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# Preface

**W**e begin this third edition with a new title, *Reflective Practice for Renewing Schools*. We substituted *renewing* for *improving*. We were searching for a more energetic and empowering term. We were also inspired by John Goodlad who prefers the term *renewal* to *reform*. He explains,

[Reform suggests] somebody is trying to do something to somebody else who it thought to be wrong and who will be reformed if he or she follows these directions. By contrast, in renewal, [insiders] want to change and to do so in the light of knowledge, in the light of inquiry into what is needed. It's the difference between digging up a garden to replace all the plants with something else and nurturing the garden. (Ferrace, 2002, p. 31)

As with the first two editions, we are drawn to images of nature, nurture, and growth . . . and bristle from images of fixing inadequacies or remediating deficiencies. Learning environments differ from machines with interchangeable components. Authentic and lasting change is motivated internally and continues to grow in creative workplaces. This book is about tapping internal hopes and desires that inspire continuous learning by educators who, in turn, inspire and nurture continuous learning by today's young people in schools.

In the fifteen years since our first edition was published there has been an increasing stream of literature on the topic of reflective practice. Still dominant is literature about reflection in preservice teacher education and ongoing learning improvement for experienced professionals. Adding to this core is literature from the fields of nursing, adult education, and professional development for practicing educators. Emergent emphases include use of technology to support reflection, engaging students in reflective practice, and using reflection to foster cultural proficiency. Further, there are even more accounts of meaningful, ongoing, and collaborative reflective practice among educators in the context of instructional teams, observed schoolwide, among schools, and both districtwide and across districts. Importantly, there is a sharper focus on reflection as a means for advancing teaching and learning practices with the explicit

intent of increasing student achievement. We view the expanding literature base on reflective practice, including research on its effectiveness, as a sign of hope and encouragement that more reflection and learning is and can be happening in the lives of educators to the ultimate benefit of students.

At its core, we believe that reflective practice is about tapping into things deeply human: the desire to learn, to grow, to be in community with others, to contribute, to serve, and to make sense of our time on earth. We believe the vast majority of educators have chosen this most noble of professions in hopes of making a positive difference in the lives and development of young people, consequently making a difference in societal life for years to come. We know this work is enormously challenging given complex contexts of practice, the wide variety of individuals and communities with whom educators engage, and the unrelenting pressure to perform and to be accountable. We believe that effective teaching involves both the hard focus on standards, instruction, and outcomes and the softer focus of relationships, intuition, and emotion. Students remind us that both caring and competence are necessary teacher attributes. Without care, there is no connection to the competence. Without competence, there is no respect.

We are concerned when structures and cultures in schools impede our natural tendencies to learn, to connect, to create, and to contribute. Working in schools can feel like living in a container, limiting space, time, and access to nutrients. Plants in such environments eventually wither and die. People who work in isolating cultures and who are cut off from essential nutrients also can lose energy and wither. It is way too hard to go it alone as educators. Edward Deming asserted many years ago that much of the reason for moving away from the work and not doing work as well, lies in the culture and the structure of the environment. Fortunately, much has been learned about how to initiate and sustain the process of re-creating culture, structure, expectations, and support such that educators are renewed in their development work with children. We are grateful for the work of Peter Block and Edgar Schein who continue to provide renewed thinking about our cultures and community.

Reflective practice is at the root of renewed life and energy in schools. Trust is at the root of collaborative cultures that sustain growth. Reflective practice is the vital and largely untapped resource for significant and sustained effectiveness. Experience by itself is not enough. Reflection on experience with subsequent action is the pathway to renewal and continuous improvement. Reflection is a means for examining beliefs, assumptions, and practices. It can lead to encouraging insights about instructional effectiveness. It can also result in the discovery of incongruities between espoused beliefs and actual actions. Either way, the self-awareness gained through reflection can motivate individuals to initiate changes in practice to enhance student learning. Effective implementation of reflective practices requires continuous development of both individual and organizational learning capacities. The hectic pace and rigid structures in many schools makes it difficult to take time out to reflect and learn. The learning demands, however, continue to escalate for both students and staff.

For readers of this book, our desired outcomes are to understand the positive potential, and perhaps even the necessity of reflective practice to improve teaching and learning in schools; to initiate or extend individual commitments to reflective practice as a way to continuously learn and improve educational practice; and to support implementation of individual and collaborative reflective practices within schools. Implied is the assumption that in order for students to learn well in school, so, too, must the community of educators who encircle them. In the words of Art Costa, who wrote the foreword for all three editions of this book and who is renowned for his work in cognitive coaching, “If we don’t provide intellectually stimulating environments for teachers, why do we think they will provide that for students?”

This book offers a framework, strategies, and practice examples for thinking and doing as reflective educators. It is organized into eight chapters. In Chapter 1, we define reflective practice, provide a rationale for its potential to improve schools, describe characteristics of reflective educators, and present the reflective practice spiral as the organizing framework for the book. This framework asserts that the place to begin implementation of reflective practices is with oneself. From that base, reflective practice can expand to include colleagues throughout the school and organization. In Chapter 2, we identify and describe fundamental considerations for the design and development of conversations in which reflective practices are embedded. The learning, as always, is in the conversation. Skilled facilitators of reflective practice have learned ways to tailor learning structures, processes, and practices to both invite, and sometimes compel, community members to listen, speak, and learn together. Chapter 2 offers principles of adult learning, including findings from brain research that inform the design of conversational space. Also identified in Chapter 2 are practices for listening, thinking, promoting trust, along with conversational norms that when enacted result in every voice being heard. Chapter 2 closes with a new practice example that offers the short version of a five-year process of growing a more interdependent community of diverse practitioners with the focus of improving equitable opportunities for students who are traditionally at risk for being removed from general education. Chapter 3 is new to the book and specifically focuses on leadership understandings and practices aimed at growing more reflective communities of practice.

In Chapters 4 through 7, we offer strategies and examples for supporting reflective practices for individuals (Chapter 4), for partners (Chapter 5), for small groups and teams (Chapter 6), and school- and districtwide (Chapter 7). Finally, in Chapter 8, we share lessons learned from our experiences working with educators and schools to implement reflective practices. We also offer ideas and strategies for remaining hopeful about possibilities in our work. At the end of every chapter we include a reflection page for you to write down your own reflection with an aim toward application.

New to this third edition are greater attention to reflection for fostering equity and cultural competence and for being more mindful about ways our brains work to either be open to learning or to shut down. There are

more strategies for individual reflection as a means of continually clarifying, grounding, and refining both purpose and practice. There are new and more robust practice examples, including more administrator and school-wide examples. And, as mentioned above, there is more attention to ways to lead this work. In the accompanying website at <http://resources.corwin.com/YorkBarrReflective>, there are numerous resources that can be easily accessed and printed for use to design and guide reflective practices.

As with the first two editions, the primary audiences for this book are teacher leaders, staff development specialists, program coordinators, site administrators, and other educators who assume responsibility for renewal, improvement, and staff development in their school communities. Faculty involved in preservice, in-service, and ongoing service in the development of teachers and administrators should also find this book a useful resource as it offers foundations, strategies, and examples for continuous learning and development of the professional educator. To this list, we add “positive deviants” as an intended audience. Since the first edition, when we introduced the concept of positive deviance (grounded in the work of the late Jerry Sternin, an international development specialist for Save Our Children), the term has taken root in some educational circles (described more in Chapter 1). Briefly, positive deviants are individuals who thrive in situations that others do not, and situations where individuals would not necessarily be expected to thrive. In the context of education, positive deviants are those individuals who “Just do it!” to borrow Nike’s slogan, mindfully and with a deep understanding of context and culture. They are the seemingly innate reflective practitioners. They just continue to reflect and learn and grow, despite what seem to be constraining forces and conditions around them. We intend this book for the positive deviants among us who we hope will feel affirmed and supported in extending their enviable and attainable propensity for growth and renewal. Maybe this book can serve as a boost for those who continue to see possibilities and who do their part, every day, striving to create positive futures. We believe that now more than ever before, educators must continuously and meaningfully reflect on their practice—by themselves, and with their colleagues. We look forward to more learning about reflective practice and the results on learning for years to come. We are convinced of the extraordinary talent, good intentions, and steadfast commitments demonstrated by the vast majority of practicing educators in K–12 schools. We are equally convinced that without significant advances in opportunity and the capacity of individuals and schools to foster continuous renewal and improvement, the demands on educators will exceed their capacity to promote high levels of learning for all students. We offer this book as encouragement and reference for individual and collective efforts to create schools where both students and adults continually learn. We cannot be like the Nike slogan and do it alone. We must go together. A commitment to reflective practice is a journey toward realizing our potential as educators to move beyond humans just doing to become humans being.