

Foreword

PUBLIC EDUCATION IS EVERYONE'S RESPONSIBILITY

Public education is the single most important public institution in a democratic society. It is our ultimate department of defense against poverty, ignorance, hatred, and intolerance. It is the vehicle by which we transmit democratic and civic values to future generations, and it is the means by which we produce an educated citizenry capable of civic leadership, personal virtue, public deliberation, and economic and social vitality.

The institution of public education is deeply woven into the fabric of American life. Today, with more than 48 million children attending America's public schools, we can justifiably take pride in the scope of and access to public education that exists in this nation. But scope and access are only half the story. Today, public and governmental responsibilities in education and the strong connection that Americans have with their public schools are being put to a serious test. The battle in education is for equity and for the right of every child to a quality education, and this is a battle we must win.

Every generation of Americans has had to wrestle with the challenge of educating its youth. This generation is no exception, and, fortunately, we now know what it takes for all children to learn. We know it takes qualified teachers, capable school leaders, supportive learning environments, adequate resources, a rigorous curriculum, high expectations linked to standards, fair diagnostic assessments, and nonacademic supports that help students build strong minds and healthy bodies. But one vital ingredient has been missing in this formula for education excellence, and that ingredient is public responsibility.

This is where the talents, experience, and passion of Stan Levenson are making an important difference for public schools. As Stan points out, private fundraising for public schools has gone big time. School fundraising from nonpublic sources has grown by leaps and bounds in the last few decades, from schools seeking hundreds of dollars for individual classroom projects to schools seeking millions of dollars for long-delayed construction and to meet instructional needs that clearly are not being met. This book makes a clear and compelling case for the role that big-time fundraising will play in improving all American schools. The book is a concise primer for classroom teachers, parents, and administrators in their pursuit of outside funding for their schools.

Many school districts have created school foundations to raise and manage donations from outside contributors, including individuals, businesses, fundraising

events, and grants from governmental and philanthropic agencies. There are a great variety of shapes and sizes of school fundraising staff and organized school foundations. They can range from a part-time staff member who writes grants to entrepreneurial parent groups that raise money through car washes and golf tournaments to multimillion-dollar campaigns that allure wealthy patrons and partner with big businesses.

Learning about and adopting the techniques of big-time fundraising helps schools to move away from nickel-and-dime fundraising activities, like bake sales and candy sales, into the world of big bucks that colleges and universities have long enjoyed as a boost to their ability to become world-class learning institutions. When it comes to big-time fundraising, Stan's book is the most specific and most comprehensive book ever written on the subject for the public schools. It includes actual methods and techniques for securing monies from individual donors as well as from corporations, foundations, and a wide array of governmental agencies.

The book is worth its asking price for its extensive bibliography and Web addresses alone, which will save readers hundreds of hours of mind-numbing online research. In addition, the examples of winning grant applications and proposals will help save readers from the frustration of starting from scratch or from the head-slapping realization that they have spent important time reinventing the wheel. Stan describes in great detail the previously unrevealed shortcuts of school fundraising. These well-kept secrets used by wealthy and advantaged school districts are laid out in the open for everyone to use to help improve public education for all children.

Stan Levenson is uniquely qualified to map the terrain of school fundraising. For nearly four decades, he has served as a dedicated classroom teacher and school administrator. He is a successful fundraiser and a respected author. His work has appeared in esteemed professional publications such as the *School Administrator*, the *American School Board Journal*, and *Principal Leadership*. His previous book, *How to Get Grants and Gifts for the Public Schools*, has proven to be an indispensable training manual for school fundraisers.

Stan is a pragmatist. Schools need more money, and he is here to help show them how to get it. He helps fundraisers understand the entire spectrum of the fundraising process: Donor research, appeal-letter and proposal writing, goal development, program evaluation, effective stewardship, and budgeting are just a few of the topics he ably examines.

Throughout this process, he is guided by a strong moral compass. At no time does he overpromise results. Money does not grow on trees, and schools will not raise significant sums of money unless they are organized, clear about their needs, honest in their dealings, accountable to donors for results, and endlessly thankful to their patrons.

Like many informed and engaged citizens, Stan is working with schools to identify private sources of support to help address today's unmet needs. At the same time, he is working to increase public understanding of the need to make public education our number-one public priority, so that the important instructional needs of schools are met by public tax dollars.

But, as much as schools need money, they need friends in local communities, in state houses, and in the White House. Stan knows that effective stewardship in public education requires citizens to vote not only with their checkbooks but also in the ballot box. As citizens, we take responsibility for our public schools when we vote for the candidates and provide the public funding that support and advance

education equity. As elected officials, we take responsibility when we keep the promises we made while campaigning and when we fight for the resources our public schools need. As school administrators and teachers, we take responsibility when we put into place appropriate teaching and learning practices so that *all* children can learn to high standards. As community leaders, we take responsibility when we provide long-term money, support innovation, give new ideas time to take root, and give educators time to work out the kinks and make a genuine difference. We are all responsible.

We as a nation cannot afford to stand by and allow our public schools become wastelands of mediocrity, ill equipped to meet the needs of our society or educate the future citizens of our democracy. We must not allow millions of children to grow up unaware of their rights and responsibilities as citizens and unprepared to support themselves and their families, with little or no stake in society's welfare. We must not accept achievement gaps, tolerate inequitable funding systems, make do with deteriorating buildings and outdated textbooks, and defend failing schools and substandard teaching.

Stan Levenson provides both insightful analysis and proven tools and strategies to help schools think creatively about making new, more powerful allies and friendships when it comes to harnessing private financial resources. Had this book been published 25 years ago, the current landscape of public education would be different as a result. His book adds greatly to our understanding of the need for public schools to be proactive in seeking outside funds for support.

Ensuring that every child in America has a quality public education takes time, takes money, and, most of all, requires acceptance of our personal and collective responsibility. Schools ignore this imperative to engage the public at their own peril. Stan adds to our understanding of public school fundraising, of the profound financial needs of public schools, and of the political pressures that we must resolve so that we can reclaim, revitalize, and reestablish public education as the powerful engine of democratic principles and progress it is meant to be. His book begs us as a nation to rethink our public commitment to public education. At the same time, Stan helps communities harvest the ripe fruit of personal and collective generosity. His book, which is extremely constructive and just plain valuable, helps communities to leave no stone unturned in the search for funds that will help improve student learning. In shifting our sights to the new world of big-time fundraising, Stan has made a groundbreaking, noteworthy, and lasting contribution to the field of public school improvement and reform.

—Wendy D. Puriefoy

Wendy D. Puriefoy is president of Public Education Network (PEN), a national organization of local education funds and individuals working to improve public schools and build citizen support for quality public education in low-income communities across the nation.