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# Preface

*Every student receives excellent instruction  
every day in every class.*

Since the publication of *Instructional Coaching: A Partnership Approach to Improving Instruction* in 2007, my colleagues and I at the Instructional Coaching Group have been fortunate enough to work with school districts across most of the states and provinces in the United States and Canada. During our visits, we've had the good fortune to work with many, many great people who are deeply committed to improving student learning by improving instruction.

Each visit, of course, is unique, but certain themes seem to surface repeatedly. Generally, instructional coaches love their work, and they are motivated by their ability to make a difference—every time they help a teacher to become more effective, they help every student that teacher will teach in the future. Instructional Coaches tell us that the partnership principles provide a solid foundation for instructional coaching. And, most important, we frequently hear that coaching is leading to real, significant improvements in teaching and learning.

At the same time that we hear about the rewards and successes of coaching, we also hear about common roadblocks that many coaches and instructional leaders are encountering. In the majority of districts we visit, workshops, professional learning communities, and instructional coaching are all offered as supports for teacher professional learning, but those offerings are not sufficiently aligned. Districts are trying all kinds of different approaches and programs, but often each is implemented separately, with the net result being that teachers are overwhelmed by demands on their time, and coaches are underutilized as supports for implementing those programs.

Additionally, we have found that school improvement plans are not used effectively to shape and propel positive changes in teaching.

In truth, in most of the districts we visit, what theoretically should be the centerpiece for professional learning, the school improvement plan, is too long, too complicated, and understood by too few to be implemented with any kind of success.

Finally, we have found that principals are underprepared to be the kind of instructional leaders they must be if their districts are to flourish. Principals need to understand good instructional practices, know how to observe teachers to gauge how effectively teachers are using those practices, and know how to design and coordinate professional learning that makes it possible for teachers to master those practices. Nevertheless, despite their need for extensive professional learning support, principals often receive less professional development than anyone else in a district.

I wrote this book to address these issues, to build on the successes and address the roadblocks. This is my attempt to provide a simple map so that educators (central office staff, principals, instructional coaches, teachers, and all other educators) can align and integrate all professional learning for impact. A teacher should only be asked to attend a workshop, participate in a professional learning community (PLC), partner with a coach, or be observed by a principal, if those events will have an unmistakable impact on teaching and student learning. My goal here has been to create a map that is simple enough to be understood but sophisticated enough to guide schools to their real destination.