



Success

Timely tips to improve student achievement

March 2021

Gahanna-Jefferson City serving universal free meals

School nutrition professionals at **Gahanna-Jefferson City** are serving free meals to students at grab-and-go meal sites through the end of the school year. All students are eligible for free meals, regardless of family income, said **Judy Hengstebeck**, communications coordinator. For more, go to <http://links.ohioschoolboards.org/SU690>.

Zanesville City high school program offers career insight

Zanesville City's Zanesville High School is introducing students to potential career pathways through its Life Plan program. Principal **Chad Grandstaff** said the program is aimed at giving students experience in a variety of fields, and that it's OK if teenagers' plans for college and career are not set in stone. For more, go to <http://links.ohioschoolboards.org/SU691>.

Maumee City uses interactive technology to keep students active and learning

Teachers at **Maumee City's** Wayne Trail Elementary School are changing how students learn with new technology that involves students being active. The technology, Lu, is an interactive projector that makes it possible for students to play and learn at the same time. For more, visit <http://links.ohioschoolboards.org/SU692>.

What's the future of the SAT?

In December 2020, 124,000 students were unable to take the SAT because of pandemic-related facility closures. As a result, the vast majority of colleges adopted test-optional or test-blind policies, meaning the SAT or ACT score would not be used in admission decisions. **Steve Syverson**, a retired senior admissions official at the University of Washington at Bothell and Lawrence University, said the pandemic and the pervasive adoption of temporary test-optional or test-blind policies gave institutions permission to eliminate the requirement. This move has officials predicting that a large number of institutions will not return to the test requirement. For more, visit <http://links.ohioschoolboards.org/SU693>.

Social media use tied to suicide risk among teen girls

Researchers tracked 500 teens over 10 years and found that an increase in the amount of time spent on social media sites, such as TikTok and Instagram, was linked to an increase in long-term suicide risk among teenage girls but not boys. The findings were published in the Journal of Youth and Adolescence. For more, visit <http://links.ohioschoolboards.org/SU694>.

Student achievement in-depth

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

Diagnosis benefits students in special education

Student achievement among students with special needs improved after they were diagnosed and began receiving support, according to a study led by Dr. **Amy Ellen Schwartz**, a professor at the Maxwell School of Citizenship and Public Affairs at Syracuse University. The data from 24,000 elementary and middle school students in New York City showed that the gains in reading and math were equivalent to closing the gap with their peers in general education by about one-sixth.

The federal requirement for schools to provide extra services to children with disabilities has existed for more than 45 years. Approximately 7 million children, about 14% of all public school students, now receive services. Although it costs state, local and federal governments an estimated \$90 billion a year, we know very little about whether special education services are actually helping students with disabilities learn more.

Special education is a particularly elusive area to evaluate because no one wants to randomly assign students to services to see if those who receive them do better than those who don't, as in a vaccine trial.

A group of economists found a way around this problem by studying 24,000 elementary and middle school students who were diagnosed with a specific learning disability from 2006 to 2012 in New York City, the largest school district in the country. They compared the students' academic performance before they were diagnosed and after they started receiving services. Test score improvements for students with learning disabilities were generally stronger after they were diagnosed and received services, equal to 18% of the usual disparity in math achievement between students with disabilities and those without disabilities. In reading, the benefits of special education were equivalent to 16% of this achievement gap.

The study, *The Effects of Special Education on the Academic Performance of Students with Learning Disabilities*, was published in January 2021 in the *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management*.

The New York City study focused only on children with specific learning disabilities, which is the largest disability category. It primarily refers to dyslexia and related reading and math disabilities, such as dyscalculia, dysgraphia and dyspraxia, but defies easy description. There aren't precise cutoffs for diagnosis, and evaluators use their discretion, which varies a lot from state to state and from expert to expert. Diagnosis of this learning disability category grew rapidly in the 1980s and 1990s and accounts for a third of all students receiving special education services in school. Special education services may prove to be much more or much less effective for other disabilities, such as Down Syndrome, blindness or deafness. For a link to the study and more information, please visit

<http://links.ohioschoolboards.org/SU696>.

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Success is published monthly as a member service by the Ohio School Boards Association, 8050 North High Street, Suite 100, Columbus, Ohio 43235-6481, (614) 540-4000 or (800) 589-OSBA. Kim Miller-Smith, senior student achievement consultant, editor; Jeff Chambers, director of communication services, assistant editor. To download a PDF of this eNewsletter, go to <http://www.ohioschoolboards.org/Success>.