At a meeting in Texas in 2003 attended by teachers, novices, and veterans, we heard the following concerns:

- “We are showing numbers, not learning.”
- “I am leaving teaching, because all the trust in teachers has gone. My voice and the voices of my colleagues were totally discounted as unimportant.”
- “If your students don’t score well, you are not a good teacher. That is what Texas has become.”
- “Veteran teachers are leaving because there is so much stress. There is no relief from the pressure.”
- “The atmosphere in my school is so negative. I know in my heart that this is wrong. I feel pain and loneliness. I don’t want to give up. But I feel that I am being drowned by a huge wave.”

How did we get here, as authors, as educators, as a country? What is going on in the world that is causing this angst, stress, and confusion in teaching, in learning, and in schools?
Changes in the World

Anthony Giddens, in his book *Runaway World* (2003), attributes the uneasy mood of the current age to fundamental changes that are on the order of the industrial revolution. These changes affect all aspects of our lives, including our schools. Of primary importance to Giddens is the growing tension between fundamentalism and cosmopolitanism. This tension reflects the disequilibrium that once-stable communities and nations experience when they are confronted with rapid and far-reaching economic and social change. In stark terms, this is a conflict between those who believe in a set of unchanging rules about how the world was created and how life should be lived, and those who welcome the variety and diversity that cultural changes bring to ways of thinking about and being in the world.

A case in point is the changing face of the family. In most industrialized countries, family structures are in flux. New ideas and practices about what constitutes a family challenge long held beliefs about the best way to raise children and organize domestic life. The traditional nuclear family is fast giving way to different configurations: single-parent families, families with more than one set of parents, families where both parents work outside the home, families where conventional roles are reversed, families where parents are of the same sex, families consisting of grandparents and their grandchildren, families of unrelated people who chose each other as kin. As the varieties of family structure multiply, the tension between fundamentalism and cosmopolitanism increases as well.

In the pages that follow, we explore how, as with families, converging forces in the world present a challenge to schools as they are currently constructed and understood. Dramatic shifts in the economy, government and public life, and demographics require cosmopolitan responses on the part of educators if public schools are to survive and endure.
Changes in the Economy

Globalization is the order of the day, leading to a new economy that depends on the production, application, and dissemination of knowledge rather than solely on the manufacture of goods and the provision of services. The new economy is fast changing the nature of work, shrinking the demand for manual labor and expanding the demand for knowledge workers. It encourages greater job turnover and career changes, “shifting career paths, serial careers and less loyalty” (Mazar, 1997, p. 19). Human capital and technology are central to this new world order, where a high school diploma is no longer a guarantee of a job or a career and postsecondary education is a necessity. The hierarchical bureaucracies that characterized the organizational life of most adults are being called into question; this creates confusion and imbalance. Competing expectations about how work should be organized have led some businesses to encourage team configurations and others to hold fast to traditional structures (Seely Brown, 1998).

Schools must accommodate themselves to the changing economic realities. In order to educate the workforce and citizenry of the future, they have to keep pace with marketplace demands as well as with technology and its effects on the way people communicate. People used to go to school because that is where the knowledge was (W. McIntyre, comments delivered at the annual conference of the New England Research Association, Portsmouth, New Hampshire, Apr. 2003). Now, public education has lost its monopoly on learning; almost anything can be found on the Internet. As schools compete with virtual academies and private providers for students, they have to make the case that they are better than their competitors at teaching people how to think critically, evaluate sources of information, and participate as full citizens in a democracy.
Changes in Government and Public Life

Globalization has also affected government and public life. The role of government has devolved in the last decade and continues to decrease in scope and influence. In efforts to increase efficiency, legislatures embrace the language, behaviors, and models of responsibility of the corporation. The adoption of a private sector ethos in the public domain has led to a view of government as a purchaser rather than a provider of direct services. The result is more support for privatization and increased subcontracting of public work to private, often for-profit agencies. “Management by results” has become the mantra of public administration, and with that comes the notion of the citizen as customer. Changing norms of public responsibility are evident in decreased public engagement, lower voter turnout, calls to cap taxes or reduce them, and a shifting of liability from the state to the family in meeting the needs of the young.

Schools have felt blindsided by the pressure to shift from public sector to private sector norms. Accountability schemes that depend on standardized measures of student progress and achievement are perhaps the most palpable effect of this new sensibility. The subcontracting of transportation and food service are less noticeable but equally indicative of the shift. Charter schools, magnet schools, home schooling, and vouchers for private education are all part of the agenda to reduce the role of government in what traditionally were considered public spheres. This shift presents schools with an enormous challenge: to figure out how to serve a public mission in a world that is increasingly comfortable with privatization of services.

Demographic Shifts

Demographics are also changing at a heady pace. Most of us are aware of the fact that the average age of the U.S. population is increasing. What is not so well known is that, at the same time, we are experiencing two consecutive baby boomlets, a flood of children
who will enter school in record numbers. Mobility and transience are also on the upswing, playing an even greater role in population shifts than the growing birthrate. Schools will enroll proportionally more students who live in poverty, who come from diverse countries and ethnic groups, who represent different language and cultural backgrounds, and who enter with unequal social capital. This is the case for all schools, not just those in the inner city. As students migrate from the city to the suburbs, “Teaching in an inner suburb will increasingly resemble teaching in an inner city.” (Hodgkinson, 2001). In addition, the increase in students with diagnosed learning disabilities will further affect schools, requiring them to provide a wide range of services and accommodations. If demography is destiny, then schools must be prepared to meet challenges that they have never before encountered.

The teaching force is also changing—in expected and unexpected ways. It stands to reason that an aging overall population, coupled with a boomlet of school-age children, will increase the demand for new teachers. What is unexpected is that retirement only accounts for one quarter of those leaving teaching in any one year (Stern, 2003). The large majority of teachers who leave the field do so for other reasons. Almost one third of teachers exit the field within their first three years; one half leave by the end of the fifth. The result is that for the first time in American history, the number of teachers leaving the profession is exceeding the number who are entering the profession. Tom Carrol expresses the urgency of the situation when he says, “It’s become a crisis. We have a bucket with huge holes in it. They are leaving as fast as we can pour them in” (comments delivered in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, Oct. 2003).

Zumwalt and Craig (in press) warn that “increasing birthrates, immigration, teacher retirements and attrition are fueling the projected need for 200,000 new teachers annually over the next decade” and indicate that given this rapid turnover of teachers, there is legitimate fear that there will not be enough good teachers to meet the
demands of the new century. It is predicted that by 2010 the United States will have replaced 75 percent of all current teachers. At the same time, there is legislation requiring that all teachers be “highly qualified” and meet demanding standards for certification and continued employment. The challenge to schools is daunting. They must recruit and retain an enormous number of new teachers in a very short time and provide them with the initial preparation and ongoing support for them to be successful. We have all heard too many stories in the past of inadequately prepared novices taking over classes in which knowledgeable teachers were desperately needed. We cannot afford to repeat these conditions for the next generation of students.

The Challenge for Schools

The major challenge for schools is this: ensuring that all students attain the skills, knowledge, and disposition they will need to be successful in the world that awaits them. The new economy demands that all students be prepared for work and for citizenry and that they all attain the high standards of achievement that have traditionally been reserved for a select few. This generation of students will need to graduate from high school with the ability to think and reason, a comfort with complex cognitive demands, a readiness to be flexible and adaptive, and a command of print, visual, quantitative, and digital literacies. This is a heavy load for schools, and it is compounded by the shifting demographics of the student population, the projected shortage of qualified and available teachers, and the reduced role of government in solving local problems.

There are two policy stances that have been developed in response to the challenge. There are policies that support standardization, accountability, and assessment and policies that support building capacity and enabling good practice. These contradictory views are not new; they are an integral part of our history and continue to influence our work today (Cuban, 1990).
Accountability Through Standardization

The most common policy stance is to hold schools accountable for meeting externally mandated standards of student achievement. The well-intentioned purpose is to establish a set of guaranteed outcomes for all students, to measure them objectively and efficiently, and to make the results transparent to the larger community. Unfortunately, the original intention has been diluted. Standards have become synonymous with standardized testing and have forced an alignment of assessments with narrow and reductionist curricula. Teachers are instructed to teach to the test rather than to the children. Transparency of results has been translated into sanctions against schools and students who do not meet standards in the required time and in the prescribed manner. In many instances, this undermining of original purpose is having negative effects on the ability of teachers to provide a rich and varied educational program for their students (Hargreaves, 1994, 2003).

In the mid-1980s, we saw the same rush to standards and testing, but for different reasons. In the United States, A Nation at Risk warned that declining student achievement, decreasing teacher knowledge, and lax academic and behavioral standards were a threat to the nation's economy and standing in the world (National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983). In the United Kingdom, new tests for students at all grade levels replaced a system that was deemed inadequate for the new global era. The solution posited then was to mandate change, standardize curriculum, raise core requirements, and use tests to hold students and teachers accountable to policymakers and legislators. In the early 1990s, the U.S. Department of Education went so far as to consider implementing a standardized national test for all students (Lieberman, 1991). This initiative failed to become policy largely because of the efforts of the educational research community. Their arguments are worth repeating here. Researchers cited ample evidence that while testing tended to raise the low-level skills of U.S. students, it also
led to the decline of higher-order cognitive skills because teachers tended to postpone teaching thinking and reasoning until after basic skills had been mastered for the required tests. The unintended consequence was that students in the lower tracks were exposed to a very limited curriculum that was oriented toward rote learning and drill and practice of the most rudimentary skills. These students never did well enough to get to the “good stuff” (Lieberman, 1991, p. 219). In effect, the teach-and-test policy increased rather than decreased the achievement gap. Darling-Hammond (1991) documented how the tests were being used for tracking and sorting purposes, systematically denying a group of students access to skills and knowledge while guaranteeing it to others. Using testing as a policy tool continues to have currency as a vehicle for improving student performance, even though it has proved ineffective and counterproductive in the past. There is another way.

**Building Capacity and Enabling Good Practice**

At the same time that *A Nation at Risk* was circulating in the United States, the Carnegie Corporation released a less heralded volume that offered a different perspective. *A Nation Prepared: Teachers for the Twenty-First Century* argued that imposing standards and tests was not enough to transform schooling (Carnegie Corporation of New York, 1986); rather, it called for the reinvigoration of the teaching force and a reinvention of the profession. It argued that teachers should become leaders in curriculum, instruction, school redesign, and professional development and that the real power to improve achievement lay with teachers, who needed to be entrusted with new responsibility and accountability for change.

A policy stance that enables rather than prescribes practice resonates with the central message of the Carnegie report. It is a viable alternative to “the widespread strategy of using mandates to legislate teaching practice[, which] assumes there is ‘one best answer’ to teaching problems rather than . . . a variety of approaches to
teaching that are differentially effective in different circumstances” (Darling-Hammond and McLaughlin, 1983, p. 393). This kind of policy recognizes the knowledge and skills that teachers bring to their work and provides incentives to increase professional knowledge and to build on it.

As Darling-Hammond and McLaughlin (1983) suggest, the task of teaching diverse learners in pursuit of challenging goals is a complex problem that cannot be solved by top-down mandates and policies that promote standardization of means as well as ends. “It requires . . . the unmandating of conflicting policies as well as a new approach based on a coherent vision of teaching and learning across the school system and an appreciation of the diverse contexts within which teachers and students learn best” (p. 405). Policies that make sense in the context of teaching and that correspond with the needs and circumstances of teachers are a practical alternative to those that impose “standardized prescriptions for practice that impede teachers’ ability to handle diversity” (Darling-Hammond and McLaughlin, 1983, p. 394).

Why Teacher Leadership?

In 1992 and again in 1999, we posed a set of propositions, or social system understandings, about teaching that were meant to characterize the realities of the profession from the teacher’s perspective (Lieberman and Miller, 1992, 1999). We noted the following:

- Teacher isolation was the norm, leading teachers to develop unique repertoires of teaching strategies that were seldom shared or made public and often defended and protected.
- The reward system for teachers encouraged this isolation by placing responsibility for feedback on students rather than on colleagues and peers, allowing little room for public discussion and display of teaching.
• A weak knowledge base on learning contributed to individualism and privacy, requiring teachers to take on blind faith that what they were doing made a difference for their students; there were few supports for testing whether what teachers did mattered.

• Competing and conflicting policy directives reinforced these norms, so teachers created a personal rather than a shared sense of goals and expectations.

• The demonstration of control over student behavior functioned as an acceptable proxy for responsibility for student learning; control was visible, and learning was not.

• Teaching was a flat profession, requiring the same of neophytes and veterans and offering little support for professional growth and career differentiation.

• Teaching was construed as technical work to be managed, viewed as a prescribed set of skills, behaviors, and techniques to be mastered and evaluated.

We believed then, as we do now, that these realities keep schools from embracing the policies, beliefs, and practices that are necessary to meet the challenges of an ever-changing world. And we warned that as long as teachers were viewed as quasi-professionals rather than true professionals, they would work in schools that were trotting toward the future while the rest of the world was running toward it at full gallop.

Transforming the Social Realities of Teaching

It is clear that as a profession, we must refashion the old realities of teaching into new ones if we are to meet the demands of the new
century. A new set of propositions about teaching that represent major shifts in perspective and practice has the potential to transform teaching and schools in the directions that the times require (Lieberman and Miller, 2000). These transformative shifts include the following:

- **From individualism to professional community:** When teachers view their work as taking place both within and beyond their own classroom, they participate in an authentic professional community. They build the capacity for joint work and develop norms of collegiality, openness, trust, experimentation, risk taking and feedback. Teaching becomes more public and more open to critique and improvement; in turn, the teaching community promotes an expanded view of professional responsibility and accountability—a move from concerns about *my* students in *my* classroom to *our* students in *our* school.

- **From teaching at the center to learning at the center:** When teachers shift their attention from the act of teaching to the process of learning, they corroborate for each other that “one size fits few” (Ohanian, 1999). By looking collaboratively at student work and designing curriculum, assessments, and instructional strategies together, they gain the collective knowledge, confidence, and power to co-construct alternatives to standardized approaches and measures.

- **From technical and managed work to inquiry and leadership:** When teachers cast off the mantle of technical and managed worker and assume new roles as “researchers, meaning makers, scholars, and inventors” (Lieberman and Miller, 2000), they expand the vision of who they are and what they do. They come to view themselves and are viewed by others as intellectuals engaged in inquiry about teaching and learning. Central to this expanded vision of teaching is the idea that teachers are also leaders, educators who can make a difference in schools and schooling now and in the future.
How Teacher Leaders Can Make a Difference

Teacher leaders are in a unique position to make change happen. They are close to the ground and have the knowledge and ability to control the conditions for teaching and learning in schools and classrooms. We believe that they are critical partners in transforming schooling. Among the many roles they can assume are the following:

- **Advocates for new forms of accountability and assessment.** Teacher leaders can challenge the dominance of tests as the sole criterion for success in school and offer alternatives to private-sector models of efficiency and accountability, introducing measures that promote learning, not just measure it. The call for accountability is not going to go away. Teachers as leaders are in a unique position to take hold of the issue and draw on their own experience and knowledge to enter the national conversation; they can help to reframe the public discourse from one that proposes an *accounting of learning* geared to an audience of legislatures and policymakers to one that supports an *accountability for learning* geared to an audience of parents and communities. In the final analysis, accountability schemes must involve teachers committed to taking responsibility for their own and their students’ continual learning.

- **Innovators in the reconstruction of norms of achievement and expectations for students.** Teacher leaders can transform schools into communities that prepare students for citizenship and work in a complex, technological, and democratic society. The notion that only a select few are capable of achieving rigorous standards is no longer realistic or acceptable. The mantra that all children are capable of learning higher-order skills must be taken seriously. Teachers in leadership positions, whether formal or informal, can be important change agents in meeting the new demands that schools face. They can lead in reshaping the school day, changing grouping and
organizational practices, ensuring more equitable distribution of resources, actively implementing curricula that are sensitive to diverse populations, upholding high standards for all students, and guaranteeing all can share in the full bounty of good teaching, materials, and support. In effect, teachers can lead a basic reconstruction of the very notions of ability, aspirations, and achievement.

• **Stewards for an invigorated profession.** Teacher leaders can work to support the profession and redefine it as an intellectual and collaborative enterprise. They can provide alternatives to restrictive mandates by expanding teachers’ repertoire of strategies. They can advocate for recognition of accomplishments in teaching—for example, through candidacy for certification by the National Board of Professional Teaching Standards, teacher scholar positions, or mini-sabbaticals. And teacher leaders can lobby for meaningful professional development that draws on the experience, expertise, and wisdom of veteran teachers to support and inspire novice teachers and that promotes the creation of professional learning communities that sustain teacher commitment, passion, and persistence.

It is clear that in the last thirty years, the pendulum has been swinging between two polarities: policies that prescribe curriculum, instruction, and testing and policies that enable schools to build the capacity of teachers to seriously engage in transforming their school community. This book comes down strongly on the side of building capacity to engage in transformation. It is about teachers who take leadership in their schools, whether formally or informally, and learn how to turn educational policy into constructive practice. It is about building a new view of teaching and community. It is about building a professional ethos that respects diversity, confronts differences, represents a sensitivity to and engagement with the whole life of students and the adults who teach them. It is about teacher leaders who are creating learning communities that include rather
than exclude, that create knowledge rather than merely apply it, and that offer challenge and support to both new and experienced teachers as colleagues. And it is about teacher leaders who make a difference.