



# Success

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Timely tips for OSBA student achievement liaisons

February 2008

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## No textbooks, no computer labs?

Empire High School in Tucson, Ariz., did away with its textbooks and computer labs. The money for these items went to help pay for laptops for each of the school's 737 students. To learn more about how Empire's staff developed its own digital curriculum, which met state standards, visit [www.techlearning.com/story/showArticle.php?articleID=196604929](http://www.techlearning.com/story/showArticle.php?articleID=196604929).

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## KnowHow2GoOhio

The Ohio College Access Network is helping all Ohio students prepare for college, even those who don't think they can attend. A new Web site ([www.knowhow2goohio.org](http://www.knowhow2goohio.org)) offers resources and encouragement to those with dreams, but no money or support.

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## As the world turns and learns

How is your school district affected by the global economy and global education? The February 2008 *Edutopia Magazine* offers an extensive, electronic look at the world of education, from Austria to Uganda. To learn more about the great international bazaar of education, visit [www.edutopia.org/global-education-2008](http://www.edutopia.org/global-education-2008).

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## Share your success with other schools

In February, OSBA begins soliciting nominations for Capital Conference speakers, Student Achievement Fair exhibitors and student performing groups. Ask your superintendent and principals to consider what programs are worthy of a nomination. Nomination forms will be in the February *Journal* and *Briefcase* issues, or at [www.osba-ohio.org](http://www.osba-ohio.org).

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## Pay-to-perform on state graduation test

Maryland State Superintendent of Schools Dr. **Nancy S. Grasmick** approved a plan to reward struggling students in Baltimore who show improvement on their state graduation exams. Learn how they can earn up to \$110 at: [www.baltimoresun.com/news/education/bal-te.ci.schools23jan23033219,0,3248095.story?coll=bal\\_tab01\\_layout](http://www.baltimoresun.com/news/education/bal-te.ci.schools23jan23033219,0,3248095.story?coll=bal_tab01_layout).

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## Education Vital Signs

This issue contains a complimentary copy of *Education Vital Signs* for student achievement liaisons to share with your board.

# Student achievement research brief

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

## The school board's role as policymaker

Policy adoption is one of a school board's primary roles. In the past, school district policymaking has been focused on changes in state and federal laws and regulations, random events and issues, and special interests raised by parents, teachers, students or other district constituent groups. This has led to the creation of complex and extensive policy manuals that sometimes deal more with legal compliance instead of the vision, direction and goals of the local board, or student learning. While policymaking will always be a necessary component of effective school governance, compliance with mandates alone is not sufficient for school boards to govern effectively. Policymaking needs to be better integrated with district planning and priorities. It is crucial that local school boards begin to focus most of their attention on policymaking designed to improve student learning.

The role of policy is especially critical in this era of standards-based education reform and increased accountability for school districts. In order to create a system that will help all students meet rigorous standards, school boards and superintendents need to focus their time and resources on policies targeting student learning. The Iowa Association of School Board's "Lighthouse Study," a study of the school board's role in student achievement, has revealed that school boards in high-achieving school districts clearly and consistently expressed a belief system that all students can learn. This finding highlights the critical role of the school board in impacting student learning. School boards are well advised to articulate their expectations and beliefs about student learning and communicate those beliefs through written board policy.

Central to its responsibility to provide direction for the district, the board should establish a guiding vision for what children should achieve, as well as a set of fundamental principles that describe its beliefs and values. Policymaking will then keep the district focused on the "big picture" and establish a framework for decision-making that drives virtually all district action.

In assessing existing policy, list all policies that are related to the board's philosophy and ask some critical questions:

- Does the policy include a focus on student learning? How?
- Are the district's administrative procedures consistent with board policy?
- Do the district's practices comply with board policy?
- Is your policy current with legal requirements?

For more information, contact OSBA's policy services at (614) 540-4000 or (800) 589-OSBA.

### **Success**

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