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# *Foreword*

**F**ive years ago, I had the privilege of writing the foreword to the 1<sup>st</sup> edition of this book. I felt then, as I do now, that principals need all the tools available to help them make needed programmatic decisions to enhance their students' achievement.

This concept is even more relevant today with the constant pressure of the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act. State and local school boards of education are expecting schools to often make huge leaps in test scores while offering little in the way of supporting information on how to accomplish that feat. Education vendors have become a cottage industry, creating numerous programs designed to improve student achievement and raise test scores. Without some way to determine what is, or is not, working in their school, principals are subject to almost "snake oil like" sales promises.

Additionally, as schools move toward shared decision making and team leadership models, those persons need direction in determining the programs they currently, or propose to, use to meet their educational goals. This book provides them with that direction.

In this assessment age of education, data is gathered and constantly sent to teachers, parents, principals, and school board members. Too often this information is received and then set upon a shelf because persons do not understand how that data, along with other information, can be used to improve student achievement. This book provides those tools.

A step-by-step guide is presented to assist even the most novice school leader in determining how to analyze their school's academic programs. Evaluation cannot be done in isolation and this book helps leaders view their academic programs in light of the entire school organization and goals for improvement.

Additionally, concepts such as validity and reliability are discussed in a manner that is clearly written and easily understood. The six phases of the evaluation process, as identified by the author, are detailed and supported with easily understandable graphs and charts.

The book ends with a guide to help principals more fully understand their role as a leader in the process of school improvement and program evaluation. The author emphasizes the “multidimensional responsibilities of the principal in program evaluation” with a principal assessment form that will prove valuable in making those crucial decisions.

Since the 2003 edition, I have worked in Philadelphia and St. Louis, and am currently with the Recovery School District of New Orleans, helping superintendents create an improved learning environment. One concern has been constant in each of these struggling school districts—how to select the best academic programs for improving student achievement.

I am proud to say, reading this book will go a long way toward answering that question.

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