From the OEP

Happy Thursday! We have a couple of reminders for you today. First, don’t forget to sign up for the OEP conference. The conference theme is teacher quality and will be held on April 28\textsuperscript{th} at the Peabody Hotel in Little Rock. Please send your name and the number of guests in your party to oep@uark.edu to confirm your attendance.

We also wanted to remind you about the policy brief we published last week. The Arkansas Department of Education recently released Arkansas School Performance Report Cards with a new “gains rating” feature. The OEP has written a short policy brief in an effort to further clarify this useful information. In addition, we have added a database to our website that allows you to view information by school. Click here to access the database or here to read our policy brief.

News from Around the Natural State

87\textsuperscript{th} General Assembly Ends After 88-Day Regular Session
The Legislature on Thursday put the finishing touches on a historic regular session in which lawmakers created the framework for operating a state-run lottery, passed a tobacco tax increase to fund a trauma system and crafted a make-do budget to try to ride out the recession.

Senate OKs Tightening School Choice Law
Legislation to tighten residency requirements for school attendance under Arkansas’ school choice law won final legislative approval in the Senate Tuesday.

Study Puts Arkansas in Top Tier for Early Education
Arkansas' state-funded prekindergarten program for 3- and 4-year-olds is in the top echelon of programs nationally in terms of student enrollment, financial resources and quality, according to a 2008 study by the National Institute for Early Education Research.

News from Around the Nation

The Evaluation of the DC Opportunity Scholarship Program: Impacts After Three Years
Faculty and staff of the University of Arkansas Department of Education Reform were key members of the research team that produced a major school voucher evaluation released on Friday by the National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance within the Institute of Education Sciences at the U.S. Department of Education. Researchers found that the OSP improved reading achievement for students by nearly 4 months of instruction if they used an Opportunity Scholarship voucher. Math achievement was not significantly affected by the program. Other key findings of the study included that parents were more satisfied with their child's school, and viewed it as safer, if they used an Opportunity Scholarship. Students’ views of school satisfaction and safety were similar between the treatment and control groups.

**Duncan Spells Out Preferred Uses of Stimulus Aid**
After delivering a stern warning that states and school districts must use their federal stimulus money smartly or risk losing billions more, U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan and his staff are starting to spell out exactly what they mean by “smartly.”

**Site Seeing**
Education Commission of the States (ECS) has created a resource related to the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA), which will distribute roughly $100 billion to states for education. The ECS list of State ARRA Websites includes a table of links to information distributed by each state’s Governor’s Office (or designee) describing how much of the ARRA will be spent on education in each state. Click [here](#) to view the State ARRA Websites, or [here](#) to go to the ECS home page to view other publications.

**Mark Your Calendar**
April 13<sup>th</sup>: The next State Board of Education meeting will be held in the Auditorium of the Arch Ford Building.
April 28<sup>th</sup>: The OEP conference, “Preparing Highly Qualified Teachers for Arkansas,” will begin at 8:30 at the Peabody Hotel in Little Rock. For more information, visit the [OEP Calendar](#).

**Final Thoughts**

“The first question ... I promise you, will be what did you do with the stabilization money to drive reform and improve achievement?” – Education Secretary Arne Duncan

**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.