
Foreword

The beauty of *Unmistakable Impact* is that it moves effortlessly back and forth from the big picture to micro application. It does so because the author, Jim Knight, is clearly deeply immersed in making the big ideas work.

He makes the case that “dramatically improving instruction is a matter of focus, simplicity, precision, leverage, and a cut across humanity that infuses all of this work.” Knight then builds a powerful case on ideas that work through “partnership principles,” “the role of the principal as lead learner,” and grounds this work in “the Big Four” ideas that incorporate content planning, formative assessment, instruction, and community building. This set of ideas, clearly depicted early in the book, provides a comprehensive agenda for what school improvement should focus on, but Knight does not stop there.

He then proceeds to furnish us with high-leverage strategies to get there. We get ideas and tools for “creating the Target,” “observing and monitoring progress,” and how the principal as lead learner needs to work closely with teachers while getting support from central office.

Building on his already impressive work on instructional coaching, we see how the key components of coaching work in practice to achieve results. *Unmistakable Impact* drills into the role of workshops and follow-up based on equality, choice, voice, reflection, dialogue, and praxis. But these are not just normative niceties. They are buttressed by incorporating key impact factors like intensive learning teams, principals as first learners, coaches as integrators, and detailed design principles that provide clear guidelines for taking specific action.

Unmistakable Impact is a treasure trove of ideas in two ways. It contains scores of ideas for “going deeper,” which Knight presents at the end of each chapter, complete with a short list of best source

books. Second, each concept in the chapters is accompanied by a tool or checklist to carefully guide action. These practical tools are complete and invaluable. In addition, the Resources offer the whole Toolkit.

Jim Knight models his advice to be a lead learner. He clearly constantly draws on recent best sources in the literature and makes them accessible to the reader. He holds up high but specific expectations for action within a framework of respect for practitioners. *Unmistakable Impact* contains the best of both worlds—compelling ideas and reader choice.

The ideas in this book are entirely compatible with our own recent work in Ontario and elsewhere. We have found that good ideas, high expectations, precise application, leadership support from principals and coaches, and multiple partnerships produce amazing results in teacher engagement and student achievement (Fullan, 2010a, 2010b). *Unmistakable Impact* takes us deeper into the realm of grounded school improvement—a great contribution to the field.

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