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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*<sup>®</sup>.

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*<sup>®</sup> 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 quasisupervisors 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.

*Stephen G. Barkley*  
*Executive Vice President*  
*Performance Learning Systems, Inc.*  
*Author, Quality Teaching in a Culture of Coaching® and*  
*Instructional Coaching With the End in Mind:*  
*Using Backwards Planning to Increase Student Achievement*