About This Book

After experiencing the power of practitioner inquiry as a part of my dissertation work where I engaged in collaborative action research with a group of teachers and their principal for an entire school year in 1991, I have been passionate about practitioner inquiry ever since. For the past 20 years, I have integrated inquiry into the fabric of initial teacher preparation in the professional development school; presented workshops, institutes, and various presentations on practitioner research to teachers and administrators in several states across the nation; initiated a program of action research in K–12 virtual schools; coached and studied principals engaged in inquiry as a way to gain insights into their administrative practice; directed a center for school improvement whose main goal was to support and promote practitioner research as a primary mechanism for school improvement across the state of Florida; created a website to support teachers in the inquiry process; and authored several books and research studies aimed at helping practitioners inquire into their practice. Across all of these inquiry endeavors, I have worked with hundreds of educators as they embarked on the inquiry journey.

Over time, I began to see patterns emerge in many teacher researchers’ initial approaches to their work. These patterns encapsulated places where their initial work in each phase of the action research process might have been tweaked or massaged just a bit to lead to more powerful and deeper research efforts. I believed that if captured and placed in a succinct and useable form, teacher inquirers everywhere could learn from these patterns, dig deeper into their work, and ultimately produce higher quality research to improve life and learning conditions for teachers and students everywhere. This is why this book was written.
Who This Book Is For and How to Use It

While there exists a plethora of introductory texts on teacher research, this book takes off where other introductory texts on action research leave the reader, providing teacher inquirers tips for each part of the inquiry process as they are in the midst of doing it (i.e., developing a wondering, developing an inquiry plan, analyzing data, and presenting one’s work). Hence, it serves as a perfect complement to books that introduce the process of practitioner inquiry, and coordinates seamlessly with the introductory text I authored with Diane Yendol-Hoppey, *The Reflective Educator’s Guide to Classroom Research*. Yet this book can also be used as a short, succinct, stand-alone text to guide teachers through the inquiry process in a very targeted and specific way. Teachers can use this text to get jump-started in the process for the first time and can refer to lengthier texts on the subject later to learn more detail about the process.

Many preservice teachers engage in inquiry as a part of their teacher education programs at various times and in various configurations. In addition, many practicing teachers engage in inquiry as a part of advanced graduate study at the university. Sometimes course work for preservice teachers and graduate students focuses specifically on action research, and at other times, action research is undertaken as an assignment in a content or methods course, such as Teaching Children Mathematics. This book may be used as a text in any university course (whether or not the course focuses on action research) to scaffold assignments related to inquiry that may be a part of the class syllabus. Its short length enables the text to be used in content courses without overwhelming the student, and as a complement to other readings on practitioner research, it will help students enrolled in courses on action research produce higher quality final projects.

In addition to being a valuable resource for practicing teachers to supplement other lengthier texts or jump-start them in the process of inquiry as professional development and college students to help them craft higher quality research as a part of coursework, this book is also for any educator who coaches action research. In essence, the book itself serves as an action research coach. It is a brief resource coaches can give to their coachees to provide them with a checklist of sorts as they progress through each phase of the inquiry process, making the complex job of the inquiry coach easier.

The goal of this book is to help teachers fine-tune their work and ultimately produce higher quality research than would be produced
in the absence of deliberate reflection on and careful scrutiny of each phase in the action research cycle: developing a wondering, developing a research plan, analyzing data, and presenting the research. If you are a teacher researcher, this book can serve as a critical friend, gently pushing you a little further in each step of the process. And if we all push ourselves a little deeper in the inquiry process, we capitalize on the capacity of teacher research to raise teacher voice in educational reform and improve schooling for all children. Happy inquiring!