

FOREWORD

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As *Middle Grades Research Journal* continues to grow in scope and outreach, it continues to be our commitment to provide sound and solid research on the many facets of middle grades research. This special issue, Volume 8, Number 2, on assessment presents a fitting follow-up to the previous issue on engagement and motivation. In many ways, the themes of these two issues are the bookends that bracket education in the middle grades.

Assessment: the very word has been known to strike terror in the hearts and minds of all members of the educational community, from students in their desks to the teachers instructing them to administrators and education policymakers at local, state, and national levels. The overlay of international assessment platforms like TIMSS (Trends in International Math and Science Study) and PISA (Program for International Student Assessment) has intensified the role played by assessment in 21st century instruction. Moreover, nowhere is assessment more relevant than in the middle grades, which are often the “black box” of failed educational trajectories. Therefore, it is both timely and relevant that we devote this

issue of the *Middle Grades Research Journal* to the concept of *assessment*, a term glibly employed but whose core meaning is frequently misunderstood and misinterpreted.

On the eve of full implementation of Common Core Standards across the United States, several questions arise. How will schools assess the success of those standards? What constitutes good assessment? How can assessment practices assist instructional practice? How will high stakes testing affect teaching and learning? Finally, what lessons can be learned from other nations that have employed national standards? We are grateful to Sencer Corlu and Emin Aydin for their work in compiling a comprehensive volume that addresses various facets of the assessment conundrum. They have gathered a selection of strong research-based articles that examine the concept of assessment through diverse lenses while providing a unified product. We are confident that readers of this volume will gain particular insights from each article while building a strong overview of the topic of assessment in the middle grades.