Preface

With the current emphasis on standards-based testing and teacher accountability for student performance, educators are under increased pressure to help their students succeed academically. Technology, while not meant to be a panacea, has been shown to help in some cases when properly applied. Computers, although now found in almost every classroom in the country, are still not being used effectively in many cases. It seems that every July, teachers attend inservice training on the latest and greatest reading program or math program that is supposed to show phenomenal improvements in student achievement. Many of these may be computer based. Then, for some unexplained reason, these phenomenal improvements do not occur, teachers and parents may become jaded, and we roll out yet another reading or math program the following July.

The purpose of this book is not to promote a particular new software package, requiring investment of scarce educational dollars and long hours spent learning the new system. Instead, this book will show you some ideas for using to better advantage a set of software packages that already comes standard on most school-based computers in the nation—Microsoft (MS) Office 2003 for PC, specifically Microsoft Word, Microsoft PowerPoint, Microsoft Excel, Microsoft Access, and Microsoft Publisher.

Even though these projects were created using Microsoft Office 2003, users with older versions of Microsoft Office will still find this publication a useful source of ideas and inspiration. While the basic layout of the screens has changed between Microsoft Office 2003 and the older versions, you can still create equivalent projects using the earlier programs. To allow access to users who do not have Microsoft Office 2003 installed, an additional file on the companion CD has many of the projects saved in older versions of Office. And while the instructions herein are designed for PC users, the MAC user who has experience with Microsoft Office products may find this book particularly useful as well. The Microsoft Publisher projects are not available in versions older than 2003.

The projects could have been ordered in several different ways (by grade level, by content area, by preferred learning modality, software package, or difficulty level.) The heart of this book lies in the project descriptions, grouped by software type, with individual chapters on using Word, PowerPoint, Excel, Access, and Publisher. Publisher is placed at the end of this list since only users with Office 2003 will be able to use this. Those with pre-2003 software will need to stay with projects in the first four categories. Within each chapter, the projects are further ordered according to difficulty level. The easier projects are described first, with the more challenging projects listed at the end of each chapter. The first part of each project contains classification icons so the reader can readily find projects of specific interest. Additionally, an Access database on the companion CD has a breakdown of each

project in the book. This data can be sorted as desired for those who are looking for very specific project groups (i.e., only science projects, or only elementary school projects).

The user of this book with only a beginner-level familiarity with Microsoft Office products would do well to simply use the sample projects on the enclosed companion CD and modify as needed for classroom use. For these individuals, it may be best to view this book not so much as a tutorial guide but, rather, as a "how-to-use-the-templates" guide. Those users who have a slightly higher, or intermediate-level, familiarity with these programs will be able to design these projects from scratch, either by following the directions included with the projects, or by reverse engineering the sample projects on the companion CD. Either way, it is not necessary to be an advanced-level user to take full advantage of this resource.

This book will prove useful to several different groups of individuals:

- General education public school K–12 teachers will be encouraged as they learn ways to increase student achievement in the classrooms.
- Classroom teachers will be able to use the technology currently available in many classrooms to help them achieve state-mandated curriculum and learning standards.
- Likewise, special education teachers will find this book useful as they look for ways to reach and teach students with special needs.
- School computer resource teachers tasked with using and maintaining the school computers will also find many useful projects here that can be used to meet educational and technology objectives and help students master content area learning standards.
- School administrators will be able to schedule inservice training sessions for their faculties in techniques designed to improve student performance. Those administrators looking for tools to improve student performance on standardized tests will find many aids to instruction that can help.
- College and university professors in schools of education and teacher preparatory programs should read this book and encourage student teacher candidates to get a copy for use in the classroom.
- Individual practitioners can use this as a classroom resource during lesson planning and scope and sequence development.
- Workshop facilitators can use this to train attendees in better ways to teach their students.
- Additionally, parents and others interested in home schooling will find dozens of useful activities to reinforce instruction.

Several enhancements set this book apart from others currently available. Each project description includes possible uses of the project by grade level and content area. Additionally, it contains approximately 100 screenshots, illustrative of finished projects, along with recommended Web sites for further information about the project.

Six major chapters and various supporting resources make up this book. Major chapters include:

- Chapter 1: Introduction to Using Microsoft Office to Enhance Student Learning
  - Intro to the book and to how technology can be used in classrooms to help meet state-mandated educational standards

- Chapter 2: Microsoft Word Projects
  - Directions for completing 20 Microsoft Word projects
- Chapter 3: Microsoft PowerPoint Projects
  - Directions for completing 20 Microsoft PowerPoint projects
- Chapter 4: Microsoft Excel Projects
  - Directions for completing 13 Microsoft Excel projects
- Chapter 5: Microsoft Access Projects
  - Directions for completing 14 Microsoft Access projects
- Chapter 6: Microsoft Publisher Projects
  - Directions for completing 20 Microsoft Publisher Projects

The companion CD, created using Microsoft Office 2003, contains four resources. The first (Resource A) is a collection of ready-to-use templates for 75% of the projects described in the book. While most of the project pages will describe how to create the desired resource, in many cases it may prove easier to simply adapt the template for classroom use. Additionally, as mentioned earlier, the companion CD has many of these projects saved in an older format for users with pre-2003 editions of Microsoft Office.

Resource B, a Microsoft Access database, allows the projects to be sorted according to the desired characteristic, including software used, suggested grade level, content area, or level of difficulty, to name a few. This feature will prove useful for teachers looking for projects that may be well suited to a specific group of students.

Effective lessons have clearly defined goals and objectives. The states are very specific in determining what must be taught in state-funded public schools. While the terms may vary from state to state, generally states will identify what you are expected to teach in public schools. Be they learning standards, curriculum standards, instructional standards, or performance standards, these objectives are already determined for every state in the Union. These standards are generally available on state Department of Education Web sites. The table in Resource C lists the Web addresses for the 50 state Departments of Education and corresponding pages containing required state curriculum and instructional standards. This table on the companion CD allows hyperlink access directly to the desired site. By using these state Web sites, you can be assured that you are teaching to the most current state educational standards available for your particular area.

The final resource on the companion CD (Resource D) is a collection of the supplemental information Web sites identified at the end of many of the individual projects. These sites contain additional suggestions on how to develop or use the associated projects.