# Study and Discussion Guide

The following suggestions have been designed to facilitate a discussion-based approach to reading the book with a group of parents and/or community members.

- 1. Share the list of guiding questions for a chapter prior to reading it as a way to introduce the content. Ask participants to think of one or two of their own questions about the chapter content in advance of reading.
- 2. Choose one or more of the guiding questions to frame the discussion of the chapter.
- 3. Encourage participants to keep notes on important ideas, areas of agreement, disagreement, or confusion, and questions.

# Chapter 1—Assessment in School Today

### Content

- Defines assessment and lays out the different kinds of assessments in use today
- Introduces the differences between assessment *of* learning (summative) and assessment *for* learning (formative)
- Explains accountability testing
- Describes the state of assessment literacy in schools today

# Guiding Questions for Chapter 1 Discussion

- What is assessment?
- How has assessment changed since we were in school?
- Why are there so many assessments these days?
- What are the differences between assessment *of* learning and assessment *for* learning?
- To what extent are educators prepared to use assessment to maximize our children's learning?

# Chapter 2—Connecting Student Motivation and Assessment

#### Content

- Summarizes research on connections among assessment, motivation, and student achievement
- Explains what research-based practices look like in the classroom

# Guiding Questions for Chapter 2 Discussion

- What assessment practices are likely to increase student motivation to learn?
- What role can assessment *for* learning play in the support of underachieving students?
- What types of feedback about their work will help our children learn the most?

# Chapter 3—What Students Learn: Standards, Curriculum, and Learning Targets

## Content

- Explains the importance of having a curriculum
- Shows how curriculum is structured and defines kinds of learning targets
- Describes how parents can learn about their district's curriculum

# Guiding Questions for Chapter 3 Discussion

- How do teachers know what to teach each day?
- Is there a high-quality written curriculum in place for each grade-level and subject in our neighborhood schools?
- Are our children getting a clear picture of what they are to learn in school? How would we as parents know that?

# Chapter 4—Classroom Assessment: Principles, Methods, and Issues of Quality

## Content

- Defines standards of assessment quality
- Explains the range of assessment methods in use
- Describes what student involvement in each method looks like
- Addresses the issue of helping with homework

## Guiding Questions for Chapter 4 Discussion

- Of the tests our children take, which ones assess what part(s) of the curriculum?
- When student involvement in assessment is done successfully, what does it look like?
- What constitutes productive help on homework?

# Chapter 5—Standardized Testing

### Content

- Describes different kinds of standardized tests and what each is designed to do
- Discusses high-stakes testing issues

## Guiding Questions for Chapter 5 Discussion

- What are the differences between norm-referenced tests and criterion-referenced tests?
- Which of these tests do our children take in school, and what do these tests measure?
- What can be done to minimize our heavy reliance on standardized tests?
- What are the high-stakes testing issues that concern me the most? Which do I support and why?

# Chapter 6—Communicating About Student Learning

#### Content

- Explains grading and report cards
- Describes other forms of communication in place in schools
- Discusses the benefits of students communicating about their own learning
- Explains communication about standardized tests
- Explores the connection between state test results and report card grades

## Guiding Questions for Chapter 6 Discussion

- In what ways does my child's teacher/school/district communicate with me currently about my child's progress as a learner?
- Is communication about my child's learning accurate, understandable, and timely?
- What factors should be considered to create the report card grades students receive?
- What factors should not be included in calculating those same grades?
- What role can students play in communicating about their own learning?
- What do I as a parent want to know about the results of a standardized test?
- What other ways beyond test scores and grades are there for me to learn about my child's progress?

# Chapter 7—Putting the Pieces Together: Parent and Community Involvement in School Assessment

## Content

- Offers general tips for working with schools
- Provides chapter-by-chapter suggestions for what parents should know and can do

# Guiding Questions for Chapter 7 Discussion

- Which questions suggested in this chapter might I want to ask? To whom might I address these questions?
- Which actions suggested in this chapter might I take?