

# Foreword

This book by Karen Miles and Stephen Frank is one of a series edited as part of the Leadership for Learning initiative of the American Association of School Administrators (AASA). Its primary purpose is to provide school-level leaders with support in strategic allocation of limited resources to maximize student performance and foster continuous school improvement.

Miles and Frank address a challenge virtually all school leaders confront: How can scarce resources be allocated to enhance the learning of all students? The authors' practical and reliable counsel builds on an artful blend of research on schools and lessons learned from their work with businesses and numerous school districts.

The authors acknowledge that more resources can sometimes increase productivity. But, they argue that what counts most is how resources are used. Thus, school leaders must determine whether the resources they have, which may be all they are likely to get anyway, are used to attain the school's *priority* goals.

It follows that the development of consensus around a limited number of goals for student learning (not goals to establish new programs or processes) is the first step in the strategic allocation of resources. Miles and Frank discuss how this can be done. They go on to focus on how professional expertise, time, and then money can be used strategically. The authors argue that if a school or district wants to substantially increase students' learning, they must invest in what they dub "the Big Three": improving teaching quality, maximizing and targeting academic time, and creating individual attention.

All too often, school resources are allocated in piecemeal and incremental ways, separately from academic planning and prioritization, with ineffective and inefficient results. Among the important lessons emphasized in this book is that it is coherence among the "Big Three" types of initiatives that accelerates and sustains school improvement.

While practical and full of powerful tools for decision making, this is not a prescriptive manual. Miles and Frank recognize that school context,



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student needs, and existing teacher capacity significantly influence the efficacy of any given improvement strategy. For that reason, they provide a set of research-based principles to guide action that will be productive in all schools.

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