January 26, 2011

From the OEP

Happy mid-week to you! Earlier this month, Education Week released its 15th annual Quality Counts report. Since 1997, Education Week has been releasing yearly report cards for each state and the nation as a whole. These report cards attempt to measure educational progress and success in several areas as well as assign an overall letter grade to each state. Each year, the OEP breaks down the grades given to Arkansas in each measured category. Today we are releasing our first policy brief for the year, Quality Counts 2011 analyzing Arkansas’ performance in six areas: K-12 Achievement, Chances for Success, School Finance, the Teaching Profession, Transitions and Alignment, and Standards, Assessments, and Accountability. Some of the interesting findings include:

• Arkansas’ grades in the 2011 Quality Counts report put the state in 6th place nationally. This is due mostly to high grades for its education policies compared to other states, while it still lags the country in student performance on national assessment.

• Since Quality Counts began its current grading format in 2008, Arkansas has persistently ranked higher in measures of academic achievement than on demographic measures, which are included by Education Week in their Chance for Success measure.

• Arkansas 4th and 8th graders have made exceptional progress in math since 2003 compared to other states, but have not seen gains in reading. However, over the same period the achievement gap between rich and poor has gotten worse in Arkansas even though it has improved nationally.

To read more about the grades Arkansas received in Education Week’s Quality Counts report, click here!!

News from Around the Natural State

UA-Fayetteville Professor Writes Ethics Guidebook for Arkansas Educators

When clear-cut ethical violations occur such as a teacher drinking alcohol on school grounds or a coach having an inappropriate relationship with a student, the results are usually in the newspaper and on local television. However, educators deal with less newsworthy ethical dilemmas every day when trying to decide what is best for students, said John Pijanowski, the University of Arkansas professor who has co-written a book to help educators who often find themselves confronted with decision-making in gray areas.

Deer-Mount Judea School District Suit Dismissal Sought

Arkansas Attorney General Dustin McDaniel has asked a judge to dismiss the lawsuit brought by a rural Northwest Arkansas school district trying to prevent further consolidation. McDaniel’s 46-page response addressed issues raised in the lawsuit filed Dec. 3 in Pulaski County Circuit Court.
by the Deer-Mount Judea School District. Transportation is central to the argument presented by the district, which has to bus children over some of the state’s roughest terrain.

Click here to check out these news stories on the new OEP Blog!!!

News from Around the Nation

Proficiency Eludes U.S. Students on Science NAEP
Most American students are not performing at a level deemed “proficient” in science, results issued for a revamped national assessment show, with 12th graders posting the weakest scores compared with their elementary and middle-level peers. Only one in five high school seniors scored at least proficient on the exam. Meanwhile, 34 percent of 4th graders and 30 percent of 8th graders were deemed proficient or better in science on the 2009 National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), known as “the nation’s report card.”

Click here to check out these news stories on the new OEP Blog!!!

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

Site Seeing
As our New Year’s Resolution, the OEP is launching the OEP Blog! The Blog will feature all of our weekly news stories seen here in the OWL as well as Legislative Updates, and a running commentary (the actual Blog itself) from OEP Staff on news stories, legislation, and other pertinent topics in education. We hope you enjoy it!

Also, if you are interested in the relevant education legislation that is being discussed in the Arkansas State Legislature, you can view the bills filed on the Arkansas Department of Education’s “Bill Tracker” website.

Mark Your Calendar
February 1 – Deadline for nominations of the 2011 History Teacher of the Year
February 9 – Praxis III 8:30 AM – 3:30 PM, Harding University, Liberty Room. Contact Cheri Smith for details: 501-279-4050

Save the Date!
University of Arkansas Department of Education Reform and Arkansas State University Conference:
Showcasing Effective Instructional Practices in Arkansas
Arkansas State University in Jonesboro, AR
February 24, 2011
Cost is FREE!
CLICK HERE TO REGISTER!!!
Final Thought(s)

"The book provides material that can be used to teach ethics in teacher-preparation programs and administrator-certification programs in Arkansas. It's in these gray areas that we can have the richest discussion with a class." – Dr. John Pijanowski on his new book Professional Responsibility for Educators and the Arkansas Code of Ethics

“Every young person listening tonight who is contemplating their career choice, if you want to make a difference in the life of our Nation...if you want to make a difference in the life of a child...become a teacher. Your country needs you.” - President Barack Obama during the State of the Union Address, January 25, 2011.

A Note from the OEP

Don’t forget about our new OEP Blog!! Our blog is on the web at www.officeforedpolicy.com and we hope you will add us to your web-browser’s bookmarks and/or your RSS Feed. Part of our plan is to incorporate the OWL (OEP Web Links) into the OEP Blog; however, this week we are still releasing this OWL in its familiar format so that none of our readers will be caught off guard. But please note: we are simultaneously posting a blog version of this same OWL on the OEP Blog so that you can do a comparison of the new version versus the old. It’s a New Year, and we hope to bring many new things to you through the OEP. Please check out the Blog Links at the end of each news section below to compare the old OWL with the new blog version.

With our new Blog format, you will still receive a weekly email from the OEP which will include pertinent education news from the state, region, and nation…it will just come to you in a slightly different format. We are also including a poll on the OEP Blog asking for your input on the new blog format. We want to know if you embrace this change or would rather keep things as they are. We want to make sure that we are getting the news to you in the most digestible format. The OEP Blog will allow us to further separate out relevant information as it pertains to education. For example, the OWL section of the OEP Blog will still bring you news stories, but we are also including separate areas for Legislative Updates that will impact education in Arkansas, as well as a section (the actual blog itself) that contains our perspective on the news, legislation, and other important topics in the field of education. We will also use this space to report on and discuss newly released OEP Publications.

We are moving to the blog format so that we can provide our readers a simple mechanism for communicating with us through the comment areas featured in each section of the OEP Blog. We would like to hear more from you. We want your perspectives and your input. We think the OEP Blog could serve as a mechanism for generating a larger dialog among educators in our state and with our Office. We hope you enjoy the new OEP Blog!

Thanks for reading! See you next week!

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If you would like to be added or removed from this list, please send an e-mail to oep@uark.edu.