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Preface

Literacy is the foundation of learning and achievement at every educational level and in every stage of life thereafter. As students move through elementary school, ideally they are acquiring solid literacy skills that enable them to read increasingly more challenging texts and write in more advanced and sophisticated ways. In order to realize this goal for *all* students, teachers need research-based knowledge and competencies to do the following: assess students, determine their specific instructional and curricular needs, choose the materials and instructional approaches that meet those needs, design and deliver effective lessons, and then assess once more to determine if students did indeed learn what was taught. These steps sound simple enough to follow until you consider the different components of literacy instruction, the multiplicity of assessment instruments, the hundreds of programs and curricula, the vast continuum of students' needs, and the limited amount of time available for professional development to master this sizable body of knowledge and instructional expertise. This book is designed to help you make the right instructional and curricular choices for every student in your classroom by maximizing your learning about literacy in the context of your collaborative grade-level team.

My Goals in Writing This Book

I have written this book with the following goals in mind:

- ❑ To introduce you to the K–6 literacy instruction exemplars, a set of effectiveness indicators against which you can benchmark your team's literacy instructional capacity
- ❑ To assist you in raising literacy levels in your classroom and school through the acquisition of research-based knowledge and instructional expertise in the context of your collaborative grade-level team

- To provide professional growth units that enable your team to boost the literacy achievement of students

What This Book Is

This book is intended to provide K–6 grade-level teams with embedded professional growth units based on the sixty indicators that comprise the exemplars of effective K–6 literacy instruction. These research-based exemplars are designed to serve as benchmarks for K–6 teachers as they seek to become more knowledgeable and competent in literacy instruction. The power of the research-based knowledge and skills described and explained in this book to raise literacy levels in your classroom lies in the synergy of your collaborative grade-level team. You can choose to read the book from cover to cover on your own, but you will benefit more from reading, cognitively processing, and making connections to student learning with your teammates.

This book was also designed to be used as a companion to *Literacy Look-Fors: An Observation Protocol to Guide K–6 Classroom Walkthroughs* (McEwan-Adkins, 2011), a book for elementary school principals. Your teacher literacy team may choose to go on classroom walkthroughs as part of your study of the professional growth units in this book. If so, I highly recommend that you engage in those walkthroughs using the model found in the book for principals and ask your principal to collect frequency data before and after your implementation of a unit to evaluate your collective instructional capacity.

What This Book Is Not

The exemplars are not intended to be and should never be used as a teacher evaluation instrument. The goal of this book is to assist educators in building capacity for research-based literacy instruction, not to serve as a classroom inspection tool or as a mandate to implement a particular set of teaching behaviors. Administrative practices such as these demean teachers and lead to a minimum level of compliance that rarely, if ever, results in meaningful change and sustained literacy achievement.

The Audience for This Book

Individual teachers as members of collaborative grade-level teams at the K–6 level are the principal audience for this book. However, numerous K–6 educators could also benefit from the information found here:

- ❑ Principals, literacy coaches, and other literacy leaders will find the book to be informative and helpful as they work with grade-level teams to increase their instructional capacity.
- ❑ All K–6 literacy educators, to include classroom teachers, teacher evaluators, special education teachers, interventionists, diagnosticians, psychologists, speech pathologists, Title I reading and special education teachers, literacy coaches and specialists, building administrators, and central office administrators, could use this book to build their personal knowledge and skills about effective literacy instruction either in a self-study or in a small-group study with colleagues who share the same job role.
- ❑ Teams of specialized teachers, such as Title I teachers, interventionists, diagnosticians, literacy coaches, psychologists, or speech pathologists, could use this book as a way to notch up their collective instructional capacity and improve their services to teachers.
- ❑ Individual specialized teachers such as those just listed could use this book as a basis for tailoring presentations to and professional growth experiences for the classroom teachers with whom they work.
- ❑ In schools where grade-level teams do not meet regularly, this book could serve as both motivation and a foundation for the formation and implementation of a collaborative schoolwide grade-level team initiative.
- ❑ In schools where grade-level teams meet regularly but do not share a common goal or are not aligned instructionally, this book could serve to focus a schoolwide self-study and result in a commitment to increasing collective instructional capacity.
- ❑ In schools where a few teachers or a single team lack the knowledge and skills to teach all students to read and write, this book could help administrators and literacy coaches tailor a specific professional growth opportunity for those teachers in a mentor-mentee relationship or in a small group with a trained literacy leader.
- ❑ In schools with high teacher turnover, large numbers of novice or alternately certified teachers, or a critical mass of teachers with low confidence and knowledge levels, this book will help administrators and literacy coaches to assess instructional capacity and design an

in-house professional growth experience that is targeted to one of these high-needs groups.

- Special education, English learner, and Title I administrators who are charged with providing professional growth opportunities for their specialized staff members could use the book to help them structure meaningful professional growth experiences.

The collaborative work around the goal of literacy for all students will give you and your teammates more energy and synergy to tackle the difficult challenges than you ever believed possible. There will be roadblocks and detours, to be sure, but you do not have to teach all students to read and write on your own. You and your team can do it together.

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