From the OEP

This week, we are particularly happy to present our next installment of the 2010 OEP Awards. Our first installment brought you the overall top performing schools in Arkansas on the Benchmark examinations. Like last year, each installment of the OEP Awards will focus on smaller subsets of schools with similar characteristics (i.e., elementary schools, grade-level performance) so that we can compare apples to apples. Our focus this week is on schools that are “Beating the Odds.” We define this as schools with at least 2/3 (66%) or more of their students receiving Free or Reduced Lunches (FRL). Poverty is typically considered a barrier to academic success; therefore, we are especially pleased to highlight the great performance of these schools. We congratulate all the schools on our Beating the Odds lists!

News from Around the Natural State

State Educators Study Texas School Models
Some Arkansas educators are taking notes from at least two Texas versions of the New Tech High School model. State and area education officials have toured the Manor New Technology High School near Austin, Texas, and representatives of at least one Sebastian County school district visited the Math, Engineering, Technology and Science Academy in Carrollton, Texas. Both schools are part of the national New Tech Network, based in California. In Arkansas, Lincoln Consolidated School District officials started the transition to a New Tech High School this year with two courses, one for sophomores and one for freshmen, and Cross County School District, based in Cherry Valley in northeast Arkansas, received a district-conversion charter last year for its high school. Cross County sought the charter to implement the New Tech High School model.

‘Distressed’ PCCSD Hires Chief Financial Officer
William J. “Bill” Goff, a certified public accountant and veteran school finance manager, was hired Friday as the chief financial officer in the Pulaski County Special School District, replacing Anita Farver, who announced last week that she was resigning effective Sept. 30. Goff, 59, of Benton has been the assistant commissioner for fiscal and administrative services in the Arkansas Department of Education since July 2008. In June, that agency - under the leadership of Commissioner Tom Kimbrell - took over the financially struggling Pulaski County Special district. Goff’s last day of work for the state is Oct. 7 and he will start work Oct. 10 for the district, where he will receive an annual salary of $130,000, up from his current state salary of $110,000.

Rogers Heritage High School Band Featured on NBC Nightly News
The Rogers Heritage high school band provided a sound Marty Barrett never thought she would hear again: her grandson playing the trumpet she bought him. In the final stages of cancer and under hospice care, Marty cannot go to hear her grandson Anthony play. With time running out, she wanted to hear Anthony and the band play one more time…so the 120-member band came to her.
News from Around the Nation

Obama Administration Sets Rules for NCLB Waivers
The Obama administration said it will waive the cornerstone requirements of the No Child Left Behind Act, including the 2014 deadline that all students be proficient in math and language arts, and will give states the freedom to set their own student-achievement goals, and design their own interventions for failing schools. In exchange for this flexibility, the administration will require states to adopt college- and career-ready standards, focus on 15 percent of their most-troubled schools, and create guidelines for teacher evaluations based in part on student performance. States that are most ready to apply for the waivers can file by mid-November, with the first round of waivers to be issued early next year.

Study: Effectiveness Drops in Departing Teachers' Final Year
Teachers who leave the profession after their third or fourth year tend to be less effective in that final year of teaching compared to professionals who stayed on, according to a provocative new study appearing in the August/September issue of Educational Researcher. Authors Gary T. Henry, Kevin C. Bastian, and C. Kevin Fortner asked if teacher effectiveness over their first few years on the job is due to improvements in their skills over this time period, or because the weaker teachers choose to leave, thus making the overall teaching pool look better. To answer that question, the researchers used a value-added methodology to examine matched student-teacher data from North Carolina from the 2004-05 school year through 2008-09 in grades 3-12. They used statewide standardized tests or end-of-course tests, separated out by the year in which the teachers left the state's public schools. They found that teachers become significantly more effective in their second year on the job, but for those who stay five years, effectiveness seems to level off after the third year in the classroom. Teachers who left after the first year were also less effective on average than those that stayed.

Lectures Are Homework in Schools Following Khan Academy Lead
The “flip model” of instruction has received national media attention lately, thanks to its promotion by Khan Academy, the high-profile nonprofit online-tutoring library created by Salman A. Khan. Khan is a Massachusetts Institute of Technology graduate who was looking for a way to help his young relatives with their homework. The two-part model is not unique to Khan Academy Teachers introduce lectures online for students to access at home and then use class time for group practice and projects normally relegated to homework—. In this model, advocates of the approach say it allows students to work through meat-and-potatoes background on their own, giving teachers more time to go in depth through discussions, projects and other activities in class.

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**

Monday October 10: State Board of Education Meeting, Arch Ford Building Auditorium, State Capitol Complex, 9:00 AM  
Tuesday October 11: Joint House and Senate Education Committee Meeting, State Capitol Complex Room 171, Little Rock, AR 10:00 AM  
Tuesday October 11: Education-House, Vocational-Technical Institutions Subcommittee Meeting. State Capitol Complex Room 171, Little Rock, AR 10:00 AM  
Wednesday October 26: APSRC Fall Conference, Double Tree Hotel and Robinson Center, Little Rock. [Click Here for More Information.]

**Final Thought(s)**

“So at a time when we’re trying to cram more into less, [the students are] already coming in prepared and ready to go, and that saved us a lot [of time].” – Dr. Susan Kramer on the Khan Academy “flip model” of instruction.

**Thanks for reading! See you next week!**

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