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Foreword

It has been about 18 years since the original publication of *Blended Coaching: Skills and Strategies to Support Principal Development*. Since that time, over 35,000 copies have been sold and *Blended Coaching* continues to be an essential text for those engaged in training and supporting educational leaders.

Many of the challenges that we faced in K-12 education 18 years ago remain in place today. We continue to struggle to close the achievement gap that mirrors and reinforces the inequities in our society. Simply put, we fail far too many of our students. We continue to face a daunting shortage of candidates for teaching and leadership jobs in our schools. We struggle with high turnover fueled by the demands of the job and the difficult working conditions encountered by professional educators. The political polarization that is fracturing our communities is being manifest at district and classroom levels.

On the other hand, there is reason to be optimistic about the future of K-12 education. More than ever, teachers are being recognized as professionals and are being asked to serve as leaders in their professional learning communities. The impact that principals have upon student achievement has been well documented, and districts across the country have developed career ladders that lead from the classroom to the principalship and beyond. Despite the forces that would divide our communities, a commitment to equitable outcomes is reflected in most educational policy and in our new generation of school leadership. And the social-emotional dimensions of teaching, leadership, and learning are now openly discussed.

Along with these hopeful trends has come a recognition of the value of mentoring and coaching support for novice and veteran educators in improving retention and performance. National standards for teacher and principal supervisors now call for coaching, and novice teachers and principals are supported by mentoring programs in many if not most school districts.

Mentoring- and coaching-based support were not the norm when Gary Bloom, Janet Gless, Wendy Baron, and I founded

the New Teacher Center at the University of California Santa Cruz in 1998. The NTC's work, grounded in the work of the Santa Cruz New Teacher Project, quickly grew to become a national model that produced well-documented positive impacts on teacher retention and student achievement. Early on in our work it became clear that teacher effectiveness was directly influenced by site leadership, and that school principals would benefit from the same sort of support we were providing to teachers. Our principal coaching work was soon adopted in many states and districts around the nation.

It became clear that the strongest schools and districts were ones where coaching and mentoring were embedded in the culture at all levels and at all career stages. Among other things, we were the first organization to write about the importance of principal supervision and to provide training for principal supervisors grounded in coaching.

It was this work which resulted in the development of the leadership coaching model that is described in *Blended Coaching*. The *Blended Coaching* model and book explicitly addressed conditions that we encountered in the field; that being an effective leader demanded both technical knowledge and skill, and “ways of being”... Dispositions and interpersonal skills. These “ways of being” often went unaddressed in preservice programs and other professional development models.

In the years since the original publication of *Blended Coaching*, Gary has continued to develop the concepts articulated in *Blended Coaching* in collaboration with colleagues including coauthor Jackie Wilson.

In the first edition of *Blended Coaching*, we state that “coaching is not supervision... but effective supervisors coach, a lot.” In this new edition, the authors explicitly support the practice of coaching-based supervision, an approach to supervision that is focused upon growing those being supervised rather than merely rating them.

The authors have also broadened the focus of the book to address the value of coaching for educators in many roles in addition to the principalship. They have also updated the book to reflect current professional standards, while refining tools for the development of basic coaching skills.

Eighteen years ago, in the original edition, we brought attention to the importance of developing educators with the

commitment and skills to address issues of equity in our schools. Wilson and Bloom renew that focus in this edition.

With the publication of this updated edition, it is my hope that a new generation of educators will continue to recognize and develop the power to change the world for the better through collaboration, coaching, and community.

—**Ellen Moir**, Founder and Former Executive Director,
New Teacher Center

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Preface

Welcome to *Blended Coaching: Supporting the Development and Supervision of School Leaders*.

The first edition of this book was entitled *Blended Coaching: Skills and Strategies to Support Principal Development*. The Blended Coaching model has been widely adopted as an approach to supporting the professional development of educators with many job titles and at all stages of their careers.

In this second edition of *Blended Coaching*, we have broadened the scope of much of our text to reflect the applicability of our approach to teachers, school leaders, and others in the K-12 community. While the bulk of our discussion speaks to the principalship, we suggest that what we share here has much broader utility. We also explicitly address the value of Blended Coaching as the foundation of effective professional supervision.

Schools need teachers, principals, and other leaders who are able to build communities of practice that will enable all students to succeed. These professional educators have a keen ability to promote collegiality, support student and adult learning, and nurture teachers. They encourage all members of the school community—students, teachers, and parents—to do their best.

Principals are responsible for setting the tone at their schools. And yet, as is frequently the case with teachers, principals are typically given the keys to the building, a pat on the back, and expected to go forth and succeed. New principals often have little or no supervised work experience and only limited practical preparation. Veteran principals struggle with changing expectations and increasing demands. Teachers practice in relative isolation, often receiving little or no actionable feedback. As the current generation of principals and teachers retires, school districts must contend with a well-documented shortage of candidates who have been suitably prepared to assume leadership and teaching positions.

Recognizing the importance of quality site professional development, school districts and other institutions around

the country are currently working to establish more effective models of support for new and veteran educators and pipelines to insure a supply of quality candidates. Calls for such programs have been issued by many national and state organizations. Professional organizations that represent school leaders such as the American Association of School Leaders (AASA), the National Association for Secondary School Principals (NASSP), the National Association for Elementary School Principals (NAESP), and the Council for Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) have been advocating for high-quality preparation programs to better prepare aspiring school leaders who will eventually take on the role and responsibilities of Assistant Principal, Principal, and Superintendent. Professional organizations such as the University Council for School Administration and the International Council of Professors of Educational Leadership that represent faculty who teach in preparation programs have been engaged in discussions about program quality and support. Organizations such as Learning Forward, Center for Educational Leadership at the University of Washington, the Leadership Academy, and the National Policy Board for Educational Administration have been working to establish more effective models of support for new and veteran educators and pipelines to insure a supply of quality candidates. Philanthropic organizations such as the Wallace and Joyce Foundations have provided financial support for innovative approaches to developing principal pipelines.

This book offers a fresh approach to professional development and supervision for principals and other educators. *Blended Coaching* addresses several critical needs:

- The importance of sustained, stable, and effective site leadership for school improvement
- The increasingly severe shortage of qualified candidates for the principalship and teaching positions
- The inadequacy of traditional preservice and inservice programs
- The need for quality induction and professional development programs for educators that include a mentoring or coaching component
- The need for effective coaching based supervision for principals, teachers, and all support staff in the education community.

This book is about helping principals and other school leaders bring themselves and their schools to their highest potential—by clarifying and then achieving their goals. It is

about teaching, showing, guiding, and working side by side with school leaders to help them improve their performance. We believe the subject we address is of interest to all who are concerned with school improvement, including supervisors and faculty in administration preservice programs, central office personnel seeking to improve the quality of site leadership, and individuals now serving as coaches or mentors to school leaders around the country, as well as those charged with formal supervision.

Norma is the brand new principal of Río Dulce Elementary School. She's 32 years old and grew up in the community where she now works. She was a successful teacher for five years and served as a middle-school assistant principal for eight months before being tapped for the principalship at Río Dulce. She is bright, motivated, and very knowledgeable about teaching and learning. Two weeks into the school year, however, she finds herself struggling with an array of issues that threaten to overwhelm her.

The purpose of this book is to help you help principals like Norma meet the challenges they face, survive the rough spots, and thrive in the important work they do. By supporting Norma in her work, you help her make a difference for the teachers, staff, students, and families of Río Dulce School.

Perhaps you are another principal in Norma's district and you have been asked to serve as Norma's mentor. Perhaps you are Norma's supervisor and are only a few years out of the principalship yourself. You might be a retiree brought in by the district to assist new principals, or an independent consultant hired to provide leadership training. You might be Norma, unsure about how to proceed with the supervision of a veteran teaching staff. In all of these scenarios, Blended Coaching and Coaching-Based Supervision are likely to be helpful tools.

Rose is in her second year as principal of Elm School. The staff appreciates her knowledge of instruction and her support. Although she is highly regarded by her school community and recognized for her commitment and hard work, she describes herself as "burnt out." She is losing confidence in her ability as a principal and is frustrated by the long hours she devotes to her job and her school's slow progress. She fantasizes about quitting. Instead of giving up, however, she shares her frustrations with Raul, her coach, who has built a trusting relationship with her. Raul observes Rose interacting with staff in a variety of contexts and helps her become aware of the ways in which her desire to control and her misgivings about delegating responsibility have burdened her and disempowered others. Raul helps Rose develop new structures for delegation and set

personal limits on the number of hours she will work and the responsibilities she will take on. As a result, Rose becomes more comfortable stating her expectations and supervising her staff. By the end of her second year, she feels as if she has emerged from a bad dream—the kind where you are unable to outrun the monster that’s close on your heels. Her job as principal becomes manageable, her attitude turns positive, and she begins to look forward to her third year at Elm.

It is our hope that this book will bring you to a new understanding of the concept of coaching and how it applies to the care and nurturing of school professional educators like Norma and Rose. Skilled coaching has helped both Norma and Rose to emerge as outstanding instructional leaders who have had a significant positive impact upon their students. It is our aim to help individuals and organizations to design and implement programs that provide the intensive, individualized, and focused professional development so sorely needed by educators like Norma and Rose.

Coaches, no matter what their particular approach, must apply a variety of basic skills. These include building trust, listening, observing, questioning, and giving feedback. Coaches must also learn a number of *strategies*, the fundamental game plans that underlie coaching practice. We have developed *Blended Coaching Strategies* as a model for their application. Coaches should also come to the table with tools, those practical resources that shape the coaching relationship and from which a coach can draw to provide feedback and meet the coachee’s specific job-related needs. Each of these elements—skills, strategies, and tools—is addressed in this book.

Coaching is a complex art, and expert coaches typically bring years of informal mentoring and other experience to the process. Many coaches have training in a variety of communication and adult learning models, including peer and cognitive coaching. Even if you have this kind of rich background, we hope you will think of this book as an introduction to the profession of leadership coaching. We believe it is essential that you broaden your capability by participating in interactive training and by being part of an ongoing community of practice where you can continue to develop your coaching expertise in the company of like-minded colleagues. Coaching requires practice. Just as teachers improve over time as they plan lessons, deliver the instruction, and assess the learning of their students, the same is true for effective coaching. One does not show up for a coaching session with no plan. Effective coaching requires thoughtful planning in order to target

the time spent with the coachee on the greatest need for improvement and growth.

If we are to construct school leadership development programs that attend to the needs of adult learners through coaching and mentoring approaches, it is necessary to establish a coaching model that can be taught, implemented, and evaluated. The goal of this book is to share our model with you and to lay the groundwork for the creation of professional communities where coaching support and coaching-based supervision lead to powerful learning and efficacy for both staff and students.

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