

FROM THE EDITOR

In the blink of an eye

“

n nineteen minutes you can mow the front lawn, color your hair; watch a third of a hockey game. ... In nineteen minutes you can order a pizza and get it delivered. ... In nineteen minutes you can get revenge.”

I had no intention of reading Jodi Picoult's novel, *Nineteen Minutes*, when it first came out. It marched down all-too-familiar terrain—the aftermath of a deadly school shooting—that has been sensationalized and distorted far too frequently.

But I started reading it in late March, sucked in by the knowledge we have gained over the past decade about school shooters. I was fascinated by Picoult's approach. The author uses flashbacks to fill in her story, and gets into the family dynamics that led a child to commit an act that was horrifying at best, deplorable and despicable at worst.

I finished the book while on an airplane in mid-April, only days before the shootings at Virginia Tech shattered the education universe—if not the collective universe—once again. The book continues to haunt me still, and makes me wonder how school systems cope with such tragedies.

How school districts can prepare for the unthinkable, the unusual, and the altogether unbelievable is the topic of Robin Flanigan's story on Page 32. Her

story, along with Managing Editor Kathleen Vail's piece on Page 35, examines how schools can and should respond to parents when a crisis occurs.

The role of parents and families in educating our children also is the focus of the fourth part of our Children at Risk series, which starts on Page 18. Senior Editor Lawrence Hardy, the primary author of this series, examines how schools in California are working to help not just children, but entire families who are at risk of failure in life.

On a more somber note, Associate Editor Joetta Sack-Min contributes a story from a rural Tennessee county that struggles to help families deal with the devastating effects of methamphetamine addiction.

In some ways, more than any other issue we have done this year, June's *ASBJ* offers you a time to think and reflect about families and their impact on schools. It also is a reminder of the opportunity many of you have to hug or call your children and tell them how much they mean to you.

Because, if the last few weeks have proven anything, it's that time can be short no matter whether you want it to be or not.

Until next month...

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