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# Foreword

Lew Smith's *Schools That Change* is based on seven years of careful, engaging work. It integrates equal parts of passion and intellect. It is a success because it respects and reveals the enormous accomplishments of eight schools going from awful to good and great performance. The book weaves brilliantly from complex individual cases to the wider knowledge base. It captures the messiness of change with a few powerful insights that greatly advance our understanding not only of success but also, more significantly, of *how* it is accomplished.

Smith's model of change is derived from a weaver's immersion in the cloth of reality over many years. The effort culminates with the emergence of powerful concepts that enable the reader to understand how success can occur and how it might be guided. The result is an elegant  $3 \times 3$  model. The three essential elements—context, capacity, and conversations—are there, and the three catalytic variables—internal dissonance, external forces, and leadership—bring the dynamism to interactive life. If you want to know about school success under diverse, difficult, challenging circumstances, it is between the covers of this impressive book.

Ever reflective, *Schools That Change* gives us maximum clarity but warns against acting too quickly on this new knowledge. The ten traps listed in the final chapter furnish a sober reminder that if we are to understand and do something about change then we need to do the in-depth, immersive work of getting inside the problem as Smith has done. His warnings are apposite: if you think this is a cookbook, go back to the bookstore; if you are arguing whether it's product or process, you lose; if you're future focused, you've got it one third right; if it's quick and easy, consider it a failure (and six more of these wise warnings).

This is a book that is carefully crafted. It is interesting and insightful. Each of the eight school portraits can be used as mini case studies to understand change. The  $3 \times 3$  model allows us to see the forest and the trees. Many of us have been working toward how to accomplish success on a large scale in a sea of reform better known for its disasters. We think we are getting somewhere identifying the deep problems, and some of the powerful ways out. We can add Lew Smith's book to this small but growing field that we now know, as Smith concludes, that although it is difficult work, "It can be done!" *Schools That Change* is a well-crafted contribution to the literature on successful reform—a sophisticated and nuanced book that should be read with care.

—Michael Fullan, Ontario Institute  
for Studies in Education (OISE), University of Toronto