Next week will be a busy week. As the school year winds down, we will leave you with two reports on what we hope are interesting topics.

Of course, Arkansas education observers are always interested in school spending and student performance. In 2008, we posted The State of Education in Arkansas: How Much are Arkansas Schools Spending? Many of our readers were particularly interested in the section on salaries, so next week we are posting a new report that focuses on teacher salaries in Arkansas. This is relevant as our state is currently meeting about adequate funding in our schools. We will compare teacher salaries and cost-of-living in surrounding states and the regions in Arkansas. Be sure to take a look at this report next week.

The second report relates to a current issue in Arkansas. As you’ll read about below, Little Rock and the state are debating the issue of charter schools as they relate to integration. In 2009, we posted An Analysis of the Impact of Charter Schools on Desegregation Efforts in Little Rock, Arkansas. We are posting a new report with updated information and additional analyses. We hope you enjoy both of these reads.

The OWL will also take a break this summer and visit your inbox less frequently. We will e-mail you once or twice a month as news and issues arise, but you can always check our list of education news on the In the News section of our website.

**News from Around the Natural State**

**Parents Sue State to Keep Schools Open**
A group of parents from rural north Arkansas has filed a lawsuit asking the court to void an Arkansas Board of Education vote to dissolve the Twin Rivers School District and close its doors.

**Union an Asset, Keep it, Teachers Tell Board**
Representatives from hundreds of Pulaski County Special School District teachers pleaded with the School Board on Monday night to reject a recommendation to terminate their union-negotiated contract. One by one, teachers stood before the School Board during a meeting that lasted well into the night.
LR School District Asks Judge: Step In
The Little Rock School District asked a federal judge late Wednesday to halt approval of new charter schools and stop expansion of existing charter schools in Pulaski County.
You can also read about it on EdWeek.

News from Around the Nation

R.I. School District Agrees to Rehire Fired Teachers
A school district that gained the support of President Barack Obama for promoting accountability after it fired all its teachers from a struggling school announced on Sunday it has reached an agreement with the union to return the current staffers to their jobs.

Texas Board Hears Calls for Social Studies Rewrite
Conservatives on the Texas State Board of Education were defiant Wednesday as a parade of critics came before them, most urging a fresh rewrite of social studies guidelines.

Push to Renew ESEA Faces Steep Policy, Political Hurdles
This was supposed to be the year that Congress finally completed the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, a task which has been lingering since 2007. But the wait may go on.

Aligning Standards and Curriculum Begets Questions
As the draft common standards undergo their final revisions, many minds are turning to the questions of how to put them into practice in classrooms.

Site Seeing

Early Warning! Why Reading by the End of Third Grade Matters is a Kids Count report from the Annie E. Casey Foundation. You can find information, such as the full report, state profiles, and data, at http://datacenter.kidscount.org/reports/readingmatters.aspx.

Here are two articles about the report:
Report: Arkansas 35th in Fourth-Grade Literacy: A new report ranks Arkansas 35th in the nation in fourth-grade literacy. In 2009, about 71 percent of Arkansas fourth-graders scored below the proficient level on the National Assessment of Education Progress reading test, according to the report “Early Warning: Why Reading by the End of Third Grade Matters,” released by the Annie E. Casey Foundation.
**Analysis Ties 4th Grade Reading Failure to Poverty**: Eighty-five percent of poor 4th graders in predominantly low-income schools are failing to reach “proficient” levels in reading on federal tests, according to a new study by a national foundation that is gearing up to lead a 10-year effort to raise 3rd graders’ reading proficiency.

You can find another interesting report in Education Next: *Evaluating NCLB*. This is from the report:

“We find that the accountability provisions of NCLB generated large and statistically significant increases in the math achievement of 4th graders and that these gains were concentrated among African American and Hispanic students and among students who were eligible for subsidized lunch. We find smaller positive effects on 8th-grade math achievement. These effects are concentrated at lower achievement levels and among students who were eligible for subsidized lunch. We do not, however, find evidence that NCLB accountability had any impact on reading achievement among either 4th or 8th graders.”

**Mark Your Calendar**

**May 24**: Joint Subcommittee on Grade Inflation in room 171 of the State Capitol, 10:00am  
**May 24**: Joint Adequacy Evaluation Oversight Subcommittee in room 171 of the State Capitol, 1:30pm  
**June 1**: Joint Adequacy Evaluation Oversight Subcommittee in room 171 of the State Capitol, 10:00am  
**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**

“You cannot open a book without learning something.” – Confucius

**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.