

Foreword

You can tell Nancy is a classroom teacher first. Sure, she's also been a professor and principal and staff developer and authored many professional books. But when you read this resource you now hold in your hands, what shines through is this: *Nancy is a teacher*.

Only a teacher would know that this is just the right book for teachers, right now.

Right now, teachers need support with teaching kids to read nonfiction. The Common Core's call for a 50/50 balance of literature and informational texts by fourth grade means that now, more than ever before, teachers need to know how to teach children to read a wider range of nonfiction texts over more time. More than the handful of minutes it takes for a class to shared read a *TIME for Kids* article, more than using nonfiction solely for research purposes or to dip in and dip out based on a scan of the index. *Real* nonfiction reading. Helping kids understand main ideas and key details, wrestle with challenging vocabulary even when English might not be their first language, make sense of text structures and text features. This is big work, and this book helps.

Right now, with the pressures to help kids read more and more complex texts, Nancy Akhavan has a solution that is sensible: Make sure that kids are doing the work, not the teacher. Make sure to leave lots of time for independent practice. Nancy's practical suggestions for routines that she calls the Daily Duo are rooted in the work of educational heroes like Pearson and Gallagher, Wiggins and McTighe, Afflerbach, Calkins, and Allington. She helps teachers to hold tight to what works in a time when some might suggest we look the other way.

And now, with the ever-mounting pressures and, at times, minimal staff development, what might many teachers want most? A book filled with clearly laid-out, practical, and ready-to-use lessons based on research they can trust. Unlike many lesson books, however, in this book Nancy puts faith in the teacher's judgment and in her close and careful assessment of her students. The lessons are organized so they can be easily navigated, but are not meant to be used one after another like a script.

As I travel the country these days, working with teachers from New York to Seattle, I find I'm met with a lot of panic. Much of it I find to be rooted in misinterpretations that are based on instructional shifts described in the publisher's criteria, not the actual Standards themselves. Nancy gives it to us straight—telling us what the Common Core says about nonfiction reading and what it doesn't, and how the comprehension research of the last few decades intersects with new recommendations.

Now, just as it's always been, it's about *comprehension*.

—Jennifer Serravallo