



Success

Timely tips for OSBA Student Achievement Liaisons

August 2003

Ready for new report cards? In mid-August, the Ohio Department of Education will issue district report cards, which are in a new format. Even though preliminary (unverified) data was released earlier this summer to newspapers, reporters will be calling to ask why your district received the rating it did. If your results are not positive, the community won't want to hear excuses, but rather what the district is doing to raise student achievement. All board members and staff need to be well versed. Develop a consistent message and provide the board and staff with bulleted talking points to help them to be credible spokespersons.

Budgets affect student achievement Student success is dependent upon the resources available. Ohio's state budget crisis is hurting many districts' ability to continue new programs aimed at raising student achievement. Ask your superintendent to report to the board how the changes in state funding are affecting your district's efforts to better educate children. Share this information with staff before presenting to the public.

Do a community poll Each September, Phi Delta Kappa releases its annual Gallup Polls of the public's attitudes toward the public schools. Since the format changes little from year-to-year, why not conduct a community survey, asking similar questions? Then report the results of your survey.

Athletes excel academically Students involved in co-curricular activities regularly outperform their classmates in the classroom. As fall sports gear up, ask your high school and middle school counselors to report the average grades received by athletes, thespians, band, choir and other co-curricular participants.

School will soon be back With most school districts beginning classes in August, recognize that teachers and administrators have been working hard over the summer to improve your academic programs. Ask key staff members to report to the board what is in store for students when they return to the classroom.

Student achievement research brief

Each month, **Success** brings you a research brief to share with fellow board members. Use it to generate discussion with the board and staff.

Helping you understanding research with 10 tips for advocates and policymakers.

For over two years, OSBA has provided members monthly snippets of research in each **Success** issue. Just what does the research mean? How should board members and administrators interpret research when making policy decisions? Those are tough questions.

The Voices for America's Children, formerly called the National Association of Child Advocates, offers some answers in its electronic publication **Understanding research: Top 10 tips for advocates and policymakers**. The publication raises the issue of determining if a given research project is one that you can trust. If you use research to measure the effectiveness of policies and programs in your district, you indeed need to be able to decide if research is good and appropriate for you to use in decision making.

Briefly, the top 10 tips to judge a research project's credibility are:

- consider the source;
- media is also a source to be evaluated;
- has the research been published and where?;
- research results are really about the topic *as measured*, not as we may think of it;
- different types of research have different strengths;
- sampling is more important than sample size;
- statistical significance explained;
- research findings are about groups;
- all research is not created equal;
- any one study is not the whole story.

The factsheet's author, Dr. Stephanie A. Schaefer, provides additional suggestions and questions to ask for each of the above tips, and further explains the significances of each one.

Source: Voices for America's Children,
www.voicesforamericaschildren.org/Content/NavigationMenu/Child_Advocacy_Institute/Research5/Data_and_Research.htm (report is available to download under the heading "Translating Research into Advocacy," which in the middle of the page)

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Success is distributed only to student achievement liaisons, so please share with fellow board members and district staff.