



December 2018



To: CER Board of Directors
Cc: Supporters & Friends
From: Jeanne Allen *Jeanne*
RE: 2018 Year-End Report

Dear Friends:

I know you're right in the thick of the holiday season, but I need just a final minute or two before year's end to thank you for your fantastic contributions to the work of education opportunity this year! Without it, our children, students, and adults who have been failed by our systems today will not be able to access the American dream, and that is what American education should be about – helping every learner at every level access what they need to achieve what our founder's envisioned. We are unapologetic believers in American exceptionalism, and our mission is to help our country's students become exceptional themselves. Your support makes that a “possible dream” for many because CER is relentless in everything we do!

The Center's leadership, staff and partners around the country have been building a new road to innovation and opportunity – a journey to fuse together exceptional learning opportunities for students at all levels, no matter what their stage of life, K through Career!

This journey took us from meetings with leaders in innovation and Ed Tech at ASU-GSV in San Diego to the Global Education Summit in Dubai. It took us to convenings with stakeholders in rural North Carolina and hurricane-ravaged Puerto Rico to ensure a quality education where the schools have been failing.

As is our custom, I am writing to share news of the impact we've had and a few more highlights of the past year.

MILESTONES



Members of CER's Board of Directors who were able to join us, with special guests at #cer25. From L to R: Jon Hage, Chris Whittle, Kevin P. Chavous, Jeanne Allen, David Hardy, Asst. Sec. of Ed Frank T. Brogan, Miss America 2019 Nia Imani Franklin, Governor Jeb Bush, Dennis Cariello, Donald Hense, Rich Harmon.

CER SILVER ANNIVERSARY. We celebrated CER's 25th with a Summit and Gala at the Mandarin Oriental Hotel in Miami. The summit featured a power-packed list of speakers including Puerto Rico Governor Ricardo Rosselló, former Governors Jeb Bush and Tommy Thompson, and the reigning Miss America Nia Franklin. Dozens of the top leaders in education, business and technology gathered to build the new **Road to Innovation**. The conversation swirled around the importance of acting nimbly, providing lots of freedom and flexibility to innovate, driving change through all established institutions from K through Career, and more. We have highlights and videos at www.edreform.com.

The speakers and attendees all continually shared that the event was fresh, dynamic, connected them with people they would not ordinarily know, and they are ready to work with us to de-silo the myriad boxes that constrain great education from occurring. When EdTech and Entrepreneurs meet Ed investors and EdReform, magical things happen.

AMERICA THE BEAUTIFUL.

The summit was capped off with a Gala celebration honoring special leaders in education innovation. **Nia Franklin** brought the crowd to tears and its feet with her rendition of “America the Beautiful”, accompanied by the CER Silver Student Orchestra, formed by area charter students for this special occasion.



JUST IN TIME FOR THE 2018 ELECTION... we unveiled this year’s *Education 50*, analyzed the gubernatorial races, issued voter guides and continued to press U.S. leaders to adopt more cogent and effective positions for educational change, innovation and opportunity. Our post-election rundown of the good, bad and so-so among the gubernatorial winners can be seen here: <https://www.edreform.com/education-50/>.

THE 2018 PARENT POWER! INDEX® is the only national, interactive guide that captures just how much opportunity parents have to make fundamental decisions about their family’s schooling. This year we added personalized learning to the rankings. We’re constantly amazed and a bit flattered that state groups, policymakers and elected officials boast or bemoan their ranking. Those who complain about low rankings don’t lack the knowledge to improve – they lack the courage. And whether the state is a C or a B (there were no A’s this year!) the PPI is not only an interactive tool to help parents discover how much power their state affords but also provides them access to tools to help get it. Parent power can be the most effective force to make changes to the failing education zeitgeist. Our PPI gives them the means to do so. <http://parentpowerindex.edreform.com/>.

CER conceived and advanced the **EDUCATION, WORKFORCE AND APPRENTICESHIP TAX CREDIT OF 2018** which almost made it into the President’s tax package. Our friends at **Invest in Ed** moved the ball forward and got it introduced as a bill, which proceeded to attract a lot of support. The idea is that we must offer American businesses and individual taxpayers the ability to support the proliferation of new choices for students at all levels – *from K through career* – and reduce the burden on taxpayers by allowing educational excellence to be funded privately with tax credit incentives.

Even with a change in the House, we will not give up. We haven't for 25 years, and a realistic assessment of the state of support for educational change and innovation is that things have been much worse in the past, and we succeeded nonetheless. So, we share the sentiments of John Paul Jones – we have only begun to fight!

WHY THE HOUSE WAS LOST. There are as many opinions about why the House was lost as there are talking head media pundits. In all modesty I think I know why, and I penned a piece about this. Had the Republicans been bold in advancing incredibly powerful and unparalleled ideas like the one above, voters may have been able to relate better. But they were timid, and indecisive, which never gets you very far. They forgot General Patton's advice for victory in battle; "*L'audace, l'audace, toujours l'audace*", meaning *audacity, audacity, always audacity*. House Republicans replaced audacity with timidity and paid the price. Happy to send you my piece or you can read about it here:

<https://www.washingtonexaminer.com/opinion/house-republicans-paid-the-price-for-their-inaction-on-education>.

By far the biggest win for new thinking in education at all levels was the **Janus decision**. That presents reformers with an opportunity, but all of us need to seize it – following Patton's advice – to make the much-needed changes a reality. Now the real work has to begin... and we will need your help.

CER'S RURAL EDUCATION INITIATIVE has provided just one of many lenses we have into the heart of the nation when it comes to education. Imagine a new ecosystem which is based not on grades and failed approaches but on helping every child, every student achieve competency in the basics, master the material before moving on, and be on a pathway to career or Higher Ed (or a hybrid of both.) That's what we are doing by bringing together an unprecedented coalition of Ed Tech, EdReform, new school developers, foundations, government and citizens to Robeson County, NC, a highly challenged county on the SC border where we will prove that education is the key to improving the economy for all. Then we will take it national...

REALITY CHECK. Have you listened? No, it's not just a phrase, but a podcast, sponsored by National Review but entirely produced by CER and hosting people from all walks of life who espouse a dedication to educational sanity, freedom, advancement and sound values. Among my guests I'm pleased to say I've had Janus v. AFSCME lawyer Jacob Huebert, New Mountain Capital CEO and founder of Modern States Steve Klinsky; Carl Schramm, author of Burn the Business Plan, Strada Education Network EVP Carol D'Amico, Lenore Skenazy, author of Free-Range Kids, Success Academy Network CEO Eva Moskowitz, as well as nearly all of our gala honorees and summit VIPs.





Listen yourself, let me know, or come on the show and let's do a 'Reality Check' on all things education and culture. <https://www.edreform.com/realitycheck/>.

OVER THE RIVER AND THROUGH THE WOODS...

... to grandmothers' homes we went in 2018 ... bringing with us our work and impact to bear with teachers, schools, businesses and towns from the American prairie to its cities. Along the way we cultivated new advocates, influencers and colleagues to help us expand our impact. To wit we went...

... when the unions called upon teachers to walk out, especially from charters, CER delivered sage advice and letters to teachers which reduced the union impact and solidified the teachers' commitment to their schools. In Arizona, Indiana, North Carolina and nationally, we implored teachers to understand that the union is not about helping them to succeed but about helping itself to survive. It worked!

... in response to **Puerto Rico calling**. We've said it often; it shouldn't have taken a hurricane. But like our North Carolina and Rural Effort, we aim to show that given flexibility, freedom and an appetite for innovation, great ideas, great schools, great technologists and great educators can indeed transform education. That's why we took the foremost expert on disruptive innovations from the Christensen Institute, Michael Horn, to Puerto Rico this spring and why the Governor has personally invited us to help him set up new schools and educational approaches in the fall. *Where there is a will, there is a way. This initiative is blessed with will. CER will show the way.*

... with ALEC, whose free market loving lawmakers continue to be the most interested and engaging of state legislators, providing them every piece of literature and analysis that they can use to demonstrate that creating new and better opportunities for students works better than the status quo.

... into DC charters, to help their young students learn about authentic, American history, developing and implementing the Why America Project for DC Charter schools.

... to **Tennessee**, to plead with lawmakers to approve schools that are out of the box and critical to student success... and to **Nevada** where a new effort was launched to educate parents about important policy needs. We went to **South Carolina** and to **Florida**, and many cities throughout the US, counseling, cajoling, reflecting and renewing excitement for educational change.

... to develop an **expanded network of entrepreneurs** who combined have created 100s of amazing tools, products and approaches that can accelerate learning, inform teachers and schools and keep parents engaged – IF systems and states allow for the freedom and flexibility we know is a must for any substantive change to occur.

... into the media, where through coverage of CER activities we reached more than 166 million people and produced 28 op-eds.

... we went into Higher Ed and began to build a basis for a new approach to education reform, one that encompasses critical pathways into careers and innovations in Higher Ed that reduce costs, ensure a focus on students and not politics, and helps ensure that students actually find relevant and meaningful work and careers. We're thrilled to have **Strada Education** as a new partner, and to have solidified friendships with many in the Higher Ed space, including, **Ellucian, University Ventures, Lumina Foundation, edX** among others...

Okay, okay - we are in DC, so we went to the Hill and the White House a lot too and had more than a little bit of influence on the new dialogue around rethinking education and blowing up old and tired Higher Ed policies, but we don't like to brag - well, maybe a teensy bit...



CER helped celebrate **NATIONAL SCHOOL CHOICE WEEK** with live interviews of members of Congress on the Hill, fanned the charter week celebration, pushed for the creation of the Congressional Innovation Caucus to explore more **personalized learning** approaches, and saw others reach milestones, like the fabulous Children's Scholarship Fund whose amazing leader Darla Romfo has helped millions, celebrated Harlem Village Academy, Friendship Public Charters, the Center for Advancing Opportunity at the Thurgood Marshall fund and dozens of other colleagues and education warriors.

We published the **18TH ANNUAL NATIONAL CHARTER SCHOOL RANKINGS & SCORECARD**, three papers on **THE CASE FOR EDUCATION TRANSFORMATION** and massive numbers of blogs and analyses.





Overall, CER had a significant footprint nationwide, having been in direct contact with more than 150,000 people directly through our various communications, portals and activities.

Which leads me to say one final thing about the area in which CER remains unparalleled and your support critical – *The Media...*

Our work remains well regarded and frequently referenced, not because we agree with everything they do, but because we are clear, unambiguous and relevant to the work the media performs. As a result, we influence stories even when we're not mentioned and when mentioned, reach millions that we'd otherwise not be able to talk with.

For example, CER's voice has been featured or has contributed to major breaking news in the *Wall Street Journal*, *Washington Post*, *New York Times*, and on *Fox News*, to name only a few outlets where our opinions emerged this year.

In 2018, our social media footprint resulted in 1,996,400 impressions on Twitter, and 22,700 on Facebook.

Now for the bad news...

We're still under attack, few people understand why and what they must do to sustain and expand opportunity, and even many of our friends from national organizations to pundits think we need to slow down and constrain the supply of new schools and choices.

As we like to say at CER Headquarters – “*REALLY??*” Because so many children are already well served, we should (according to NACSA, or the DC authorizer, or The California Charter association) slow down opening schools to ensure quality... when really what they mean is their type of school, their type of quality and that parents really don't know what they are doing anyway (which they say, often, and publicly).

So, it's time for a call to arms, a resurgence of education reform values, a renewed focus, and a new movement.

We will be leading that into 2019 and launching a new business model that will help us augment the support of our donors, become more self-sustaining and demonstrate how powerful ideas can and will take hold if we modernize and grow – NOT CONSTRAIN – our work, our ground troops and the opportunities we create for students.





The CER Board calls it Exponential Impact. And it's what we are all about from here on out.

IN APPRECIATION...

We saluted 9 amazing visionaries and pioneers whose work exemplifies 25 years of service, success and advancement of American principles in education:

- **Brian Jones** (Strayer Education)
- **Governor Tommy Thompson** (Bipartisan Policy Center)
- **Jon Hage** (Charter Schools USA)
- **J.C. Huizenga** (National Heritage Academies)
- **Fernando Zulueta** (Academica)
- **Deborah Quazzo** (GSV)
- **Lisa Graham Keegan** (Arizona Chamber Foundation)
- **Joe Nathan** (Center for School Change)
- **T. Willard Fair** (Urban League of Greater Miami)

And for all of those who took time to give me advice, take a call, (or be badgered to take one!) a meeting or simply wrote a check, we salute you. We will show you how much your investment counts even more in 2019, but for now, we give thanks for you that we can wake up every morning and do this work which is so meaningful and impactful.

God Bless you this season and always –

Jeanne Allen

