



Success

Timely tips for OSBA Student Achievement Liaisons

March 2004

Student Achievement Fair application deadline looms

You have until March 31 to nominate one of your outstanding academic programs for the 2004 SALT Student Achievement Fair at the OSBA Capital Conference. The Nov. 9 fair showcases 100 creative, successful academic achievement programs from around Ohio. See the latest *Briefcase* for an application form or contact **Kathy LaSota**, deputy director of search services and board development, at (614) 540-4000, (800) 589-OSBA or k_lasota@osba-ohio.org.

Answers to questions on proficiency testing

March is proficiency testing time in Ohio. Board members often are asked questions about these high-stakes tests. One good source for answers can be found on the Ohio Department of Education's proficiency testing page (www.ode.state.oh.us/proficiency).

Creative clubs boost knowledge

Does your school district have any creative clubs that increase student achievement? A Seattle-area school, Aki Kurose Middle School, has a Vocabulary Club, which challenges members to learn 200 new words. (http://seattlepi.nwsourc.com/local/160811_vocabulary16.html). If your district has such a club, feature it at a future board meeting. If not, encourage your teachers to create fun-filled opportunities outside the school day to challenge students academically.

Performers needed

OSBA is looking for outstanding performing groups for the 2004 SALT Student Achievement Fair at the OSBA Capital Conference. Five groups will entertain conference attendees for 20 minutes each during the afternoon. To nominate a group, contact **Al Meloy**, deputy director of search services and board development, at (614) 540-4000, (800) 589-OSBA or a_meloy@osba-ohio.org.

Education Vital Signs

Enclosed with *Success* is a complimentary copy of the *American School Board Journal's Education Vital Signs 2004*. It contains interesting information and statistics on academic achievement across the nation.

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.

Closing the achievement gap

Closing the achievement gap between groups of students is a goal that needs to have the highest of priorities in our nation's schools. Improving learning opportunities for all children will require more than a school-by-school effort. Rather, it will demand systemwide approaches. Substantial gains will result only if we recognize that, to increase student achievement, we must improve instruction and commit the political will and resources necessary to develop effective strategies and solutions.

State leaders need greater knowledge about where to target resources and how to set policy to support entire school systems. Local leaders need guidance about the practices that will improve instruction. And, community members need good ideas about how to support high-quality teaching and learning most effectively.

Learning First Alliance leaders spent a great deal of time visiting school districts and conducting interviews to determine strategies that had the greatest impact on student achievement and instruction. As a result of those efforts, seven factors emerged as essential:

- districts had the courage to acknowledge poor performance and the will to seek solutions;
- districts put in place a systemwide approach to improving instruction — one that articulated curricular content and provided instructional support;
- districts instilled visions that focused on student learning and guided instructional improvement;
- districts made decisions based on data, not instinct;
- districts adopted new approaches to professional development that involved a coherent and district-organized set of strategies to improve instruction;
- districts redefined leadership roles;
- districts committed to sustaining reform over the long haul.

As we attempt to redefine school and district leadership roles, there must be efforts to ensure that stakeholders — boards, central offices, unions, principals, teachers and teacher leaders, universities, and parent and community leaders — are engaged in the roles that they are best positioned to lead.

Source: *Beyond Islands of Excellence: What Districts Can Do to Improve Instruction and Achievement in All Schools*, www.learningfirst.org

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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 43235-6482, (614) 540-4000 or (800) 589-OSBA. Scott Ebright, APR, deputy director of communication services; editor.

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