



Success

Timely tips for OSBA Student Achievement Liaisons

August 2005

Whose child is left behind? “Because the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) comes without enough funding, it is a law that mandates accountability without equity.” That is one of many findings of a study commissioned by the United Church of Christ (UCC). Months before NCLB was signed into law, UCC formed its Public Education Task Force, which was charged to “identify systemic barriers to excellent public education and to recommend strategies to address those barriers.” For the complete study, which included site visits to a number of Cuyahoga County schools, go to www.ucc.org/justice/education/whosechildleftbehind.pdf.

Summer staff in-service Quality staff development is vital to the operation of school districts. Most districts begin the school year with activities aimed at providing important and insightful subjects to consider. Ask your administrative team to outline the activities that are being planned.

Report cards are coming On Aug. 16, the Ohio Department of Education will issue district report cards. You still have time to brief board members and staff on what to expect on your report cards. Ask your superintendent to make a presentation for the August board meeting on what the district did the past year to improve student achievement and why the district earned the “grades” it did on the report card. For assistance with the release of the report cards, ODE has created the *2004-2005 Guide for Ohio’s Report Card System*. It can be found at www.ode.state.oh.us/reportcard.

Family dinners raise grades According to Columbia University psychologist **Suniya S. Luthar**, children who usually eat with at least one parent have better grades and fewer emotional problems than kids who dine on their own. This suggestion that family dinners can help students emotionally and academically comes from an article about one of Luthar’s studies that appeared in *Current Directions in Psychological Science*. This study reveals that affluent teenagers are more likely to use drugs and alcohol, and have more emotional problems than inner-city students.

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.

Understanding standardized tests

What do standardized tests measure and how can the results be used to improve performance? Here are key points to keep in mind when considering the uses and misuses of standardized testing.

- norm-referenced tests compare a student's performance with that of a nationwide sample of students from a previous year for a particular subject at a particular grade level;
- criterion-referenced tests compare a student's performance to specific standards that have been established for a particular subject at a particular grade level;
- both criterion- and norm-referenced tests can be used to evaluate a large number of students in a fast, cost-effective manner;
- standardized tests can provide information that can be compared across locations and among groups;
- social, economic, family and other factors can affect how students perform on tests;
- to be useful in evaluating what students know, a test must be a good match for the school system's curricula;
- standardized tests are not designed to determine how well students are performing as individuals;
- combining standardized tests with other assessments of learning and performance provides more detailed and useful insights than relying on only one type of assessment;
- to be reliable, studies that compare test scores among groups of students must use comparable samples (this means the student groups being compared must represent the same range of characteristics, and if they do not, researchers must control for any differences);
- standardized test scores can be improved by "teaching to the test," but this practice does not address whether students understand or can apply the content;
- when a population of students changes from year to year, average test scores also might change significantly;
- standardized test results are a snapshot taken at a particular time under particular circumstances — many factors can affect an individual student's performance on a particular test.

Source: National School Boards Association,
www.nsba.org/site/sec_peac.asp?TrackID=&SID=1&DID=36150&CID=1238&VID=64.

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