Preface

My work is inspired by the hope of making schools better places for both adults and children. I began as a teacher, program director, coach, and advisor to middle and high school students. My desire to make schools more effective learning environments for children and youth led me to attend graduate school to learn more about how to support adolescent development. While in graduate school, I learned that there was an entire field devoted to supporting adult development. I immediately became thirsty for more knowledge about the field and discovered that an important relationship exists between supporting adult development and child development.

I have dedicated myself to this work, to learning from courageous and generous school leaders and to sharing what I have learned (and continue to learn) with and from others, for nearly two decades. I am passionate about creating, and helping others shape, school contexts that better support the development of both children and adults. This is my resounding hope, inspiration, and commitment. The questions informing my research were drawn from this commitment, and my research has involved—and evolved from—paying careful and caring attention to the kinds of leadership that nurture adult development. There is perhaps no better time to pay this kind of attention to adult development among educators.

The work of educators has become dramatically more complex in the 21st century, especially since the passage of the No Child Left Behind Act in 2002. Building school capacity, managing reform, meeting accountability demands, caring for students' diverse needs, closing the achievement gap, and working effectively in an era of standards-based reform are some of the pressing issues facing all educators today. School systems around the country are changing in response to demands for increased accountability, greater diversity in the student population, and standards-based reform. Given these demands and the added complexity they create, as well as the extraordinary pressure to improve student achievement, researchers, reformers, school systems, and policymakers are searching for promising new approaches (Firestone & Shipps, 2005; Hargreaves & Fink, 2006; Kegan & Lahey, 2009; Wagner, 2007). Without the tools or support to meet such sizeable challenges, many principals, superintendents, and teachers feel ill equipped, and some leave the profession for more supportive environments (Donaldson, 2008; Murphy, 2006; Teitel, 2006).

Educational challenges such as those named above place new, complex demands on educators. Therefore, we must change the ways in which we work and learn together. As school leaders committed to supporting student learning, achievement, organizational change, and adult learning, we must first understand that authentic change starts with us. It must be a given that if schools are to adapt to current conditions, they need to be places where the adults as well as the children can grow.

Development of effective models of support for leadership, human capacity building, and leader development can make the difference. While principals, teachers, and superintendents certainly continue to need support to meet the technical requirements of their work (e.g., managing budgets, schedules, and personnel), they also need the kind of support that will help them adapt to the daunting demands of the new environment. As educators, we must build our developmental capacities (i.e., our cognitive, affective, interpersonal, and intrapersonal capacities) so that we can meet these adaptive challenges while we are *in the process* of working on them. Such a process requires ongoing support for adult growth and new ways of working, learning, and leading together, as opposed to training on specific topics and acquiring discrete skills. Much of this ongoing support must stem from the practice of leadership and the work we do together as we support each other's growth.

One way to facilitate the support and development of principals, teachers, and superintendents is to shape schools and school systems more effectively as genuine *mentoring communitie*s or *learning centers*—contexts for collaborative learning—where educators support and challenge each other to grow. While supporting adult development is important for its own sake, such support will also strengthen teaching practice and, in turn, student performance (Donaldson, 2008; Elmore, 2004; Fullan, 2003; Guskey, 2000; Murphy, 2006). The research on which this book is based offers a promising path toward building these kinds of schools and school systems so that we can work through adaptive challenges while simultaneously building leadership and developmental (human) capacity. Doing so will enable us to serve better the development of both children and adults in schools.

Supporting adult learning is positively linked to improved student achievement (DuFour, 2007; Guskey, 1999, 2000; Roy & Hord, 2003), and opportunities for improving student learning depend on principal leadership and the quality of teaching (Firestone & Riehl, 2005; Levin, 2006; Marzano, Waters, & McNulty, 2005). However, to meet the complex challenges of 21st-century schooling and globalization, we will need new ways of working together that will support adult development (Childs-Bowen, 2007; Donaldson, 2008; Kegan & Lahey, 2009; Wagner et al., 2006). How can we create high-quality learning and growth opportunities for adults with different needs, preferences, and developmental orientations? Just as we adapt our instruction to care for the differences among children, we must differentiate our leadership practices to attend to differences in how adults learn and what they need to grow. My intention in this book is to offer ideas and practices to do just that.

This book is, in many ways, a response to the expressed needs of principals, superintendents, and other school leaders for better supports for their own and other adults' growth in the service of children's learning. The new learning-oriented model of school leadership I present is one promising path that can help build our schools and school

systems as learning centers, or mentoring communities for growth. Learning-oriented school leadership attends to the development of our capacities to handle complexities. My model, informed by developmental theory, offers a range of supportive practices, which I call pillar practices for growth. As pillars support a roof, these practices are supportive of and challenging to individuals at different developmental levels.

The four practices—teaming, providing adults with leadership roles, engaging in collegial inquiry, and mentoring—are developmentally robust, meaning that they can support the growth and learning of adults with different preferences, needs, and developmental orientations. In describing these practices in detail, I illuminate the importance of the relationship between a person and the environment, as well as the different kinds of supports and challenges that different people need in order to grow.

It is essential that we find more effective ways to support the adults who teach our children, especially given the complexity of leadership, teaching, and learning in our world (Ackerman & Mackenzie, 2007; Donaldson, 2008; Kegan & Lahey, 2009). This book illuminates the ways in which principals, teachers, and superintendents can use specific, developmentally oriented practices to support adult growth and learning. Moreover, the collective and individual strategies outlined herein suggest a promising new way to work towards the important national goals at the forefront of our educational agenda. After all, effectively exercised leadership in support of adult growth is important for its own sake, as well as being directly tied to improved quality of teaching and the growth of children.

This book is intended, therefore, for several audiences. It offers practices for supporting adult learning and growth to adults who serve in schools and school systems—teachers, principals, assistant principals, superintendents, teacher educators, professional development providers, and other leaders. It is also for those who work to support and teach aspiring leaders in preservice and inservice graduate programs. In addition, I hope it helps adult learning theorists, organizational theorists, researchers, and policymakers. Since the ideas and practices in this book draw from multiple knowledge domains—adult learning, developmental theory, leadership practice, and organizational collaboration—I hope that a wide audience will find the ideas and practices helpful and informative. This book was written for anyone who wants to learn how to support adult development better in an educational, organizational, or even a personal context.

In writing *Leading Adult Learning,* my primary purpose and heartfelt intention was to offer this new perspective and to illuminate practices that can support adult development within schools and across school systems. I very much hope it offers a map that you can use to support adult development in *your* learning community. I invite and encourage you to let me know how, if at all, what follows helps in the noble and inspiring work you do. It would be an honor to learn from you about how the ideas and practices presented help you in your leadership, the support of others' growth, and your own growth. I am hoping, with all my heart, that they do.