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Why Coaching? Why Now?

Every moment of one's existence, one is growing into more or retreating into less. One is always living a little more or dying a little bit.

—Norman Mailer

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 Summary

Coaches are everywhere these days. It's "cool" to have a coach, yet it is often a misinterpreted and misunderstood role. Look around your community and you are likely to see a growing number of professional coaches. There are parent coaches, life coaches, executive coaches, financial coaches, business coaches, and school-based instructional coaches. The term *coach* isn't new and is known by just about everyone. Surely anyone who's participated in a sport has had a coach and an inkling of what a coach may do. However, the coaching role in a professional setting is different and needs to be defined, understood, and distinguished from other helpful roles.

Executive and leadership coaching continues to grow in schools, providing confidential, individualized professional growth in a convenient, ongoing format that is focused on the leader's specific challenges. It is a common strategy available to leaders of business to enhance their performance and strengthen their organizations. School leaders need the same service and benefits to successfully lead their schools and districts to high levels of achievement.

Executives and HR managers know coaching is the most potent tool for inducing positive personal change, ensuring better-than-average odds of success and making the change stick for the long term.

—John H. Eggers and Doug Clark (2000, p. 67)

Coaching in the classroom continues to expand. The instructional coach role has grown, and teachers in forward-thinking districts are learning coaching skills as a means for helping students become independent learners.

Coaching Defined

The term *coach* comes from a French word meaning "to transport important people from one place to another." *The Cambridge Dictionary* says a coach is "used to take groups of people on journeys." A coach

was known as a vehicle, a thing. Now the term is used to describe a person, a process, a role, and a profession. A modern interpretation would refer to a person moving others to a higher level of competence, confidence, performance, or insight. It is imperative that, in establishing a successful coaching program in schools, district leaders have a common understanding of the definition, role, skills, and process of coaching. Coaching is all about change. It's about supporting people and organizations through change, helping them get from one place to another in their professional and personal lives.

The coaching profession has emerged from a number of fields and combines elements of what has been learned about human performance and achievement. It has roots in psychotherapy, particularly solution-focused and cognitive behavioral therapy. Patrick Williams writes, "Carl Jung, Alfred Adler, Carl Rogers and Abraham Maslow are antecedents to today's therapy practice—and modern day coaching. Coaching was born as a result of great advances in psychotherapy and counseling, and then blended with consulting practices and organizational and personal development training trends. Coaching takes the best each of these areas has to offer and provides a now standardized and proven method for partnering with people for success" (Williams, 2004, p. 38). In Chapter 3, coaching is further defined and distinguished from mentoring and other helping roles.

Today, individuals work with coaches to achieve challenging goals, create the life of their dreams, achieve high levels of performance, or enable their businesses or organizations to prosper. Executives collaborate with coaches to think through challenges, develop strategies, and be more effective with greater confidence. Coaching is internalized by having trained coaches available, creating coaching groups and teams, and fostering a coaching culture and mindset of positive thinking.

The International Coach Federation (ICF) is one of the leading professional organizations that support the rapidly growing coaching profession. It has developed Professional Coaching Core Competencies (see Chapters 3–4), professional-coaching credentials, and accreditation paths to coaching. ICF (n.d.) defines coaching as "partnering with clients in a thought-provoking and creative process that inspires them to maximize their personal and professional potential" (para. 1).

Coaching is a healthy, positive and enabling process that develops the capacity of people to solve today's business problems.

—Thomas G. Crane (2001, p. 12)

A skilled coach helps individuals create change—in what they think, in what they believe, and ultimately, in what they do. A coach is a highly skilled professional who works with people to unlock their hidden potential to bring about extraordinary results. Coaches inspire people to get out of their comfort zones to reach their full promise. Coaches provide ongoing support through challenging, transformative efforts to help individuals and organizations create lasting change.

Coaching is about aligning one's inner values, gifts, passions, personal mission, and strengths with the coachee's outer world. It's about making desired change to achieve an external or internal goal. Coaching is a process; a powerful, confidential relationship; a strategy; and dozens of skills and techniques that support an individual or an organization through a change process. Coaches are change agents. They are experts in creating change in people and organizations.

Coaches help people think beyond their daily issues and see a bigger picture. They help daydreams become reality by helping coachees focus on their most important priorities and take action toward them. They help find time, manage challenges, and deeply connect with one's most precious dreams and desires. Coaching is an action-oriented, results-focused, and positive process. It helps busy people stay in motion toward their highest priorities. Coaching focuses on the inner self, on gaining clarity about what excites us, and how we may need to grow and change to achieve the outer results we want in our professional or personal lives.

Coaching is an alliance between two people: the coachee, who wants or can benefit from making professional and personal changes, and the coach, who is skilled and experienced in listening deeply to what the coachee wants and what is in the way of achieving it. Together, they create a pathway to change. The coach offers support throughout the change process.

I like to compare what a coach does with what a chiropractor does. A chiropractor helps you feel better by putting your body back into alignment. When one part of your body is out of whack, other parts of you feel the effects. Your physical health suffers. When your spine is properly aligned, you feel great. Your systems are aligned; you feel good and healthy again. Life works!

Think of a coach as performing the same function. However, they're aligning your thoughts, beliefs, goals, and actions to achieve desired, extraordinary results. Coachees feel more alive. They are energized, empowered, focused, and optimistic.

The coaching profession is built around certain philosophies about people and insights into why they behave as they do. Coaches

are taught to “see” the highest potential in everyone they work with. Coaches believe each person is an expert on their own life, and each is creative, resourceful, and capable of creating their own solutions. Coaches are your allies, cheerleaders, and inspiration. They hold the coachee accountable for accomplishing agreed-upon tasks.

Contrary to what many people think, it is *not necessary* for a coach to have content knowledge or expertise in the field of the person he or she is coaching. This comment may be surprising and controversial. When you are trained and skilled in coaching techniques, you have the ability and skill to coach anyone in any field. Many educator-coaches are functioning in a blended model of coaching, combining coaching and mentoring. When I’m training new coaches, they find that this is a difficult concept to grasp initially. It can be challenging to stay in a coaching role, particularly when you want to share your personal experiences. Coaching and mentoring are different roles and different processes, each requiring different skills and experience. Coaching is a discovery and learning process, whereas mentoring is about sharing experiences and what has worked for others. In Chapter 3, the difference between coaching and mentoring is further clarified.

Coaches can be 100 percent in a coaching role when working with individuals or they can incorporate coaching behaviors into their daily interactions and conversations with staff or any others, depending on their level of training or their role. Leaders, instructional coaches, and teachers can consider using a coaching approach as a communication style and create a results-focused, goal-oriented, and action-oriented classroom, building, or district.

Coaching is about the future—intentionally creating a desired future. It’s a confidential, collaborative partnership in which the coach is totally focused on the success of the coachee, the organization, and the results that person desires.

Coaching: A Booming Profession

Once upon a time, the only type of coaching most of us were familiar with was sports coaching. Now, coaching is “in.” There are thousands of coaches with many specialties. As of this writing, anyone can call himself or herself a coach. You can simply wear the title, with little or no formal training. However, calling oneself a coach may not assure anyone that there’s consistency of training or sufficient know-how to help people and organizations create lasting

change. There are credentials that require hours and years of preparation for becoming a professional coach.

Thomas Leonard is considered the founder of the modern coaching profession. He founded the International Coach Federation in 1995, as well as several coach training schools, including CoachU, CoachVille, and the Graduate School of Coaching. He died suddenly in 2003, leaving behind a rapidly growing new profession. According to the 2012 *ICF Global Coaching Study*, approximately 47,500 professional coaches are now in business worldwide (bringing cumulative annual revenue close to \$2 billion) as compared to 2,100 professional coaches in 1999. The report also found that more coaches reported an increase in fees, hours, clients, and revenues over the past twelve months. Overall, indicators point to a growing profession. ICF reports growth of 2,000 new members a year (ICF, 2012).

Coaching is flourishing as results are becoming known. For organizations, it has become an effective, beneficial strategy for managing change, developing and retaining leaders, and changing the culture of organizations. For individuals, it has awakened or rekindled purpose, mission, motivation, and passion, enabling people to connect with what matters most to them in their daily lives.

What's the Payoff?

How likely is it that your district would be willing to invest precious staff development resources in something that only has a 5 to 15 percent chance of success? Not likely, yet many are doing just that. As demands on districts to improve student achievement continue, districts are wise to consider how they spend their school improvement and staff development resources.

The early research on effective staff development has shown little impact of traditional training programs on creating change in the classroom (Collins, 1997; Joyce & Showers, 1995). It recommends models that provide ongoing support and are job embedded, specifically coaching. This is probably not new information to experienced staff developers. Looking at Figure 1.1, you can see that without coaching built into the improvement process, only between 5 and 15 percent of learning is transferred. Put another way, if your staff development budget is \$100,000 and is focused on a workshop model, although learning is taking place, you are getting a benefit of only \$5,000 to \$15,000 worth of learning that transfers to the classroom. With coaching, your investment would yield a whopping \$80,000 to \$90,000.

Figure 1.1 Impact of Training Components on Teacher Learning and Application

Training Components	Impact of Training Components on Teacher Learning and Application		
	Concept Understanding	Skill Attainment (mechanical use)	Application
Presentation of theory	85%	15%	5–10%
Modeling by trainer	85%	18%	5–10%
Practices and low-risk feedback in training setting	85%	80%	10–15%
Coaching	90%	90%	80–90%

SOURCE: Adapted from Joyce and Showers (1995) and Collins (1997).

Let's take a closer look at what should happen when a new skill is learned. Suppose you want to learn to be a better public speaker. You've just gotten your first job as a principal and find that, although you have dreaded public speaking, you now have to do it and do it well. You've set a new goal to improve, and off you go. You read a few books and observe people making good speeches. But you can read all you like about techniques of making and delivering a good speech. You can know how to write one. You can know a lot. It's likely you'll feel tense, nervous, and anxious in the beginning; it's a normal response. You're likely to slip back into your old ways or avoid it altogether. When practicing the new skills, it won't feel good or comfortable. You're in a new zone, what I call the *discomfort zone*, and it most likely does not feel good. However, it is when new learning is implemented over time that change and growth happen. Coaching sustains and supports the person being coached while engaging in new behaviors.

It is in that discomfort zone that it's tempting to retreat. It is especially in that discomfort zone where a person benefits from coaching.

Asked for a conservative estimate of the monetary payoff from the coaching they got, these managers described an average return of more than \$100,000, or about six times what the coaching had cost their companies.

—Fisher (2001, p. 19)

Little by little, practice session by practice session, with feedback, it begins to feel better. In time, it will feel normal. The new skills will be embedded, and the feelings of discomfort will lessen. Feeling skilled and confident will be the new norm.

The Cost of Not Coaching

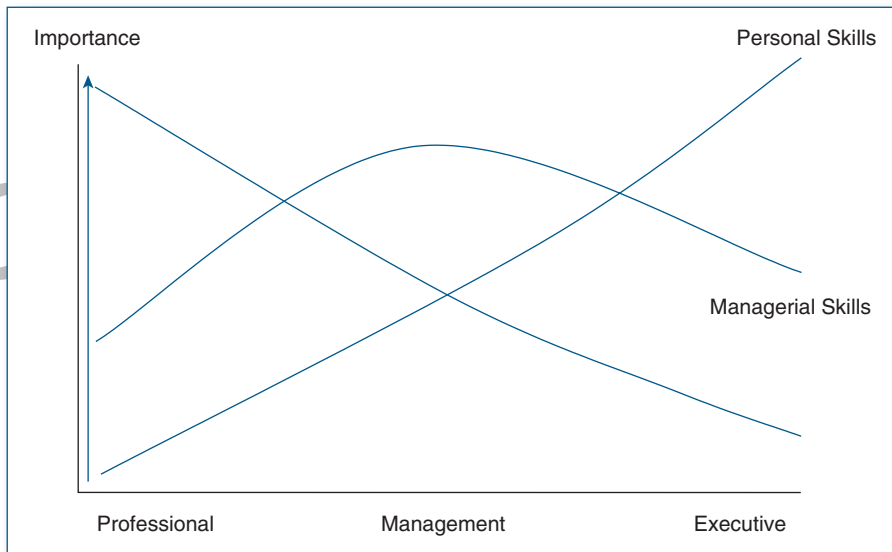
In a recent conversation, a leader of a medium-sized suburban school district claimed that the prior six leaders the district had hired didn't work out. Each one, he claimed, shone during the interview phase. However, when they started their new job, they didn't have what it took. Six in a row! It seemed evident to me that there was a systemic problem: a lack of support for these newly hired leaders. There was no support system, and each of the six was let go in a short time. Think of the time spent and cost of advertising that then had to be repeated.

I've heard it said that the skills that helped you succeed in one job will not be the same ones that help you succeed in a higher position. As leaders move up into higher levels, the skills needed to be successful change from technical to managerial to personal (see Figure 1.2). The softer skills—emotional intelligence and people skills—become far more important and crucial to success. In my coaching practice, I find that the majority of coachees are dealing with interpersonal conflict, time management, and self-control issues.

A derailed executive is described as “having reached the general manager level; is fired, demoted or reaches a career plateau. The derailed leader had been originally seen as having high potential, an impressive track record and holding a solidly established leadership position—until derailed” (Chappelow & Leslie, 2000, p. 7). Five key characteristics describe these executives:

1. Problems with interpersonal relationships
2. Failure to hire, build, and lead a team
3. Failure to meet the organization's objectives
4. Inability or unwillingness to change or adapt
5. A lack of a broad functional orientation

I cannot help but wonder how often school leaders are dismissed instead of supported. Let's look at an example of a derailed school leader. Robert was a thirty-year veteran teacher and content area administrator in a small district. He came to me for coaching after

Figure 1.2 Changing Requirements for Success

SOURCE: Reprinted from *Preventing Derailment: What to Do Before It's Too Late* by Michael M. Lombardo and Robert Eichinger, Copyright © 1989 Center for Creative Leadership.

he'd moved to a larger district and was soon without a job. He didn't know what had happened. He'd had no feedback. Although he was successful and confident in one district, as soon as he moved on to a much larger one, he began to sense it wasn't a good match. He'd hoped to work until retirement but found himself out of work one year later. It was too late to save his position, and it was too bad for everyone involved. Coaching helped Robert prepare for his next move with renewed self-esteem and confidence. Had coaching been available to him, perhaps the situation would have been remedied. The district would have saved the time and dollars invested in hiring him, and Robert would have been supported rather than dismissed.

The costs are great to a school system when there is frequent turnover among leadership. Imagine if there was a process for improving relationships rather than continuing frustration with interpersonal conflicts. Imagine the dollars that would be saved by dealing directly with conflict and improving the day-to-day struggles and stresses that leaders and school board members face. Imagine increased stability and longevity, which are highly possible when leaders receive the benefits of a coaching relationship.

Given that the cost of superintendent searches ranges from \$5,000 to \$100,000, it makes good sense for districts to protect their

investments by providing strategies that increase leader retention and will support them in transitioning to a new position or a new district. It would be a mistake to view coaching as only for leaders who “need it.” It’s not a weakness to rely on another for support. It’s smart practice. Ongoing professional growth and continuous learning is everyone’s role. Considering that in the area of professional development only 29 percent of superintendents felt they were “somewhat prepared” for the role, there is clearly a need for providing leaders with appropriate support to do their very best (Colorado Association of School Executives, 2003).

The Impact of Coaching on the Business Environment

Leading an effective, high-performing school system is surely as challenging as leading a Fortune 500 Company, a large hospital, or any complex organization. There are many parallels to the business world. In corporations, managers have multiple departments to lead, budget and personnel issues and personalities to deal with, boards to respond to, and lofty goals to accomplish. In the business world, the goals may be product branding, profits, and market share. Technological advances and a more global society have created enormous pressure for companies to outperform the competition, creating high-stress workplaces and low morale. In the educators’ world, the goals are student achievement and helping all students reach their full potential. Although the goals are vastly different, the daily challenges of leading a complex organization are strikingly similar. In many ways, districts around the country are looking to and learning from their business counterparts.

To create a high performance team, we must replace typical management activities like supervising, monitoring, checking, and controlling with new behaviors like coaching and communicating.

—Ray Smith, CEO, Bell Atlantic
(as quoted in *Edge First*, 2000)

Executives of major corporations have used executive coaches for years to deal with the complexities of running large companies. Many companies have internal, professionally trained coaches on their staff whose purpose is to improve the performance of individuals and teams and boost results for the business.

Coaching has become *the* strategy for management and leadership development programs versus traditional kinds of training. Department

managers and upper management leaders are often left to deal with complex people issues, and many of them are unskilled and untrained in this arena. Many business owners and managers are uncomfortable dealing with difficult people or difficult situations. Leaders may be wonderful visionaries and poor at people skills or terrific at people skills and poor at managing change, making decisions, or solving problems. Coaching has become increasingly utilized and popular because the relationship between coach and coachee deals with those uncomfortable situations in a private, confidential manner. It provides support, feedback, a place to vent frustrations, and a safe space to brainstorm possible solutions.

Coaching is used in business in a multitude of formats. CEOs use one-on-one executive coaching. Frequently, coaching is also available for middle managers. Some companies have full-time, in-house coaches who work with anyone who wants or needs support. These people may coach individuals, executives, or teams. They may shadow, observe team meetings, and provide feedback. They often administer assessments to determine specific areas for coaching. Middle- to upper-level managers often apply a coaching approach versus a top-down management style. Although they may not be credentialed coaches, they have learned to use coaching skills as an effective communication style. School systems have much to learn about the benefits of coaching from business.

Additional return on investment (ROI) studies have been conducted since the well-known 2001 Manchester study. Anecdotal results always point to similar benefits, no matter which study or type of industry is examined. The impact of coaching is always high in areas listed above across many studies. A Phillips 2007 study reported tangible gains in revenue growth, retention, cost savings, and productivity, and intangible benefits of increased commitment, communication, customer satisfaction, and service. They report a 221 percent ROI (Moseley, 2011).

The trend to determine coaching effectiveness appears to be shifting from ROI data to 360 forms of assessing the impact of coaching. Corbett and Kennedy (2014) note, "In a startling discovery, we found that the number of consultants who use ROI to measure coaching's value dropped from 33% to 22%" (p. 12). 360 assessments are becoming the preferred method to measure the benefits of coaching.

The scarcest resource in the world today is leadership talent capable of continuously transforming organizations to win in tomorrow's world.

—Noel Tichy (Tichy & Cohen, 1997, p. 8)

Coaching Benefits

A 2005 review of the literature on coaching effectiveness (Fielden, 2005) noted that some researchers believe coaching can be broken down into both strategic and interpersonal benefits as follows:

Strategic Benefits of Coaching:

- Improve customer service
- Provide structure, guidance, and focus
- Help monitor and evaluate actions
- Promote initiative and accountability
- Encourage people to take responsibility
- Motivate people
- Communicate better
- Improve skills
- Increase awareness of resources

Interpersonal Benefits of Coaching:

- Tap into creativity and potential
- Increase ability to welcome change
- Improve concentration, confidence, relaxation, and decision making
- Remove performance fears and anxieties
- Eliminate unhealthy stress at work

Additional evidence of the benefits of executive coaching for business leaders was identified in a 2001 study of the impact of coaching (McGovern et al., 2001). One hundred executives from Fortune 100 companies received executive coaching that was both change oriented (aimed at changing certain behaviors or skills) and growth oriented (aimed at sharpening performance). Organizational benefits reported included the following:

- Increased organizational strength
- Increased executive retention
- Increased productivity
- Increased quality
- Reduced complaints
- Improved working relationships with staff
- Improved teamwork
- Improved job satisfaction
- Reduced conflict
- Increased organizational commitment

The results of the executive coaching program delivered an overall, estimated return of 5.7 times the initial investment. The figure is even higher (788 percent) when employee retention was considered (McGovern et al., 2001).

The International Coach Federation *2009 Global Coaching Client Study* identified key findings for individuals and companies. It found that 68 percent of individuals indicated that they had at least made back their initial investment in coaching. The report suggests that clients who achieve a financial benefit from coaching can typically expect an ROI in the range of 344 percent or 3.44 times the amount spent.

The study also found 86 percent of companies had at least made their investment back. Nineteen percent reported an ROI of at least fifty times (or 5000 percent) the initial investment while a further 28 percent saw an ROI of ten to forty-nine times the investment. The median company return is 700 percent, indicating that typically a company can expect a return of seven times the initial investment (ICF, 2009).

Coaching: A Global Study of Successful Practices

The American Management Association conducted a survey of more than 1,000 executives and managers to determine coaching's popularity, its association with higher performance, its correlation between leader performance via coaching and corporate performance, the methodology used to choose coaches, the international outlook for coaching, and even the role of peer coaching (Tompson et al., 2008).

Over half (52 percent) of the respondents reported that they currently have coaching programs in place in their organizations. Of the 48 percent that didn't offer coaching at this time, 37 percent plan to implement a coaching program in the future. Fifty-seven percent of respondents say they use coaching more than they did in the past. The trend is growing.

The survey indicates that respondents from organizations that use coaching more than in the past are also more likely to report two kinds of advantages:

1. Their organizations have higher levels of success in the area of coaching.
2. Their organizations are performing well in the market, as determined by self-reports in the combined areas of revenue growth, market share, profitability, and customer satisfaction.

There also seems to be a relationship between the extent to which individuals receive coaching and their abilities in terms of leadership. That is, the survey found that those who have received coaching were more likely than other respondents to say that their subordinates trust their leadership abilities, and they're more likely to say that they set specific goals for performance at work.

The survey inquired, "To what extent does your organization use coaching for the following purposes?" The top four reasons are as follows:

- To improve individual performance and productivity (79 percent)
- To address leadership development and succession planning (63 percent)
- To increase individual worker skill levels (60 percent)
- To improve organizational performance (56 percent)

The study also indicated that coaching is most effective when it is an integrated part of a training and development program. This method is also the one most highly correlated with reported coaching success.

It found that organizations with a well-defined purpose for using coaches are more likely to report having a successful coaching program. Coaching is most frequently used for high potentials and executives. The results showed a significant relationship between using coaches for these groups and coaching success. This is a significant bit of information that school district leaders should consider when deciding how to best utilize coaching. Better to offer coaching to successful leaders than use coaching as a remedial, punitive service.

The report recommends that employers should consider using an external coach for top executives. While using more cost-effective internal coaches may be useful for managers and supervisors, it appears that external coaches are worth the extra cost at the executive level. When it comes to training internal coaches, there is a tendency to resort to using resources within the organization (developing training courses and using existing internal coaches to provide the training). However, results support using externally based development programs or bringing in external talent for this purpose instead, given their stronger association with coaching success.

The International Coach Federation (2013) *Organizational Coaching Study* reports that top executives most often had an external coach. It says, "More often than not, it tends to be very senior level executives who are coached, and in most organizations they will have an external

coach. Less senior grades who are considered 'high potential' are also often offered coaching as a mechanism to assist their development and progression. In a minority of organizations coaching is open to anyone who wishes to avail of it" (p. 6).

Respondents were passionate in talking about value, impact, and effectiveness of coaching. Almost all organizations stated that they "know" coaching has been effective, although the evidence to support this is mostly anecdotal. Measuring the success of coaching was considered a challenge, and the methods used varied among the organizations.

Broad-ranging impacts of coaching include the following:

- Leadership development and performance
- Increased levels of employee engagement
- Reduced attrition
- Improved team working

Very few organizations reported having a formal quantitative process in place to measure the impact of coaching. However, most organizations collect some feedback on coaching engagements, but these tend to be informal, and the information received is not always centrally collated. For the most part coaching is measured using 360 feedback programs and employee engagement/satisfaction surveys that could be linked back to those who had received coaching. Mostly these tools were readily available in the organization and were not designed specifically to measure the impact of coaching. Respondents also reported changes in behavior as a result of coaching but as these changes are qualitative, they are difficult to measure. Some respondents believe that coaching is particularly effective compared to other methods, such as training or mentoring, due to the flexible nature of a coaching assignment and the ability to tailor this to the needs of the coachee.

Sherpa 2013 Executive Coaching Survey

A private firm, Sherpa Executive Coaching, has conducted an annual survey of executive coaching since 2005. The 2013 survey reveals that executive coaching has become a permanent fixture in the modern organization. The perceived value and the credibility of coaching are at all-time highs. Coaching has been used to solve specific behavioral problems, to assist in transition, and to develop up-and-coming leaders. Today, having an executive coach can be a status symbol, the mark of an

up-and-coming leader being groomed for greater possibilities. “You have a coach. You must be something special” (p. 17).

The results of coaching have been consistently reported in three primary ways:

- A coach enables leaders to reflect on their decisions and about themselves. Many coaches used the term “awareness” in describing the benefits of coaching.
- People usually avoid difficult truths. Coaching brings reality front and center. “Executives don’t have anyone to trust and tell the truth about where they need development” (p. 19).
- People don’t know how to change. A coach can guide a client to find alternatives to behaviors that are not working. As leaders make changes, they can help their organizations deal with change more effectively.

Executive coaches who reported the benefits of coaching in these countries said the following:

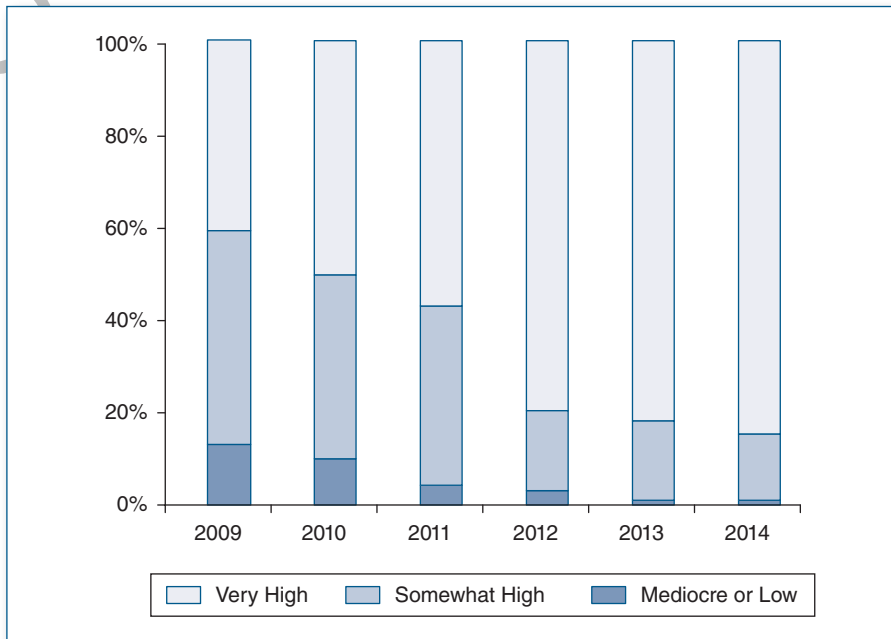
- Brazil: “Leadership development. Improved business behavior. Better results.”
- New Zealand: “An independent opinion on how one is really performing, versus the way they have always seen themselves.”
- Poland: “Coaching counteracts the ‘lonely at the top’ phenomenon.”
- Russia: “Full development of a leader’s potential.”
- Scotland: “Clients learn to see a range of options, rather than limiting themselves to just one or two.”
- South Africa: “Clarity of thought. Personal awareness, resulting in confident leadership.”
- United Kingdom: “Clients become more resourceful, more creative and able to deal with anything that is thrown their way.”
- USA: “Clients gain clarity about their strengths, appreciation for differing styles, and confidence” (p. 19).

The survey states, “For business leaders, having a coach can be the mark of someone being groomed for great things. With that in mind, decisions about who gets a coach are important ones. Ideally, anyone in a leadership position benefits from coaching and the improved business behavior it produces” (p. 12).

Almost every human resource and business leader sees real value in coaching (see Figure 1.3). The number of professionals in

human resources and training who now see the value of executive coaching as “very high” jumped from 63 percent to 75 percent. Educators would be wise to promote coaching as a perk, not a punishment for poor performance.

Figure 1.3 The Value of Coaching



SOURCE: The Executive Coaching Survey, Evidence and Interaction, Ninth Annual Report, © 2014 Sherpa Coaching

The Need for Leadership Coaching in Education

Given the evidence that coaching is effective and cost-effective, schools should be considering how to begin, extend, and expand their current coaching programs from the classroom to the boardroom. Clearly, extending coaching beyond the classroom to include executive and leadership coaching would be beneficial for the entire system.

Susan was a second-year leader of a professional development organization. She had been a teacher for many years but was not yet comfortable with being so visible in her new role. She was quiet by nature and struggling to feel more confident. She was frequently nervous and unsure of herself when we began coaching, excited about her position but filled with self-doubt.

Her external goal was to implement a new program in a number of schools. She voiced some limiting beliefs and fear that others would view her as not knowing enough. Her inner voice held her back. Her external goal was inhibited by her inner mind. Although our goal for coaching was an externally focused one, the strategies and steps to accomplish it were *internal*. Without coaching, Susan had no one and no process for dealing with the root cause of her anxiety. Two years later, Susan was an accomplished, confident leader in her district.

Hand in hand with the enormous demands and accountability placed on school systems to raise standards for students has come increased pressure on school leaders at every level. School systems need strong leadership at the central office and building levels who can inspire staff to achieve at high levels.

These concerns contribute to high turnover and a perceived shortage of qualified candidates seeking the position. Superintendents often feel that graduate programs didn't prepare them for the day-to-day work of being a superintendent. When asked what training

would be useful now, superintendents called for one-on-one mentoring and coaching.

Superintendents need mentoring and coaching to be more effective in their jobs, especially with regard to school reform initiatives and building relationships with stakeholders.

—Bob Tschirki (CASE, 2003)

There has been growth in the number of focused professional development programs for new and aspiring principals and superintendents. More are needed. Executive coaching for

principals and superintendents and leaders using a coaching approach with others will enable them to manage the numerous challenges today's leaders are facing with improved confidence and competence. Because of the action-oriented nature of the coaching process, leaders will walk away from *every* coaching session with a set of actions to take that are directly related to their current issues or challenges. Leader and coach consider obstacles and strategize together to overcome them. Because coaching has a built-in accountability system, there is constant movement toward the organization and coachee's goals.

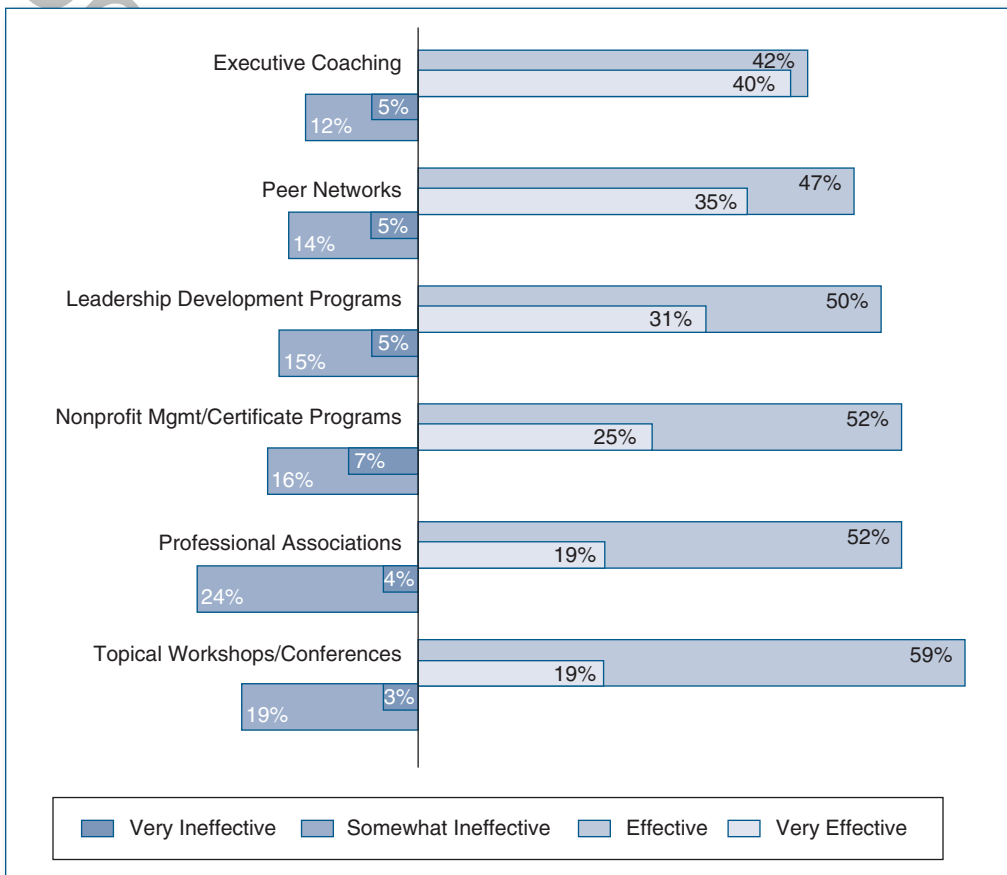
In the 2011 *Daring to Lead* study, executive coaching, peer networks, and leadership development programs were rated very effective (see Figure 1.4), with executive coaching rated highest (Cornelius, Moyers, & Bell, 2011). The study highlighted that top leaders have challenges and needs depending upon their tenure, size of the organization, and other factors. Recognizing that different leaders will need

different things at different times, the study recommends increased support for and use of executive coaching and support for new leaders, perhaps in combination with peer networks and leadership development programs.

The leader of the past knew how to tell. The leader of the future will know how to ask.

—Peter Drucker (as quoted in Hesselbein, Goldsmith, & Beckhard, 1997, p. 227)

Figure 1.4 Effectiveness Ratings of Professional Development Activities Utilized



SOURCE: *Daring to Lead*, 2011. CompassPoint Nonprofit Service and the Meyer Foundation.

New Evaluation Systems and Leader Turnover Spark Need for Coaching Competence

Many states across the country have implemented new principal and teacher evaluation programs, requiring principals and those who

supervise them to now develop the skills needed to coach staff toward improvement. They are discovering that coaching skills are necessary skills for today's leaders. Rather than telling teachers what to do, principals with coaching skills help teachers develop their own growth plan, with specific action steps that they identify and work toward. The shift in ownership of the growth plan is an enormous difference.

School board members need knowledge of executive coaching and its potential impact. They need to know that most people who benefit from coaching are already successful professionals who strive to make a greater impact and become ever better at what they do in order to strengthen their schools or districts. Coaching is not solely for people who are perceived as needing help; it is highly effective for ensuring that all leaders are achieving at their peak potential. Coaching is a perk, not a punishment.

Traditional approaches to professional development are local, regional, state, or national workshops and conferences, which are often insufficient for those in leadership positions. Busy school leaders have little ability to drop what they're doing to attend training programs, although they would like to. In addition, it can be difficult to discuss thorny issues with a mentor, trainer, or other professional developer when trust or confidentiality are not promised.

A well-structured coaching program enables ongoing, customized professional growth by the coach coming to the district or being available via telephone. Coaching provides convenience and is 100 percent focused on the leader's issues and concerns for achieving specific, measurable results. Confidentiality—a must in coaching—ensures the leader or person being coached can address any and all challenges that arise without repercussions.

The future success and strength of our school systems lay in the leadership ability of their administrators. Executive or leadership coaching can have a strategic impact on the performance of an organization's leaders. Most districts need to greatly improve student achievement results. Results don't happen when people are only focused on test scores or accountability issues. School systems must support leaders to help their staff with the intangible elements of human interaction—the soft people skills. To achieve extraordinary external results, we must focus on *developing and sustaining individual, team, and organizational behaviors* through improving personal relationships. *Executive and leadership coaching* builds the organizational capability to achieve those results by strengthening those skills, one leader at a time.

The American Association of School Administrators reports an annual turnover rate for superintendents of 14 to 16 percent. Their 2010 decennial study reports that only about half (51 percent) of the respondents surveyed said they planned to still be a superintendent in 2015 (Kowalski, McCord, Peterson, Young, & Ellerson, 2011). Principal turnover also continues to be high. According to a study, more than one-fifth of new principals leave within two years (Burkhauser, Gates, Hamilton, & Ikemoto, 2012). The need for immediate changes in schools and increasing accountability for principals and teachers has increased the demands of these positions and elevated job stress. More than ever before, principals are called on to become instructional leaders and bring about change in classroom practice often with little know-how to “get teachers to change.” Strong instructional leadership skills create longevity and stability at the district and building levels.

In a 2010 study of executive coaching and the superintendency, Jennifer Wyatt, an assistant professor at Murray State University, reported a discrepancy in the interpretation of “coaching” among the respondents. An analysis of archived data from the American Association of School Administrators (AASA) mid-decade study by Glass and Franceschini (2007) revealed that 41.8 percent of superintendent respondents stated that they had received coaching during their tenure as superintendent. Upon further examination of the raw data, it became evident that there was not a clear operational definition of “coaching” held by the respondents.

Rather, the respondents reported that they had received coaching for what appeared to be genuine instances of coaching but also had formal and informal mentoring. Based on this finding, each response was analyzed and recoded to include the newly defined parameters of executive coaching, formal mentoring, informal mentoring, and none of the above.

For the purposes of the study, Wyatt (2010) defined coaching as a structured, confidential process in which a superintendent (client) works one-on-one with a coach to achieve professional goals. To ensure credibility, the executive coach must have completed a formal executive-coach training program to meet the criteria for the study. The new coding system revealed that only 6.2 percent of total participants had indeed received executive coaching according to their descriptions. The new coding system also revealed an astounding number (59.2 percent) of participants had not received any kind of executive coaching or mentoring (formal or informal) and that over 60 percent of male superintendents had not received any form of

executive coaching or mentoring compared to 56.3 percent of female superintendents. The roles and responsibilities of the superintendent position are complex, time-intensive, and unpredictable in nature. Due to the stressors and demands of superintendency, they must have access to the most effective professional development resources and support systems including executive coaching and mentoring. Executive coaching provides individualized professional development through a confidential and structured process, whereas mentoring tends to be less structured and often does not secure confidentiality. As seen in Wyatt's study, there continues to be a gap in understanding in the formal practices of executive coaching within the field of education.

Coaching offers a different and new approach to the principalship and to classroom interactions between teacher and student. When principals become skilled in using a coaching approach, they learn how to work with each person and foster the necessary changes.

Executive Coaching for School Leaders: An Important Strategy

In 2000, Dennis Sparks, Executive Director of the National Staff Development Council (now Learning Forward), launched a life

[Coaching] helped me to see situations with a different pair of eyes. The coach "nudged" me to create possible solutions I might not have seriously considered on my own. The coach provided the gentle support that kept me focused on attaining personal and professional goals.

—KC, school leader, New York
(personal communication, July 2002)

coaching pilot initiative. Fifty principals and superintendents received weekly life coaching for one year. It was the first known project that brought life coaching to school leadership. The results were positive, and participants reported feeling more focused, purposeful, and confident. "I would like to see school leaders (who are already great just as

they are) become more purposeful, more clear, more confident, more balanced, and happier in their professional and personal lives. It follows that schools led by such leaders will become better places for students and staff" (Killion, 2002, p. 22), Sparks said.

In 2002, I launched two leadership executive coaching pilot programs in New York, one for aspiring leaders and another for leaders of professional development centers. The Long Island (NY) School Leadership Center offered its enthusiastic interest and assistance in

helping me to launch a four-month leadership coaching pilot program. Both veteran and aspiring leaders were invited to participate, and they received a combination of group and individual coaching sessions. After four months, a first-year principal felt far more competent in her role, one participant landed the job of her dreams, and other participants reported increased comfort dealing with interpersonal communication and greater confidence to pursue their first administrative positions.

In another project, I worked with experienced leaders of professional development agencies over a six-month period. Their goals ranged from interpersonal relationships, managing and making time for organizational priorities, and boosting their confidence and effectiveness in their roles. In this project, I used a leadership assessment that pinpointed their strengths and confirmed the leadership areas where they needed further development. Goals emerged from the assessment that became the targets of our coaching sessions. Among the reported gains were improved interpersonal relationships with staff, increased confidence, and courage to step out of their comfort zones to try new strategies and skills and take on new leadership roles. One participant produced a product to bring to market and another made great strides in completing her doctoral dissertation and achieving long-desired, increased fitness levels.

Both projects convinced me that school leaders need, appreciate, and benefit from coaching; that the coaching partnership works; and that results are often beyond those goals that the coachee sets out with. In my experiences coaching school leaders, I've found that leaders seek coaching for a variety of reasons. Typically, they are as follows:

- Transitioning and integrating into new, higher-level positions
- Deciding whether to stay in their current positions or move on to others
- Strengthening their leadership competencies and confidence
- Strategizing to prepare for and obtain their next positions
- Struggling with staff
- Having conflicts with school board members
- Seeking their first superintendency
- Seeking feedback
- Learning about their strengths and areas for personal development
- Managing and balancing their personal and professional lives

Coaching continues to grow for school leaders. There are numerous projects that have sprung up around the United States offering executive coaching for superintendents and principals, as you will read later in this chapter.

Coaching Expands in Education

When I began writing this book in 2006, there were very few coaching projects occurring that I was aware of; there was a small handful. Since the word got out and people experienced the benefits of the coaching process, there has been tremendous expansion in the number and breadth of coaching projects around the world. Coaching is offered to new and aspiring superintendents and principals through various grants and organizations. Many individuals are investing in their own learning and paying for coaching services personally. Leaders and teachers are beginning to learn coaching skills and adopt a coaching style of leadership and teaching.

Below are some coaching implementations and projects that have occurred since 2007. This is not a list of all projects but a sampling.

ICF International Prism Award Goes to a K–12 School

Each year since 2005, the International Coach Federation has awarded and recognized an organization that has demonstrated coaching excellence. According to the ICF, “This award has become the epitome of what professional coaching can accomplish at the corporate/organizational level.” In past years the ICF International Prism Award has been given to such organizations as Banner Health Care, Joey Restaurant Group, Genentech, and IBM Corporation.

In 2013, the International Prism Award Winner was Isikkent Schools, Ismir, Turkey, the first school to receive this prestigious award. Isikkent Schools serves students from pre-kindergarten through Grade 12 and has a mission of educating young people holistically to develop them into highly motivated, self-aware, and thoughtful adults who are passionate about lifelong learning. It is a school that has internalized coaching in a way I envisioned it for years, permeating the system, training leaders and teachers in coaching skills.

Isikkent embarked on a coaching approach to education in 2009. They chose coaching because it aligned with their goals of preparing students with 21st-century skills and for its ability to create independent

learners. Since 2009, coaching has formed the foundation of Isikkent's culture, impacting the lives of every individual affiliated with the school and yielding a learning environment inhabited by overwhelmingly positive people.

School leaders allocated 24 percent of their professional development budget to coach training. All teachers engaged in a two-day training in which they learned ICF Professional Coaching Core Competencies. Afterwards, forty-one teachers engaged in a more in-depth training, building skill and competency in coaching. They also developed an initiative to "market" coaching to Isikkent students, teachers, and parents, ensuring it would be perceived as positive, not remedial. Some teachers are now on their way to receive the Professional Coach Credential (PCC), which requires a high level of coaching expertise. The fourteen-person leadership team engaged in coach training, and parents receive an overview of coaching at the beginning of each school year.

Isikkent's leaders say their investment in coaching has paid off, with impacts exceeding their expectations. Leaders reported the following:

- The number of disciplinary problems in the high school has decreased from 26.5 percent of students receiving referrals in 2008–2009 to 4.74 percent in 2013.
- The number of disciplinary problems in the middle school has decreased from 16 percent of students receiving referrals in 2008–2009 to 2.08 percent in 2013.
- Students' rates of acceptance to their first-choice universities have increased.
- Faculty and student engagement have improved.

Students who have received coaching reported the following:

- Improvements in their conflict-resolution abilities
- Capacity for setting and reaching goals
- Increased cooperation and communication with peers

Teachers who sought coaching provide similarly positive feedback about the experience, citing

- Enhanced communication with students and parents
- Improved goal-setting abilities

They have attributed these great results to coaching. (Also see Chapter 8.)

2013 ICF International Prism Award: Honorable Mention

The 2013 ICF International Prism Award: Honorable Mention was also given to an education institution, Defense Acquisition University (DAU), based near Washington, D.C. DAU is charged with providing learning opportunities and leadership development to 152,000 military and civilian defense-acquisition professionals. DAU has 600 faculty members, forty-nine of whom completed coach training developed with ICF's Code of Ethics and Professional Coaching Core Competencies at its center. A pilot program was launched in 2008 providing one-on-one executive coaching services to Department of Defense program leaders. Over a five-year period, 230 people received coaching.

The two main goals of the coaching initiative were as follows:

- Improve outcomes and leadership capacity of Defense Acquisition Workforce (to design and implement extraordinary futures)
- Establish a culture that values and practices performance and development coaching

According to Richard Hansen, Director of Leadership Programs and Executive Coaching, the DAU initiative reported a financial return on investment of 743 percent and nonfinancial ROI of 330 percent. With an annual acquisition budget of \$350 billion, the defense acquisition operating environment demands a high return on every investment of time, labor, and money. The DAU's coaching initiative has met this demand.

Coaching occurred in face-to-face meetings and bimonthly phone calls over six to nine months.

Among the improvements noted were the following:

- Strategic communication
- Change implementation
- Stakeholder relationships
- Leadership interactions
- Increased individual and team capability
- Customer satisfaction
- Increased resources
- Reduced cycle time

In my conversation with Richard to learn more about their success, he said a byproduct of the coach training was that those faculty

who became skilled coaches are better teachers in the classroom. They now are asking powerful questions, using and applying coaching competencies in their teaching, and providing fewer answers. They have become better teachers by incorporating coaching skills into their teaching.

The coaching program continues with future plans that include developing a coaching community of practice and internalizing coaching within the university.

Colorado Association of School Executives Leadership Coaching Program

Recognizing the value professional coaching can bring to school leaders, the Colorado Association of School Executives (CASE) has developed the CASE Leadership Coaching Program, including a vetted cadre of leadership coaches. "CASE recognizes coaching as one of the most effective approaches for achieving professional and personal growth," said CASE Executive Director Bruce Caughey. "Coaching absolutely helps school leaders navigate the many issues and initiatives they face in a way that will ultimately help kids." It is CASE's vision that one day all K–12 education leaders in Colorado will have access to affordable leadership coaching. Under Mary McNeil, the former Director of Professional Learning, CASE formed a Leadership Coaching Program Advisory Committee in 2009. The association has since offered complimentary one-on-one leadership coaching sessions and informational breakout sessions about coaching at its annual conferences. Additionally, leadership coaching has been a component of the CASE Leadership Academy for Principals: Summer Boot Camp, offering every participant complimentary postcourse coaching sessions to help transfer the learning to practice. To promote the concept and value of coaching, the CASE website includes information on its available coaching services and current articles and research on coaching for education leaders. CASE has developed a thoughtful application and approval process to ensure those accepted into the CASE Cadre of Leadership Coaches share the same coaching philosophy as CASE does, plus have a minimum amount of coach-specific training and at least sixty hours of valid coaching experience. Benefits of belonging to the cadre include quarterly professional learning community sessions for the coaches and having one's coach profile posted on the CASE website (www.co-case.org).

Great Work Alliance

Great Work Alliance was awarded a grant by the Ohio Department of Education to provide leadership coaching to school principals across the state. A team of educators was trained in ICF Professional Coaching Competencies. Coaching took place in face-to-face coaching sessions over a three-year period. Principals received coaching between 2011 and 2013. Sessions were typically one hour in length, sometimes longer.

Upon the conclusion of coaching, recipients felt increased confidence and moved away from compliance to instructional leader.

The topic focus of each session related to key leadership areas within the school and aligned with the school's continuous improvement plan and improvement grant targets.

Qualitative and quantitative data were collected from sixteen randomly selected principals who met the criteria of receiving coaching from Great Work Alliance Coaches for a minimum of one year and maintained the principal assignment for the same school during that time period. Growth was documented in the areas of self-perception, interpersonal, decision-making, and stress management skills. Statistical analysis supported the significance of the growth levels in each of these areas. Principals reported personal growth and added insights into the various components of their building leadership roles.

One hundred thirty-eight principals were engaged in the program and were school leaders in high-poverty schools throughout Ohio. Services included using a multiple learning system; on site, one-on-one leadership coaching; individual support and training utilizing technology; and support via professional leadership community training. Individual coaching sessions were rooted in real-life educational leadership challenges and tied to the school's strategic objectives, allowing context and relevance. Leadership and emotional intelligence assessments (360 Leadership Assessment, Bar-On Emotional Intelligence Assessment, Strengthfinders 2.0 Assessment) were utilized, were not tied to evaluation, and played a key role in holding principals accountable to the overall school improvement plan while forwarding their professional growth related to day-to-day improvement tasks.

Coaching engaged all leaders in a process of self-reflection about their professional roles and practices, leadership strengths and challenges, and emotional and social skill development. With greater self-awareness and social awareness leaders managed conflict better and factored others' perspectives into their decision-making processes. With greater skills in the area of self-awareness and empathy, school

leaders tend to have better relationships with colleagues by using more collaborative leadership strategies. The end result of this experience supports what the literature has told us: Coaching is beneficial for anyone, especially in the service of supporting and promoting growth and action.

Principals affirmed that a critical conversation partner who was not tied to their evaluations promoted creative thinking and provided the accountability needed to prompt and undertake change. Ideally coaching should not be attached to initiatives that seem to be aimed at “failing principals” but as a true professional partnership that recognizes the challenge of leading a high-poverty school. Their (Great Work Alliance) work was with talented principals of struggling schools. Through the development of the coaching relationship, they were able to break through that barrier, which opened school leaders to the real opportunities for growth. The confidential nature of coaching sessions proved to be vital to create a trusting relationship. This allowed principals to openly discuss the critical issues in more depth and to share their personal fears and concerns. Such openness resulted in more aggressive action plans and comprehensive improvement plans.

Among the topics that arose during coaching sessions were the following:

- Student engagement
- Teachers supporting school initiatives, vision, and goals
- Relationships with staff
- Personal organization skills
- Burnout
- Providing feedback to staff on teaching performance
- Underperforming teachers—veteran and newer teachers lacking strong instructional practices
- Engaging difficult conversations
- Higher level questioning in planning and instruction
- Time management issues
- Building relationships with staff—forging “buy in” practices
- Creating relationships with parent support groups
- Having courageous conversations with marginal teachers
- Balancing home/family and work
- Time for self-reflection

Among the reflective comments from principals are the following:

- “Every principal who strives toward excellence needs a great coach who helps maximize a leader’s potential.”

- “One of the benefits of the coaching experience included my coach’s reflective listening skills, allowing me to think aloud and brainstorm solutions to situations I encountered.”
- “My coaching experience has been very powerful. My coach is someone who understands what I am going through; provides feedback in non-threatening, positive manner; guidance in difficult situations; finds strengths in your individual leadership and builds on them; and countless resources to become a better leader!”
- “My coach has been invaluable—and consistent from day one. Being a principal is often lonely, but my coaching has served as a touchstone of support.”
- “My coach has made himself available to me, whether to simply listen to my vision, perceptions of pedagogy or my administrative realities. He provided guidance, reality checks, and honest feedback. We connect on the importance of good instruction, and the ideas that all decisions should be predicated on making a difference for kids. I really want to be a great principal, and I look forward to coaching for the upcoming school year as a resource to my getting there.”

As a result of collected data from this leadership-coaching program, the following recommendations were made at the conclusion of the grant:

- The value and importance of the building school principal should be supported by job-embedded coaching. Coaching services should adhere to International Coaching Federation standards and be confidential.
- The use of coaching should be promoted in districts as a vehicle for maximizing leadership growth for each building principal and assistant principal.
- Statewide training programs should include a qualified coaching-support component for school administrators.

Wisconsin Association of School District Administrators’ (WASDA) Executive Coaching Program

The WASDA Executive Coaching Program was developed for new superintendents in 2008 by Dr. Norm Fjelstad and Cooperative Educational Service Agency #2 as joint partners. All first-year superintendents receive executive coaching, which occurs monthly, between

each of five workshops targeted to issues and concerns of superintendents. Coaching is provided by professional, certified coaches. Individuals new to the superintendent role rarely struggle with knowledge of instruction. More often the pressing issues that arise are about fiscal management and political and press issues, those that might be difficult for a top leader to discuss with anyone other than a confidential strategic-thinking partner. All coaching occurs on the telephone monthly. However, coaches are available 24/7, if needed. There are currently two professionally trained coaches at WASDA. Funding is offset by a corporate partner. The program was so successful that WASDA developed Phase II for a second year of coaching support, including three coaching sessions paid for in advance by districts.

Georgia School Superintendents Association

The Georgia School Superintendents Association (GSSA) has provided an executive coach to every new superintendent for the past eleven years. GSSA budgets for this service so there is no cost to the new superintendent. Recognizing that each newcomer enters the position with a different set of skills and experiences and faces a different set of challenges, coaching offers the opportunity for real-time learning and tailors coaching to individual needs. Coaching provides needed assistance in that first difficult year, helping them shift from site administrator or central-office leader to chief executive and helping them deal strategically with board, financial, and personnel issues. Each new superintendent can choose to access a trained coach for eight sessions throughout the year.

National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP)

Since 2003, NAESP has run a National Mentor Training and Certification Program to offer mentoring to principals and preparation for principal mentors. Current plans are to expand the preparation for mentors to include coaching skills and competencies.

Recent Coaching Research in Education

The topic of research on coaching in education is an interesting one. It would be helpful to look beyond specific education research projects and look at the research in neuroscience. That is where much of

the scientific evidence of how we make change, how our brain processes new information, and how we use learning to form new habits and experience lasting change is found. What coaches do in practice is based on brain research and what has been found to be effective.

A number of education research projects have occurred over the past decade, and they all appear to be very positive and have demonstrated the benefits of coaching. Below is a summary of a variety of leadership coaching research conducted in recent years.

Donald Wise (2010), PhD, Professor of Educational Research at California State University, Fresno, and a leadership coach, sent surveys to over 10,000 principals across the United States who received leadership coaching with 1,349 responding. Wise wanted to study these questions:

- To what extent is principal leadership coaching occurring in the U.S.?
- What are the characteristics of the principals being coached?
- What are the characteristics of the coaching relationship?
- Is there a relationship between leadership coaching and the perceived performance of school principals?

Of those responding, 48.9 percent have been coached. Those who were coached were in the principal role between one and five years and were evenly dispersed between elementary, middle, and high school levels (48.9 percent, 49.7 percent, and 48.6 percent respectively) in urban (56.4 percent), suburban (50.4 percent), and rural (43.4 percent) locations. Most coaching occurred for one to two hours twice per month, with email or telephone access to the coach between face-to-face sessions. The primary challenges faced by principals were reported as follows: (1) financial resources, (2) home and community issues, (3) test scores and accountability, (4) instruction and assessment issues, (5) lack of time, and (6) too many responsibilities. Wise posed these questions in the survey:

“What were the goals you achieved through coaching?” Sample responses were as follows:

- Improved my leadership skills
- Helped me be a better leader
- Helped me critically evaluate instruction
- Had a successful first year of principalship
- Used research-based practices to implement effective change/growth

“What were the major goals received through coaching?” Among the results were the following:

- 26.6 percent reported improved instruction
- 24.2 percent gained support for new principals
- 21.6 percent improved leadership skills

Among the challenges faced by principals prior to coaching were feeling less effective because of the overwhelming demands and balancing expectations of the office with the expectation of being an instructional leader. One participant defined leadership coaching as “moving a principal’s focus from overall management to instructional leader.” The most appreciated aspect of having a coach was having someone as a sounding board and reflection, or “having an unbiased person to talk to.” Of the participants, 37.2 percent said they wanted more time and more coaching sessions.

The overall conclusions of the study were as follows:

- Of those coached, 85 percent said they were better principals because they were coached.
- Of those coached, 78 percent said coaching had a positive impact on student achievement.

In another study entitled *Coaching School Leaders* presented at AERA in 2012, Chad Lochmiller, Indiana University, and Michael Silver, Seattle University, examined the experiences of novice administrators and leadership coaches who participated in a university-based coaching program from 2006 to 2011. The program sought to improve support for administrators by providing three years of induction support by a leadership coach. They explored the following questions:

- How do novice administrators describe their coaching support?
- How do coaching relationships evolve over time?
- What is the focus of the coaching support and how does it change?

Overall the findings reveal that coaching benefited the leadership practice of new administrators. Coaches worked with the administrator for four to six hours per month in the first and second year and two to three hours per month in the third year. Leadership coaches were retired administrators who had participated in coach training and were not employed by the school district.

The multi-year evaluation focused on different facets of the leadership coaching program and the coaching experience throughout the five-year period. Novice administrators generally found leadership coaching valuable. It was viewed as a unique form of professional learning compared with other types of support. One coachee commented, "When I first heard I was getting a coach I was worried. I wondered whether I had time for this. I wondered whether it would be helpful. After our third or fourth conversation I started realizing the support was about my work and my needs" (p. 12). The new administrators also perceived coaching as valuable because it provided them with recurring opportunities to stop, reflect, and think about their leadership practice. "Our sessions have been brain-busting. I can reflect, slow down and really think about how what I am doing relates to instruction and how my actions are supporting instruction. It's invaluable" (p. 13), said one participant. Another participant reported, "At first I was unsure, I was nervous. I felt self-conscious but after a few sessions I realized that this was not about the district or my performance. It was about my growth" (p. 19). "I don't think I could have done this without her. She (coach) became my savior in many ways" (p. 20).

Evaluators reported that leadership coaching had a significant impact on a range of leadership activities: It influenced their beliefs about leadership, knowledge of instructional strategies, confidence to address instructional practice in their schools, and understanding the challenge in their schools. "The program has done a great job of bringing the instruction side of this work to the front of the work. I see many connections between leadership coaching and instructional leadership" (p. 22). "Each session is really focused on something related to teaching and learning" (p. 24).

The study states that a leadership-coaching program may be a viable pathway to improve support for new school principals. Offering a program over multiple years allows the coachee to develop a relationship with the coach based on high levels of trust. Principals learned that coaches bring a specialized skill set and tailor coaching to the unique challenges of the leader. The study concludes by suggesting that university leadership preparation programs add a coaching component to the internship experience.

Another doctoral research project studied the effect of leadership coaching on secondary principals in Texas. Michael Greenwalt (2012), EdD, Director, Program Monitoring and Interventions, Texas Education Agency, recognized a distinct void when it comes to supporting beginning and experienced principals. Principals are expected

to know everything and perform at the highest levels at all times. Says Greenwalt, "Leadership coaching is an investment which seems to fill an immediate need for principals to have relevant, ongoing, job-embedded, and individualized professional development" (p. 6). The results of this study confirm the importance of leadership coaching for principals.

This study examined how principals improved interactions, thought processes, and relationships (the way work got done). Principals reported personal, professional, and organizational benefits resulting from leadership coaching. Personal benefits included better self-care, reduced isolation, increased self-confidence, and heightened self-awareness. On a professional level, coaching resulted in the generation of plans and ideas, improved communication, individualized professional development, and an enhanced sense of efficacy. Two participants stated that they remained in their job because of coaching. Benefits to the organization were identified in the areas of staffing, solutions, and student performance.

Greenwalt recommends that school districts educate all staff, including senior leadership, about coaching through definitions, examples, and case studies that can assist in establishing buy-in and letting everyone know what is possible with coaching. He goes on to state that districts should also understand that commitment and motivation are prominent factors leading to positive results from leadership coaching, and therefore, participation is voluntary. It is critical that potential coaching clients are educated about coaching in order to raise the probability that they will view it positively and take advantage of the service coaches offer.

This study advances the notion that leadership coaching is a positive and beneficial experience that will support principals in navigating the complexity of school leadership's ever-changing demands, helping to ensure that all students are academically successful.

Another study examined the effectiveness of a coaching model that was designed for business managers on education leaders (Chandler, Roebuck, Swan, & Brock, 2011). The researchers consider education "one of the largest businesses in every country" that, like its business counterparts, is called on to respond to rapid changes needed in the field. Education organizations are seeking processes that will improve the performance and effectiveness of their leaders. The practice of executive coaching appears to set top companies apart from others. Companies with strong leaders outperform their competitors.

Coaches provided leadership coaching that ranged from monthly to forty to fifty hours per year. Eighty coaches were trained; thirty-five responded to the survey. The study examined if education leaders perceived coaching differently than their business counterparts.

The coaches were asked to rank effective approaches to improvement performance. They responded as follows:

Encourages coachee to look at problems in new ways (100 percent)

Works to understand the context of the environment (100 percent)

Makes the coachee feel that her/his work is important (100 percent)

Asks coachee appropriate questions to identify real issues (97 percent)

Provides coachee with appropriate feedback (97 percent)

Encourages the coachee to do this her/his own way (97 percent)

Uses a variety of strategies to help coachee achieve own goals (97 percent)

Listens without interruption (94 percent)

The study found there was no significant difference in the ratings of the value of coaching between business and education leaders. The coaches also ranked effective ways to improve some sectors of the organization, from most effective to least effective. Coaching was ranked first, followed by mentoring second, workshops and conferences were tied for third, books and book studies tied for fifth, and others tied for seventh (lunch and learn, expert advice, etc.).

There still remains a need for more research. I suggest future research that focuses on the preparation of the coaches involved in a study. Many of the studies mentioned above had a cadre of coaches trained to implement professional-coaching skills and competencies. Too often in the education field, the term *coach* does not always relate to solid, professional-coaching preparation. Anyone can call him- or herself a coach. Because the terms *coaching* and *mentoring* are frequently used interchangeably, it is important to look deeper into research projects and determine how coaches are prepared. If they are making suggestions, consulting, giving advice, or using their own experiences, they are not coaching. To demonstrate true results of coaching effectiveness, I suggest all coaches have a minimum of sixty hours of training in coach-specific skills in which the training includes coaching others, receiving coaching, and being supervised by an experienced coach.

Success Story—Submitted by POWERful Leadership Coach™ Patrick Callaghan, Assistant Superintendent, South-Western City Schools, Columbus, Ohio

The Ohio Department of Education has been investing heavily in the process of supporting principals in their school improvement efforts, especially when accountability evidence indicates that their schools are at risk. Working in the sixth largest district in the state, and being the only large urban district to achieve an excellent state rating, colleagues at the Ohio Department approached me about the key to our success in elementary schools. Having grounded our work in the work of Dr. Ernest Boyer and his Basic School research, they asked if I could provide professional development to support other districts.

Knowing that the Basic School was a mindset, not a professional development “fix it,” I spoke about the way in which our elementary school leaders became confident instructional leaders by growing their knowledge of instruction and strength for making the decisions that would propel the schools forward. As my colleagues at the State Department of Education were busy creating an Executive Principals Leadership Academy (EPLA), my partners and I at Great Work Alliance, LLC proposed an alternative model for support for principals selected to become part of the EPLA, something not often afforded to school leaders. That support was executive leadership coaching. A successful grant application positioned us to be the executive coach for over one hundred principals throughout the state of Ohio. The POWERful Coaching™ training and framework supported our dream of not just “telling” principal colleagues how to grow their schools but engaging them in a process that helped them to uncover untapped potential and confidence to lead their schools with renewed optimism grounded in their own passions and dreams.

The principals who were offered professional coaching were all part of “struggling” schools. It did not take us long to recognize that the vast majority of the principals were not struggling or deficient. They were bright and capable people, mired down in the accountability malaise that was slowly zapping enthusiasm and passion from their professional lives.

One principal very typical of those with whom we worked was Cara (not her real name). Cara was the principal of an alternative high school specializing in “newcomers”—students who arrive at the schoolhouse door from other lands with little or no English-language background. The school had test scores that were struggling. The school found itself in “academic watch” status. Cara was not long from her training as a leadership intern and assistant principal, recently promoted to the principal role with the charge to turn the school around. Not officially called “principal” or paid the principal’s salary, Cara was filled with passion for second-language

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learners and drive to help the school succeed. Early assessments revealed that Cara was committed, skilled, and passionate. My coaching assessment was that she had good interpersonal skills and instinctually made connections with adults and kids alike.

In a growing school with limited resources, she attended the EPLA and embraced her role as a leader for change. The bureaucracy offered inconsistent support of district leaders and did not fully recognize the hurdles that she faced, causing her to doubt her next steps. A staff committed to students but wary of constant testing demands that only brought about disappointing results challenged her initial work.

Our coaching sessions took place about every two weeks. The promise that we made to our clients was they would have our total and confidential attention. They could share their obstacles and hopes in the safety of a relationship that was focused on them—nonevaluative and not reported to anyone in the role of “supervisor.” It did not take long for Cara to open up and comfortably settle into the coaching relationship. Each session would end with a commitment to “take a next step” of her choosing.

As a coach, I nurtured the relationship with periodic “check-ins” or encouraging notes, emails, and phone calls. As Cara grew more confident of the relationship, we were able to tackle larger issues and bigger obstacles. Sometimes the issues strayed away from the actual work of school, touching upon the balance of time for the principal themselves or their family.

The close working relationship between the coach and the principal coachees paired with accountability for making the decisions that result in taking “next steps” resulted in ongoing success and improvement in the school’s status. For Cara, the school rose from a “watch” status to “continuous improvement.”

The school became a full-service high school with growth in its student population from nearly 400 to more than 700 students within three years. Cara was able to build a committed culture of focus on students, accountability through teacher-led teams grounded in short-cycle assessment. Her confidence as a leader—a fully paid “principal” recognized within the district as a promising leader—resulted in her being recognized by community and government leaders.

Cara summed up her experience with coaching in this way:

“I was unsure at first of taking on another meeting or person in my busy world. I can say after a year, that I am glad that I took the risk and made time to focus on me. My coach’s only vested interest was in my growth as a leader. He supportively helped me center in on my personal goals as a leader while pushing me forward by listening and responding with honesty and realistic, easily implemented strategies of my own choosing. During the typical, challenging and fast paced work of the principalship, I looked forward to my conversations with my coach.”

Coaching: A Strategy for Achieving Peak Performance

No serious athlete would consider training for an Olympic event or other challenging sports competition without the assistance of an inspiring, skilled coach. Most people are familiar with athletic coaches; they work with athletes to move them from one place of competence to another. These focused, dedicated, goal-oriented people seek out coaches to help them gain and strengthen their physical skills and, more importantly, help them find the mental focus and thinking needed to be successful at a high level. It makes good sense for educators to learn from professional athletic coaches the techniques they use to help ordinary people achieve extraordinary results.

Although sports coaching and “professional” coaching differ in some aspects, there are similarities. In both, coaches strive to reach a challenging goal and rely on a skilled, supportive coach to whom they are accountable. Results are achieved by following a thoughtful plan that includes specific, daily action toward the targeted goal. Both supply objective, encouraging feedback to help the coachees continue toward their goals. A sports coach, as well as an executive or personal coach, deals directly with achieving peak performance through a close, collaborative relationship that focuses on the mind to achieve greater results. According to Olympic running coach Bobby McGee, 80 percent of training for a challenging race or competition is mental versus physical. He uses five strategies with his athletes: affirmations, focus, routine for dealing with anxiety, visualization, and dealing with discomfort. I have applied these strategies with coaching school leaders to reach their maximum potential (see Chapter 6). In fact, *all* the “professional” coaches I know use these techniques when coaching executives, leaders, individuals, and teams to create and achieve change and overcome personal and professional challenges.

Achieving peak performance in the boardroom or the classroom can be no less challenging than on a race course or high-diving board. Sports coaches help athletes visualize success by focusing on what they *want* to achieve rather than on what they *don't* want. These are common techniques to achieving superhuman performance. They help athletes eliminate negative thoughts that might interfere with

To succeed . . . you need to find something to hold on to, something to motivate you, something to inspire you.

—Tony Dorsett, NFL running back

achieving their goals. They help manage their lives to make appropriate time for training, nutrition, and rest. They help athletes create conditions for success. Professional and executive coaches perform similar functions.

Improving thinking skills, improving imagery skills, and taking purposeful action are key ingredients to achieving challenging goals. It takes discipline, just as athletes work toward their goals on a daily basis, for coachees working on any personal or organizational goals to practice positive thinking and helpful mental habits.

Our thoughts create our reality. When negative thoughts are more prevalent than positive thoughts, negative results will occur. We can choose thoughts that will move us toward a goal or away from one. How would it be to think . . .

New Thoughts	Versus	Old Thoughts
I won't give up.		I'm a quitter.
I can do that.		I'm not good at that.
I have what it takes to succeed.		I don't have what it takes.
Anything is possible.		That will never work.
I make time for what's important.		There's not enough time.

By practicing affirming thoughts on a daily basis, a new mindset evolves, and new actions are the result. Everything is energy; our thoughts are energy, too. An abundance of positive thoughts sends positive energy flowing through the coachees into their environments. Aligning vision with thoughts and beliefs allows people to experience success mentally before experiencing it physically. This is the essence of sports coaching *and* the essence of professional coaching. With executive and leadership coaching available to all school leaders and teachers, they will have the opportunity to reach their peak levels of performance and lead their staffs, students, and systems to success.

Coaching: It's All About Change

Change is so challenging that 90 percent of people who underwent bypass surgery did not change their lifestyles, even when faced with possible death (Deutschman, 2007). At a Global Medical Forum summit,

health care leaders convened to discuss the concern that 80 percent of the health care budget was consumed by five health care issues: smoking, drinking, eating, stress, and insufficient exercise. Dr. Edward Miller, Dean of Johns Hopkins Medical School, noted that 600,000 patients a year with severe heart disease undergo bypass surgery, a traumatic and expensive procedure that can cost more than \$100,000 each—a total cost of \$30 billion (Deutschman, 2007, p. 54). He noted that many patients who *could* avoid repeat surgery rarely do. Health care issues are caused by the choice of lifestyle versus disease. “The central issue is never strategy, structure, culture, or systems. The core of the matter is always about changing the behavior of people” (p. 55), said John Kotter in the same article. “Behavior change happens mostly by speaking to people’s feelings. In highly successful change efforts, people find ways to help others see the problems or solutions in ways that influence emotions, not just thought” (p. 55). A study of bypass surgery patients showed that those who were told what to do (regarding living a healthier life) did not make lasting changes. Only when they were provided with support (a team of professionals) to implement lifestyle changes did they succeed.

A few years ago, I heard a radio reporter comment that nearly 80 percent of people who got a new hairstyle reverted back to their original style within a few months. I don’t know if it’s true, but it’s no secret that people resist change, and there’s probably no greater frustration among leaders of organizational change efforts.

So how do we obtain lasting change? How do we start? How do we overcome resistance? How do we get change right? In my workshops, I find that school leaders can easily and rapidly rattle off dozens of initiatives and programs that have come and gone. Their level of frustration is high, and often leaders and their staffs are reluctant to implement one more new thing. School system resources are precious dollars that no district can waste on another failed change effort. Supporting change efforts with a coaching approach that addresses the soft, people issues and deals with coachees’ feelings can help sustain those efforts and add lasting value to school improvement investments.

Emotional Intelligence and Coaching

Emotional intelligence is known to be a greater predictor of success in a leadership role than technical or cognitive skills. The higher the position, the more important it is. Goleman (1998) says, “Emotional competence made the crucial difference between mediocre leaders

and the best. On average, close to 90 percent of success in leadership was attributed to emotional intelligence” (p. 33). And Cherniss (2000) says,

There now is a considerable body of research suggesting that a person’s ability to perceive, identify, and manage emotion provides the basis for the kinds of social and emotional competencies that are important for success in almost any job. Furthermore, as the pace of change increases and the world of work makes ever greater demands on a person’s cognitive, emotional, and physical resources, this particular set of abilities will become increasingly important. (p. 10)

Often, managers and supervisors don’t deal effectively with their staff to assess or manage emotional competencies. They are either uncomfortable doing so or unskilled. Who then can address those delicate personal issues? Skilled, trained coaches and organizational psychologists are two professional groups equipped to deal directly with emotional intelligence to improve leadership effectiveness, productivity, and overall well-being. School systems must embrace executive and leadership coaching as a common practice, as it directly deals with the hearts and souls of the coachees. In the confidential space of the coach-coachee relationship, coachees are safe to reveal themselves and their inner, personal issues. They reflect on and work on the areas of emotional competency that are holding them back from high levels of success.

In addition, when educators participate in reflective practices that cultivate self-awareness, emotion management, social awareness, and relationship management, they are better able to deliver high-quality instruction and leadership (Patti, Holzer, Stern, & Bracket, 2012). Coaching was provided to administrators, principals, and assistant principals in twenty-five New York City districts over four years. Coaches met with coachees individually and in teams to strengthen collaboration and communication skills. Coaching engaged leaders in a process of self-reflection about their roles, leadership strengths and challenges, and emotional and social skill development. With greater self- and social awareness, they manage conflict better. Self-aware administrators tend to have better relationships with colleagues and use more collaborative strategies. One participant stated coaching “far outweighs any possible benefits reaped by top-down and fear-based models of individual and organizational change” (p. 270).

There's a high correlation between these interventions and supports that executive and leadership coaches offer and the development of emotional competencies necessary to success on the job. Most often, even when coachees begin a coaching relationship with specific, external organizational goals, the coaching conversation quickly shifts to their internal, personal resources and capacity for carrying them out. In that respect, executive coaching is personal coaching, just as leadership development can be equated with personal development. It is common for professional coaches to incorporate the use of assessments to identify areas of strength and developmental opportunities with coachees (see Chapter 7: Using Assessments).

SUMMARY

Creating systemic change has been a challenge for school leaders for decades. Increased pressure on school systems has caused an alarming decline in the number of qualified candidates interested in leading our schools. Clearly, additional models of supporting school leaders on the job can attract them to these challenging positions and provide the confidential support to retain them while improving performance.

Numerous studies have supported coaching as a beneficial process for creating collaboration and professional growth among teachers. The role of school-based coaching continues to grow and expand, and it is also important that classroom coaches increase their coaching skills and knowledge.

We are making great progress. Recent research studies support coaching. Yet we still have a long way to go before we realize the full potential and value of coaching in school systems. Coaching techniques and strategies are useful throughout the school system. Why limit coaching to some staff or some classrooms? Why not make coaching skills available to every educator who faces the enormous challenge of successfully educating every child? I believe that when coaching is available to principals, department chairpersons, and central office administrators, we will see enormous shifts in culture, communication, attitude, and outlook—factors crucial to making lasting change.

Let us borrow the knowledge from classroom coaching models, the success of business and leadership coaching, and the rapidly growing coaching profession to create a new level of support for leaders and school systems. School system leaders can deal more effectively with their daily challenges and achieve a level of peak

performance just as CEOs of businesses and top athletic competitors have. We can incorporate the same peak performance strategies for our leaders and ensure that school-based coaches have adequate preparation as coaches. We can support and encourage them by acknowledging the challenge of the job and providing what is needed: the ongoing support, opportunity for professional growth, confidence, and increased competence available with professional coaching.

REFLECTIVE QUESTIONS

- How does your current perception of coaching differ from ICF's definition?
- How can your school's leader or leadership team benefit from working with a coach?
- What steps can you take to create increased awareness of the benefits of coaching?
- How might you expand your current coaching initiative?