

# FROM THE EDITOR

## Reform and our schools



Over the next several months, you will hear the words “reform” and “schools” used in the same sentence. That’s nothing new, of course, but the transition to a new president and discussions about reauthorizing No Child Left Behind make it a safe bet that ways to reform, restructure, and turn around low-performing school districts will be chief talking points for lawmakers next year.

But what does this call for reform really mean? Is it as simple as some researchers, lawmakers, and advocates—many of them far removed from the classroom—would have you believe?

In “Reform School” on Page 14, Senior Editor Del Stover examines the following premise: We know what it takes to have a high-performing district, so why aren’t we doing it? The answers and examples used in this excellent and nuanced story both debunk myths and inform the debate.

And, speaking of school reform, what are John McCain and Barack Obama saying about the state of public education? In “The Second Tier,” beginning on Page 20, Senior Editor Lawrence Hardy provides you with an assessment of each candidate’s education platform, as well as a look at the reasons K-12 schools are not getting more attention this year.

Our features continue with a look at one of the largest growth initiatives in public education: the move toward universal pre-k programs. This package reports on the newest research, why

more school boards are supporting the effort, and what it takes to make pre-k work for all.

But wait, there’s more. This month’s Urban Special Report looks at several reform-related efforts, including a report on the effectiveness of school turnarounds and the need for districts that face restructuring to have a sound infrastructure in place. The 10-page report, which starts on Page 30, also includes a feature on a high-performing urban district (North Carolina’s Wake County Schools) that embarked on a complete self-audit of its academic programs, as well as Senior Editor Naomi Dillon’s feature on the KIPP charter schools phenomenon.

As you can see, with a historic election just weeks away, we want readers to be prepared for the debates and discussions to come. And with the number of Title I schools in restructuring increasing by more than 50 percent (see the Center on Education Policy’s report that is in the Up Front section), it’s obvious that reform is already taking place in many areas across the country.

Without question, as Del notes in his cover story, true reform is a “tough slog.” For school boards and administrators dedicated to taking the hard steps necessary for success, we wish you the best. You’ve got a hard job ahead, and we hope we are providing you with tools you need to be school leaders.

Until next month...

*Glenn Cook, Editor-in-Chief*