CHAPTER

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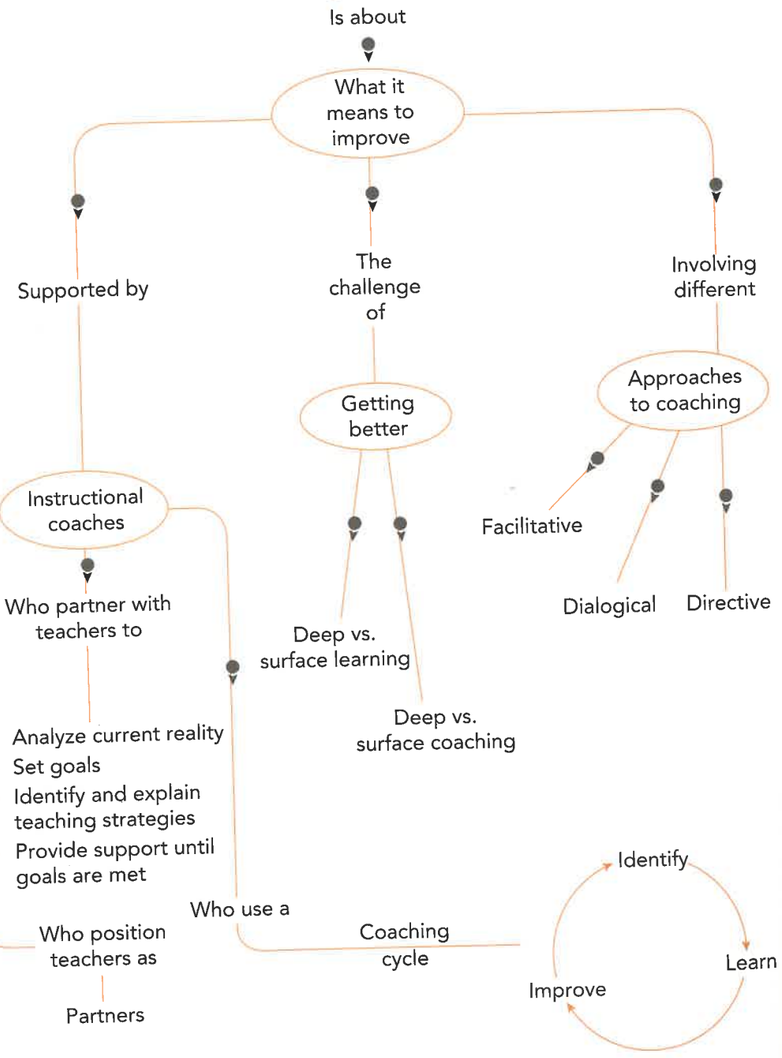
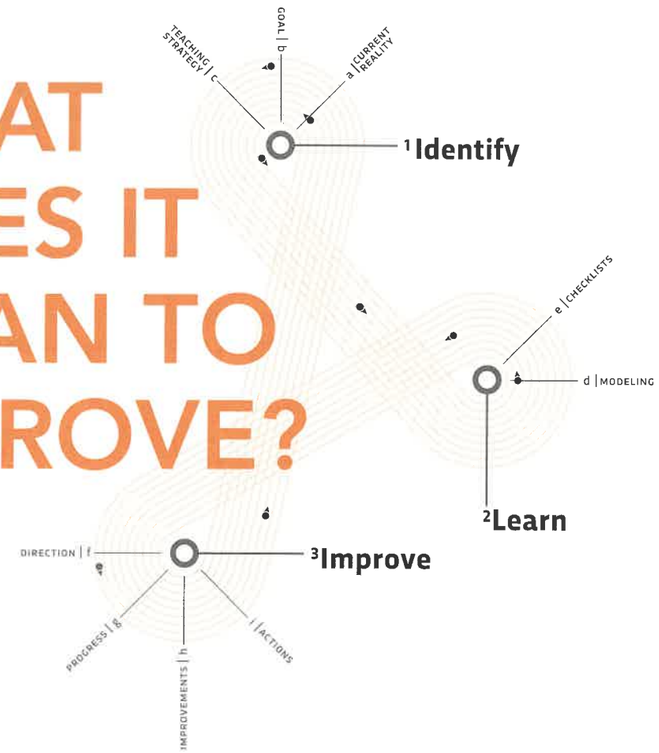


WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO IMPROVE?



Like you, I've spent a lot of my life trying to improve. As I write this book, I'm trying to eat a cleaner diet, cut out sweets, and drop a few pounds (well, maybe 40!). I'm trying to be more present in conversations, trying to listen more than talk, and trying to focus and be more attentive. In the past year, I've watched about a dozen videos of myself presenting to various groups as part of my efforts to upgrade my skills, and I've been reading books about writing to try to improve the simplicity, utility, and (I hope) the beauty of my writing. Admittedly, I've also wasted a lot of time reading books about how to not waste time.

When it comes to trying to improve, I'm not alone. Your local bookstore or online retailer has stacks of books on dieting, relationships, leadership, money management, spiritual guidance, and self-help. Organizations in your community likely offer hundreds of courses on every topic from yoga, to iPad basics, to photography, to archery. Universities now offer thousands of online courses that anyone can take if they choose. Even Ivy League institutions such as Yale offer free online courses that are identical to the courses taught in traditional classrooms.

There are many ways to improve, and most of us try to do it the best way we know how. Increasingly, people are finding that one of the most powerful ways to improve is to partner with a coach. As Harvard researcher Atul Gawande has written, "Coaching done well may be the most effective intervention designed for human performance" (2011, p. 53).

For close to twenty years, my colleagues and I at the Kansas Coaching Project at the University of Kansas Center for Research on Learning, along with my colleagues at the Impact Research Lab in Lawrence, Kansas, have been studying one form of coaching—instructional coaching. This book describes what our research says about what instructional coaches should do and how they should interact with collaborating teachers to improve the quality of students' and teachers' lives to the greatest extent possible.

WHAT IS INSTRUCTIONAL COACHING?

Coaching is booming. There are life coaches, executive coaches, and performance coaches. There are coactive coaches, empathic coaches, and solution-focused coaches. There are image coaches, dating coaches, and even Twitter coaches. In other words, if you want to learn how to do something, you can find a coach to help you do it.

There are also many different types of coaches in education. For example, schools might employ cognitive coaches, literacy coaches, data coaches, content-focused coaches, technology coaches, behavior coaches, pedagogical coaches, and instructional coaches. Some approaches to coaching address many aspects of an educator's life. Others focus on a particular aspect of an educator's work, such as effective teaching to improve student learning, as in the case of instructional coaching. However, regardless of its focus, each approach is designed to help teachers improve.

Instructional coaches partner with teachers to

- analyze current reality,
- set goals,
- identify and explain teaching strategies to meet goals, and
- provide support until goals are met.

Instructional coaches (ICs) partner with teachers to help them improve teaching and learning so students become more successful. To do this, ICs collaborate with teachers to get a clear picture of current reality, identify goals, pick teaching strategies to meet the goals, monitor progress, and problem-solve until the goals are met. At the Impact Research Lab, we define instructional coaching as follows: "Instructional coaches partner with teachers to analyze current reality, set goals, identify and explain teaching strategies to meet goals, and provide support until the goals are met."

Devona Dunekack, who has worked with me as an instructional coach since 1999, was prompted to try to define instructional coaching a few years ago when she was asked a question that many coaches hate: "Tell me, what is it that you do?" Devona's friend, who asked the question, was genuinely curious about Devona's work, and Devona did her best to explain her job, talking about how she worked with teachers and helped them improve their instruction.

Trying to understand, the friend, who was a nurse, then asked, "So, you're a trainer of trainers, isn't that right? You train teachers?"

"Well, in a way, I suppose," Devona answered, clarifying, "we help teachers improve what they do."

"We have them in nursing too," Devona's friend said. "I hate that."

"Why?" asked Devona, somewhat taken aback.

"Well, they show up, and we have to sit in a room all day and hear about stuff we already know. The sessions are boring, so we sit there and talk about the presenter's hairstyle or her shoes, but we have to go to remain certified. I hate that."

"I'd hate that too," Devona agreed. "But, what if your trainer of trainers met you on your floor, got to know you, and really listened to and affirmed you? What if you became comfortable telling her where you wanted to improve, and the trainer of trainers worked with you, showed you exactly how to improve in your chosen area by working with your patients, and then watched you and gave you helpful suggestions and support until you could easily do the new skill?"

"Oh, I'd love that," said Devona's friend.

"That's what I do," said Devona.

And that is what instructional coaches do. Shoulder to shoulder with teachers, ICs respectfully share teaching strategies that help teachers meet goals that they set. To accomplish this, we have found that instructional coaches are most effective when they do two things: (a) position teachers as partners so that coaching really is two teachers talking with each other

> *I think it's the perfect job. I have done some different things over the years, but coaching is where you get to put it all together. If you love children, love education, and have the mindset of always being a learner and wanting to try something new, then as an instructional coach, no two days are ever going to be alike. I love that. There may be some days where your calendar gets completely wiped out by a crisis or something unscheduled happens on your campus, but you've got to be there, be available, and be flexible enough to understand that not every day is going to go exactly the way that you planned it, but you're going to do your best.*
>
> **—Linda Zarsky**
> Lead Instructional Coach for Leander
> Wyoming, Independent School District

and (b) employ the high-impact actions within a coaching cycle, which I'm calling the Impact Cycle. Both are described below.

TEACHERS AS PARTNERS

How instructional coaches interact with others is as important as what they *do*. An instructional coach who sees herself as an expert and believes teachers simply need to buy into her good advice on what they did right or wrong is likely to encounter a lot of resistance.

Effective instructional coaches see teachers as professionals, which means they see teachers as the ultimate decision makers about what and how they learn. As I've emphasized over the years, we suggest that coaches guide their behavior by the set of Partnership Principles described in the box on the facing page.

When coaches act in ways that are consistent with the Partnership Principles, as opposed to a top-down approach, teachers do most of the thinking, and coaches and teachers work as equals with the goal of making a powerful, positive difference in children's lives.

The Partnership Principles[1]

Equality: In partnerships, one partner does not tell the other what to do; both partners share ideas and make decisions together as equals. Coaches whose interactions embody equality have faith that the teachers they work with bring a lot to any interaction, and they listen with empathy.

Choice: Taking away choice and telling others that they must act a certain way usually guarantees that they will *not* want to do what we propose. As the saying goes, "When you insist, they will resist." Coaches who act on the principle of choice position teachers as the final decision makers, as partners who choose their coaching goals and decide which practices to adopt and how to interpret data.

Voice: Conversation with a coach should be as open and candid as conversation with a trusted friend. When coaches follow the principle of voice, they expect to learn from their collaborating teachers, and the teachers they coach feel safe expressing what they think and feel. When coaches live out the principle of voice, teachers know that their opinion matters.

Dialogue: When people are partners, their conversation is often a dialogue, a conversation where everyone's ideas are shared through back-and-forth interactions. Coaches who foster dialogue balance advocacy with inquiry. They actively seek out others' ideas, and they share their own ideas in a way that makes it easy for others to share what they think. Dialogue helps instructional coaches set themselves up as thinking partners.

Reflection: Learning often involves the messy muddling through that we often refer to as reflection. As a result, when professionals are told what to do—and when and how to do it, with no room for their own individual thought—there's a good chance they will stop learning. Much of the pleasure of professional growth involves reflecting on what you're learning. When coaches collaborate with teachers by co-creating ideas in reflective conversations, teachers (and coaches) often find those conversations to be engaging, energizing, and valuable.

Praxis: People who engage in praxis apply knowledge and skills to their work, community, or personal lives. For example, a teacher who wants to increase student engagement by telling powerful stories, and then reads about stories and carefully considers how to use them during instruction, is engaged in praxis as I define it. When coaches act with the goal of praxis in mind, they make sure that coaching is productive, meaningful, and helpful to teachers and students.

Reciprocity: Reciprocity is the inevitable outcome of an authentic partnership. When coaches engage in dialogue, reflect, and strive for praxis with their collaborating teachers, they will be engaged in real-life situations and live out the old saying, "When one teaches, two learn." Partnership is about shared learning as much as it is about shared power.

1. See Chapter 2 in *Unmistakable Impact: A Partnership Approach to Improving Instruction* (Knight, 2011) for a detailed description of the Partnership Principles.

Top-Down	Partnership
Compliance	Commitment
People *outside* the classroom know what students need	People *inside* the classroom know what students need
One size fits all	One size fits one
Constructive feedback	Dialogue
Coach does most of the thinking	Teacher does most of the thinking
Judgmental	Non-judgmental
Teachers have lower status than coaches	Teachers have equal status with coaches
Accountable to leaders	Accountable to students

A COACHING CYCLE

The partnership approach is at the heart of the Impact Cycle that instructional coaches use with teachers. The Impact Cycle involves three stages: Identify. Learn. Improve. In this book, I dedicate most of the pages to describing this cycle.

> *We . . . have a small way of thinking about accountability. We think that people want to escape from being accountable. We believe that accountability is something that must be imposed. We have to hold people accountable, and we devise reward and punishment schemes to do this . . . These beliefs are so dominant in our culture that they are difficult to question, yet they are the very beliefs that keep us from experiencing what we long for.*
>
> —**Peter Koestenbaum and Peter Block**
> *Freedom and Accountability at Work: Applying Philosophical Insights to the Real World* (2001, p. 3)

One coach who uses the Impact Cycle is Joi Lunsford, an instructional coach at Reeves-Hinger Elementary School in Canyon, Texas, just south of Amarillo. Joi collaborated with Melissa Kimbrough, an elementary teacher at Reeves-Hinger. All teachers in Joi's school were expected to set improvement goals, and Melissa sought out Joi because she wanted to increase the engagement of the students in her classroom. As Joi worked with teachers at Reeves-Hinger, word spread that the video goal setting that Joi did (how Joi describes the Impact Cycle) was a powerful way for teachers to figure out how to reach more children, so over time more and more teachers asked to partner with her.

To start the coaching process with Melissa, Joi offered to video record Melissa's class so Melissa could be sure they were focused on the right goal. To create the video, Joi used her iPhone to record some of the lesson. Then she shared it through the Teaching Channel's Video Collaboration Tool, Teams. Joi also gave Melissa the "Watch Your Students" and "Watch Your Self" reflection forms to fill out as she watched her video (copies of these forms are included in Chapter 2). Finally, Joi and Melissa watched the video separately and then got together to discuss the video.

"We set up a debrief meeting," Joi told me, "where we came together and went through the Identify Questions" (also included in Chapter 3). The Identify Questions,[2] which lie at the heart of the Impact Cycle, helped Joi be a more effective coach:

> The questions help me be a better listener and help me stay focused on what they [teachers] are thinking. The moment I start to give advice, I stop myself by going back to the questions because the teachers know what they want; they know what is bothering them. So if I just prompt them to reflect and to think about where they would like to focus, I do a much better job helping them set a meaningful goal that matters to them.

After they had moved through the Identify Questions, Melissa and Joi agreed that increasing student engagement would be a powerful goal. The video of Melissa's class had revealed that about half of the students were off task during small-group activities, so Melissa set a goal that 90 percent of her students would be on task during small-group activities.

To reach the goal, Joi suggested Melissa experiment with a strategy called "Chunking Instructions." To help Melissa learn the strategy, Joi did several things to help her learn how to chunk instructions so that her students would be more engaged. First, Joi recognized that Melissa might need to modify

2. Much more about these questions and how they were developed will be presented in Chapter 3.

the strategy or pick some other strategy if chunking didn't help her students hit their goal. As Joi explains, "Not every strategy works the first time. Some teachers love a strategy and it might work really well for them, but others might hate it or find that it doesn't work for their students." However, Joi has found that when she partners with teachers such as Melissa and helps them find a strategy that works for them, eventually they will hit their goal. In fact, only one teacher she has worked with in the past three years has not hit the goal.

Joi did many other things to help Melissa learn how to chunk instructions. For example, she shared a checklist through Google Drive, so she and Melissa could adapt the strategy as needed. "When I share a checklist with a teacher," Joi told me, "we go through the list together to make sure she's clear on it. Then when I share the checklist on Google Drive, I always say, 'Hey, I'm sending this to you so you can help us make it better.' It becomes a living document that improves with each new teacher learning the strategy and giving input."

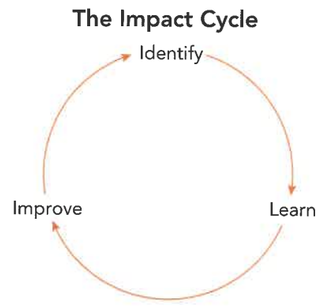
Joi also deepens teachers' understanding of strategies by modeling or co-teaching. Like many others, Joi has found that "the most popular way for a teacher to see a strategy is to visit the classroom of a teacher on campus who's using the strategy effectively." Joi has also created a video library of strategies that she shares with teachers so that they can see what it looks like to implement a teaching strategy, like the chunking instructions strategy that Melissa used to increase engagement.

As it turned out, once Melissa incorporated the chunking instructions strategy, her students hit the goal of increased engagement quickly after a few modifications. When Joi recorded what she refers to as a "target video" to see how close Melissa's students were to the goal, it clearly showed that every student was engaged. Melissa's students had gone from 50 percent on task to 100 percent on task. As dramatic as the change was for Melissa's students, an even more dramatic change might have been experienced by Melissa. She went from being strongly opposed to coaching to enthusiastically praising it. At the end of her time working with Joi, she sent the following letter to her principal:

> *I would rather have my nose hairs tweaked out one by one than make a goal-setting video!* That is what was going through my mind for the past year or so regarding video goal setting. *Why would I want to have someone come into my classroom and film me as I struggle? What if they are judging me and think I'm a terrible teacher? I am so uncomfortable when people are in my classroom!* These deep-seated fears had kept me from one of the most valuable things I have ever experienced as a teacher. This year, out of pure need and frustration, I decided to give it a shot. I needed to see what was keeping my class from performing as I knew they should. I had tried everything I knew and I needed to figure out the problem. Let me just say that I am now a believer. It was nothing that I thought it would be. I didn't even really notice Joi as she filmed my kids. When I watched the video, Joi helped me to set a goal, gave me some strategies to try, and I got to work. It has worked beautifully. The change in my kids and their performance is astounding. We still have a lot of work to do, but I have some valuable tools that I will use year after year. Video goal setting has gone from something I would never do, to something I will never *not* do. If I can do it, anyone can.

Melissa's students' success was great for students and great for Melissa, but successes like Melissa's also affect the entire school. When teachers at Reeves-Hinger heard about it, they became more and more interested in coaching. During Joi's first year, there were only eight teachers who, as Joi expressed it, "were brave and kind and let me use them as guinea pigs. You know, I learned a lot that first year." The second year, "word had spread throughout the grade levels and through friends, and more teachers were excited about getting involved to see if it would make a difference for them, too." As a result, in year two Joi had thirty teachers involved in coaching. "This year [her third year]," Joi told me, "we have forty-two teachers."

To summarize, the Impact Cycle that Joi employed involved three components. First, Joi and Melissa got a clear picture of reality through videotaping. Then, they identified the goal of 90 percent of students being on task and chose a teaching strategy that would help them reach the goal. We refer to this stage as **Identify**. Second, Joi used a checklist and modeled the strategy to make sure Melissa understood how to use the chunking instructions strategy. We refer to this stage as **Learn**. Finally, Joi and Melissa monitored progress toward the goal and made modifications to the teaching strategy until the goal was hit. We refer to this stage as **Improve**.



THREE APPROACHES TO COACHING

The following three approaches to coaching are commonly used—facilitative, directive, and dialogical—each with its unique strengths and weaknesses. While the dialogical approach is the one used by ICs implementing the Impact Cycle, a short summary will be presented of all three.

Characteristic	Facilitative	Dialogical	Directive
Metaphor	Sounding board	Partner	Expert–apprentice
Teacher knowledge	Knows what they need to know to improve	Has valuable knowledge but may need other knowledge to improve	Must implement new knowledge to improve
Decision making	Teacher	Teacher	Coach
Approach	Does not share expertise	Shares expertise dialogically	Shares knowledge directly
Focus	Teacher	Student	Teaching practice
Mode of discourse	Inquiry	Balances advocacy with inquiry	Advocacy

FACILITATIVE COACHING

Facilitative coaches see collaborating teachers as equals who make most if not all decisions during coaching. As Sir John Whitmore has written in his influential book *Coaching for Performance: GROWing People, Performance, and Purpose* (2002), "The relationship between the coach and coachee must be one of partnership in the endeavor, of trust, of safety and of minimal pressure" (p. 20).

Facilitative coaches encourage coachees to share their ideas openly by listening with empathy, paraphrasing, and asking powerful questions. Additionally, facilitative coaches do not share their expertise or suggestions with respect to what a teacher can do to get better based on the assumption that (a) coachees already have the knowledge they need to improve, so a coach's role is to help them unpack what they already know and that (b) coaches who share their expertise with coachees may inhibit progress by keeping coachees from coming up with their own solutions. In other words, "The coach is not a problem solver, a teacher, an adviser, an instructor, or even an expert; he or she is a sounding board, a facilitator, a counselor, an awareness raiser" (Whitmore, 2002, p. 40).

Facilitative coaching can be used in all kinds of situations, so it has the potential to address issues that dialogical and directive coaching are not able to address. For example, facilitative coaching may be used to help a teacher get along with a difficult team member, to help a principal lead culture change in her school, or to help a student use his time more effectively.

In the classroom, facilitative coaching works best when the teachers being coached already have the knowledge they need to improve. It is less effective when teachers do not have the necessary knowledge to bring about the change they want to see. For example, a teacher who is struggling to create a learner-friendly classroom culture and who has not learned effective strategies for classroom management will likely need an instructional coach to help him master teaching behavioral expectations, reinforcing appropriate behavior, and correcting inappropriate behavior. Clearly, facilitative coaching would not be an appropriate approach in such a situation. Instead, the teacher would benefit from particular teaching practices such as those described in *The Art and Science of Teaching: A Comprehensive Framework for Effective Instruction* (Marzano, 2007), *The Skillful Teacher: Building Your Teaching Skills* (Saphier, Haley-Speca, & Gower, 2008), or *High-Impact Instruction: A Framework for Great Teaching* (Knight, 2013).

DIRECTIVE COACHING

In many ways, directive coaching is the opposite of facilitative coaching. That is, the directive coach's goal is to help coachees master a certain skill or set of skills. The directive coach and coachee relationship is similar to a master–apprentice relationship. The directive coach has special knowledge, and his job is to transfer that knowledge to the coachee. While the relationship is respectful, it is not equal.

In contrast to facilitative coaches who set their expertise aside when working with teachers, the directive coach's expertise is at the heart of this coaching approach. Since their job is to make sure teachers learn the correct way to do something, directive coaches tell teachers what do to, sometimes model practices, observe teachers, and provide constructive feedback to teachers until they can implement the new practice with fidelity.

Directive coaches work from the assumption that the teachers they are coaching do not know how to use the practices they are learning, which is why they are being coached. They also assume that teaching strategies generally should be implemented with fidelity, which is to say, in the same way in each classroom. Thus, the goal of the directive coach is to ensure fidelity to a proven model, not adaptation of the model to the unique needs of children or strengths of a teacher.

The best directive coaches are excellent communicators who listen to their coachees, confirm understanding using effective questions, and sensitively read their coachee's understanding or lack of understanding. Since the goal

is high-quality implementation of a new practice, directive coaches need to especially be effective at explaining, modeling, and providing constructive feedback.

When teachers are committed to learning a teaching strategy or program, directive coaching can be effective. However, directive coaching tends to de-professionalize teaching by minimizing teacher expertise and autonomy, and, therefore, frequently engenders resistance. Telling teachers they have to do something a certain way whether they want to or not treats teachers more like laborers than professionals, and it often leads to resistance more than change.

The directive approach to coaching also often fails because it oversimplifies the complex world of the classroom. The unique, young human beings who attend our schools are too complex for one-size-fits-all approaches to learning. What teachers and students need is an approach to coaching that combines the facilitative coach's respect for the professionalism of teachers with the directive coach's ability to identify and describe effective strategies that can help teachers move forward. That approach is the dialogical approach.

> *I think you have to have a belief in and a passion for the importance of public education if you are working in a public school. It is not always an easy job, but it can be very rewarding. I hope that coaching is going to become standard operating procedure in our schools. I have worked with people that have said to me that they would never have implemented the targeted changes without my support. I really believe it is one of the single most important things that we could be doing to improve the quality of what is happening in our public schools.*
>
> **—Janice Creneti**
>
> Instructional Staff Developer, FDLRS, Largo, Florida

DIALOGICAL COACHING

The facilitative coach focuses on inquiry, using questions, listening, and conversational moves to help a teacher become aware of answers he already has inside himself. The directive coach focuses on advocacy, using expertise, clear explanations, modeling, and constructive feedback to teach a teacher how to use a new teaching strategy or program with fidelity. The dialogical coach balances advocacy with inquiry.

Like a facilitative coach, a dialogical coach embraces inquiry, asking questions that empower the collaborating teacher to identify goals, strategies, and adaptations that will have an unmistakable impact on students' achievement and well-being. Dialogical coaches ask powerful questions, listen and think with teachers, and collaborate with them to set powerful goals that will have a powerful impact on students' lives. They employ a coaching cycle, like the Impact Cycle, that is driven by back-and-forth conversation about the current reality and the teacher's hoped-for reality in the classroom.

In contrast to facilitative coaches, dialogical coaches do not withhold their expertise. They work from the assumption that the issues teachers face in classrooms can often be better addressed if teachers look at what the research has identified as effective teaching strategies. Therefore, like directive coaches, dialogical coaches must have a deep understanding of teaching strategies they can share with teachers to help them improve. What separates them from directive coaches, however, is that they do not do the thinking for teachers; rather, they position teachers as decision makers.

Dialogical coaches do not give advice; they share possible strategies with teachers and let teachers decide whether they want to try one of them or some other strategy to meet their goals. Dialogical coaches partner with teachers to identify goals and teaching strategies and then describe strategies precisely, while also asking teachers how they want to modify the strategies to better meet students' needs. Then, they help implement the strategies and gather data on whether or not they lead to students hitting their goals. Dialogical coaches don't keep their ideas to themselves, but they realize that sometimes strategies have to be modified to meet students' needs and to align with teachers' strengths. They also understand that student-focused goals that matter to teachers are essential for effective coaching.

During dialogical coaching—in contrast to directive coaching—the standard for excellent implementation is not the coach's opinion but the goal itself. That is, if a teacher implements a strategy in a way that is radically different from how it was designed to be used, the coach doesn't take a top-down approach and tell the teacher how to teach the strategy with fidelity. Instead, she simply says, "Let's see if we can hit the goal." If the goal isn't hit, then teacher and coach can go back to the description and consider whether the strategy should be taught with greater fidelity.

Facilitative and directive coaching both involve conversation, but they do not involve dialogue. A dialogue is a meeting of the minds, two or more people sharing ideas with each other. It is not a dialogue if I withhold my ideas, and it is not a dialogue when I tell you what to do. It is a dialogue when I share my ideas in a way that makes it easy for others to share their

ideas. A dialogue is thinking with someone. That is the approach we take when implementing the Impact Cycle, and the rest of this book provides a step-by-step description of how coaches can employ that cycle.

> *In a dialogue . . . nobody is trying to win. Everybody wins if anybody wins. There is a different sort of spirit to it. In a dialogue, there is no attempt to gain points, or to make your particular view prevail. Rather, whenever any mistake is discovered on the part of anybody, everybody gains. It's a situation called win-win, whereas the other game is win-lose—if I win, you lose. But a dialogue is something more of a common participation, in which we are not playing a game against each other, but with each other. In a dialogue, everybody wins.*
>
> **—David Bohm**
> *On Dialogue* (1996, p. 7)

DEEP LEARNING, DEEP COACHING

The purpose of coaching is to foster improvement. Therefore, if done well, coaching can be incredibly important since improvement stands at the heart of so much that matters in life. When we choose to learn and get better, on our own or with a coach, we open ourselves to a better life of healthier relationships, greater successes, deeper feelings of competence, and more vitality and growth. Not surprisingly, Edward Deci, one of the world's leading experts on motivation, identifies competence (along with autonomy and relationships) as one of the main factors in motivation. When we grow, improve, and learn, when we strive to become a better version of ourselves, we tap into something deep in ourselves that craves that kind of growth.

In one of my favorite quotations, Peter Senge writes about this desire for learning in *The Fifth Discipline: The Art and Practice of the Learning Organization* (1990):

> Real learning gets to the heart of what it means to be human. Through learning we re-create ourselves. Through learning we become able to do something we were never able to do. Through learning we reperceive the world and our relationship to it. Through learning we extend our capacity to create, to be part of the generative process of life. There is within each of us a deep hunger for this type of learning. (pp. 13–14)

Coaching that is designed for impact taps into the "deep hunger for learning" that Senge describes. It is the motivating power of learning and changing for the better that has led thousands of teachers to feel positive and motivated after they have met their goals through coaching.

Joellen Killion, who has written extensively about coaching, distinguished between what she referred to as coaching light and coaching heavy. "Coaching light," Joellen wrote, "occurs when coaches want to build and maintain relationships more than they want to improve teaching and learning. From this perspective, coaches may act to increase their perceived value to teachers by providing resources *and* avoiding challenging conversations" (Knight, 2009, p. 22). In contrast, when coaches are "coaching heavy," they "work outside their comfort zone and stretch their coaching skills, content knowledge, leadership skills, relationship skills, and instructional skills. They are increasingly aware of the beliefs that drive their actions and reexamine them frequently" (p. 23).

> *Coaching heavy requires coaches to say "no" to trivial requests for support and to turn their attention to those high-leverage services that have the greatest potential for improving teaching and learning.*
>
> **—Joellen Killion**
> "Coaches' Roles, Responsibilities, and Reach," in *Coaching: Approaches and Perspectives* (Knight, 2009, p. 23)

As I've worked with coaches, I've found Joellen's distinctions very helpful, and I've tweaked them slightly so they better address instructional coaching more specifically. Following Joellen's lead, I distinguish between surface coaching and deep coaching. When instructional coaches do surface coaching, similar to Joellen's "coaching light," they provide teachers with resources, offer supportive comments, model lessons, conduct quick observations, and share quick feedback. Surface coaching does not involve teachers in the deep work of setting student-focused goals and collaborating

until those goals are met, and it usually involves only superficial reflection and little change.

When engaging in deep coaching, on the other hand, instructional coaches guide teachers through a reflective process that involves setting goals, identifying teaching strategies to be implemented to reach those goals, collaboration, and adaptation of teaching and learning until the goals are met. In short, deep instructional coaching uses the Impact Cycle.

At the receiving end of the distinction between deep coaching and surface coaching is the distinction I make between deep and surface learning. When we experience surface learning, we make minor adjustments, try something out for a while, but we don't really make significant steps forward. Deep learning, on the other hand, is learning that changes our assumptions about how we do what we do. Deep learning gets to the core of who we are. As such, deep learning should be the outcome of deep coaching.

Deep learning can happen in positive and negative ways. One of my deepest learning experiences occurred when I was in my early twenties. At the end of two years at university, my average grade was D- (that's just a tiny bit above an average of F!), and university officials wrote to inform me that I wouldn't be welcomed back for a third year. At twenty years old, I left school discouraged by my poor performance, but even more discouraged by my deep sense that I really wasn't capable of success. I had a bad case of what Martin Seligman has labeled "learned helplessness," a belief that I simply did not think I could be successful no matter what opportunities might present themselves.

I moved from my Ontario university to Jasper, Alberta, a tourist town in the Canadian Rockies, in large part to escape my growing belief that I was and always would be a failure. Once in the mountains, though, I quickly fell in love with the natural beauty, and I started to spend every free weekend hiking and then climbing in the backcountry. Looking at the mountains every day, I was drawn deeper and deeper into climbing. I felt compelled to improve, and I took courses on climbing safety, read every book I could find on mountaineering, rock climbed after work at the Rock Garden cliffs outside of town, and went out climbing almost every weekend with Peter Aman and Chris Dunlap, two experienced climbers who generously let me tag along.

For me, there was something powerful about learning how to climb, learning how to manage the carabiners, pitons, ropes, and other gear, and to feel a profound sense of accomplishment every time my friends and I reached the summit of another mountain. Each mountain I climbed changed me a little bit, and week-by-week I overcame my learned helplessness.

Climbing taught me that I could control my life. I went back to university with a new identity, and the second time around I learned to be a successful student, ultimately winning a hard-to-get Canadian Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council scholarship that funded my doctoral study of the partnership approach, which stands at the heart of my work on coaching. The truth is that I might not be writing this book if I hadn't moved to the Rockies and learned how to climb.

More recently, I had another deep learning experience. Four years ago, my wife, Jenny, and I were overjoyed to see our beautiful son arrive in our lives. Luke was born later in my life, and for many years I had dedicated most of my time to researching, writing, and consulting. Like many others who are deeply dedicated to their professional goals, I frequently worked eighty- and ninety-hour weeks, writing articles, books, and research proposals, traveling, presenting, attending meetings, consulting, and so forth.

Work seemed to be going well, and I felt encouraged to see my books and ideas shared. That success just encouraged me to do more work, and I came to believe that if I wasn't working, I was wasting my time. In fact, I'm ashamed to recall that when Jenny would ask me to help around the house or help with Luke, my pat response was, "That's not a good use of my time." I felt I needed to dedicate myself to improving the lives of students, even if that meant I had no time for the most important people in my life. I was convinced that the best way I could help my family was to work hard and provide for them. If I did that well, then I was a good family man.

Six months after Luke was born, my illusions about what "a good use of my time" was came crashing down. Jenny told me that we needed to talk. One evening after Luke was asleep, we sat down at the kitchen table and she told me that I was risking losing my new son, and not only that, I was risking losing her. I couldn't be an occasional dad and husband, she warned. "Your son," she said, "should be at least as important as your work. And, your wife should be, too."

Then, in the kindest and most compassionate way, Jenny pointed out all the events I had missed in Luke's and her life and all the things she had done when I was an absentee parent. Jenny was gracious when she listed off all I had missed, but she was also clear. My family should never be a waste of my time! Just the opposite: My family was the best use of my time. If I truly wanted to be a good father and husband, I would have to turn my life around.

Jenny's comments were painful to hear. Until that conversation, I thought I was being a good husband and father, but the truth was I had skipped the whole husband and father part completely. That night was one of the most difficult of my life, but it was also extremely important. Thankfully, I listened through the pain, and I recognized I had to change. I started to

put boundaries on my work and travel time, and I have striven to make my family my top priority. I've learned that professional success without personal success is pretty hollow, and I've learned I have to live differently. For me, that was deep learning.

Learning to climb changed the story I told myself about who I was by showing me, again and again, that I could succeed and that I could control the outcomes of my life. The simple act of climbing to the summit of so many peaks convinced me, step by step, that I could be a success, that I wasn't doomed to a life of failure. Climbing gave me a more positive story for my life.

My conversation with Jenny was more difficult. I came face to face with the reality that I was not as good as I thought I was. I learned that if I wanted to be the father to Luke I imagined I was, I had to make some dramatic changes. When learning is difficult, when our positive story of ourselves has to change, consciously or unconsciously, we often choose ignorance over deep learning. All in all, life is a lot easier on the surface—choosing to assume everything is going just fine—than it is to go deeper and really see how we can improve. Deep learning, however, is one of the best ways to really improve.

These two experiences, one pleasant, the other painful, dramatically changed my life for the better. I include them here because I think they illustrate the central challenge at the heart of deep learning. Learning and change often appear to be difficult, but learning and change are essential. The good news is that learning and change often involve others who help us change—for me those people are my climbing partners and Jenny. For many teachers, that person is an instructional coach.

> *I think that we need profound growth in education because we have been very content with just teeny bits of growth. We have to figure out how to get more people engaged, and I think we are looking at the heart of change. We are all trying to figure out who we are, and realizing that what we thought was reality isn't reality, that who we thought we are isn't who we are, is a painful thing. You let go of this dream that you have and accept this painful reality. But that's how we become adults.*
>
> **—Jean Clark**
> Administrator, Cecil County
> Public Schools, Cecil County, Maryland

The Impact Cycle described in this book has been developed and refined to help instructional coaches help teachers experience deep learning. In turn, when teachers learn, they can guide students to experience the deep learning, which, as noted by Peter Senge in the quotation above, "gets to the heart of what it means to be human."

In the rest of this book, I will describe how coaches should interact with teachers and what they should do. For people learning how to do instructional coaching, this book provides a clear step-by-step process they can employ to help make deep learning really happen, and as a result, enable colleagues and their students to improve in clear, measurable ways.

The book is organized as follows:

Each chapter begins with a learning map depicting the key concepts in the chapter. Each chapter also contains these features:

Making It Real describes practical actions educators can take to turn the ideas in each chapter into actions.

To Sum Up provides a summary of each chapter.

Going Deeper introduces resources (mostly books) readers can explore to extend their knowledge of the ideas and strategies discussed in the chapter.

QR Codes are linked to videos illustrating the various parts of the instructional coaching cycle carried out by elementary teacher Crysta Crum and secondary teacher Cathryn Monroe in coaching conversations with me.

Finally, throughout the book you will find checklists that can be used to describe teaching strategies, gather data, plan coaching, and monitor progress toward goals.

The following is a brief description of the contents of the rest of the book.

Chapter 2, Identify: Getting a Clear Picture of Reality: The Impact Cycle involves three stages: Identify, Learn, Improve. In this chapter, I describe how to start the Identify stage of coaching by getting a clear picture of reality in the classroom using four approaches: student voice, student work, observation, and teacher evaluation data.

Chapter 3, Questions to Identify a PEERS Goal: After a teacher has gained a clear picture of reality, she is guided by the coach to identify a change for the better

Video 1.1
Introducing Crysta Crum

Video 1.2
Introducing Cat Monroe

resources.corwin.com/impactcycle

she would like to see in her students—usually these changes are related to achievement (e.g., percentage of students proficient on formative assessments), behavior (e.g., number of disruptions per minute in a class), or attitude (e.g., percentage of students who report on exit tickets that they feel safe coming to school). We have found that the most effective goals are what we refer to as PEERS goals; that is, they are Positive, Easy, Emotionally Compelling, Reachable (they are measurable, and there is a strategy that can be implemented to hit the goal), and Student-Focused. I will describe PEERS goals in detail in Chapter 3. After setting a PEERS goal, teacher and coach identify a teaching practice, such as those identified in *High-Impact Instruction* (Knight, 2013), that the teacher will implement in an attempt to hit the goal.

Chapter 4, Learn: Once a teacher has chosen a strategy, she needs to implement it. In this chapter, I describe how to do that. We have found that if teachers are going to learn a new strategy, they first need to receive a clear explanation of the strategy. Then, they need to see a model or multiple models of the practice in action. The coach might go into the classroom and model the practice with students or model it when students are not in the room, if that is more appropriate. Coach and teacher could watch another teacher use the practice, or coach and teacher could watch a video of the target practice. To learn something new, you need to both hear about it and see it, and this chapter describes how to do that.

Chapter 5, Improve: Once a teacher has learned the chosen strategy or practice, she can set about implementing it to see if it hits the goal. This chapter describes how the coach and teacher monitor implementation of the practice as well as whether it leads to progress toward the goal. Additionally, the chapter describes how coach and teacher should talk about implementation and progress, and how decisions should be made about modifying the way a practice is implemented or pivoting to a new strategy in an attempt to hit the goal.

Instructional Coaches' Toolkit:

Strategies for Enrolling Teachers: In the past twenty years, coaches working with the Impact Research Lab have identified many different ways in which to enroll teachers in a coaching relationship while honoring the partnership philosophy. This section of the toolkit describes ways to enroll teachers in coaching and includes forms coaches can use during the enrollment part of coaching.

Data-Gathering Tools: Central to the improvement cycle is the gathering of data. Data are necessary for getting a clear picture of reality,

for setting goals, and for monitoring progress toward goals. This toolkit provides tools coaches and teachers can use to gather data about learning and instruction.

Instructional Playbook: Instructional coaches support teachers in reaching their goals by helping them implement teaching strategies that they know will have a positive impact on students. To that end, they use a so-called instructional playbook consisting of a list of the teaching strategies instructional coaches share, a one-page summary of each strategy, and checklists that coaches can use to explain strategies to teachers. This section of the toolkit contains a model instructional playbook.

Strategies for Assessing Student Attitude: In many cases, teachers set goals that are related to students' attitudes and beliefs. For example, a teacher might want to know if students feel comfortable speaking in his classroom. This section of the toolkit contains forms teachers can use to gather data on what students think, feel, and believe.

Appendix: Lean-Design Research: The Impact Cycle results from a research model that my colleagues and I at the Center for Research on Learning refer to as Lean-Design Research. In this Appendix, I describe how we use this research methodology.

MAKING IT REAL

Coaches and other change leaders (especially principals and coaching supervisors) can make this chapter real by discussing what kind of coaching they want in their schools. Do they want surface coaching, where coaches work with larger numbers of teachers but have less impact, or do they want deep coaching, where coaches have much more impact but work with smaller numbers of teachers?

Change leaders responsible for coaching should also discuss whether they want facilitative, directive, or dialogical coaches. If they opt for dialogical coaches, usually because they believe coaches should foster better teaching for better learning, they should discuss and plan how instructional coaches can get the professional development they need so that they have deep knowledge of effective teaching strategies.

TO SUM UP

- We define instructional coaching as follows: "Instructional coaches partner with teachers to analyze current reality, set goals, identify and explain teaching strategies to meet goals, and provide support until the goals are met."
- Instructional coaches see teachers as professionals and, therefore, as equal partners in coaching, and they position teachers as the decision makers within the coaching process.
- The partnership approach involves seven principles: equality, choice, voice, reflection, dialogue, praxis, and reciprocity.
- The Impact Cycle involves three components:
  - Identify, during which coach and teacher collaborate to get a clear picture of current reality, identify a student-focused goal, and choose a strategy to try to hit the goal.
  - Learn, during which the coach ensures that the teacher learns the identified strategy by explaining it clearly, usually through the use of a checklist and by modeling the strategy so the collaborating teacher sees it being used before implementing it.
  - Improve, during which the teacher implements the teaching strategy and the coach and teacher monitor progress toward the goal, making adjustments as necessary until the goal is reached.
- Deep learning occurs when we make significant improvements in the way we go about doing something important, like teaching or raising a family.
- Deep learning is complicated by our identity, our lack of understanding of our current reality, and our mindset.
- Instructional coaches balance advocacy with inquiry, which means they adopt the partnership and inquiry approaches of facilitative coaching, while also sharing effective teaching practices in a dialogical way.

GOING DEEPER

In my previous books on coaching, *Instructional Coaching* (Knight, 2007), *Unmistakable Impact* (Knight, 2011), and *Focus on Teaching* (Knight, 2014), I have mentioned several books about coaching in schools, including Gary Bloom, Claire Castagna, Ellen Moir, and Betsy Warren's (2005) *Blended Coaching: Skills and Strategies to Support Principal Development*, Arthur Costa and Robert Garmston's (2002) *Cognitive Coaching: A Foundation for Renaissance Schools*, Jane Kise's (2006) *Differentiated Coaching: A Framework for Helping Teachers Change*, Joellen Killion and Cindy Harrison's (2006) *Taking the Lead: New Roles for Teachers and School-Based Coaches*, Stephen G. Barkley's (2010) *Quality Teaching in a Culture of Coaching*, Nancy Love's (2008) *Using Data to Improve Learning for All: A Collaborative Inquiry Approach*, Lucy West and Fritz Staub's (2003) *Content-Focused Coaching: A Foundation for Renaissance Schools*, Jan Miller Burkins's (2009) *Practical Literacy Coaching: A Collection of Tools to Support Your Work*, and Mare Catherine Moran's (2007) *Differentiated Literacy Coaching: Scaffolding for Student and Teacher Success*. Finally, *Coaching: Approaches and Perspectives* (Knight, 2008), contains chapters by several coaching authors discussing many of the coaching approaches listed here.

Additionally, three books are especially useful in explaining the practices we see effective instructional coaches using:

- Atul Gawande's (2010) *The Checklist Manifesto: How to Get Things Right* explains the importance of precise explanations of practices.
- Chip and Dan Heath's (2010) *Switch: How to Change Things When Change Is Hard* provides, among other things, an excellent description of what is required to begin and change initiatives like coaching.
- Joseph Grenny, Kerry Patterson, David Maxfield, and Ron McMillan's (2013) *Influencer: The New Science of Leading Change*, 2nd Edition explains the importance of modeling as a part of change and learning.