

Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to the memories of two vocational educators who were cut from the same cloth and who were in fact good friends, Jack Rudolph and Nevin Frantz, Jr. As my principal for many years, Jack Rudolph taught me an appreciation of vocational education which served as my compass and directed me towards this goal. Dr. Nevin Frantz, Jr. help me understand the importance of having a clear philosophy of education. He was a great source of guidance and his determination to help others in the face of grave illness gave all who knew him strength. Both men had an appreciation of education, the ability to work hard, and a belief in God's love in all circumstances. I am grateful that our paths crossed.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I remember telling my students that I was leaving my work and family studies classroom of 15 years to start a new journey. One student asked if this was a trip of a lifetime and if I would be going alone. I remember thinking what a funny question that was since my destination was further education. Of course I had to do this alone. But I have learned that no one can travel this long road alone. I would like to express my heartfelt thanks to all those individuals whose wisdom, support, and encouragement made my journey possible.

Special thanks are extended to Dr. Daisy Stewart, chair of my doctoral committee. Her leadership, professionalism, and continued optimism has made her an exceptional mentor. I've heard it said that the greatest motivational act one person can do for another is to listen, and this she did often and well. I am grateful for her time and effort, and for her editing skills.

As a teacher I have always believed that to enable students is to give them the knowledge and skills they need to be successful and to empower is to support them in taking responsibility. Dr. Patrick O'Reilly both enables and empowers his students to higher levels. I am thankful that he allowed me to work within his data bases and for his belief in the merit and worth of this study.

My other committee members, Dr. Susan Asselin, Dr. Betty Heath-Camp and Dr. Irene Leech all gave their time and effort to help me produce this dissertation. Each guided me through hurdles, provided support, and much needed focus. Their efforts and support are gratefully appreciated.

Friends are indeed precious gifts from God and He has truly blessed me with an amazing sisterhood. Carole, Mickey, Mimi, and Jane, thanks for your friendship which has saved me more than once. Thanks for caring and calling, and helping me see that we "get by with a little help from our friends."

Throughout my life I have met many wonderful people but none who were more generous and loving than Jessica and Jon Gotow. They not only gave of their friendship and kindness but they gave me their house with no strings attached, not even rent. Without their support I would not have made it through this journey. Thank you from the bottom of my heart.

Once in a while you meet someone and it feels as if you have known them all your life. So it is with my office-mate, Paula. It is said that misery loves company, and both of us have shared our kindred problems. Thanks for the memories and the margaritas. It is certain that our friendship will endure the test of time.

A special thanks to the entire staff of VTE and especially to their girl Friday, Becky Cox. Becky, your help and friendship will not be forgotten.

I believe that a good marriage and a strong family is a joy forever, and it makes a successful journey worthwhile. My family has many strengths and I love each and every one of them. Throughout my studies, my children have focused on the positive aspects of this long journey. My husband, Fred, has expressed unconditional love for me and an unwavering belief in my ability to succeed. When you feel loved and supported by your family, you can weather any crisis and truly enjoy success.

In closing, I thank God. For only through God's grace and blessings has this pursuit been possible.