From the OEP

For the past several weeks in our “Mark Your Calendar” section, we have featured a “Save The Date” announcement for the 2011 Summer Leadership Institute sponsored by the University of Central Arkansas being held on June 10, 2011. The theme for this year’s institute is “Closing the Achievement Gap” and features Keynote Speaker Joseph F. Murphy, PhD, who is the Frank W. Mayborn Chair of Education and Associate Dean at Peabody College, Vanderbilt University.

We are also happy to announce that the OEP will be presenting during one of the afternoon breakout sessions on a project titled: **Spotlights on Success: Schools Beating the Odds in Arkansas**. The presentation will highlight our recent study examining gaps on the statewide achievement scores between each of the following categories: high- and low-poverty, Caucasian and minority, urban and rural, large and small. Even if some gaps aren't big, as is likely with large and small schools, these schools are still different enough to justify examining them separately. Additionally, the schools beating the odds in the following three categories will be examined: 1) Low-poverty schools beating the odds; 2) Schools closing the achievement gap: race; and 3) Schools closing the achievement gap: poverty, to round out a full consideration of what counts as "beating the odds". Just because a school isn't poor doesn't mean it can't "beat the odds"; such a school simply has to perform much better than similar schools. [Click here for more information on the presentation.](#)

We feel that these schools should be commended. Each of the above categories represents a different type of school with a unique set of strengths and needs. Examining strategies for success in each of these types of schools should provide better information for all educators. More information on the 2011 Summer Leadership Institute can be found here. You can also [register online for the Institute](#). We hope to see you in June!

News from Around the Natural State

**Poll: State-Trained Teachers Ample**

A survey by the Arkansas Partnership for Teacher Quality found the state produces too many teachers but not enough in certain subjects or in certain locations. The study, funded by the Arkansas Education Association and the Arkansas Association of Colleges for Teacher Education, presented to the House and Senate Education Committees, was designed to get a comprehensive picture of teacher training and retention in Arkansas. It used data from the state Department of Education and the Department of Higher Education of the 14,420 teachers licensed from 2002 to 2008, 9,968 teachers with fewer than four years’ experience and 1,117 first-year teachers.

**Little Rock School Chief Lays Out Priorities**

Morris Holmes, Little Rock’s newly appointed superintendent for the next two school years, said that much of the district’s focus in that time will be on early childhood education, elementary-school reading, stronger middle schools and careful budgeting. Arts education, a push for better
school attendance and the promotion of the many opportunities in the district’s high schools also will be priorities, Holmes said in his first news conference since his surprise appointment by the School Board. All the priorities are part of the district’s existing Target 2015 strategic operating plan, Holmes said.

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

**News from Around the Nation**

**Specialists Weigh Common Social Studies Standards**

Feeling that social studies has been sidelined by a test-driven focus on math and English/language arts, subject-matter specialists from more than a dozen states are meeting with representatives of content-area groups to brainstorm ways to improve academic standards in that subject. The two-day gathering in Charlotte, N.C., is the third convened in the last year and a half as states and social studies groups seek to re-establish the prominent role they feel the disciplines deserve in classrooms. Social studies specialists from 18 states and officials of 15 social studies organizations have been taking part in the talks.

**Outlines Emerging for ESEA**

Four months after President Barack Obama made education a centerpiece of his State of the Union address, lawmakers charged with reauthorizing the Elementary and Secondary Education Act are beginning to sketch out their own visions for aspects of the law’s renewal. The prospects that Congress will meet the president’s goal—a comprehensive, bipartisan reauthorization by the start of the next school year—remain cloudy, however.

**Click here to check out these news stories on the 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**

With the wrap-up of Benchmark and EOC testing, we thought it may be helpful to remind you of our OEP Resources page which contains a number of grade-, school-, and district-level data tables as well as some “lookup” databases which you can use to compare a particular school’s performance to that of the district, the region, or the entire state. As you begin to receive your student test scores from the spring 2011 test administration, these archived databases can serve as a point of comparison for how your grade, school, or district has performed compared to last year. **Click here to visit the OEP Data Resources page.**

**Mark Your Calendar**

June 8: Joint House and Senate Education Committee Meeting, 1:30 PM, Room 171, State Capitol Complex

**Save the Date: June 10, 2011**

2011 Summer Leadership Institute

Sponsored by the University of Central Arkansas
8:30 AM – 3:30 PM, Brewer-Hegeman Conference Center

Conference Theme: Closing the Achievement Gap

Keynote Speaker: Dr. Joseph Murphy, Associate Dean at Peabody College, Vanderbilt University

Click here for more information and to Register for the Leadership Institute

Final Thought(s)

“A human being is not attaining his full heights until he is educated.” – Horace Mann

Thanks for reading! See you next week!
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