From the OEP

Good Afternoon! As promised, in preparation for the OEP Conference this Friday, April 16th at the Double Tree Hotel in Little Rock AR, we are releasing an OEP Policy Brief today reporting the 2009 NAEP Reading Results. The NAEP brief highlights Arkansas' performance on the NAEP Reading subtest. In addition to the most recent NAEP Reading scores, we also provide an overview of Arkansas NAEP Reading performance over time as compared to the nation, highlight performance on the NAEP Reading exam according to student subgroups (race and socioeconomic status), compare Arkansas' reading exam performance to that of Arkansas' neighboring states, and we examine national trends.

In addition, our colleagues Sandra Stotsky, Chris Goering, and David Jolliffe in the University of Arkansas College of Education and Health Professions recently released a report of recommendations from their Survey of Arkansas’ English Teachers of more than 400 English teachers in grades 9, 10 and 11 in Arkansas public schools to find out what books they assign. They followed up with some of the teachers in focus group meetings to find out more about the conditions for teaching in the context of testing and accountability. Among their 10 recommendations:

- The Arkansas Department of Education needs to develop the framework for an appropriately challenging English language arts curriculum for students in grades 7-12 in the middle third of academic performance.
- The Arkansas Department of Education should develop and provide guidelines for stronger literature and reading programs in grades K-8, with a special stress on vocabulary development.

More information on this report can be found here.

Rather than news stories, we have a timely update from today’s State Board of Education meeting. As always, more news can be found on the OEP website. Tune in tomorrow for another OEP publication as we continue to get closer to the OEP Conference.

Special Report from the Capitol

The OWL flew down to the Capitol Complex today to attend the monthly State Board of Education Meeting and brings you Breaking News!

- **School of Excellence Charter School in Humphrey Loses Charter:** The Arkansas State Board of Education voted unanimously to revoke the charter of the Humphrey School of Excellence Charter School in Humphrey as soon as possible after Dr. Kimbrell, commissioner of education, made the recommendation to the State Board.
- **Turrell School District Annexed into Marion School District:** Because the Turrell School District is on the 2010 “Act 60” Consolidation List, meaning that the district must be consolidated with one or more districts as the district has fallen below 350 average
daily student membership for both the 2007-2008 and 2008-2009 school years, the Arkansas State Board of Education voted today to annex Turrell in to the Marion School District. The consolidated will be effective July 1.

- **State Board Hears Report on Twin River School District Plans:** The state took administrative control of the Twin Rivers School District in February because the district had failed to meet accreditation standards for more than two consecutive years. The plan is to reallocate the area contained in Twin Rivers into the six surrounding school districts: Highland, Hillcrest, Mammoth Spring, Maynard, Pocahontas and Sloan-Hendrix.

**Site Seeing**

In preparation for the OEP Conference on Effective School Leadership next Friday, our featured website this week is the National Institute for School Leadership; a website offering "professional development programs designed to give principals the critical knowledge and skills they need to be instructional leaders and improve student achievement in their schools."

**Mark Your Calendar**

June 15: “Common Standards, Common Sense: What the Common Core State Standards Mean for Arkansas” hosted by The Learning Institute at Bryant Middle School, 9am – 3:30pm. Contact Quentin.suffren@tli.net for more information.

More information is available on the OEP Calendar.

**Final Thought**

'We must not believe the many, who say that only free people ought to be educated, but we should rather believe the philosophers who say that only the educated are free.' - Epictetus

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.