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Preface

WELCOME TO BLENDED COACHING STRATEGIES: SKILLS AND STRATEGIES FOR DEVELOPING SCHOOL PRINCIPALS

Schools need principals and other leaders who are able to build communities of practice that will enable all students to succeed. These leaders have a keen ability to promote collegiality, support adult learning, and nurture teachers. They encourage all members of the school community—students, teachers, and parents—to do their best.

Principals are responsible for setting the tone at their schools. And yet, as is frequently the case with teachers, principals are typically given the keys to the building, a pat on the back, and expected to go forth and succeed. New principals often have little or no supervised work experience and only limited practical preparation. Veteran principals struggle with changing expectations and increasing demands. As the “boomer” generation of principals faces retirement, school districts must contend with a well-documented shortage of candidates who have been suitably prepared to assume leadership positions.

Recognizing the importance of quality site leadership, school districts and other institutions around the country are currently working to establish more effective models of support for new and veteran school leaders. Calls for such programs have been issued by many national and state organizations. The need is further substantiated by our work at the New Teacher Center (NTC) at the University of California, Santa Cruz, where we provide intensive support to first- and second-year principals, experienced principals, and new teachers and their mentors.

This book offers a fresh approach to professional development for principals and other school leaders. *Blended Coaching: Skills and Strategies to Support Principal Development* addresses several critical needs:

- The importance of sustained, stable, and effective site leadership for school improvement
- The increasingly severe shortage of qualified candidates for the principalship
- The inadequacy of traditional preservice and inservice programs
- The need for quality induction and professional development programs for principals that include a mentoring or coaching component

This book is about helping principals and other school leaders bring themselves and their schools to their highest potential—by clarifying and then achieving their goals. It is about teaching, showing, guiding, and working side by side with school leaders to help them improve their performance. We believe the subject we address is of interest to all who are concerned with school improvement, including supervisors and faculty in administration preservice programs, central office personnel seeking to improve the quality of site leadership, and individuals now serving as coaches or mentors to school leaders around the country.

Norma is the brand new principal of Río Dulce Elementary School. She's 32 years old and grew up in the community where she now works. She was a successful teacher for five years and served as a middle-school assistant principal for eight months before being tapped for the principalship at Río Dulce. She is bright, motivated, and very knowledgeable about teaching and learning. Two weeks into the school year, however, she finds herself struggling with an array of issues that threaten to overwhelm her.

The purpose of this book is to help you help principals like Norma meet the challenges they face, survive the rough spots, and thrive in the important work they do. By supporting Norma in her work, you help her make a difference for the teachers, staff, students, and families of Río Dulce School.

Perhaps you are another principal in Norma's district and you have been asked to serve as Norma's mentor. You might be a retiree brought in by the district to assist new principals, or an independent consultant hired to provide leadership training. We suggest you consider our approach to professional development for principals: leadership coaching through the application of *Blended Coaching Strategies*.

Through several dozen years of collective experience, the authors of this book have learned a great deal about successfully coaching teachers and principals. Our experience is informed by 15 years of research and fieldwork, mentoring teachers and principals in dozens of school districts across the country.