

NAFEPA 35th Annual Conference – Different Times Next Year

The road leading to the NAFEPA 35th Annual Conference themed ‘The Road to Reauthorization’ was a bumpy one. Last fall, we learned that we did not have an event planner and this role was taken on by the NAFEPA Executive Committee. We also learned that our conference date, March 1-4, 2009 was a month earlier than usual and for some of our members too close to the State Title I Directors’ Conference for them to attend both conferences. Finally, as school districts struggled with budget cuts, professional development was limited and our conference registration was less than 150 in early February.

The federal stimulus package that was signed into law on February 17, 2009 in my opinion changed the content and relevance of our conference. Suddenly, we weren’t just talking about new NCLB federal regulations from the Bush administration and when NCLB would be reauthorized. We were also having conversations about what Dr. Zollie Stevenson, Jr., Director, Student Achievement and School Accountability, U.S. Department of Education, in his presentation termed “The largest Investment in Education in Our Nation’s History”. We further considered what we were going to be able to do with it, when we were going to get it, how we were going to coordinate it with other resources, and more importantly, how we were going to use it effectively and be accountable to our publics. These points were made by several other presenters including Mary Kusler, Assistant Director of American Association of School Administrators, Rich Rasa, Office of Inspector General, U.S. Department of Education, Willard R. Daggett, President, International Center for Leadership in Education, Jack Jennings, President, Center on Education Policy, and Leigh M. Manasevit, Partner, Brustein & Manasevit. In particular, Dr. Daggett stressed what he saw as the opportunity to reform education making use of relevant content and methods with applicable technology.

And, I forgot to mention, we had approximately 300 participants at the conference despite a ten-inch snowstorm that cancelled many flights and local schools.

For the NAFEPA 36th Annual Conference, I believe we will have different times. We found that the NAFEPA Executive Committee can put on an excellent conference without an event planner and will probably continue to do so. I believe there will not be any down time in federal education policy and grant work before next year’s conference and our school districts will require us to stay involved almost 24/7 and attend professional development. Issues on the table that we should know more about next year are new federal regulations interpretation and implementation, NCLB reauthorization, and federal stimulus interpretation, implementation and accountability. Next year’s conference is March 28-31, 2010 and should not conflict with other conferences.

For more information, visit the NAFEPA website www.nafepa.org and if you are a member, the conference Powerpoint presentations may be downloaded. There are also links to other education information websites to keep you informed on breaking developments and new federal education opportunities.

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