



Success

Timely tips for OSBA student achievement liaisons

January 2007

Fostering foster children

Each foster child presents a unique challenge to education in public schools. The *American School Board Journal* takes a look at the subject and how a good education can turn those students' lives around. To read the research, visit: www.asbj.com/current/research.html.

Learn school-based teacher coaching success secrets

Teacher Learning Network member and National Board-certified teacher **Juli Kendall** shares her secrets to successful school-based teacher coaching in an article in *Teacher Magazine*. They are: listen first, teach by example, be patient. To read the article, visit www.teachermagazine.org/tm/articles/2006/11/29/05tln_kendall.html.

What condition is your condition in?

While we usually don't want to compare classes, buildings and school districts, we often find such comparisons interesting. To learn more about the state of other schools, visit the U.S. Department of Education's Condition of Education Web site at <http://nces.ed.gov/programs/coe>. There you will learn that U.S. fourth-graders score as well or better than most of their international peers, although their counterparts in other countries are gaining ground.

"Helping kids succeed!" site

The OSBA Student Achievement Leadership Team's mission is to help school boards focus on improving student achievement. To view the SALT Web site, a great, resource clearinghouse, go to www.osba-ohio.org/sa.htm.

Plan now for the 2007 Student Achievement Fair

Share your success beyond your community. Plan now to showcase one of your outstanding programs at the 2007 OSBA Capital Conference and Trade Show. The lineup for the Student Achievement Fair is now being assembled. Contact **Kathy LaSota**, OSBA deputy director of search services and board development, as soon as possible at (614) 540-4000 or (800) 589-OSBA to learn more about this wonderful opportunity to highlight your district's academic achievement. The application and supplemental information can be found at www.osba-ohio.org/sa.htm.

Student achievement research brief

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Middle school program brings success

Turning Points is a comprehensive education reform model that focuses on improving student learning. Turning Points works with middle schools in 16 states and has eight regional centers around the country. Schools are committed to a three-year process of reform. Turning Points helps middle schools undergo dramatic change.

A national Turning Points Network has been created from a report prepared in 1989, from the Carnegie Corporation based in New York. The report, "Turning Points: Preparing American Youth for the 21st Century," recognized the need to strengthen the academic core of middle schools and establish caring, supportive environments that value adolescents.

Some of the advantages of Turning Points include:

- students are engaged in planning and managing their own learning,
- new partnerships between the school and the community are created,
- professional development operates differently,
- the principles form a framework for creating middle schools that address the needs of young adolescents.

The movement to establish a distinctive form of education for young adolescents — the middle school movement — reflects the grassroots genius of American educators. Since 1988, Turning Points has grown into a thriving national network of regional centers serving more than 80 schools in Arizona, Colorado, Connecticut, Idaho, Illinois, Iowa, Massachusetts, Michigan, Missouri, New York, North Carolina, Ohio, Rhode Island, South Carolina, Vermont and Wisconsin.

By working with Turning Points, efforts are focused squarely on improving learning, teaching and assessment at the middle school level. Member schools participate in a local, regional and national network of schools, which helps them develop all facets of the learning process.

To learn more about Turning Points' work with schools, visit www.turningpts.org

Source: Center for Collaborative Education, www.turningpts.org

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Share your success with other schools

February is when OSBA begins soliciting nominations for Capital Conference speakers, Student Achievement Fair exhibitors and student performing groups. Ask your superintendent and principals to consider what programs are worthy of a nomination. Information and nomination forms will be in the February *Journal* and *Briefcase* issues.

Improving relationships improves school culture

A high school principal in rural Kentucky has office hours in the middle of a hallway. Spencer County High School Principal **Tracy Bale** can be found daily talking to students and staff, or working on his laptop at a desk situated where he can see down four corridors and into the cafeteria. He wants to be visible, get to know each of the school's 760 students and change the school's culture. A story on Bales is on the Kentucky School Boards Association's Web site at www.ksba.org/KSA0107%20Hall%20monitor.htm.

Personalized education

Will teachers soon prepare lesson plans for each of their students? Five education experts say, "yes" in the winter 2007 issue of "Threshold: Exploring the Future of Education." To learn about how technology will foster greater personalization in schools, visit the Cable in the Classroom Web site: www.ciconline.org/thresholdwinter07.

Help your seniors succeed in college

Before senioritis sets in on your seniors this spring, help them prepare for the leap to college next fall. **Beverly Low**, dean of first-year students at Colgate University, offers tips for college-bound seniors to stay focused and finish strong. Her six tips can be found at: <http://newswire.ascribe.org/cgi-bin/ behold.pl?ascribeid=20070117.061012&time=07%2011%20PST&year=2007&public=0>.

Transforming schools

The National High School Alliance has a Web-based resource guide to help school leaders take action around the six core principles of "A Call to Action: Transforming High School for All Youth." The resource guide contains a variety of resources, including research, tools, case studies and strategies. It can be found at: www.hsalliance.org

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Education in a Flat World

In the flat world, companies have immediate, unlimited access to information from all over the globe, and change occurs quickly as businesses try to meet their customers' needs. In education, students are our customers and to give them the opportunity to thrive, we must unleash their potential and give them a chance to grow faster. High levels of specialized knowledge and expertise will be necessary for the professionals of the future. To ensure our students thrive, we must give them access to that knowledge. We cannot waste their time teaching them content they already know. We must be master diagnosticians who know our students' knowledge and skill levels in each content area before we plan instruction. We need to know:

- How do learning styles differ in our classrooms (auditory, visual, kinesthetic)?
- What combination of lecture, discussion, group work, hands-on activities and independent study reaches the most students?
- How can students' interest in archaeology, music or the construction industry be used to help them master the academic content standards?

Find out what students already know — Students are assessed prior to the lesson to determine knowledge and skills. Lessons are organized to provide the opportunity to learn new knowledge.

Discover how students want to learn — Students are interviewed about learning styles, preferences and/or interests before each unit. Teachers incorporate this information into student choices and create varied paths throughout the lesson.

Monitor their progress — Learning checkpoints are important throughout a lesson or unit. Adjustments are made to meet individual needs and the assessment continues until the teacher is sure the students have mastered the content.

Find out if students learned the content they needed to learn. Ask:

- Are students demonstrating learning?
- Can they show their learning in various ways, regardless of the assessment tool used?
- Do they understand the content deeply enough?
- Can they show knowledge in different ways?
- Can they prove through their performance that they have mastered the content?

Source: www.Battelleforkids.org/flatworld.

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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.

No child left bored

The School Administrator takes a look at how to challenge gifted and talented students in an article by **Sally M. Reis**. To read the story, go to:

www.aasa.org/publications/saarticledetail.cfm?ItemNumber=8205&snItemNumber=&tnItemNumber=.

Building school/ community partnerships

Public schools have built partnerships with community groups to bring in needed resources. A recent survey by DeHavilland Associates offers insights into how community/school partnerships are structured, and what types of relationships schools and districts have established. To read about the survey's key findings, point your Web browser to: **www.dehavillandassociates.com/DeHavilland_PartnershipReport_0207.pdf**.

Student Achievement Fair application deadline looms

You have until April 27 to nominate one of your outstanding academic programs for the 2007 SALT Student Achievement Fair at the OSBA Capital Conference. The Nov. 13 fair showcases 100 creative, successful academic achievement programs from around Ohio. See the latest *Briefcase, Journal* or visit **www.osba-ohio.org/Files/SAF07app.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 2007 SALT Student Achievement Fair. Five groups will entertain conference attendees for 20 minutes each during the afternoon of Nov. 13. To nominate a group, use the form mentioned above or contact **Al Meloy**, deputy director of search services and board development, at (614) 540-4000, (800) 589-OSBA or a_meloy@osba-ohio.org.

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New report compares Ohio's educational system with world-class systems

“Creating a World-Class Education System in Ohio,” is a report that was commissioned by Achieve Inc. intended for Ohio policymakers and others interested in moving Ohio’s K-12 system to global levels to compete with any nation. The findings and recommendations were reported to the State Board of Education on Feb. 13. The report detailed how far Ohio has come and confirms that Ohio’s education system is on the right track. It also provided recommendations on how to build upon Ohio’s efforts and move the state’s education system forward, based upon national and international best practices.

The report stressed that the best school districts in the world have a few things in common. There are high expectations for all students in that system. There are often the necessary resources to provide students what they need to achieve success. And, each successful system has consequences for those students who don’t make the grade and incentives for those who do make benchmarks. The report also stated that 37% of Ohio students that go onto college needed remedial classroom work costing around \$32 million per year.

What did the report conclude about the Ohio educational system and how best to move forward? The new system in Ohio has to be characterized by, “high-challenge, high-support and aligned incentives for all key actors responsible for student achievement.” Clear vision and a holistic plan should include multiple important efforts acting in parallel in a mutually reinforcing way, to move the system to world-class levels of student achievement. Broad involvement and courageous leadership is needed to achieve the greater coherence and alignment focusing on student achievement and bringing together stakeholder groups to forge new ways of working together. Sustained commitment over time should deal with specific strategic initiatives and be staggered so that short-term improvements can be demonstrated, even while the groundwork for longer-term changes is being established.

As Gov. **Ted Strickland** has said, “I believe that a governor alone can’t transform education to make it work for every child, but with the right state support, our communities and teachers and students can.”

To view the full report visit www.achieve.org/Ohio_report.

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How do we stack up?

Do Ohio students receive the same quality education as those living in other states? The U.S. Chamber of Commerce offers state-by-state comparisons on its Web site at: www.uschamber.com/icw/reportcard/default.

World-class education in Ohio

A report to the State Board of Education by Achieve Inc. finds that “it is increasingly clear that Ohio’s future economic competitiveness depends on the ability of its education system to produce students who can compete globally.” The Ohio Department of Education (ODE) is conducting meetings across the state to present the report’s seven recommendations and to gain feedback from school, business and community leaders. To read the report and learn about the scheduled meetings, go to www.ode.state.oh.us and search for “Creating a World-Class Education System.” Then plan to attend a meeting and let your views be known.

Honoring student 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 and to say a few words of encouragement to the students and staff.

Music fills the air

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

Why do you believe in public education?

Take a moment at your next board meeting to share your reasons why you believe in public education. Ask your superintendent and treasurer, and fellow board members to do the same (give them several days notice so they can prepare). **Jon Samuels**, board member of Public Education Partners in Aiken, S.C., gives his reasons in a letter posted at www.publiceducation.org/pdf/BelieveInPublicEducation.pdf.

Student achievement research brief

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What is a school district's success? Part 1

According to the Coalition of Essential Schools, success is not a narrow measurement of just test scores. We emphasize tests because we have not regarded quantified results as the determining factor for a student's success. The question then is how can we create a more-balanced approach for our goal of ensuring student success?

First, we must invest in our people. School improvement and success will emerge if we provide a professional development system that provides an embedded learning strategy for all. Most teachers will attest that typical training fails or has little to no effect due to the lack of sustained implementation. Training is introduced without leadership supporting it for a committed time period. Training must be monitored and implemented in ways that inspire ambitious goals for at least a three-year commitment. In a recent study conducted by the Ohio Center for Essential School Reform with Miami University, teachers provided feedback on professional development. Two of the seven themes from the study emphasized that districts have too many educational initiatives, and that professional development, when aligned to standards, must be given from three to five years before effective school success is apparent.

A second component of success is creating a personalized learning environment. **Nel Noddings**, former Stanford University professor, has observed that effective teachers "learn about their students' needs, working habits, interests and talents," and apply that knowledge as they develop lessons and plan for their students progress. Student success has been demonstrated when school districts choose to create smaller learning organizations within their schools to build closer relationships with students. When students recognize that teachers sincerely care about their learning and provide relevant course work related to their interests, needs and global workforce requirements, school success will follow.

Finally, quantifiable and qualitative results confirmed in a study with over 20 central and southern Ohio school districts in 53 buildings that formative classroom assessments significantly improved student success on the state achievement tests. Formative assessments are short tests that help teachers shape, not evaluate, their instruction for each student. The Ohio Center for Essential School Reform studied the Literacy Curriculum Alignment Process to determine if the school districts that have adopted the process showed improvement on the Ohio Academic Achievement Tests and to determine if the teachers changed their instructional practices using standards-based education.

Source: Dr. **Susan Lang**, executive director, Ohio Center for Essential School Reform, www.ohioces.org

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“Leadership for Change”

The American Association of School Administrators and Aramark Education have issued an in-depth report that provides insights on what’s ahead for education from 25 school superintendents. “Leadership for Change” addresses critical education issues that have an impact on student achievement. To download the report, go to www.aramarkschools.com/pdf/SOY_Forum_white_paper_final_06.pdf.

Principal mentoring done right

The Wallace Foundation produced a report called “Getting Principal Mentoring Right: Lessons from the Field.” This report is based on a review of existing literature, along with Wallace staff visits to mentoring programs in Kentucky and New York City. To download the report, go to the Wallace Knowledge Center at www.wallacefoundation.org

Recognize National Honor Society membership

One of the top academic honors for your students is being tapped for induction into the National Honor Society. Have the society’s officers share with the board what it means to be a member, and explain the society’s four virtues: scholarship, leadership, character and service.

Help kids lead healthy lives

The Road of Life: Cancer Prevention for Kids offers a free, integrated elementary health education curriculum. It contains 31 lessons that focus on nutrition, physical activity and tobacco-use prevention. The curriculum is integrated into core academic subject areas (social studies, science, English language arts, mathematics) and is aligned to Ohio State academic content standards benchmarks for the grades 3-4 program and indicators for grade 4. To download the curriculum go to: www.roadoflife.org

Recognize your students

The Student Achievement Leadership Team has two award pins for recognizing worthy students. These are great to pass out at board meetings or at academic recognition events. Contact **Linda Cooper** at (614) 540-4000 to order the pins. Pins can be purchased in quantities of 50 at \$1.50 a pin, or 100 and more at \$1.25 a pin.

Student achievement research brief

Each month, **Success** brings you a research brief to share with fellow board members. Last month's issue shared part of a report on how a school district can create a more balanced approach to attaining success. This month looks at the report's findings.

What is a school district's success? Part 2

According to the Ohio Center for Essential School Reform, 20 central and southern Ohio school districts that adopted the Literacy Curriculum Alignment Process showed improvement on the Ohio Academic Achievement Tests.

The average gain with the districts in fourth-grade math was over 9%; fourth-grade reading was 13%; sixth-grade math gain was almost 17% and sixth-grade reading over 9.5%. Following the completion of the study (school year 05-06), additional gains were made with the exception of sixth-grade math, which stayed the same: fourth-grade math was 26%; fourth-grade reading was 17%; sixth-grade math was almost 17% and sixth-grade reading was 32%.

Seven themes emerged from the study on formative assessment using the Literacy Curriculum Alignment Process. The following are some of the themes:

- 67% of teachers say they changed instructional practices after experiencing positive results using a common/formative assessment,
- 84% of the teachers responded that they needed uninterrupted collaboration time,
- 100% responded that their district had too many initiatives at the same time,
- 92% of the teachers responded that the common/formative assessment process helped them understand the standards.

Success in a school district needs a balanced approach of aligned and continuing professional development, personalized learning with relevant course work to prepare students for the global economy and a formative assessment system for teachers to shape their instruction.

Source: Dr. **Susan Lang**, executive director, Ohio Center for Essential School Reform, www.ohioces.org

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Rewarding success

During commencement exercises, a speaker proudly announces the scholarships earned by those graduating that day. Many of those scholarships are from local businesses. A recent survey asked voters how important it is for local businesses to contribute to various groups in their community. Americans do want to see local businesses contribute to educational pursuits. Fifty-eight percent of those surveyed believe it is “very” important for businesses to give to educational scholarships for local students and 54% say the same for giving to local K-12 schools. Libraries and literacy programs are also popular recipients (49%). To view the entire survey, visit www.moore-info.com/polls_current.html.

Educating the newest Americans

Schools throughout Ohio are challenged with educating immigrant children. The Annenberg Institute for School Reform’s “Voices in Urban Education” looks into this issue and offers suggestions to assist districts in helping immigrant students succeed. To read the report, visit www.annenberginstitute.org/VUE/index.html.

Are we killing creativity?

Creativity expert Sir **Ken Robinson** feels schools are not nurturing creative minds. “We are educating people out of their creativity,” he says. “All kids have tremendous talents and we squander them.” To hear why he believes that creativity should be taught, as well as literacy, listen to him at www.ted.com/index.php/talks/view/id/66.

Share summer plans

From summer school to summer reading programs, your students are still learning. Ask your curriculum director or building principals to attend your next board meeting to share what district students are doing to improve their knowledge over the summer break.

Improving your board's success

You are continuously improving district operations and student achievement. But what are you doing to improve your effectiveness as a board? Summer is a great time for board retreats and self-evaluation. Contact OSBA for information on conducting such activities.

Student achievement research brief

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Who are your partners in educating students?

In a national survey, school and district officials rank businesses as their most important community partners over parent organizations, booster clubs, foundations and others. This was just one of several findings published in “Community/School Partnerships: A National Survey” that examines the integral role businesses and others play in supporting K-12 education. The report is from DeHavilland Associates, a consulting/communications firm.

In this report, education officials also offered insights into how they establish and manage community/school partnerships, what types of relationships they’ve established with key partners and with which organizations they’d most like to work with in the future.

Following is a sample of key findings:

- The total value of partnerships over the previous 12 months was limited, with 43.6% reporting a value of \$25,000 or less, and the vast majority (83%) listing the value at less than \$200,000.
- There were clear differences in the responses of suburban, urban and rural school districts. Those in suburban areas note generally higher levels of support from community-based partners; those in urban areas receive greater support from institutional partners (nonprofits, foundations and postsecondary institutions); and those in rural areas record below-average levels of support from every partner, with the exception of booster clubs.
- Rankings of current partners reinforced the importance of local support, with regional/national foundations and nonprofits appearing at the bottom of the list (10 and 12 respectively). However, these organizations are seen as attractive future partners, with regional/national foundations listed third and regional/national nonprofits listed sixth on the ranking of partners with whom respondents would most like to develop a relationship.

To download a free copy of “Community/School Partnerships: A National Survey,” visit www.dehavillandassociates.com/resources.html.

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Learning begins at home

According to Dr. **Dorothy Rich**, "The family, regardless of income and educational background, can use opportunities this summer to make a truly positive impact on children's attitudes and behaviors that determine school success." Why not ask a principal, teacher or curriculum director to write a story on how parents can use the summer months to keep their children learning? Rich's Web site offers parents steps to get started at: <http://drdorothy.blogspot.com/2007/05/morning-to-night-its-learning-time-your.html>

Summertime news

What is going on in your district this summer? Building maintenance and repairs, summer school, staff development, vacations, scheduling and hundreds of other activities are occurring throughout the district. Your school reporter will still be looking for stories to write, so encourage him or her to visit schools during this slow time.

Tight budget ahead

The state's biennium budget has been front-page news the past 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 increased academic achievement.

High-quality education for all

The Getting It Right For Ohio's Future campaign will make public education a fundamental right and transfer a greater burden of funding public schools to the state. Visit the campaign's Web site (www.rightforohio.org) to learn more about how you can help the campaign.

Student Achievement Fair is all filled up

The ninth annual SALT Student Achievement Fair at the Capital Conference has become so popular with school districts that it is already full. One hundred booths are reserved for outstanding academic programs from across Ohio. The five performance groups also have been selected. Look for a mailing from OSBA with the list of districts chosen.

Student achievement research brief

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Ensuring they will be ready

Across the nation, school districts are working to ensure that no child is left behind and that all children reach academic proficiency. However, many educators are discovering that reform efforts in the K-12 educational system are sometimes too little, too late. By the time some children reach kindergarten, they are already far behind their peers in skills and measures of school readiness. These educational gaps tend to be much more difficult to close as children advance through school.

With public schools facing heightened accountability requirements, prekindergarten has emerged as an important strategy to promote school readiness and achievement in elementary school and beyond. Research has shown that high-quality pre-K programs, particularly for economically disadvantaged children at risk for educational failure, produce both short- and long-term gains in children's cognitive and social development. Generally, children who participate in programs like these:

- are better prepared for school,
- perform better on standardized tests,
- are less frequently assigned to special education classes,
- are retained less frequently in later years,
- have better school attendance rates,
- are less likely to drop out of school,
- are more likely to go to college,
- will have higher employment rates and family income,
- are less likely to be a teen parent,
- have lower incidences of criminal activity.

Children do even better when pre-K standards are aligned to elementary school standards. Several national and state studies have found benefits for young children that extended well beyond kindergarten. In addition to producing educational gains, high-quality pre-K programs provide savings through reduced special education placements and remedial costs, which result in savings to our public school systems. Research also indicates that for every \$1 spent on quality pre-K programs, there could be a long-term payback of between \$2-\$4. Communities also benefit by better preparing young people for skilled jobs and increasing their economic productivity.

All children can benefit from a high-quality prekindergarten program. For many of them, pre-K can make the difference between struggling through school or doing well. For more information about pre-K, visit the Center for Public Education at www.centerforpubliceducation.org.

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Ready or not, schools open

The August school board meeting is a good time to tell community members what changes are in store for them in their schools. Have a staff member report on what has been done to improve education, as well as any changes in your schools. This is a great opportunity to announce the dates and times of back-to-school activities and open houses.

Budgets affect student achievement

Student success is dependent upon the resources available. Ohio's new two-year budget flat-funded 311 school districts next school year and 243 the following school year. That will hurt many districts' ability to continue programs aimed at raising student achievement. Ask your superintendent to report to the board how state funding affects your district's efforts to better educate children.

Report cards are 'round the corner

In a few short weeks, the Ohio Department of Education (ODE) will be releasing your district report cards. Be prepared to tell what your district did the past year to improve student achievement and why the district earned the "grades" it did on the report card. For assistance, go to ODE's Web page at www.ode.state.oh.us and search for "local report card."

Begin planning your Capital Conference now

You should have received the 2007 OSBA Capital Conference and Trade Show brochure in the mail. Review the four-day conference schedule and plan to attend those sessions that would benefit your district most. Discuss the many dialogue sessions addressing student achievement at your next board meeting to learn which board members and administrators will be attending each session.

HB 190 would change achievement testing

House Bill 190 passed favorably out of the Ohio House of Representatives in June. This bill changes the administration and reporting dates for the elementary achievement tests. Ask your superintendent to explain the changes to your district. This legislation will be considered by the Ohio Senate when it returns from summer recess.

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Work on Ohio High School Transformation Initiative continues

The work of the Ohio High School Transformation Initiative (OHSTI) will move into the next stages of helping children. KnowledgeWorks Foundation has just received an additional \$7.4 million from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation to strengthen OHSTI. School districts that have accepted new three-year grants include **Canton City, Columbus City, Cleveland Heights-University Heights City, East Cleveland City, Lima City, Lorain City, Toledo City** and **Youngstown City**.

This effort has focused on providing a high-quality high school education for students in urban areas that have struggled in the past with student achievement. This initiative is one of the nation's most aggressive school improvement efforts focused on changing Ohio's prevailing, ineffective high school model. These students have also received more personalized attention, and increased academic rigor that has inspired them to achieve.

These new small schools provide students with a relevant curriculum supported by:

- organization around students' individual learning styles;
- tailoring learning to fit student needs;
- "majors," such as business or health, provide "hooks" that make learning relevant to students;
- team-based projects and other real-world work methods replace the traditional "stand and deliver" lecturing style of the past.

Up to 15,000 students in 44 high schools across Ohio have had the advantage of attending these smaller schools that help raise achievement and increase college enrollment opportunities. As part of this effort, significant professional development opportunities and on-site coaching will be offered during the summer for teachers to help deepen the positive changes already under way.

According to KnowledgeWorks, campuses participating in OHSTI graduated students at higher rates than the state averages from 2002 to 2005, the most recent years for which graduation rates are reported. While the state's average graduation rate increased only two percentage points from 2002 to 2005, OHSTI campuses increased from 64% in 2002 to 70% in 2005.

For more information on the program, go to the KnowledgeWorks Foundation at www.kwfdn.org.

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Back-to-school facts

The start of the new school year brings changes and excitement. If you need any back-to-school facts and figures to compare how your school stacks up nationally to the more than 97,000 public elementary and secondary schools, visit the National Center for Educational Statistics at <http://nces.ed.gov/fastfacts/display.asp?id=372>.

Does weight affect student achievement?

If you believe that academic achievement is directly related to school attendance, then the answer is yes. A *New York Times* story (www.nytimes.com/2007/08/21/health/nutrition/21patt.html) reports on a study that shows, “on average, underweight children were absent 7.5 days, normal weight children 10.1 days, overweight children 10.9 days and the obese 12.2 days.”

Avoiding school improvement mistakes

In the latest issue of *Changing Schools*, **Ceri Dean** and **Bryan Goodwin** offer advice to avoid three mistakes often made in school improvement efforts. The online article is available at www.mcrel.org/pdf/changing_schools/9503NL_07_CS55_02_school_improvement_mistakes.pdf

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.

Are high-quality after-school programs important?

Millions of children attend after-school programs across America. Does the quality of these programs make a difference in classroom performance? To read what the the Harvard Family Research Project says about after-school program quality, visit www.researchconnections.org/location/ccrca12576 and download the fact sheet “The quality of school-age child care in after-school settings.”

Student achievement research brief

Each month, *Success* brings you a research brief to share with fellow board members.

The value of homework

Whether homework helps students — and how much homework is appropriate — has been debated for many years. With claims that students and families are suffering under the burden of huge amounts of homework, school board members, educators and parents may wish to turn to the research for answers to their questions about the benefits and drawbacks of homework. While the research has produced mixed results, there are some findings that can help to make informed decisions about homework.

Older students benefit more from homework than younger students. Some studies have shown that older students gain more academic benefits from homework than younger students, perhaps because younger students have less effective study habits and are more easily distracted.

Students from low-income homes may not benefit as much from homework as those from higher-income homes. Some researchers believe that low-income students may have fewer resources and less assistance, and are therefore less likely to complete the homework and reap related benefits.

Students with learning disabilities benefit from homework under certain conditions. Students with learning disabilities can benefit from homework if appropriate supervision and monitoring are given.

Asian American students may benefit more from homework than do students from other ethnic groups. A national study of the influence of homework on student grades across five ethnic groups found that homework had a stronger impact on Asian-American students than on students of other ethnicities.

Too much homework may diminish its effectiveness. While research on the optimum amount of time students should spend on homework is limited, there are indications that for high school students, 1½ to 2½ hours per night is optimum. Middle school students appear to benefit from smaller amounts (less than 1 hour per night). When students spend more time than this on homework, the positive relationship with student achievement diminishes.

After-school programs that provide homework assistance may improve student behavior, motivation, and work habits, but not necessarily academic achievement. Several studies noted improvements in student motivation and work habits, which may indirectly affect achievement.

For more information: www.centerforpubliceducation.org.

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Invest in education, reduce crime, increase economy

Researchers at the Justice Policy Institute have found that a 5% increase in male high school graduation rates would produce an annual savings of almost \$5 billion in crime-related expenses. The annual benefit to Ohio's economy is estimated to be \$232,897,238. To download the complete report, visit www.justicepolicy.org/content.php?hmID=1811&smID=1581&ssmID=61.

Academic integrity questioned

The San Francisco *Chronicle* reports that between 75% and 90% of high school students cheat. **Regan McMahon**, the *Chronicle's* deputy book editor, examines the issue and offers suggestions to curb academic cheating. Ask an administrator to explain to your board the appropriate policies and what the district does to prevent students from cheating. The story can be found at www.sfgate.com/cgi-bin/article.cgi?file=/c/a/2007/09/09/CM59RIBI7.DTL.

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 **Martha F. Rothery, Findlay City**, invites you to the student achievement liaison meeting at 7:30 a.m. on Tuesday, Nov. 13, in rooms E 150-151. A continental breakfast will be provided. Please RSVP to Debbie Beckman at (614) 540-4000, (800) 589-OSBA or d_beckman@osba-ohio.org.

Conference Guide available

The complete, 194-page OSBA *Conference Guide* will be delivered to your district in October. If you want an electronic version, one is posted on OSBA's Web site at: www.osba-ohio.org/CC2007.htm.

Do parents support rigorous math and science classes?

Just 25% of Kansas and Missouri parents think their children should be studying more math and science, according to a study published by the Public Agenda. To read the report and the survey responses, visit www.publicagenda.org/importantbutnotforme/index.cfm.

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Not all recent academic gains are a result of NCLB

The Center on Education Policy (CEP) has been monitoring the effects of the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) since its inception in 2002. CEP studied and polled the state education agencies and chief school officers to examine the effects of the NCLB Act at the local level. “How Students Achievement Increased Since No Child Left Behind?” found that state test scores on reading and math have gone up. The achievement gaps between minority and white students has narrowed. However, the report has warned that the gains couldn’t be attributed to NCLB since there are many reform efforts and the data collected from various states were incomplete. In addition, some states completely overhauled their assessment systems during the study period. Others continue to make changes to their testing systems over the years, making comparison of test scores from year-to-year difficult if not impossible.

No doubt NCLB has an effect on teaching and learning, but its impact on student achievement is still unclear because the act is still in its infancy. Perhaps the more appropriate question to ask now is whether NCLB is using the right accountability tool to measure school performance? The CEP study found positive trends in Florida schools with the achievement gaps narrowing between white students and students belonging to major racial groups. However, under NCLB, Florida still continues to have more schools not making AYP and going onto the punitive restructuring phase.

The study used data from all 50 states, but it often didn’t have complete data from all the states in all subjects and grade spans.

The major findings were:

- 14 of 38 states with sufficient data showed that gaps between white and African-American students have narrowed in reading across all three grades, while no state showed evidence of gaps widening;
- in math, 12 states showed gaps between white and African-American students narrowing, while one state showed the gaps widening;
- 13 of 40 states with sufficient data showed evidence that gaps between white and Hispanic students have narrowed in reading across three grade spans;
- 11 of 41 states with sufficient data showed evidence that gaps between white and Hispanic students have narrowed in math across three grade spans;
- even when the gaps have narrowed for subgroups, they were still often sizable;
- the report does not have sufficient data to report on achievement gaps for students with disabilities and LEP students.

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Test community support

We test students regularly. How about testing your community? The Give Kids Good Schools Web site (www.givekidsgoodschools.org) offers a quiz on “How much do you and your community do to support public education?” Encourage community members to take the 10-question test. Results appear after all questions are answered, including comparisons with other test-takers’ communities.

Are you data driven?

The New York Times reports that some schools are not using testing data to help students improve academically. Ask school staff to make a presentation to the board on how your teachers use data to raise student achievement.

Graduation coaches wanted

Last year, Georgia had more public high school students, but fewer high school dropouts than the previous year. The state’s graduation rate soared from 60% in 2003 to better than 70% in 2007. One initiative cited as helping this trend is graduation coaches. A coach’s primary role is to identify at-risk students and help them succeed in school by keeping them on track academically before they consider dropping out. To learn more, visit the Georgia Department of Education Web site: http://gadoe.org/tss_school_improve.aspx?PageReq=TSSGraduationCoach.

OSBA resources are a mouse click away

For Student Achievement Leadership Team resource kits and valuable Web links to back issues of *Success*, visit the OSBA SALT Web page at www.osba-ohio.org/sa.htm. And if you have another resource that would be valuable to student achievement liaisons, other board members and administrators, please send your suggestions to **Drew Clark**, OSBA information services specialist, at d_clark@osba-ohio.org.

Reforming Ohio’s high schools

The SALT team released Resource Kit #15, *Reforming Ohio’s high schools*. This kit, which is enclosed with this *Success* issue, examines two KnowledgeWorks Foundation projects in Ohio urban high schools.

Student achievement research brief

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New study finds public high school students on par with private high school students

A comprehensive study conducted by **Harold Wenglinsky** for the Center on Education Policy examined a nationally representative sample of low-income students attending urban high schools using federal longitudinal data from 1988–2000. It compared student achievement in reading, math, science and history, and other related outcomes, and controlled for students' previous achievement, family socioeconomic status (SES) and parental involvement factors. The study compared traditional public schools with magnet schools, public schools of choice, independent private schools, non-Catholic religious schools, Catholic parish schools, Catholic diocesan schools and Catholic holy order schools that are run by a religious order (such as the Jesuits), which are 3% of students in the sample.

Low-income students attending urban public high schools generally performed at the same academic level as similar private school students and were as likely to attend college, be satisfied in their jobs and be as civic-minded in their mid-20s.

Specific findings:

- In reading, 12th-graders' test scores were affected by family SES, parental discussion of school, parental expectations, parental involvement and students' eighth grade test scores. The type of school had no impact on achievement, with the exception of the few Catholic holy order schools.
- In math, 12th-graders' test scores were affected by family SES, parental expectations and students' eighth grade test scores. The type of school had no impact on achievement, except holy order schools.
- In science, 12th-graders' test scores were affected by family SES and students' eighth grade test scores. No school type showed any impact on achievement.
- In history, 12th-graders' test scores were affected by family SES, parental expectations and discussions, and students' eighth grade test scores. The type of school had no impact on achievement, except holy order schools.
- Taken as a whole, the study found no general private school advantage across subjects.

For three straight years, a national study has debunked conventional wisdom on the superiority of private schools. In 2005, researchers from the University of Illinois found that public school students significantly outperformed private school students in fourth-grade and eighth-grade math (2000 National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP)) after controlling for demographic and socioeconomic status. In 2006, a U.S. Department of Education report found that public school students performed about evenly with private school students on math and reading (2003 NAEP).

Source: www.cep-dc.org

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The cost of failure

A Pennsylvania State Board of Education study to learn the cost of a quality education provides insight on the price of dropping out. A high school dropout will earn \$260,000 less over a lifetime, or \$158 billion for each year's dropouts. That equals \$36 billion less taxes paid. The study, available at www.eplc.org/CostingOutStudiesAcrossNation.pdf, projects health-related spending would be \$41.8 billion less, plus murder and assault rates would drop 30% if each dropout completes one more year of school.

Fishin' for math success

The Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development's November *Educational Leadership* takes a look at how to help students learn math. **Marilyn Burns** offers tips in her article "Nine ways to catch kids up." Read the article at www.ascd.org/portal/site/ascd/menuitem.a4dbd0f2c4f9b94cdeb3ffdb62108a0c.

Educating education editors

The Columbia University Teachers College is helping education editors and reporters better understand our industry. Through its Hechinger Institute on Education and the Media, Teachers College posted a primer on reporting on classrooms and instruction. This series of articles, found at <http://cotsen.org/cotsen-hechinger/reporting.html>, are written by current and former education reporters.

Success starts early

A New America Foundation research brief says that the roots of academic success or failure are already firmly in place by third grade and as much as half of the black-white achievement gap already exists before children enter first grade. To read suggestions to improve the No Child Left Behind Act, go to www.newamerica.net/publications/policy/10_new_ideas_early_education_nclb_reauthorization.

Looking for live links?

If you would like an electronic version of this or any **Success** issue, visit OSBA's Student Achievement Web page, www.osba-ohio.org/sa.htm. PDF versions of **Success** are available as downloads on this page. Web pages mentioned in the newsletter are live links in the electronic version.

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Increasing achievement through character education

Do students who demonstrate positive character traits do better in school? Do schools that embrace a “positive character” culture produce students who achieve at higher rates? Those were two of many questions asked by the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education and the Caring School Community, a collaborative of Missouri public school districts, in a four-year research study funded by the U.S. Department of Education (2002-2006).

The grant, received from the Office of Safe and Drug Free Schools, allowed the Caring School Community to implement its CHARACTERplus Program in 64 randomly selected schools across Missouri. Schools not among the 64 were used as control schools for comparison purposes in a phased and monitored research design.

Results of the study showed improved school climates, less reported incidents of school discipline and improved student achievement. Secondary results included greater willingness on the part of parents and teachers to communicate more regularly, greater attendance by parents and school staff at community and school-related events, and better strategies for developing school leadership.

Specifically, student discipline-related office referrals decreased 19%, with an overall difference between treatment and control schools of 31%. Additionally, during a three-year period, student achievement (in those schools participating in the CHARACTERplus program) in communication arts increased as much as 47% and in math by as much as 54%.

At the International Center for Leadership in Education in Rexford, N.Y., the positive correlation between character education and achievement has also been the focus of research. The center believes that although the development of a child’s character may first and foremost be the responsibility of his or her family, schools play a strong supporting role in reinforcing these efforts. The center’s research indicates that schools with the highest levels of student achievement do not sidestep the responsibilities of character education, but include it as a key part of the curriculum.

The center’s work in this area has concluded that there are 12 guiding principles for exceptional character. They are adaptability, compassion, contemplation, courage, honesty, initiative, loyalty, optimism, perseverance, respect, responsibility, and trustworthiness.

For more about the positive links between character education and student achievement, please see these sources: www.characterplus.org; and www.leadered.com.

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