FOREWORD

Coaching has become ubiquitous; it is everywhere—and for good reason. Research studies, beginning several decades ago, have informed us about the effectiveness, and thus the value, of coaching for corporate executives, for educational leaders at the district and campus level, for teachers at the classroom level, and—for an ever-increasing number of staff in the work place—across an infinite number of professions.

A MODEST LOOK AT RESEARCH ON COACHING

School-Change-Process Research

In the mid-1970s, longitudinal studies of change in schools and universities were designed and conducted by researchers at the Research & Development Center for Teacher Education, at The University of Texas, in Austin (Hall & Loucks, 1977; Hall & Rutherford, 1976; Hall, Wallace, & Dossett, 1973). The studies targeted understanding and insights that would support and assist innovation implementation in educational settings. Successful implementation was expected to lead to improvement of educational practice and, subsequently, increased successful student learning.

These studies were initiated as a result of the unsuccessful experiences of educators who introduced changes of curriculum and instructional strategies, perpetuating an annual cycle of introducing change, being provided modest support, assessing the impact of the change—typically there was little—and rejecting the effort because it was an unworthy product, and starting anew.

Along the way, some wise individual suggested that the fault lie not with the product being adopted and subjected to implementation but with the process.

Researchers at the R&D Center were invited and mandated to explore this issue.

Investigation across multiple years of study at multiple sites nationwide revealed useful findings—findings that could be employed to insure that innovations became implemented and transferred to classrooms where the change in practice might influence student results. Reports of the major findings (currently reported by Hall & Hord, 2006) included the following requirements for successful change:

1. A clear vision of the intended change (implemented in a high-quality way);
2. A plan for reaching implementation and articulation of needed resources;
3. Investment in professional learning (in order to use the "new" effectively);
4. Assessment of the progress of implementation;
5. Provision of continuous support and assistance; and
6. A context conducive to change and improvement. (Hord, Roussin, & Sommers, 2010)

The fourth and fifth strategies, assessing implementation and providing support, may easily be translated into coaching—identifying where and how help is needed by individuals and responding with needed information, skills development, or application to the work place.

Because of their importance statistically in the change process, R&D Center staff labeled these assess-and-assist strategies as "one-legged interviews," as they were of short duration and informal tone. The assessments with individuals were conducted at scheduled times, but more frequently initiated by the change facilitator while interacting with implementers on the way to the cafeteria, while collecting mail at

the staff mailboxes, or crossing the parking lot to their cars at the end of the workday. Support and assistance followed, dependent upon the assessment made. Over time, the staff referred to these interactions as "little things mean a lot" after a popular dance tune of the time, because they were deemed very powerful, although they required small amounts of time and effort.

Staff-Development Research

In a similar time frame, Bruce Joyce and Beverly Showers (2002) initiated investigations into the early mysterious and generally misunderstood processes of staff development to identify the effectiveness of its phases or stages. The phases identified by Joyce and Showers are

- Study of theory;
- Modeling and demonstrations;
- Practice and low-risk feedback; and
- Peer coaching.

Like Hall and Hord (2006), change research that identified the large group-learning sessions of staff development as an important intervention to support change of practice, Joyce and Showers' (2002) studies, in addition, confirmed the importance of addressing and responding to individuals' adult learning issues in order to implement new practice in classrooms. This line of research added additional visibility to the significance and need for one-to-one or small-group follow-up with implementers, subsequent to the typical large-group learning sessions.

Joyce and Showers (2002) also found that the coaching of implementers was the most powerful factor that provided them with the knowledge, skills, and capacity to transfer the adult learning to the work place. As a result, Joyce and Showers have consistently and persistently promoted the follow-up coaching phase of professional learning as vital to implementation success.

Research on Professional Learning Communities

More recently, in the past decade and a half, the professional learning community (PLC) has become the innovation du jour, and language about it, from a wide variety of interpreters, has found its way across the nation and around the globe. Referring to the research studies conducted on PLC, a synthesis of the components, attributes, or dimensions of effective PLCs can be found in Hord and Sommers (2008). These dimensions are

- Shared beliefs, values, and vision of what the school should be;
- Supportive and shared leadership;
- Intentional collective learning and its application;
- Supportive conditions, both structural and relational; and
- Shared personal practice.

Note again that school and classroom practice is made public, in shared personal practice. In the PLC, the expectation is that administrators and teachers will invite colleagues to observe their work, script notes, and engage in a follow-up conversation that includes both "warm" and "cool" feedback. The intention is to address the knowledge and actions and behaviors of the professionals in order to support them in avoiding confusion and clarifying misunderstanding as they learn more deeply and clearly how to employ new practices so that their students achieve increased results.

Once again, while collective (large-group) learning sessions are deemed critical, the follow-up and coaching of colleagues working and watching each other while implementing the learning from the large-group sessions leverages the learning. It is an important strategy that increases the adoption and implementation of new practice.

COACHING

Who, Where, and Why

A most useful reference that provides information about the work and impact of coaching on classroom practice is that of Killion and Harrison (2006). They note the wide array of differing types of coaching for classroom personnel: challenge coaching, cognitive coaching, collegial coaching, content-focused coaching, instructional coaching, mentoring, peer consultation, peer coaching, and technical coaching (pp. 12–13), to name a few. In the corporate sector, multiple types of coaching are similarly found.

At a more descriptive level, Killion and Harrison (2006) explained the 10 roles of coaches typically found in the nation's schools. A modest adaptation of these roles has been included by Hord et al. (2010) in their volume of learning opportunities for PLCs. These roles include resource provider, data coach, curriculum specialist, instructional specialist, mentor, classroom supporter, learning facilitator, school leader, catalyst for change, and mediator (pp. 197–199). It is not difficult to imagine the breadth of knowledge and array of skills required of these coaches.

A structural demand is that of time and place for the coaching activities to be conducted. Typically, coaching is done in the teacher's classroom, thus providing an easy answer to the location issue. What is not so easy is the question of when the coaching and its subsequent follow-up consultation can be done. In too many cases, the coaches have a classroom teaching assignment in addition to coaching, making the scheduling of this activity challenging. A great deal of time, energy, and resources have been funneled into the logistics and preparation of coaching for improving teacher practice. But, what coaching for the school's administrator?

THE PRINCIPAL

Critical in How a School Operates

Since the early eighties, the research and educational literature has been replete with studies of principals—what effective principals do, how they implement their role, how they engage staff in their work for the increased learning of students, and other topics.

"Principals, specifically, are the lynchpins of school change, providing the necessary modeling and support required for a learning school" (Hord & Sommers, 2008, p. 28).

It is an established fact that principals are a most significant factor in whether the school is a learning and improving school or whether it is more likely to operate in a culture characterized as laissez faire. It is also well known that principals gain most of their knowledge and skills for "principaling" while on the job. Further, their context is one of relative isolation, as their days are filled (to a large degree) with unanticipated events that demand immediate attention; and, they most often have no administrator colleagues with whom to interact in the school. The climate across schools all too often is one of competition for principals, so that seeking colleagues for assistance or support is not politically wise. What to do?

THE PRINCIPAL'S PERSONAL COACH

With scholarly insight strengthened by reflection on the national Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium Standards (Council of Chief State School Officers, 1996), and, importantly, with the detail of their own experience as principals, Diana Williams and Essie Richardson fill this significant gap for the

developing principal. Potential and practicing principals find a wealth of content and its application to guide their learning activities. Not only does this volume enable the learning school administrator to gain understanding of the effective principal's role but it also enables the administrator to self-assess and consider the possibilities of adopting unfamiliar practices into his or her own repertoire.

Most assuredly, a personal coach can be a significant addition to the resources provided to principals for continuing their professional learning and its application. In the current economic environment, providing this service for many schools' and districts' leaders is nearly impossible. As an effective alternative, the authors of this book provide engaging stories, rich descriptions, and serious questions that the reader can employ for growth and development. Hence, it is a valuable resource and should be found on every school administrator's worktable, dog eared and sticky noted.

For the principal, the authors are the leadership coaches, who in the text ask readers to reflect upon their own situations. The reader who agonizes over decisions is supported by the coaches who understand that many principals "cannot show their vulnerabilities" and need guidance and assistance. The authors-coaches provide a mirror and questions that stimulate readers to respond with their best thinking while "uncovering the inner resources to accomplish extraordinary results."

The book does not gloss over the challenges that principals meet daily in their schools. Indeed, Williams and Richardson draw on and share their own personal experiences as school administrators, while framing their questions and suggestions in the language of school-leadership standards. Used appropriately, this richly developed text will help principals reach improved practice that results in higher-quality teaching and subsequently increased successful student learning.

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