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# Foreword

I have a clear memory of the blue sky, the horizon over the desert, and the straightaway to the Mexican border that led me to the school. The school overlooked the stunning mountain scenery across the desert. With only sand and a few buildings around the school, it looked very different from the schools in Chicago where I regularly visited to observe lessons.

It was February 2004, my first visit to a school in New Mexico. My purpose was to help teachers there conduct their first public research lesson along with my colleagues from the New Mexico MathStar project. I had had several opportunities before to hear about the MathStar project's efforts to improve the teaching and learning of mathematics by using lesson study, but it was my first time to be an actual part of their lesson study endeavor.

After we walked into the school, several other educators from local school districts joined us to participate in a public research lesson. We observed a mathematics research lesson in which a teacher and his students used both English and Spanish to communicate with each other. During the participants' discussion, which was held right after the research lesson, members of the team that had planned the lesson talked about their experience of collaborating with each other. I was moved when I heard a team member emphasize that her lesson study endeavor had been highly rewarding because she had never experienced such collaboration with her colleagues before. At the same time, I recognized that the lesson planning team had successfully established a lesson study foundation and was ready to move toward the second stage.

Lesson study, which originated in Japan, has played an important role in Japanese teachers' professional development since Japanese public education started more than a hundred years ago. In contrast, U.S. educators have only recently become interested in lesson study

as a promising source of ideas for improving education. In 2000, there were only a few places in the U.S. where researchers and practitioners worked together trying to implement lesson study. The New Mexico MathStar project was one of these pioneers of lesson study.

My own lesson study journey with U.S. educators began in the summer of 2000 in Tokyo, where a couple of lesson study workshops were held for U.S. researchers and educators. One year later, a group of California teachers and researchers asked me to help them implement lesson study in their schools. I demonstrated a research lesson so they could actually experience lesson study, and afterwards I met a couple of members from the New Mexico MathStar project at a conference. That was the first time I learned that teachers and researchers in New Mexico had been trying to use lesson study to improve their mathematics teaching and learning.

Years later, when I visited the first public research lesson in New Mexico, which I described in my opening paragraphs, I was impressed to find that the project had begun to establish a foundation of lesson study in less than a couple of years. It impressed me because, through my participation in the lesson study activities of other pioneers, I have learned that the process of implementing lesson study in U.S. schools has not been smooth.

Karin Miller Wiburg and Susan W. Brown, the authors of this book, played key roles in the New Mexico MathStar project, which U.S. lesson study researchers and practitioners have recognized as one of the successful pioneers of lesson study in the U.S. Since the inception of the New Mexico initiative, the authors have worked closely with teachers and educators in New Mexico to find ways to implement lesson study in schools where most students have been underserved. As their book makes clear, the authors are aware of the challenges of implementing lesson study in a U.S. school, and they try to avoid transplanting lesson study in a superficial way. They carefully analyze similarities and differences between Japanese lesson study and existing professional development approaches in the U.S. And they try to capture how the philosophical background of lesson study relates to other approaches.

Also, due to the authors' effort, this book does not limit itself simply to describing the process of implementing lesson study in the schools of New Mexico. The chapters provide a broad look at the implementation of lesson study in the U.S. This perspective helps us to develop a notion that implementing lesson study is a way to provide important ingredients that are missing from U.S. school environments rather than a new approach to replace existing professional development.

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If you are seeking a more effective way to improve teaching and learning for your students, seeking a way to collaborate with your colleagues to improve your school, or seeking innovative ways to help your teachers become actively involved in their professional career, you will learn from the work of Karin Wiburg and Susan Brown.

— *Akihiko Takahashi*