Happy Friday!

*Education Week* released the 2010 edition of Quality Counts – and **Arkansas placed tenth** in the nation with a B-minus. We will soon post a policy brief summarizing and analyzing these results. (To view our 2009 policy brief, click [here](#).) In the mean time, have a great weekend!

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**News from Around the Natural State**

**State School Fund Looks Short for ‘11**
The state’s Public School Fund must cut programs, and may eliminate others, in fiscal 2011 because of revenue shortfalls and dwindling reserves, Education Commissioner Tom Kimbrell said Wednesday.

**Education Officials Say 58 Arkansas High Schools Inflated Students’ Grades**
The Arkansas Department of Education (ADE) says 58 high schools in the state inflated students’ grades during the 2008-09 school year. The ADE news release can be found [here](#).

**School Lunch Program Not Reaching All Needy Students**
As a panel chaired by U.S. Sen. Blanche Lincoln, D-Ark., takes up reauthorization of the Child Nutrition Act this year, one of its goals is to help the federal school lunch program reach students now falling through the cracks — something child nutrition workers say is especially important in tough economic times.

**Governor Names New Board of Education Member**
Gov. Mike Beebe today named Vicki Saviers of Little Rock to the state Board of Education. Saviers, founder of the Public Education Foundation of Little Rock and a member of the Arkansas Education Accountability Coalition, replaces Randy Lawson of Bentonville.

**Wickes, Van-Cove Ponder Merger**
Two southern Polk County school districts are pondering voluntary consolidation, which officials say would benefit students in the Wickes and
Van-Cove districts.

News from Around the Nation

**Quality Counts: Grades and Highlights Reports Issued for All 50 States and D.C.**
The nation and many states face a continuing struggle to deliver a high-quality education to all students, according to Education Week's annual education report card. The nation received a C when graded across the six distinct areas of policy and performance tracked by Quality Counts. Maryland topped the nation with a B-plus overall, followed closely by Massachusetts and New York, both of which earned a B. The majority of states received grades of C or lower.

**As School Exit Tests Prove Tough, States Ease Standards**
A law adopting statewide high school exams for graduation took effect in Pennsylvania on Saturday, with the goal of ensuring that students leaving high school are prepared for college and the workplace. But critics say the requirement has been so watered down that it is unlikely to have major impact.

**Southern Schools Mark Two Majorities**
The South has become the first region in the country where more than half of public school students are poor and more than half are members of minorities, according to a new report.

**Obama Unveils Projects to Bolster STEM Teaching**
President Barack Obama announced more than $250 million in private investments to help attract and prepare new teachers for science, technology, engineering, and mathematics, collectively known as the "STEM" field, and to help improve instruction in those areas by practicing teachers.

Site Seeing

This week we would like to highlight an interesting article we read in *The Atlantic*: **What Makes a Great Teacher?** "For years, the secrets to great teaching have seemed more like alchemy than science, a mix of motivational mumbo jumbo and misty-eyed tales of inspiration and dedication. But for more than a decade, one organization has been tracking hundreds of thousands of kids, and looking at why some teachers can move them three grade levels ahead in a year and others can’t. Now, as the Obama administration offers states more than $4 billion to identify and cultivate effective teachers, Teach for America is ready to release its data."

Mark Your Calendar
January 22: Lecture Series – Thomas Dee, Associate Professor of Economics and Director of Public Policy Program, Swarthmore College – Graduate Education Building 343, 12:00pm

January 19: State Board of Education Meeting at the Arch Ford Building Auditorium, 9am

January 29: Lecture Series – Lori L. Taylor, Assistant Professor in the Bush School of Government and Public Service, Texas A&M – Graduate Education Building 343, 12:00pm

February 19: Literacy and Arts Conference – “Enriching Literacy with Arts, Enriching Arts with Literacy” at the Jones Center for Families in Springdale. Contact David Jolliffe (djollif@uark.edu) for more information. Registration information is attached.

February 26: 2nd Annual ESL Symposium at the Clarion Inn, Fayetteville

March 3 and 4: 3rd Annual ASD Symposium at the Fayetteville Continuing Education Center. March 3 from 7:00 – 8:30pm is a free community meeting on “Meeting the Needs of Persons with ASD.” Contact Barbara Gartin (bgartin@uark.edu) or Tom Smith (tecsmith@uark.edu) for more information.

April 16: OEP Conference – “Preparing Effective School Leaders for Arkansas” at the DoubleTree in Little Rock

More information is available on the OEP Calendar.

Final Thought

“We have created an accountability system that people understand now. We have an assessment program that is of high standards, and we have a set of standards in Arkansas…that we believe are pretty high.” – Arkansas Commissioner Tom Kimbrell (comment about the Quality Counts 2010 report)

Thanks for reading! See you next week!

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If you would like to be added or removed from this list, please send an e-mail to oep@uark.edu.