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# Preface

**W**hen I first created this work, I titled it *Lucky to Be a Teacher*. It reflected my concern that too many teachers lose track of the reasons why they entered the profession and easily become frustrated by the oftentimes overwhelming responsibilities of a classroom teacher. The statistics bear this out. Data for the United States indicate that about 15% of new teachers leave teaching within the first year, 30% within three years, and 40 to 50% within five years (Smith & Ingersoll, 2003). In inner city schools, that number jumps to one half of the teachers quitting within three years (Dickson, 2006).

The first version of the book was self-published in 1994, while I was on a sabbatical leave from teaching to work on my PhD at Vanderbilt University. That sabbatical leave was to be my first of two departures from the classroom. The second departure came after I earned that degree, gave up my classroom teaching position, and became an educational and behavioral consultant. On both occasions when I left the classroom, I became acutely aware that I longed for the life-changing interactions, the shaping time, and the joy that teaching affords. As a result, I returned to the classroom after each hiatus.

The purpose for my writing the original book was to prevent the burnout that I believed took many fine teachers away from our profession.

The second version of the book was published in 2005, when Eric Jensen noticed the work and asked me to revise it for his Brain Store collection. Its name was changed to *Cognitive Nourishment: Life-Changing Affirmations for the Savvy Teacher* in order to emphasize the exciting new research that was fast emerging in the field of brain-compatible teaching, neuropsychology, and neurology.

And, now we have arrived at the third version, which you are reading. In 2006, the Brain Store was sold to Corwin Press, and I was contacted to update and revise the book. With each version, there have been changes to the book's format and content. It has now evolved into a workbook, in which is included a series of thoughtful questions after each affirmation and elaboration, personalizing the message so that teachers can apply each statement to their own unique situation.

The original goal for writing the book has not changed: to inspire teachers of every grade and ability level to refocus on the importance of their profession and to help them build the necessary resilience to stay in the field. However, the format has again evolved to get the reader more actively involved with the message through reflective contemplation and self-awareness. In my classroom, I refer to this as *self smart* or *intrapersonal work*. I tell my students that most children and many adults ignore this most important aspect of their intellectual and emotional development, yet so much can be learned from self-evaluation and healthy introspection.

It is my hope that you will face your students with renewed vigor, improved skills, and increased enthusiasm after using this workbook, that you will experience the passion and rewards that teaching can bring, and that you will fully realize that you are incredibly lucky to be a teacher!

Whereas some teachers just *hope* for positive life changes, those who use cognitive affirmations become inspired to *produce* their own future. The savvy teacher knows that a daily dose of cognitive affirmations will nourish the brain and cause it to flourish.

Think positively, work hard, and be honest as you reflect on the affirmations, and you will find new excitement and success in teaching. Remember: We tend to become the person our thoughts prepare us to be.