



Success

Timely tips to improve student achievement

September 2021

Mansfield City adds gardening and agribusiness courses in intermediate school

A high tunnel greenhouse will offer students in **Mansfield City's** Malabar Intermediate School lessons about careers in plant and animal science, agriculture and agribusiness, says principal **Tom Hager**. Teacher **Stephanie Uhde** points to research noting the physical and mental wellness benefits of school gardening and the high levels of student participation in such programs.

For more, go to <http://links.ohioschoolboards.org/SU733>.

Three tips to increase engagement in science lessons

Teachers can leverage the power of science when working to address learning challenges exacerbated by the pandemic. Emphasizing science instruction, using evidence-based strategies and routines and exploring real-world phenomena will pique students' interest and help them with vital skills while giving more attention to a core academic subject that has too often been neglected.

For more, visit <http://links.ohioschoolboards.org/SU728>.

High school students use interior design skills on campus

Interior design students at a Texas high school are using their skills to create gathering spaces on campus for students and staff. The goal of the project is to revive some open spaces at the school, making them more welcoming.

For more, visit <http://links.ohioschoolboards.org/SU729>.

Student research may bring pardon for woman accused of witchcraft in 1693

Research conducted by eighth-grade civic students at a Massachusetts middle school spurred state Sen. **Diana DiZoglio** to propose a bill to formally pardon **Elizabeth Johnson Jr.**, a woman who in 1693 was wrongly convicted of witchcraft amid the Salem witch trials. The students, under the guidance of teacher **Carrie LaPierre**, discovered that Johnson was spared from execution by the governor but her conviction remained on the record.

For more, visit <http://links.ohioschoolboards.org/SU730>.

CODA shines spotlight on ASL, deaf culture, families

CODA, an acronym for child of deaf adults, will give broad movie audiences an inside look at deaf culture and the use and nuances of American Sign Language (ASL) accompanied by spoken English and captions as it tells the story of the Rossi family and Ruby, the only hearing member. The PG-13 movie stars Academy Award-winner **Marlee Matlin**. "CODA" will become the first feature film ever released in theaters with open captions always visible on the screen.

For more, visit <http://links.ohioschoolboards.org/SU731>.

Student achievement in-depth

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

K-eight or middle school: What works for early adolescents depends on many factors

The research comparing outcomes of students at K-eight and middle schools remains inconclusive. While some studies have shown that students who move to a middle school experience steeper declines in academic achievement than those who stay put, other research has found few differences between the groups.

Proponents of K-eight schools, or “elemiddles” as they’re sometimes called, say they promote strong relationships among not only teachers and students but also teachers and parents and offer stability to young teens during a tumultuous time in their lives. They argue that early adolescence — a period marked by more rapid physical and cognitive development than any stage other than the first two years of life — is a terrible time to transition to a new school.

The recent conversions represent a return to old ways of educating early adolescents. Up until about 1900, the American education system operated on a two-tier structure, with eight years of primary school followed by four years of secondary school. More than a century of experimentation with the middle grades hasn’t provided much clarity about which configuration works best.

“We don’t have enough research yet to say everyone should go to one model,” said **Jonah Rockoff**, a professor of finance and economics at Columbia University whose own research has found that transitioning to middle school puts students on a downward path. “Neither is perfect. The jury is still out.”

Now, even the staunchest supporters of middle schools say that the movement’s best practices can work in any configuration. That acknowledgement led the National Middle School Association to change its name in 2011 to the Association for Middle Level Education.

“It’s not at all about what grades are in the school building,” said **April Tibbles**, chief communications officer for the Association for Middle Level Education. “It’s about making sure the programs and practices are developmentally responsive to the needs of the young adolescent students.”

To access the cited studies and for a more in-depth report, please visit <http://links.ohioschoolboards.org/SU732>.

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