Good afternoon! I hope you have some free time today because there are lots of news stories to highlight. There are several stories from the Arkansas Department of Education, as there was a recent state board of education meeting. You will also notice that a draft of the common core standards has been posted. You can read about that from the ADE blog or EdWeek; both stories are linked below.

As always, you can find more news stories on our website by visiting http://www.uark.edu/ua/oep/news.php

Have a great weekend!

**News from Around the Natural State**

**KIPP Schools Show Off For Tour**
Jakerious, a 6-year-old kindergartner at the KIPP Delta Elementary Literacy Academy charter school in Helena, served as part of a welcoming committee Tuesday to greet several national KIPP administrators who toured the schools and listened to success stories from the system’s first senior class, set to graduate in May.

**Draft of K-12 Common Core State Standards Ready for Comment**
The National Governors Association Center for Best Practices (NGA Center) and the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) today released the first official public draft of the K-12 standards as part of the Common Core State Standards Initiative, a process being led by governors and chief state school officers in 51 states, territories, and the District of Columbia.

**Dr. Kimbrell’s Weekly Message Now Online**
Dr. Tom Kimbrell talks about Arkansas educators doing the right things for students and the Race to the Top application in this week’s video message.

**Two Conversion Charter Schools’ Charters Renewed**
The Arkansas State Board of Education renewed two conversion charter schools after presentations by both that illustrated the flexibility and successes conversion charter schools can achieve. Conversion charter schools are schools within a school district that may apply for the same...
waivers that open enrollments may seek in their charters.

**Weiner School District to Become Part of the Harrisburg School District**
The Arkansas State Board of Education voted unanimously to approve the petition to annex the Weiner School Board into the Harrisburg School board during its March meeting.

**South Pike County School District to be Formed**
The Arkansas State Board of Education voted unanimously to approve the voluntary administrative annexation of the Delight School District into the Murfreesboro School District.

**Wickes and Van Cove Join Together**
Arkansas will have a new school district beginning in July when the Wickes and Van Cove districts join together in a voluntarily consolidate to form the Cossatot River School District.

**News from Around the Nation**

**Draft Common Standards Elicit Kudos and Criticism**
The first public draft of grade-by-grade common standards, released this morning, is being greeted with a mix of praise and skepticism, illustrating both the mounting consensus that the country needs to set higher expectations for all students and the many problems that complicate their adoption.

**School’s Shake-Up is Embraced by the President**
A Rhode Island school board's decision to fire the entire faculty of a poorly performing school, and President Obama's endorsement of the action, has stirred a storm of reaction nationwide.

**Officials Step Up Enforcement of Rights Laws in Education**
Seeking to step up enforcement of civil rights laws, the federal Department of Education says it will be sending letters in coming weeks to thousands of school districts and colleges, outlining their responsibilities on issues of fairness and equal opportunities.

**Final Rules Unveiled for ‘i3’ Innovation Fund**
The U.S. Department of Education unveiled the final rules for its $650 million Investing in Innovation, or i3, grant program, standing fast in the face of criticism that its proposed guidelines demanded too much from applicants in the way of private-sector match and evidence to back up their proposals.
Site Seeing

Common Core State Standards Initiative: The draft of the K-12 standards is available for public comment. Visit www.corestandards.org to view the core standards and submit your feedback.

Mark Your Calendar

March 31: Joint Subcommittee on Grade Inflation at the Arkansas State Capitol Buiding Room 171, 10:00am
April 6: Joint Adequacy Evaluation Oversight Subcommittee meeting at the Arkansas State Capitol Building Room 171, 10:00am
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

“I think KIPP’s impact is amazing. I think education and economic development go hand in hand.” – James Valley, Helena-West Helena Mayor

Thanks for reading! See you next week!
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