

# Preface

*“In education, change for good, change for better, and change for worse are inevitable and constant.”*

Education has been a target of reform for the past 100 years or so. The need for change in education has been a function of the changing needs of people and society. As history has moved from the Dark Ages to the Age of Enlightenment through the Age of Industry and on into the Information Age, changes in the needs of society have directed each of those moves. Enhancing the quality of the product of education—namely, our students—has been a critical motive for change through the years. Raising student test scores to be on a par with those of other countries has been a major incentive for the government’s involvement with change in education. Improving the quality and standards of the teaching profession has also been a major motive for change. Collectively, these motives and incentives issue a call to action. Educators, reformers, theorists, businesspeople, practitioners, governments, parents, and administrators heard the call. They answered the call with a plethora of innovations: programs, models, theories, movements, practices, policies, legislation, mandates, and so on. The result is hundreds of educational innovations. Presented with so much to choose from, schools are like kids in a candy store, salivating over all the wonderful educational “candies” as they try to decide: Which ones do we choose? Which ones are the best? Which ones will have better outcomes? Which ones will raise test scores? Which ones are good for us?

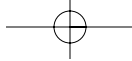
Their dilemma reminds me of my dilemma as a child. When my mother received a box of chocolates for a special occasion, she would always make them available to everyone in the family. I had my favorite chocolates: nuts, caramel crunch, cherries, and others. My dilemma was that they were all

covered with chocolate, so I did not know my favorite from my least favorite. How could I choose? I made a childish, egocentric decision to push my finger into the chocolate first, to test the center, with little thought to the waste that I was creating. Sometimes, I would bite the chocolate and throw the rest away if it was not one of my favorites. I could demolish a box of chocolates in short order. This went on for years. One day, after I had learned to read, I noticed that the sheet of paper that covered the chocolates identified the filling in each one. I had never noticed it before. But then again, I did not know to look for it. Sometimes it stayed in the box top. Most of the time, I was in such a hurry to get some chocolates that I paid no attention to the information available to me. My quest to find the right chocolate is analogous to schools trying to find the right remedy for the education ills that plague American campuses. Choosing, by trial and error, the best innovation for a particular educational setting or situation is the equivalent of sticking a finger in a chocolate to test the center rather than consulting the candy guide that clearly states what's in the chocolate. Choosing an appropriate innovation requires one to RATE (Research, Analyze, Test, and Evaluate) it first—or pay later, through wasted time and resources.

Although this reference book is not meant to be an exhaustive compilation, it does present a fairly comprehensive array of important innovations. My hope is that *The Quick Reference Guide to Educational Innovations* will inform the decision-making process, helping educational consumers cut through the “chocolate coating” of educational rhetoric and sales hype and go directly to the best innovation for them. I wish them bon appétit for the 21st century.

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