Authors' Preface

One day while Kathi and her assistant, Paul Firth, were working on this first edition of this book, Kathi's colleague Leo van Lier stuck his head into the office and asked what they were doing.

"We're writing a book!" Kathi glibly replied.

"Oh. What's it about?" Leo asked.

"Uh—" (Kathi was hard-pressed to answer his apparently simple question.) "What's it about, Paul?" Kathi asked.

"Well," Paul hesitated. "I guess you could say it's an experiential treatment of language assessment for teachers." That sounded better than anything we have come up with since then, so we've stuck with Paul's idea ever since.

Indeed, our intent in writing the second edition of this book, as was the case with the first edition, has been to meet the challenge that Donald Freeman posed to all the authors in the *TeacherSource* series. He asked each of us to think about the following questions (and others) with regard to our chosen topics:

1. What do you think is centrally important to know about this topic?

   What do you think is critical to know about it?

2. How have you helped teachers-in-training to understand the topic?

   What kinds of activities or experiences have you organized to do so?

3. How has your own understanding of the topic changed or evolved?

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How have you learned this aspect of teaching? What have been the critical experiences or turning points in the development of your own understanding?

The answers to these questions are woven throughout the book, so you can see that— to the extent that we have been successful—Paul's characterization was appropriate. Our own experiences and those of the other teachers quoted here in the "Teachers' Voices" sections in each chapter serve to illustrate but also to motivate the ideas put forth in the "Frameworks" section. In those "Frameworks" we have not attempted to cover everything teachers should know about language assessment. Instead we have selected a few procedures and key concepts and explored them in light of various teachers' experiences, including our own. Likewise, in the "Tools of the Trade" sections, we have explained and illustrated some of the key statistical procedures that teachers need to understand in order to read about, interpret, and analyze language testing data.

For each chapter we have provided both "Suggestions for Further Reading" and a list of "Helpful Websites," in case you would like to pursue more in-depth study of the chapter topic. These resources on the website and the Investigations in each chapter are intended to help you, the reader, cross the bridge from the printed page to your own classroom. We hope the journey will be informative, pleasant, and entertaining, and that the information and activities in this book will help you get through the many dilemmas involved in being language teachers with assessment responsibilities.