

# OEP WEB LINKS



January 8, 2009

## From the OEP

The new year brings a new legislative session, convening on Monday, January 12. Lawmakers will be considering changes to the school choice law, the issue of “highstakes” End of Course exams, and will likely revisit the recurring issues of school finance and school facilities finance. We recently published policy briefs on several of these issues, which you can find [here](#). Also be looking for a newsletter which will cover topics that will be of importance to our legislators, such as teacher certification and pay, charter schools, and the choice law.

## News from Around the Natural State

### Quality Counts, Arkansas Department of Education Release

Quality Counts, the annual report by Washington-based Education Week that ranks the 50 states based on education policies and student achievement, has released their 2009 results. OEP is writing a policy brief to review these results in more depth; be looking for that soon.

### State, 4 Districts Added to School-Choice Lawsuit

Parents seeking to strike down the state’s School Choice Act, which has prevented their children from transferring schools, are now suing the state Board of Education and four more school districts. Of course, school choice is one of the key controversial issues our policymakers will consider this session.

### EStem Leaders: Pay Plan is Dandy

Leaders of the fledgling eStem Public Charter Schools in downtown Little Rock are pointing to their employee bonus-pay plan - worth up to \$10,000 to each teacher - as a possible model for the state and nation.

### Siloam Springs: Schools Take Look at Merit Pay Plan

A committee of Siloam Springs educators wants to use an experimental performance-pay plan to increase student achievement and attract qualified teachers to the district.

## News from Around the Nation

### **50-State Report Card**

Quality Counts 2009 is the 13<sup>th</sup> edition of *Education Week's* series of annual report cards tracking state education policies and outcomes. For more information, including a state report card map which provides quick overview of each state score, click [here](#).

### **Duncan to Confront Host of Challenges at Ed. Department**

As the man tapped to be the next U.S. secretary of education, Arne Duncan faces a long list of difficult and complex tasks, according to *Education Week*.

## **Site Seeing**

As part of his economic-stimulus plan, President-elect Barack Obama has pledged to wire more schools to provide high-speed internet access. Ethan Clement, a student in rural Arkansas, has some advice: [Don't forget to wire the buses](#).

## **Mark Your Calendar**

On Monday, January 12<sup>th</sup> there will be a State Board of Education meeting in Little Rock. For more information about meetings and events, visit the [OEP calendar](#).

## **Final Thoughts**

*Ranking in the top 10 nationally is a tribute to the efforts this state has made to improve our public education system. Yet, as we continue to say, we must not get too comfortable with this news. As a state, we can't afford to quit striving to become better.* –Arkansas Education Commissioner Ken James

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

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