January 7, 2010

From the OEP

Happy New Year! We would like to take some time as we enter 2010 to thank you for your support. We aim to continue to serve you this year, and would value your input about what we should focus on in 2010. Below we have reflected on some highlights of our work from 2009.

The OEP released policy briefs to address relevant education topics:
Quality Counts 2009
The New Arkansas School Performance Report
Competing in the Federal Race to the Top
Recognizing the Accomplishments of ADE Commissioner Ken James and OEP Welcomes New Commissioner: Tom Kimbrell

The OEP kept you informed with pressing Arkansas education issues through Arkansas Education Reports:
Putting “Teaching to the Test” to the Test: Is this Really a Problem in Arkansas?
Outstanding Educational Performance Awards: Highlighting Top Achieving Arkansas Schools, 2009
An Analysis of the Impact of Charter Schools on Desegregation Efforts in Little Rock, Arkansas

Our newsletters kept you informed about education legislation.

The annual OEP Conference of 2009 focused on teacher quality in Arkansas.

We are currently working on the Arkansas Report Card and are planning the 2010 OEP Conference, to focus on school leadership in Arkansas. (Don’t forget to save the date: Friday, April 16!) We would love to hear your thoughts as to what type of work you would like to see from the OEP this new year.

Now we have some catching up to do…Below you’ll find the latest education news. Happy 2010 – stay warm!

**News from Around the Natural State**

School Chiefs’ Salaries on Rise; They Outpace Teacher Raises
Superintendent salaries grew on average by 8.7 percent since the 2005-06 school year. Teacher salaries went up 6.2 percent. The Pulaski County Special School District paid the most in superintendent pay at $411,281 in 2008-09, about four times the state average. The top paying superintendent salaries: Pulaski County Special, Fayetteville, Springdale, Pine Bluff, Little Rock, Fort Smith, Bentonville, Rogers, Conway and Benton. The bottom superintendent salaries: Wonderview, Fouke, Twin Rivers, Kirby, Concord, Smackover, Calico Rock, Mountain Pine, Magazine, and Maynard.

As Rural Districts Struggle, Teacher Salary Gap Widens
Despite tax increases for schools and the Supreme Court signing off on the state’s education funding system, teachers are still paid more - or less - depending on where they teach.

OEP Editorial Note: We try to refrain from editorial notes in the news section, but we do believe it’s important to point out here that all of us employed by the Arkansas taxpayers to work in the field of education – teachers, administrators, and those in higher education (like us) – are appreciative of our jobs and salaries. During an economic time in which many of our friends in the private sector are experiencing pay cuts or losing their jobs, we in education should consider ourselves fortunate for our annual pay increases (however small) and our very secure jobs!

Deadline Nearing for School Cash
State and local education leaders are racing to meet a Jan. 19 application deadline for millions of dollars in federal funds.

Is it Legal? Will it Open?
Jackie Y. Jackson, the originator of the all-boy charter school that got the OK to open its doors in July from the board of the state Department of Education two weeks ago, doesn't believe the restrictions placed by the board on the school are legal.

News from Around the Nation

Race to Top Viewed as Template for New ESEA
Educators hoping for a glimpse at the next rendition of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act may want to take a close look at the rules for the Race to the Top program, which pushes states to adopt education redesign principles that federal officials say are likely to be the cornerstone of the Obama administration’s plans for a new ESEA.

NCATE Panel to Weigh Student-Teacher Fieldwork
In a sign of the increasing influence of teacher-preparation models that emphasize practical experience over coursework, the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education will convene a high-powered panel this week to study ideas for updating student-teaching.

Reading Aloud to Teens Gains Favor Among Teachers
Mention teachers’ practice of reading aloud to their students and a typical image comes to mind: In a cozy corner of an elementary classroom,
youngsters are gathered on a rug, listening intently to Charlotte’s Web. But, in fact, many teachers across the country are reading to students in middle and high schools, too, and some education researchers say more teachers of adolescents ought to be using the same strategy.

**Second Study Gives Thumbs Up to N.Y.C. Charters**
Students in New York City's charter elementary and middle schools make bigger learning gains than their regular public school counterparts in math and reading, according to a new study, the second in five months to find good results for the independently run public schools in the nation's largest school system.

**Site Seeing**
This week we have links to two recent commentary articles by professors at the University of Arkansas: [The Future of Ed. Schools; Five Lessons from Business Schools](#) and [Three Ideas to Make Arkansas Public Schools the Best](#)

**Mark Your Calendar**

- **January 8**: Professional Licensure Standards Board Meeting at the Arkansas Department of Education
- **January 14**: Education Committee Meeting at the State Capitol Room 151, 1:30pm
- **January 22**: Lecture Series – Thomas Dee, Associate Professor of Economics and Director of Public Policy Program, Swarthmore College – Graduate Education Building 343, 12:00pm
- **January 19**: State Board of Education Meeting at the Arch Ford Building Auditorium, 9am
- **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
- **February 19**: Literacy and Arts Conference – “Enriching Literacy with Arts, Enriching Arts with Literacy” at the Jones Center for Families in Springdale
- **February 26**: 2nd Annual ESL Symposium at the Clarion Inn, Fayetteville
- **April 16**: OEP Conference – “Preparing Effective School Leaders for Arkansas” at the DoubleTree in Little Rock

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

**Final Thought**

“Education is what survives when what has been learned has been forgotten.” – B.F. Skinner
Thanks for reading! See you next week!
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