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Preface

The idea to train peer coaches grew out of my search for strategies that would help teachers improve teaching and learning. Research and experience have shown that collaboration among teachers is the key toward this endeavor.

The early efforts I led at collaborative professional learning helped teachers improve their practice, but what they learned rarely spread beyond their classrooms. Spreading innovative practices across a school seemed to require some sort of key to unlock the power of collaboration. Schools needed teacher leaders to lead collaborative professional learning in their schools. Peer Coaches could be that key.

Four nucleotides make up the DNA of Peer Coaching. The first is the fact that **effective professional learning results from collaborating with a peer**, someone teachers know and respect and who is just down the hall to help when needed. The second is the belief that **collaboration is more successful if one of the peers is a Peer Coach** who is highly skilled in communication, collaboration, lesson design, and integrating technology. Third, **successful coaches need a willing, engaged learning partner**. Finally, if we want to avoid creating more small-scale, short-lived educational experiments, **coaching needs to be part of a plan that aligns coaching with the school's goals** and provides the support the Peer Coach and her or his learning partner need for success.

Today, in more than 40 countries, teachers who collaborate with a Peer Coach report that their Peer Coach provides a safety net that encourages them to take risks to improve teaching and learning. Working with a Peer Coach, they are engaged in a process of continuous improvement designed to help their students learn the basics and 21st-century skills. Peer Coaches have demonstrated that they are effective at unlocking the power of collaboration to improve teaching and learning (Ley, 2011; Liston & Ragan, 2010).

How Will This Book Help You?

This book blends theory, the research behind coaching, and practice. Its unique strength comes from the practical experiences shared by dozens of highly successful Peer Coaches from the United States and across the world. Their shared experiences offer invaluable guidance and advice that will help coaches succeed. The book also features resources drawn from Peer Coach training activities that will be valuable to anyone interested in coaching. Some of these include a template for creating a Coaching Plan, the Learning Activity Checklist, a research-based tool that defines the qualities of highly effective learning, and a step-by-step lesson-improvement process used by coaches and their learning partners to translate the checklist into effective classroom learning. In addition, the book draws on my experiences helping educators implement coaching in hundreds of school districts around the world, experiences that provide rich resources that will guide coaches and school leaders to implement coaching successfully.

WHO SHOULD USE THIS BOOK

The book is designed for educators who believe the future of education depends on effective collaboration among teachers to improve teaching and learning. It addresses a variety of issues

school leaders face as they implement a coaching program to improve teaching and learning. Teacher leaders who are moving into coaching roles will find the book provides a wealth of practical insights into strategies for effective coaching.

Educators New to Coaching

I hope the book encourages educators who are considering coaching to adopt it and provides insights and resources vital to implementing a successful Peer Coaching program for those educators just launching one. For example, it defines the attributes of successful coaches to help schools make wise choices as they select Peer Coaches and offers proven strategies for selecting teachers to collaborate with coaches. The book provides an understanding of the roles Peer Coaches and their collaborating teachers play. Successful coaching is far more difficult than having one peer offer advice to another, and the book provides advice from successful coaches on strategies and skills they have used. Finally, this work is designed to provide prospective Peer Coaches and school leaders with ideas on how to align peer coaching with school goals and how to support and sustain coaching successfully.

Experienced Educators

The book is also designed for principals, coaches, and educators in schools that already have coaching programs and are looking for ways to make coaching more effective. While the book emphasizes one type of Peer Coaching, much of what makes these Peer Coaches successful is immediately relevant to any coach focused on improving teaching and learning. The issues I address throughout the book, like building trust, using communication skills to build a safety net, and emphasizing inquiry to build capacity to improve student learning, have value for any educator involved in coaching. Schools involved in coaching should benefit from my materials on how schools and districts can successfully support and sustain

coaching. In addition, the book offers valuable insights into how to use coaching to produce systemic improvement in teaching and learning.

BOOK AT A GLANCE

Chapter 1 explains the roles Peer Coaches assume and how they play these roles to create a relationship based on respect and trust. It also explores strategies coaches can use to build this kind of relationship with their collaborating teachers.

Chapter 2 examines the research about the strategies that are most likely to improve student learning, research on effective professional learning, and how Peer Coaching aligns with both fields of research.

Chapter 3 defines three critical coaching skills, communication and collaboration skills, lesson-design skills, and technology integration and outlines why these skills are essential to build the coach's capacity to assist other teachers to improve instruction.

Chapter 4 outlines a step-by-step look at the elements of a Coaching Plan designed to align coaching with the school's goals and make Peer Coaching effective. It also explores how school leaders can use the planning process as part of their overall strategy to build their schools' collective capacity to improve teaching and learning.

Chapter 5 offers insight into communication and collaboration skills Peer Coaches need to be successful. It also provides insights into how Peer Coaches use these skills to create a safety net that encourages their collaborating teachers to take risks and improve teaching and learning.

Chapter 6 examines the importance of creating a norm for effective learning for successful Peer Coaching and the broader success of schoolwide improvement of teaching and learning. It also provides practical insights into how Peer Coaches can use this norm to assist peers in the ongoing process of improving teaching and learning.

Chapter 7 gives educators a structured lesson-improvement process and related resources that coaches and their collaborating teachers have successfully used to improve learning activities to help students develop basic skills and 21st-century skills.

Chapter 8 provides insights into the ways Peer Coaches use learning tasks like communication or collaboration as the starting points for integrating technology and offers other key approaches coaches use to ensure that teachers use technology to enhance 21st-century learning.

Chapter 9 explores the ongoing development of coaches after they have gained some on-the-job coaching experiences. It examines the strategies and tools coaches can use to shape structured discussions about successes and challenges they face and their use of protocols to foster safe, focused reflective discussions after observing a peer.

Chapter 10 provides insights into strategies successful Peer Coaches have used to build support for coaching within the school and how these efforts can align with school and school district efforts to create capacity to improve teaching and learning.

I have been constantly amazed at the ways these dedicated and skillful professionals have helped peers to improve teaching and learning. I hope this book encourages schools to rely on Peer Coaching to unlock the power of collaboration to improve teaching and learning in their schools.