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With this book about to go on press again, now seems like the time to consider what has changed on the K-12 policy scene since "Creating the Capacity for Change" was written in 2004, and the impact those changes have had on the book's observations. As I hope the title and cover photograph convey, this is a book about the need for state policymaking. The years since it was first released have been dominated by national action that might seem to have preempted the field of education policy. Certainly, in these years the states themselves have retreated, grumbling and protesting about No Child Left Behind rather than moving affirmatively to assert their own primary and necessary role.

Yet this development has if anything strengthened the need to make clear the central importance of state policymaking, given the inability of the national government to change an institution that exists in state rather than national law. [The national government's failure when it tried to take control of urban and metropolitan affairs—another field of policy constitutionally the responsibility of the states—has taken on more and more meaning with the controversy over NCLB. For this story, see Pages 122-124.]

I am hopeful that between now and 2009, while the discussion about the reauthorization of NCLB is under way, this book can do two things: clarify the need to change schools and schooling and make it clear that this can happen through a restructuring that only state action can accomplish. People in the national government, as well as the general public, need to appreciate how fully they depend on state action to reach the goals set for public education.

Since "Creating the Capacity for Change" was first published I have been fascinated by the steady evolution in our thinking—both about the nature of the problem facing policymakers and about the strategy required for change. We do learn as we get along. I am struck by how much we have learned in the past five years. Let me begin by mentioning several things that have become clearer since 2004.

• A powerful systemic change is under way, driven by the national decision to switch the mission of the schools from 'access' to 'achievement'. I deal with this change, and its effects, in the Introduction that follows.

• The open sector created by state legislation now seems a permanent part of K-12 public education. In a number of important cities this non-district part of public edu-