

# ADE DAILY NEWS CLIPS

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## Ark. high school dropout rate dips (Baxter Bulletin)

LITTLE ROCK — Arkansas' high school dropout rate fell to 3.6 percent for the 2009-10 school year, an improvement from a year earlier but higher than the national average, according to a U.S. Education Department study released Tuesday.

The average Arkansas freshman graduation rate, which estimates the percentage of high school students who get their diplomas in four years, was 75 percent for the year, compared to 78 percent nationally, according to the study.

But the study noted that many students who don't graduate in four years take another year or more and complete their coursework.

The study defines a dropout as a student who was enrolled at any time during the previous school year who is not enrolled at the beginning of the current school year and has not successfully completed school.

Nationally, Arkansas falls in the middle of the extremes. Arizona had the highest dropout rate at 7.8 percent, while New Hampshire had the lowest at 1.2 percent.

The federal study also shows that Arkansas, and the nation, still have a racial disparity in graduation rates. The Arkansas dropout rate for African-American students was 5.0 percent, while for white students it was 3.1 percent. Nationally, the rate for African-American students was 5.5 percent and 2.3 percent for white students.

The study was released as Arkansas legislators take on several education-related issues. The House and Senate also are addressing recent court rulings on the ability of students to transfer from one school district to another and on funding in districts that collect more than the state minimum required to fund local districts.

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## UPDATE: Andi Davis: No longer attorney on Malvern school case (Arkansas Times Blog)

AVOIDING DRAMA: Andi Davis

When the 8th Circuit U.S. Court of Appeals heard arguments last week on the important case over the Arkansas school transfer law, news accounts noted that parents seeking the ability to transfer from Malvern to the whiter Magnet Cove School District were represented primarily by Jess Askew of the Williams and Anderson law firm in Little Rock.

Not present in St. Louis was Andi Davis of Hot Springs, the original attorney in the lawsuit, which led to invalidation of the school transfer statute by federal Judge Robert Dawson on account of the law's prohibition of transfers that have segregative effects. Davis' absence was noted in news accounts because Attorney General Dustin McDaniel, whose office is defending the law, had recently confessed an affair with Davis in 2011. Her presence on the opposite side of the case gave rise to questions, though he's insisted no conflict existed and they never discussed the case.

Where was Davis?

She told me over the weekend she no longer represents the Malvern parents in the case. In an e-mail, she said:

I sat down with Mr. Askew as well as my clients and we decided it would be best that I withdraw and that I not attend any of the oral arguments. It is difficult because I love this case and I have fought for 4 years to get where we are now. But, the case and clients are more important than my desire to be a part of it so I think it's better that the issue not become lost in my drama.

The federal court record of the case does not currently reflect a formal withdrawal motion, however, though her attorney also told me he understood her plans were to withdraw.

She had referred me to her attorney, Jeff Rosenzweig, on another matter, the suspension of her law license Nov. 17 by the Arkansas Supreme Court over continuing legal education requirements, a suspension that was stayed Dec. 3 while she contested the matter. He responded on that:

The CLE people had failed to update her address with the address she had with the Supreme Court. Thus they were sending her warning letters to her ex husband's address. In violation of a court order and of basic courtesy, he did not give the letters to her. She had no idea that she was in CLE trouble until he gave her the suspension letter. She believed she had attended enough CLE and had no reason to think there was any deficiency. Apparently a couple of hours weren't recorded. When the CLE people were shown and realized that they had sent the letters to an incorrect address (and an incorrect name by the way—ANDREA DAVID). they immediately rescinded the suspension. She has rectified the deficiency problem.

Davis' former husband, Fred Day, has been a source of friction before. A series of questions Day's lawyer posed in Garland County Circuit Court in a dispute over child visitation forced the issue of her relationship with McDaniel into the open. This weekend, provocative photos of Davis were distributed through an e-mail account bearing his name.

UPDATE: I've received another e-mail purporting to be from Dr. Day. This one, I'll note, is the same e-mail address given to me for him some weeks ago. He did not respond then to my note. Today, he writes:

These emails are not coming from me I assure you nor am I trying to create anymore drama for myself, the kids or Andi. I'm actually sorry I ever filed what I did. If you can send the pictures that were attached to email I would appreciate it. I want to find out who the conspirator really is and expose them as a fraud.

Fred

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### **History Conference To Look At Southwest Frontier Women (Southwest Times Record)**

The fifth annual Fort Smith History Conference will examine the significance of women in the region, dating back to settlement of the frontier and receiving the right to vote.

“Women of the Southwest Frontier: From Settlement to Suffrage” is the subject of the annual conference, slated from 8:30 a.m. to 6:30 p.m. Saturday at the University of Arkansas at Fort Smith’s Smith-Pendergraft Campus Center, 801 N. 49th St.

Presenters from across the region will lead workshops and share information during the interpretive and scholarly program highlighting the contribution of women in a variety of aspects, including their ways of life,

slavery, war, legislation, funeral customs, dress, employment, childbirth and child rearing, according to Martha Siler, who co-chairs the event with Leita Spears.

Siler said past conferences have highlighted other minority groups, but this is the first time women's place in history will be discussed.

"We felt that it was time to let the women have their day," Siler said. "And be talked about and celebrated and how important their role was in settling Fort Smith and this area."

Siler said the event began five years ago when the Historytellers Interpretive Services teamed with Billy Higgins, a history professor at UAFS.

"We send out a call for papers around the state and nation," Siler said. "And scholars respond."

Sponsored by the Historytellers Interpretive Services and the UAFS history department and College of the Humanities and Social Sciences, the conference will kick off at 8:30 a.m. with breakfast and registration, followed by a welcome at 9 a.m. by keynote speaker, Peggy Lloyd, who will offer information on a woman's life on the early frontier by highlighting the life of ex-slave Dolly Pennington, a free woman of color and landowner in southern Arkansas.

"We've got some really good speakers," added Siler, a member of Historytellers, noting that the panel of presenters includes local as well as out-of-town and out-of-state history researchers.

At 10 a.m., Russell Lawson will present "Senora Berlandier: Life on the Northern Mexican Frontier," which examines the life of Beatriz Concepcion Villasenor, widow of Jean Louis Berlandier, who explored the northern Mexico and Gulf Coast Texas boundaries in the late 1820s and early 1830s.

"There are few records about Beatriz Concepción Villaseñor, and she is only known because of her famous husband, but through the act of historical detection and deduction, I hope to draw out, as it were, the essentials of her life from the historical records, to discover what was life like for women on the northern Mexican frontier both before and after the Mexican War with the United States," Lawson, a history professor at Bacone College in Muskogee, said in a description of his presentation.

The life of infamous female bandit Belle Starr will be explored by Daniel Maher, assistant professor of sociology and anthropology at UAFS and ABD in anthropology at UA, in "Myra Maybelle Shirley's Transition to Belle Starr," slated for 10:35 a.m. Maher will discuss how Starr's life became a symbolic archetype of "gender roles gone awry" in the late 19th century, and how her notorious legacy is used to promote tourism.

At 11:15 a.m., Randy Smith will talk about the Women's Funerary Statues in historic Fairview Cemetery in Van Buren, which commemorate the girls and women buried there.

During the session at 11:50 a.m., just before lunch, Sarah Griffith, assistant professor of English at UAFS, will present "Arkansas Soiled Doves: Socioeconomics and Prostitution in the Early 1800s."

After lunch, Kimberly Robinson, associate professor at UAFS teaching 18th-century British and American literature, rhetoric and composition, will lead the afternoon sessions with a discussion of "Mrs. Hiram W. Jones," a Quaker woman who accompanied her husband into Indian Territory in 1873, at 1:25 p.m., followed by a presentation at 2 p.m. by Kisa Clark, a graduate student and teaching assistant of the department of communication at the University of Arkansas, on "Kate Richards O'Hare: Socialist, Activist and Educator." Known

for her extensive propagandist work for the Socialist party, O'Hare spent time at Commonwealth College, a Southern rural education institution in Mena.

The rest of the afternoon will be filled with presentations by Janine Chitty, assistant professor of English at UAFS, and Melissa Whiting, full professor and former department head in the Colleges of Languages and Communication at UAFS, at 2:40 p.m. about Julia Burnelle "Bernie" Smade Babcock, a female writer from Arkansas; a 3:15 p.m. session "Taming the Frontier — A Woman's Perspective," by Sheila Ballard; and Susan Simkowski, assistant professor of media communication at UAFS, with a 3:45 p.m. presentation on "Women of the Military Frontier."

Siler said a 4 p.m. session will feature Josh Williams, curator of Historic Washington State Park, leading a session on 19th Century Dance.

"Throughout history, community dance has been not only an art form but a way to socialize and make new friends," the conference schedule states. "Come alone or with a partner and you will leave with new friends and new knowledge of dances such as the Virginia Reel, The Grand March and Patty Cake Polka."

Registration fee is \$30 for adults and \$20 for senior citizens age 60 and over; high school and university/college students are admitted free with valid student ID, according to Siler.

"We've always wanted to keep it free for students," Siler said, adding that the price of the conference includes a continental breakfast, lunch, dinner and snacks.

Educators attending can receive up to six hours of professional development credits, Siler added.

For information or to register, visit [www.fortsmithhistoryconference.webs.com](http://www.fortsmithhistoryconference.webs.com) or email Siler at [marthasiler@gmail.com](mailto:marthasiler@gmail.com).

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### **Arkansas Legislature: Gun Rights On Agendas This Week (Southwest Times Record)**

LITTLE ROCK — After a long holiday weekend, legislators return to the Capitol today to get down to the business of the 89th General Assembly, with early tussles possible this week over gun rights.

The Legislature convened Jan. 14 and lawmakers heard Gov. Mike Beebe's state-of-the-state address the following day. They spent the rest of the week filing bills, in organizational meetings and receiving information reports from state agencies before adjourning Thursday for the long King holiday weekend.

"For all practical purposes, things start Tuesday," House Speaker Davy Carter, R-Cabot, said at the end of the week. "Real committee meetings, with the public there and testifying, I think it's time to start the real work."

On Wednesday, gun rights could draw attention.

The House Committee on State Agencies and Governmental Affairs is expected to consider House Resolution 1003 urging the preservation of the Second Amendment, a response by freshman Rep. Richard Womack, R-Arkadelphia, to new gun restrictions proposed by President Barack Obama last week in the wake of the Newtown, Conn., school massacre.

Womack said he filed the nonbinding resolution after receiving numerous phone calls from constituents concerned about Obama's proposals, which included limiting the number of rounds in a clip and stricter background checks.

"My constituents feel that the federal government is not in touch with their wishes and that the Second Amendment is being intruded upon, so we just wanted to shore up our delegation's understanding of the people of the state," Womack said.

He said lawmakers are sensitive to the need to protect people from gun violence.

"My colleagues are looking at every available avenue to address the problems and really nothing is off the table at this point," he said, declining to elaborate.

Also Wednesday, the Senate Judiciary Committee is expected to take up Senate Bill 71, known as the Church Protection Act of 2013.

The proposal by Sen. Bryan King, R-Green Forest, who also opposes the president's proposals, would let church officials decide whether they want to allow people with concealed handgun permits to carry weapons in the places of worship.

King filed the same measure in 2011 as a House member. It passed the House but died in the Senate Judiciary Committee.

King said many constituents urged him to refile the measure and the president's gun control plan has made people more concerned.

"It has brought more interest out," he said. "You know a church, it's just like those schools, it's a soft target."

King said his bill would not mandate anything.

"It just lets each church decide what policy they want to have," he said. "They can allow anybody in the church to conceal, they can only designate certain people to carry or they cannot allow anybody to carry."

Also this week, SB 65, which would remove race as a factor in deciding whether students can transfer between districts, could be before the Senate Education Committee, said the sponsor, Sen. Johnny Key, R-Mountain Home.

Key, chairman of the committee, said last week he was waiting on a fiscal impact report before running the bill. The committee meets Wednesday.

The bill was filed the same day last week that the 8th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals in St. Louis heard oral arguments in appeals of a federal judge's ruling last year that struck down Arkansas' school choice law.

U.S. District Judge Robert T. Dawson said in June that a raced-based provision in the 1989 Arkansas Public School Choice Act violates the 14th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, which guarantees equal protection under the law.

Key said his bill "just takes the racial component that has been deemed unconstitutional" out of the law, making it "open choice."

Rep. Andy Mayberry, R-East End, had originally planned to run HB 1037, known as the Pain-capable Unborn Child Protection Act, at Thursday's House Committee on Public Health, Welfare and Labor but said he will wait another week.

Mayberry said he was having a difficult time scheduling some of the witnesses, adding that one witness will be traveling from another state.

The measure would ban abortions in the state after the 20th week of pregnancy because some studies have determined that is the time when a fetus begins feeling pain, supporters of the bill have said.

Mayberry filed a similar bill in 2011 but that measure failed to get out of the House public health committee.

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### **Vilonia selected as 'Diamond School' (Log Cabin Democrat-Conway)**

"Diamonds are a School's Best Friend" according to the writing on the T-shirts being worn this week by teachers at Vilonia Middle School. The T-shirts are in recognition of the school being selected as an Arkansas Diamond School to Watch for 2013.

"We are a school with positive thinking and hardworking teachers and a plan to continue to get better every day," said principal Cathy Riggins, explaining the status. The Vilonia Middle School, she said, is honored to be one of the 10 schools in Arkansas that has been selected in 2013 and honored especially to be among "a part of a select cadre of schools," around the nation receiving the honor.

The honor, she said, is part of a program began by the National Forum to Accelerate Middle Grades Reform, founded in 1997 and comprised of an alliance of more than 81 national associations, foundations, researchers and educators. The National Forum identifies high-performing middle schools and highlights their achievements so other schools might benefit from their example.

She said school officials applied two years ago, but they did not satisfy all of the criteria.

"I felt like we qualified then," she said. "We were already doing a lot of what it takes. We raised the bar, and applied again. This time, we were recognized."

In meeting the students' needs at the school, she said, teachers sometimes do "a lot of out of the box thinking." "We are not always traditional," she added. "Our goal is to meet the needs of all of our kids." Achieving the status is a reflective process allowing teachers and staff to closely examine the school's instruction and cultural practices as well as the expectations for the students, she said.

"It also lets me examine my leadership," she said. As well as meeting student needs, she said, an important aspect of her job, as she sees it, is to promote growth with her teachers. She also credited other school administrators, the Vilonia Board of Education and parents for supporting the school and helping them to meet their objectives.

A celebration is planned for 10 a.m., Feb. 13, in the Vilonia High School gymnasium with local and state dignitaries. Also, Riggins and members of her staff will be traveling to Washington D.C., during the summer, to the national award ceremony.

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