



Success

Timely tips for OSBA student achievement liaisons

April 2009

Teaching music improves reading skills

Two Long Island University researchers have data to prove that teaching music skills improves reading skills. **Joseph M. Piro** and **Camilo Ortiz** published their study in the March 2009 *Psychology of Music*. To read about the study, visit <http://links.osba-ohio.org/33522>.

Poverty and your schools

A new report from Arizona State University argues that six out-of-school factors related to poverty are the major cause of the achievement gap between poor and minority students and other students. Those factors that inhibit student achievement are low birth-weight and non-genetic prenatal influences; inadequate medical, dental and vision care; food insecurity; environmental pollutants; family relations and family stress; and neighborhood characteristics. Read the policy brief at <http://links.osba-ohio.org/96844>.

Obama's education reform

President **Barack Obama** pledged to reform education during his campaign. Last month, he addressed his planned overhaul of education in a speech to the U.S. Hispanic Chamber of Commerce. Discuss how his reforms will affect your district's programs at a school board meeting. To read the CCN.com article, go to <http://links.osba-ohio.org/70532>.

Plan now for end-of-year recognition events

As the school year winds down, be sure to plan for school board member involvement in those end-of-year recognition events. Parents, staff and students appreciate board members attending such spring activities. If student achievement is important to your board, show it by being visible at these public ceremonies.

SALT resources online

For more than 10 years, OSBA has focused on raising the quality of public education through the Student Achievement Liaison Team. In addition to **Success** coming to you each month, the SALT Web page offers valuable resources. To learn more about these resources, visit www.osba-ohio.org/sa.htm.

Student achievement research brief

Each month, *Success* brings you a research brief to share with fellow board members.

Improving your school climate

School climate and the learning environment set the stage for teaching and learning. The overall school climate and specific learning environment of a classroom have enormous influence on student achievement. Students cannot learn in chaos, fear or embarrassment. They must feel safe, and they need an orderly structure. Every child deserves respect, encouragement and supportive opportunities to learn and grow. How can school boards assess the climate of their schools and their classrooms?

Ensure a safe environment for work and learning. School leaders must take steps to ensure to the best of their ability that schools remain a safe place. School boards need to develop policies and demand procedures to protect students and staff.

Examine the available data that reflect climate. One simple source toward understanding climate is attendance data. Patterns of student absence can be detected when comparisons are made among schools, races, genders and neighborhoods. Disparities may raise questions about the learning environment.

Examine the capacity to provide special programs. A lockstep-learning environment may cause some students to fall out of step and not regain their footing. The classroom teacher who recognizes and accommodates differences in student learning styles and pace creates a nurturing learning environment. Even in classrooms with a positive environment, some students may need supplemental or alternative settings in order to be successful.

Survey parents and students to determine satisfaction. School climate is a reflection of perceptions and feelings. Some districts have developed satisfaction surveys modeled after business surveys.

Build a positive culture within the organization. The way school board members interact with the superintendent or other staff members sends a message about the value of staff in the eyes of the board. The way board members treat each other also influences staff's perceptions and attitudes.

Make schools inviting places to be. Schools belong to the community and can define the community. While first impressions can be lasting, the true measure of welcome extends beyond them. The role parents and other community members are invited to play contributes to the school climate. Schools that build partnerships with parents and community members create a welcoming climate.

For more information: www.nsba.org/keywork2/

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Success is distributed only to student achievement liaisons.