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Preface

By the time this book is published, the Common Core and newly approved content standards in Social Studies and Science will have become the new normal in most school districts across the nation. As approved providers for the Ohio Department of Education, we are currently working with several districts attempting to transition to the new standards. And despite the flurry of attention being paid to the new standards in every education journal and at virtually every conference, the truth is that most districts are *not ready!*

Like buying a flat-screen TV without new operating software, the mere adoption of new content standards without proportionate improvements in classroom instruction is relatively useless. Because the new standards are so different in scope and depth from the prior standards, districts who attempt to implement them without redesigning their instructional delivery systems accordingly are experiencing failure and frustration. In contrast to the current standards—many of which are isolated skills, knowledge, and ideas that could be taught and measured in relative isolation—the new standards are an interconnection of skills and require a deep-level understanding of complex relationships among several concepts and ideas. Those who crafted the new standards proudly hail them as essential to college and career readiness for life in the 21st century.

The Common Core in Math and English Language Arts are the kick-off to what may become a national curriculum and assessment system in all four major subjects. And with so much negative press about America's education system, the last thing school districts need is to fumble on their first possession. We wrote this book to help schools and school systems successfully adopt and implement the new content standards.

We designed this book as a process guide for districts who are sincere about adopting the new standards and realize they are embarking on what is essentially the systematic redesign of classroom instruction. Because it contains suggestions for how to accomplish this goal—accompanied by actual examples, as well as quotes from practitioners who have been directly involved—the book offers an authenticity and relevance that are absent from more theoretical publications.

With so many similar books out there, why should readers buy THIS one?

1. It addresses all four core content areas, K–12, rather than only one subject or only one grade range (e.g., elementary, middle school, or high school).

2. It shows districts how to translate the new standards into a holistic, comprehensive instructional delivery system—not just a piece of one or a single component; it includes both the content and the cognitive demand of the new standards.
3. It helps teachers develop an entire suite of course tools for each grade level and subject, including curriculum maps and unit plans; daily lessons are easily derived from these unit plans and are flexible to permit differentiation as needed. In addition, the book addresses assessment of the standards through various strategies that help teachers adjust their teaching to be sure that they are truly meeting the rigor of the standards.
4. It accommodates the reality that a transformed curriculum—enriched by the new content standards and the 21st century skills—cannot be taught with traditional classroom strategies. It incorporates the best-practice techniques to deliver and assess classroom instruction, taking it to the level required by the new standards.
5. It is based on several years of experience in districts of various sizes and demographics (rather than only one district or only one demographic group).

Our book is equally appropriate for administrators and teachers. For administrators, the book offers both wide-angle and close-up advice about districtwide readiness; adjustments in the infrastructure; and the role of principals, coaches, and grade-level teams to launch and then sustain the new instructional program. For teachers, the book provides evidence-based, best-practice approaches to the delivery and assessment of classroom instruction and includes proven examples of specific techniques.

To allay the understandable skepticism of many readers, the messages from practitioners throughout the book are a testament to the processes described and the positive impact of these processes on staff and students. As educators, we must be willing to continue to grow and learn as the expectations change for our students. The following quote, from one of the people with whom we have worked, says it best.

. . . And from those who REALLY know. . . .

One of the things I love most about the teaching profession is the commitment educators make to being life-long learners. But I wonder how many teachers have really followed through with this commitment. I wonder how many teachers have simply been recycling skills, lesson plans, and worksheets, and become stagnant learners. While we often talk about how the Common Core and State Standards will challenge our students, and provide them with more in depth and rigorous learning experiences, I am most excited and hopeful about how these new standards will encourage . . . or in some cases, force . . . our nation's educators to grow as professionals, instructional leaders, and as learners.

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The cliché is that a patient would not go to a doctor who refused to keep current with new medical practices and research. Our students deserve no less. They deserve to be taught by teachers who are passionate about student learning, and their own personal and professional learning. The Common Core will not have a positive impact on students' learning unless our teachers are compelled to seek new instructional resources and strategies, build collaborative relationships with their colleagues, and renew their commitment to continually grow as learners.

As I help teachers to understand the Common Core standards and the implications they will have on their teaching, I am optimistic about the positive impact these standards will have not only on our students' achievement and growth, but on the professional learning of our teachers.—Jennifer M. Walker, 2009 Ohio Teacher of the Year, instructional consultant, Mahoning County (Ohio) Educational Service Center

With the commitment to being life-long learners, we hope that you enjoy the book as the tool to help you accomplish that goal.

—Judith K. March and Karen H. Peters