

## **A letter from Jan Olson**

It's very important that teachers know who their advocates are and Diane Ravitch is one of the best. She is highly respected and her voice carries a lot of weight nationally. She is a former assistant secretary of education and was originally a supporter of No Child Left Behind, but a couple of months ago she wrote an op-ed piece in the Wall Street Journal explaining why she has changed her mind, saying, "it's just not working." Diane Ravitch draws upon over 40 years of experience as an educational historian and researcher. She is currently a professor at NYU.

When the documentary "Waiting for Superman" was recently released, I was hoping that Dr. Ravitch would respond. The documentary received unprecedented pre-release publicity, including the Oprah Winfrey Show. Unfortunately, Oprah has enormous influence and the misleading information contained in the documentary was most likely believed by the majority of her audience. The essence of the film is that charter schools are the answer, public schools are bad and teachers are the problem!

Dr. Ravitch did respond by writing a review of the documentary in the November 11, 2010 issue of the "The New York Review of Books. She is very brave to speak out and we as teachers need to be aware that we have a highly respected, intelligent, and articulate advocate in our corner. I hope our membership will take the time to listen to the hour long interview with Diane Ravitch posted on our website and read her review of "Waiting for Superman." Her recently released book, "The Death and Life of the Great American School System: How Testing and Choice Are Undermining Education" would also be a very important source of information.

In addition to Diane Ravitch's voice, another documentary is being released at limited sites across the country in response to the Race to the Top initiative by the Department of Education. The title of the film is "The Race to Nowhere." The film emphasizes that children need to be nurtured in order for them to develop a life-long love for learning and they need to be exposed to a well rounded curriculum, including the arts. The film describes the enormous pressure that children currently experience and the consequences involved. Clips of this documentary can be seen on the internet, by simply entering the film title. Also, we are very fortunate to have a viewing of this documentary scheduled at our very own Cape Cinema on Thursday, December 2 at 7:00 pm. I hope our membership will spread the word to parents, colleagues, administrators, etc.

It is so important for teachers to be well informed. Effective advocacy requires that teachers go out of their way to become well informed, so they can then speak up with convincing and factual information.