April 30, 2010

From the OEP

Happy Friday!

During the week of April 12 we posted several policy briefs. We are highlighting them again in case you haven’t had a chance to read them:

**National Standards: Following the Pendulum of Debate**
*The OEP looks at the debate surrounding the proposed Common Core Standards released in March 2010.*

**How Did Arkansas Fare in the Race to the Top?**
*The OEP breaks down how Arkansas scored in the federal Race to the Top grant competition and highlights the strengths and weaknesses of our state’s application.*

**Reauthorizing No Child Left Behind: The Obama Blueprint**
*The OEP provides a history of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act up through its reauthorization as the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB). We conclude with a side-by-side comparison of NCLB with the Obama Blueprint for reauthorizing the Law.*

**2009 NAEP Reading Results**
*The Office for Education Policy reports Arkansas student performance on the 2009 NAEP Reading exam as compared to the U.S. and neighboring states.*

Have a great weekend!

News from Around the Natural State

**Presidential Scholars Program Recognizes Six Arkansas Semifinalists**
Six Arkansas public school students have been named 2010 Presidential Scholars Semifinalists by the U.S. Department of Education.
A Fond Farewell to Dr. Diana Julian
Dr. Diana Julian was honored Wednesday afternoon at a reception to bid her farewell from the Arkansas Department of Education. Dr. Julian is resigning, effective Friday, from her position as Deputy Commissioner, to pursue educational consulting opportunities.

News from Around the Nation

Panel Finds No Favorite in Teacher-Prep Pathways
After six years of study, a national panel of prominent scholars has concluded that there’s not enough evidence to suggest that teachers who take alternative pathways into the classroom are any worse—or any better—than those who finish traditional college-based preparation programs.

Foundations Seek to Leverage Innovation Funding
A dozen foundations that have been key players in efforts to improve schools are pledging $506 million this year to spur education innovation, including a joint effort to help districts, schools, and nonprofit groups secure matching funds for the federal Investing in Innovation grant competition.

Obama Honors Iowa Woman as Year's Top Teacher
A high school English teacher from Iowa who incorporates everything from singing to Facebook in her lessons has been recognized by President Barack Obama as the nation's top teacher.

Site Seeing

Charter School Autonomy: A Half Broken Promise - This Fordham Institute study finds that the typical charter school in America today lacks the autonomy it needs to succeed, once state, authorizer, and other impositions are considered. Though the average state earns an encouraging B+ for the freedom its charter law confers upon schools, individual state grades in this sphere range from A to F. Authorizer contracts add another layer of restrictions that, on average, drop schools' autonomy grade to B-. (Federal policy and other state and local statutes likely push it down further.) School districts are particularly restrictive authorizers. The study was conducted by Public Impact.

Mark Your Calendar

May 6: Forum on Proposed National Standards at Arkansas State University in Jonesboro, 5:00 – 7:00pm. Contact Misty Newcomb at mdn01@uark.edu for more information.
May 10: State Board of Education Meeting at the State Education Building in Little Rock
May 12: Forum on Proposed National Standards at the State Capitol Building. Contact Misty Newcomb at mdn01@uark.edu for more information.
May 14: Professional Licensure Standards Board Meeting
June 11: UCA Leadership Institute, 8:30am – 3:00pm. View the flyer for more information.
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**

From the remarks by President Obama in the Rose Garden for the 2010 National Teacher of the Year Award, to the award winners:

“And we do this because you’re the key to our success in the global economy – preparing our kids to compete at a time when a nation’s most valuable currency is the knowledge and skills of its people. And we do this because the impact you’ve had on all of our lives: pushing us, believing in us, insisting – sometimes, despite all evidence to the contrary – that we have potential and that we have something worthy to contribute.”

**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.