



# Success

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Timely tips to improve student achievement

September 2024

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## 1 in 5 high school students enroll in dual credit programs

Dual-enrollment programs, which allow high school students to earn college credits, are growing nationwide, reaching one-fifth of high school students in the U.S. However challenges remain to ensure equitable access and support for students participating in these programs. For more, go to <https://osba.link/0924SU1>.

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## Creating a teacher-parent communication plan

Creating an effective line of communication with parents involves determining the specific channels that will be used and how student feedback will be incorporated, and setting clear expectations for the frequency of communication. For more, visit <https://osba.link/0924SU2>.

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## West Virginia district offers new digital supports for families

Kanawha County Schools in West Virginia is part of a statewide initiative that provides online mental health resources and supports for families. It also uses an app to allow parents to track school bus locations in real time to reduce their stress during the school year. For more, visit <https://osba.link/0924SU3>.

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## Team approach credited for improving school attendance

A California high school's collaborative team strategy helped lower chronic absenteeism to 5.6% — far below the national average of 29.7% in 2022. Principal **John Ahlin** emphasizes the importance of relationship building and consistent support to boost student engagement and success. For more, visit <https://osba.link/0924SU4>.

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## Three issues top educator concerns at start of school year

Educators are concerned about how chronic absenteeism, mental health issues and poverty are affecting education, according to a survey by the Pew Research Center. For more, visit <https://osba.link/0924SU5>.

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## Students, teachers advocate for skate park near school

Elementary school students in San Diego are advocating for a skate park near their school. Teacher **Manuela Ippoliton** and skate park designer **Kanten Russell** discuss the benefits of skating and the important life skills students are learning from their advocacy efforts. For more, visit <https://osba.link/0924SU6>.

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## Student achievement in-depth

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

### What researchers and educators say about fidget devices

Fidgeting refers to small, often repetitive movements or behaviors people engage in, usually with their hands or feet. Fidgeting is believed to occur when an individual needs a way to self-regulate behavior; an outlet for nervous energy; or to regulate attention, physical discomfort or restlessness. As a result, fidget tools or toys, often called fidgets, have become popular aids for adults and school-aged students.

Fidgets can wreak havoc in classrooms. During the peak of their popularity, when fidget spinners emerged as bestsellers and promised to improve human attention spans, one-third of the top 200 U.S. schools responded by banning fidgets altogether. Marketed as “a universal classroom support,” fidgets are believed to alleviate the symptoms of anxiety, hyperactivity and boredom, according to **Stephanie L. Kriescher**, a professor of psychology at the University of Northern Colorado, and her colleagues. Yet, “the evidence basis of fidget toys remains controversial and largely reliant on theory, with few peer-reviewed experimental studies.”

For students who struggle with executive function, overstimulation or anxiety, fidgets may quiet tics, perseverations and restlessness, allowing them to sustain focus for a longer time and allocate more of their residual attention to the academic task at hand.

However, much of the research on the negative attributes of fidgets focuses on a class of devices more appropriately classified as entertainment rather than study aids. Fidget spinners, pop-its, light-up discs or pens with excessive clicking parts can be misused and even cause serious classroom disruption.

It's important to note that fidgets don't improve attention, though they may suppress other distractions in some circumstances. Teachers surveyed about the use of fidgets in the classroom agreed that their preference is to use the least disruptive fidgets for the least amount of time required to get the academic work done.

There is a clear agreement between researchers and teachers about fidget use: Avoid the most distracting fidgets at all costs — spinners, poppers and other devices that light up, make noise or encourage throwing. For more about this research and a link to the University of Northern Colorado study, please visit <https://osba.link/0924SU7>.

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