



# Success

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Timely tips for OSBA student achievement liaisons

October 2008

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**Getting tough with truents** One Maryland school district started a campaign of television, radio and print advertising as part of a crackdown on truency. The *Washington Post* reports on the actions Prince George's County Schools to discourage skipping school. To read the story, visit [www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2008/08/27/AR2008082702335.html](http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2008/08/27/AR2008082702335.html).

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**Preparing the first generation for college** Public schools sending more and more students to higher education. For students from families that have no college graduates, their success rate in college is less than half of those from families where the parents both hold bachelor's degrees. Ask you guidance staff what the are doing for to prepare the first generation for college.

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**Plan now for Capital Conference SALT activities** Be sure to attend the many Student Achievement Leadership Team (SALT) activities at Capital Conference. Enclosed in this mailing is a letter to student achievement liaisons and a flier promoting all the student achievement sessions and SALT programs. OSBA President **Edward A. Bischoff, Delaware-Union ESC & Delaware Area Career Center**, invites you to the student achievement liaison meeting at 7:30 a.m. on Tuesday, Nov. 11, in rooms E 150–151. A continental breakfast will be provided. Please RSVP to **Debbie Beckman** at (614) 540-4000, (800) 589-OSBA or [d\\_beckman@osba-ohio.org](mailto:d_beckman@osba-ohio.org).

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**Conference Guide available** The complete, 216-page OSBA *Conference Guide* will be delivered to your district in October. If you want an electronic version, one is posted on OSBA's Web site at: <http://osba-ohio.org/files/CC08guide.pdf>.

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**Get students involved** A British study on universal prekindergarten found that students who attended pre-k scored 27% higher on standard math test than those students who did not. To Read the *Boston Globe* story go to [www.boston.com/news/education/k\\_12/articles/2008/08/29/preschool\\_tied\\_to\\_higher\\_math\\_skills/](http://www.boston.com/news/education/k_12/articles/2008/08/29/preschool_tied_to_higher_math_skills/).

# Student achievement research brief

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

## Does multi-age grouping make sense for middle school?

Many middle and junior high schools across the country have tried a variety of flexible arrangements of time and structure in efforts to more effectively meet the needs of adolescent students. One of those – multi-age grouping – is more familiar to many in elementary schools, but is gaining popularity from experts and administrators in the middle grades.

Multi-age (or multi-grade) grouping is a strategy that allows students of different ages and abilities to be placed together on learning teams or in classes. Most often, students remain on the same team throughout the middle school years, and teams change only when the oldest leave for high school, and the youngest enter from elementary grades.

This style of grade grouping allows students to interact across age groups and research shows students may develop deeper and longer-term relationships with other students as well as with teachers and administrators. In this type of setting, teachers are able to structure learning activities to meet individual student needs rather than aiming instruction at the “median” level of the group. This learning style is somewhat similar to “looping,” where one teacher, or team of teachers, stays with the same group of students as they advance from one grade to another. In multi-age grouping, however, the students stay together, but may indeed change teachers as the move from subject to subject.

Research on middle school multi-age grouping is scarce. One reason is that the model is still relatively scarce. More than 90% of all US middle school students are educated in single-grade classrooms. Existing research does show advantages for this strategy, noting that the use of multi-age grouping has been instrumental in improving classroom climate, teacher advocacy for students, quality of instruction, student achievement, parental involvement, and teacher-to-teacher relationships.

While some research shows that multi-age grouping yields neutral as well as positive effects, findings do indicate that such strategies are associated with enhanced self-concept and more positive attitudes among students toward school. Other studies found that children in multi-grade classes fared as well or better than their peers on standardized measures of achievement. For many administrators with multi-age classrooms within their buildings, the most profound findings have been the positive impact on self-esteem, less referrals for discipline, and a feeling of bonding when students are grouped together for more than one year and within varying ages and abilities.

For more information, please see the research link on the National Middle School Association Web site [www.nmsa.org/research](http://www.nmsa.org/research).

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**Success** is published monthly for student achievement liaisons by the Ohio School Boards Association, 8050 North High Street, Suite 100, Columbus, Ohio 43235-6481, (614) 540-4000 or (800) 589-OSBA. Scott Ebright, APR, deputy director of communication services, editor; Cheryl Ryan, education management consultant, assistant editor. **Success** is distributed only to student achievement liaisons.