It’s always nice to start a new week refreshed after a three-day weekend. With that, we hope you all enjoyed the Labor Day weekend, and although Labor Day traditionally marks the end of summer, we at the OEP are excited about working to bring you more news, publications, and useful resources to help you get through this fall.

This week, we are particularly happy to present our next installment of the 2010 OEP Awards. Our first installment brought you the overall top performing schools in Arkansas on the Benchmark and EOC examinations. Like last year, each installment of the OEP Awards will focus on smaller subsets of schools with similar characteristics (i.e., elementary schools) so that we can compare apples to apples. Our focus this week is on schools that are “Beating the Odds,” that is, schools with at least 2/3 (66%) or more of their students receiving Free or Reduced Lunches (FRL). Because economically disadvantaged students must overcome barriers on the road to academic success, we are especially pleased to highlight the great performance of these schools. We congratulate all the schools on our Beating the Odds lists!

Among the high-poverty schools in the state, many high-poverty schools obtained the accomplishment of being on two lists, either Top 20 math and literacy for high-poverty schools or of being both Top 20 on the high-poverty and the overall lists in one subject. Cutter Morning Star Elementary (Cutter Morning Star) was on three lists in the Top 20 in both math and literacy for high-poverty schools and the Top 20 math overall. Only one school, Eudora Elementary (Lakeside LV), earned the highest achievement of being in the Top 20 on all five lists. Eudora Elementary was not only on the Top 20 list for both subjects as a high-poverty school, but was also in the Top 20 overall for math, literacy, and combined. Eudora Elementary ranked third in elementary reading overall and first in elementary math, elementary combined, high-poverty math, and high-poverty reading.

Last week, the OWL brought you our 2009-2010 State Benchmark Lookup Database. This resource contains all Arkansas benchmark data released for last school year by the Department of Education in a convenient, customizable format. The data contain demographics as well as test scores, and they can be summarized using a lookup for individual schools, districts, and regions. Further, the database allows for comparisons so that you can better understand the performance of schools and districts of interest to you. We hope you are finding these tools to be useful in seeking a clearer understanding of schools’ achievement in benchmark grades. If you have any questions about how to use this database, please drop us a line at oep@uark.edu.

On a final note, we report with sadness this week that one of the courageous Little Rock Nine, Jefferson Thomas, has passed at the age of 67. Although this news is not explicitly policy-oriented, the nine students who were the first of many that would help to integrate our schools across the state remain significant in the history of our educational efforts in Arkansas. Our thoughts are with Mr. Thomas’ family, friends, and remaining eight classmates that made history at Central High School in Little Rock. A full news story is linked below in our News from Around the Natural State.
Arkansas Wins Funds for School-Tests Effort
The U.S. Department of Education awarded a group of 25 states - including Arkansas - plus Washington, D.C., a $170 million grant to develop common standardized tests to be implemented by the 2014-15 school year, Secretary Arne Duncan announced Thursday. The new tests, designed for grades three through 11, will replace end-of-year paper tests with computerized tests spaced throughout the year to allow teachers to modify instruction for struggling students.

Education notebook -New Charter School Applications, LRSD gets Sued & Michelle Obama’s Reach out and Read Program Hits Goal
Five organizations have applied to the state to establish open-enrollment charter schools in Little Rock, Pine Bluff, Forrest City, McNeil and Gillett beginning in the 2011-12 school year; Nineteen black employees in the Little Rock School District’s Maintenance and Operations Department have filed a federal lawsuit against school district leaders, contending that they have each been victims of long-term, unlawful racial discrimination in their workplace; and The Reach out and Read program - which aimed to distribute a million books to children nationwide by Labor Day - met its deadline in August.

Thomas of Little Rock Nine Dies of Cancer at 67
Jefferson Thomas, one of the nine black students to desegregate Little Rock Central High School in 1957, died Sunday in Columbus, Ohio. He was 67. Thomas was one of the youngest in the group Central High enrollees who became known as the Little Rock Nine. The other eight members of the group are still living. Central High School became internationally known in 1957, when the nine black students integrated the school. Until then, segregation laws barred black students from Central.

News from Around the Nation
California to Use New Type of Nationwide School Tests.
With a federal award of $330 million, California and 43 other states joined Thursday to replace the much-maligned year-end English and math standardized tests with new nationwide tests that could better measure student learning and teacher performance.

L.A. Civic Leaders Urge LAUSD, Union to Revamp Teacher Evaluations
The group, including the presidents of the L.A. Area Chamber of Commerce and United Way of Greater L.A., urges the use of student test score data and more access to information about instructors for families.

Formula to Grade Teachers’ Effectiveness Gains Acceptance, and Critics
A growing number of school districts have adopted a system called value-added modeling, provoking battles from Washington to Los Angeles — with some saying it is an effective method for increasing teacher accountability, and others arguing that it can give an inaccurate picture of teachers’ work.

'Superman' Documentary Draws Praise, Controversy
Well in advance of its official release, the education film “Waiting For ‘Superman’” has attracted a level of attention that could make it one of the
year’s most-watched documentaries—and one of the most controversial among educators, some of whom question its depictions of the American
school system and how to improve it.

**Don’t forget, you can always keep up with more education news on the In the News section of our website.**

**Site Seeing**

Last week, we suggested The Arkansas Department of Education Commissioner’s Memos as our featured website and this week we bring an
extension of the Commissioner’s Memos by linking to the Commissioners Video Messages. Scroll to the bottom of the page to hear Dr. Kimbrell
speak about current issues in Arkansas education.

**Mark Your Calendar**

Sept 7-9 Beginning Administrator Induction Training (late hires)
Sept 7, 14, 21, 28 ADE Pathwise Mentor Training @ Dawson Educational Coop
Sept 10 [Compressed Interactive Video Workshop: Training for State Reporting Cycles 1-9 for fiscal year 2010-2011](#)
Sept 10 [Department of Education Reform Lecture Series: Glenn Loury - Simple Economics of Affirmative Action Policy](#)
Sept 13 [Cycle II 2010-2011 Joint Use Agreement Grant Application Due](#)
Sept 13 [State Board of Education Meeting](#)

**OEP Conference Reminder: November 9, 2010** - Annual OEP Conference at the Clinton Presidential Center in Little Rock, Arkansas. This year’s Conference topic is Assessment and Accountability. The keynote speaker will be Raymond Simon, Arkansas Commissioner of Education from 1998 to 2004. He was appointed Deputy Secretary of the U.S. Department of Education in 2005. Rather than holding the conference in the spring, as in years past, we are now holding it in the fall to avoid 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!

**Final Thought**

*Good is not good where better is expected.* – Thomas Fuller

**Thanks for reading! See you next week!**
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