



NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

July 3, 2007

FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT:

Julie Johnson Thompson
Office: 683-4786 Cell: (501) 580-6508
Email: julie.thompson@arkansas.gov

ADE TO HOST CONFERENCE FOCUSED ON STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT GAP

Educators from four states will focus on issues surrounding the student achievement gap among sub-populations of students in a conference sponsored by the Mid-Continent Comprehensive Center (MC3) and hosted by the Arkansas Department of Education in Little Rock on Thursday and Friday, July 5 and 6.

"We are pleased to be in Arkansas for what promises to be an informative, productive meeting focusing on the best practices and evidence-based strategies for narrowing achievement gaps," said Dr. Belinda Biscoe, MC3 director and assistant vice president of the College of Continuing Education at the University of Oklahoma. "We hope these sessions will provide a springboard for further discussion and, more importantly, for action regarding equity and excellence in education."

Dr. Tim Waters, chief executive officer of Mid-continent Research for Education and Learning (McREL) will deliver the first keynote speech at 8:30 a.m. July 6. He will address the research and policy issues surrounding the role of school- and district-level leadership in narrowing the achievement gap, which is often identified as the gap between achievement scores between one subgroup and another. In his 23 years in the K-12 system, Dr. Waters established a reputation as an innovator and leader of education improvement and reform. He has written numerous articles on the topic of education leadership and co-authored *School Leadership That Works*, published in 2005.

The second keynote speech, set for 1 p.m., will be delivered by Dr. Stephanie G. Robinson, principal partner emeritus with Education Trust and the lead researcher on "Gaining Traction, Gaining Ground:

How Some High Schools Accelerate Learning for Struggling Students.” Robinson recently retired from a 35-year career as a public school teacher, administrator, college faculty member and education advocate. She joined the Education Trust in 1993, where she led the campaign to generate support among policy makers and education advocates for the Commission on Chapter One’s report, “Making Schools Work for Children in Poverty.”

“Addressing the achievement gap is a challenge across the country and one that we take very seriously here in Arkansas,” said Dr. Ken James, Arkansas’ Commissioner of Education. “We have been fortunate in the past few years to show real and meaningful gains for all groups of students on our statewide tests, and now, as we delve deeper into ways of increasing the performance for those who are not achieving as quickly, we appreciate opportunities to share and learn best practices for closing gaps at events such as these. That’s why we are so happy to be hosting this important conversation.”

The event, which begins with an opening session the evening of July 5 at the Clinton Library, takes place at The Little Rock Peabody Hotel. Sessions continue through the day Friday, and a complete agenda is attached for reporters wishing to cover all or part of the conference.

--ADE--

The Arkansas Department of Education strives to ensure that all children in the state have access to a quality education by providing educators, administrators and staff with leadership, resources and training.