

FROM THE EDITOR

Risks and safety

Go into any elementary school, in any state, and you will see them—children who will not finish high school. Chances are that these kids, likely identified as “at risk” when they walk into their first classroom, have one or more factors working against them.

You probably even know what those factors are: poverty, welfare dependence, absent parents, single-parent families, unwed mothers, and a parent without a high school diploma.

Senior Editor Lawrence Hardy’s cover story, the first in a five-part series that will appear in *ASBJ* in the coming months, takes a look at those factors and how they affect school performance. As districts grapple with dropout rates, achievement gaps, and assertions from the business community that students are not prepared for the working world, they can learn valuable lessons from this series.

Future stories will look at community influences, youth crime, the family’s role, and how schools can be—and are—part of the solution. It’s fascinating reading.

The chilling series of shootings in late September and early October again raised questions about the safety of children on our school campuses. One encouraging trend, as noted in Senior Editor Naomi Dillon’s story on page 26, is that the conversation around safety has evolved from reaction to prevention.

Disturbingly, there is little schools can do to prevent a psychopath from

committing a random act of violence on a campus. Metal detectors and security cameras are just tools, and zero tolerance policies are not the one-size-fits-all solution that they were thought to be post-Columbine. It takes a concerted effort by everyone—teachers, administrators, student support personnel, and law enforcement—to ensure that our children are safe.

Safety of another kind—environmental safety—is the subject of Bruce Buchanan’s “The High Cost of Cleanup” on page 22. As Buchanan, a frequent contributor to *ASBJ*, notes: “Dealing with these invisible threats may not seem as pressing as closing the achievement gap or getting the buses to run on time. But experts warn that the cost of ignoring these risks can be great, both in the money required to clean them up and the potential health hazards of doing nothing.”

Finally, I’d like to call your attention to this month’s special report, which looks at how urban schools are dealing with declines in enrollment and resources. Even if you are in a small district, you can glean lessons from the stories in this section, which are written by Senior Editors Del Stover and Naomi Dillon and *ASBJ* Contributing Editor Nora Carr.

Until next month...

Glenn Cook
Editor-in-Chief

