From the OEP

This week, we are releasing our newest installment of the OEP Awards highlighting High Achieving Middle Schools. So far, we have presented the overall top performing schools in Arkansas on the Benchmark and EOC examinations, schools that are “Beating the Odds” in which students in schools with at least 2/3 of the student enrollment receive a free or reduce-priced lunch, are reaching high levels of achievement, and high achieving elementary schools across the state.

This week, our report focuses on the top performing middle schools by taking a deeper look at those schools that serving students in grades 6-8. We provide a breakdown by each grade, by each region, and by each Benchmark subtest. Congratulations to all the OEP award-winning elementary schools!! Click here to read the latest OEP Awards section on High Achieving Middle Schools. -or- click here if you want to read the entire OEP Awards report.

News from Around the Natural State

2 School Districts Get ‘Fiscal Distress’ Letters

The Arkansas Department of Education has recommended that the Cutter Morning Star School District in Garland County and the Hermitage School District in Bradley County go in the “fiscal distress” program, which has led one school board to vote to reassign its superintendent. The districts would join 10 others - Armorer, Dermott, Earle, Forrest City, Helena-West Helena, North Little Rock, Pulaski County Special, Strong-Huttig, West Side, and Yellville-Summit - classified in some level of fiscal distress. Entering the state Education Department’s fiscal distress program means the agency closely monitors district spending. It also means the state education commissioner, at any time, could take over a district, removing a school board and superintendent from power.

College Promise Programs Drawing Interest

Communities all over Arkansas are interested in making a promise to help young people attend college. More than 75 people from school districts, chambers of commerce organizations and residents from across the state, are responding to an offer of help from the nonprofit Arkansas Community Foundation to learn about starting Promise college scholarship programs. The foundation held a conference to help interested communities understand what goes into starting a traditional Promise scholarship, including estimating the cost and partnering with industry. The term Promise scholarship encompasses a variety of scholarship programs, but the general premise is that if students who live in a particular community attend classes regularly and graduate with a set grade point average, then money will be available to help finance college. Most of the communities interested in learning about Promise scholarship programs have not reached a point where they are ready to announce or implement a
program this year, but many have been talking about it since Murphy Oil Corp. announced the state’s first Promise scholarship for El Dorado School District graduates in 2007.

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

**News from Around the Nation**

**Ohio Voters Reject Law Limiting Teachers’ Collective Bargaining**

Ohio voters have rejected a law that would have stripped teachers of many of their collective bargaining rights, according to results, an outcome that could reverberate well beyond the state's borders. The Ohio referendum, known as Issue 2, was perhaps the most closely watched ballot fight of the 2011 election. The target was a law pushed through the state's GOP-controlled legislature this year with strong Republican support. The measure had drawn a flood of attention from the media and political activists over the past few months, partly because it was regarded as an important, symbolic fight over collective bargaining and the influence of teachers' unions and other organized labor groups.

**Teacher Layoffs: Where Did They Happen?**

The recession has brought with it a huge fear of unprecedented high teacher layoffs — and while the president’s job bill offers hope, where have the cuts happened and how tough were they, asks The National Council on Teacher Quality (NCTQ). The White House has supplied sobering evidence of a decline in education jobs and that as many as 280,000 “educator jobs” are at risk this school year. But not discounting this evidence, the NCTQ claims to be struck by the lack of reports on layoffs in newspapers this fall. A new survey by the National Council on Teacher Quality has found that in 74 districts around 9,545 teachers (that works out as about 2.5 percent of the total teachers) were actually laid off (or were probationary teachers who were non-renewed for budget reasons).

**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**

Last June, the OEP presented at the UCA Summer Learning Institute on our Arkansas Education Report titled “Spotlights on Success: Traits and Strategies of Five High-Growth Schools in Arkansas.” AETN was there to film our presentation and have graciously offered to host the videos on their website. The videos are linked below:

- **Session 1, Video 1: Introduction and Overview**
- **Session 1, Video 2: Panel Discussion with School Leaders**
- **Session 2, Video 3: Characteristics of Successful Schools**
- **Session 2, Video 4: Situating the Case Study, Results in the Broader Research**
Mark Your Calendar

November 9-10: Arkansas Rural Education Association Fall Conference, Clarion Resort, Hot Springs.
Monday November 14: House and Senate Education Committee Meeting, Durand Center, NorthArk College 1:30 PM
Tuesday November 15: House and Senate Education Committee Meeting, Durand Center, NorthArk College 9:00 AM
Thursday November 17th: Common Core: Learning from the Experts with David Coleman, Sponsored by the APSRC, Clinton Presidential Center – Great Hall, 9:30 AM – 3:30 PM
Tuesday November 29: House and Senate Education Committee Meeting, State Capitol Complex, Room 171, 10:00 AM

Final Thought(s)

"I think the Number 1 goal for us, the Number 1 thing that interests us about starting a Promise scholarship, is the effect it will have on our children,” she said. “We heard over and over again about the change in attitude that happened along with these programs. It’s giving students the kind of scaffolding they need to get somewhere.” - Mountain Home Education Foundation Member Sarah Bergman on the benefit of Promise Scholarships.

Thanks for reading! See you next week!

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