon Boulevard, Arlington, VA 22201. The phone number is (800) 791-9308. The fax number is (800) 791-9309. The Handbook is $40.
Reading for success

Summer is such a good time for students and school board members to read. There are lots of resources for learning how other school districts are improving their students’ achievement. OSBA and NSBA have a host of books to help you better understand the school board member’s role in improving student learning. Contact OSBA, (800) 589-OSBA, or NSBA, (703) 838-NSBA, for a catalog of available publications.

Surfing for success

If reading books isn't your style, why not surf the Internet for student achievement ideas. In addition to OSBA's Student Achievement Initiative Web site (www.osba-ohio.org/SpeakUp.html) and the Annenberg Institute’s (see back page), try visiting a few of these Web sites for ideas:

- Goals 2000's increasing student achievement through state and local initiatives (www.ed.gov/G2K/GoalsRpt);
- National Education Association's Student learning and achievement (www.nea.org/helpfrom/achieve/index.html);
- National Institute on Student Achievement, Curriculum and Assessment (www.ed.gov/offices/OERI/SAI/);
- Georgia student achievement toolbox (www.gatoolbox.org);
- National Clearinghouse for Comprehensive School Reform (www.goodschools.gwu.edu/);
- Southeast Regional Educational Laboratory's linked page (www.serve.org/educational.htm).

Board candidates need to know about your success

Invite those community members who are thinking or planning to run for a seat on your board of education to visit a board meeting and learn more about your student achievement activities and plans. Have staff share with them what is working for you.

Looking for success

OSBA is always looking for successful school programs. As the newsletter for improving student achievement, Success would like to publish short items on successful academic programs. Send a brief description (100 words or less) of your program to Success editors at OSBA.
Student achievement research brief

Each month, Success will bring you a research brief to share with fellow board members. Use them to generate discussion with the board and staff.

Recently enacted Senate Bill 1 will change Ohio’s report card system, testing program and academic accountability system. At the foundation of this new system is the goal to improve the academic achievement of Ohio’s children in public school systems. The goal of the Annenberg Institute is to assist school districts with this challenge.

The Annenberg Institute recently unveiled a new “Toolkit” with ideas to improve student achievement on its Web site (www.annenberginstitute.org). The following is a brief description of each tool in the kit:

- **Accountability events**: The drawer includes a suggested format, practical advice and checklists for use in hosting a community event.
- **Surveys**: This drawer describes a variety of surveys, the multiple purposes for using them and seven tools used in the field. Practical suggestions and several sample surveys are included.
- **Ways to examine student work samples**: This is a drawer comprised of two separate sites: (1) The Looking at Student Work site has a special focus on professional development; (2) The Student Work and Accountability documents and develops models of how the examination of student work can be used at various levels of a school system to help inform practice and policy.
- **School visits and self study**: The drawer contains descriptions of school visits and what to expect.
- **Analyzing and tracking standardized test data**: This drawer includes approaches for organizing and analyzing test results to improve student achievement.
- **School report cards**: The drawer includes background information, resources and sample cards.
- **Ways to analyze teacher assignments**: This drawer describes approaches for examining the connections between work that teachers ask students to undertake in classrooms, the standards and curriculum adopted by the school, and students’ work samples produced in response to the assignments.
- **Monitoring equity and access**: This drawer provides a framework and materials to help stakeholders assess the educational opportunities and outcomes of students across race, class, ethnicity and gender.

This summary is provided from Brown University’s Annenberg Institute for School Reform web page. All materials on the Web site and summarized in this article are the copyright of the Annenberg Institute for School Reform.

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Does your new technology help student achievement? If your district invested in new technology, ask your tech coordinator to give the board (and community) a brief presentation on how technology is affecting your students. What is working and what is not? What are the plans for this year?

The proof is in your product A good measure of your district’s student success is what your graduates will be doing after leaving high school. Report post-graduate plans to the board and how this compares to previous years. Ask your guidance department to do a five-year follow-up report on graduates. Also have them contact some of the colleges, universities and employers of recent grads to survey their ideas on your district’s strengths and weaknesses.

Review Senate Bill 1 Senate Bill 1 made changes in the proposed standards, testing vocational student requirements, students with disabilities, intervention and remediation programs. Have your administrators explain the new requirements and how they will affect your district.

Prepare your community for new programs Each new school year brings change. Create an action plan to communicate to your communities what your district will be doing differently this school year. Emphasize why you are introducing a new curriculum, grade card, intervention program or higher standards. Open houses and community forums are excellent venues to tell your stories.

Lessons learned Every summer staff participate in a variety of education experiences from college courses, workshops and exchange programs. Ask them to share what they learned and how they plan to use their new found knowledge.

Still looking for success OSBA is looking for successful school programs. As the newsletter for improving student achievement, Success would like to publish short items on successful academic programs. Send a brief description (100 words or fewer) of your program to Success editors at OSBA.


**Student achievement research brief**

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**Improving student achievement through classroom interaction**

In an article published on the Mid-continent Research for Education and Learning (McREL) Web page, *Loyce Caruthers* provides a framework for assisting teachers in their efforts to maximize instructional impact on students.

As the district’s policy-maker, you can provide an environment for teachers to use the framework and maximize their input. The Colorado Association of School Boards suggested the following in their publication, *What school boards can do to support standards-based education*.

For professional development, the publication recommends the following board actions:

- Create, with your district leadership team, a district professional development strategic plan that articulates clear professional development goals, integrates resources (such as multiple funding sources from the federal level) and supports whole school reforms.
- Reallocate existing resources to provide more resources for professional development. Additional resources could be used for stipends for teachers who attend summer institutes, substitute teachers, purchasing professional development techniques and increasing instructional staff in schools.
- Work with district administrators and regional service providers to identify already supported opportunities for professional development that are consistent with the district’s strategic plan for professional development.
- Create time for professional development by restructuring the school day or school year. Boards can also promote learning on the job, common planning time and peer mentors.
- Support the use of technology to promote teachers’ professional development.

For academic improvement, the board may:

- Ensure that new teachers have the knowledge and skills to teach to high standards;
- Ensure existing teachers have the knowledge and skills to teach to high standards and train new teachers to teach to high standards;
- Ensure that schools use high quality programs and practices that work with your students;
- Ensure that schools are structured to support learning;
- Make available high-quality, targeted special services for low performing students;
- Ensure that the district offers extended opportunities to improve;
- Ensure that teachers use multiple and ongoing measures of student progress.

To view the Caruthers article, visit (www.mcrel.org/products/noteworthy/noteworthy/loycec.asp).

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Success breeds success

As a follow up to a suggestion in the August Success, feature outstanding graduates in your district newsletter. Everyone enjoys reading about winners and by highlighting their accomplishments, you associate your district with success. One Ohio district effectively raised its image when the community newspaper ran weekly stories on successful alums. It was no coincident that a tax levy easily passed following the series.

Co-curriculars motivate students to succeed in class

A 1999 study of nearly 22,000 students by a University of Colorado professor indicates students who participate in some form of interscholastic activities have “significantly higher” grade-point averages than students who do not. Data revealed that student participants in Jefferson County (CO) high schools had an overall grade-point average of 3.093 on a 4.0 scale, while the GPA for non-participants was 2.444. More information on this can be found on the National Federation of State Associations at www.nfhs.org/case.htm.

NSBA's EDvancenet

The National School Boards Association offers an Internet resource called EDvancenet to help school leaders and policymakers address the issues surrounding the use of technology in K–12 education. These resources enable school leaders, policymakers, and the people who work with them to make a difference in how schools improve teaching and learning with technology. Visit www.edvancenet.org for more information.

Tell OSBA what you do to improve achievement

You can help OSBA by visiting www.osba-ohio.org/SASurvey.html and filling out a short survey on what your district is doing to increase student achievement. The short five-question survey will assist OSBA in its Student Achievement Initiative.

Ask a simple question

As your board deliberates on just about any issue, always ask, “How will this improve student achievement?”
Student achievement research brief

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Effective schools research: A guide to districtwide student achievement

In a recent publication, High Student Achievement: How six school districts changed into high-performance systems, Gordon Cawelti and Nancy Protheroe made an observation that most student achievement research is focused on schools and classrooms. “Little research has been done on highly effective school districts—organizations that have been successful in increasing the ability of many or all of their schools to serve student populations that are typically low-achieving.”

One organization that is providing research and information on how to create district-wide student achievement is the Association for Effective Schools, Incorporated (ESI). On their Web site (www.mes.org), ESI provides information to assist a district in developing this system. From that research, common processes and characteristics of effective schools were identified. The processes and characteristics are:

- **Clear school mission:** The staff in effective schools share an understanding of and commitment to instructional goals, priorities, assessment procedures and accountability.
- **High expectations for success:** The staff must believe and demonstrate that all students can attain mastery of the essential content and school skills, and the staff also believe that they have the capability to help all students achieve those skills.
- **Instructional leadership:** The principal in effective schools is the instructional leader. The principal must communicate leadership and purpose to the staff, parents, and students.
- **Frequent monitoring of student progress:** The school and teachers must measure student academic progress frequently.
- **Opportunity to learn and student time on task:** Teachers must allocate a significant amount of classroom time for instruction in the essential content and skills.
- **Safe and orderly environment:** The school board and central office must provide a safe and orderly environment to allow teachers to teach and students to learn. A non-oppressive school climate is conducive to teaching and learning.
- **Home/school relations:** Parents must understand and support the school’s basic mission. The school board, central office, and building administration must provide parents with the opportunity to play an important role in helping the school to achieve that mission.

What is so special about the above seven items? They are the only set of identified research-based constructs that permits a district to analyze its schools and provides a roadmap on how to improve student achievement on a district-wide basis.

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Plan for your Capital Conference success

With so much to see and do at OSBA's upcoming Capital Conference and Trade Show, plan your conference now. The conference's theme “Achieve!,” focuses on student learning. There are four learning tracks aimed squarely at improving your educational programs: instructional innovations, student achievement, student issues and alternative education. Refer to the promotional flier you received this summer to identify the more than 100 different sessions. For an update, visit OSBA's Web site (www.osba-ohio.org/CapitalConference/CC2001.html) where you can download a complete Conference Guide. Meet with board members and district administrators who will be attending Capital Conference and decide who will be attending what session.

Student Achievement Fair full at 100 exhibits

In only its third year, the Student Achievement Fair is sold out, so to speak. Exactly 100 outstanding academic programs will be featured during the four-hour fair, along with 10 performing groups. Again, for a complete listing of the programs to be featured, download the complete Conference Guide from OSBA's Web site.

Boost the academic boosters

One of your district's best resources to promote academic achievement is the academic booster organization. Invite the boosters' leaders to attend a school board meeting to talk with the board on how they see their role in assisting the district improve academic performance.

Open house feedback

Every fall, just about every school in Ohio conducts an open house for parents. Are they effective? What works and doesn't work? Have your building principals report to the board what happened during their open house and what feedback they received from parents and teachers. This could be an excellent opportunity to share ideas to improve next fall's round of open houses (first tip: decide on a time schedule, share it with all staff and keep to it).
Erasing the achievement gap: What can your district do?
The public and political expectation today is that public schools will educate all children, regardless of their background or circumstance. The most challenging aspect is that a group of public school children are without the proper skills or capacities to learn in the classroom. As a result, an achievement gap exists because the above children enter school academically behind and are unable to maximize their classroom experience. The question is: How do public schools erase the achievement gap?

What are the causes of the achievement gap?
Although complex, the research identifies two main categories on what causes the achievement gap. The first category identifies the socio-cultural causes, such as poverty, cultural attitudes and racism, to name a few. For instance, the research identifies the following conditions that poverty creates to impede the learning of disadvantaged children:
- poor health care (including inadequate prenatal care for their mothers);
- frequent changes in residence, requiring transferring to new schools repeatedly;
- lack of books and other educational resources in the home;
- parents with lower levels of education;
- an unstable family structure.

The second category identifies school-related causes, such as districts with inadequate funding, unqualified teaching staffs, undertrained teaching staffs and low student expectations, to name a few.

What can we do to narrow the achievement gap?
Research suggests the following factors can help narrow the achievement gap:
- districts must create high expectations for all students,
- districts must create cultural congruence in the classroom by structuring the curriculum to tap into the disadvantaged student's storeroom of knowledge,
- support teaching strategies that promote meaningful participation,
- create smaller class sizes in the K-3 grades,
- demand and support the creation of higher teacher quality in the district,
- create meaningful summer enrichment programs to preserve the academic gains made during the school year.

The information in this Research Brief is from the Education Research Service's On the Same Page fact sheet, What Can Schools Do to Reduce the Achievement Gap? To receive more research information on this issue and others, visit their Web page at www.ers.org.
Focus on success at Capital Conference

The OSBA Capital Conference is loaded with student achievement activities designed to help your students succeed. One person cannot attend all the student achievement activities, so as liaison, you need to work with board members and staff to coordinate who will be attending what sessions. Your treasurer will soon receive your district’s name badges, Guides and other important Capital Conference information.

Sunday's highlights

2:30 p.m. – Pre-conference workshop with Ian Jukes. Preregistration is encouraged due to limited seating (cost is $50).

Monday's highlights

1:30 p.m. – World-class schools – What are they? • Bringing the public back into public relations • Partnership for proficiency intervention • Immediate interventions to improve proficiency test scores • Alternative behavior intervention • Student-led conferences – where parents really listen
3 p.m. – Dropping in – not out • Mathematics and science education – Ohio’s shared vision • Creating the small high schools we need • Avoiding parent/school conflict in special education

Tuesday's highlights

7:30 a.m. – Student Achievement Liaison breakfast
9 a.m. – Proficiency concepts = real-world skills • Creating public school academies • Community learning centers – flip the umbrella, catch a rainbow • Language-based instruction – a systemic literacy reform approach
Noon – Student Achievement Fair
1:30 p.m. – Using charter schools in a system of high-performing schools • Curriculum mapping for beginners • Engaging classified staff in raising student achievement • The case for character education
3 p.m. – Starting a successful alternative education program • Board involvement in the school reform process • 5th quarter • Child and family advocates

Wednesday’s highlights

9 a.m. – Alternatives for at-risk youth • Learning beyond the four walls – distance education opportunities • Helping students read with effective reading intervention • Home schooling issues – they’re far from certain
Student achievement research brief

Each month, Success will bring you a research brief to share with fellow board members. Use them to generate discussion with the board and staff.

In 1997, Congress authorized the creation of the National Reading Panel to assess the status of research-based knowledge, including the effectiveness of various approaches to teaching children to read. The panel is made up of 14 leading, reading research scientists, college of education representatives, reading teachers, educational administrators and parents. Recently, the panel released a summary of its findings.

Phonemic awareness instruction: Teaching children to manipulate phonemes in words was highly effective under a variety of teaching conditions with a wide range of learners across a range of grade and age levels. Teaching phonemic awareness to children significantly improves their reading more than instruction that lacks any attention to phonemic awareness. As a result, the panel concluded that phonemic awareness training was the principal cause of the improvement in student reading and spelling.

Phonics instruction: Systematic phonics instruction produces significant benefits for K-6 students and for children with reading difficulties.

Guided oral reading: The panel concluded that guided repeated oral reading procedures that included guidance from teachers, peers or parents had a significant and positive impact on word recognition, fluency and comprehension across a range of grade levels. However, there are gaps in the research.

Teacher education and reading instruction: Although the studies in this area are limited, the panel found that professional development produced significantly higher student achievement in students.

Computer technology and reading instruction: The lack of research in this area also made it difficult to draw many conclusions. However, the panel made the following general statements:
● All the studies report positive results, suggesting that it is possible to use computer technology for reading instruction.
● The use of hypertext (highlighted text that links to underlying definitions) may have an instructional advantage.
● The use of computers as word processors may be a very useful tool for reading since reading and writing are linked.

The above is from the Report of the National Reading Panel: Teaching Children To Read. If you would like a copy of this report or other information, visit www.nationalreadingpanel.org.
### CIP Report

How is the district’s continuous improvement plan (CIP) coming along? Ask the chair of the CIP process to report to the board the goals and objectives of the plan. An outline of CIP activities for the school year would also be helpful to the board.

### SALT Liaison Breakfast was sharing time

During the OSBA Capital Conference Student Achievement Liaison Breakfast, district liaisons shared some of their best ideas with each other. *Success* will feature some of these ideas in the next couple of issues.

### Recognize student success outside the classroom

The Waverly City Board of Education recognizes students that achieve in areas that are not necessarily school functions. For example: students that excel in 4-H, read a large number of books or participate in community service projects receive a certificate from the district. Contact Randy Armburster, Waverly’s student achievement liaison, for more information.

### Reward student success

Sheffield-Sheffield Lake City has a Renaissance Program which gives students special discounts and perks from local merchants. As grades go up, rewards increase. Contact Scott Daughtery, Brookside High School principal, for more information.

### Get civic and service groups involved in your schools

How do you involve your social and civic groups in your district’s communications efforts? Each of these groups has a community service component that can be mutually beneficial for your district and the organization. Ask your administration and service club presidents to explain the partnerships that currently exist. If it does not exist, perhaps now is the time to cultivate that partnership to help your students.
Student achievement research brief

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Benchmarking: South Carolina’s approach to student achievement
A few years ago, the South Carolina School Boards Association, three South Carolina school districts, the South Carolina State Department of Education, and Instructional and Accountability Systems (a consulting firm) joined together to develop a benchmarking training manual and implement a benchmarking pilot project. As a follow-up, Dan Saltrick and Jeff Schiller of Instructional and Accountability Systems wrote an article to summarize the manual and the project’s findings.

The authors shared the following four lessons from the project:

Expectations were not high enough for all students
To address this issue, the authors recommended that districts change their delivery systems instead of lowering the curricula.

Expectations were lowered for some students because educators viewed the obstacles at home and prior grades as invincible barriers to learning
The authors suggested that a change in the intensity, focus and nature of how you teach to that type of student will produce a system where almost all students can learn and perform at higher levels. Kati Haycock from the Education Trust (www.edtrust.org) also presents a powerful presentation, which further illustrates the author’s point.

Many school-based administrators, teachers and instructional support staff are not aware of the organizational and instructional strategies that really make a difference in improving student achievement
Effective professional development strategies and programs are an important element in addressing this issue.

Improving student achievement requires a detailed analysis of present achievement, enrollment and program participation data
Educators must target their scarce resources and limited energies to the specific identified needs of children. The Seattle public school system implemented a funding system that targets financial resources to the neediest school buildings without depriving the district’s other schools.

To obtain a copy of the manual, please contact the South Carolina School Boards Association at 803-799-6607. You may also receive a benchmarking resource from the Ohio School Boards Association’s bookstore. The book is entitled, Benchmarking: A Guide for Educators by Sue Tucker.