



# PART I

## Making a Case for Leadership Coaching

### Introduction

*Impossible is a word to be found only in the dictionary of fools.*

—Napoleon Bonaparte

**T**he first time I offered complimentary executive coaching sessions at a conference for school administrators, I was stunned to discover that by 8:00 a.m., my schedule was fully booked for the day. I was the last person to leave the conference. Every person entered the session with a challenge he or she was facing on the job and left thirty minutes later with actions to take the next day. Everyone thought, initially, I would tell them what to do to remedy their problem. Every administrator quickly learned that coaching is a collaborative discovery process. Each one left the session feeling positive, more confident, and empowered to solve his or her problem.

Welcome to the powerful world of coaching! If you are reading this book, it is likely you have begun the quest to know more about coaching, to determine how to bring coaching into your school,

district, or university. This book will provide you with what you need to know to get started planning and implementing a successful program. I believe that coaching, done well by skilled coaches, holds enormous promise for creating ongoing, continuous improvement of all aspects of the education system—for creating lasting change . . . at last.

It can be very tempting to jump on the bandwagon and start a coaching program in your school or district. It's well worth doing. Coaching is a hot, new field and a buzzword that is used more and more often to describe a role that is often *not* coaching. As you take the trip down the coaching road, my advice is to "walk, don't run"; "proceed with caution"; and take time to learn about the role, the process, and the coaching relationship. Take time to discuss and reach mutual understanding with your colleagues about how coaching differs from other helping roles. Before you implement yet another new thing, learn about the role of coaches and the skills, techniques and processes that professional coaches use. Learn about coaching's potential for changing thoughts, beliefs, and minds and touching the essence of who we are as human beings. I believe coaching is the missing ingredient from our school improvement efforts, and when a well-designed coaching program is successfully implemented, school systems, staff, and students will soar.

There are many compelling reasons for the coaching process to find its way into the boardroom, the principal's office, and elsewhere throughout a school system, as well as in the classroom. Coaching as a strategy to reform schools is still in its infancy. We have yet to fully appreciate its potential for strengthening schools and boosting the performance of school leaders responsible for the high levels of achievement of others in a demanding, complex environment. We have a long way to go, and my hope is that this book will provide the basic knowledge educators need about coaching to design and develop successful programs.

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[Coaching is] the heart of management, not at the edges. Coaching is everything you do to produce extraordinary results amid change, complexity, and competition. Coaching is everything you do to improve your strategic thinking about the future you want to create. Coaching is everything you do to ignite personal and team learning in solving organizational problems while building the capability you need to succeed. Coaching is everything you do to give you and your entire organization an edge and advantage. You don't need coaching for ordinary results.

—Robert Hargrove (2000, p. 83)

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I see a future for coaching as a continuous improvement process that will penetrate the system far beyond its current use. I see districts where

- All leaders utilize coaching skill in staff evaluations
- All leaders have access to receive coaching from a trained professional coach
- Every educator has clear professional goals and a coaching plan to achieve them
- Every educator is taking daily actions to achieve his or her goals
- Every school and central office has access to high-quality professional-coach training
- Every district has well-trained coaches available to coach others
- School leaders incorporate a coaching approach for more effective communication with colleagues, board members, and staff
- Principals have and use coaching skills with teachers, especially in the evaluation process
- Teachers are skilled in coaching students to empower their learning

Executive coaches are not for the meek. They're for people who value unambiguous feedback. All coaches have one thing in common: it's that they are ruthlessly results oriented.

—Anonymous

All school leaders deserve access to a coaching relationship and benefit from learning coaching skills and techniques to enhance interpersonal communication throughout their school systems. I have great hopes for coaching and its yet untapped potential for creating successful school change and hope that throughout the course of the book, you, the reader, will discover some of the potential coaching has for effective and lasting school change.