

# EDUCATION WEEK

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## Board Stamp For Teachers Raising Flags

States Question Expense Of National Certification

BY JOETTA L. SACK

Georgia lawmakers thought they had a great plan to recruit and keep well-qualified teachers in the classroom: offer an annual 10 percent bonus to every teacher who earned national certification.

But as more teachers get that seal of approval from the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards, some of the legislators are getting sticker shock. The cost of Georgia's program is expected to more than triple from this fiscal year to the next, and at a time when the state budget is particularly tight.

So now the legislature is debating whether to scale back the bonuses, which would likely trigger an outcry from teachers and their unions. The fiscal strains, meanwhile, are also emboldening critics, who question whether nationally certified teachers are really any better than those who don't gain the credential.

Thirty-two states offer some sort of cash bonus to teachers who successfully complete the stringent board-certification

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## Mixed-Race Youths Found More Prone To School Troubles

BY KARLA SCÖON REID

Students from more than one racial background are more likely than their single-race peers to experience trouble in school, such as repeating a grade, skipping school, and being suspended, a new study shows.

The study of 90,000 middle and high school students found that mixed-race youths also have a higher risk of health or behavior problems than teenagers of a single race. The study, which combined surveys and follow-up interviews with some students, found that all mixed-race students were more likely to report smoking, drinking, feeling depressed, having access to guns, and engaging in sexual activity.

"Overall, the pattern is overwhelming," said J. Richard Udry, the lead author of the study, "Health and Behavior Risks of Adolescents with Mixed-Race Identity," which will be published in this month's issue of the *American Journal of Public Health*.

But Mr. Udry, a professor of maternal and child health at the University of North Carolina's school of public health,

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Democratic presidential candidate Howard Dean enjoys a skit parodying his stump speech at a Halloween party in Manchester, N.H. The former Vermont governor has been outspoken in his criticism of the bipartisan No Child Left Behind Act of 2001.

## On Trail, It's Dean vs. No Child Left Behind Act

BY ERIK W. ROBELEN  
Portsmouth, N.H.

Speaking to more than 200 largely undecided voters packed into a technical-college dining room here on Halloween day, Howard Dean explained his strategy for winning the White House.

"Everybody else in the race thinks that if you're a little like George Bush, then that's the way to beat him," he said. "Vote for the war in Iraq because we don't want to be called soft on defense. You vote for

some of the tax cuts because, Lord knows, we have to be for the middle class. You vote for No Child Left Behind. ..."

The former Vermont governor highlights his opposition to the federal education law in drawing contrasts between his campaign for the Democratic presidential nomination and those of other contenders. He promises to "dismantle" the bulk of the No Child Left Behind Act, one of President Bush's most

prized domestic-policy accomplishments.

"Anybody here from a school board?" Mr. Dean asked the audience. "School boards call it 'No School Board Left Standing.' ... Teachers call it 'No Behind Left.'"

While the funding levels for the No Child Left Behind law have become routine target practice for the Democratic presidential candidates—they say that

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A bipartisan legal-reform group launches a campaign to counter the "culture" of school lawsuits.

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Seattle voters reject all three incumbents running for re-election to the school board.

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Gerald A. Reynolds, the head of the civil rights office at the U.S. Department of Education, will jump to the Justice Department.

## Agitator for Choice Leaves Her Mark

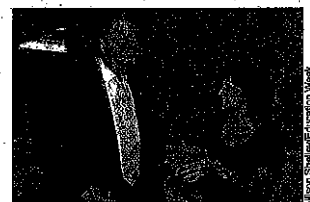
BY JEFF ARCHER  
Washington

After arriving as a freshman at Dickinson College in 1978, Jeanne Allen wrote a letter to her high school principal.

It wasn't a thank-you note. She complained that her education thus far had been lacking, at least compared with that of her classmates at the Pennsylvania liberal arts college. It was a brash claim for an A student from the affluent suburb of Allendale, N.J.

"I just said I was shocked that I could get through with the grades I got and feel like I was unprepared to do college work," Ms. Allen said recently as she told the story. "I was mad."

Jeanne Allen is still mad. It would be



Gov. Jeb Bush of Florida chats with Jeanne Allen at a party for her group.

hard to find a more outspoken champion of alternatives to regular public schools. Through the Center for Education Reform here, which she founded 10 years ago, she

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## Choice Advocate Jeanne Allen Leads With Blunt Approach

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has supplied an arsenal of ammunition in the battle for charter schools and vouchers and a steady stream of jobs at teachers' unions, school boards, and others she collectively dismisses as "the blob."

She churns out newsletters, op-ed articles, and testimony to lawmakers at a dizzying clip. The center's Web site gets more than 1 million hits a year, she says. She helped form the Education Leaders Council, a Washington group of mostly conservative, charter-friendly state education officials. And she has shaped the debate

### NEW VISIONS OF LEADERSHIP Profile From the Front Lines

over how charter schools should be regulated with her reports characterizing "strong" and "weak" state charter laws.

Her work has won her friends in high places. At a black-tie event held here last month to celebrate the CSR's first decade, Ms. Allen drew gushing praise from Florida Gov. Jeb Bush, Wal-Mart heir John Walton, and Sen. Judd Gregg of New Hampshire, the Republican who chairs the Senate education committee. U.S. Secretary of Education Rod Paige called her "an American hero."

Others can't stand her. They bristle at the way she equates "school reform" with school choice, and at how she pounces on anyone who expresses skepticism toward charters and vouchers.

"Nobody's ever called her subtle," said Gerald W. Bracey, an Alexandria, Va.-based education researcher who has been skewered on the center's Web site. "She's mean. She really goes for the jugular."

Even some within the charter movement say privately that her confrontational style and conservative views don't help at a time when they're trying to build new alliances. Ms. Allen has opposed legislative deals struck by local charter leaders on the grounds that the measures threatened charter school autonomy, and she recently pulled out of efforts to form a national coalition of pro-charter-school organizations.

Ms. Allen has no plans to back down or to soften her approach. She sees her cause in the starkest of terms, often comparing it to the battle against Jim Crow in the 1950s. "They didn't stand up and say, 'OK, fine, we'll take the bus, but not the water fountain,'" she said of civil rights leaders.

### Stirring Things Up

Jeanne Allen is part policy, work, part angry mom. Her scrappy office here on K Street, N.W., the epicenter of Washington lobbying firms and law offices, is papered with student artwork—the messy kind made with glitter, finger paint, and colored paper. Despite her work schedule, she

does lunch and recess duty at the Roman Catholic school that her youngest child attends in a suburb just outside the city limits. (Her three older children go to an independent day school.) And she's adamant about being home for dinner.

"I feel like I really understand parents a lot more than people who are supposedly in the business of understanding parents," Ms. Allen said.

Juggling work and family has become more of a challenge since her husband, who worked in public affairs, died of throat cancer this past spring. Ms. Allen, who is 43 and whose children range in age from 9 to 14, impressed many at his funeral by giving a eulogy. Ms. Allen, born Jeanne Abate, grew up the youngest of four children of Italian immigrants. (She points out that her father got through engineering school and achieved the American dream without affirmative action.) Her parents weren't much for politics, but they didn't mince words. "I'm actually probably a lot more factual than they are," she said.

Her entree into the political arena began with a receptionist's job in the office of then-U.S. Rep. Marge Roukema, a New Jersey Republican. She later served under Secretary of Education William J. Bennett in the federal Education Department's office of higher education and worked for the Heritage Foundation as an education analyst.

She founded the Center for Education Reform in 1993 with a \$33,000 gift from Jerry Hume, a former member of the California state board of education. She now has a \$2 million budget and a staff of 14.

The center, which Ms. Allen embodies, doesn't just promote school choice—it agitates for it. It's as quick to point out the faults of public schools as it is to sell the idea of charters and vouchers. Ms. Allen calls the crusade "discontenting the contented"—essentially waking people up to the notion that public education, in her opinion, isn't all it's cracked up to be.

Despite her high-powered fans, she claims to speak for the little guy. Her thesis is that public schools have turned their backs on parents, caring more for the people who run them than for the students who attend them. Her message is: There is an alternative.

"The reason I'm on this side is because I'm on the right side," Ms. Allen said. "Choice is a natural state of man."

In plain-talking publications, she teaches parents how to lobby school boards and talk to the press. She tells them that the best charter laws have the least restrictions, and that the best curricula stress traditional teaching methods. She offers sample letters to send to lawmakers and publishes the only national directory of charter schools. Such schools, now numbering 3,000 nationwide, are publicly financed but largely independent.

Her opponents don't buy her image as spokeswoman for the average Joe. They point out that the center isn't a membership organization, and that Ms. Allen gets much of her funding from right-leaning foundations.

"She's taken all her words and ideology from the Heritage Foundation and put a smiley face on it, and pitched it as what parents want," said Kathleen Lyons, a spokeswoman for the National Education Association.

But her devotees, who aren't all conservatives, say Ms. Allen does tap real people. While other Washington groups pitch papers for policy journals, she sets her sights on *Good Housekeeping* and *Parent*. When she strikes a chord, and people write to her, they go straight into her database, which she says now holds some 37,000 names, only about 4,000 of whom are "policy people and pundits." "Jeanne is one of the best grassroots organizers I've seen," said

### Her Center for Education Reform marks its first decade.

Gary Larson, the director of media relations for the California Charter Schools Association. "I've seen it in action."

Mr. Larson cites this instance: In 2001, when he was just getting active in the charter movement and before his association existed, he got in touch with the CSR for advice in opposing plans by the San Francisco school board to pull the plug on a charter school there.

From the opposite coast, Ms. Allen produced a list of people, many from the Bay Area, who she knew would sympathize with the cause.

Other examples of her matchmaking skills abound. When Tennessee mullied its first charter law last year, she brought a group of Volunteer State lawmakers to Delaware to show them that state's charter schools in action.

It was at a meeting convened by the CSR in 1995 that the idea was hatched for the Education Leaders Council, which initially shared offices with Ms. Allen's shop.

### Doing It Her Way

And yet, even some of the pro-school-choice camp find her divisive.

Over the summer, she pulled the CSR out of the Charter School Leadership Council, a group of charter-supporting organizations that included the Black Alliance for Educational Options, the Thomas B. Fordham Foundation, and the National Council of La Raza.

The council, which is now defunct and trying to regroup, was an attempt to present a single voice on charter school issues at the national level. Ms. Allen's main problem dealt with its governance. Other members wanted to do away with a rule that required unanimous consent of all the groups before the council could take action. Ms. Allen objected to using majority rule instead.

In a recent interview, she further questioned the premise of the council.

"We don't need to become like the establishment," she said. "We don't have to have formal organizations that are democratically composed at the national level, and speak on behalf of everyone. There are enough people at the local and state levels."

On occasion, she's raised the ire of those people, too, including charter backers in Illinois. Local charter leaders in that state brokered a deal in the legislature last year to raise the cap on the

number of charter schools that could be opened in Chicago. Ms. Allen vocally objected to provisions in it that called for educators in charter schools to hold state teaching licenses.

John Ayers, the executive director of Leadership for Quality Education, a Chicago-based group that supports charters, said the teacher-licensure language was needed to get the bill through a Democratic-controlled legislature.

Although the measure passed, Mr. Ayers maintains that his group lost favor with a potential donor because of the CSR's opposition, but won't say which one.

"It's quite simply a matter of, we live here, and we have to cultivate coalitions," he said. "[CSR] publicly insinuated that we sold out."

Ms. Allen sees it differently. She worries that some charter leaders have become too complacent, too willing to compromise. "In our education reform movement," she said, "we lack for a certain amount of optimism or foresight as to what could be bigger and better."

But she, on the other hand, has very big ideas for the charter movement. Last year, she won a \$3 million grant from the Bentonville, Ark.-based Walton Family Foundation for a three-year effort to jump-start charter advocacy at the state level. The gift is the biggest in the Center for Education Reform's history.

Through training and organization, Ms. Allen aims to teach state groups how to be more strategic and aggressive. She may ruffle feathers along the way, but some allies insist she's right for the job. Said John Walton: "She's controversial, but some of the most effective people are controversial."

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