

OEP WEB LINKS



August 26, 2009

From the OEP

Last week, we were excited to begin our “flurry of publications” with two policy briefs; the first discussing [Highly Qualified Teachers in Arkansas](#), and the second outlining the [Race to the Top](#) program initiated by the USDE. This policy brief also includes our “report card” rating how well situated Arkansas is to be awarded a piece of the federal funding. In case you missed these reports, the links above are still active. We hope you will have a look!

This week we post the first section of our [Arkansas Education Report](#) highlighting **Outstanding Educational Performance** (or OEP) in schools across the state of Arkansas. Over the next three months, we will continue to update this *Arkansas Education Report* by recognizing schools that performed exceptionally well on the April 2009 administration of the Arkansas Benchmark exam, with a focus on a different subset of schools every other week. We begin this week by featuring the overall top performing schools across the state. On September 16, we will highlight those schools that are “Beating the Odds”...that is, schools that are performing quite well even while serving high percentages of low-income students. A schedule of our biweekly report postings is included below. We look forward to highlighting these schools and giving credit to the successful students and educators across the state!

- **Top “Overall” Schools in Arkansas** ([posted today](#), August 26, 2009)
- **Top Elementary and Middle Schools Serving High Poverty Areas** (September 16, 2009)
- **Top Performing Elementary Schools by Region** (September 30, 2009)
- **Top Performing Middle Schools by Region** (October 14, 2009)
- **Top Performing High Schools across Arkansas** (October 28, 2009)
- **Most Improved Schools from 2008 to 2009** (November 11, 2009)

News from Around the Natural State

Arkansans beat U.S. SAT Scores: Fewer Than 10% In State Take the Test:

Members of the Arkansas high school Class of 2009 who took the SAT college entrance exam scored above the national average, but the state scores dropped in reading and writing when compared with 2007 and 2008 results. However, scores in math did improve for the class of 2009. Fewer than 10 percent of all Arkansas high school seniors typically take the SAT, preferring instead the ACT college entrance exam as the ACT exam has been more widely accepted by Arkansas colleges and universities. Indeed, last week, we highlighted a story on [ACT Results](#) reporting that the average composite score for Arkansas in 2009 was a 20.6 (which is unchanged from 2008) and the national average was a 21.1. According to the ACT, 18% of Arkansas students were college ready in all four subject areas, while the national average was 23%.

The wise OWL believes that these stories are worth highlighting because we are reminded to approach with caution results from tests which are not representative of all students in the state; the OWL is careful not to draw conclusions from assessments administered only to voluntary samples of students. So, it is probably not all that important that the small subset of our students who take the SAT do well, or that the larger subset of our students who take the ACT do less well.

Rather, the wise OWL suggests that we focus on data from standardized assessments that include representative samples of Arkansas students (such as the NAEP) or assessments given to all eligible Arkansas students (such as the Arkansas Benchmark or the SAT-10).

College Prep Classes Fuller:

The number of Arkansas high school students taking rigorous Advanced Placement courses and earning scores of “qualified” or better continued to climb in 2008-09, fueled by supporting state laws. Arkansas students taking Advanced Placement exams in 2009 totaled 18,437, an 8.2 percent increase from the 17,037 test takers in 2008, according to statistics prepared by the College Board, a New York-based nonprofit agency that administers the Advanced Placement program.

Blytheville Selected as New Site for 2010 KIPP Delta School:

KIPP announces that Blytheville has been selected as the new site for the first KIPP Delta school to open outside of Helena, AR in 2010. Blytheville was selected through a competitive application process that considered factors such as local support, parental demand, and availability of facilities and funding.

News from Around the Nation

NEA at Odds With Obama Team on Stimulus:

After emphasizing its agreement with President Barack Obama’s education reform agenda for half of his first year in office, the National Education Association has finally taken the offensive, formally announcing its opposition to core elements of the Obama administration’s proposed guidelines for the \$4.35 billion Race to the Top program.

College Board Reports Stagnant SAT Scores:

Scores on the SAT declined or stagnated in the last year, according to results released today by the College Board. The New York City-based nonprofit organization’s annual, [national report](#) shows that the mean mathematics score for the class of 2009 was 515, the same as for the class of 2008. In reading, it was 501, one point lower than for students in the class of 2008. The mean writing score fell by one point as well, to 493. Each section is scored from 200 to 800 points.

Site Seeing

[The National Center on Performance Incentives](#) at Vanderbilt University strives to address one of the most contested questions in public education: Do financial incentives for teachers, administrators, and schools affect the quality of teaching and learning? NCPI’s work involves a series of rigorous research initiatives, including randomized field trials and evaluations of existing pay-for-performance programs. The NCPI is

engaged in these research and development activities to inform both education policy and practice, and to improve teaching and learning within the nation's public schools.

Mark Your Calendar

September 1, 1:00 PM: Public hearing for pending rule: Rules Governing Eligibility and Financial Incentives for National Board for Professional Teaching Services

September 9, 10:00 AM Joint Education Committee Meeting, Room 171, State Capital Building

Final Thought

Early Wednesday morning, America lost a public servant with a tireless record of supporting secondary and postsecondary education in our country. Because a major “campaign” of the gentleman from Massachusetts was education, the OEP found this “Final Thought” by the late senator particularly fitting for this edition of the OWL:

“For me, a few hours ago, this campaign came to an end. For all those whose cares have been our concern, the work goes on, the cause endures, the hope still lives, and the dream shall never die.” – Senator Edward Kennedy (D-MA) Addressing the Democratic National Convention, 1980

Thanks for reading! See you next week!

The Office for Education Policy

University of Arkansas

Director: Gary W. Ritter

Research Associates:

Nathan Jensen

Caleb Rose

Bentley Kirkland

James Shuls

Becca Braun

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