



# Success

Timely tips to improve student achievement

May 2022

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## Oberlin City teacher named National Teacher of the Year

**Oberlin City's Kurt Russell**, who teaches history and African American history at Oberlin High School, has been selected as the 2022 National Teacher of the Year by the Council of Chief State School Officers. Russell says he hopes to focus on diversity and advocate for a well-rounded education. **Anton Schulzki**, president of the National Council for the Social Studies, says Russell could "bring a perspective that could add to the conversation both in Ohio and across the country." For more, go to <http://links.ohioschoolboards.org/SU776>.

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## Helping students to be active participants in learning

Working together to complete authentic tasks can help boost engagement by making high school students more active participants in their own learning, according to Dr. **Zachary Herrmann**, director of the University of Pennsylvania Graduate School of Education. Herrmann shares a four-phase approach to help teachers plan and facilitate experiential collaborative learning experiences. For more, go to <http://links.ohioschoolboards.org/SU777>.

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## Texas students connect with Ukrainian peers

Students at Denton High School in Texas spoke remotely with two students from Ukraine who were displaced after Russia waged war on their country. The Ukrainian students spoke about the personal effect of the war on them and their families and encouraged students to be thankful for their freedom of speech, citing propaganda about the war being advanced in Russia and elsewhere. For more, visit <http://links.ohioschoolboards.org/SU778>.

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## Teacher drops penalties for late assignments

**Christina Torres**, an eighth-grade English teacher, stepped outside of her comfort zone to adopt a grading policy that does not penalize students for late work. In this article, Torres writes that students receive a separate grade for each assignment based on "organization, planning and preparedness." For more, visit <http://links.ohioschoolboards.org/SU779>.

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## Preschool enrollment falls 20%

Enrollment in state-funded preschool programs declined last year for the first time in at least two decades, according to the National Institute for Early Education Research's 2021 State of Preschool report. The institute reports a drop of close to 20%, with the greatest decline among students from households of low income and students of color. For more, visit <http://links.ohioschoolboards.org/SU780>.

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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.

### Report studies barriers keeping students from attending schools

Roughly two-thirds of high-school teachers and less than half of K-12 teachers participating in a poll said at least one of their students had enrolled but failed to attend class during the 2020-21 school year, according to a report released by the U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO). Teachers surveyed said students lacked at-home support and faced challenges with virtual learning as well as the time required to care for family members and for jobs.

The report issued in March and updated in April is the federal government's attempt to understand how the pandemic affected the country's public school system. Data was gathered from a national survey of public school teachers contracted by the GAO and conducted by Gallup.

High school teachers were the most affected, with roughly two-thirds, or 65%, having at least one student who never showed up, compared to less than half of teachers in kindergarten to eighth grade. Likewise, teachers in urban schools and those in high-poverty schools were significantly more likely to report having students who never showed up.

For older students especially, competing demands including providing care to a family member or work commitments were common reasons for their absence. Nearly half of teachers in grades three through eight and grades nine through 12 said that providing care to a family member was "somewhat" or a "significant" factor for students.

The GAO report comes at a time when a handful of states and school districts are beginning to report their own chronic absenteeism data — that is, data on students who have missed 10% or more of a school year, or roughly 18 days. The challenges, which have been occurring alongside enrollment drops, aren't confined to the country's biggest city school districts.

Chronic absenteeism increased 30% among the 1.4 million students enrolled in New Jersey public schools, according to the annual New Jersey School Performance Reports released earlier this month. And, in Akron, new data shows that half of all students are considered chronically absent. Among high school seniors, two-thirds have missed at least 10% of the school year and 44% have missed more than 20%.

"The high levels of chronic absences means positive conditions for learning are being eroded at a systemic level," said **Hedy Nai-Lin Chang**, executive director and vice president of Attendance Works, a nonprofit organization that tracks absenteeism and its effects. For more, please visit <http://links.ohioschoolboards.org/SU781>.

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