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Foreword

A few years ago, Carla Cushman and Nina Morel called to tell me they had been charged with designing and implementing an instructional coaching program in Tennessee's Sumner County schools. I was delighted, as I first met these school leaders during a training session I held on instructional coaching at a Reading Summit in Tennessee. Carla and Nina were new to coaching then and purchased my book *Quality Teaching in a Culture of Coaching*[®].

Early in our subsequent conversation, Carla and Nina asked me to recommend a book that would guide them through the actual process of creating such a program, from the envisioning stage to designing to planning. They wanted to gain ideas about the appropriate professional training that might be required and how to launch and implement the program. In my *Quality Teaching in a Culture of Coaching*[®] book, I stress the value and importance of creating a coaching culture in schools, but I had to be honest with them—I did not know of a book that specifically guided the process of creating and implementing a program within a school jurisdiction.

So they decided to write the book themselves, even though, as they both admitted, they did not have a lot of direct experience with coaching prior to receiving their assignment. That changed quickly as they delved into research and the study of coaching skills and strategies. They flew out to Salem, Oregon, where I was holding a week-long instructional coaching training and interviewed me and others on the process. Bringing what they learned back to Tennessee, they practiced in the roles of coach and coachee. Nina and Carla became immersed in coaching as they shadowed other coaches, teachers, and administrators, testing theories and gleaning ideas from their experiences as well as creating ideas of their own.

Their book is a culmination of this knowledge and practice of instructional coaching along with their own now more substantial

experiences within the world of coaching. Carla and Nina guide the reader through the process of creating an effective instructional coaching program and touch on all the aspects in a step-by-step, chapter-by-chapter approach while weaving a delightful metaphor of navigating a ship through waters rough and calm.

The book will find its way to central office and building administrators looking to start or refine a coaching program. School board members and others studying school leadership will achieve great insights not only into creating a viable coaching plan but also in learning a model that offers ways to improve their existing programs. The authors' efforts and research underscore their point that they are promoting not just a coaching program but an overall culture of collaboration and professional learning. Central to the theme embedded within the process is the importance of teachers moving from isolation to collaboration, with principals and instructional coaches supporting them along the way.

As we pointed out in *Instructional Coaching With the End in Mind: Using Backwards Planning to Increase Student Achievement*, teaching is a complex profession, compounded by the day. Time and again, research has borne out the tremendous value of coaching. It offers support and refines teaching methods that enhance teaching and student learning alike. An instructional coach performs a balanced act between principal and teacher. A skilled instructional coach can spell the difference between an enthusiastic faculty with proactive professional development programs and engaged student population and those schools or districts that scramble to keep up with teaching mandates and parent demands.

In this book, Carla and Nina sketch out a navigational guide for a journey toward an effective instructional coaching program. It is not necessarily a destination. As the authors point out, just as the use of cell phones has become a part of our way of life, coaching in many districts has become an integral part of their culture. At the same time, coaching may not change a culture so much as the culture influences the coaching program, so that instructional coaches become quisupervisors or assistant principals. Each school, each district, each teacher, principal, and instructional coach will encounter different successes and challenges. The thrust, however, is to change the tradition of teaching in isolation to one of collaboration and teamwork, sharing and transparency, where the engagement of students always remains the end goal.

This is a significant book that provides guidance in the aspects of instructional coaching programs. It describes methods to present the

concept, create or elicit the vision; it outlines characteristics to look for when hiring an instructional coach; the importance of communicating to stakeholders; how to enroll and gain buy-in from principals; what training and support are needed; and what to do with resistance and challenges—what they cleverly refer to as “squalls.”

Chapter 7 in particular provides motivation and answers the unasked questions about who gets coached first and why, how the process works and in what environment, and how to tell the story that drives the desire to take the risks and reap the rewards of a coaching culture destined to improve and augment the value of teachers, coaches, principals, and students alike.

In the event readers are not sure where to begin their journeys, a Facilitator’s Guide to follow or adapt as desired provides a real “anchor” for this navigational guide.

Carla and Nina do not have all the answers for you. But they do have the questions that will lead you to design an instructional coaching program of your own. Just as an effective instructional coach develops a teacher’s capacity to reflect and create and experiment in an ongoing continuous improvement cycle, so too does *How to Build an Instructional Coaching Program for Maximum Capacity* coach you on a journey to create a program with stellar results.

Thank you, Carla and Nina, for your remarkable contribution to building a culture of coaching.

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Author, Quality Teaching in a Culture of Coaching® and

Instructional Coaching With the End in Mind:

Using Backwards Planning to Increase Student Achievement

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Prevailing Winds

Navigating the Perfect Storm



If you are reading this book, you are probably a leader who is already interested in the potential of coaching. Perhaps you are an administrator for a school or district that is considering implementation of an instructional coaching program, or maybe you are an educator who is preparing to be an administrator. You might even be a teacher leader

who recognizes a need in your own school and wants to learn what might be involved in starting a coaching program. Perhaps you were intrigued when you saw the benefits firsthand in another school or district—or perhaps, like us, you have been asked to start a coaching program and you do not really know how to begin. This book is a navigational guide for you as you embark on your coaching voyage.

Over the course of our careers, we have weathered a lot of storms, from the *Nation at Risk* (1983) to No Child Left Behind (2001). Despite these programs' impact, most people would agree that what was actually happening in most American classrooms was little changed from what it was in 1975. But in recent years, many educational, social, and economic realities have come together in the "perfect storm" that is now transforming public and political attitudes toward schooling in America. In many states, standards are higher, tests are harder, and teacher and principal evaluations are including individual and school value-added statistics. Teachers are called upon to exhibit expertise in their content, the standards, pedagogy, assessment, statistics, and diverse cultures and learning styles. The very concept of *public school* is being reimagined. All of this is in the context of intense economic pressure in a "flattening" world where globalization is forcing greater and greater economic competition with the world's largest countries of India and China (Friedman, 2005). In this maelstrom of change, it is finally becoming apparent to American schools what other countries such as Finland, South Korea, and Singapore have embraced for some time: Sustained and embedded support for collaboration, action research, and peer observation must occur in order for teachers and learning organizations to reach their potential (Darling-Hammond, 2010–2011). We think of this as maximum capacity.

Fullan (2008) states that "individuals and groups are high in capacity if they possess and continue to develop knowledge and skills, if they attract and use resources . . . wisely, and if they are committed to putting in the energy to get important things done *collectively* and *continuously*" (p. 57). It seems that the sociocultural learning theory formulated by Vygotsky (1978) and others is as applicable to the professional learning of teachers as to the educational learning of children. The way to maximize the capacity of teachers to meet student needs is to embed professional learning in the cultural and social life of the school. No one person can navigate the complexities of modern educational reality alone behind closed classroom doors or sitting in a lecture hall listening to experts. This new climate requires continuously improved teacher knowledge, skills, effectiveness, and collaboration embedded within the daily work lives of teachers. There are

different methods to accomplish this goal, but this book is about the way that we found worked best for our learning organization—instructional coaching—and ways to implement it in any school.

According to the U.S. Department of Education website (2009), “Doing What Works,” one of the keys to education reform is improving teacher effectiveness . . . and strategies to do that include redesigning staff learning to ensure it is “sustained, job-embedded, collaborative, data-driven, and focused on student instructional needs.”

Over the years, as teachers and then as administrators, the authors came to believe that effective professional learning must take place in the context of the particular work situation of the teacher. Some schools in our district had great success with the professional learning community (PLC) model of professional growth, and this experience heightened our desire for deeper and richer professional dialog for all of our teachers. Like most districts, the majority of our meager professional learning dollars were spent bringing in professional presenters to provide instruction in workshop-type settings. We always knew that when the opportunity arose, we would take a different path. And indeed, the resources came, and we and our colleagues were asked to create a coaching program in our district in a very short time frame.

We began by researching the literature on coaching models and implementation recommendations. We found many sources that helped us narrow our focus to the one approach to coaching we felt matched our needs and vision. However, the book we kept looking for was a step-by-step guide to take us from the dream to the reality, and we could not find it. Most of the books we read were very helpful for our coaches, but they were not practical guides for large-scale implementation. There were many excellent resources for one to acquire deep knowledge about the various forms of coaching and the strategies coaches employ, but no plan of attack for two newly appointed and inexperienced coaching facilitators who had about 2 months to develop a program and then hire, train, and deploy a cadre of instructional coaches to make a difference in student achievement. This book can be that guide for you.

When we were faced with the challenge of starting a coaching program, not only were we untrained as coaches ourselves, but we had never even been formally coached in any setting other than

athletics. Although coaching had become ubiquitous in the realms of counseling and business, in the pre-K–12 world in which we operated, it had only been the rare and well-funded district that believed it could afford instructional or academic coaches on any large scale. This meant we were asked to implement a change initiative with very little personal knowledge or experience and to help teachers and administrators understand what coaching is and why implementing a coaching program is a better solution to school-improvement issues than are other options, such as lower class size, increased technology purchases, or adding more support personnel.

Our first step was to assess our own strengths and challenges as leaders. Although we knew little about coaching, we both had education and experience in implementing change initiatives. We also had the advantage of knowing our personnel: We had some understanding of the needs, motivation, background, and vision of our district, teachers, and principals. We determined to use these assets to build our project, and we embarked on a learning process about coaching, the missing link in our knowledge base. To compensate for our gaps in knowledge, we sought out experts and practitioners in the field by reading their work and, in some cases, by contacting them personally and asking for advice.

You may be in a different situation. You may be new to your position and know a lot about coaching and little about your school or district. You may be very familiar with coaching and know your personnel well but know little about implementing large-scale change. Your first step is taking an honest look at what your strengths and challenges are and making a research plan based on those. This book does not attempt to teach you everything you need to know about coaching, leadership, or change, and it certainly cannot teach you about your own school or district culture, personnel, and vision, but hopefully it will give you a framework on which to place your own leadership skills and knowledge as you develop a successful coaching initiative.

Boarding the Ship

When the two of us initially discussed writing a book about our experience with coaching, one of the first images that came to our minds was Homer's *Odyssey*. When we began implementing the coaching initiative, we felt like we were embarking on a long voyage that might have lots of exciting and sometimes harrowing adventures. What we were planning for was (in some cases) a drastic change in school culture. How we approached that change would have a great