



# Success

Timely tips to improve student achievement

July 2021

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## Superintendents offer strategies to ease students, parents back into in-person learning

Three district superintendents recommend several strategies to ease students and families back into in-person learning next school year. The strategies include: offering custom schedules for families who still have concerns about returning full time; forming a reopening task force of students, teachers, administrators, board members and community members; and communicating plans and strategies well in advance, giving families time to process the information. For more, go to <http://links.ohioschoolboards.org/SU715>.

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## Playful learning enhances problem-solving, creativity

Playful Learning Landscapes (PLL), which weave activities such as puzzles and games into bus stops and other urban spots, encourage exploration, creativity, problem-solving and collaboration while enhancing students' spacial, reading and math skills, write Dr. **Helen Shwe Hadani** and **Jennifer S. Vey** of the Metropolitan Policy Program. They write that schools should scale PLLs throughout neighborhoods using funding designed for after-school and extended enrichment. For more, go to <http://links.ohioschoolboards.org/SU716>.

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## The benefits of speech-to-text technology in all classrooms

Virtual learning allowed resource specialist teacher, **Vikram Nahal**, to experiment with new technologies that supported his students with learning disabilities. Speech-to-text technology allowed students to more easily transfer their ideas onto the page, which was especially helpful for students with ADHD and processing-related disabilities, such as auditory processing disorder or working memory deficits. For more, visit <http://links.ohioschoolboards.org/SU717>.

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## Teacher uses video to offer student feedback

**Lee Ferguson**, a high school biology teacher in Texas, uses video messages to provide remote and in-person feedback to students. Ferguson shares how she uses this feedback to give a personalized critique on students' work and build rapport with them. For more, visit <http://links.ohioschoolboards.org/SU718>.

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## Student achievement liaisons will meet in Columbus or virtually for networking event

On Aug. 18, OSBA's student achievement liaisons (SAL) will meet in Columbus or virtually for their second-annual SAL networking event. The evening begins at 6:30 p.m. and includes a 30-35 minute presentation on creating the conditions necessary to move beyond the pandemic for optimal student learning and well-being. Additionally, there will be time for networking with other student achievement liaisons and resource sharing. For more, visit <http://links.ohioschoolboards.org/SU719>.

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## Student achievement in-depth

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

### **Struggling schools don't get a boost from state takeovers, study shows**

In 2008, The Atlantic ran a story detailing school boards as the problem with American education. The piece concluded the problem was their structure: thousands of disparate boards, each influenced by local politics and teachers unions but subject to little oversight.

It was emblematic of a mindset that held real sway over the last two decades, with big city school districts, including New York and Chicago, shifting control to the mayor. In dozens of other cases, states took over school districts deemed low performing.

Now, a new national study casts significant doubt on the idea that states, at least, are better positioned to run schools than locally elected officials. Overall, researchers found little evidence that districts see test scores rise as a result of being taken over. If anything, state control had slightly negative effects on students.

The paper is the most comprehensive accounting to date of a strategy that has appealed to policymakers in many states but also brought fierce blowback. The study doesn't suggest that takeovers never succeed on academic grounds — there are clear examples where they have. But the successes appear to be more exception than rule, and the uneven academic results bring into sharp relief the costs of state takeover: the loss of democratic institutions, disproportionately in Black communities.

"These policies are very harmful to communities in terms of their political power," said Dr. **Domingo Morel**, a Rutgers University political scientist who has studied and criticized state takeovers. "And then what the state says is going to improve — this research shows it's not doing that either."

Overall, researchers found little evidence that districts see test scores rise as a result of being taken over. If anything, state control had slightly negative effects on students. The study focused on the 35 school districts from across the country that were taken over by states between 2011 and 2016. These takeovers often happened in small cities and the vast majority of affected students were Black or Hispanic and from families with low incomes. In the first few years of a state takeover, the schools generally saw dips in English test scores. By year four, there was no effect one way or the other. In math, there were no clear effects at all.

For more information about the study, a link to the study and its results, please visit <http://links.ohioschoolboards.org/SU720>.

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