

# FROM THE EDITOR

Gender, achievement, and 9/11

They were born one minute apart from the same parents, but they couldn't be more different. He is 24-7 motion, all boy and all play. She is quiet, introverted, more interested in tasks than activities.

My twins, Benjamin and Emma, fit the mold of Michael Gurian's intriguing thesis discussed in "Learning and Gender," the cover story that appears on Page 18. But Katharine and Nicholas, my other two kids, are the opposite. He is more on task, more likely to stay inside and read, less likely to fidget. They seem to make the case for the issues raised in Kathleen Vail's sidebar, "Is the Boy Crisis Real?"

Both stories present compelling arguments for discussions around gender and learning styles in schools. Gurian's belief—that heightened awareness of gender differences can lead to increased student achievement—is shared by a growing number of school leaders across the country, and he has the statistics and case studies to back it up. At the same time, Sara Mead of the Education Sector cautions that districts focusing solely on gender issues neglect the true crisis—achievement gaps by race and class.

It's intriguing, thought-provoking reading that we hope you enjoy.

The Kennedy assassination. Neil Armstrong on the moon. The Challenger disaster. Columbine. Hurricane Katrina. Chances are you can remember—if you were alive when

these events occurred—exactly where you were on those days.

And who can forget where they were on 9/11?

That was the basis for my return to Chester, Pa., to write the story "Failing District, Failed Reform," which appears on Page 24. Five years ago, on Sept. 10, I drove to Chester to report a story on Edison Schools and for-profit school management companies. The next day, the Chester Upland's schools opened under private management, which was overshadowed by the terrorist attacks.

I stayed in Chester—in part because I could not get back into the greater Washington, D.C., area—and reported the Edison story while gathering bits and pieces of information about the Twin Towers and the safety of my family, friends and co-workers. The experience was, in a word, surreal.

Since then, I have always been intrigued by what has happened to the Chester Upland School District and the reform efforts there. What I found when I returned was an ongoing tragedy, a district that has been mired in politics, mismanagement and dreadfully low achievement. All of those things were in place prior to 9/11, and sadly their vestiges remain today.

One hopes that Superintendent Gloria Grantham's mix of reforms, reconstitution, and structure will provide the district with what it needs to finally turn around. One hopes.

Until next month...

*Glenn Cook*  
Editor-in-Chief

