From the OEP

We hope you are enjoying your summer. A few things have caught our attention this month, and we would like to pass the news along to you. First of all, at the July 13 State Board of Education meeting, the rules governing “highly qualified” teachers were addressed. Of course, it is critically important that we have highly qualified teachers in the classroom, and we decided to review the document that outlines the criteria in Arkansas. We are currently working on a summary of the rules and invite you to read the policy brief, which will be released in the next couple of weeks, and decide what you think about the criteria for “highly qualified” teachers in Arkansas.

Last Friday, the U.S. Department of Education announced the guidelines for Race to the Top funds. Race to the Top is part of the ARRA, but is a competitive grant between states. Money may not be given to every state; money will only be given to states that provide evidence that they will excel in the four reform areas

• using data to inform instruction,
• developing and adopting world-class standards and assessments,
• turning around low-performing schools,
• and recruiting and retaining great teachers and leaders.

We are in the process of writing a policy brief to highlight the goals and application process for Race to the Top. We will release this in following weeks, as we are still sorting through the complex guidelines! We’ll keep you posted.

Finally, we are gearing up for the coming school year and have several publications on the way. Keep your eye out for newsletters covering the OEP teacher quality conference and a recap of the 2009 education legislation, a policy brief on school choice in Arkansas, and our annual report card on student achievement in Arkansas.

Thanks for reading! A brief list of recent news follows, but as always, you can go to the In the News section on our website for more news articles.

News from Around the Natural State

Arkansas Teacher Earns Presidential Award
An Arkansas educator is among more than 100 science, math, and engineering teachers and mentors nationwide named by President Obama as recipients of two presidential awards for excellence.

**Small, Enthusiastic Response Received for New Charter School**
A small but seemingly enthusiastic group of parents, patrons, and teachers learned more about the operations of a new Washington County charter school, Prism Education Center, which may be opened in August 2010.

**News from Around the Nation**

**Report Urges Halt to Extra Pay for Master’s Degree**
States are spending billions in education dollars each year rewarding teachers for earning advanced degrees that show little correlation with improved student achievement, a report released yesterday concludes.

**State Test Score Trends Through 2007-08, Part 2: Is There a Plateau Effect in Test Scores?**
The Center on Education Policy released a report that examines the so-called "plateau effect" that holds that test scores rise in the early years of a test-based accountability system and then level off. The analysis draws from a database of reading and math test results from all 50 states going back as far as 1999.

**Draft Content Standards Elicit Mixed Reviews**
A draft of common academic standards, meant to bring greater coherence to the nation’s English and mathematics lessons, is drawing a mix of enthusiastic, ambivalent, and barbed responses from those who have seen it.

**Site Seeing**
To view more information about Race to the Top, such as the notice or the Secretary’s remarks, visit http://www.ed.gov/policy/gen/leg/recovery/index.html

**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**
“But let me be clear: Success should be judged by results, and data is a powerful tool to determine results. We can't ignore facts. We can't ignore data. That's why any state that makes it unlawful to link student progress to teacher evaluations will have to change its ways if it wants to compete for a grant. That's why the Race to the Top grants will go to states that use data effectively to reward effective teachers, to support teachers who are struggling, and when necessary, to replace teachers who aren't up to the job.” – President Obama speaking at the Race to the Top announcement

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.