From the OEP

This week, we are releasing the Per Pupil Spending Lookup Database: 2007-08 to 2009-10, a new OEP database which contains district-level spending over a three academic year period (2007-08 to 2009-10). Users can select up to two school districts and compare per pupil spending amounts and average daily attendance (ADA) of each district. This database is our latest addition to our OEP Data Resources featured on the OEP Website 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. Click here to visit the OEP Data Resources page!!

Earlier this week, over on the OEP Blog, we were happy to see our second highest number of hits from our readers as we continue our in-depth review of the education legislation that resulted from the 88th General Assembly 2011 session. Our latest post, More Legislation on Student and School Safety reviews more bills that address safety in- and out of school such as bullying, parental monitors on school buses, and the prohibition of hazing at initiation into or affiliation with sports programs and other extracurricular activities. Help us beat the former record: Click here to visit the OEP Blog and leave us a comment on what is being covered!!

News from Around the Natural State

School Finalist Decides Not to Pursue Little Rock Superintendent Job

The deputy superintendent in the Memphis City Schools who has been an on-again, off-again finalist for the Little Rock superintendent’s job declined a second invitation to interview with the School Board. The candidate, Irving Hamer, has a long and varied resume that includes a master’s degree and a doctorate from Harvard University as well as experience as a deputy superintendent in the Miami-Dade County, Fla., public schools, a professor at Teachers College at Columbia University in New York and a visiting professor at Florida International University. He is a former officer for divisions of Simon & Schuster book publishers. Hamer, who was one of 17 applicants for the Little Rock job, did not return calls for comment.

Three Arkansans Named Presidential Scholars

Three high school seniors who live in Arkansas have been named 2011 Presidential Scholars. One of the three, an east Arkansas resident, attends private school in Tennessee. The scholars, who are invited to attend an award ceremony and other events in their honor June 18-21 in Washington, D.C., are: Boshan Zhao, Little Rock Central High School; Eric B. Zheng, Pulaski Academy in Little Rock; Neha Kumar of Forrest City, who attends Saint Mary’s Episcopal School in Tennessee. The three Arkansans are among 141 scholars named by U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan. The national scholars include one young man and one young woman from each state, the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico, and from U.S. families living abroad.
News from Around the Nation

Elementary Teachers Critical to Advancing STEM Education, Report Says

A new report from the Center for American Progress argues that an often neglected but vital avenue to improving STEM learning in U.S. schools is a concerted focus on strengthening the selection, preparation, and licensure of elementary school teachers to adequately tackle math and science material. “We cannot wait any longer to get serious about STEM policy,” declares the report from the Washington-based think tank. “Strengthening our elementary school teachers in math and science is the first critical step in the right direction.” The report notes, for example, that prospective teachers can typically get a license to teach at an elementary school without taking a rigorous college-level STEM class, such as calculus, statistics, or chemistry, and without demonstrating a solid grasp of math or science knowledge, or the nature of scientific inquiry.

Gates and Pearson Foundations Team For Common Core Curricula

As states and school districts grapple with how to teach the skills outlined in the new common standards, two foundations announced a partnership aimed at crafting complete, online curricula for those standards in mathematics and English/language arts that span nearly every year of a child’s pre-collegiate education. The announcement by the Pearson Foundation and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation marks yet another entry into the increasingly crowded marketplace of curriculum creation sparked by the common standards. All but six states have adopted those learning guidelines. A press release from the two foundations can be found by clicking here.

Site Seeing

With the release of the Per Pupil Spending Lookup Database 2007-08 to 2009-10, we wish to remind our readers that the OEP Data Resources page 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. Click here to visit the OEP Data Resources page.

Mark Your Calendar

May 4-6: Arkansas Association of Federal Coordinators (AAFC) Conference, Hot Springs Convention Center
May 11: School Law Conferences sponsored by the AAEA and APSRC (two, one-day drive-in conferences) Click here for more info!
May 16: State Board of Education Meeting, 9:00 AM, Arch Ford Building, State Capitol Complex
May 17: Joint House and Senate Education Committee Meeting, TBA

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)

“Education then, beyond all other devices of human origin, is the great equalizer of the conditions of men, the balance-wheel of the social machinery.” – Horace Mann

Thanks for reading! See you next week!
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