

### *Educational News: It Really Is All About the Money*

When thinking about how to structure this summary, I decided to research papers location of home-like connections. Bartlesville, Oklahoma is where our house is, Arkansas is where my father and son are located, the United States is my nationality, and São Paulo, Brazil is where I currently teach and live during the school year. One of the benefits for doing so is that not only is there a structure for the piece but I also have first-hand knowledge of the back story of the locations themselves which helps in unearthing the underlying connections between the various articles

Bartlesville, Oklahoma is the home of Philips Petroleum Company and is the little town ,Frank Phillips built. “Uncle Frank” made sure, in his decades as the head of the company, that the town acquired all the urbanity and civility of a much bigger town. This sense of aspiration also applied to its school system which has become one of the best in the state. Upon Philips merger with Conoco Oil, in 2002, the town became one of the central hubs of the oil conglomerate. The 66 Federal Credit Union services the banking needs of the company and people in the area. Keeping this in mind, the first article, The Renewal of the Bruin Debit Card Agreement, concerns a fund-raising relationship between the credit union and the school system. The school board has approved the renewal of the Bruin debit card program, named after the mascot of the Bartlesville Senior High School, in which 1,000 dollars annually, and a part of the interchange income generated when someone uses the debit card, are donated to the school district. At the school board meeting, a check the second quarter interchange income was presented for \$2,577.74, which represented its second quarter interchange income generated through the program. While modest by large school funding, this particular program is a good example of how local businesses can support their school systems without undue fiscal strain on themselves while also generating school pride in the local community thus resulting in a win/win all the way around. (The Barlesville Examiner)

Mike Masterson, in his opinion piece in the Northwest Arkansas Democrat titled Stay Within Reason, was having a critical look at the proposed campaign to raise \$115.8 million dollars for a new high school in Fayetteville, Arkansas. As an item of note— Fayetteville, Rogers, Springdale, and Bentonville are the key cities that line the upper end of Interstate 540 and make up one of the fastest growing sections of the whole country due to the economic predominance of the Wal-Mart home office and the hundreds of required offices of the companies’ suppliers. The growth of the area has been exponential and extravagant. While Masterson agrees that a new high school is needed, the fact that enrollment has declined since 2004 and other cities in the area have built new high for far less (“ Take a gander at Springdale’s stunning \$40 million Har-Ber High School, a.k.a. the Taj Mahal.” weigh against the passage of the bond. Add to the fact that it would add an 11 percent property tax while in the midst of a major economic depression doesn’t help matters as does the lack of clear oversight on how the money would be spent were it to be generated. “There are bound to be thousands of folks just like me who believe that a new high school is needed, but the point is to build one within the constraints of reality and reason.” (Masterson)

A secondary piece from the larger state Arkansas Democrat Gazette, UA Enrollment Tops 18,000 For the First Time, looks closely at the enrollment status of the major universities in the state. By far, the University of Arkansas is the flagship of the university fleet. Enrollment is up, nearly reaching the 20,000-student milestone, which is a 3.4 percent increase from last year. Two other universities also showed a substantial increase with the U of A at Fort Smith showing an 8.2 percent increase and the Northwest Arkansas Community College in Bentonville showing an 11 percent increase. Several factors have lead to the increase in enrollment in the three schools, with many of them being tied to the downturn in the economy. There is an increase in enrollment in the two year programs as individuals retool to either get a new job or to make themselves more marketable should they lose their jobs, the schools offer competitive tuition rates, there is an increased retention rates of current students, and the schools offer locations close to student’s homes of residence. Another factor has been the number of veterans making use of the new G.I. bill for furthering their education. Suzanne McCray, vice provost for enrollment and dean of admissions summed it up best when she said, in regards to a substantially increased graduate enrollment amongst an immense undergraduate one, “the figure “probably is telling...if you can’t earn, learn,’ is a truism.” (Park)

While some state universities and land grant colleges are seeing an upswing, some of the Ivy League school that depend on endowments from moneyed individuals, corporations and trusts to be invested well have not fared so well. In the Reuters report, Harvard, Yale Endowment Suffer Big Losses, posted by MSN, states that Harvard and Yale endowments for the year are down by nearly 30 percent due to the effects of the economic depression on the hedge funds, equity funds and timber futures the universities invested in, rather than stocks and bonds that other college endowments use, to supplement their endowment funds. Because of a the negative cash flow in this year's budget, both schools have reduced staff, delayed some proposed projects, holding money back in reserve, and are investing in private equity funds rather than the more volatile ones of the past. Each school is looking at an extended time of monetary instability and is making investment projections based on this assumption. (Reuters)

Here in Sao Paulo, the local news in education has not been concerned with monetary matters but with the new state testing which is supposed to address the mismatch between what is being taught in schools and the requirements of the job market here in Brazil. In the weekly news magazine, *Veja*—similar to our Newsweek or Time, there was an opinion piece entitled Good Work is done in School. Here the viewpoints of various stakeholders—parents, university professors and reformers are represented. “Our educational model is very targeted, and language skills and mathematics, for example, are very different form the values included in life.” says Carlos Alberto Ramos, a professor at the University of Brasilia. While the parents feel that the elementary education addresses the needs of literacy and numeracy, it is when children reach the high school level that things fall apart. Because of a high stress on the entrance exam to university, *the vestibular*, the majority of high schools teach only to the test and do so by rote memorization. Interestingly, making the educational system produce strong individuals to enter the labor force is a directive mandated by Brazilian law at this level and this is where the disconnect happens. Students who exit the schools are expected to be able to communicate well, solve problems, speak in public, and be adept at teamwork. Instead, they are skilled at detailed regurgitation of facts to the test. (Dias)

Upon rereading the various articles, what became clear was seeing how economics served as the unifying link among them all. In the United States, the effects of the recession were evident. It is important to note, however, that both Bartlesville and Arkansas have suffered less than other areas of the country because of outside revenue generated by oil and Wal-Mart, both of which have kept afloat during the downturn. As such, what concerned the authors was more of the application and allocation of funding rather than generation the monies themselves. Brazil, too, falls into this particular mindset. Because the country's economy is fairly insular, the massive shift started in Wall Street, had less of a current impact than other countries. However, being able to compete later in the market is much on the minds of many Brazilians as an emerging member of the BRIC (Brazil, Russia, India, and China) block of economic powerhouses as it has been in the United States prior to the current economic woes. In short, the theme of the articles is that to educate your population, you have to have the funds to do so, and as the markets ebb and flow, so do the educational resources and how they are used.

#### Citations:

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