

FROM THE EDITOR

Money and innovation



Several months ago, when the stock market started imploding and it was becoming apparent that our nation was tumbling toward an unprecedented recession, *ASBJ's* editorial staff started looking at ways to report on the impact of the economic downturn on school districts.

At the time, before the presidential election, we had no idea of what was to come: a massive \$789 billion stimulus package that included more than \$100 billion in federal money for K-12 schools, universities, and early childhood education programs.

The long-term effects of the stimulus, which is designed to stabilize school funding in states that were facing growing deficits this year and next, remain unknown. But in the three states featured as part of our new series—dubbed simply as “Money” and starting on page 16—the financial instability that districts feel remains very real.

In the features written by Senior Editors Naomi Dillon, Lawrence Hardy, and Del Stover, we take a look at districts in three of the nation’s hardest-hit states—California, Florida, and Michigan. All are faced with similar, yet different problems as they work to provide the best possible education for our nation’s children.

The story is followed by Larry’s interview with new Education Secretary Arne Duncan, who saw his budget almost double in his first weeks on the job. Duncan, the former Chicago superintendent touted highly for his reforms in the nation’s third-largest district, also has an unprecedented pot of discre-

tionary funds—\$5 billion—to reward schools for innovative programs that promote student achievement.

Some of the most innovative programs we are seeing today are around the “green schools movement,” at which we take an extended look in a special report that begins on page 40. The report is the brainchild of Associate Editor Joetta Sack-Min, who wrote and edited much of it before she became a first-time mom a few weeks ago.

You can find a host of other innovative programs by checking out the grand prize recipients and other winners of the 2009 Magna Awards, a program that *ASBJ* sponsors with the assistance of Sodexo School Services. We received more than 340 entries for this year’s program, which would not be possible without the hard work of Kathleen Vail, Margaret Suslick, Carrie Carroll, and Donna Stubler, who also produced the supplement that accompanies this month’s magazine.

As you can see throughout this magazine, school leaders are helping children and their communities through this tough time in our nation’s history. The United States, as we have been reminded all too often recently, did not get into this situation overnight and won’t get out of it by snapping our fingers and closing our eyes.

Thanks to your innovative work, however, chances are that we can make it sooner rather than later.

Until next month ...

Glenn Cook, Editor-in-Chief