

# FROM THE EDITOR

## Don't Wait—Act



I'm sure you've been in meetings where a number of significant things are accomplished, but the primary issue that gets reported on is a parent's complaint or a verbal spat between two board members. It's Journalism 101: News thrives on conflict.

In my salad days, I seized on the isolated conflict at the expense of the larger story. While trying to be accurate and objective, I did not have the experience to see the nuance. And sadly, given the state of many newspapers today, many reporters have neither the experience nor the time.

But where there's a gap, others are there to fill the void. And that's what we're seeing right now, as documentaries and TV shows focus on the "crisis" in public education. Using broad strokes that have little nuance—and sometimes misstated or incorrect facts—talking heads and clever graphics point out how traditional public schools are not doing their jobs.

Entertaining? Perhaps. Accurate and objective? No way.

In this month's cover package, written by Senior Editor Del Stover and Communications columnist Nora Carr, we take a look at the spate of documentaries that are attacking public schools. We also attempt to provide you with tips on how to combat the "fall tsunami" caused by the "Waiting for Superman" documentary and programming such as NBC's recent "Education Nation."

It's tempting to adopt a bunker mentality and not come out until everything blows over. And yes, attention will fade over time. However, the criticism and the overly simplistic understanding of

the challenges public schools face is not going away.

If anything, the harsh spotlight that these events place on public schools represents an opportunity for you to openly discuss what is working and what can work in your schools. It is rare that you will have such a wide opening through which to engage your community.

So take that opportunity. As the headline says on Nora's story: Don't Wait—Act.

If you want a good example of the work that a school district has done to engage its community for the betterment of at-risk youth, look no further than Managing Editor Kathleen Vail's story, "Art at Work."

Kathleen's story focuses on the Cincinnati Arts and Technology Center (CATC), a remarkable public-private partnership that uses the visual arts to reconnect disadvantaged students with school. As the story notes, more than 95 percent of the center's students earn the credits they need to graduate or to move to the next grade, and more than 90 percent of the seniors graduate.

That's a remarkable achievement, and one that we should be celebrating. CATC is an example of how traditional public schools are being creative and innovative, and Kathleen does a terrific job of capturing how that innovation has been translated into results, showing ultimately that yes, it can be done.

Thanks to all of you who are doing what you can for the students in your community.

Until next month ...

*Glenn Cook, Editor-in-Chief*