From the OEP

On June 25, we described the Race to the Top Fund of $4 billion. Under that State Fiscal Stabilization Fund (SFSF), part of the ARRA, the U.S. Department of Education is holding a national competition among states. States must provide evidence that they will make “dramatic progress on the four reform goals” and effectively use other ARRA funds. On July 1, the first part of the application was approved and Arkansas received an initial **$297 million of ARRA funds**. We will continue to follow the status of the ARRA, and we are eager to see how Arkansas competes with other states for the Race to the Top Funds. The U.S. Department of Education is supposed to release more specific guidelines for the Race to the Top competition later this month.

Recently the OEP spoke with the 2008 Arkansas Teacher of the Year, Paul Gray of Russellville. After receiving the award, Gray spent a year on administrative paid leave to work as a consultant with the Arkansas Department of Education. Now that Gray has completed his time with the ADE, we spoke with him about his philosophies and experiences. View our newest policy brief to read the Interview with Paul Gray.

News from Around the Natural State

**2009 Arkansas Test Scores**
For the first time, more than 60 percent of Arkansas students at each grade level scored at or above proficient on both the mathematics and literacy Arkansas Augmented Benchmark Exams.

**More Than $297 Million in Recovery Funds Now Available for Arkansas to Save Jobs and Drive Education Reform**
U. S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan today announced that more than $297 million is now available for Arkansas under the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) of 2009.

**Move Exams to End of Course**
William McComas makes a suggestion about End of Course exams in this opinion editorial piece: End of Course exams should be given at the end of the year.

News from Around the Nation
Racing for an Early Edge
Even before they’ve finished spending their first block of federal stimulus aid, states are getting a head start in a national “race to the top” for better public education, without even knowing rules to the game.

Racial Gap in Testing Sees Shift by Region
Black students have made important gains in several southern states over two decades, while in some northern states, black achievement has improved more slowly than white achievement, or has even declined, according to a study of the black-white achievement gap released by the Department of Education.

Site Seeing
The Department of Education has a blog written by education staff and have covered Secretary of Education Arne Duncan’s latest speeches and events. To follow Duncan and the latest issues in education (and leave your own comments) visit http://www.edgovblogs.org/duncan

Mark Your Calendar
There are several workshops and conferences being held this summer for educators. Visit the ADE calendar to view topics and dates.

Final Thoughts
“Any good teacher wants to use data and wants to be accountable. We all want to improve our students, our schools, and our teaching.” – Paul Gray, ATOY 2008

Thanks for reading! See you next week!
If you would like to be added or removed from this list, please send an e-mail to oep@uark.edu.