Success

Ohio School Boards Association — Helping Kids Succeed!

Timely tips to improve student achievement   January 2011

Chalkboards & overheads Finland produces some of the highest scoring students on international tests, but their classrooms are definitely low-tech, according to a *Wall Street Journal* story. Finnish students have no high school sports teams, less than 30 minutes of homework and lunches are free, as is a college education. To learn how the Finns aced the Programme for International Student Assessment, visit **http://links.ohioschoolboards.org/11011**.

Learning from mistakes "Those who can examine their own mistakes learn more than others. Period," writes former Providence (R.I.) school board member **Julia Steiny** in the *Providence* Journal, "They learn more skills, more deeply and more quickly." To read her article on teaching students to learn from their own foibles, visit **http://links.ohioschoolboards.org/11012.**

Help teachers succeed Would better teacher evaluations translate into improved student success? **Bill Gates** thinks they might and is willing to pay to find out. His foundation is financing research by dozens of social scientists and thousands of teachers to develop a better system for evaluating classroom instruction, according to a New York Times story. Read the story at **http://links.ohioschoolboards.org/11013**.

A quick reform fix? A recent report by McKinsey and Company looks closely at 20 school systems from around the world that have registered significant, sustained and widespread student achievement gains. To learn why these succeed where other school reform efforts failed, visit **http://links.ohioschoolboards.org/11014**.

Volunteers help improve HS graduation rate Community volunteers give struggling students the boost to graduate at Indianapolis Washington High School. More than 40 after-school programs, staffed each day by at least 100 helpers, were instrumental in raising the school's graduation rate from 47% to 68%. To read the *Indianapolis Star's* story on this remarkable turnaround, go to **http://links.ohioschoolboards.org/11015**.

Student achievement research brief

Each month, **Success** *brings you a research brief to discuss with board members and administrators.*

Checking public education's vital signs

For a number of years, the *American School Board Journal* (*ASBJ*) staff compiled a supplement to the magazine, titled *Education Vital Signs.* The supplement's purpose was to provide board members and administrators a multitude of education statistics and articles that try to put those statistics in the context of the previous year's events.

This year, the *ASBJ* staff took a new approach with education vital signs. This new method recognizes that today's data is most valuable when it informs tomorrow's decisions.

Instead of a supplement, a four-page article highlighting the trends of this year's data appeared in the September *ASBJ.* The article looked at trends in professional development, time in the classroom, teacher accountability, technology and collaboration. You can read the complete article at **http://links.ohioschoolboards.org/11016**.

Acknowledging that schools are becoming more "data-driven" than ever before, and educational decisions — the kind of decisions made by board members and administrators every day — are increasingly based on the latest research. *ASBJ* has created an area on their website that provides the research information normally used to produce the *Education Vital Signs.*

The information is provided so that school board members and administrators have access to the latest, most useful research on a variety of topics, such as 21st century skills, administration, after-school and summer programs, bullying, charters and vouchers, children at risk, dropout prevention, early learning, facilities and school design, food and nutrition, health and wellness, helping students learn, immigration and diversity, leadership, parents and communities, safe from harm, school governance, school spending, teachers, technology focus, and testing and assessment.

This research can provide answers and support to you and your district as you make decisions affecting student achievement. You can find this information on the *Education Vital Signs* website at **http://links.ohioschoolboards.org/11017**.

Note: Because the National School Boards Association ceased printing Education Vital Signs, *the OSBA Student Achievement Leadership Team is not able to send student achievement liaison a copy as in previous years.*

Timely tips to improve student achievement   February 2011

Learn by taking tests

Taking a test does more than just measure knowledge; the act promotes learning as well. So says a *New York Times* story, citing research posted on the online journal *Science*. To read the story, visit **http://links.ohioschoolboards.org/11021**.

Grading the parents

A child's success in school can be boosted by involved and supportive parents. Florida state Rep. **Kelli Stargel** proposed a bill to grade kindergarten through third-grade parents. To read how Stargel, a mother of five, wants to hold parents accountable, visit **http://links.ohioschoolboards.org/11022.**

What's leadership's role in reform?

Public school leaders have a distinct role in transforming low-performing high schools. A new Alliance for Excellent Education policy brief says "… states and districts must craft comprehensive systems based on principles of accountability, leadership and empowerment, thereby creating the conditions to dramatically improve high schools, particularly those serving the most challenged populations." To read more, go to **http://links.ohioschoolboards.org/11023**.

Online phys ed offered

Not everyone thrives in gym class. So a Sioux Falls, S.D., physical education teacher, **Chris Clark**, developed an online class as an option for non-competitive students. The class includes 40 writing assignments and 60 activities with a goal of instilling healthy lifestyles. To read the story in the Sioux Falls *Argus Leader*, visit **http://links.ohioschoolboards.org/11024**.

ZAP helps homework

Center Middle School in Azusu, Calif., has adopted a zero-tolerance policy for missed homework assignments. Forget to turn in an assignment and students get ZAPped (Zeros Aren't Permitted) and after-school tutoring, where they stay until the work is finished. Forty-two percent of the student body have been zapped, with about half learning their lesson. To read the *San Gabriel Valley Tribune* story online, go to **http://links.ohioschoolboards.org/11025**.

Student achievement research brief

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Effective professional development is tied to student achievement

Learning Forward, formerly the National Staff Development Council, and Stanford University are taking a multiyear look at the state of teacher training. Their study, *The Status of Professional Development in the United States,* is unfolding in several phases. The latest phase, called "Teacher Professional Learning in the United States," studies four states — Colorado, Missouri, New Jersey and Vermont — that show success in professional development.

The report notes that the states "share a number of key characteristics and face similar challenges. All have professional development standards, induction and mentoring programs for beginning teachers, and a state-level organization or professional board that oversees teacher licensing, professional teaching standards and professional development. Most also require professional development plans for teachers and minimum levels of professional development for license renewal. All provide a range of supports and incentives for professional learning."

The group cites four key factors to judge how state policy affects professional development: leadership, infrastructure, resources, and the ability of professionals and innovators to shape strategies through intermediary organizations or independent providers that provide professional development in the state.

Each state approaches professional development in different ways, with various levels of support and delivery. Similarities that contribute to each state's success include:

● developing multiple accountability systems,
● monitoring quality,
● requiring induction and mentoring programs,
● adopting the professional learning community model,
● partnering with professional organizations,
● creating networks of intermediary organizations,
● addressing federal mandates and accountability requirements in constructive ways.

The report says that, "Research evidence supports the notion that investing and supporting professional development that is ongoing, intensive and connected to practice and school initiatives; focuses on the teaching and learning of specific academic content; and builds strong working relationships among teachers makes a difference in student achievement."

To download the Learning Forward report, visit **http://links.ohioschoolboards.org/11026**.

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More Ohio students take AP exams

More than 23,000 seniors in the Ohio public school class of 2010 took at least one advance placement (AP) exam, according to the Ohio Department of Education (ODE). That is up from the nearly 13,000 who took the AP test in 2001. Ask for a report on your district's AP program at a board meeting. To read ODE's release on Ohio students' success, visit **http://links.ohioschoolboards.org/11031**.

Watch DOG dads work

Children living in homes without fathers are more likely to get involved in drug and alcohol abuse, drop out of school and suffer from health and emotional problems, according to the National Center for Fathering. A story in the Fort Myers (Fla.) *News-Press* highlights a local Watch DOGS program in which dads are volunteering in a high-poverty elementary school. To learn how to combat this problem, affecting one-third of all U.S. students, visit **http://links.ohioschoolboards.org/11032.**

Avoid four classroom differentiation mistakes

To help all students learn, teachers are creating different lessons for various learning styles. On the ASCD Edge blog, **Robyn Jackson** warns to avoid four mistakes that may hinder, rather than encourage, education. Read her blog at **http://links.ohioschoolboards.org/11033**.

Preschools pay dividends

A study on Chicago's Child-Parent Centers finds the return on investment for preschools serving low-income families provides an 18% annual return. The researchers used data collected on former students and claim the study is the first for a sustained, publicly funded early intervention program. To download the study, go to **http://links.ohioschoolboards.org/11034**.

School-based health care raises achievement

Students who received mental health counseling in schools arrive on time for class 25% more often and have better attendance (than before counseling). School-based health care centers serve nearly two million children in the U.S. To learn more on how such students raised their grade point averages, read the United Press International story at **http://links.ohioschoolboards.org/11035**.

Student achievement research brief

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Solid research equals solid results

Ineffective teaching practices and unproven education theories are among the chief reasons children fall behind and teachers become frustrated. Programs and practices grounded in scientifically based research are not fads or untested ideas; they have proven track records of success. School board members must demand that instructional practices be evidence-based and direct local funding so that only the best ideas with proven results are introduced into the classroom.

Doctors require solid research before treating patients, which has produced some of the most effective remedies and cures in history. By using solid research, we can get the best ideas to kids who would fail without them. For example, an experiment might involve teaching two groups of children to read using different methods and comparing the results to see which method is most successful. Some children will learn to read with a variety of methods. Children having problems learning to read need the most effective methods. Effective teaching and curricula can challenge children and interest them in learning — preventing problems of violence, hyperactivity and learning disability misidentification.

Key characteristics of reliable research
● **Scientific method** — A hypothesis about what works, or how it works, is formulated; a treatment group and control group are used in a study to try to disprove the hypothesis.
● **Replicated** — Several studies find the same result.
● **Generalized** — Study findings can be applied broadly to students other than the ones studied.
● **Meets rigorous standards —** The study's design, measures and interpretation of results meets rigorous standards of peer review.
● **Convergent findings** — Results found using different approaches all point to the same conclusion.

Using data for board decision making
Is your board ready to talk about what data and reliable evidence is in place to measure whether you are reaching your goals? Asking the following questions will ensure that you are on the right track:
● Do we have data on student performance related to our goals?
● Do we examine our data by gender, race and socioeconomics?
● Do we expect our superintendent to use our student achievement data to plan staff development and reward teacher and staff performance?
● Do we have an assessment program that is based on district standards and reliable evidence?
● Does our assessment program have multiple measures, not just a single high-stakes test?
● Is assessment data provided to teachers and principals in a format that can be used to make informed instructional decisions?

To learn more, visit **http://links.ohioschoolboards.org/11036**.

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Timely tips to improve student achievement   April 2011

The value of pre-K

A new study from Vanderbilt University's Peabody Research Institute finds that children who attended Tennessee's public prekindergarten gained an average of 82% more on early literacy and math skills than comparable children who did not attend. Learn more at http://links.ohioschoolboards.org/11037.

Setting goals raises student achievement

The Wall Street Journal reports that some schools are looking to boost student achievement by implementing goal-setting programs that help students identify and reach measurable, attainable targets in a set time frame. "SMART" goals allow students to break large goals into smaller steps and use specific strategies to overcome obstacles. Read more at http://links.ohioschoolboards.org/11038.

Engagement key to reform

Education leaders need to do more to engage parents and communities in improving students' education, writes **Hugh B. Price**, a visiting professor at Princeton University. Local school boards, educators, PTA groups, and community-based and business groups could team up to "to envelop youngsters in a culture of achievement," he writes. Learn how these groups can work better together at http://links.ohioschoolboards.org/11039.

Team teaching increases student progress

A Maryland elementary school combines team teaching with regular conferences aimed at monitoring the progress of individual students. The "Kid Talks," held three times a year, help educators match resources with students. "We're smarter together than we are as one," Principal **Steve Raff** said. Read the story at http://links.ohioschoolboards.org/11040.

Ohio districts capitalize on technology

Skype, SMART boards, hybrid buses and "excergaming" gym programs that combine video gaming and physical fitness are just a few of the ways Ohio districts are using technology. Learn more at http://links.ohioschoolboards.org/11041.

Student achievement research brief

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Effective teacher evaluations
Educational consultant **Charlotte Danielson** has pioneered efforts to improve teacher evaluations. In "Evaluations That Help Teachers Learn," Danielson writes that traditional systems of teacher evaluation usually contain a number of deficiencies, including:
• Outmoded evaluative criteria, often in the form of checklists.
• Simplistic evaluative comments, such as "needs improvement," "satisfactory" and "outstanding," without any consistency as to what those words mean or with no guidance as to where the teacher might focus his or her improvement efforts.
• Using the same procedures for both novice teachers and career professionals, with little or no differentiation to reflect the veteran teachers' experience and expertise.
• A lack of consistency among evaluators; a teacher might be rated at the highest level by one administrator and much lower by another.

An effective teacher evaluation system must be credible. A teacher evaluation system that satisfies this requirement should:
• *Feature a consistent definition of good teaching.* To assess the quality of teaching practice, it's essential to *define* it. It's not sufficient to say, "I can't define good teaching, but I know it when I see it."
• *Promote a shared understanding of the definition.* Everyone in the system — teachers, mentors, coaches and supervisors — must possess a shared understanding of the definition. Having a common language to describe practice increases the value of the conversations that ensue from classroom observations.
• *Use skilled evaluators.* Those who support teachers — mentors, coaches and supervisors — must be able to recognize classroom examples of the different components of practice, interpret that evidence against specific levels of performance and engage teachers in productive conversations about their practice. Evaluators must be able to assess teachers accurately so that teachers accept the judgments as valid and the public has confidence in the results.

A credible system of teacher evaluation requires evaluators to use higher-level skills than those used in the old checklist, "drive-by" observation model. Effective evaluators need to be able to assess accurately, provide meaningful feedback and engage teachers in productive conversations about practice.

According to Danielson, evaluator-teacher conversations, when conducted around a common understanding of good teaching and around evidence of that teaching, offer a rich opportunity for professional dialogue and growth. Moreover, unless a district's negotiated agreement forbids it, brief and informal drop-in observations yield plenty of information for reflective conversation and require far less time than that required for formal observations.

To learn more, visit **http://links.ohioschoolboards.org/11042**.

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Direct instruction increases learning

Although many teachers are moving toward inquiry-based lessons, a recent study showed that a group of eighth-grade students learned more through direct instruction or lecture-style teaching. The study found that by spending 10% more class time on direct instruction, students could receive up to two months of additional learning each year. Read more at **http://links.ohioschoolboards.org/11043**.

Linking reading and all-day kindergarten

Students enrolled in full-day kindergarten programs have better reading skills than their peers in part-time programs, according to a report by the Pennsylvania Partnerships for Children. "Eliminating this … will force school districts to make difficult decisions which could hamper student outcomes," said **Joan Benso**, president and CEO of the child advocacy group. Learn more at **http://links.ohioschoolboards.org/11044**.

Semi-virtual field trips

California science teacher **Ray Barber** uses videoconferencing technology to connect students with science in their own community. Barber accompanies small groups of students to six sites. Those students then produce webcasts for their classmates, who pose questions and interact with the on-site experts. Learn how he has conducted multiple virtual field trips at **http://links.ohioschoolboards.org/11046**.

At risk from the get-go

A report by the Annie E. Casey Foundation found that students who don't read proficiently by third grade are four times more likely to leave school without a diploma. For readers who can't master even basic skills by third grade, the rate is six times greater. To learn how schools, families and federal, state and local policies can help these students, download the report at **http://links.ohioschoolboards.org/11045**.

Architects inspire Ohio students

Students in **Hilliard City**'s elementary school gifted program recently showcased structures built as part of a yearlong project. The 240 fourth- and fifth-grade students studied the work of prominent architects, then

created their own structures. Read how this program challenges students at **http://links.ohioschoolboards.org/11047**.

Student achievement research brief

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Wonder who the bullies are? Look toward the 'middle'

We have all heard disheartening and even tragic stories about bullying and the potential long-term impact it can have on its victims. In an attempt to understand the roots of the problem, more research is now focusing on the perpetrators of school violence, in particular, and bullying in general.

Robert W. Faris, an assistant sociology professor at the University of California at Davis, recently published a study on the topic in the February 2011 edition of the *American Sociological Review*, a monthly publication of the American Sociological Association.

Faris' research subjects were middle and high school students from North Carolina. His research covered several years and collected data from hundreds of students. His study suggests that it is neither the "most popular" nor "least popular" students who are the most likely bullies, but rather the students who are located within the middle of their social hierarchies. Faris analysis found that students at the bottom of the status ladder "don't have as much capacity" for aggression, while those who are on the top rungs of those ladders "don't have as much cause to use it." Faris reasons that bullying is sometimes used as a perceived means of social climbing. The least popular kids don't see an upward move in social status as attainable or attractive, and the most popular don't have any more climbing to do.

As normally occurs, there were some exceptions to the rule, and Faris found differences based on gender. He found girls to be less likely to be physically abusive or physical bullies, and more indirectly aggressive. He also found that girls, for the most part, bully other girls. Boys, on the other hand, will bully both boys and girls. However, most of those gender differences are "modest," Faris said, "and overall rates of aggression are equivalent by gender."

Other interesting findings from the study included:
• Youths from single parent households are no more aggressive than others.
• Students whose parents have low levels of education are significantly less aggressive.
• Academic achievement and sports participation have little effect on aggression.
• Development during puberty, generally thought to increase aggression, has no effect.

These results can have implications for bullying prevention efforts. Anti-bullying programs at schools should pay particular attention to status as a key variable in bullying and aggression. Download this study at **http://links.ohioschoolboards.org/11048**.

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Has NCLB shortchanged high achievers?

Four experts offer their thoughts on whether a focus on closing the achievement gap under the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) has overlooked top achievers. Two contend that efforts to improve equality in education benefit all students. However, others argue that current policies ignore the needs of gifted learners. Read more at **http://links.ohioschoolboards.org/11050**.

How to use text messaging for learning

As schools begin to experiment with using mobile phones for educational purposes, this blog post focuses on how text messaging on simple, low-end phones might be used in a lesson or assignment. **Audrey Watters** asks educators to consider seven questions in developing such a project. Link to the full story at **http://links.ohioschoolboards.org/11051.**

Google offers schools discounted laptops, software

Google's new Chromebooks for Education program will provide students with laptops loaded with the latest Web-based Google software for $20 per month. This article considers whether leasing the 3G, wireless devices will be a boon to schools seeking an affordable way to expand students' access to one-to-one computing at school as well as at home. Learn more at **http://links.ohioschoolboards.org/11052.**

The link between ADHD and screen time

Dr. **Perri Klass** examines why a child with attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) may be able to sit for hours concentrating on a television screen or video game, but have difficulties sustaining the focus needed to learn in school. Find out why researchers studying behavioral and neurological connections are struggling to untangle whether longer screen times are a cause or an effect of ADHD in children at **http://links.ohioschoolboards.org/11053.**

Apps help students With SAT prep

Apps that help teens study for the SAT are improving as traditional test-prep businesses like Princeton Review and Kaplan refine their mobile software to compete with start-ups. Read about these free or low-cost apps at **http://links.ohioschoolboards.org/11054.**

Student achievement research brief

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Student achievement in reading and mathematics is trending up

Long-term trend data is showing improvements in student achievement in a number of areas. The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) reports reading and math scores are up.

The average reading score for 9-year-olds was higher in 2008 than in all previous assessment years, increasing four points since 2004 and 12 points in comparison to 1971. The average score for 13-year-olds in 2008 was higher than in both 2004 and 1971, and the average reading score for 17-year-olds was higher for 2008 than 2004. White, African-American and Hispanic 9-, 13- and 17-year-olds had higher average reading scores in 2008 than they did in the first assessment. In 2008, female students continued to have higher average reading scores than male students at all three ages.

Average mathematics scores for 9- and 13-year-olds were higher in 2008 than in all previous assessment years. The average score for 9-year-olds in 2008 was four points higher than in 2004 and 24 points higher than in 1973. For 13-year-olds, the average score in 2008 was three points higher than in 2004 and 15 points higher than in 1973. In contrast, the average score for 17-year-olds in 2008 was not significantly different from the scores in 2004. White, African-American and Hispanic 9-, 13- and 17-year-olds all had higher average mathematics scores in 2008 than in 1973. While there was no significant difference between the average mathematics scores of male and female 9-year-olds in 2008, male students did score higher than female students at ages 13 and 17.

When you separate the data into the three individual race groups, you see notable gains made by African- American and Hispanic students. The reading scores for 9-year-olds rose by 34 points for African- American students and 25 points for Hispanic students. In mathematics, the scores rose 34 points for African-American students and 32 points for Hispanic students.

Between the early 1970s and 2008, 17-year-olds' math scores improved by 17 points for African-American students and 16 points for Hispanic students. Reading scores increased 28 points for African-Americans students and 17 points for Hispanic students.

Although these achievement levels are not where they should be, notable improvements are being made for all students. Improved performance for racial/ethnic groups may be seen at all ages. This success should encourage districts to rededicate themselves to helping all students do better and eliminate achievement gaps among groups of students.

The full report can be found at **http://links.ohioschoolboards.org/14995.**

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Summer school goes high-tech

More schools in Ohio and Kentucky are offering students online summer courses as a way to broaden offerings while keeping costs low. Some districts have students complete the courses on campus, while others can earn credit for courses completed at home. However, educators are divided over the effectiveness of online summer school. Log onto **http://links.ohioschoolboards.org/11064** for the full story.

Handwriting instruction benefits pondered

A growing number of schools are choosing to continue handwriting instruction for students amid the increasing use of computer keyboards and touch screens. Some are influenced by research showing handwriting stimulates certain cognitive areas of the brain, and others say it remains an important skill for students to learn. Read more at **http://links.ohioschoolboards.org/11061.**

Eight ways technology is changing school libraries

Teacher and writer **Dave Saltman** explains eight trends for librarians and teachers who are working to increase the digital literacy of students. Among the developments, more schools are using digital catalogs that include features allowing students to share comments about particular books, while virtual libraries enable educators to compile useful online resources for students. Link to the story at **http://links.ohioschoolboards.org/11062.**

Student chefs compete for spot on lunch menu

High school students in Howard County, Md., competed to make the best nutritious entree, and their peers decided which one would be on the lunch menu in the fall. Find out why the annual Top Student Chef competition has been such a huge success at **http://links.ohioschoolboards.org/11063.**

Tips for using interactive Whiteboards in lessons

Teachers must develop interactive components to fully use interactive Whiteboards and make lessons more engaging for students, said **Alyssa Porter** of DYMO/Mimio. Such content includes objectives that require student participation and opportunities for students to practice new skills. Learn more at **http://links.ohioschoolboards.org/11060.**

Student achievement research brief

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Standards: A national discussion

Standards are a part of everyday life and come in many forms. In education, standards form the foundation for a school district's learning system. They give a common focus to classroom instruction, assessment and resource use. Standards help teachers and principals set priorities and provide a measure for identifying students who need extra or different instructional support to succeed. School boards cannot establish a successful standards-based educational system without the support of all critical stakeholders. If teachers do not take ownership of the standards, they will not prepare their students to meet them. Parents who do not understand and support the standards cannot help their children meet expectations. If the community does not support the standards, it will not provide the resources necessary for schools to prepare students to meet them.

Accountability is essential to maintaining public confidence, and accountability begins with a shared understanding of the desired results. The following self-assessment can determine where your district needs to go regarding standards:
➢ Our district has established student performance standards that clearly define what students are supposed to know and be able to do at each grade level.
➢ Our local standards reflect state and national standards for student performance.
➢ Staff and the community have been involved in determining our standards.
➢ Our standards are published in a single document for distribution to the public.
➢ Our standards are written in a way that is easily understood by parents and the community.
➢ Our district has a plan for keeping these standards constantly in front of parents, students and staff so that everyone knows what is expected.
➢ We have a process for reviewing and revising our district standards so that they remain current and viable.

In addition to the self-assessment, there are a number of questions that school board members should ponder relative to district standards:
➢ What have we done as a board to promote involvement of the community — including business, political and higher education leaders — in setting standards for our students?
➢ How are standards clearly communicated to students, parents, teachers and other members of the community?
➢ How do we help parents and community members understand that standards should address both what students should know and what they should be able to do at key points in their schooling?
➢ Is the rigor of our standards consistent with parent and community expectations?
➢ How can the board foster and sustain public support for standards?
➢ How do we determine what policies and resources are needed for the superintendent and staff to implement standards-based instruction?
➢ What is the connection between our local standards and the state standards?

For more information on this topic visit **http://links.ohioschoolboards.org/11065.**

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How to use "Angry Birds" in physics lessons

Physics teachers are using the "Angry Birds" game, played on mobile devices, to teach students about the laws of physics. Students learn things like the atmospheric composition of a planet or the motion of a new never-before-seen asteroid by playing the game that involves launching birds long distances. Link to the story at **http://links.ohioschoolboards.org/11066**.

Indiana replaces cursive lessons with keyboarding

Indiana is among the growing numbers of states to no longer require the teaching of cursive in school. Penmanship lessons will be replaced by keyboarding instruction in elementary school. Supporters say typing is a more practical skill for students to learn, while critics say cursive handwriting still has a use in today's society. Log onto **http://links.ohioschoolboards.org/11067** for the full story.

NASA program's end may hurt science education

The end of NASA's space shuttle program could take a toll on science education. With the final shuttle launch, some teachers said they are concerned that students will lose a real-life link to science lessons and research. Read more at **http://links.ohioschoolboards.org/11068**.

Should summer learning look more like camp?

Studies show that students, especially those from low-income families, can lose up to three months of reading and math skills over summer vacation. That's why some schools and groups in California are blending the traditional summer camp experience with academic lessons. Read about their success at **http://links.ohioschoolboards.org/11069**.

What does Google+ mean for schools?

Tech-savvy educators across the country are considering how the new Google+ system could be used by schools. This article considers features such as Circles and Hangouts, which may offer students and teachers more control over online sharing and provide a preferable alternative to other videoconferencing tools. However, the fact that the system is not yet integrated with Google Apps for Edu and could be blocked by some schools' web-filtering controls may hamper its widespread use in education. Learn more at **http://links.ohioschoolboards.org/11071**.

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Year-round education debate
American public schools traditionally operate on a 10-month calendar. This practice can be traced back to the time when our nation was still largely agrarian and children were needed to work in the fields during the summer. Those times are gone, but schools typically remain on a 10-month schedule with limited or no activity in late June through mid-August.

Many people favor moving away from this "antiquated" system and going to year-round schooling. Generally, this means that schools will continue to operate on a 180-day system, but the days are spread differently with shorter breaks between each term. The most popular example of year-round education is the 45-15 Plan. Students attend school 45 days and then have three weeks off. Normally scheduled breaks for holidays and vacations are still built into the calendar.

Year-round education is a very complex topic, with many variables to be considered, including the reasons behind a school district's decision to change its current calendar.

Arguments for year-round education
- Students tend to forget information during the summer and shorter vacations may increase retention rates.
- Short breaks provide additional opportunity for enrichment or remedial education.
- More students can be accommodated at one school with multi-tracking.
- It is inefficient to have schools sit idle over the summer.

Arguments against year-round education
- Studies are inconclusive regarding academic benefits.
- Students are likely to forget information whether they are out of school for three weeks or two months and review periods will still be necessary.
- Student participation in enrichment, summer internships or work is eliminated.
- Extracurricular activities could be affected by scheduling problems.
- Unless the entire school district is on a year-round schedule, families could have students on different schedules.
- Many schools are older and do not have air-conditioning.

Studies comparing academic results for year-round versus the traditional schedule are often inconclusive. It is difficult to attribute outcomes strictly to the school calendar. Schools that choose to implement year-round schedules need to carefully evaluate their rationale and consider whether a new calendar will achieve the desired goals. For more information on this topic: http://links.ohioschoolboards.org/11072.

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Students use PLNs to get specialized knowledge

More students are taking advantage of Personal Learning Networks, or PLNs, to acquire specialized knowledge on a wide range of academic subjects. PLNs use social networking to connect subject experts and students with other students or educators who need specialized information or instruction. "It's taught me how to be more professional and talk to people I wouldn't normally have talked to," high-school student **Julia Albaugh** said. Find out more about the success of PLNs at **http://links.ohioschoolboards.org/SU2**.

Career/technical ed more popular in high schools

About 14.5 million high school students nationwide will be enrolled in career and technical-education programs this year. The programs appear to be gaining renewed interest — due in part to the poor economy of the past few years. Link to the full story at **http://links.ohioschoolboards.org/SU5**.

ACT finds more students are college ready

One-fourth of this year's high school graduates who took the ACT college readiness exam met benchmarks in English, reading, math and science. The scores are an increase from 2005. While observers are pleased with the improvement, they note that three-quarters of students still are unprepared for college-level work. Read more at **http://links.ohioschoolboards.org/SU3**.

Live simulations provide training for educators

A Syracuse University training program for school leaders uses live simulations to help teachers and principals learn to address and manage difficult situations with students, parents and colleagues. The approach is modeled after "standardized patients" used in medical schools and, unlike computer simulations, has trained actors playing roles to help leaders learn to respond to real people. Details are available at **http://links.ohioschoolboards.org/SU4**.

Poll: Most parents happy with childrens' schools

About 80% of parents say they are happy with their childrens' schools, though many also believe there has been a decline in the quality of public education overall, a new poll shows. Learn more at **http://links.ohioschoolboards.org/SU6**.

Student achievement research brief

Each month, *Success* brings you a research brief to discuss with board members and administrators.

There's a big difference between "college eligible" and "college ready"
In continuing work started with his groundbreaking book *Standards for Success* (2003), Dr. **David T. Conley** of the University of Oregon and the Educational Policy Improvement Center works to educate others about the knowledge and skills necessary for college readiness. His latest book, *College and Career Ready: Helping All Students Succeed Beyond High School*, features case profiles of America's most college ready high schools, and seeks to inform policymakers, administrators, teachers, parents and students how they can develop a culture rooted in postsecondary success.

Conley strongly believes students are more apt to make a successful transition to higher education if they are truly college ready, which he defines as the degree to which the student's previous educational and personal experiences have equipped them for the expectations and demands they will encounter in college. Further, college readiness means that a student will be prepared to enroll and succeed without any remediation (courses or tutoring) in credit-bearing general education courses at a postsecondary institution. "Success" in these courses means that the student is able to understand and assimilate the concepts and knowledge of the coursework at a level that he or she can then move to the next level of coursework in the same subject area. Conley believes a more comprehensive model of college readiness is critical for all parents and educators to both understand and "buy into," so that they may begin rethinking the ways we prepare children and students.

Conley's college readiness model is based on four "rings" or facets — each with a number of key factors. At the core of the model, the first facet discusses a student's *key cognitive strategies*, or the ability to interpret, analyze, prioritize and reason with precision and accuracy. The next ring of the model is about *academic content.* This facet is linked closely with the first, and includes a student's general knowledge of the "big ideas" associated with the core subject areas of education. The third facet of Conley's model is labeled *academic behaviors* and includes the intrinsic or personal skills a student needs to succeed at the college level, including time management, group and team work, persistence and good self-perception. The final, or most "outer ring" of the model is called *contextual skills and awareness* or, more basically, what we might think of as "college knowledge." This includes the ability to interact with professors and peers once on campus, but also includes all the formal and informal information necessary to get admitted: select a school that represents a good fit, obtain financial aid, complete a quality application and understand the difference between one school and the next.

If school districts around Ohio and throughout the country measure themselves against Conley's college readiness model, it will no doubt become clear that much fewer of our graduates are college ready than when they are measured by our traditional rulers of "courses taken and grades received." Once we understand the gaps that exist between college eligible (our traditional way of thinking) and college ready (using Conley's model), we'll be on the way to providing a much better foundation for our students. For more information on this subject, please go to **http://links.ohioschoolboards.org/SU1**.

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Teacher studies the effect of iPads on achievement

Ohio English teacher **James Harmon** says state testing data show that students who used iPads in the classroom improved their chances of passing reading and writing tests than peers who did not use the technology. Harmon says the devices help engage students in learning and the game-like applications can reinforce academic lessons. Learn more at **http://links.ohioschoolboards.org/SU11**.

Supporting the 'flipped' math teaching approach

Columnist **Gareth Cook** writes in support of the "flipped" classroom model in which students receive online instruction at home and practice what they have learned with a teacher in the classroom. At **http://links.ohioschoolboards.org/SU7**, Cook writes that this approach is especially beneficial for teaching math.

More schools offer single-gender classes

There are as many as 200 single-gender public schools nationwide, and hundreds of other schools offer same-sex classes, according to estimates that show an increase in same-sex schooling since 2006. Supporters say separating boys and girls allows for a better school environment. However, opponents argue that such classes could lead to the promotion of gender stereotypes. Read more at **http://links.ohioschoolboards.org/SU8**.

Average SAT scores dip nationwide

Average SAT scores declined this year, primarily because more students are taking the college-entrance exam — some of whom are unprepared or are not fluent in English, according to the College Board. Among 1.65 million graduating seniors, average scores declined by three points in critical reading, two points in writing and one point in math. Details are at **http://links.ohioschoolboards.org/SU9**.

Engage students with project-based learning

The start of the school year is a good opportunity to begin engaging students with project-based lessons, writes journalist and author **Suzie Boss**. She suggests 20 project ideas meant to inspire communication and promote literacy, as well as projects that investigate concepts such as climate science and zero gravity. The lesson list is available at **http://links.ohioschoolboards.org/SU10**.

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Interactive Whiteboards and their impact on student achievement

An interactive Whiteboard is a display that connects a computer and projector. The computer's display is projected onto the board and a user can control the computer using a pen, finger or other device. Using interactive Whiteboards in the classroom offers a flexible and versatile method of teaching. They can be used with all subjects and allow a teacher to run multiple applications and switch between a variety of media from the board. At the beginning of each new school year, more Whiteboards are being installed and used in Ohio schools. But does using interactive Whiteboards actually impact a student's learning? Is the technology engaging the student?

Yes, according to a number of research studies. Several studies have found that when the use of an interactive Whiteboard is incorporated into the instruction, students perform better on standardized testing than students in a classroom without a Whiteboard. In some circumstances, the difference was dramatic. One study showed higher performance for fourth- and fifth-grade students in mathematics and reading/language arts when instruction incorporated an interactive Whiteboard.

Using an interactive Whiteboard shifts instruction from presentation to interaction. Studies found that student engagement increased when a Whiteboard was used on a regular basis. Students commented that the interactive features held their attention longer and they enjoyed those features when making presentations.

Using Whiteboards can make a difference in academic achievement, but that difference is dependent on how the Whiteboards are used in the classroom. The use of an interactive Whiteboard needs to be integrated into the lesson plan. Consistent and regular use by a teacher was found to have a greater impact than occasional use. One study reported that achievement increased when a Whiteboard was used 75% of the time. When used as a newer version of a screen, the impact of the Whiteboard decreases.

As districts install Whiteboards into the classroom, they need to consider the use of the Whiteboard when selecting classroom materials. Teachers also need professional development on how to use and implement the interactive Whiteboards into their teaching. Staff development will ensure the Whiteboard is used to its full potential as a successful tool for student learning.

You can find a copy of studies on how interactive Whiteboards impact student achievement and engagement at **http://links.ohioschoolboards.org/43667.**

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Columbus schools import Singapore math method

Columbus City Schools adopted a Singapore-style math curriculum for some of its students in grades K-two. The slower-paced curriculum aims to develop a deeper understanding of numbers and place value, with students trying to discover why certain methods are used to solve particular problems. Learn more at **http://links.ohioschoolboards.org/SU12.**

Can e-readers encourage students to read more?

Students in Advanced Placement literature courses at a Kentucky high school are reading more each night and enjoying it more since they began using Nook e-reader devices in class. Surveys show that students enjoy having access to textbooks, online libraries and other resources on one device. The full article can be found at **http://links.ohioschoolboards.org/SU13.**

Teacher shortage for students with autism

Some new programs in Ohio are designed to help provide support for teachers who work with students with autism. Online programs provided by Step by Step Academy offer instruction for educators on helping to motivate students and handle particular behaviors, while Bowling Green State University offers a graduate-level certificate program on autism. Read more at **http://links.ohioschoolboards.org/SU14.**

Free app teaches students safe use of social media

A new mobile app aims to keep students safe while using social media in a school setting. The free app, BeSeen, uses a video game format to simulate common social networking situations. Log onto **http://links.ohioschoolboards.org/SU15** for more details.

Should schools eliminate report card letter grades?

Letter grades on some Virginia students' report cards will be replaced by a number system that officials say is better aligned with instructional standards and will offer a more accurate description of students' progress. Other schools have abandoned letter grades. However, they continue to be the most widely used grading method, primarily because of their role in calculating students' GPAs for college admissions. Click on **http://links.ohioschoolboards.org/SU16** to read the rest of the story.

Student achievement research brief

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Collaboration and student achievement

Society demands that we adequately address student achievement to ensure that all students achieve at the highest level possible. 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. What we should realize is that we can solve complex problems when collaboration is in play, since it engenders mutual ownership of problems, as well as solutions.

While parents have an immediate interest in school quality and operations, other community members also have a literal stake in the schools. School boards that involve others through effective community engagement activities have had great success in garnering broad support. That support is not only financial, but also collaborative, which brings social, emotional and experiential resources to bear. Those resources can raise student achievement to heights unattainable through instruction alone.

Questions the school board should ask itself

o   Do we provide leadership and take an active role in establishing collaborative relationships?
o   What alliances and collaborations would most advance student achievement goals and objectives — teachers, teacher unions, social service agencies, colleges and universities, businesses?
o   What are appropriate levels of stakeholder involvement?
o   Is the community engaged in student achievement plans and initiatives at district and school buildings through surveys, forums, meetings, committees and school-based management councils?
o   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

o   What initiatives are currently in place, what are their purposes, and who are the participants?
o   What efforts are made to collaborate with groups with whom the district differs?
o   Is there adequate outreach to various governmental agencies, education associations and universities to keep current on educational issues?
o   How does the district relate with the media?
o   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, read *the Key Work of School Boards Guidebook* at **http://www.nsba.org/KeyWork**.

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Ohio middle school groups students by ability

Reynoldsburg City's Hannah Ashton Middle School has improved academic achievement after adopting a system that groups students by ability rather than grade level. The school divides students into three groups — high-, middle- and low-achieving — to better address their individual needs. However, critics say struggling students could feel stigmatized and the classification system unfairly targets poor and minority students. Click on **http://links.ohioschoolboards.org/SU20** to read the rest of the story.

States urged to promote union-district cooperation

States are being encouraged to foster cooperation between school districts and teachers' unions by provisions in the federal Race to the Top grant competition. However, some question whether states can bridge divides, citing recent politically driven battles in Ohio and elsewhere. Read more at **http://links.ohioschoolboards.org/SU18**.

Students gain confidence by reading to dogs

A tutoring program at **Washington-Nile Local's (Scioto)** Portsmouth West Elementary brings therapy dogs into the classroom as a stand-in audience for children to read aloud. The unique program boosts students' confidence and encourages public speaking. Log onto **http://links.ohioschoolboards.org/SU19** for more details.

Study finds more science is needed in U.S. schools

The No Child Left Behind Act's emphasis on reading and math achievement has diminished the focus on science instruction, according to a recent study that calls for more time spent on science education. The study is available at **http://links.ohioschoolboards.org/SU21**.

Who will pay for Ohio's switch to online testing?

Ohio schools will switch to online state tests in three years, but questions remain about how to pay for the computers and software needed for the change, plus how much the transition will cost. While some officials hope the state will shoulder the financial burden, others anticipate the cost will be transferred to local districts. The full article can be found at **http://links.ohioschoolboards.org/SU17**.

Student achievement research brief

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Bullying can impede student achievement
Bullying is a widespread problem in schools around the world, and one that has serious implications for children who are victimized, as well as those who perpetrate the bullying. Research shows that both bullies and victims may experience short-term and long-term adjustment difficulties.

School-based bullying prevention efforts can positively impact school performance and achievement. For example, elementary students attending schools with a bullying and violence prevention program in place had higher achievement than a comparison group of students in schools that did not have the program.

The challenge for educators is to create a safe learning environment so that all students can achieve optimally in school. Some important considerations include:
- ✓ School climate is important. Reduced adult supervision and low structure are associated with increases in student bullying.
- ✓ Bullying is strongly influenced by peer behaviors and reactions. Bystanders — students who are aware of bullying — can have a powerful effect on bullying.
- ✓ Students with disabilities may be victimized more frequently than their nondisabled peers.
- ✓ Many lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) students report victimization while at school. A recent survey of LGBT youth reported that 85% reported some form of bullying or harassment at school.

School-based anti-bullying efforts involve programs directed to the entire student population, with the goal of increasing awareness about bullying and decreasing bullying behaviors. School-based anti-bullying efforts may include classroom curriculum studies, whole-school/multidisciplinary interventions and/or targeted social and behavioral skill training for bullies and victims. The most promising results were reported for whole-school anti-bullying efforts, including those to establish school-wide rules and consequences, specific teacher training, use of conflict resolution strategies and classroom curricula and individual training. School-wide programs were found to be far more effective than were classroom curriculum programs or social skills training strategies.

Bullying will be reduced and/or stopped when prevention and intervention programs target the complexity of individual, peer, school, family and community contexts in which the bullying unfolds. To read a report entitled "What can be done about school bullying? Linking research to educational practice," go to **http://edr.sagepub.com/content/39/1/38.abstract**.