



Success

Timely tips for OSBA student achievement liaisons

December 2005

Wellness-achievement link resource kit

This month's *Success* mailing contains the Student Achievement Leadership Team's recent resource kit, **The student wellness-student achievement link**. Read it thoroughly, distribute it to fellow board members, your superintendent and treasurer, then ask for a wellness discussion at your next board meeting. If you do not have a wellness policy on record, adapt the one found in this resource kit, which was unveiled at the SALT Breakfast on Nov. 15. You can download an electronic copy from the OSBA Web site at www.osba-ohio.org/sa.htm.

Share what you learned at Capital Conference

Make a point to give a **report to your board about the innovative student achievement programs** featured at Capital Conference. You may want to share copies of session handouts from one or two particularly interesting sessions you attended while in Columbus. You can download handouts for most conference session from OSBA's Web site at: www.osba-ohio.org/2005/handouts.htm.

Xschool 360: Got yours?

The *Harvard Education Letter* tells, "What video games can teach us about making students want to learn?" Yes, gaming designers use learning principles to entice children to solve complex problems in an entertaining way. So how can public schools bring such excitement into the classroom? **James Paul Gee** writes, "To succeed, game designers incorporate principles of learning that are well supported by current research. Put simply, they recruit learning as a form of pleasure." The article can be found at: ww.edletter.org/curent/gee.shtml.

Next year?

Are you planning to continue serving as your district's student achievement liaison? Great, if you are! If not, plan to discuss the position and its importance at your next school board meeting. You may wish to identify an interested board member to take over in 2006. The student achievement liaison's job description can be found at www.osba-ohio.org/saliaison.htm. Remind your treasurer to include your student achievement liaison on the OSBA membership roster.

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.

Continuous improvement and school success.

Continuous improvement is not simply the process itself — it is a way of thinking about everything we do. It reflects a habit of the mind, a way of thinking about what we do and seeking ways to do it even better. Continuous improvement depends on good information and is data-driven. This data constitutes the feedback loop that empowers the board and staff to seek ways to refine, strengthen or modify existing programs and practices, or potentially to eliminate them.

What will it take to get there?

- **Model continuous improvement as a board.** Seek ways to improve the way the board does business. Frequently reflect on public meetings and other activities and seek to make them better. Ask for feedback from staff and others about ways to improve meetings and other functions of the board.
- **Adopt a customer focus.** Adopting a customer focus means understanding what we do and for whom we do it. The central question for each board member is, whom do I serve and who serves me? Answering this question brings focus and purpose to the work we do.
- **Make decisions based on the data.** We have preconceived notions about what is effective and how things should be done. Continuous improvement requires stepping back and reconsidering those notions if the data do not support them. When something is not working, stop it.
- **Require that all programs — existing and new — have built-in data requirements.** In countless ways, at budget times and throughout the year, boards make decisions about whether a given program should stay, go or be modified. It is critical that the board establishes up front what data will be collected for its review and when the data will be needed.
- **Foster open communication and invite feedback.** A climate in which open communication is valued allows people to think outside the box and share different perspectives without fear of reprisal.
- **Celebrate evidence of improvement and reward those who are responsible for it.** It is very easy to turn continuous improvement from a positive to a negative. When the efforts of those who create improvements are not recognized and rewarded, continuous improvement can rapidly give way to a kind of perpetual crankiness. When this happens, staff and others will view the board's questions and focus as negative, and they will respond accordingly.
- **Promote continuous improvement as an integral part of every policy and decision.** Make others aware that the board is very serious about finding even better ways to do the things the system is already doing well as it is about improving things the system is not doing well.

For more information, please refer to NSBA's *Key Work of School Boards*, www.nsba.org.

Success

December 2005

Success is published monthly for student achievement liaisons by the Ohio School Boards Association, 8050 North High Street, Suite 100, Columbus, Ohio 43235-6482, (614) 540-4000 or (800) 589-OSBA. Scott Ebright, APR, deputy director of communication services, editor, and Rob Delane, director of school board development, assistant editor. **Success** is distributed only to student achievement liaisons, so please share with fellow board members and district staff.