



# Success

Timely tips to improve student achievement

August 2022

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## Program aimed to help students earn diplomas

A new California program will tailor high school programs to the needs and goals of students with disabilities, helping them earn a high school diploma and achieve their career goals. Under current standards, students who cannot meet the state graduation requirements are only able to earn a certificate of completion, disqualifying them from many careers. For more, go to <http://links.ohioschoolboards.org/SU795>.

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## Teens explore writing in program at Mark Twain House

The Mark Twain House and Museum in Hartford, Conn., is hosting 13 high school students who are completing various forms of writing, publishing an online literary magazine, and building their personal portfolios. The six-week program allows students to learn more about the literary process beyond just writing while being inspired by Twain's space. For more, go to <http://links.ohioschoolboards.org/SU796>.

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## More schools, states open school safety tip lines

A growing number of states and school districts are implementing school safety tip lines in response to violence, said **Kenneth Trump**, president of consulting firm National School Safety and Security Services. Experts share suggestions for running successful tip lines, including offering continuous promotion and allowing an anonymous reporting option. For more, visit <http://links.ohioschoolboards.org/SU799>.

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## What grading for equity looks like

Rio Rico High School in Arizona is rethinking grades to better reflect what students know and know how to do – and to address the inequity of the zero. How are they getting started? For more, visit <http://links.ohioschoolboards.org/SU800>.

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## Project ideas to start year, make connections

Teachers can build relationships and connections in the classroom by starting the school year with fun, yet challenging group projects, writes **Susan Yergler**, a middle-school English teacher in North Carolina. Yergler shares three project ideas, including a story slam in which each student shares a brief story, typically one that is autobiographical. For more, visit <http://links.ohioschoolboards.org/SU801>.

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## Oregon provides mental health training for educators

The Oregon Department of Education launched the Well-Being Information and Strategies for Educators program to help educators support students experiencing mental health challenges. The free, online training, part of a national program, includes guidance on identifying youth in need, teaching responsible decision-making and strategies for de-escalation. For more, visit <http://links.ohioschoolboards.org/SU802>.

## Student achievement in-depth

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

### Researchers examine enjoyable, good teaching

There is likely to be a trade-off between "good teaching" that is effective and teaching that students find enjoyable, according to an analysis by researchers from the University of Maryland and Harvard University. The researchers studied students' math test scores and teacher evaluations and found that teachers who were better at raising scores received lower evaluations and vice versa.

Two researchers from the University of Maryland and Harvard University waded into the question of good teaching, analyzing 53 elementary school teachers who were randomly assigned to classrooms in their schools located in four different districts along the East Coast. Focusing on math instruction, the researchers compared students' math scores with surveys that the fourth- and fifth-grade students had filled out as part of an experiment. Students were asked to rate their math classes the way consumers fill out customer satisfaction surveys: "This math class is a happy place for me to be;" "Being in this math class makes me feel sad or angry;" "The things we have done in math this year are interesting;" "Because of this teacher, I am learning to love math;" and "I enjoy math class this year."

The academics found that there was often a trade-off between good teaching, where students learn, and good teaching that kids enjoy. Teachers who were good at raising test scores tended to receive low student evaluations. Teachers with great student evaluations tended not to raise test scores all that much.

"The teachers and the teaching practices that can increase test scores often are not the same as those that improve student-reported engagement," said **David Blazar**, one of the study's co-authors and an associate professor of education policy at the University of Maryland College Park. Likewise, the researchers watched hours of recorded lessons of teachers in classrooms, but they didn't find statistical evidence that teachers who spent more class time on test prep produced higher test scores. High achievement didn't seem to be associated with rote instruction.

Instead, it was teachers who delivered more cognitively demanding lessons, going beyond procedural calculations to complex understandings, who tended to produce higher math scores. The researchers admitted it was "worrisome" that the kind of cognitively demanding instruction that we want to see "can simultaneously result in decreased student engagement." Other researchers and educators have noted that learning is hard work. It often doesn't feel good for students when they're making mistakes and struggling to figure things out. It can feel frustrating during the moments when students are learning the most.

The most interesting results were those about good teachers who increased learning and made learning fun. These teachers incorporated hands-on, active learning; grouped students to work collaboratively; and maintained orderly classrooms.

For more information and a link to Blazar's study, please visit <http://links.ohioschoolboards.org/SU803>.

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