

# FROM THE EDITOR

## Planning for the Future



**T**he strategic planning retreat was not going well. Administrators and board members were struggling to wordsmith the mission statement, and the effect was like listening to Charlie Brown's teacher.

Sitting there, my mind numbed beyond reason, I started talking to an administrator about our problem: How do we take all of this language and turn it into something the general public understands and accepts?

His response remains with me to this day. "We're focusing on the wrong thing," he said. "We're looking at process, what we're going to do for our students rather than the end result, which is what we expect our students to be able to do when they leave. What do we want the outcome to be?"

After our break, the administrator posed that question, and despite some grumblings from the others who were settling into their roles as editors, we started looking at it seriously. In the end, our mission statement boiled down to two words: Life Ready.

Put simply, our goal was to help students become ready for life beyond high school.

A decade later, as we edited this issue of *ASBJ* and looked at its focus on the work and challenges facing you as school leaders, memories of that discussion and the result kept coming to mind. Today, as your roles are dissected and discussed (see Del Stover's excellent cover story, "The Future of

School Boards") during a time of severe economic hardship (see Lawrence Hardy's "On the Edge"), we need to do everything we can to train school leaders for the future.

As Davis W. Campbell explains in "Key Players, Key Roles," much of that training occurs at the state level. But it starts with you, and the desire and commitment of your leadership to make a difference. As you can see throughout this issue, strong leadership is needed now more than ever.

Some excellent examples of leadership can be found in the Magna Awards supplement that appears with this issue of the magazine. We received 334 nominations for the 2010 awards program, the second largest number in Magna's 16-year history. School districts from more than 40 states competed for the grand prize, first place, and honorable mention awards that are recognized in the supplement.

This year, we are fortunate to have Art Monk, a member of the Pro Football Hall of Fame, as the keynote speaker for the 2010 Magna Awards luncheon on Monday, April 12, at NSBA's 70th Annual Conference in Chicago. We hope you can join us to recognize the winning districts and be inspired by Monk. It will be a terrific afternoon.

Until next month ...

*Glenn Cook, Editor-in-Chief*