From the OEP

The OEP staff has been wrapping up after our Annual Conference last week and looking to put our new knowledge to good use! For those of you who weren't able to make it last week, copies of the day's presentations are available at http://www.uark.edu/ua/oep/2009_Conference_Proceedings.html.

We are excited to report that Senator Joyce Elliott's address on "Preparing Highly Qualified Teachers for Arkansas" is now available on our website! The discussion is an excellent one. Here are a few of the key points addressed by Senator Elliott:

1. Teachers must approach teaching as a genuine career, requiring continuous learning and improvement
2. We should be willing to borrow the best teacher training and teacher quality ideas from our international peers
3. Policymakers must insist on a 21st Century Compensation package for teachers rather than paying everyone the same just because they lasted another year.
4. The public should honor the profession and demand -- and financially support -- high quality teachers
5. Policymakers need to demand knowledge of academic content on the part of teachers

The recording of Senator Elliott's presentation* is available at http://uark.edu/ua/oep/2009_Conference/Elliot/Elliot.html.

*We apologize for the poor video-quality. The 2009 OEP Conference was held in a room over-looking the Arkansas River and the video images appear over-exposed. On the other hand, the audio quality is excellent and we recommend taking a moment to listen to the Senator's talk.

Now, on to other news …

News from Around the Natural State

Legislature Leaving School Choice Law Questions to Court
Lawmakers have been discussing a law that allows a student to apply for a transfer to a school district outside of the district in which he or she lives. However, the legislative session ended without approving any changes to the law. The decision will now be left to the courts.

Lottery Commission Meets, Elects Chairman
Former U.S. Rep. Ray Thornton of Little Rock has been named as the first chairman of the Arkansas Lottery Commission. Thornton is also a former state attorney general, state Supreme Court justice and past president of both the University of Arkansas and Arkansas State University.

News from Around the Nation

Duncan Gets an Earful on NCLB 'Listening Tour'
Secretary of Education Arne Duncan is currently on a 15-state "listening tour" to learn how NCLB works from the perspective of educators, parents, and kids. President Obama has been vague about changes he would make to the law, but his ideas are beginning to take shape as Duncan speaks out. For more information on the D.C. voucher program and a closer look at what an U.S. Education Department study found, please read Study Supports School Vouchers from the Washington Post.

Push is on for National Academic Standards
There is a growing effort to establish common academic standards for the nation's elementary, middle, junior high and high schools. If things go according to plan, we may see a common set of standards for math and English in kindergarten through 12th grades by the end of the summer.

U.S. No Longer Advising Schools to Close for Swine Flu
The Department of Health and Human Services is now reporting that the swine flu virus has been milder than anticipated. Officials are no longer recommending that schools close due to flu-like illnesses among students.

Reading Programs Found Ineffective
A federal study was conducted for four reading programs--Project CRISS, ReadAbout, Read for Real, and Reading for Knowledge--found disappointing results. The study concluded that Project CRISS, ReadAbout, and Read for Real had no effect on reading comprehension. In addition, they found that Reading for Knowledge had a negative impact on composite test scores.

Research Partnership Launches First Product
Researchers from the Strategic Education Research Partnership have developed a new program that addresses inadequacies in the vocabularies of many middle school children. The program is called "Word Generation" and it consists of short, engaging vocabulary-boosting lessons that are taught each day by different teachers across the middle school curriculum.
Site Seeing

SchoolDataDirect.com is a wonderful site. It's full of information and links to useful websites in nearly any area of education interest. It's a great place to find ideas and new information!

Mark Your Calendar

The OEP does not have any events on our calendar at the moment. However, you can always stay up to date by visiting the OEP Calendar on the web.

Final Thoughts

“You are educated. Your certification is your degree. You may think of it as your ticket to the good life. Let me ask you to think of an alternative. Think of it as your ticket to change the world.” - Tom Brokaw

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.