



# Success

Timely tips to improve student achievement

January 2025

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## Shift away from mandatory graduation tests continues

The trend of eliminating standardized tests as graduation requirements continues, with only seven states maintaining such mandates. The shift away from testing gained momentum during the pandemic and reflects a broader move toward alternative assessments of student competency. For more, go to <https://osba.link/0125SU1>.

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## Public school enrollment declines 2.5% since 2019

According to the National Center for Education Statistics, public school enrollment decreased 2.5% from 2019 to 2023, with the most significant drop of 4.5% in pre-K through 8th grade. Enrollment in grades 9 through 12 increased by 2% during the same period. For more, visit <https://osba.link/0125SU2>.

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## Program helps students with disabilities join the band

South High School in Denver implemented the United Sound program, which pairs student musicians with peers who have disabilities. Band and orchestra director **Kyle Dobbins** says the program has been successful and notes that students learn quickly and build relationships through music. For more, visit <https://osba.link/0125SU3>.

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## Looking at alternatives to school resource officers

The percentage of U.S. public schools with school resource officers stands at 44%, contrasting to only 1% in 1975, and researcher **Monic Behnken** of Iowa State University raises questions about their effectiveness. Behnken recommends that schools provide resource officers with training on de-escalation and child development, and teaming them with therapists and social workers. For more, visit <https://osba.link/0125SU4>.

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## Retaining teachers through reimagined career pathways

Retaining teachers is crucial for student success, says **Jessica Kato**, National Board Certified Teacher, who advocates for innovative career paths like hybrid teaching and master teacher roles. Kato makes recommendations to champion educators' growth and keep them thriving. For more, visit <https://osba.link/0125SU5>.

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## Fostering student belonging to enhance academic success

Experts claim that creating a sense of belonging is crucial for students, especially adolescents, to overcome feelings of inadequacy and trust issues affecting the learning process. Teachers can play a vital role by affirming students' contributions and sharing student progress, which helps build confidence, says **Andrew Fuligni**, co-executive director of the Center for the Developing Adolescent at UCLA. For more, visit <https://osba.link/0125SU6>.

## Student achievement in-depth

Each month, **Success** brings you a research brief or in-depth article to discuss with board members and administrators.

### Teacher job satisfaction dips as student absenteeism rises

Research and policy on student absenteeism have largely focused on the individual consequences for students who miss school. However, absenteeism does not occur in a vacuum and it correlates to other classroom dynamics. One such dynamic affected by student absenteeism is teacher job satisfaction.

Chronic absenteeism has surged since the pandemic, with more than a quarter of students missing 10% or more of the 2021-2022 academic year. A study using survey data from the U.S. Department of Education and included 2,370 kindergarten teachers from public and private schools around the country indicated statistically significant differences in teacher satisfaction for the broad aspects of job enjoyment, usefulness, and belief in the profession based on student attendance.

“Teaching is about helping kids grow and develop, and anything that pulls teachers away from that purpose is going to make them unsatisfied,” says **Michael Gottfried**, a professor in the Graduate School of Education at the University of Pennsylvania and co-author of the study.

The study shows that teachers feel less satisfied when more students are absent, as they then must spend more time remediating these disengaged students, which can lead to burnout and demoralization. Likewise, teachers bear the responsibility to reach out to the family, send homework packets home and they feel responsible for absences. Some policy attention focused on reducing absenteeism may make teachers feel under scrutiny and at fault for poor student attendance.

To alleviate some of the pressure, Gottfried suggests providing more support for teachers, such as before and after school tutoring and additional instructional assistance for at-risk students.

For more about this research and a link to the study, please visit <https://osba.link/0125SU7>.

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