From the OEP

Good afternoon! Today we have posted a new policy brief: Quality Counts 2010. Here we have summarized and analyzed the results of Quality Counts, an annual report published by Education Week. As was the case last year, Arkansas did well in the ranking, placing tenth with a B-minus. However, in the policy brief we explain why the overall results and rankings should not be our focus. Rather, we should look at individual components and we should be very pleased that we earned an A in the Standards, Assessments, and Accountability section. Unfortunately, the data used for the K-12 Achievement piece of the Quality Counts rating is now outdated as it came from 2007. For a more current report on the academic performance of Arkansas students, read our annual OEP Report on Arkansas Schools, to be released in February.

At the last State Board of Education meeting, Arkansas Education Commissioner announced plans to establish a charter school review council, stating that the department’s current process for reviewing applications and existing charter schools is inadequate. In response to this, we are today posting a policy brief examining how Arkansas and other states currently approve and review charter schools. We also discuss the potential benefits of a charter school review council. Read the policy brief – Charter School Review in Arkansas and Across the Nation – for more information.

As always, you can find a list of more news stories on the “In the News” section on the OEP website.

News from Around the Natural State

NLR District's Hiring Called Into Question
A judge questioned the effort of the North Little Rock School District to recruit black faculty members, as part of the district’s desegregation plan.

News from Around the Nation

Experts Urge Districts to Do More With Less
The nation’s school districts are facing a budget crisis that is expected to only get worse as the effects of the recession linger. But some thought leaders are insisting that schools and districts can and should use the opportunity to target resources in a way that serves their students better. A conference this month, "A Penny Saved: How Schools and Districts Can Tighten Their Belts While Serving Students Better," sponsored by
Thomas B. Fordham Institute, highlighted what the organizers see as fresh thinking on education spending.

**RTI (Response-to-Intervention) Said to Pay Off in Gains for English-Learners**
Chula Vista started using RTI during the 2004-05 school year. In the 2006-07 school year, it hired Douglas Fisher, a professor of teacher education at San Diego State University, as a consultant to focus on how to apply RTI to students who don’t have a command of English. Mr. Fisher is one of a small number of researchers looking closely at the overlap between response to intervention and techniques for teaching ELLs.

_OEP Note: What is Response-to-Intervention (RTI)?_ RTI is an early intervention program that aims to reduce the number of referrals to special education by incorporating a three-tier approach to teaching. Tier one is the instruction that all students receive. Tier two is for students who need additional help, usually offered through small group instruction. Students needing additional help receive one-on-one assistance in tier three.

**Teacher-Dismissal Powers Found to Affect Absences**
Chicago teachers who didn’t have tenure took fewer days off after principals were given more flexibility to dismiss probationary teachers, a new study has found.

### Site Seeing
Visit the _Quality Counts 2010 Table of Contents_ to find more information about the latest results. You can view state highlights reports (for $4.95), the grading calculator, an interactive map to examine state-by-state grades, or other information.

### Mark Your Calendar

**January 29**: Lecture Series – Lori L. Taylor, Assistant Professor in the Bush School of Government and Public Service, Texas A&M – Graduate Education Building 343, 12:00pm, weather permitting

**February 2**: Joint Adequacy Evaluation Oversight Subcommittee, State Capitol Building Room 171, 10:00am

**February 19**: Literacy and Arts Conference – “Enriching Literacy with Arts, Enriching Arts with Literacy” at the Jones Center for Families in Springdale. Contact David Jolliffe (djollif@uark.edu) for more information.

**February 26**: 2nd Annual ESL Symposium at the Clarion Inn, Fayetteville

**March 3 and 4**: 3rd Annual ASD Symposium at the Fayetteville Continuing Education Center. March 3 from 7:00 – 8:30pm is a free community meeting on “Meeting the Needs of Persons with ASD.” Contact Barbara Gartin (bgartin@uark.edu) or Tom Smith (tecsmith@uark.edu) for more information.

**April 16**: OEP Conference – “Preparing Effective School Leaders for Arkansas” at the DoubleTree in Little Rock. Send your RSVP to oep@uark.edu

More information is available on the [OEP Calendar](#).
Final Thought

“Are we pleased that we are in the national top 10? Yes. Are we satisfied with our ranking? No. Our goal is to be in the top five, of course, and we believe that we can get there.” – Arkansas Education Commissioner Tom Kimbrell, on Arkansas’ ranking in Quality Counts 2010

Thanks for reading! See you next week!
The Office for Education Policy
University of Arkansas
Director: Gary W. Ritter
Research Associates:
Nathan Jensen
Caleb Rose
Bentley Kirkland
James Shuls
Helen Barnard
If you would like to be added or removed from this list, please send an e-mail to oep@uark.edu.