From the OEP

The OWL has a lot of news on this cold Thursday. First, in response to the recently released Quality Counts 2009 by Education Week, as in years past we present a summary of the results for our readers. In addition, we discuss some flaws in the Education Week ranking system. Indeed, in a more rational ranking scheme, Arkansas may even have fared better. To read our analysis of the Quality Counts 2009 report, click here.

As you may know, Governor Beebe held his State of the State address this week. He announced that his proposed budget will add $234 of additional per-student funding over the next two years and will give school districts additional one-time enhancement money of $35 per student. To read more of Governor Beebe’s speech, see the link below in News from Around the Natural State.

In other news, the new education chair has been announced: Representative Bill Abernathy. He and the other legislators will have a busy session and we hope to keep you up to date. Next week we will be releasing a newsletter that covers some of the issues sure to be discussed this session, such as the Arkansas school choice law (which has been labeled as unconstitutional), the now “high stakes” End-of-Course exams, and teacher pay, among other things. So be looking in next week’s OWL for a link to the newsletter.

News from Around the Natural State

State OK’d Change Labeling for Schools
The U.S. Department of Education said that it will allow Arkansas to use a new way to work with academically troubled public schools.

Excerpts from Beebe’s Speech
Excerpts from Gov. Mike Beebe’s State of the State address - The complete text of Gov. Mike Beebe’s State of the State address is available at www2.arkansasonline.com/legislature.

News from Around the Nation

Nothing but Praise for Duncan in Senate Hearing
Arne Duncan, President-elect Barack Obama’s choice to serve as Secretary of Education, coasted through his confirmation hearing today on a wave of bipartisan support from the Senate education committee.

**Charter School Law May Get Strengthened**
Mississippi’s charter school law is set to expire in July and could be strengthened this legislative session. Mississippi’s current law allows for only six charter schools, which have been converted from existing public schools. Under one proposal, new start-up schools could be created with independent boards and attendance would be done by lottery. Another proposal would authorize up to five new charter schools with a lottery enrollment system.

**Luna Supports Lifting Limit on New Charter Schools**
Idaho Superintendent of Public Instruction Tom Luna is supporting an effort to raise the cap on the number of new charter schools that can open each year, saying the limit could deny children some educational opportunities. Idaho law limits the number of new charter schools to six a year. Luna said more than 50 charter school petitions are in the works, and 12 of them are ready or almost ready.

**Site Seeing**
Given that Governor Beebe gave his State of the State address this week, it reminds us that we’re not the only state beginning a new session. Indeed, *Education Week* has been thinking on the same lines, and is kind enough to post a summary of the address for several states. Click [here](#) to read what other governors have been saying.

**Mark Your Calendar**
The next State Board of Education meeting is scheduled for February 9th. For more details about other events, visit the OEP [calendar](#).

**Final Thoughts**
"Arne Duncan is a visionary leader and fellow reformer who cares deeply about students. As the CEO of the Chicago Public Schools, Arne has advanced policies to hold schools accountable for providing all our nation's students -- regardless of race, income level, or background -- with a high-quality education.” – Secretary Spellings, U.S. Secretary of Education

**Thanks for reading! See you next week!**

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If you would like to be added or removed from this list, please send an e-mail to oep@uark.edu.