Preface

In recent research, trust has been shown to be a key resource in school reform. Increasing trust in schools has been linked to increased participation among faculty in school reform efforts, greater openness to innovations among teachers, increased outreach to parents, and even higher academic productivity in a school. While trusting relationships are not a substitute for student-centered, academically challenging instruction or a more participatory governance structure, they can be seen as the groundwork necessary for such interventions to succeed schoolwide. For example, a more rigorous curriculum that calls for changes in teaching methods is more likely to be adopted by the entire faculty and implemented in the intended fashion in a school where teachers trust one another and their principal. Similarly, trusting relationships among parents, teachers, and administrators allow shared decision making to work toward the benefit of the students rather than dissipating into conflict and personal agendas.

While the importance of trust in schools has been established, the key question posed by both researchers and school professionals remains: How is trust built among adults in elementary schools? This question is the primary focus of this book. My interest in issues of trust building evolved as I worked with Bryk and Schneider on their recent monograph, *Trust in Schools* (2002). Although their work focused on defining the components and benefits of trust in schools, their monograph concludes with a brief discussion of trust building and calls for further investigation of the process of developing trust in schools. As we worked on the monograph, we forced ourselves to concentrate on honing the elements of the theory of trust and our analysis of what trust could mean to a school's productivity. However, inevitably we asked ourselves how the schools we noted in our analysis that went from low to high trust over the course of three years were able to accomplish this change. If a new principal enters a low-trust school, what can be done to promote the development of high-trust relationships? It is from these discussions that this work emerged.

I began to develop a theory of trust building by relying on the literature on trust in organizations and linking it to the Bryk and Schneider (2002) conceptualization of trust in schools. I then turned to the literature on principal leadership and school change to bring specificity to the model in the context of schooling. After a look at why trust in schools is important in Chapter 1, my model for building trust and the literature that supports it are presented in Chapter 2. In an attempt to bring definition to the particularities of the model as it may be witnessed in the day-to-day work of the school, three semihistorical case studies of schools that have experienced a change in principal leadership and positive changes in relational trust are presented in Chapters 3, 4, and 5. Using survey data from teachers and principals in Chicago public schools, in Chapter 6 I test several hypotheses about trust building derived from the case study research. Finally, Chapter 7 sets out a discussion of the ramifications of this study on trust building—what the results tell us and how they might be applied to schools today.

Chicago public schools served as an interesting backdrop to this study on trust building in that they were in the midst of a major school reform effort for the time period studied. Legislation passed in the late 1980s created a local school council (LSC) for each public school; each LSC had control over any discretionary funds and had the power to hire or fire principals every four years. These LSCs consisted of two teachers, who were elected by the faculty, and six parents and two community members, who were elected by the community. The legislation also granted more autonomy for school principals as it reduced the power of the central office and gave principals the ability to hire faculty without regard to seniority rules. This decentralization of power made social relations between school professionals and the community even more important than in traditional school districts.

The dramatic changes in the power structure in Chicago public schools attracted a wealth of resources to both guide and study the phenomenon. Many researchers and members of local community agencies organized seminars to help train LSC members, created leadership networks for principals to explore their new roles, and obtained funding to study the efficacy of this form of school governance. In some cases, these professionals became partners with the central office, providing training and research services as independent contractors. Other groups received outside grants from foundations and maintained more distance from the formal structure.

Soon after the implementation of the reform began in 1989, Tony Bryk formed the Consortium on Chicago School Research (the Consortium) at the University of Chicago to study it. Backed by foundation grants, the Consortium brings together researchers and policy advocates who are concerned about urban education to investigate policy changes in the Chicago

school system with the goal of informing future decision making. Founded in 1990, the Consortium conducted its first major survey of teachers and students in Chicago public schools in 1991. Topics covered in the survey included school governance, school leadership, instructional practices, professional development, professional communities, student engagement, parent involvement, opportunities to learn, and the school environment. Similar surveys were conducted in 1994, 1997, and 1999. Data from these surveys allowed Bryk and Schneider to develop school-level measures of teacher-teacher trust, teacher-principal trust, and teacher-parent trust. Along with this unique dataset, the Consortium has amassed data from the Chicago public school database, including student test score files, administrative records, and school-level demographic information, and combined it with U.S. Census data and several other datasets collected from public agencies. The work in this book relies heavily on the data resources of the Consortium. Their rich collection of data allowed me to identify schools for in-depth case study work and to empirically test the propositions coming from my model of trust building.