

FROM THE EDITOR

The Evolution of Choice

Almost two decades ago, school reformers cried out for “choice”—a way to provide options to students and parents who wanted to move away from the traditional public schools.

The most common refrain from these reformers was that the traditional public schools were failing, and that the competition choice provided would revolutionize education as we know it.

If the past two decades have shown us anything, it's that choice has not resulted in a revolution, but an evolution that gradually—and begrudgingly—has been accepted by public school districts. Now, with the Obama administration's open embrace of the charter movement and its tie to Race to the Top funding, choice is poised to have an even more significant and lasting role in how we educate future generations of children.

The primary feature package in this month's *ASBJ* focuses on the choice evolution, the issues it presents for traditional public schools, and what you as school leaders can do about it. Through a series of stories that starts on Page 18, our staff members and a variety of contributors look at emerging developments in the charter, magnet, and virtual school movements.

I hope you will read and enjoy it.

One of the best parts of this job—in addition to conceptualizing, writing, and editing stories about one of my life's passions, public education—is getting to meet and know people while

you do it.

More than 20 years ago, when I worked at the *Houston Chronicle*, I met Cecile S. Holmes, the newspaper's new religion editor. We became good friends, and the relationship has continued over the past two decades. (For the longest time, we had a running joke that, every time something significant in my life happened, she was off covering the Pope.)

Since I came to *ASBJ* in 2001, Cecile and I have worked together on several projects, most significantly on our April 2004 issue commemorating the 50th anniversary of *Brown v. Board of Education*. For some time, I have wanted her to write for us on the intersection between public and private, specifically religious, schools.

The result, “From Private to Public,” is part of this issue's cover package. In the story, which starts on Page 25, she examines how the lagging economy and enrollment declines in urban centers have forced Catholic schools to embrace the charter movement, using her contacts in the religious community to offer a different perspective than you usually find in our pages.

2009 has been tremendously difficult personally for Cecile, who lost both her father and her husband earlier this year. I truly admire her for pulling this story together for this issue and for her consummate professionalism in doing so. And I truly value the ongoing friendship that we have to this day.

Until next month ...

Glenn Cook, Editor-in-Chief

