From the OEP

For those of you who have been spending some of your summer vacation time in the stores and shopping malls to beat the heat during these dog days of summer, the increasing number of “back to school” sales and specials are a subtle reminder that the beginning of the 2010-11 school year is around the corner. Meanwhile, we have continued to track education news around the state and nation. We learned some bad news this week when it was reported that Arkansas was not among the finalists in the Race to the Top grant competition. In a press conference Tuesday, July 27th, US Department of Education Secretary Arne Duncan announced the 19 finalists: Arizona, California, Colorado, the District of Columbia, Florida, Georgia, Hawaii, Illinois, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Jersey, New York, North Carolina, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, and South Carolina. More information on this story can be found in our News from Around the Natural State section below.

In other news, we need to alert our OWL readers and OEP Annual Conference attendees of a change in the conference date. Please update your calendars to reflect that the OEP Annual Conference in Little Rock will now be held on Wednesday November 10th. We have updated our SAVE THE DATE information below. We are still in the process of confirming the venue for the conference, but will surely update you once we have made final arrangements.

As always, you can keep up with education news on the In the News section of our website.

News from Around the Natural State

No ‘Race to the Top’ Money for Arkansas Schools
Arkansas will not receive federal stimulus money for education under the Race to the Top program, U.S. Department of Education officials said today. The state applied for both of two rounds of grants but did not make the cut either time. Arkansas asked for $374 million in its first-round application and $175 million in its second-round application.

Reviewing Bids: School Work to Begin
Bid packages for the demolition of Bates and for the site preparation and excavation on the south side of the Fayetteville high school campus were opened Tuesday morning, said Phil Jones of Nabholz Construction, the firm serving as construction manager for the project.

News from Around the Nation

Common Core Standards Coming
There’s been a good deal of hoopla surrounding the development and approval of common standards for students across the country. The standards, touted by President Barack Obama and the National Governors Association, were approved for Arkansas earlier this month.
19 Arrested as Protesters Claim School Plan Would Resegregate System
Police in Raleigh, North Carolina, arrested 19 people at a rancorous school board meeting Tuesday afternoon where protesters accused the Wake County School Board of adopting a plan that will resegregate the school system.

Rhee Dismisses 241 D.C. Teachers; Union Vows to Contest Firings
D.C. Schools Chancellor Michelle A. Rhee announced Friday that she has fired 241 teachers, including 165 who received poor appraisals under a new evaluation system that for the first time holds some educators accountable for students' standardized test scores.

Site Seeing
The ed.gov Race to the Top Fund Website is the hub for information about the Race to the Top Grant Competition. The scoring sheets from Phase 1 as well as the state applications from Phase 2 along with a wealth of other information are contained here.

Mark Your Calendar
August 6, 2010: AYP/Smart Accountability CIV Training, 1:00-4:30 PM video conference. More information here.
August 9, 2010: State Board of Education Meeting, 9:00 AM, Arch Ford Building

*NEW* SAVE THE DATE: November 10, 2010 - Annual OEP Conference in Little Rock, Arkansas. This year’s Conference topic is Assessment and Accountability and will feature Keynote Speaker Raymond Simon who was the Commissioner of Education in Arkansas from 1998 to 2004 before being appointed as the Deputy Secretary of the U.S. Department of Education in 2005. Please note that this is the annual OEP Conference that we have typically held in the Spring for the past 3 years, but have decided to hold this year’s conference in the Fall so that we do not conflict with the Arkansas State Benchmark and EOC testing dates. We hope you will consider attending. We will be working to allow professional development hours credited to teachers and administrators for this conference. More information coming soon!

More information is available on the OEP Calendar.

Final Thought
“Teachers open the door, but you must enter by yourself.” - Chinese Proverb

Thanks for reading! See you next week!
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