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# Preface to the Second Edition

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**N**early ten years ago, the idea that became the Parallel Curriculum Model—or PCM as we have come to call it—had its genesis in a series of conversations between Sandy Kaplan and me. Those elongated conversations, held alternately on the West Coast and East Coast, remain some of the most engaging and challenging of my life. Over the period of a year, Sandy and I sketched out the premise and framework for the Parallel Curriculum Model.

Over the following two years, we expanded the discussion to include colleagues, associates, classroom teachers, and graduate students from across the U.S., inviting them to review and respond to the model. The model benefitted greatly from their counsel.

Ultimately, Jeanne Purcell, Deb Burns, and Jann Leppien signed on to help us “put meat on the bones” of the PCM framework, and became our partners in writing the first edition of *The Parallel Curriculum*.

In time, about a score of noted educators reviewed the draft manuscript. A number of those individuals represented major educational professional groups. Again, they sharpened our thinking and enhanced our work.

The first edition of *The Parallel Curriculum Model* was published in 2002.

Many of the educators who had a hand in originally developing The Parallel Curriculum Model have a background in the education of gifted learners. The Parallel Curriculum Model was initially created with those learners in mind. Those of us who have worked extensively with such students understood that these students are often ill-served by curriculum and instruction aimed at a ceiling of expectations far lower than the one that they can and should reach. For that reason, it was of interest for us to create a contemporary curriculum model that could help teachers extend the considerable intellectual reach of the most able students in our schools. Many of our conversations, and much of the PCM planning, centered around this first understanding.

We also understood a second truth, however. There is no single profile for a highly able or gifted student. There are bright kids whose ability is so overt that no one can miss it. There are kids who are both highly able and learning disabled. There are bright kids who are just learning to speak English, who come from low-income backgrounds, whose performance is muted by issues of gender or race. There are convergently bright kids—and divergently bright ones. There are bright kids who can’t wait to go to school each morning, and bright kids who are deeply alienated from school. This second understanding spawned other conversations for us as we

tried to ensure that whatever model we developed provided ample room and support for high performing students and for students with the potential to perform well academically, but who do not do so for a stunningly wide variety of reasons.

It is also the case, however, that all of us who authored the first edition have worked with a broad range of students during our educational careers—students of all ages, in many subjects, and a very broad array of learning strengths and needs. We are all champions of better schools and classrooms for kids, and we understand that most students spend too much time working with curriculum and instruction that is “flat” and uninspiring. This third understanding led us, from the beginning, to other conversations and the agreement that virtually all students should work with the kind of curriculum and instruction reflected in PCM.

Said somewhat differently, all of us believe that our schools and the students in those schools would fare much better if educators created curriculum and instruction from the belief that virtually all students would benefit from the very highest quality of curriculum, and then provided a support system to enable most students to work successfully with such curriculum.

In the six years between the first and second edition, all three discussions have continued and expanded.

We have been joined in various PCM writing endeavors by Cindy Strickland, Marcia B. Imbeau, and Kathy Glass. The members of a PhD curriculum seminar at the University of Virginia’s Curry School of Education conducted a semester-long, very detailed analysis of our first edition and possible revisions. Professors and students from many colleges and universities have used PCM to study curriculum and to create it. Schools and school districts, both public and private, both in the U.S. and abroad, have adopted PCM as a curriculum model. Once again, our work has been strengthened and our conversations extended by these partnerships.

We hope this second edition of *The Parallel Curriculum* does justice to the interest, time, and investment of many, many people. This new edition does reflect the three ongoing and intertwined conversations that have now spanned a decade. You’ll find here a model that makes at least three assumptions. First, it is very important for advanced learners to work with curriculum and instruction designed to serve as a catalyst for their continued advancement as thinkers and learners. Second, to ensure persistently escalating challenge for advanced learners, curriculum developers and teachers must have an understanding of what advanced challenge looks like and a mechanism for consistently incorporating such challenge in curriculum. Third, at a given time, all students are somewhere on a continuum from novice to expert in the various disciplines. The vast majority of those students would benefit from working with rich curriculum designed to engage them with important ideas, enhance their capacity as thinkers, and invite them to address authentic problems as contributing adults do.

Look inside some schools. In many, a limited use of complex multifaceted curriculum will reflect a tacit belief that only a few students are really smart, and they were born that way. In a few schools, broad use of complex, multifaceted curriculum will reflect a tacit belief that many students can be smart if nurtured

and supported toward that end. *The Parallel Curriculum* authors are convinced that outcomes for schools and students are predicted by the will of educators to teach far more students as though they were highly capable, and the skill of these educators to do so. We hope the second edition will contribute to both that will and skill.

Carol Ann Tomlinson (2008)