

Foreword

What a pleasure to be part of this important book that speaks directly to principals in precisely the method they appreciate the most—advice and counsel from their peers. It's a great honor to be able to introduce the wise words of outstanding and award-winning school leaders, most of whom I know well and respect enormously.

I was taken, but not surprised, by the totally child-centered approach each contributor to this book took as he or she discussed successes on the job. Principals stress treating all children with dignity. They always place children before all else. Next come their staffs and their families and, finally, themselves. In my experience, great principals tend to be humble but steely strong leaders who give credit to others. But they are always in the background making the tough decisions, doing what's best for children, and backing up their staffs.

For over two decades, we have heard this when our National Distinguished Principals come to Washington, D.C., for this most prestigious award presented by the National Association of Elementary School Principals and the U.S. Department of Education. As they accept the award, they always point out how much help they've had along the way. But we know that it's *their* decisions, drive, and dedication that set the tone and create the climate of their outstanding schools. Furthermore, the glitter of the award is quickly pushed aside as they eagerly share their best practices and eagerly learn all they can from their esteemed colleagues from across the country and around the world.

xii Best Practices of Award-Winning Elementary Principals

This book overflows with ways to keep standards and staff morale high. The principals define customer-friendly schools and illustrate how sharing decisions with staff makes schools stronger. They explain how to help children *belong* in their schools rather than just attend. However, their advice doesn't end with the final bell. They truly welcome and understand how to help struggling students, at-risk youngsters, non-English speakers, and the many children who need far more time and attention than schools are expected to offer.

In 2001, the National Association of Elementary School Principals published a landmark report, *Leading Learning Communities: What Principals Should Know and Be Able to Do*, as a guide to principals in crafting their responsibilities in key instructional areas. Without a doubt, the contributors to this book know what to do, how to do it, and when to do it!

Vincent Ferrandino
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