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Success

Timely tips for OSBA student achievement liaisons

August 2008

What do the reports report? To prepare for the Aug. 19 release of Ohio's local district report cards, take a moment to visit the Center for Public Education's Round-up of National Education Report Cards Web page. This resource can help you understand what each report measures and compares. The URL is www.centerforpubliceducation.org/site/c.kjJXJ5MPIwE/b.2551883/k.FD76/Roundup_of_National_Education_Report_Cards.htm.

What's right about our public schools?

The Learning First Alliance, a partnership of 18 leading education associations with more than 10 million members, is working to improve student learning in America's public schools. The Alliance has a Web site where it shares examples of success, encourages collaboration at every level, and works toward the continual and long-term improvement of public education based on solid research. Also, you can submit one of your district's success stories. Visit www.publicschoolinsights.org.

Understanding value-added Battelle for Kids and the Ohio Department of Education produced a DVD to explain the new value-added measure and its role in Ohio's accountability system. This DVD will be sent to your district office and each elementary and middle school building. While this DVD is aimed at teachers, it can help school board members understand the new value-added measure.

Reforming Mass. schools?

Massachusetts Gov. **Deval Patrick** released parts of his long-term plan for education reform. His Education Action Agenda is designed to raise achievement of all students as measured against global benchmarks and to help prepare all students by 2020 to compete successfully in the global economy. The plan is a result of the Readiness Project, a statewide initiative involving more than 200 Massachusetts educators, business and community leaders. To download the plan, point your Internet browser to www.mass.gov/Agov3/docs/Readiness%20Final%20Report.pdf.

Student achievement research brief

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

What research says about preparing English language learners for academic success

Improving academic success among English-language learners (ELLs) is a challenge faced by many schools and districts. The task is complicated by several factors, including the demographics of the ELL population, which has more than doubled since 1990, and the fact that the ELL label masks a great deal of diversity. For example, Spanish is the first language for 79% of ELLs, and the Asian languages are a distant second, but other ELLs may speak any one of more than 400 languages.

According to the U.S. Department of Education, ELLs, are students whose native language is other than English and “whose difficulties in speaking, reading, writing, or understanding the English language” may prevent the individual from succeeding in the classroom and on state assessments.

Various states and districts apply their own criteria to determine which students are officially assigned ELL status. A unique characteristic of the ELL subgroup is its instability; students who learn English well enough to pass language proficiency tests move out of the subgroup as new students who don't pass the test move in. The success — or failure — of ELLs can count double in adequate yearly progress calculations because a student with an ELL classification may also belong to other NCLB subgroups (e.g., ethnic group, special education, free and reduced-price lunch).

Helping individual ELLs master academic language is a multifaceted, long-term process, not an event or a program with a clear end date. A statement from the ERIC Clearinghouse on Languages and Linguistics is worth repeating: “Research on second language learning has shown that many misconceptions exist about how children learn languages. Teachers need to be aware of these misconceptions and realize that quick and easy solutions are not appropriate for complex problems. Second language learning by school-aged children takes longer, is harder and involves more effort than many teachers realize.”

Districts can support both teachers and students by making sure teachers are well prepared, adopting programs that provide sustained and coherent instruction across grade levels, and fostering continuous school improvement with a focus on student learning.

For more information: www.centerforpubliceducation.org/atf/cf/%7B13A13846-1CA6-4F8A-B52E-2A88576B84EF%7D/EnglishLanguageLearners.pdf.

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