

Preface

The book you hold in your hand is the outcome of many years of research done by Richard J. Shavelson and his colleagues at the Stanford Education Assessment Laboratory (SEAL). In many cases, this research began before I even started teaching.

My work in formative assessment started during my time as a high school biology and earth science teacher. My education professors and school administrators always said that I needed to do formative assessment in my classroom. At that time, I thought that formative assessment consisted of pre-assessing students at the beginning of a unit and then doing quizzes and grading papers through each of my units to find out what they were learning.

When I went to graduate school, however, I had the good fortune of working for Professor Shavelson and SEAL's codirector, Maria Araceli Ruiz-Primo, and I learned that there was much more to formative assessment than I had previously known. During my years at Stanford, SEAL collaborated with researchers and curriculum developers at the University of Hawaii at Manoa on a study funded by the National Science Foundation (ESI-0095520) that tested Black and Wiliam's (1998) contention that formative assessment has a positive impact on student learning. This project was called the Romance Project and was initiated before I got to graduate school. Under the mentorship of Dr. Ruiz-Primo, my primary responsibility on the project was to assist in the development of formative assessments, to help train teachers taking part in the research, and to visit and communicate with the teachers as they enacted the assessments in their classrooms.

The study lasted three years, and we learned an immense amount about what formative assessment looks like in practice. For me, the study sparked my interest in what formative assessment truly was—not quizzes and assignments but a perspective on teaching that integrates students' alternative conceptions, good teaching practices, and research-based assessment techniques. I had the opportunity to present some of this work to teachers through the Center for the Assessment and Evaluation of Student Learning (CAESL) and to hear what they thought about it. Most of the time, the response was the same: Your research is interesting, but I want to hear about how I can use these assessment techniques and approaches in *my* classroom.

As a former teacher, I took that feedback to heart, reflecting on how my perspective had evolved through my work as a research assistant on the

Romance Project. I became committed to adapting all we had learned through our research into a resource for practicing teachers. I took the *Teachers' Guide to the Reflective Lessons*, the handbook written by SEAL for the research project, and adapted it into a workshop for teachers at a meeting of the Knowles Science Teaching Foundation and from there developed it into a book.

The work that is presented in this book is based on the research and curriculum development activities of a number of individuals: Rich Shavelson, Maria Araceli Ruiz-Primo, Carlos Ayala, and Yue Yin at Stanford, collaborating with Frank Pottenger, Donald Young, Paul Brandon, Rachael Jones, and Miki Tomita at the Curriculum Research and Development Group at the University of Hawaii. In addition, the book is based on the priceless experiences of the teachers in the Romance Project, who for the purposes of research will remain anonymous. These and the other teachers—and their students—featured in this book are identified only by pseudonyms, but without their openness and candor, this work would not have been possible.