From the OEP

After the Arkansas Board of Education unanimously voted on Monday, we would like to officially welcome the new Arkansas Education Commissioner, Tom Kimbrell. On the heels of Governor’s Beebe announcement on Friday, we wrote two policy briefs: The first provided a recap of the accomplishments of former Commissioner Ken James, while the second provided an introduction to our new Commissioner, Dr. Tom Kimbrell. Both of these publications can be found on the OEP website.

In addition to highlighting Dr. James’ success and welcoming Dr. Kimbrell, this week we are highlighting our second round of top performing schools in Arkansas in the evolving AER, Outstanding Educational Performance Awards. In the second section we present the top performing “high-poverty” schools – or schools that are beating the odds. Be sure to read the newest OEP Awards report to see which schools are “beating the odds” in Arkansas!

We have received a lot of positive feedback from the initial publication of this report. We’re even more excited to release this section because we’re highlighting schools that may have a lot of challenges, but are succeeding nonetheless. These schools may not receive much praise throughout the year, but we hope you take a look and congratulate the schools on this list. These schools are great examples of how all students, no matter their economic level, can achieve at high levels.

We would also like to recognize three more schools in Arkansas. Yesterday, the U.S. Department of Education announced the 2009 National Blue Ribbon Schools. This award honors public and private schools that are either academically superior, or have made dramatic gains in student achievement and helped close gaps in achievement among minority and disadvantaged students. We would like to congratulate the three schools in Arkansas receiving the award: Mount Pleasant Elementary School in Mount Pleasant, Park International Magnet School in Hot Springs, and Vandergriff Elementary School in Fayetteville.

Finally…Don’t forget to fill out the OEP Survey for your chance to win a $50 or $25 Barnes and Noble gift card. We would like your advice as we plan for the future. Please respond by September 22.

News from Around the Natural State

New State Education Commissioner Hired
The state Board of Education voted unanimously to hire Tom Kimbrell of Cabot as state education commissioner.
1st Load of Lottery Tickets Arrives
Four trucks delivered about 26 million Arkansas lottery tickets to a lottery vendor’s warehouse in west Little Rock on Monday, the latest milestone for the fledging venture.

Time for Plan B in Fayetteville
Fayetteville School District officials will start over with the issue of replacing the high school after voters Tuesday rejected a millage increase to pay for a new one.

School Millage Results
This article highlights the unofficial results of school districts’ elections across the state. To view other news articles, visit the OEP In the News section.

News from Around the Nation

Schools Look Abroad to Hire Teachers
Some American school districts have turned increasingly to overseas recruiting to find teachers willing to work in their hard-to-staff schools, according to a new report by a national teacher's union.

Charter Schools Group Sets High Goal
The South Carolina Association of Public Charter Schools hopes to enroll 10% of public school students within the next five years. It's an ambitious goal, considering that would be about 70,000 students in charters when only 9,000 students are enrolled in those schools this year. The association plans to launch an Institute of Charter School Excellence that will provide training for prospective charter schools, as well as those with approved applications.

Evidence is Limited on Charters’ Effect on ELL Achievement
The question of whether charter schools do a good job of educating English-language learners is being debated in Massachusetts, as legislators consider two proposals that would expand the number of such schools.

TFA Strives for Continuous Teacher Development
Long criticized for the short duration of its training, Teach for America has invested heavily in the professional development of its teacher corps.

Site Seeing
Please fill out the OEP Survey! Of the responses by September 22, two people will be randomly selected for a $50 and $25 Barnes and Noble gift card.

Mark Your Calendar
September 24, 12:15pm: Education Committee meeting at Deer High School
September 25, 9:00am: Education Committee meeting at Mount Judea High School

To view other events in Arkansas, visit the OEP Calendar.

Final Thought

“Measuring the growth of learning and achievement is what we (Arkansas educators) should be about in meeting the education needs of every child in our schools.” – Dr. Tom Kimbrell

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.