Preface

This book, *Schools Can Change: A Step-By-Step Change Creation System for Building Innovative Schools and Increasing Student Learning,* provides a change creation process that enables schools to develop significant schoolwide improvements. It lays out step-by-step the necessary concepts and approaches for building innovative schools and increased student learning. If the concepts and processes outlined in this book are fully and effectively implemented, the "school improvement" results can be remarkable.

The Change Creation system has its roots in the schoolwide change system referred to as Whole-Faculty Study Groups (WFSG), which has been widely implemented based on a series of the five books published by Corwin Press, *Whole-Faculty Study Groups: A Powerful Way to Change Schools and Enhance Learning* (1998), *Whole-Faculty Study Groups: Creating Student-Based Professional Development* (2001), *Whole-Faculty Study Groups: Creating Professional Learning Communities That Target Student Learning* (2005), *The Whole-Faculty Study Groups Fieldbook: Lessons Learned and Best Practices From Classrooms, Districts, and Schools* (2007), and *Schoolwide Action Research for Professional Learning Communities: Improving Student Learning Through the Whole-Faculty Study Groups Approach* (2008) by the authors of this book, Carlene U. Murphy, Dale W. Lick, and Karl H. Clauset. Over the years, these books have laid the foundation for the WFSG movement to become one of the successful whole-school improvement processes available to schools across North America.

Research by the authors on school improvement and the WFSG system has continued during recent years. They have examined new approaches to the various processes of school improvement and how current processes, including the WFSG system, could be improved to make the system more effective. Specifically, the Change Creation system, relative to the WFSG system, has been simplified and streamlined to make it easier to use and to provide critical new materials and approaches. The result of all these efforts, the Change Creation system, goes well beyond the WFSG system in substance and practice and, we believe, in total effectiveness.

PURPOSE AND NEED

In an overview and review of the environment relating to school reform and school improvement and a wide range of perspectives on their successes, we and other researchers discovered that most of the major, general initiatives

(e.g., A Nation at Risk; National Education Summit, President and Governors; Charter Schools; Goals 2000, Educate America Act; and No Child Left Behind) were, overall, disappointingly ineffective. As we compared these various general school improvement initiatives, we found that they were inconsistent and often at odds with the various professional standards for school learning and practice, including the Standards for Professional Learning by Learning Forward (formerly the National Staff Development Council), 2011; Educational Leadership Policy Standards: ISLLC 2008 by The Council of Chief State School Officers; and The National Board for Professional Teaching Standards.

What this all meant was that there was no "silver bullet" for improving our schools effectively. Instead, these standards pointed out that genuine effective school improvement requires leaders and teachers intimately and creatively involved in a broad-based, creative change system that builds on the professional standards mentioned above.

This approach is precisely the one taken in this book. The first chapter introduces the essence of the book, the Change Creation system, and its foundation being established on the above learning, leadership, and teaching standards. The next three chapters present the critical fundamentals of effectiveness that are required for schools to become successful professional learning communities, significantly improve teaching, and increase student learning. And in the final eight chapters, the book explains, in detail, how the process of the Change Creation system helps schools become and function as professional learning communities by action teams of school personnel.

WHO SHOULD READ AND USE THIS BOOK?

This book should be read and used by anyone who is interested in facilitating staff development, school innovation, and increasing student learning. A primary audience for the book should be the personnel in K–12 schools—all teachers, administrators, and staff—and the district staff who guide and support them. The book is written so that it can serve as a stand-alone guide for the effective initiation, comprehensive implementation, and successful completion of the Change Creation system approach to crucial staff development, major school innovation and schoolwide improvements, and as a textbook or detailed reference book.

For schools that choose to introduce the Change Creation system, all school personnel will be involved in their schoolwide effort. Consequently, in such schools, each faculty member, administrator, and staff member should have a copy, or many copies should be shared with school personnel, allowing full and convenient access across the school.

In addition, the book holds special potential for individual teacher leaders and administrators, school leadership teams, and groups of teachers and administrators who are considering new options for seriously improving their schools.

Other important audiences for this book include the following:

- Central office personnel in school systems, especially for consideration and possible implementation of action teams of school personnel in their school system
- College of Education faculty in colleges and universities, for understanding this new and successful process for schoolwide change and enhanced student learning, as well as for possible use as a textbook or reference book in classes relating to teacher training and school improvement. Preservice teacher training needs to ensure that new teachers have experience working collaboratively in learning teams.
- Community college faculty and administrators for consideration of action teams of college personnel and their application in their institution for collegewide change and improving student learning
- School, community college, college, and university libraries
- Individuals and groups in national and international workshops on action teams and their application in education, from small seminars to large groups
- Individuals and groups in corporate, community, and governmental organizations involved with schools, education, and training

ORGANIZATION AND CONTENTS

The book has an introduction to the Change Creation system, two parts, Fundamentals of Effectiveness and The Process of the Change Creation System, and a large and rich array of important and helpful online resources (available for copying and use by going to www.corwin.com/schoolscanchange).

Chapter 1 gives an overview of the environment relating to school reforms and school improvement and perspectives on their success. It shows that the major, general education initiatives, mentioned earlier, were disappointingly ineffective and were inconsistent and often at odds with the various professional standards for school learning and practice referenced above. The chapter ends with an overview of the Change Creation system, including its new approaches for improving teaching and learning and an outline of the framework for the Change Creation system.

Part I: Fundamentals of Effectiveness

This part of the book addresses the critical fundamentals of effectiveness for understanding and dealing with school culture and cultural change, school vision and change, and authentic teams, learning teams, and professional learning communities. These fundamentals are *required* for schools to be successful in becoming professional learning communities, improving teaching, and increasing student learning. Our focus is on creating the right leadership, vision, culture, and relationships in schools to support and sustain the Change Creation system.

Chapter 2, "Fundamentals of Effectiveness for School Improvement," explains the essentials relating to, dealing with, and creating cultures of discipline, change creation, collaboration, transformational leadership, and school change.

Chapter 3, "Fundamentals of Vision and Successful Change," provides the change concepts necessary for leaders, teachers, and their schools to effectively apply the Change Creation system and move the people and the school toward innovation and increased student learning. In particular, it discusses the directional and inspirational foundation for school change, the *school vision;* the nature and feelings of change; a process for school change; the roles of change; the sponsorship of change; resistance to change; and the most important principle relating to change, the Universal Change Principle.

Chapter 4, "Fundamentals for Creating Learning Teams and Professional Learning Communities," covers authentic teams, learning teams, and professional learning communities, groups of school personnel such as action teams becoming learning teams, and schools developing into professional learning communities.

Part II: The Process of the Change Creation System

Part II of this book discusses and unfolds the process for the Change Creation system through what is termed the Decision-Making Cycle (DMC). The steps of the DMC build on the Fundamentals of Effectiveness given in Chapters 2–4.

Chapter 5, "Introducing the Decision-Making Cycle," provides an overview of the DMC, which is the process of the Change Creation system. It also discusses in detail the preparation that schools need to make before beginning the DMC.

Chapter 6, "Identifying Student Learning Needs and Forming Action Teams," focuses on Step 1 in the Action Teams DMC and offers strategies that the principal and the school leadership team can use to identify specific school-wide student learning needs, form action teams, and help each action team reach agreement on the specific learning needs it will address.

Chapter 7, "Introducing Action Teams," and Chapter 8, "Supporting Action Teams," describe, in depth, action teams and the critical support required for their success, with action teams being the primary vehicles for effectively implementing the Change Creation system. These chapters present action teams in the Change Creation system as designated teams of school personnel who work together to help the school move toward accomplishing the school vision and illustrate the importance of school and district leaders in leading and supporting action teams. Action teams lead the effort to respond to the overarching question that educators need to constantly keep in mind: *What are students learning and achieving as a result of what educators are learning and doing in their action teams?* The Change Creation system has at its core a job-embedded, self-directed, student-driven professional learning system of action teams.

Chapters 9–12 discuss the remaining four steps in the DMC process and its application in detail. Chapter 9, "Creating Team Action Plans," introduces the action plan template that action teams use, explains the task in Step 2 of the Action Teams DMC, how teams use their action plan, the companion to the team

action plan, the team meeting log, and it illustrates the importance of school and district leaders in leading and supporting action teams as they create and begin to use their team action plans.

Chapter 10, "Implementing Learning and Inquiry Cycles for Innovation and Improving Student Learning: Parts 1 and 2," and Chapter 11, "Implementing Learning and Inquiry Cycles for Innovation and Improving Student Learning: Parts 3 and 4," address Step 3 in the Action Teams DMC and examine each part of the learning and inquiry cycle. Step 3 is the cycle of learn-plan-act-reflect and the heart of the learning and inquiry cycle that action teams follow—it is the *action* in action teams. This step focuses on what teams need to do for each part of the cycle and how the principal and the school leadership team can ensure that the work of action teams in their learning and inquiry cycles leads to learning and innovation.

Chapter 12, "Assessing the Impact of Action Teams and Sharing Results and Best Practices," details the last two steps in the Action Teams DMC—Step 4, assessing the impact of action teams on teacher practice and student learning, and Step 5, sharing results and best practices and applying lessons learned. The chapter focuses on what each team needs to do to assess its own impact on teacher practice and student learning and how the principal and the school leadership team can assess the schoolwide impact on teacher practice and student learning. It also focuses on the importance of sharing results and best practices at the end of learning and inquiry cycles and at the end of the year, as well as on creating mechanisms to ensure that teams learn from each other and that lessons learned are applied throughout the school. Both of these steps are critical for the school if it is to become a genuine professional learning community.

The book concludes with a brief epilogue by Carlene Murphy, the founder of the WFSG system, on the transformation of WFSG into the Change Creation system and the future for school innovation and improved student learning.

Resources

As indicated in the list of online resources on page xi, a large and rich array of important and helpful resources for this book have been created and are provided online for copying and ease of use. These resources are immediately available by going to www.corwin.com/schoolscanchange.