JUNE 2, 2011

FROM THE OEP

One week from tomorrow (June 10th) the University of Central Arkansas will hold the 2011 Summer Leadership Institute. 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:

- Racially diverse schools with high achievement for all student groups.
- High poverty schools (rural and urban) fostering high student achievement.
- High achieving schools showing continued achievement growth.

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.

Part of our presentation will involve a panel of teachers and school leaders from these schools who will be responding to questions such as:

- What is happening at your school to push your students to such high levels?
- How would you describe your school’s culture and how did you and your team develop this culture?
- What is one positive feature that your school just couldn’t do without?

We are hoping that these questions will start a discussion and generate ideas that could be useful for schools across the state. If you would like to join us for this discussion, please click here to register for the 2011 Summer Leadership Institute!! We hope to see you in Conway next week!

NEWS FROM AROUND THE NATURAL STATE

STATE: SCHOOLS WON’T BE HARMED

The Little Rock School District will not be harmed if a federal appeals court refuses to temporarily stop a judge’s order to end the state’s obligation to pay it millions of dollars in desegregation funding and to expedite an appeal of that ruling, the Arkansas attorney general’s office said in a court filing. “There is absolutely no need, nor any likelihood, that any Little Rock school will be forced to close, that mass layoffs will occur, or that the plans of students and their parents for next year will be disrupted,” the filing said. “Those things will only happen if [the district] itself chooses such a course of action rather than a more prudent approach.”

Whether or not the school receives any desegregation money, the Little Rock Superintendent assured parents, staff and teachers that the district would work “to land squarely on our feet for the 2011-2012 school year” while a group called the Knight Intervenors, representing the three
Pulaski County school districts that were receiving desegregation payments, urged the judge to stay the ruling that freed the state from its obligation to pay nearly $70 million in desegregation payments.

Arkansas Business & Education Alliance Celebrates 20th Anniversary

The Arkansas Business & Education Alliance, a non-profit organization was established in 1991, with the vision of improving education in Arkansas, will celebrate “Heroes in Education,” with a luncheon on Thursday, June 09, 2011, at the Holiday Inn Presidential, Little Rock, from 11:30 am – 1:00 pm. As a special 20th Anniversary tribute, ABEA founders, Hillary Clinton, Bill Fisher, Don Munro and Archie Schaffer, III, will be named “Heroes in Education.” For additional information regarding the organization and the event, please check out the website at www.arkbea.com.

High School Tries Out New Cell-Phone Policy

There’s a new cell-phone plan at Bentonville High School - unlimited texting, calling and data for students, but only between classes or at lunch. An experimental policy that started May 23 allowed for the change, Principal Kim Garrett said. Students had to turn off their cell phones and keep them out of sight after the first bell rang under an old plan. Students seen using cell phones would receive detention, and the phones would be confiscated until a parent picked them up. “I think we live in a new time,” Garrett said. “Can we take a step forward? Can students also take a step forward so it is better for all of us?” Garrett estimates nearly 3,400 of the 3,600 students at the high school have cell phones.

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

News from Around the Nation

Common-Standards States Building Online Resource Site for Teachers

Five states that have adopted the Common Core State Standards are beginning work on an initiative to create an open-source "platform" that would help teachers access, download, and create resources tied to the common standards, officials from the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) said. CCSSO and the states of New York, Illinois, Massachusetts, North Carolina, and Colorado will take the lead in helping design and pilot the platform, with financing promised by the Seattle-based Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and the Carnegie Corporation of New York. Four other states—Delaware, Kentucky, Georgia, and Louisiana—are planning to take part in the near future, with the goal of implementing it in all nine states by 2013.

Some States Wary of New Race to Top Cash

For U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan, handing out hundreds of millions in federal money isn’t as easy as it once was. The announcement that he’ll divvy up $700 million in new Race to the Top funding between the nine states that narrowly missed out last year and a $500 million early-childhood education competition has drawn a mixed—and, in at least one case, almost hostile—response. Part of the reluctance to go after this money also likely stems from the much smaller carrot that’s now being offered in exchange for federal dollars. The grants are a sliver of what they were in the first two rounds, when awards started at $75 million for the smallest winners, such as Hawaii, Rhode Island, and the District of Columbia, and ranged up to $700 million for the largest, Florida and New York. For this third round, California, the largest state, stands to gain only up to $50 million. Smaller states such as Colorado could get closer to $10 million.

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 Leadership Institute.

Mark Your Calendar
June 8: Joint House and Senate Education Committee Meeting, 1:30 PM, Room 171, State Capitol Complex, Little Rock
June 9: Arkansas Business & Education Alliance “Heroes in Education” Event; 11:30 AM, Holiday Inn Presidential, Little Rock
June 13: State Board of Education Meeting, 9:30 AM, Arch Ford Education Building at the State Capitol Complex, Little Rock
June 23-24: Sixth Annual Literacy Symposium, 8:30 AM, Fayetteville Town Center, Fayetteville AR. Register Online Here.

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)
“I think our community is so attached to our cell phones we have gotten into this mindset of having our cell phones handy so we can communicate. Unfortunately, that is not a good learning environment. We have to teach our students on how to be fully present when they need to be fully present.” – Bentonville High School Principal Kim Garret on cell phone use in the school

Thanks for reading! See you next week!

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