



Success

Timely tips for OSBA student achievement liaisons

May 2009

Middle school math may be key for minorities

A University of Illinois professor says that the best predictor of student success in math for kids in high-minority urban schools is the math course they took in eighth grade. **Christy Lleras** used data from the U.S. Department of Education's National Educational Longitudinal Study to follow the effects of math placement, school-related behaviors and achievement in more than 6,500 public school students as they progressed from the eighth to the 10th grade. To learn more about Lleras' study, visit <http://links.osba-ohio.org/34887>.

Empowering parents

Not all parents know how to support their children in schools, especially those who do not speak English. Lacoochee (Fla) Elementary School Principal **Karen Marler** and her staff created a Parent University to help parents be, well, better parents. The program started with eight mothers, has tripled in size and plans to expand next fall. The parents in the program are getting more involved in their children's schools. One component is improving English-speaking skills. To read the *St. Petersburg* (Fla.) *Times* story, visit <http://links.osba-ohio.org/90615>.

Invest in writing

In an article in *Teacher Magazine*, Virginia high school English and journalism teacher **Mary Tedrow** suggests the United States invest in writing. She writes, "... reading is input — other ideas implanted from a variety of voices — and writing is output — a record of a student's understanding of what those voices are saying." To learn why this is money well spent, visit <http://links.osba-ohio.org/86253>.

Recognize your students

The Student Achievement Leadership Team has two award pins for recognizing worthy students. These are great to pass out at board meetings or academic recognition events. Contact **Ann Herritt** at (614) 540-4000 to order the pins. Pins can be purchased in quantities of 50 at \$1.50 a pin, or 100 and more at \$1.25 a pin.

Student achievement research brief

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

Restructuring poor performing schools under NCLB may not improve student achievement

A policy brief from the Great Lakes Center for Education Research and Practice finds little evidence that sweeping school restructuring — mandated by the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) for so-called failing schools — will raise student achievement. The report is titled “NCLB’s Ultimate Restructuring Alternatives: Do They Improve the Quality of Education?” and was written by Dr. **William J. Mathis**, adjunct associate professor of school finance at the University of Vermont and superintendent of the Rutland Northeast Supervisory Union in Brandon, Vt.

The brief examines the impact of the specific school restructuring approaches required under by NCLB. Under the law, enacted in 2001, schools are required to be restructured if they fail to make “adequate yearly progress” (measured by meeting test score targets) for six consecutive years.

NCLB school restructuring can take one of the following forms: takeover of the school by the state; turning management of the school over to a private firm; shutting down and reopening as a charter school; or reconstituting the school by replacing some or all administrators, staff or faculty. A fifth option provided under the law endorses “any other major restructuring of a school’s governance arrangement.”

The brief reviews existing research on each of the five restructuring options and finds “there is little or no evidence to suggest that any of these options delivers the promised improvements in academic achievement,” but notes that negative side effects are frequently recorded, including increased segregation, substantial, short-term drops in achievement scores and organizational instability.

Mathis concludes: “Given that these approaches are being proposed for the nation’s most troubled schools, the solutions (currently set forth by NCLB) are likely to be woefully inadequate,” and that “reliance on these restructuring options could actually deter schools from exploring more promising approaches of achieving the goal of a sound basic education for every child.”

In light of such findings, Mathis recommends against relying on restructuring sanctions to promote school improvement and encourages the support of research on the effectiveness of other school improvement strategies. He also recommends support for strategies that have been shown to increase school improvement, including early education, small school communities, and strong counseling and social support systems for students.

To download the report, visit <http://links.osba-ohio.org/63384>.

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