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The AmeriCorps Now!

“not later, for Adams 14.”



Will a New President Mean Changes in Education ?

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Upcoming Events

Training Day	Jan. 16
MLK Peace Marshal Training & Cleanup	Jan. 17
MLK Parade Downtown	Jan. 19
Winter X-Games in Aspen	Jan. 23-26

“Everybody can be great because everybody can serve.”

-Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

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Pictured above: CARENET alumni Jenny McCargish and Matt Bitner wishing for warmer weather at the 2008 MLK Parade

As the last days of the Bush administration begin to wind down many Americans are already looking to analyze what have been the triumphs and failures of the last eight years and what will go down in history as the “legacy” of George W. Bush. Regardless of your political leanings it has most certainly not been a presidency devoid of controversy. The federal education reforms put into place under the Bush presidency are no exception. The No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB), passed on January 8, 2002, is the most sweeping educational (at least at a national level) reform since the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) of 1965. The act, its implementation, and its consequences will be indelibly linked to the legacy of the Bush presidency. Moreover, as we look to the incoming administration and the “change” that has been so promised, many of us involved in education are wondering what policy changes are in store for us and, more importantly, how will these changes affect our roles as

educators and our students learning?

NCLB has been, for lack of a better term, revolutionary to American Education. Whereas in numerous other countries, such as Germany, Japan, Great Britain and Australia, education is highly standardized and nationally regulated, the United States government has historically opposed attempts to nationally standardize aspects of education and has largely deferred education reforms to local and state governments. Also, while the ESEA of 1965 (passed under President Johnson) provided aid to schools with large populations of low-income students and the federal government developed assessment tools for following students’ progress, it did not tie funding to achievement in the way that the NCLB does.

“Accountability” for teachers, administrators, and students is the most prominent hallmark of the act as it is focused on increasing achievement by not allowing any teacher or student to fall through the cracks of the



system or be “left behind”. For these reasons NCLB is seen as such a landmark policy and will be remembered as a cornerstone of the Bush legacy.

And now for the controversy. There are countless arguments for and against the NCLB act. Some say that it is overfunded while others (including President-elect Obama) contend that it was vastly underfunded. Some argue that it puts some schools at an advantage and

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If you have any questions about AmeriCorps or would like to know more, check out our website:

www.AmeriCorps.org

New Members at a Glance

Jacob Hoffius is one of a few new members to the CARENET AmeriCorps team this year. Jake, as he is commonly referred to, is currently serving his AmeriCorps term at Adams County Middle School. While most people feel that middle school aged kids are quite difficult to deal with, Jake

believes otherwise. He loves the middle school and he thoroughly enjoys working with the staff and students of ACMS. What follows here is a brief interview with Jake to hopefully let you know a little bit more about him!

Why did you choose to join the CARENET AmeriCorps team?

“Well, I wanted to move to Colorado because of the mountains, mostly. I love the outdoors and I love to spend my time hiking, biking and snowboarding—being from Charlestown, South Carolina, I found myself limited in these respects, so I wanted to change that and Colorado was the first place I looked.

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“Getting Things Done”

www.CARENETAmeriCorps.weebly.com

other schools at a disadvantage; while others argue that the educational playing field has finally seen some leveling. Test results and achievement records of the past six years under the act seem to indicate that achievement has increased at a national level in elementary grades, while middle and high school students have not shown significant progress. However, many would contend that standardized tests are no measure of achievement and learning and that NCLB has narrowed education as teachers are forced to solely “teach to the test.”

On the other side of that argument some would contend that testing is a crucial part of measuring educational accountability. If you throw in issues of the act’s implementation at the state and local level, as well as how English language learners, students from a lower socio economic background, minorities, or special education learn-

ers are affected by NCLB, there are countless more cans of worms that can be opened and examined. I do not wish to split hairs-- anyone reading this works in education and can judge these issues on their own. Moreover, as CSAP nears, we can all agree that for better or for worse (or most likely for both) the affects of NCLB are felt throughout the educational community.

So, at the end of the Bush administration we, as educators and Americans, as well as the incoming administration have been left, with this act and the controversy that surrounds it. If you go to the Barack Obama and Joe Biden website, you will find (as I have) that the incoming administrations plans for education reform are, at least at this point, extremely vague. What does seem to be certain is that Obama plans to keep and reform NCLB. How and to what degree he plans to accomplish this task remains to be seen. The web-

site is riddled with statements such as, “Obama and Biden believe teachers should not be forced to spend the academic year preparing students to fill in bubbles on standardized tests and he will improve the assessments used to track student progress to measure readiness for college”, or “They will also work to ensure that all children have access to a strong science curriculum at all grade levels.” Missing from the website are any comprehensive plans towards achieving these goals. Unfortunately, it seems that those in the education community will have to adopt a “wait and see” attitude when it comes to education reform.

I would also encourage Americans to adopt a similar attitude in their assessment of the “Bush legacy.” This is coming from someone who personally disagreed and continues to disagree with a tremendous amount of the administration’s policy decisions. However, time will be the true test. Perhaps acts such as NCLB are the first step towards a manageable and comprehensive national approach to education and educational accountability. Perhaps it is a total disaster. It is too soon to be throwing around phrases such as “legacy” or “mark on history” and as we look to the future it is vital that we understand the impact of acts such as NCLB. We all work in schools and I guarantee that all of us have seen and felt these impacts first hand. I think we can all agree that hopefully the incoming administration will listen to educators and those who feel the effects of these reforms while shaping the future of education. Until then we will all have to hope and wait and see.

Make it a day on... not a day off!

In August of 1994, President Bill Clinton signed into law federal legislation creating the King Holiday and Service Act. The bill, coauthored by former Pennsylvania U.S. Senator Harris Wofford and Atlanta Congressman John Lewis, challenges Americans to transform the King Holiday into a day of “citizen action and volunteer service in



honor of Dr. King. Unlike regular holidays that usually give people the day off, the King Day of Service emphasizes “a day on.” The holiday seeks to build on the great legacy of Dr. King by continuing his teachings of non-violence and social justice through participation in the community. With thousands of projects planned across the country, the 2009 King Day of Service on January 19th promises to be the biggest and best ever!

To get involved locally, please visit www.colorado.gov/gccs.

Alexa Plotkin

New Members at a Glance cont'd

Darren Latanick

After being informed about AmeriCorps by some of my friends, I searched for different programs and eventually I found CARENET. Once I read the program description I knew what a great opportunity the CARENET team would be for me and I just couldn’t pass it up. I love kids and I really wanted to work with at-risk youth, so it was a simple decision for me to make when I was offered the position on the CARENET team. I had to say yes.”

What does being a member of AmeriCorps mean to you ?

“To me, AmeriCorps means taking the time to help others that can’t necessarily help themselves; it means being an active member of the community and it has been an amazing experience for me so far.”

If you were stranded on an island what foods would you eat?

“I would have to say, Kobe steak, garlic mashed potatoes, green beans a North Carolina barbecue sandwich with hush puppies and frozen grapes.”

Vincent Lucero



Pictured above: Jacob Hoffius helping some students put together marshmallow snowmen at the MEP Winter Parent Conference.