

# Foreword

*Governor Jim Hunt*

**T**he Wake County Public School System is among the best in the nation, in large part because of many decades of great leadership by some courageous school board members and educators in the district, and great support from community and business people in the county. Bill McNeal and Tom Oxholm led powerfully in this tradition during their tenure with the school district. This book provides an insider's perspective on many of the challenges they faced and the successes they experienced.

Elsewhere, I have described five goals in North Carolina that we have to reach to make our schools the best in the nation: A Smart Start, Excellent Teaching, Safe Schools, High Student Performance, and Community Support. Every child should start school, on day one, healthy and ready to learn; every teacher should be committed to excellence; every school should be a safe and inviting place in which to learn; every student should be challenged to meet high standards; and every community should stand in support of its public schools. As you read this book, you will see how the Wake County Public School System has incorporated these same goals. The school district's Goal 2003 and Goal 2008 are the embodiment of the single-minded focus on excellence in education that we must have if we are to be the best in the nation—and if our nation is to remain the best in the world.

I have known Bill and his wife for many years and count them among my personal friends. What you should understand about Bill McNeal's use of the *Wizard of Oz* metaphor is that he truly believes in the principles of courage, brains, heart, and home. Watching Bill's career unfold over the years, it is evident to me that he is first and foremost a leader—a leader who chooses to exercise his talents in service and the field of public education. For this, students in Wake County, North Carolina, and, indeed, the nation, can be thankful. I don't know Tom Oxholm personally but I do know him by reputation; he is clearly a risk taker whose value system is

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deeply rooted in fairness and what's best for every child. The time he served as a member of the Wake County Board of Education is indeed a "profile in courage."

You will find Bill and Tom's book both enjoyable and educational. There are stories and lessons in the book that everyone can learn from, regardless of how you see yourself as a leader. I have always had a vision of how teachers can teach well, how students can learn, and how we can have successful schools where all students are safe, nurtured, and experience a culture where they are expected to do well. The standards that Bill and Tom emphasize—courage, brains, heart, and home—reflect this vision and should be the standards by which we all measure ourselves.

—*Jim Hunt*  
Governor of North Carolina  
1977–1985 and 1993–2001