November 18, 2010

From the OEP

As the end of the week looms, we hope yours has been a productive one. We are pleased to announce that we have created a Fall 2010 OEP Conference Website with a synopsis of each speaker’s presentation and a link to their Power Point (if applicable). In addition, you can visit our website for past OEP Conferences to get an idea of what we have covered in past years.

We wanted to bring to your attention a new report out by the Arkansas Advocates for Children and Families (AACF). We are particularly pleased to spread the word from this very important organization because Laura Kellams, the Director of the Northwest Arkansas branch of AACF, is a new member of the OEP Advisory Board.

The report: “Carried Over: Arkansas Students are Left Behind When Schools Stockpile Poverty Money” states that at the end of the 2008-09 academic year, Arkansas schools were sitting on more than $25 million that was intended to be spent on helping poor students catch up to their peers. Over $145 million was allocated to Arkansas in 2008-09 to serve these students. Further, over one-fifth of Arkansas school districts in 2009 carried over more than 20 percent of the money they received through the National School Lunch Act (NSLA) funding program…and only 31 of Arkansas’ 257 school districts spent all of their NSLA money in 2009. Click here to visit the AACF website or view the press release for the report.

News from Around the Natural State

Scholarships Await Arkadelphia Pupils

Students who graduate from Arkadelphia High School will get help picking up the tab for college. Representatives from Southern Bancorp and the Ross Foundation, both based in Arkadelphia, announced Tuesday that they have partnered to start a scholarship program that will help students pay the cost of tuition and mandatory fees up to the highest rate of a public university in Arkansas.

Proponents of the Arkadelphia program hope that it will have the same kind of impact on the district that the El Dorado program has had in the past three years. Before 2007, the El Dorado School District was losing students. Since the program began, the district has steadily increased its overall enrollment each year, which to the district means people are both moving to El Dorado and people aren’t leaving at the same rates as before. The graduation rates have also increased from 74.4 percent the year the El Dorado Promise was announced to 87.6 percent in 2009 - the last year for which data is available.

Gala Honors ’11 Arkansas Teacher of the Year

Kathy A. Powers, a fifth- and sixth-grade teacher at Raymond and Phyllis Simon Intermediate School in the Conway School District, was named the 2011 Arkansas Teacher of the Year on Friday at a Governor’s Mansion gala broadcast live on television.
Three Sessions Bridge Distance, Connect Students, Teachers
The Office of Distance Education for the Arkansas School for Mathematics, Sciences and the Arts celebrated National Distance Learning Week last week by holding three collaborative sessions involving instructors and their students.

Pulaski County Special School District Superintendent Readies Cost Cuts
The new superintendent of the Pulaski County Special School District said Monday that he will begin in December making recommendations to the School Board on ways to reduce district costs and to deliver services to students more efficiently.

News from Around the Nation

NEA Asks Education Department for Regulatory Relief from NCLB
The Obama administration has said it wants lawmakers to reauthorize the Elementary and Secondary Education next year, but with a new Congress coming in; it's tough to tell whether or not that will actually happen. Now a number of education organizations, including the American Association of School Administrators and the National School Boards Association, are asking the U.S. Department of Education for regulatory relief from parts of the No Child Left Behind Act (the current version of ESEA) so that schools don't have to wait until Congress renews the law to get some of the changes they're looking for. The nation's largest union, the National Education Association, is also part of the push.

NCATE Panel: Teacher Prep. Needs Major Restructuring
Teacher preparation needs to be organized in such a way that student-teaching and other "clinical" experiences in schools are prioritized, with coursework and other requirements embedded in and supplementing the on-the-job work, according to a report issued this morning by a high-powered panel convened by the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) consisting of teacher-educators, teacher-quality experts, policymakers, and practitioners.

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

Site Seeing
We have created a Fall 2010 OEP Conference Website which includes a presentation highlighting our speakers and links to their PowerPoint Presentations. Also, to see what other topics we have covered in past years, visit the OEP Conference Websites from our 2008 Conference: Adequacy Achieved...Now What; our 2009 Conference: Preparing Highly Qualified Teachers for Arkansas; and our Spring 2010 Conference: Preparing Effective Leaders.

Mark Your Calendar
Nov 17-19: Special Ed Programs Web Conference; Guidance on Reporting
Nov 18-19: Arkansas Reading Association Annual Conference, Peabody Hotel and Statehouse Convention Center, Little Rock AR
Nov 30: Joint House and Senate Education Committee, 1:30 PM - State Capitol Room 171
Dec 1: Joint House and Senate Education Committee, 9:30 AM - State Capitol Room 171
Final Thought

“The city really needs this, the shot in the arm. This is going to help the community, the schools, the two colleges that we have here.” - Elementary art teacher Sandra Capps on the Arkadelphia Promise Scholarship Program.

Thanks for reading! See you next week!

The Office for Education Policy
University of Arkansas
Director: Gary W. Ritter Ph.D.
Research Associates:
Nathan C. Jensen
Caleb P. Rose
James L. Woodworth
Jeffery R. Dean
If you would like to be added or removed from this list, please send an e-mail to oep@uark.edu.