



DEAN, TEACHERS COLLEGE

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Jeanne Allen, President  
Center for Education Reform  
1001 Connecticut Avenue, N.W.  
Suite 2004  
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Dear Jeanne:

I appreciated the opportunity to visit with Kevin and you last Friday. I hope you understand that I am interested in contributing to the charter school movement in Indiana in ways that I believe we (the university) can make significant, long-lasting contributions. I am not interested in housing any charter school-related association or alliance. I am not interested in our being a primary resource or technical assistance entity. On an as needs and appropriate basis, we can provide technical assistance in areas in which we have faculty expertise. However, I do not see this as a major initiative on our part.

Our primary commitment lies in authorizing charter schools, monitoring them to assure success, and conducting meaningful research (in collaboration with the four other public universities). Given our recent challenge, we now have a most intriguing and powerful approach through the Virtual Special Education Cooperative to meet special education requirements. This unique approach may have promise for charter schools meeting special education requirements in a better way. We stumbled onto this solution through crisis, but think the approach may have national significance.

For most of my professional career I have been committed to educational alternatives. When I worked at the University of Southern California from 1975-80, I served as the USC liaison to the Office of Magnet Schools for Los Angeles Unified School District and helped create a magnet school at 32<sup>nd</sup> Street. At the same time, I supported educational alternatives in parents' exodus from L.A. Unified School District schools to San Fernando Valley "home schools." During all this time and a few years after I returned to Ball State in 1980, I was editor of "Changing Schools," an alternative school publication that my long-time friend Johnathan Kozol called the best of its kind at that time. I share this with you simply to note my personal values related to making innovative and meaningful choices accessible to parents and their children.

I wish to reaffirm a couple of points during our conversation. One is our continued commitment to adding new charters. Despite increasing pressure from superintendents, a few alumni, and other education organizations and individuals, we have no intentions of

backing away from the university's commitment. This decision was based on our historical mission and recent developments:

1. Until 1968, Ball State University was a Teachers College. Decades of preparing educators to work in schools as its only mission has continued to be a strength within the university's mission. Excellent teaching among university faculty is expected and prized.
2. We operate the state's only laboratory school, Burriss, which has been in existence since 1929 and the Indiana Academy for Science, Mathematics, and Humanities – a 2-year residential school for gifted students from across Indiana.
3. The Ball State University Professional Development School Network has 30 partners, including two museums. We are in the process of expanding the Network to Europe, in collaboration with NEA and DoDEA.
4. In collaboration with Indianapolis Public Schools we have established the TEACH Academy, Indiana's only magnet school developed to prepare future teachers who begin their work as high school freshmen.
5. In conjunction with the Smithsonian, The Field Museum, NASA, the Smithsonian Environmental Research Center, the Newseum, the Holocaust Museum, and the Baseball Hall of Fame we are one of the nation's largest providers of electronic field trips. These are provided live via satellite and video streaming. Apple Computer, Inc. provides video streaming and also archives these on the Apple Learning Interchange website.
6. We provide executive secretaries (our faculty) for six public school study councils that represent more than one-half of the school-age population in Indiana.
7. Our Center for Gifted Studies and Talent Development is considered one of the leading such centers of its kind in the nation.
8. We have worked with Apple Computer, Inc. on offering graduate credit for their online workshops (Stanford University and the University of Texas at Austin offer continuing education units). With Apple we are launching an electronic database system for higher education institutions to assess student performance for digital portfolios.

I share this list with you to simply indicate risk and innovation is our friend. I would love to have the time some day to have lunch or dinner with you in D.C. to talk more about what we do and are capable of doing. I will be in D.C. from February 20-23 to attend The Holmes Partnership meeting at the Grand Hyatt. Perhaps there would be an opportunity to meet during that time.

I mentioned to Kevin in an e-mail message that my offer still stands to meet with university officials in the D.C. area to share ideas about what I believe colleges/schools of education and others might do to be supportive of charter school initiatives. If you would like me to write a short piece about our efforts or about our newly established Virtual Special Education Cooperative, I would be happy to do so. If you have any

suggestions as to foundations or grants that I might pursue related to our charter school research efforts or that of the Virtual Special Education Cooperative, I would be appreciative.

Thank you for all you are doing in support of choice. I look forward to working with you and your colleagues in the future.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Roy A. Weaver". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above the printed name.

Roy A. Weaver,  
Dean

P.S.: I have enclosed some materials that you might find useful. In particular, I have included a recent draft that outlines our research commitment. If you or your colleagues would have time to review it and share any insights from your experiences, I would be most appreciative.