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# INTRODUCTION

In the ever-changing landscape of education, now more than ever before, schools need instructional coaches who know how to support teachers and students through varied teaching and learning challenges. Although instructional coaching isn't brand-new, ambiguity still exists around the role of an instructional coach. The crux of instructional coaching should be a daily, intentional, and purposeful engagement with all learners in the school community to support teaching and learning in innovative and transformational ways. Instructional coaches need their own supports to determine how to fulfill this function each day. As instructional coaching expert Jim Knight (2007) states, coaching is "one of the most unpredictable professions in education; each day brings surprises, new challenges, and successes" (p. 19).

As we embark on the journey of instructional coaching, we must identify drivers that will not only support the work of an instructional coach but also aid in transforming the role of instructional coach in the same way classrooms are being transformed. You might ask, "Shouldn't I just follow a coaching framework, prescriptive model, or cycle?" While instructional coaching frameworks, models, and cycles are helpful for defining the overall work of an instructional coach, we live in a dynamically changing educational context that is often unpredictable and that requires innovative approaches daily. Classrooms are being transformed into learning studios, libraries into learning commons, and brick-and-mortar schools into virtual learning spaces. Teacher professional learning is on demand, self-directed, and personalized. Teachers access, deliver, and facilitate content, curriculum, and instruction in various blended online and off-line media. Students are expected to develop skills to solve local and global problems that have yet to arise, and become the next generation of leaders and entrepreneurs. All these conditions, and more, require that instructional coaches know how to quickly determine how to best support teacher effectiveness throughout changes in education. The *drivers* presented in

this book provide foundational guidance that helps drive this action because they are not framed inside a rigid structure or in a prescriptive fashion the way frameworks, models, and cycles often are. The works and research of Adam Grant (2014), Carol Dweck (2007), Susan Cain (2012), and Don Beck and Christopher Cowan (1996) also provide new insights into how people live, work, collaborate, and view the world.

Based on these changing demands and this emerging information, I've identified a set of seven drivers for effective daily instructional coaching—catalysts that will support and guide coaches through this ever-changing educational landscape.

1. Collaboration
2. Transparency
3. Inquiry
4. Discourse
5. Reverberation
6. Sincerity
7. Influence

Coaches can create a sense of inspiration, compassion, empowerment, and empathy around instructional coaching when they apply these drivers on a daily basis. These daily drivers work to produce successful outcomes not only for coaches but also for principals, teachers, students, and parents.

## About This Book

This book explores the seven drivers of instructional coaching to build on, refine, and innovate ways that instructional coaches work and communicate with teachers. These drivers will help illuminate the importance of the teacher's role in student learning, and the importance of instruction.

Chapter 1 explores the driver of collaboration. Coaches should share their expertise, practices, and purposes daily while embracing diversity and dissonance among the educators they serve. They can lead the development of a school community in which collaboration with all learners makes coaching an expectation and a safe, normal, and critical part of the teaching profession and the school and district culture. Chapter 2 dives into the driver of transparency. Coaches hear a lot about creating buy-in and trust. There is no better way for coaches to genuinely create trusting, positive, and collegial environments than to establish a culture of transparency about their intentions,

their goals, and even their own flaws and mistakes in teaching and learning. Once coaches create a culture of transparency, they can begin to implement the driver of inquiry by asking questions with the purpose of changing the cycle of thinking and learning, which is the focus of chapter 3. Chapter 4 concentrates on the driver of discourse—the art of purposefully choosing language norms to convey that coaches value all stakeholders as people and value their ideas and perspectives. Chapter 5 centers on a driver that I call *reverberation*: a meaningful two-way oscillation of feedback that coaches fuel with trusting relationships and consistent dialogue. Coaches push themselves to become the best versions of themselves and encourage teachers to do the same through the instructional coaching driver of sincerity, the focus of chapter 6. And finally, chapter 7 explores the driver of influence, through which coaches can catalyze change efforts in education.

Throughout these chapters, I will draw on powerful and groundbreaking conclusions of the latest research on growth mindsets from Dweck (2007), communication from Cain (2012), and sociocultural psychology from Grant (2014), which all lend support to the efficacy of the seven daily drivers. I will share daily behaviors, practices, and tools that help define the role of an instructional coach. Reproducible tools appear throughout the book to guide readers and offer opportunities to reflect on new learning, explore new ideas, and create actions that immediately put new learning into practice.

## About the Coach's Role

This book is for everyday instructional coaches, ranging from novice to veteran. The seven drivers can transform any instructional coaching or leadership capacity. An important underlying concept of this book is that coaches need to act on the seven daily drivers with humility. They must not get caught up in the official title or status of the instructional coach; they should instead focus on the unprecedented support they will provide to teachers using the drivers. Dacher Keltner, Deborah H. Gruenfeld, and Cameron Anderson (2003) explain that people who boldly claim status inside an organization are not the ones who most readily and reliably attain and hold power; the best leaders lead from behind the scenes, not loudly out in front. Additionally, while people often perceive personality (especially extroversion) to be a crucial factor in leadership efficacy, Corinne Bendersky and Neha Shah (2013) find, “Whereas personality may inform status expectations through perceptions of competence when [teams] first form, as group members work together interdependently over

time, actual contributions to the [team] are an important basis for reallocating status” (p. 387).

The seven drivers connect instructional coaching concepts to quantifiable actions that work to make a difference in how coaches support teachers. Each driver will help provide direction and energy to our daily practice and journey as instructional coaches. Each chapter highlights a driver and contains instructional coaching stories, illustrations, tools, and connections to research in education and psychology. Some suggestions in this book challenge the status quo of instructional coaching, which I’ve observed as including an undefined function of supporting teachers with limited resources, support, and leadership. The drivers in this book build on time-tested research and on the latest psychology research to help inspire actions that transform the coaching role. I encourage you to deeply reflect throughout each chapter, apply the ideas to your own coaching context, and ask yourself what might be holding you back from implementing innovative solutions to improve teaching and learning.