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# Contents

<b>Acknowledgments</b>	<b>vii</b>
<b>About the Author</b>	<b>ix</b>
<b>Part I: Staff Development That Changes Classroom Practices</b>	<b>1</b>
Why Read This Book?	2
<b>1. What Do Teachers Believe?</b>	<b>5</b>
A Failure to Collaborate	6
A Teacher’s Strengths and Beliefs	7
Ineffective Beliefs	8
Where Those Ingrained Habits Come From	10
Habits and Mental Models	10
Identifying Teacher Beliefs	11
Incorporating Knowledge of Teacher Strengths and Beliefs Into Staff Development	14
A Common Framework	15
Providing Evidence That Influences Beliefs	17
Experience Insurance	18
Pointing to the Evidence	20
The Goal of Experiences	21
<b>2. What Do Teachers Need During Change?</b>	<b>23</b>
The Case of the Paralyzed Pilot Team	24
Why Weren’t They Changing?	25
Information: The <i>Content</i> of Staff Development	26
Resisters? Who?	30
Delivery: The <i>Process</i> of Staff Development	31
Differentiated Coaching: Why Mentoring and Instructional Coaching Often Miss the Mark	32
A Lesson From the World of Sports	33
Chameleon Coaching	34
Moving Toward Differentiated Coaching	37

<b>3. What Problems Do Teachers Want to Solve?</b>	<b>39</b>
Amy's Problem	40
Defining the Problem Through the Eyes of a Teacher	42
Problems: A Key to Teacher Buy-In	43
Generating Alternatives	45
Learned Helplessness	46
Different Beliefs, Different Solution Sets	47
Evidence: Did We Solve the Problem We Defined?	48
Problem Solving and Action Research	49
<b>4. How Can Teachers Collaborate?</b>	<b>53</b>
Levels of Collaboration	54
Pinpointing Deep Collaboration	56
Benefits From Collaboration	57
What Gets in the Way of Level III Teacher Collaboration?	58
Requirements for Level III Collaboration	59
An Example of Level III Collaboration	66
<b>Part II: Developing a Language for Change</b>	<b>69</b>
Embracing the Mission of Reaching Every Student	70
A Framework for Authentic School Change	71
<b>5. A Common Framework: Creating a Climate Where Change Is Possible</b>	<b>74</b>
A Camping Framework	74
Back to School	75
A Framework That Works	77
Judging and Perceiving: Two Great Approaches to Life	80
Extraversion and Introversion:	
Finding the <i>Energy</i> to Teach and Learn	88
Sensing and Intuition: Your Preference	
for Gathering Information	91
Thinking and Feeling: How We Make Decisions	95
Eight Preferences, Sixteen Types	99
<b>6. Learning Styles and Coaching: An Effective Alliance</b>	<b>101</b>
Different Personalities, Strengths, and Beliefs	102
Reading and Writing	105
Mathematics and Science	108
Classroom Practices	109
Student Behavior	110
Gifted Education	111
A Significant Factor in Education	111

Why Use Type in Coaching?	113
Differentiated Staff Development:	
The First Step in Coaching	114
Phase I: The Learning Styles Model	114
Learning Styles and Staff Development	117
Learning Styles and Change	118
Using Learning Styles to Motivate Change	120
Notes on Phase II: Adding Judging and Perceiving	123
Phase III: Adding Thinking and Feeling	124
<b>7. Coaching Your Whole Staff for Change</b>	<b>126</b>
The Second Key Element in Staff Development:	
Understanding the Strengths and Beliefs of the Teachers	128
The Third Key Element of Effective	
Staff Development: Providing Information	
and Evidence That Can Influence Teacher Beliefs	132
Patterns for Supporting People During Change	133
Proceeding at the Right Pace	136
<b>8. Differentiated Coaching for Teachers:</b>	
<b>The Power of a Strengths-Based Model</b>	<b>138</b>
Coaching Defined	139
When to Coach? Who Can Coach?	140
Coaching as a Staff Development Strategy	141
The Fourth Key Element of Effective	
Staff Development: Meeting the Needs of Each Teacher	142
The Fifth Key Element for Effective Staff Development:	
Relating or Applying What Teachers Are Learning	
to the Problems They Want to Solve in Their Classrooms	149
<b>9. A Framework for Solving Problems</b>	<b>154</b>
The Sixth Key Element of Effective	
Staff Development: Deep, Reflective Collaboration	156
A Call for Collaborative Problem Solving	164
<b>10. Organizing Staff Development Efforts</b>	
<b>in the Same Backpack</b>	<b>166</b>
Helping Students Advocate for Their Own Learning Needs	167
Multiculturalism	171
Students of Poverty	174
Brain Research	176
Difficult Students	180
A Final Note	182

<b>Appendix A: The Sixteen Types: Strengths, Beliefs, and Needs During Change</b>	<b>184</b>
<b>Appendix B: Problem-Solving Model</b>	<b>218</b>
<b>Appendix C: Case Studies in Coaching Teachers for Change</b>	<b>222</b>
<b>References</b>	<b>233</b>
<b>Index</b>	<b>239</b>

# Part I

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## Staff Development That Changes Classroom Practices

Imagine having almost 90 minutes of staff development time every week. My first experiences with school change took place at a small suburban school with just that luxury. Slowly, I introduced the 25 teachers to a learning styles model and helped them use it to plan differentiated lessons and assessments. They walked out of each session with ideas or activities to use with students right away.

To collect data on our efforts, I ran student focus groups, asked teachers to e-mail descriptions of classroom experiences, and conducted interviews to understand what teachers found helpful or useless in the materials. Each week I asked, “What did you try? What did you see?”

The “eager beaver” teachers told stories of increased class participation, fewer behavior problems, more student engagement in projects, and higher work quality. Little by little, other teachers tried the practices they heard their colleagues raving about. By the end of the year, even two of the most reluctant teachers decided to attend the extra six hours of training (on their own time) to become certified to use the differentiation model with students and adults.

Fast-forward a year. The principal moved to an urban middle school that was three times the size of her previous assignment, with 60 percent students of color, 60 percent of its students qualifying for free or reduced lunches, and almost no staff development budget. Rather than cut corners on the quality of our efforts, we decided that I would work with a