Preface

For the last 35 years, my colleagues and I have been studying school improvement in general and the cardinal role of leadership in helping schools to improve in particular. We continue that work here by examining leadership of the instructional program. Building great schools is about two tasks: creating productive culture and creating instructional capacity. In our last book, *Creating Productive Cultures in Schools* (2014), we examined one of those two pillars in considerable detail. Here, we turn the spotlight on the second pillar, the instructional capacity.

In Part I, we establish the general storyline of school improvement. The first chapter in Part I examines the larger political, economic, and social forces in the nation that shape school improvement and provide understanding about the nature of school improvement leadership. Chapter 2 takes us backstage in the school improvement play. We see a good deal of the critical dimensions of school improvement that are often "backgrounded" in the work of change and reform. Surfaced here, they are then threaded throughout the remaining chapters of the book.

In Part II of the book, we review the central role of vision in school improvement. In Chapter 3, we peer deeply into the role that school leaders play in improving schools by examining the three ingredients of vision: mission, goals, and expectations. In Chapter 4, we provide the map for how school improvement leadership works, with a special focus on the critical role of leaders in promoting powerful school cultures and creating a powerful academic press.

In Part III, we zero in on leadership of the instructional program. Chapter 5 addresses the critical role that school leaders play in staffing schools and providing and allocating material resources. We then turn in Chapter 6 to an analysis of leadership in the broad domain of talent development.

The final part of the book carries us further into what we call *school as academic place*. As is the case throughout the book, the focus is on the second pillar of highly productive schools, *academic press*. In Chapter 7, we explore the essential norms from which academic press grows—or the norms that define academic press. We close Chapter 8 with a detailed analysis of how leaders need to approach and manage curriculum and assessment in their schools.