

# ADE DAILY NEWS CLIPS

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## **Educators Target School Safety At Fort Smith Seminar (Southwest Times Record, Fort Smith)**

Dozens of educators and law enforcement personnel from across the state brushed up Wednesday on crisis planning in schools.

A free seminar held inside the Fort Smith Convention Center as snow draped the city was hosted by the Sebastian County Sheriff's Office.

The eight-hour day was capped with an "active shooter response" discussion.

"As we look at the cases, Columbine is the incident that happened that changed a lot of this for us," said Chester Jones, a school resource officer and member of the Mountain Home Police Department.

Jones said that at the time of that 1999 school shooting, protocol called for law enforcement to set up a perimeter around the school while waiting for a specialized SWAT team.

"That's exactly what they did," Jones said. "Ultimately by doing that, they allowed that much time for those boys to go in and have run in the school. That's why it's changed now for us."

Thirteen people were killed at the Colorado high school.

"Those guys had how many minutes to just shoot, kill, whatever they wanted?" asked Tom Canta, also a resource officer in Mountain Home. "In the meantime, there was an army assembled outside Columbine. Because of communication problems, and because of the old tactical issues of assemble, secure and wait for the squad, nobody went in until the damage was done. So now we've changed."

New tactics call for more proactive measures, Canta said.

"Basically, we're not going to sit out there and wait on SWAT," he said. "We're going to go in with a minimal amount of men or ladies as possible, and deal with the suspects. We don't want to have kids in a building like in Columbine with no resistance, and all the time in the world to pick out their victims."

"That's what we're trying to eliminate with our training."

The Fort Smith School District employs a supervisor of safety and security, Eric Huber, and pays half the salaries of two Fort Smith Police Department patrol officers.

"It's really helpful to cover the different aspects of things that are going on in the schools," Huber said. "We get to learn what different places throughout the United States are doing."

Fort Smith has had an evolving crisis plan in place for decades, according to administrators.

Wednesday's seminar was held in conjunction with the Criminal Justice Institute, Safe Schools Initiative and Western District of Arkansas Anti-Terrorism Advisory Council.

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### **Achieving the dream in DeQueen (Pine Bluff Commercial, Commentary by Steve Brawner)**

Just looking at the demographics, DeQueen Elementary is supposed to fail.

Sixty-five percent of its students are Hispanic, and more than half of the student body speaks Spanish at home. Eighty percent of the students come from families whose incomes qualify them for free and reduced lunch prices. The district's millage rate is the second lowest in the state. It spends less than the state average per pupil.

And yet 96 percent of DeQueen's third-graders scored proficient or advanced in math in the state's benchmark exams in 2012, and 92 percent scored that well in literacy. Schoolwide, the same percentages of Hispanic and Caucasian kids, 93.59, scored at least proficient in literacy, and math scores for both groups were an inch apart at the 94 percent level. (The school has only a small number of African-American students.)

The numbers jump off the page, which is why The Education Trust, a national education group, honored DeQueen Elementary last year with its Dispelling the Myth Award. Only two other schools, one from Boston and one from Compton, Calif., also received the award, which is given to schools that demonstrate that demographics don't have to be destiny.

How does DeQueen Elementary succeed? Principal Terriann Phillips points to the school's use of the Direct Instruction teaching method for literacy, where students are grouped according to ability and then practice concepts until they get them right. It's very scripted, but it works, at least in DeQueen.

Students also are tested for English language fluency at the beginning of the year and then, if necessary, placed in intensive instructional classes with a low student-teacher ratio so those who are behind can learn the language.

But people are more important than policies, and some of the most important things DeQueen Elementary is doing can be done anywhere. According to Phillips, literacy facilitator Gayla Morphew and math facilitator Maribeth Revels, the entire staff is committed to making sure no child gets left behind – a commitment reinforced by what Morphew called "positive peer pressure." Staff turnover is rare, teachers are close, and they have fun together.

"I've gone to some facilitator-type trainings," Morphew said, "and the biggest majority of it was discussion on how to get people to work together or how to be a part of the culture and all this kind of stuff. And I would just look at Maribeth and I'd say, 'Why are we here? This isn't what I need to hear. We've already got that. Do some schools not have that?'"

Meanwhile, the students and their parents are committed to education. Parent-teacher meetings are well-attended, and they are presented in both English and Spanish.

Many of the Latino families are intact, and in many cases, the parents work opposite shifts. But they came to America for greater opportunities for their children, and so they support the school and back the teachers.

"Very rarely will you have to call that parent more than once if a child's misbehaving," Phillips said. "It's taken care of."

After one year had been disrupted by a series of snow days, two teachers played an April Fools' prank on their students by telling them that they would be in the classroom all day on Saturday and Sunday after church if the students voluntarily wanted more instruction. The next day, every student had said they were coming. One student's parents said going to class was more important than a scheduled basketball tournament.

Phillips knows that some of her students aren't here legally, and a higher percentage of their parents aren't. A few years ago, a school mother died crossing the border from Mexico, leaving the dad behind in DeQueen to take care of all the parental responsibilities. As an educator who loves her students, she has to deal with that.

But it's against the law for her to inquire about immigration status and, besides, that's not her responsibility. The entire system is broken. Educators like Terriann Phillips shouldn't be asked to fix it.

Their part is to teach kids, and in DeQueen, they're succeeding.

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### **Conway students earn awards at Mid-South Model UN Conference (Log Cabin Democrat, Conway)**

Conway High School students won several awards during the 2013 Mid-South Model United Nations Conference at Rhodes College in Memphis last week, according to a news release.

The "learning" conference promotes "education and awareness of international policy and values," according to the Rhodes College website. Rhodes' Model UN Coordinator Jon-Cody Sokoll said in email the college wants to help "afford students the opportunity to understand what coming to a consensus on a public policy issue is like and inspire those same students to participate in the debates of their generation."

Students earning awards were: Selene Spatz, senior, best overall delegate in Special Political Committee; Zoe Allison, junior, best overall delegate in the Security Council Committee; Caroline Osborn, senior, second place for best overall delegate in the Economic and Social Council; and Sigan Chen, senior, best overall position paper in the Social and Humanitarian Committee. Delegates helping to sponsor winning position papers were Laura Craig, Keegan Fletcher, both seniors, and Tristan Thompson, sophomore.

Sophomore Bailey Craig attended the conference as an observer.

Conway High School took seven students who competed. All of those students helped sponsor winning position papers, according to an email from the high school.

The high school is among the top delegations at the conference this year, according to the news release. The students were among about 350 high schoolers from 15 schools across the mid-south to participate.

Conway students competed against stiff competition from the best Model UN schools in the Memphis area and the Mid-South region. Conway High School had more winners than any of the other Arkansas schools at the event, said William Richardson, advanced placement history teacher in email.

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## **Local educator selected as member of national teaching association (log Cabin Democrat, Conway)**

Michelle Brand Buchanan, of Conway, was recently selected to join the National Science Teacher's Association Science Matters Advisory Board, according to a news release.

The association promotes excellence and innovation in science teaching and learning.

As a member of the Science Matters Advisory Board, Buchanan will provide advice and input to the NSTA Board of Directors and staff responsible for Science Matters programs and endeavors. The goal of Science Matters is to emphasize the importance of why strong science and mathematics skills are essential for students' success to parents and teachers of elementary school students. Science Matters, formerly Building a Presence for Science, is NSTA's initiative to bring content, news and information that supports quality science education to parents and teachers nationwide.

Buchanan is a licensed secondary Arkansas science educator, a Science Early Adolescence National Board Certified Teacher and has won many national awards for her teaching expertise and curriculum writing skills. Her awards include the 2011-2012 PBS Innovative Teacher, 2008-2009 Toyota International Teacher Program Galapagos Islands participant and the 2006-2007 U.S. Department of Education's Star Teacher award for Louisiana. In 2005, Buchanan served as an education liaison in Antarctica with the International Antarctic Drilling Program, ANDRILL. She was also selected by TED-Ed in a national search to write science animated lessons for online publication.

Buchanan is the assistant director of UALR Teach, an innovative teacher preparation program that is a replication of the UTeach program from the University of Texas in Austin. She lives in Conway with her husband, coach Buck Buchanan of Hendrix College.

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## **Report: Opportunity for AP classes uneven in USA (USA Today)**

More students than ever are taking Advanced Placement courses in high school – about one in five earn at least 3 out of 5 possible points on an AP test before graduating.

In 2002, 471,404 students took an AP exam of any sort. By last year, it was 954,070.

A new report by the College Board, a non-profit group that creates the tests, finds that opportunities to do advanced work are uneven across the USA. More than 48% of high school students in Maryland took an AP test in high school, for instance, but fewer than 15% in Mississippi did.

The new findings come a day after a Department of Education panel released its own report on educational opportunities in the USA. The Equity and Excellence Commission said, "While some young Americans — most of them white and affluent — are getting a truly world-class education, those who attend schools in high poverty neighborhoods are getting an education that more closely approximates schools in developing nations."

The new AP results are likely to fuel that debate, with findings that suggest student opportunities for advanced work vary strikingly by race. White students, for instance, make up about 59% of the student population and 62% of those who pass an AP test. African-American students, who are nearly 15% of the student population,

constitute fewer than 5% of those who pass an AP test. A score of 3 or higher is considered passing on the test's 5-point scale.

The College Board found that, among African-American and Hispanic students whose PSAT scores suggest they'd succeed in AP classes, about one in three end up taking an AP math course. Nationwide, about 300,000 members of the high school class of 2012 showed the potential to do well in AP but didn't take a course.

"We've made strides, but we must continue to work to ensure equity at the heights of excellence," said College Board President David Coleman. The organization's greatest challenge, he said Wednesday, is to figure out how to get underserved students access to AP coursework.

Christina Theokas, research director for the Education Trust, an advocacy group for low-income and minority students, said the findings show access is a big problem for minority students, particularly African Americans and American Indians. "We're expanding the program, but within schools, we're not opening up access and more participation for those kids," she said.

Theokas suggested that schools need to do more to change their academic cultures to encourage more kids to take challenging coursework such as AP. "I think there's still a lot of work to be done on the part of schools to truly open up the program to more kids."

A few states, such as Maryland, Florida, Massachusetts and Arkansas, have aggressively opened up access to AP. In Arkansas, the percentage of students taking AP tests has more than quadrupled since 2002. In other states, growth has been much slower: 19 states saw only single-digit gains.

As more students take AP tests, overall failure rates tend to rise, from about 35% in 2002 to nearly 40% in 2012, according to the College Board. But scores have actually stabilized in the past two years, said Trevor Packer, a senior vice president.

Since the sheer number of students taking AP tests these days dwarfs that of a decade earlier, the percentage of overall students passing at least one test is rising, from nearly 12% in 2002 to nearly 20% last year.

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### **Arkansas lawmaker says he may change spending-cap bill (Arkansas Democrat-Gazette)**

LITTLE ROCK — An Arkansas lawmaker who is proposing a cap on the growth of state government says he's considering changing the formula that would be used to determine that limit.

House Republican Leader Rep. Bruce Westerman of Hot Springs said Thursday that he may amend the proposal by tying the annual expenditure limit to the average growth of personal income in the state. The current legislation calls for limiting state spending to the three-year average increase in the state's gross domestic product or 3 percent, whichever is less.

He said he hadn't decided whether to make the change but said it may appease some lawmakers' concerns.

Gov. Mike Beebe said Thursday that the possible change wouldn't affect his opposition to the bill, which he says will "wreak havoc" on the state's budget.

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## **Meeting to focus on potential closure of Greenville school (Pine Bluff Commercial)**

The administration of the Pine Bluff School District will host a community meeting at 6 p.m. Feb. 26 at Greenville Elementary School to discuss the possibility of closing the school before the start of the 2013-2014 school year.

The Pine Bluff School District Board of Directors approved a request from district superintendent Linda Watson at its January meeting that she be allowed to work with her administration to prepare a report that includes information the board will need to make an informed decision on which district schools will be closed to address the continuing loss of students from the district.

The Feb. 26 meeting is part of this information-gathering effort on the part of the district as it seeks public input on the issue.

“The Pine Bluff School District has lost at least 100 students a year for the past nine or 10 years,” Watson said in January. “We cannot continue to survive financially operating all of the schools we have now. The district had between 6,000 and 7,000 students several years ago and now we are down to around 4,500 in K-12. We will prepare a detailed plan that includes financial and enrollment information to allow the board to decide on a school closing plan effective with the 2013-2014 school year.”

Watson stressed in January that no decisions regarding school closings have been made yet.

“At its last meeting the board authorized my administration to study closing schools and towards that end we have met with principals and staff,” Watson said at the regular monthly meeting of the school board Tuesday night. “The next step will be to have a community meeting to discuss the reason why this is necessary. Over the next couple of weeks we will continue to visit with staff and hopefully we will have all of the information we need by the March board meeting or the April meeting at the latest.”