Recently, teachers have been enduring some truly challenging times. However, Tom Newkirk, as observed in this remarkable and inspiring book, there is always a struggle to prioritize children first, to honor knowledge over compliance, and to place humanity above the aims of the state. Classic Newkirk: direct, incisive, and brimming with wisdom.

—Harvey “Smokey” Daniels
Coauthor of Comprehension & Collaboration

Holding On to Good Ideas in a Time of Bad Ones
Six Literacy Principles Worth Fighting For

In Holding On to Good Ideas in a Time of Bad Ones, Tom Newkirk eloquently defends teaching against the “cult of efficiency” that transforms classrooms into assembly lines of knowledge. Newkirk goes beyond diagnosing the problem to present six ideas worth fighting for. These transformative practices gently but firmly return instructional decisions to where they belong: with you, our teachers. Newkirk shows how to:

- increase your instructional emphasis on writing because producing text is more important than ever
- help students access deep knowledge and expand their thinking through time to write freely
- connect school learning and the real world by teaching with popular culture
- propel the development of reading skills by helping students discover the pleasure of reading
- provide the time and space for meaningful, long-lasting teaching and learning by uncluttering the curriculum
- spark professional growth and avoid stagnation by discussing failure and uncertainty with colleagues.

Holding On to Good Ideas in a Time of Bad Ones is affirming, not argumentative. It celebrates the humanity and unpredictability of teaching with Newkirk’s blend of humor, passion, and warmth. Let it inspire a search for the things in your teaching that are most worth holding on to.

—Nancie Atwell
Author of In the Middle
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Rich with pedagogy and human enough to make you burst out laughing, Thomas Newkirk’s thoughts made me feel both heartened and head-slappingly awakened. This book is one of the best teacher books ever. I’ll be giving copies of it to lots of teacher friends as we find our way back to trusting what we know about kids, about learning, and about teaching writing.

—GRETCHEN BERNABEI
Author of Reviving the Essay

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Using a mixture of memoir, research project, cultural analysis, and critique of published findings, Newkirk encourages schools to ask questions about what counts as literacy in boys and what doesn’t, to allow in their literacy programs boys’ diverse tastes, values, and learning styles. In other words, if we want boys to join “the literacy club,” then we have to invite them in with genres of their own choosing.