

# Introduction

**W**hy staff development? Quite simply, because the educational landscape is changing and staff developers are agents of change. Teaching methods employed in the past worked well for some students; otherwise, we wouldn't have engineers, politicians, scientists, doctors, accountants, etc. Today's teaching methods, however, have become more dynamic, constructivist, and learner-centered, in response to the changing profile of today's students. Video games, sound bites, and mouse clicks are all a part of and a habit in the lives of today's students, and, as such, "stand and deliver" teaching no longer serves all students. Engaging today's learners requires thinking and teaching outside the box.

The development of quality teachers and non-instructional staff, who can reach the diverse needs of today's learners, is essential to the success of a school. Today's students bring different interests, attention spans, and backgrounds to the classroom. A school needs a strategy to reach diverse learners and a vision to implement successful teaching and learning. Although change is often disruptive of the "old ways," schools have a unique opportunity to embrace change with the higher goal of shaping bright and able young adults. Embracing change also requires a commitment to always better the best practice and learn about new methods of what works.

Staff development comes in many forms: workshops, presentations, learning communities, faculty study groups, among other approaches, addressing questions from "Who will demonstrate linking of technology across subject areas?" and "Who will conduct 'How To' workshops to help teachers learn to utilize technology in their teaching?" to "What teaching strategies will help address goals outlined in new legislation?" There is a need for continuous professional development to help achieve these and other goals. Staff developers play the role of introducing new strategies, implementation

## vi The Lighter Side of Staff Development

methodologies, and best practice to address the needs of a changing educational landscape.

Other fields such as medicine and engineering require continuous professional development. Education is no different. Improving professional skills, keeping up with technological changes, enhancing communication and presentation skills, and thinking creatively are also germane to educators. Committed staff development leaders and teachers only work to better the educational outcomes for today's students. Teachers are diverse learners, too, and staff development should aim to be creative, timely, relevant, and fun!

Keeping goals in mind and a sense of humor in the process, I would like to point out the "lighter side" of staff development. Enjoy the cartoons in this book. I have had fun creating the ideas and drawing them for you. It is my hope that my work will give you a chuckle or two and perhaps be incorporated into one of your staff development presentations.

—*Aaron Bacall*