



Success

Timely tips to improve student achievement

December 2023

How to better engage students' families

Lauren Wells, manager of professional learning development at the testing nonprofit NWEA, shares five actionable ways for school leaders to better engage students' families. Recommendations include relationship-building, prioritizing collaboration and employing multiple communication formats. For more, go to <http://links.ohioschoolboards.org/SU907>.

Teachers share classroom life ideas

Teaching hacks from educators around the world cover topics like student engagement, assessment, reducing disruptions, clean classrooms, tech tools and teaching advice. These practical tips aim to make educators' lives easier while fostering a positive and effective learning environment. For more, visit <http://links.ohioschoolboards.org/SU908>.

Race cars drive student interest in manufacturing

Mae Jemison High School in Huntsville, Ala., integrates Greenpower USA, enabling students to design and build race cars using digital modeling and 3D printing. The hands-on experience with power tools and composite lay-ups offers a bridge between digital design and tangible outcomes. For more, visit <http://links.ohioschoolboards.org/SU909>.

How districts are recruiting, retaining substitutes

Building and maintaining sufficient substitute pools should be part of a district's overall staffing strategy, says **Amanda von Moos**, executive director of the nonprofit Substantial Classrooms, which helps districts train substitutes. Learn more at <http://links.ohioschoolboards.org/SU910>.

Mississippi students build mobile homeless unit

Students at Gulfport High School in Mississippi have built a solar-powered mobile homeless unit for overnight stays. Construction technology instructor **Dave Huffman** says all lessons are adapted to real-world applications, and students are encouraged to let their imaginations run wild. For more, visit <http://links.ohioschoolboards.org/SU911>.

Tackling absenteeism amid homelessness challenges

Addressing chronic absenteeism among students experiencing homelessness poses unique challenges, with urban and rural districts employing distinct strategies. Urban areas like San Diego prioritize solutions like transportation assistance, access to clean clothes and health care support, while some rural districts emphasize personal connections. For more, visit <http://links.ohioschoolboards.org/SU912>.

Student achievement in-depth

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

Proposed study on how cellphones affect students

A bipartisan Senate bill, the Focus On Learning Act, introduced in mid-November proposes a U.S. study led by the U.S. Department of Education on the effects of cellphone use in K-12 classrooms related to students mental health and academic performance. The pilot program would provide participating schools with secure containers to store students' phones during school hours, according to Sens. **Tom Cotton** (R-Arkansas) and **Tim Kaine** (D-Virginia). National research would be conducted on elementary and secondary student cellphone use and the impact on learning, academic achievement, educational outcomes, engagement, classroom instruction, school climate and student behavior.

Many districts have recognized the potential of smartphones to enhance curricula, provide resources and increase student engagement, but finding the fine line between a useful tool and significant distraction has proven an elusive goal for many teachers and administrators. While some parents and students say cellphones are an important tool for socialization and for emergencies, student cellphone use during the school day has exasperated administrators and teachers, who say overuse of devices is distracting and harmful. A Common Sense Media study of 200 students, released in September, found that 97% of 11- to 17-year-olds used their phones during the school day. Daily in-school screen time ranged from less than a minute to 6.5 hours with a median time of 43 minutes.

School leaders have used several strategies to curb student phone use during the school day, including prohibiting the use of certain apps, allowing phone use only at lunch or in between classes, and storing students' phones during the school day.

"Widespread use of cellphones in schools are at best a distraction for young Americans; at worst, they expose schoolchildren to content that is harmful and addictive," said Cotton in a statement. "Our legislation will make schools remain centers of learning." Understanding the the impact on learning, academic achievement, educational outcomes, engagement, classroom instruction, school climate and student behavior will guide future decisions about phone usage in school.

To participate in the pilot program, a school would be required to have a communication system in place to allow teachers, administrators and staff to communicate with local emergency responders. Participating schools also would need to have a clear process for students to be able to contact their parents.

For more links to research regarding cellphone use in K-12 classrooms, please visit <http://links.ohioschoolboards.org/SU913>.

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