



Success

Timely tips for OSBA Student Achievement Liaisons

January 2005

Share your Success

Since *Success* is only sent to student achievement liaisons, be sure to duplicate copies of this newsletter and distribute it at your next school board meeting so others can help you help your students achieve more success in your classrooms.

Let's talk about schools

Join in the discussion of how to boost student achievement in Ohio public schools. Visit OSBA's student achievement forum on the association's Web site at: www.osba-ohio.org/phpBB2/index.php. Be sure to register and check back frequently.

Teacher quality = student achievement

A study by **Linda Darling-Hammond** of Stanford University suggests that policies adopted by states regarding teacher education, licensing, hiring and professional development may make an important difference in the qualifications and capacities that teachers bring to their work. Invite your director of professional development to a board meeting to discuss what your district is doing to improve teacher quality. The study can be found at: <http://epaa.asu.edu/epaa/v8n1/>.

Helping students learn

The *American School Boards Journal* archives offer an online anthology on student achievement at www.asbj.com/achievement. This resource provides a solid foundation for school board members and administrators searching for effective ways to improve their students' academic success. Why not review one topic monthly as a board?

Making a difference for students

January is School Board Recognition Month in Ohio. It is a great opportunity to tell about the board's role in raising student achievement in your district. This year's theme, "Making a difference for students," gives you a vehicle to share the steps your board has taken to help students improve their academic performance in the classroom. List your accomplishments and plans for the future. Point to increases in proficiency test scores and other measures of student performance.

Student achievement research brief

Each month, **Success** brings you a research brief to share with fellow board members. Use it to generate discussion with the board and staff.

What are kids doing when they're not in school?

A joint project of The Wallace Foundation and Public Agenda (founded by author **Daniel Yankelovich** and former U.S. Secretary of State **Cyrus Vance**) has released a study called "All Work and No Play? Listening to What Kids and Parents Really Want from Out-of-School Time." Views from both parents and students were recorded in June 2004 with surveys that were conducted with 1,003 parents and 609 middle and high school students at random throughout the nation. Most students, 9 in 10 (90%), participate in activities or programs in their non-school hours. Students enjoy sports activities (66%), school clubs (62%), volunteer work (60%), church youth groups (54%), extra academic preparation (30%) and belonging to outside organizations (19%).

What makes up a good after-school program?

- must be challenging,
- offers a healthy and safe environment,
- positive social environment,
- a good ratio of adults to children,
- a time to develop peer-to-peer relationships.

Most parents weren't looking for programs to improve their child's performance in school, but something that would give their child a well-rounded education. Almost half of parents wanted a program that would develop a child's hobbies and other interests. A third wanted programs to keep their kids off of the streets and out of trouble, and a small percentage said the main purpose of after-school programs should be just to have fun.

What do the kids want? They wanted programs that were structured, as well as the flexibility to choose the activity they participate in each day. The kids found it more interesting when they are led by younger, more enthusiastic leaders. And, children also thought it was valuable to have time to get to meet new friends, as well as spend quality time with current friends.

Both parents and children see the advantages of good after-school programs and the difference they can make in young people's lives. However, in one survey, 9 out of 10 children admitted that sometimes they needed a push from a parent to get involved.

For more information on the study visit: www.wallacefunds.org/WE

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Be part of the solution

A recent issue of *VUE Magazine*, published by the Annenberg Institute for School Reform, looks at how urban school districts can be part of the solution, not part of the problem. The story says smart districts revolve around three elements: results, equity and community. To read the story, visit: www.annenberginstitute.org/VUE/fall04/Rothman.html.

Promote your successes

If your students are succeeding in school, why not tell the community? Not everyone has the time to visit the schools so make a short video and take it to the community. Digital cameras and editing software come with many new computers, and students and staff are using homemade videos in the classroom. Enlist talented students to write, shoot, edit and produce a video, then make copies and distribute them to the community.

Attend the SALT Symposium

Plan now to attend the **free Student Achievement Leadership Team's annual symposium on March 5**. This popular program will be held at Westerville South High School from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. and will feature speakers from Battelle for Kids. They will offer an introduction to value-added data, a progress measure to be included in Ohio's accountability system starting in 2006; information on Project SOAR, a 78-district pilot project that increases student performance by using value-added data to inform decision-making; and an overview of various standards implementation, data tools, training and resources available to help your school district support administrators, teachers and students. Board members and educators will be on hand to share firsthand success stories, challenges and valuable lessons learned during the process. See the next *Briefcase* for more information on the SALT Symposium.

Achievement testing is coming

The end of winter signals the annual round of Ohio achievement testing. Highlight the enhanced preparation your teachers and administrators are doing to help students do well on the tests. Have your curriculum director report to the board. Share with the community and media tips on how parents can help their children do as well as they can on the tests.

Student achievement research brief

Data-driven decision making and accountability

For too long, education data was too slow in turnaround, too unwieldy to manage and too disparate to make meaningful comparisons. Recent advances in computing and communications technology have made possible the widespread use of data for decision-making at every level of the school system. A new generation of software and Web-based products that integrate data into the core of teaching bode well for closing the accountability loop between standards, classroom practice and learning outcomes.

Taxpayers are demanding accountability of their schools, and savvy educators are embracing performance data as a useful means for directing school improvement. The ability to track individual student performance, aggregate and disaggregate data easily, and use sophisticated and high-speed data-collection systems present a new host of options for using and interpreting data. Fear and mistrust of data are giving way to a new culture of use in which teachers and administrators routinely collect and analyze student data to achieve goals. We should insist that:

Community members

- question student achievement and progress data that is collected, analyzed and reported;
- use common sense to determine whether progress reports are full measures of the vision.

School board members

- ensure that the assessment progress is aligned to their vision;
- require that what is assessed actually provides sound evidence of achievement;
- review assessment policy for its intended and unintended implications in schools;
- track policy from enactment through implementation to actual practice in the school or classroom;
- look at data in the context of the whole system;
- balance the effort in collecting data with the amount and type of data required to inform decision-making;
- institute policies that optimize data that is collected and analyzed.

Administrators

- identify the measures, evidence and benchmarks that indicate success with technology;
- ensure that data is collected, analyzed, and sent to the appropriate people in a timely fashion;
- train district personnel to correctly interpret and use the data for decision-making.

Teachers

- develop their assessment literacy;
- understand and interpret data in ways that enable them to adjust the use of technology in learning activities to better meet the needs of students.

Parents

- ask to see data beyond a letter grade — artifacts, evidence, scoring criteria and trends in students' work.

For more information, visit: www.ncrel.org

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Education Vital Signs

Student achievement liaisons will find a copy of the *American School Board Journal's Education Vital Signs* with this issue of *Success*. This complimentary copy contains interesting information and statistics on academic achievement across the nation.

State budget

The community needs to know what Gov. **Bob Taft's** proposed state budget will do to your school district's academic program, especially projects you started to improve student achievement. Ask your superintendent and treasurer to explain the ramifications.

Student Achiever pins

As your district plans for its spring academic honors programs, consider purchasing the popular Student Achievement Leadership Team "Student Achiever" lapel pins to distribute this spring. See the enclosed flier to order.

Student Achievement Fair application deadline looms

You have until April 1 to nominate one of your outstanding academic programs for the 2005 SALT Student Achievement Fair at the OSBA Capital Conference. The Nov. 15 fair showcases 100 creative, successful academic achievement programs from around Ohio. See the latest *Briefcase, Journal* or visit www.osba-ohio.org/Files/SAFairapp.pdf for an application form. If you have questions, contact **Kathy LaSota**, deputy director of search services and board development, at (614) 540-4000, (800) 589-OSBA or k_lasota@osba-ohio.org.

Performers needed

OSBA is looking for outstanding student performing groups for the 2005 SALT Student Achievement Fair at the OSBA Capital Conference. Five groups will entertain conference attendees for 20 minutes each during the afternoon of Nov. 15. To nominate a group, contact **Al Meloy**, deputy director of search services and board development, at (614) 540-4000, (800) 589-OSBA or a_meloy@osba-ohio.org.

Student achievement research brief

Graduation and college-readiness rates from 1991–2002

Our goal is to provide a system of public schools that prepares students to be well-educated, productive citizens. Part of preparing students is ensuring their high school graduation and continuation onto college.

The Manhattan Institute recently released a report on graduation rates, both nationally and for each state. The report combines graduation rates with data provided by the U.S. Department of Education to calculate the percentage of all students who left high school eligible for college.

The study provides important information on the progress that the public educational system has made in producing high school graduates and college-ready students. The report calculates graduation and college-readiness rates for each graduating class from 1991 to 2002.

Major findings of the study include:

- The state with the highest graduation rate in the nation in 2002 was New Jersey with 89%. Ohio came in 10th with a 78% total graduation rate. The state with the lowest graduation rate in the nation for 2002 was South Carolina with 53%.
- Nationwide, the percentage of all students who left high school with the skills and qualifications necessary to attend college increased from 25% in 1991 to 34% in 2002.
- There is very little difference between the number of students who graduate from high school college-ready and the number of students who enroll in college for the first time. This indicates that there are few students who have the skills necessary to attend college, but choose not to do so because of lack of funds or other nonacademic factors.
- Nationwide, 1,325,825 students were college-ready in the class of 2002. In 2001, 1,374,649 students enrolled in college for the first time.

In Ohio, the percentage of all students who left high school with the skills and qualifications necessary to attend college increased from 20% in 1991 to 31% in 2002. In Ohio, the total public high school graduation rate increased from 71% in 1996 to 78% in 2002.

For more information, visit www.manhattan-institute.org.

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Promoting public service

“From day one, the mission of public schools in America was to instill and nurture the values of democracy,” says **William J. Cirone**, in an article in the February *School Administrator*. What is your district doing to foster civic service as part of the curriculum? Ask your high school and middle school principals to share their programs with the board. For background, visit the American Association of School Administrators’ Web site: www.aasa.org/publications/sa/2005_03/col_cirone.htm.

Honoring academic achievement

Each spring, your district will conduct a number of academic honors ceremonies. Ask the superintendent to provide the board with a list of such events, then arrange for at least one school board member to attend each program to show your support for academic achievement.

Music is in the air

Spring is the season for musical productions in just about every elementary, middle and high school auditorium in Ohio. Boards can show strong support for all arts by featuring a performance or an art exhibit at their next board meeting.

What are your resources?

As you go through the budget process, how do you stack up against other districts? How do you know how equitable your budget is to groups within your schools? The Assessing Patterns of Resource Distribution Web site offers a tool to compare district spending for schools with different students and programs. To try the tool, visit: www.schoolcommunities.org/resources/APRD/welcome.php.

Preparing for the new SAT

Last month, the College Board’s Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) appeared in a new, longer form. Ask guidance counselors to share with the board what steps were taken to prepare your students for the new writing section. Ask some juniors for their thoughts on writing the timed essay and how they prepared differently to take the SAT.

Student achievement research brief

Collaboration and student achievement

Never before has the level of accountability for student achievement been as high. We know more today about how students learn, we have developed better teaching methods and we have more skilled teachers than ever before. Still the solution eludes us. We can solve complex problems when collaboration is in play, since it engenders mutual ownership of the problem and the solution. Leaders need to build those collaborative relationships. While parents have an interest in school quality and operations, other community members also have a literal stake in the schools. School boards that use effective community engagement activities have had great success in garnering broad support, and not only in the financial sense. Collaboration also brings social, emotional and experiential resources to bear that can raise student achievement to heights unattainable through instruction alone.

Questions the school board should ask itself:

- Do we provide leadership and take an active role in establishing collaborative relationships?
- What alliances and collaborations would most advance student achievement goals and objectives — teachers, teacher unions, social service agencies, colleges and universities, and businesses?
- How can collaborative relationships be built and sustained?
- What are appropriate levels of stakeholder involvement?
- Is the community engaged in student achievement plans and initiatives at the district and school levels through surveys, forums, meetings, committees and school-based management councils?
- Is the community well-informed about the district's vision, achievements, difficulties and plans for improvement?

Questions the school board should ask the superintendent and staff:

- What collaborative initiatives are currently in place, what are their purposes and who are the participants?
- What efforts are made to collaborate with groups with whom the district differs?
- Is there adequate outreach to various governmental agencies, education associations and universities to keep current on educational issues?
- How many outreach and student achievement speaking opportunities are on the events calendar?
- How does the district relate to the media?
- How are collaborative and engagement initiatives managed? What is the definition of appropriate roles, responsibilities, expectations and decision-making parameters?

Collaborative relationships require time and attention to cultivate and maintain, and school boards that seek to build such relationships can lead from a position of extraordinary strength.

For more information: NSBA's *Key Work of School Boards Guidebook* or www.nsba.org.

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How do you stack up to charter schools?

Charter schools were started as an experiment in Ohio, but do we know how effective they are? Start by asking staff to provide data to compare how students leaving your schools are doing in charter schools compared to your own students of similar age and demographics. A recent Ohio Education Association study of data from the Ohio Department of Education showed that charter students do not do as well academically as those students in the schools they left.

Federal involvement in your schools

The No Child Left Behind Act is not the only federal involvement in your school district. Find out how the district complies with federal mandates and what it costs the district. Then share the information with parents and community leaders.

Serving your gifted students

Many feel the brightest students are the ones being left behind in the accountability movement. Have your gifted coordinator make a presentation to the board on what the district is doing to serve your best students.

Highlighting student success

What is your district doing to recognize student success? Invite community members to those spring ceremonies honoring academic achievement. At awards banquets and receptions, plan to have honor students meet and mingle with community members who do not have children in your public schools.

Understanding minority student achievement

If your district has an achievement gap and would like some ideas to close the gap, visit the Web site of the Minority Student Achievement Network at www.msanetwork.org. The group was founded five years ago by superintendents of suburban school districts.

Student achievement research brief

Math wars: Are U.S. kids ready to compete in a global workplace?

An article recently published by the *American School Board Journal*, “Math that adds up,” by Kathleen Vail studies the effects of success in math and staying competitive in the global marketplace.

“We need to spend the time to develop concepts deeply to engage students so they understand,” said Cathy Seeley, president of the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics. “We want to ground skills in understanding. It’s more efficient for students to memorize multiplication tables if they understand what multiplication is. It’s easier to memorize, because you can picture what it is.”

One teacher, Aldona Skrypa, who teaches geometry to third-graders in New Jersey, likes to take the children throughout the town and show them different shapes. She’ll point out that the yield signs are triangles, railroad tracks are parallel horizontal lines and regular stop signs are actually octagons. Skrypa’s way of teaching has earned her national recognition, and she strives to make math accessible and tangible to her students.

James Stigler, a UCLA psychology professor and author of *The Teaching Gap*, has studied math teaching methods here and in six other countries. “We have no conceptual coherence,” he said. For example, U.S. students are taught how to solve algebra equations in five steps, a process that is more procedural than conceptual.

A private organization, Math for America, recruits math, engineering and economics majors, pays for their master’s degrees and then they are certified to teach math in New York City high schools. This Newton Fellows program also gives these teachers a stipend and other support and professional development over their careers.

Helping the United States stay competitive in the global marketplace is the driving force of many who worry about student math skills. Is your school community doing all it can to promote successful math skills?

For additional information on math education visit: www.nctm.org or www.mathforamerica.org.

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Shhhh ... are we forgetting the quiet students?

Are we leaving shy and quiet students behind? *The Christian Science Monitor* published an article, "When quiet kids get forgotten in class," that examines this issue. Quiet and shy kids have as much to contribute to discussions as the rest of the class, reports author **Toni Weingarten**. The article can be found at: www.csmonitor.com/2005/0426/p11s01-legn.html.

Building improvements

Without students in schools the next couple of months, what is your district doing to refurbish and revitalize classrooms? The June board meeting would be a good time to share just what goes on in your buildings to prepare for the next school year.

Your summer reading is enclosed

Summer is a great time to catch up on reading. OSBA is providing student achievement liaisons a copy of the National School Boards Association's new book *Leading Change, the Case for Continuous Improvement*. It is the latest in the Key Work of School Boards series. A brief summary of the book also is enclosed.

Post your questions on the Student Achievement Forum

Have you visited the Student Achievement Forum on OSBA's Web site? It is a place where board members and administrators can ask each other questions and offer their opinions. Go to the OSBA Web page (www.osba-ohio.org) and click on "Student Achievement Forum." First-time users will need to register, so click on the word "register" at the top and fill in the required information. Post a question, comment or success story, and wait for replies. Encourage all board members to participate in discussions on how to improve student achievement.

Good schools make good business

A report prepared by the Prince George's Business-Education Alliance in Maryland said that creating a top-flight system of public education, from kindergarten through college, makes good business sense. The report can be found at: www.pgbea.org/SummitReport.pdf.

Student achievement research brief

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Public schools outperform private schools in study

A recent study, reported in the *Phi Delta Kappan*, suggests that it is time for a critical reexamination of common assumptions regarding the effectiveness of public and private schools. As market-style reforms change the public school landscape, prompting many to call for various forms of school privatization, it is important to examine the evidence as to whether private schools are, indeed, more effective than public schools.

In the study, once the fact that private schools tend to have higher socioeconomic status (SES) students than public schools was accounted for, what was found was actually just the opposite of what was expected: public schools outperformed private schools within each SES quartile.

Key findings:

- When accounting for demographic/SES differences among public and private school students, public school students performed “significantly better” than private school students.
- When researchers looked at public and private school students’ performance across four SES quartiles (low SES, low-mid SES, mid-high SES and high SES), public school students outperformed private school students in each one. Public school fourth-graders’ average scores were 6-7 points higher within each quartile, and public school eighth-graders’ average scores were 1-9 points higher.
- Public schools enroll “much higher” percentages of lower-SES students and students with disabilities than do private schools. At each grade level, less than 40% of the public schools were high SES (meaning their SES was above the median for all schools), while more than 80% of private schools were high SES.
- While the average overall math scores of private school students were “significantly higher” than that of public school students, the advantage is explained by the demographic and socioeconomic differences of the student bodies.
- Most of the research that has led to common assumptions that private schools are more effective at raising student achievement than public schools is three decades old and was largely limited to high school students. It will be important to conduct further research to illuminate the causes of achievement differences in public and private schools.

For more information on this study, go to the *Phi Delta Kappan* May 2005 issue at www.pdkintl.org or the National School Boards Association at www.nsba.org.

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Tight budget ahead

The state's biennium budget has been front-page news the few weeks. How will it affect your academic programs? Have your treasurer and curriculum director report to the board and community what the district needs to do to maintain a balanced budget while striving for increasing academic achievement.

OGT results are in

Parents of sophomores just received their child's Ohio Graduation Test (OGT) results. This makes it a good time for the board to discuss your district's successes on the OGT. What did you do that was particularly successful and what didn't work? What will you be doing for those students who did not pass the test?

Boosting staff morale, boosts student achievement

The June issue of *American School Board Journal* offers 10 ways to raise staff morale, which author Kathleen Vail reports will increase academic achievement. The cover story suggests schools: support new teachers; clue into climate; empower teachers and staff; recognize and reward teachers and staff; don't ignore administrator morale; deal with student discipline; treat teachers like professionals; ask employees what's going on; keep facilities tidy; and develop emotional IQ. For the entire story, visit www.asbj.com.

Lessons learned from across the pond

An article in *Policy Review*, published by the Hoover Institution, looks at England's public school reform. While you may not agree with what the British government is doing, you need to know what policymakers in Washington, D.C., are reading. Those ideas might find their way to our Statehouse. For the article, visit www.policyreview.org/jun05/hill.html.

Opening day activities

You never get a second chance at making a good first impression. So, what is your district doing to make the first day of school great? Setting the tone early will reap benefits down the road. Have your building principals report their plans to kick off the school year in style.

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Project-based learning versus problem-based learning

Project-based learning and *problem-based learning* both use various range of instructional strategies. Despite many similarities in the two approaches, there are some distinct differences. So, which is better in K-12 instruction?

Project-based learning is driven by the end product, and the knowledge base that a student acquires through each phase or different production schedules that are vital to the success of the end result. Projects can vary widely in time frame and the purpose of the technology used. One of the first steps is that students must define the purpose and vision to create the end product. The entire process is unique to the situation at hand and mirrors real-world production activities. Different skills are used all along the way to be molded to fit the end result.

Problem-based learning begins in a much different way than project-based learning in that the difficulty has to be examined from the start. This approach uses an inquiry model as the basis for learning: Students are presented a problem, they have to organize their thoughts on the subject, pose additional questions and then identify those areas that need more work. In this case, there may or may not be an end product, but necessary research and new knowledge will be gained throughout the process.

In practice, it is very likely that the line between project- and problem-based learning is frequently blurred and that the two can be used in combination to multiply learning experiences. “Why should we care what we call it? asked **Joe Oakey**, the founder of the Autodesk Foundation and referred to as the father of project-based learning in California. “Are the two the same? If we can develop a meaningful way for anyone, any age, to be challenged and to learn useful skills and knowledge as they answer the challenge, why should we care if it is called project-based, problem-based or circus-based?”

Source: the Center for Problem-Based Learning at the Illinois Mathematics and Science Academy Web site: www.imsa.edu.

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Whose child is left behind? “Because the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) comes without enough funding, it is a law that mandates accountability without equity.” That is one of many findings of a study commissioned by the United Church of Christ (UCC). Months before NCLB was signed into law, UCC formed its Public Education Task Force, which was charged to “identify systemic barriers to excellent public education and to recommend strategies to address those barriers.” For the complete study, which included site visits to a number of Cuyahoga County schools, go to www.ucc.org/justice/education/whosechildleftbehind.pdf.

Summer staff in-service Quality staff development is vital to the operation of school districts. Most districts begin the school year with activities aimed at providing important and insightful subjects to consider. Ask your administrative team to outline the activities that are being planned.

Report cards are coming On Aug. 16, the Ohio Department of Education will issue district report cards. You still have time to brief board members and staff on what to expect on your report cards. Ask your superintendent to make a presentation for the August board meeting on what the district did the past year to improve student achievement and why the district earned the “grades” it did on the report card. For assistance with the release of the report cards, ODE has created the *2004-2005 Guide for Ohio’s Report Card System*. It can be found at www.ode.state.oh.us/reportcard.

Family dinners raise grades According to Columbia University psychologist **Suniya S. Luthar**, children who usually eat with at least one parent have better grades and fewer emotional problems than kids who dine on their own. This suggestion that family dinners can help students emotionally and academically comes from an article about one of Luthar’s studies that appeared in *Current Directions in Psychological Science*. This study reveals that affluent teenagers are more likely to use drugs and alcohol, and have more emotional problems than inner-city students.

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Understanding standardized tests

What do standardized tests measure and how can the results be used to improve performance? Here are key points to keep in mind when considering the uses and misuses of standardized testing.

- norm-referenced tests compare a student's performance with that of a nationwide sample of students from a previous year for a particular subject at a particular grade level;
- criterion-referenced tests compare a student's performance to specific standards that have been established for a particular subject at a particular grade level;
- both criterion- and norm-referenced tests can be used to evaluate a large number of students in a fast, cost-effective manner;
- standardized tests can provide information that can be compared across locations and among groups;
- social, economic, family and other factors can affect how students perform on tests;
- to be useful in evaluating what students know, a test must be a good match for the school system's curricula;
- standardized tests are not designed to determine how well students are performing as individuals;
- combining standardized tests with other assessments of learning and performance provides more detailed and useful insights than relying on only one type of assessment;
- to be reliable, studies that compare test scores among groups of students must use comparable samples (this means the student groups being compared must represent the same range of characteristics, and if they do not, researchers must control for any differences);
- standardized test scores can be improved by "teaching to the test," but this practice does not address whether students understand or can apply the content;
- when a population of students changes from year to year, average test scores also might change significantly;
- standardized test results are a snapshot taken at a particular time under particular circumstances — many factors can affect an individual student's performance on a particular test.

Source: National School Boards Association,
www.nsba.org/site/sec_peac.asp?TrackID=&SID=1&DID=36150&CID=1238&VID=64.

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September 2005

Do you understand district report cards?

To help people better understand the local district report cards, OSBA, with the support of several education groups and education leaders, has prepared a unique Web-based resource. Enclosed in this mailing is a flier explaining the program, which will be available Sept. 10.

Dress for success

Toledo City started requiring uniforms last school year in elementaries and is including middle schools in the program this year. Columbus City adopted a stricter dress code this fall. The Web-based *cnn.com* reported that in 1997, 3% of all public schools required uniforms; in 2000, the level topped 12%. The U.S. Department of Education says 47% of public schools enforced a strict dress code. For the *cnn.com* story visit: <http://edition.cnn.com/2005/US/08/12/style.rules>.

Passing the torch

Now that you know who will be running for a seat on your board of education, invite those candidates to a board meeting to brief them on the board's role in student achievement. Share the board's philosophy and explain what steps the board has taken to increase student achievement. This would be a good opportunity to showcase your successes by inviting the media and community leaders to the briefing.

Another parent resource

The Seattle Times published *Parent's Guide* last month to help parents prepare for the new school year. Some of the articles are very specific to the Seattle area, but the paper's Web site offers some great tips on helping students do better in school. *Parent's Guide* can be found at: <http://seattletimes.nwsourc.com/html/parentsguide>.

Reading and writing

While reading skills are critical for learning, writing skills are becoming more important for graduates, especially for those going into public service. A new report concludes that writing is a more important job requirement for state employees than it is for private-sector employees. Visit: www.writingcommission.org/pr/message-from-state.html.

Student achievement research brief

Each month, **Success** brings you a research brief to share with fellow board members. Use it to generate discussion with the board and staff.

Education Secretary Spellings says No Child Left Behind Act is working

The No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) is a federal law that requires all students to be proficient in both math and reading by 2014, and holds school districts accountable for results. Two major sources of funding to school districts for compliance with NCLB are funds from Title I and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). Most of the federal dollars spent in Ohio are Title I funds, and are targeted toward disadvantaged youth. Generally, Title I funds provide remediation programs in reading and math for primary grade children, whereas IDEA funds are for special education and related services. In addition to Title I and IDEA funding, there are other programs that cover specific issues; funds for reduced-price school lunches and AIDS education would be some examples. In almost every instance, the federal contribution rarely reaches the cost of the federally mandated program and is therefore underfunded. One example is special education (IDEA), where the federal commitment of 40% toward this costly federal mandate has rarely been higher than 17%.

U.S. Education Secretary **Margaret Spellings** spoke at the National Council of La Raza in July. She said, “We made a commitment to close the achievement gap and provide every child with a quality education by 2014. That means all children, no matter their race or income level. And you know what? That commitment is paying off. We have the data to prove it.... We learned the results of the National Assessment of Educational Progress long-term trend data.... The grades from our Nation’s Report Card are in, and they are encouraging. The report card shows how students have fared in reading and math over the last three decades. It’s big news because we’re not talking about just any old test. The Nation’s Report Card is the gold standard of assessment. This long-term data, along with the state data, is the yardstick that the experts use to measure how well we’re serving our children. And with this data, we can see we’re moving in the right direction: The achievement gap is closing, and NCLB is working.

“These results didn’t come out of thin air. They come from a commitment to doing something that’s never been done before — a commitment to giving every single child a quality education. They are the results of hours of hard work and determination by students, teachers, parents and people like you. I’m committed to working with you to make this law work for all students — including those students new to the English language. Many of you have shared concerns with me about finding the best way to assess these students to make sure they’re keeping pace in school. And because of that, we’re convening a working group of researchers and educators to study the issue. The key is listening to people like you on the frontlines. As we all know, a law is only as good as its implementation.”

For more details on NCLB visit: www.ed.gov/nclb/landing.jhtml?src=pb

Success

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Success

Timely tips for OSBA Student Achievement Liaisons

October 2005

Plan now for Capital Conference SALT activities

Be sure to attend the many Student Achievement Leadership Team (SALT) activities at Capital Conference. Enclosed in this mailing is a letter to student achievement liaisons and a flier promoting all the student achievement sessions and SALT programs. OSBA President **Catherine D. Ingram, Cincinnati City**, invites you to the Student Achievement Liaison Breakfast at 7:30 a.m. on Tuesday, Nov. 15. A continental breakfast will be provided.

Students need instructional and emotional support

A teacher who gives instructional and emotional support can improve academic outcomes for at-risk first-graders, according to a University of Virginia study. The September/October issue of *Child Development* reports the findings are significant because they are drawn from “naturally occurring variation in everyday classroom interactions” instead of a specific program designed to improve the classroom environment.

Student Achievement Fair

One hundred student achievement projects will be highlighted during the OSBA Capital Conference and Trade Show on Tuesday, Nov. 15. If one of your programs will be showcased in the Student Achievement Fair, ask the staff member responsible for the display to preview it for the district administration and board during the October board meeting. Five musical groups also are going to perform that day in the fair. Check your *Conference Guide* for more details.

Achievement pins

Ever wish to recognize students for their classroom success? The Student Achievement Leadership Team has lapel pins that you can buy to give to those who deserve a pat on the back. Contact **Diana Hartings** (d_hartings@osba-ohio.org or (614) 540-4000 ext. 113) to order, or stop by the OSBA Bookstore during Capital Conference.

Conference Guide available

The complete, 186-page OSBA *Conference Guide* will be delivered to your district any day now. If you can't wait, an electronic version is posted on OSBA's Web site at: www.osba-ohio.org/CC2005.htm.

Student achievement research brief

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School climate and student learning

Climate and the learning environment set the stage for teaching and learning. For a quality education, children and staff must have a safe and inviting place in which to learn and work. Schools and district office staff members play an important role in determining climate. Relationships built on trust and mutual respect among staff members — and between the staff and the board — help shape a workforce with a strong commitment to the district and its vision. A positive climate results from leadership that appreciates and publicly values the role that each person in the organization plays.

The way board members interact with the superintendent or other senior staff members sends a message about how the board values the staff. The way board members treat each other also influences the staff's perception and attitudes, with a consequent impact on workplace climate. Because that workplace is usually a school, relationship skills and behaviors ultimately have an influence on the classroom environment and student learning. Positive relationships do not happen without a substantial and continued investment in skill-building. Staff members need to understand the value of teamwork and mutual respect, develop the skills to practice them and have the time to put those skills into action.

To get a sense of where your district is in regard to a positive school climate, here are some questions the board should ask:

- How is climate assessed?
- What do students, teachers, parents and other community members think about the district's climate?
- Are data collected on student discipline incidents?
- Do school board policies hold staff and students to high behavioral standards? Are there clear and consistent consequences for those who violate policies?
- What is the district doing to create a safe, inviting and positive learning environment?
- Does the district regularly make student achievement a part of the board's agenda?
- How does the district promote understanding, commitment and accountability to others?
- Do the school board, administrators and staff model mutual respect, professional behavior and a commitment to continuous learning?
- Do teachers have the time and resources to achieve standards?
- How does the district recognize outstanding staff and student performance?
- What are the avenues for two-way communication and are they adequate?

For more information: *The Key Work of School Boards* or www.nsba.org/keywork.

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November 2005

**Thank you liaisons:
Attend the SALT breakfast**

Thank you for your efforts to keep your board focusing on student achievement. The Student Achievement Leadership Team would like to buy your breakfast during Capital Conference. We hope you can attend the 45-minute student achievement liaison breakfast at 7:30 a.m. on Tuesday, Nov. 15, in Room E 150-151. **A continental breakfast will be provided.** Please register in advance by contacting **Debbie Beckman**, OSBA administrative assistant, at (800) 589-OSBA, (614) 540-4000 or d_beckman@osba-ohio.org by Nov. 4.

Student Achievement Fair

If you have a program from your school district exhibiting at the OSBA Capital Conference's Student Achievement Fair on Tuesday, Nov. 15 (noon to 4 p.m.), make sure you visit the booth and let those from your district know how proud you are of them. Musical performances and an art show will be showcased at the fair.

**Strong building leadership
raises student success**

"Leadership is second only to classroom instruction among all school-related factors that contribute to what students learn at school," according to a study commissioned by the Wallace Foundation, titled "How Leadership Influences Student Learning." The study can be found on the Center for Comprehensive School Reform and Improvement's Web site at: www.centerforcsri.org/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=145&Itemid=5.

Read 'em their rights

Our neighbor to the west, Indiana, has a Reading Bill of Rights. According to a University of Evansville Web site, all adolescents need opportunities to become better readers. The entire community is responsible to offer support for: access to books, encouragement to value reading, time to read, skilled reading leaders, public library support, community agency support, family support and reading role models. For the complete Indiana Reading Bill of Rights, visit: www2.evansville.edu/mgrnweb/readbill.html.

Student achievement research brief

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Wellness mandate: Does it correlate to success in the classroom?

The Child Nutrition Act of 2004 requires all school districts participating in a federal school meal program to develop a local school wellness policy by the start of the 2006–07 school year. The policy must include:

- guidelines for school meals that comply with or exceed those set by the U.S. secretary of agriculture;
- nutrition directions for all foods available on the school campus;
- goals for nutrition education, physical activity and other school-based activities to promote wellness;
- evaluation, implementation and monitoring of this plan.

Why was this mandate passed? Well, according to Action for Healthy Kids, nine million American children are overweight, three times the number of kids as compared to 1980. Children who are overweight at age 12 face a 75% chance of being overweight the rest of their lives. Child health problems, such as elevated blood pressure, Type II diabetes, depression and heart disease can all be traced to being overweight.

In San Francisco, school and community leaders took matters into their own hands and started the San Francisco Wellness Initiative back in 2000. In collaboration with school site administrators, the initiative manages wellness programs in seven public high schools. The program aims to improve the health, well-being and educational outcomes of students by providing coordinated education, assessment, counseling and other support services at the school site.

“Wellness services are an essential tool for improving student achievement” stated **Ron Pang**, principal of Lincoln High School. “The stressors facing students will inevitably spill into the classroom, but with the wellness program, we have the means to proactively address them.” In the 2004 annual evaluation report the program received top reviews. The report showed that it had increased youths’ attachment to school, as well as academic performance. Between baseline and follow-up work, the San Francisco Wellness Initiative saw increases of 2% to 16% that were observed across five key youth development assets linked to improved academic success.

Editor’s note: The next OSBA Student Achievement Leadership Team resource kit will focus on wellness. Look for The Student Wellness-Student Achievement Link later in the month.

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Timely tips for OSBA student achievement liaisons

December 2005

Wellness-achievement link resource kit

This month's *Success* mailing contains the Student Achievement Leadership Team's recent resource kit, **The student wellness-student achievement link**. Be sure to read it thoroughly, distribute it to fellow board members, your superintendent and treasurer, then ask for a wellness discussion at your next school board meeting. If you do not have a wellness policy on record, adapt the one found in this resource kit, which was unveiled at the SALT Breakfast on Nov. 15.

Share what you learned at Capital Conference

Make a point to give a **report to your board** about the innovative student achievement programs featured at Capital Conference. You may want to share copies of session handouts from one or two particularly interesting sessions you attended while in Columbus. You can download handouts for most conference session from OSBA's Web site at: www.osba-ohio.org/2005/handouts.htm.

Xschool 360: Got yours?

The *Harvard Education Letter* poses a timely question, "What video games can teach us about making students want to learn?" Yes, gaming designers use learning principles to entice children to solve complex problems in an entertaining way. So how can public schools bring such excitement into the classroom? **James Paul Gee** writes, "To succeed, game designers incorporate principles of learning that are well supported by current research. Put simply, they recruit learning as a form of pleasure." The thought-provoking article can be found at: www.edletter.org/current/gee.shtml.

Next year?

Are you planning to continue serving as your district's student achievement liaison? Great, if you are! If not, plan to discuss the position and its importance at your next school board meeting. You may wish to identify an interested board member to take over in 2006. The student achievement liaison's job description can be found at www.osba-ohio.org/saliaison.htm. Remind your treasurer to include your student achievement liaison on the OSBA membership roster.

Student achievement research brief

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Continuous improvement and school success.

Continuous improvement is not simply the process itself — it is a way of thinking about everything we do. It reflects a habit of the mind, a way of thinking about what we do and seeking ways to do it even better. Continuous improvement depends on good information and is data-driven. This data constitutes the feedback loop that empowers the board and staff to seek ways to refine, strengthen or modify existing programs and practices, or potentially to eliminate them.

What will it take to get there?

- **Model continuous improvement as a board.** Seek ways to improve the way the board does business. Frequently reflect on public meetings and other activities and seek to make them better. Ask for feedback from staff and others about ways to improve meetings and other functions of the board.
- **Adopt a customer focus.** Adopting a customer focus means understanding what we do and for whom we do it. The central question for each board member is, whom do I serve and who serves me? Answering this question brings focus and purpose to the work we do.
- **Make decisions based on the data.** We have preconceived notions about what is effective and how things should be done. Continuous improvement requires stepping back and reconsidering those notions if the data do not support them. When something is not working, stop it.
- **Require that all programs — existing and new — have built-in data requirements.** In countless ways, at budget times and throughout the year, boards make decisions about whether a given program should stay, go or be modified. It is critical that the board establishes up front what data will be collected for its review and when the data will be needed.
- **Foster open communication and invite feedback.** A climate in which open communication is valued allows people to think outside the box and share different perspectives without fear of reprisal.
- **Celebrate evidence of improvement and reward those who are responsible for it.** It is very easy to turn continuous improvement from a positive to a negative. When the efforts of those who create improvements are not recognized and rewarded, continuous improvement can rapidly give way to a kind of perpetual crankiness. When this happens, staff and others will view the board's questions and focus as negative, and they will respond accordingly.
- **Promote continuous improvement as an integral part of every policy and decision.** Make others aware that the board is very serious about finding even better ways to do the things the system is already doing well as it is about improving things the system is not doing well.

For more information, please refer to NSBA's *Key Work of School Boards*, www.nsba.org.

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