

Preface

Reading matters! It is a pervasive feature of quality living, a learned feature of personal and social development that has extended the nature, scope, and effectiveness of day-to-day life from what readers have been able to do as agents in the earliest forms of the communicative arts to their interfaces with twenty-first-century digital literacy.

Our purpose in this book is to open up to researchers, teachers, and others associated with effective instruction what has been happening in different parts of the world to help improve reading. In each of the chapters that follow is an account of research-based attempts to better understand and act on the compelling need to advance and improve reading. This work then is a basis for seeing what it is that improving readers do as they improve—what innovations have been involved, what critical issues for promoting students' engagement and reading improvement in the twenty-first century were identified, what research evidence and theoretical models underpinned these issues as critical and innovations as successful, and where further research has been signaled.

Connections between research and practice are better and more enduring when they build on objectives, exploration, and discovery that are shared and valued in both domains. In education, such commonality is important around ensuring that issues critical to the instructional interface are anticipated, recognized, and accommodated through innovative pedagogy, policy, and resources. For example, researchers, educators, and communities want to know what changes, if any, are to be made in relation to twenty-first-century media, technology, and learning if students' reading improvement is to be achieved sustainably. Further, we would like to know more about the characteristics of reading engagement and what evidence is at hand that these are closely connected to how well students read not only in the texts and images of their literate lives, but also in the cognition and metacognition they build about reading, improving, and themselves as readers and improvers. We would also like to pursue what we have learned about negative effects on children's and young people's enjoyment of reading that have possible, if unintended, connection with community responses to systemic testing and reporting of national reading performances through comparative assessment such as the Program for

International Student Assessment (PISA) or Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS).

Demonstrable and trustworthy accounts of alliances of research and classroom innovation that will help progress areas of interest such as those mentioned above are pertinent to strengthening research–practice connections—and to improving how we go about improving reading in the twenty-first century. Authors of the 15 chapters in this book have attempted to provide accounts of where, how, and with what effect such strengthening has begun to happen.

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