

# Introduction

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**A**mong the additions to this new edition of the book are parent education resource letters. Principals are called on to help with many parenting issues. These letters are designed to keep the communication channels open on issues that relate to student performance at school as well as health and wellness.

The number of positive, complimentary letters has been increased. There can never be too many complimentary letters. In fact, a principal's goal for each day may be to write at least one complimentary letter or note. Imagine the impact this small initiative could have in a school!

New letters are included that refer to achievement tests, assessments, standards, and the requirements of the No Child Left Behind Act. Also included are additional letters for behavior and crisis situations.

All of the letters in this edition have been reviewed and updated. The explosion of e-mail use since the first edition is noteworthy. Although many forms of communication can be handled as e-mail, there is no electronic substitute for the personal touch of a letter!

Mary Poppins's phrase, "well begun is half done," was the spirit guiding the preparation of this collection. The letters presented here and on the accompanying CD are intended as *templates*. They are meant to be a beginning. The templates have been designed to be generic, allowing the letter writers to *personalize them to specific situations*. Specialized language and educational jargon have been avoided so that the letters can be compatible with many different school settings.

The letters that can make a difference in the principalship are often the letters that principals have no time to prepare. Often, "must write" negative letters consume the principal's letter-writing energies. This collection of letters is primarily focused on the letters that principals have little or no time to prepare. Clearly, principals know how to write letters; they simply have incredible time constraints. The letters in this manual are not substitutes for the personalized letters that principals will craft. This collection is merely a starter kit.

The sequence of letters begins with the positives: thank-you letters, congratulations, best wishes, and other personal correspondence. These are the letters that build a culture of care throughout a school community. Recognition for a job well done or for a special contribution to the education of students are letters that make the work life of a school a positive experience. Remember: You can *never* write too many thank-you letters.

## HIGH-IMPACT LETTERS FOR BUSY PRINCIPALS

Letters that are short, simple, and sincere can convey the right touch to the recipient. Letters that are personal, such as condolence notes, should be handwritten.

## 2 194 HIGH-IMPACT LETTERS FOR BUSY PRINCIPALS

The letters are derived from a number of sources. Practicing principals contributed letters; these principals are cited in the acknowledgments. Other letters come from my files, from personal experiences as an administrator and teacher in elementary, junior high, and senior high school settings. Letters have also been collected during years of association with principals, with schools, and from parenting five children.

Some letters get written because they simply must be written. These may fall under a heading of discipline or problem behaviors, and they often have legal implications. School attorneys often assist in the preparation of these formal letters. This collection of letters is not designed to address these sensitive issues. Often, state statutes and specific school district policies frame these letters, and template letters would not be appropriate.

Principals provide many types of correspondence. Teacher appraisals, special education reports, forms pertaining to various uses, and newsletters are other types of written communication. This collection does not include these. School districts have teacher appraisal procedures and accompanying documentation based on district policies. For individuals who do not work in districts with established procedures, *The Marginal Teacher*<sup>1</sup> is an excellent resource. Special education procedures and correspondence deserve a special collection of letters targeted to the participants in this process. There are a number of companies that provide education forms for schools. School newsletters are an important communication device. Newsletter samples would fill an entire notebook, too. For these reasons, these forms of correspondence are not included in this collection.

These letters are for the principal leader who will be the key communicator for the school. They are meant to enhance and articulate the work of the schools and their leaders.

### **NOTE**

1. *The Marginal Teacher: A Step-by-Step Guide to Fair Procedures for Identification and Dismissal* (3rd ed.), by C. E. Lawrence, was published in 2005 in Thousand Oaks, CA, by Corwin Press.