

# How to Use This Book

In writing this second edition, I was pleased at how much of the first edition was still relevant and also excited about updating those parts influenced by the many changes in the educational scene during the several years since its publication. In fact, I got so excited thinking about issues both old and new that I was inspired to write four new messages just for this second edition. Throughout this new edition, you will notice some recurring themes that have become even clearer to me in recent years than when I first wrote this book. In particular, I hope you will notice a theme related to equity, intelligence, and the incredible potential of all students; a theme on challenging students to think by teaching with a problem-centered approach focused on student engagement and classroom discourse; and a theme on the importance of teachers and others working together to address challenges and improve student learning.

This may not be a book you read from front to back, but I encourage you to read all of it eventually. Feel free to read the messages in whatever order you choose, based on which issues challenge you, which topics resonate with you, or which titles appeal to you at any particular moment. Each of the messages connects to other messages in various ways. You might choose to follow a path suggested by the related messages listed at the end of each piece, or you might choose to read the messages in numerical order.

The messages are arranged in three parts, each with a slightly different focus. Part I encompasses overarching, global issues especially appealing to a general audience, including policy makers and those outside of education, as well as curriculum developers and school leaders. Part II targets school and community issues relevant for local decision makers and communities. Part III looks more closely at issues of interest in schools and classrooms, especially for teachers. Part IV consists of four additional messages new to the second edition, revisiting themes from the rest of the book—equity, technology, teaching, and mathematical thinking (habits of mind). Throughout each part there are messages that reach across all audiences, as we all deal with issues and decisions that affect mathematics teaching and learning in and out of the classroom.

Following Part IV are four appendices. Appendices A and B include resources for finding and selecting worthwhile tasks around which teachers can design engaging lessons. Appendix C identifies a small

set of resources I offer as a starting point for an essential professional library for teachers and leaders in mathematics. Finally, Appendix D includes a list of research summaries and position statements from the National Council of Supervisors of Mathematics and the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics.

Together, the messages address many of the issues we face in school mathematics, but they are not intended to present a comprehensive overview of the entire area of mathematics education. Rather, they are intended to stimulate personal reflection and interactive discussion, sometimes around delicate topics not always addressed in school settings. Accordingly, each piece concludes with reflection and discussion questions for teachers, families, leaders, and policy makers. To continue the discussion, these questions are followed by a list of related messages from both this book and from its partner volume, *Smarter Than We Think*, as well as a list of additional resources under the heading “More to Consider,” consisting of books, articles, websites, and so on, related to the issues, themes, or stories in the message. In keeping with the emphasis on stimulating reflection and discussion, I have tried to include a range of resources that sometimes present different or opposing points of view. Both the “Related Messages” section and the resources included under “More to Consider” are listed not in numerical or alphabetical order, but with those I’ve determined most relevant to the particular message presented first.

I hope the reflection and discussion questions help you process the ideas presented in the message, reflect on how you agree or disagree, and consider possible actions to take in your classroom, school, home, or community. For those who support others in learning and leading, I hope you will also use these questions as you work with groups of teachers, future teachers, teacher educators, coaches, families, administrators, or other educational leaders to challenge the status quo and to consider how we might take action to change the system where it needs to change.

I have proposed many ideas related to the challenges we face in our classrooms, schools, communities, and nation, and many more ideas can be generated as others engage in the discussion. But turning ideas into solutions that work in any particular setting calls for committed and coordinated dialogue, planning, and action. I hope these messages stimulate, enhance, and reinvigorate the work that dedicated educators and other individuals undertake to reach the goal of a high-quality mathematics education for every student.