From the OEP

Last week, after the OEP released our Annual OEP Awards, it was brought to our attention by one of our constituents that some school scores were missing from our original analyses. We spent the past few days re-examining and re-analyzing the ADE Data and are happy to release the accurate and updated OEP Awards. We apologize for any confusion last week’s report may have caused. As they say in the movies: “Take Two!”

As you may recall, we started the OEP Awards two years ago to highlight successful districts and schools in the state. As in previous years, the OEP Awards recognizes top schools on the Benchmark and End of Course Exams for the 2010-11 academic year. Schools are grouped by each region, by each school level, and by schools with a high population of low income students. In the coming weeks, we will release additional OEP Awards that specifically highlight high performing elementary schools, middle schools, high schools, as well as schools serving low-income students that are “beating the odds” by performing exceptionally well on state assessments. We plan to release a new installment of the OEP Awards every other week. Enjoy the first installment of the Annual OEP Awards!

News from Around the Natural State

Education Commissioner: Give Us Control

Significant changes must be made to a state policy to allow the Arkansas Board of Education to intervene or even take over some of the state’s poorest performing school districts, according to Education Commissioner Tom Kimbrell. Even a dramatic raising of the bar would leave some schools out of reach, he said. Kimbrell made the remarks at a state board work session set to discuss revising standards for academic distress, a classification that allows the state to sanction or take control of districts that fail to meet an academic standard set by the board. Under the current standard, no districts perform poorly enough to receive the label - even some that could benefit from state intervention, Kimbrell said.

Fountain Lake School District $35,000 Short on Millage Collections

The Fountain Lake School District is struggling with school property-tax funding on multiple fronts. The district that straddles Saline and Garland counties is about $35,000 short on its millage collections this year because of an error in rolling back its millage rate. The school district, joined by the Eureka Springs School District, is suing the Arkansas Department of Education in a case filed over an error in determining how much millage collection should be sent back to those districts.

Conway Students Earn Top AP Scores

Conway High School senior Preston West is $600 richer thanks to good scores on college-level tests. West was among 218 Conway High School students who scored 3, 4 or 5 on a 5-point system, with 5 being the best, on Advanced Placement tests last spring. This is high enough to qualify for a $100 reward on each exam. The program, commonly called AAIMS, allows students to get college-level credit in English, math and science courses. The grant-funded, nonprofit organization and Gov. Mike Beebe recognized Conway High on Thursday as Conway made the the top
scores among 31 Arkansas high schools in 28 school districts that participated in the Arkansas Advanced Initiative for Math and Science program during the past school year. The program, based at the University of Arkansas at Little Rock, is handing out $100 gift cards totaling $258,000 to students in those 31 schools.

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

**News from Around the Nation**

**Common-Standards Implementation Slow Going, Study Finds**

 Barely half the school districts in states that have adopted the common standards are taking essential steps to implement them, and most cite inadequate state guidance as a major problem in moving forward, a new study released by the Center on Education Policy finds (not to be confused with the Office for Education Policy). Districts are also deeply divided about how rigorous the new standards are and how much they demand new curricula and instructional strategies, according to the survey. The portrait that emerges from the study suggests that too many districts are woefully unprepared for the challenge of the new standards, some experts say.

**US House Gives Bipartisan Stamp of Approval to Charter School Bill**

The U.S. House of Representatives took what has become a rare step today: It passed an education bill with broad bipartisan support. The vote, on charter school legislation, was an overwhelming vote of 365 to 54. The measure is one of a number of small, targeted bills the House will consider in reauthorizing the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, a.k.a. the No Child Left Behind Act. It would allow states to tap federal funds to replicate charter school models with a proven track record of success. The bill would encourage replication and expansion of models with evidence of effectiveness. The bill would also encourage charter schools and traditional public schools to learn from each other, and it would help charters gain access to high-quality facilities; which may remain a challenge for charters. For more, check out this fact sheet from the House education committee.

**Click here to check out these news stories and more 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**

For those of you accustomed to using the Arkansas Department of Education’s Website (www.arkansased.org), they are currently gathering user information in a new Web Survey of the ADE Website. Click on this link to take the survey.

**Mark Your Calendar**

Thursday September 15: **UA Dept. of Ed Reform Screening and Panel Discussion of Waiting for Superman**, Union Theater, University of Arkansas 6:00 PM The panel features Little Rock Attorney Chris Heller, and Marquette University Professor Howard Fuller.
Final Thought(s)

“One size does not fit all and one remedy will not fit all schools. We need to make a rule and say, ‘If you’re going to land on this list, you need to get busy doing some things’.” – Commissioner of Education Tom Kimbrell on changing the policy for identifying school districts on the state Academic Distress list.

Thanks for reading! See you next week!

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