Foreword

The Koret Task Force on K–12 Education—a joint endeavor of the Koret Foundation of San Francisco and the Hoover Institution—is a group of eleven education policy experts that seeks to evaluate the existing evidence on school reform measures and to conduct research on the quality and productivity of K–12 education in the United States. Immediately after the task force formally convened in 1999, its investment in research and writing began.

This venture is the conception of joint thinking between Tad Taube, president of the Koret Foundation, and myself. The Koret Foundation is a philanthropic organization that has decided to focus heavily on education issues in the United States. We both felt strongly that the Hoover Institution could contribute to the national dialogue on how to improve American public education. Thus, the Hoover Institution, with significant support from the Koret Foundation, embarked on a multiyear effort to identify and convey factual information about the state of American education, as well as to generate ideas that would enhance the opportunity for all children to gain more knowledge and assemble better skills.

The first book released by the Koret Task Force and edited by task force member Terry M. Moe, *A Primer on America's Schools* (Hoover Institution Press, 2001), cuts through the complexities and often unwarranted assumptions in the education debate and conveys essential information pertaining to this important public policy issue. In *A Primer on America's Schools*, this group takes an important step toward school reform by providing a broad overview of the current state of American education.

The *Primer* provided the foundation for the task force to proceed with two new projects on the important issues of school choice and accountability. These books are fresh contributions to a field that has become frozen by ideological disputes, bureaucratic resistance, and establishment views.

In *Choice with Equity*, edited by task force member Paul T. Hill, nine education specialists, including six members of the task force, take a hard look at the possible downsides of choice in education. These scholars ask whether choice is likely to increase student segregation by race and class or to harm students whose parents are not the first to choose a school. They acknowledge the risks inherent in poorly designed choice programs and suggest how choice can be structured to protect and actually benefit the disadvantaged.

In *School Accountability*, edited by task force members Williamson M. Evers and Herbert J. Walberg, scholars describe the present state of school accountability, how it evolved, how it succeeded and failed, and how it can best be improved. This book describes the range of efforts and identifies the best principles and practices that will improve accountability and hence our nation's schools.

I thank the task force members responsible for the design of these volumes and the editors and authors that contributed to it. I also thank the Koret Foundation for its continuing generous financial support that sustains the work of the task force, especially to Tad Taube for his help in creating the intellectual foundation for the task force and the Hoover Institution's Initiative on American Public Education.

The Koret Task Force on K–12 Education forms the centerpiece of the Hoover Institution's Initiative on American Public Education, with the overall goal of presenting pertinent facts surrounding the current debate, contributing to the debate as a constructive commentator, and generating new ideas relating to education reform. This is a multiyear commitment to the production of research and writing on education reform that citizens of the United States should be considering as a matter of public policy. We could not have launched this ambitious initiative without the help of the many individuals who have stepped forward to support this effort, many of whom are explicitly mentioned on the acknowledgment page.

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