From the OEP

This week, our thoughts go out to all those affected by the recent string of storms in Arkansas, Missouri, and Oklahoma. We wish you all a speedy recovery.

In last week’s OWL, we highlighted the upcoming 2011 Summer Leadership Institute sponsored by the University of Central Arkansas being held on Friday, June 10. 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 upcoming Arkansas Education Report featuring case studies of five successful schools in Arkansas beating the odds in the following three categories:

- Schools closing the achievement gap: race
- Schools closing the achievement gap: poverty
- Low-poverty schools beating the odds

We gathered information for this report and following presentation by visiting these five schools and meeting with the principals, teachers, and staff to get their perspective of what makes their school successful. Here is a snippet of the type of information we will feature in the presentation:

One of the schools we visited was Salem Elementary in the Bryant School District. During this visit, we spoke with the school principal, Mr. Mark Scarlett, who told us that some of the secrets to the success at Salem is that they consistently put the students above all else. He also considers his teachers to be the “classroom experts,” and despite frequent Classroom Walk Throughs, he prefers to let the teachers control the classroom curricular choices. Further, according to Mr. Scarlett and several of the teachers we met, another major component to the school’s success is that the staff sees each other as members of a large family who are there to help “the babies” grow. Click here for more information on the presentation.

We will be featuring more stories from Salem Elementary as well as those from four other schools in our Spotlights on Success talk. We hope that some of the strategies being employed at Salem Elementary could lead to increased success in similar schools. We hope you will register online and join us June 10, 2011 at the Summer Leadership Institute!!!!

News from Around the Natural State

District Touts Tuition Pledge: More in First Arkadelphia Promise Class Going to College

A record number of seniors at Arkadelphia High School will attend college next year, according to numbers gathered by the Arkadelphia Promise foundation. The class of 2011 is the first class to receive the benefit of the Arkadelphia Promise scholarship, which pledges to pay for tuition and fees for qualifying seniors. Of the graduating class, 120 have committed to colleges in Arkansas and around the country, compared with 88
students from the 2010 graduating class. The high school surveys graduating students but does not track them through the college-attendance process.

**Judges Release State from Obligation to Pay Desegregation Aid**

U.S. District Judge Brian S. Miller stunned parties in the 28-year-old Pulaski County school desegregation lawsuit by releasing the state from its obligation to pay for desegregation efforts in the three school systems - except for the majority-to-minority inter-district student-transfer program. The judge ordered the end to the bulk of extra state aid to the districts - which totals nearly $70 million a year - in a 110-page, sharply worded order in which he found the North Little Rock School District to be unitary, or in substantial compliance with its desegregation plan, in eight of nine areas. District staffing was the exception.

Little Rock School District attorneys Chris Heller and Clay Fendley issued a response to this ruling telling Judge Miller that the state’s largest school district and its students will be irreparably harmed without a stay of Miller’s order that relieved the state from paying much of the desegregation aid it has been paying for two decades.

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

**News from Around the Nation**

**Joplin Schools Chief: We Will Rebuild**

The Joplin school district will be ready for school to start again on Aug. 17, despite the destruction of four schools and uncertainty about the fate of some staff and students following a devastating tornado, superintendent C.J. Huff declared. Six other buildings were damaged, and the cost estimates are as high as $100 million, he said.

**US House Education Committee Votes to Scrap More Than 40 Education Programs**

The House education committee took a first step toward piecemeal reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act—by voting to slash over 40 programs from the U.S. Department of Education. The measure, which was approved on a party-line vote of 23-16, would get rid of programs that the committee sees as duplicative or not the right role for the federal government. The bill is the first in a series of smaller, more targeted bills, which the House committee says it will consider instead of a broader ESEA reauthorization measure. Click here to read the list of programs that could potentially be cut.

**State Legislatures Notch Major K-12 Policy Changes**

*Over at the OEP Blog, we have been recapping the education legislation passed by the Arkansas General Assembly in the latest session. Here, Education Week takes a snapshot of controversial measures passed by the state legislatures in this recent legislative season.**

This legislative season now finished or wrapping up in many states has brought big changes to education policy, some forged through bipartisan compromise, others only after hyperpartisan battles. Republican leaders who swept into office last fall—when the GOP won a majority of governorships and took control of both legislative chambers in 25 states—wasted no time pushing through ambitious and often controversial education agendas. Their hardest-fought victories include the passage of laws that curb teachers’ collective bargaining rights and tie educators’ tenure, advancement, and pay to their performance, including their ability to improve student test scores.

**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
On June 10th, The University of Central Arkansas College of Education is hosting its annual Leadership Institute. A website has been created to provide prospective attendees with information about the Institute, registration deadlines and costs, as well as descriptions of the presentations (including the OEP Presentation titled ‘Spotlights on Success.” Click here to learn more about the University of Central Arkansas 2011 Leadership Institute.

Mark Your Calendar
June 8: Joint House and Senate Education Committee Meeting, 1:30 PM, Room 171, State Capitol Complex
June 13: State Board of Education Meeting, 9:30 AM, Arch Ford Education Building at the 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, Vanderbilt University, Associate Dean at Peabody College

Breakout Session: Spotlights on Success: Schools Beating the Odds in Arkansas
Speaker: Dr. Gary Ritter, University of Arkansas, Director of the Office for Education Policy

Breakout Session: SREB’s Leadership Training Courses: 13 Critical Success Factors for Effective Principals
Speaker: Kathy O’Neil, Director of the Learning-Centered Leadership Program
Speaker: Kristie Clements, Director Module Development

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

Final Thought(s)
"It's really unbelievable and I can't quite fathom it yet because every day for so long you dread walking into this building and it's all crammed with kids...But I wish that if I had the opportunity, I could walk through the halls again and be surrounded by a mass of people." - Sarah Strickland, graduating senior at Joplin High School in Joplin, MO.
Thanks for reading! See you next week!
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