

EDUCATION WEEK

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Dean Strikes a Chord With One Constituency: Iowa's Younger 'Voters'

It may not be much help in his very real quest for the White House, but Howard Dean won something in Iowa last week.

While the former governor of Vermont finished a distant third in the Jan. 19 Iowa Democratic caucuses, behind Sens. John Kerry of Massachusetts and John Edwards of North Carolina, he came in first among students taking part in the Iowa Mock Caucus. From Jan. 12 to Jan.

14, as the real race for the Democratic presidential nomination tightened, 8,752 students in some 200 schools around the state cast their mock votes in an educational exercise sponsored by the Iowa secretary of state's office. The result: 27.3 percent of student voters backed Mr. Dean, followed by 18.6 percent for Mr. Kerry. Former Sen. Carol Moseley Braun of Illinois, who dropped out of the race on Jan. 15—just after the student voting ended—finished third with 11.8 percent of the vote, slightly

ahead of Mr. Edwards, who received 11.4 percent.

Rep. Richard A. Gephardt of Missouri didn't fare any better among the students than he did with the actual voters: He received 9.6 percent of the mock vote.

Organizers say this was not the first time Iowa's students and adult voters were not on the same page.

"In Iowa, the students overwhelmingly chose Lamar Alexander the year their parents chose Bob Dole," said John Herklotz, the vice chairman of the National Student/Parent Mock Election, in a reference to the 1996 Republican caucuses. "Their choice, we discovered, was based on the fact that Lamar Alexander did not run negative commercials. Perhaps history might have been different had the adults evaluated candidates as the children did."

The Iowa Mock Election was part of the National Student/Parent Mock Election, a voter education project that conducts such student votes in all 50 states and the District of Columbia.

Meanwhile, New Hampshire, which was holding the first-in-the-nation binding presidential primary on Jan. 27, held its student mock voting Jan. 12-23. The results were to be released late last week. More than 125 New Hampshire schools signed up

to participate in the first such event in the Granite State.

"The assumption is likely to be that the New Hampshire students' vote will reflect their parents' choices," said Mr. Herklotz.

For organizers of the student election, however, it is not about how adults vote; it is about how students view political leaders who could affect their lives.

"We must encourage young people to make their voices heard," Laura Kessler, the state coordinator for the New Hampshire mock election, said. "It is their future that is being decided by this election. Their wars, their educational opportunities, their environment, their health care will all be voted on this year when America chooses its leader."

The 2004 National Student/Parent Mock Election is scheduled for Oct. 28. Schools can enroll at www.nationalmockelection.org.

—NATASHA N. SMITH & ALAN RICHARD

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