What Your Colleagues Are Saying . . .

The core of success in schools is educator expertise. This book doesn’t mince words about how hard it can be but sheds sunlight onto evidence-based processes that lead to improvement. *Differentiated Supervision* asks for excellent diagnoses of teachers’ needs, their theories of teaching, and the impact of current methods. Furthermore, it uses multiple coaching and supervision models to assist in the fidelity of implementation and provides processes for educators to work together to evaluate the impact on the learning lives of students. The book is rich in using feedback, look fors, and walkthroughs, as well as developing evaluative mind frames and equity checks—all leading to a bountiful harvest of student growth.

—John Hattie
Emeritus Laureate Professor, University of Melbourne
and Co-Director of the Hattie Family Foundation
Carlton, Victoria, Australia

In reconceptualizing supervision as a supporting process of continuous feedback, Mausbach and Morrison provide valuable insights into how school leaders can improve teaching and learning. This wonderfully written, comprehensive guide provides school leaders with the tools and strategies needed to strengthen collective efficacy and achieve improved results.

—Jenni Donohoo
Author/Education Consultant
New Orleans, LA

We differentiate instruction to meet the varied needs of students; why do we fail to do so for teachers? The authors have developed a model to remedy this, one that makes it possible for school leaders to provide the guidance and support all teachers deserve.

—Nancy Frey
Professor of Educational Leadership
San Diego State University
San Diego, CA
Differentiated Supervision
This book is dedicated to all students and teachers who love to learn and grow.
Differentiated Supervision
Growing Teachers and Getting Results

Ann Mausbach
Kim Morrison
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Deputy Head of School, Carol Morgan School
Atlanta, GA
ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Ann Mausbach, coauthor of Leading Student-Centered Coaching: Building Principal and Coach Partnerships (Corwin, 2018), School Leadership Through the Seasons: A Guide to Staying Focused and Getting Results All Year (Routledge Eye on Education, 2016), and Align the Design: A Blueprint for School Improvement (ASCD, 2008), has been an educator for over 30 years. Ann’s belief that the greatest investment a leader can make is in people not programs has focused her work on supporting principals and teacher leaders with the tools they need to align purpose with action. Her administrative experience includes serving as a coordinator of staff development, director of curriculum, director of elementary education, and an assistant superintendent for curriculum and instruction. She currently works as an associate professor for educational leadership at Creighton University in Omaha, Nebraska.

Kim Morrison, coauthor of School Leadership Through the Seasons: A Guide to Staying Focused and Getting Results All Year (Routledge Eye on Education, 2016), is the principal of an urban elementary school located in the Midwest. Her administrative experiences have included elementary, middle, and district administration for over 20 years. She has primarily worked in at-risk environments addressing complicated issues of equity, poverty, homelessness, and special education. She was named Middle School Principal of the Year by School Administrators of Iowa in 2016. She has been the coordinator for new teacher induction, McKinney Vento Homeless Grant, and Safe and Drug Free Schools.
INTRODUCTION

“Remember that children, marriages, and flower gardens reflect the kind of care they get.”

H. Jackson Brown, Jr.

THE ROOTS OF DIFFERENTIATED SUPERVISION

Supervision—such a loaded word for many educators. For teachers, this means memories of hours spent nervously preparing lessons, hoping to fill the time with all the correct techniques so the principal can check all the correct boxes on an endless rubric, and then being agreeable during the post-observation conference so that the experience is over as soon as possible so they can get back to their classroom and teach in their “normal” way. For principals, it conjures up the stress of trying to fit in an inordinate number of observations in the last few frantic months of school, using cumbersome forms and then sharing generic feedback around broad and widely interpreted teaching standards. Lots of work for very little return for everybody.

Having been involved in both types of experiences, early on in our administrative careers (which now span over 20 plus years for each of us) we knew there had to be a better way to support teachers and positively impact the students in our care. Experience had taught us that if we messed with something like supervision it would have to be connected to our overall efforts in improving the school. Treating supervision as an isolated activity didn’t work; we had gone down that path and knew it was a big waste of time for teachers and leaders and resulted in little impact for students.

We began revisioning a system for supervision based on the principle that schools are complex systems, meaning they are made up of multiple interconnected parts. The more tightly coupled the parts the more likely improvements to the system would be sustainable. The level of interdependency inherent in a garden helps explain this thinking. Change one aspect of a garden (i.e., type of fertilizer) and it impacts the whole garden, either positively or negatively. We also believe supervision is all about growth and not just about pulling weeds. Addressing ineffective supervision required us to dig at the roots of the issue because changes would impact the entire school. Hacking around at the dead branches wasn’t enough; we needed a comprehensive framework. The differentiated supervision model is the response.
DIFFERENTIATED SUPERVISION DEFINED

Differentiated supervision is a comprehensive model that provides a coherent method for supporting individuals, small groups, and the whole school in implementing high-leverage strategies that improve student learning. The model is organized so that leaders can differentiate based on both teacher needs and supervision practices. Differentiation by teacher means knowing, understanding, and responding to the unique needs of individual teachers. No two teachers’ needs are exactly the same, so supervision practices that treat them as such miss the mark. Feedback tools in the differentiated supervision model are designed to help leaders pinpoint areas of support for individual teachers. Processes provide structure but also allow for flexibility so if a teacher needs more support that can easily be accommodated.

Differentiation by process means using a variety of supervision methods to provide support to teachers. Multiple methods are needed to provide the leader with an in-depth understanding of the teachers’ needs. A mixture of supervisory practices (i.e., general walkthroughs, implementation studies, etc.) will be shared throughout the book, not to purport one method over another, but in an effort to help leaders know when and how to use these practices in a manner that creates coherence rather than chaos. In essence, we will be sharing how to differentiate which practice will have the greatest impact in the context of the work you are doing both at the building and individual level.

Supervision is more than a series of steps that lead to a final evaluation. For us, as corny as this may sound, it is a way of being. It is about creating a culture where examining practice, working together to figure out issues, and constantly improving are the norms. Supervision is about supporting and directing, not judging and complying. Changing the culture and achievement in a school requires a broadened definition of supervision, one that moves away from thinking it is just about appraisal and viewing it as a powerful fertilizer for growth.

IT TAKES COMMITMENT

A commitment is a pledge or promise to the purpose of your enterprise. Making a commitment is crucial because it’s what transforms words into reality. For those of us in schools, that means a commitment to learning. As we express and transmit commitments to those around us, it leads to the creation of new behaviors and attitudes (Daskal, 2016). When new experiences are provided that allow individuals to practice and build upon their learning, commitment increases. In other words, when we do the work, belief and dedication to change follow. This serves as a call to action for leaders. We must commit to doing this work by engaging in behaviors that will transform beliefs and ultimately the system, exactly what the differentiated supervision model is designed to do. Committing to the work of teaching and learning must be a deliberate process. Leaders have to be clear about
what they want to sow, then do the work required to plant and nurture seeds of improvement.

We have found three core leadership commitments help focus a leader’s attention and ensure that the differentiated supervision model gets implemented in an impactful way. These commitments flow from the components that make up the professional capital equation (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012). These include human (individual talent), social (how groups work together and interact), and decisional (ability to make good decisions based on experience and learning) capital. Leading learning involves having all three capitals interact and work together to move the school forward. As you read the following chapters, we encourage you to reflect on how these commitments are manifested in the model.

### Core Leadership Commitments

- **Human**: Use of a growth mindset to develop and enhance professional capital.
- **Social**: Development of a school culture that promotes learning.
- **Decisional**: Implementation of school improvement processes at high levels.

### The Book Chapters

- **Element I**: Universal Support
  - Qualitative Feedback
  - Process: Walkthroughs
- **Element II**: Individual/Small Group
  - Qualitative Feedback
  - Processes: Focused walkthroughs/PLCs
- **Element III**: Universal Support
  - Quantitative Feedback
  - Process: Implementation Study
- **Element IV**: Individual
  - Quantitative Feedback
  - Process: District or state evaluation process

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DIFFERENTIATED SUPERVISION MODEL

The differentiated supervision model graphic outlined in Chapter 1 is the organizer for the book. Four quadrants are used to describe the major areas of supervision as well as to demonstrate the interconnectedness between all components. One quadrant of the model is described in each of the Chapters 2–4. Leadership moves that increase the likelihood for successful implementation are included for each quadrant. The focus for feedback and practical examples of what this feedback would sound like will also be a part of each chapter. A From the Field vignette is used throughout the book to help readers see how the four quadrants work together to create focus.

Our buildings weather the seasons when they are nurtured by principals who focus on growth and know how to support teachers and students in this pursuit. We dedicated the last chapter to those leadership behaviors that will help do just that. Teachers flourish when led by a respectfully relentless principal. Chapter 6 teases out the specific nuanced leadership behaviors needed that help leverage the positive trajectory of a school.

OUR INTENTIONS

In reading this book, we hope to expand your definition of supervision so you can see how impactful it can be when it is woven throughout your daily work. We also hope that you see how the processes and tools can create a community of learners, having a positive effect on both the culture and achievement in your school. In seeing the interrelatedness of this model, we believe you will not only be more efficient with your supervision but be better equipped to provide relevant and powerful feedback. While leading a school is never easy, our desire is that by reading this book you will not only be inspired but equipped to know you can make a difference. Finally, our ultimate intention is to help you support the teachers and students in your care so they grow beyond measure.
A FEW THINGS YOU SHOULD KNOW

Before embarking on a journey of differentiated supervision, we want to clarify a few terms that you will see throughout the book. Because these terms can mean different things to different people, we are sharing our definitions so that as you encounter them throughout your reading you will have a clear picture of what we are describing.

SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT PLAN (SIP)

A school improvement plan (SIP) is the North Star for this work. Imagine building a house and having workers show up and do whatever they want to do. This sounds crazy, because it is, and yet it is what we do to teachers when they work in schools without a well-articulated SIP. Builders’ blueprints outline what the structure will look like when it is completed. This provides direction and guidance so that everyone involved knows and understands what is being built. Building a strong school is no different. The SIP serves this function for schools.

A SIP is a planning document that outlines goals, strategies, and objectives. Having a clear, collaboratively developed plan that aligns with the mission, vision, and needs of the school helps create a culture that allows everyone to thrive because it creates a shared sense of purpose and builds a continuous improvement mindset. The goal of the SIP is to affect change in the system so it is developed in response to achievement and cultural data. Developing a focused plan will be outlined in Chapter 1.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT SYSTEMS

Learning is messy. It doesn’t occur in a straight line that connects point A to point B. It’s more like the two-step—one step forward, two steps back. In addition to not being linear, learners aren’t all starting at the same place or from the same vantage points. Deep learning requires time, practice, and feedback (Campitelli & Gobert, 2011). Organizing meaningful professional
learning for adults in a school is difficult, if not impossible, if we don’t pay attention to these important factors. The differentiated supervision model addresses these issues by being strategic about planning for adult learning. This happens in two ways: first, by aligning learning content to the strategies in the SIP, and second, by organizing learning in such a way that provides teachers ample opportunities to learn in a variety of settings. This means providing some whole group learning (when the concept is new) and copious amounts of small group (via professional learning communities, or PLCs, or learning teams) and one-on-one learning (through feedback). Developing a comprehensive professional development plan, which is outlined in Chapter 2, ensures that both of these things will happen.

**INFRASTRUCTURE**

The first step in making this work happen is to build an infrastructure of support. We use the term infrastructure because it refers to the physical and organizational structures needed for the operation of an enterprise. The infrastructure is pivotal because it is what holds up the rest of the work. Much like a trellis in a garden provides support and direction for plants to grow, so does the way a leader organizes the work of the adults. Without upfront planning on what these structures will be, the hope of implementation dies on the vine. Because more than one infrastructure of support is needed, we will address this concept in each chapter, providing specifics about what needs to be in place in order to hold up the framework as related to the content in that chapter.

**TIMING**

The differentiated supervision model is designed as a recursive process that provides consistency and structure for the school leader. There is a rhythm to this work that is driven by the seasons of the school year. Leaders use the qualitative and quantitative data gathered throughout the year to make decisions and support teachers. Appendix A provides a suggested outline of what needs to occur as you move throughout the school year.