From the OEP

Good afternoon! We hope you are able to take some time this afternoon to read through the articles we’ve provided below. Even as the school year winds down, education issues continue to make the news. In particular, the D.C. Opportunity Scholarship Program has been in the spotlight as of late. Our very own Dr. Patrick Wolf, who is the principal investigator of the study, testified at a U.S. Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs meeting yesterday. To view the meeting, click [here](#). Education Week also wrote an article - “Obama Wants to Extend D.C. Voucher Program” - about Obama proposing to spend $12.2 million for the 2010-2011 school year to continue the program for about 1,700 kids.

For more news from around the state and nation, visit the [In the News](#) section on the OEP website.

News from Around the Natural State

**14 Area Districts’ Lawsuit Latest Battle in War over Funding**
Oral arguments are set for May 21 before the state Supreme Court in a lawsuit by 14 school districts accusing the state of violating the state constitution by relying too much on local property taxes for funding schools.

**Task Force to Look at Qualities of “Highly Qualified” Teachers**
In the not-too-distance future, school districts across the state will be able to evaluate a teacher using the same criteria — not with a test, but with a research-based list of criteria. A state Department of Education task force is about to tackle the job of formulating the standards.

**Education Groups in State Get $635,000 from Verizon**
Two educational nonprofits were among the recipients Monday of grants totaling $635,000 from the Verizon Foundation, the philanthropic arm of New York-based Verizon Communications Inc.

**District Retakes Teacher Pay Lead**
The Springdale School District regained its place as the highest paying district in the state for beginning teachers Tuesday when the School Board approved a $1,250 retroactive increase for each phase of its salary schedule.
News from Around the Nation

Budget Would Boost Incentive Pay, Turnaround Aid
President Barack Obama’s first budget proposal would boost U.S. Department of Education spending by 2.8 percent and provide substantial resources to turn around low-performing schools, reward effective teachers, and bolster early-childhood programs.

For Many Teachers, a Famously Fertile Market Dries Up Overnight
In an effort to cut costs and avoid teacher layoffs, the Department of Education in New York City ordered principals to fill vacancies with internal candidates only. As a result, aspiring teachers at education schools and members of programs like Teacher for America - a corps of recent college graduates - and the city's Teaching Fellows - which trains career professionals to become teachers - are scrambling for jobs.

Site Seeing
In case you missed the OEP conference last month and have not viewed the material, we would like to direct you to our website one more time. We have created a section for the 2009 conference where you can view the presentations for each speaker and watch the video of Senator Elliott’s address. Click here for material from the 2009 OEP “Teacher Quality” conference.

Mark Your Calendar
May 16, 2009: The Educators Career Fair will be held at the Metroplex/Team Summit Event Center in Little Rock from 9 AM until noon.
May 26, 2009: The House and Senate Education Committee will meet at 10:00 AM in room 171.
June 8, 2009: The State Board of Education meeting will be held in the auditorium of the Arch Ford Building in Little Rock.

Final Thoughts
“Good teachers are to education what education is to all other professions – the indispensable element, the sunlight and oxygen, the foundation on which everything else is built.” – Lowell Milken

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.