

# Schools That Coach

*This book is dedicated to the more than 100,000 educators,  
leaders, and coaches around the world with whom we have  
had the privilege to collaborate and learn.*

# Schools That Coach

Leading Schools Through  
the Power of Coaching

Christian van Nieuwerburgh  
Jim Knight  
John Campbell

**CORWIN**

Copyrighted Material, [www.corwin.com](http://www.corwin.com). Not intended for distribution.

For promotional review or evaluation purposes only. Do not distribute, share, or upload to any large language model or data repository.



FOR INFORMATION:

Corwin  
A Sage Company  
2455 Teller Road  
Thousand Oaks, California 91320  
(800) 233-9936  
www.corwin.com

Sage Publications Ltd.  
3rd Floor, HYLO  
103-105 Bunhill Row  
London EC1Y 8LZ  
United Kingdom

Sage Publications India Pvt. Ltd.  
10th Floor, Emaar Capital Tower 2  
MG Road, Sikanderpur  
Sector 26, Gurugram  
Haryana - 122002  
India

Sage Publications Asia-Pacific Pte. Ltd.  
18 Cross Street #10-10/11/12  
China Square Central  
Singapore 048423

---

Vice President, Content  
and Product: Monica Eckman  
Executive Content  
Leader: Megan Bedell  
Content Development and Operations  
Manager: Lucas Schleicher  
Senior Product  
Assistant: Natalie Delpino  
Production Editor: Tori Mirsadjadi  
Copy Editor: Pam Schroeder  
Typesetter: C&M Digital (P) Ltd.  
Cover Designer: Scott Van Atta

Copyright © 2027 by Corwin Press, Inc.

All rights reserved. Except as permitted by U.S. copyright law, no part of this work may be reproduced or distributed in any form or by any means, or stored in a database or retrieval system, without permission in writing from the publisher.

When forms and sample documents appearing in this work are intended for reproduction, they will be marked as such. Reproduction of their use is authorized for educational use by educators, local school sites, and/or noncommercial or nonprofit entities that have purchased the book.

All third-party trademarks referenced or depicted herein are included solely for the purpose of illustration and are the property of their respective owners. Reference to these trademarks in no way indicates any relationship with, or endorsement by, the trademark owner.

No AI training. Without in any way limiting the author's and publisher's exclusive rights under copyright, any use of this publication to "train" generative artificial intelligence (AI) or for other AI uses is expressly prohibited. The publisher reserves all rights to license uses of this publication for generative AI training or other AI uses.

Printed in the United States of America

*Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data*

Names: Nieuwerburgh, Christian van author | Knight,  
Jim author | Campbell, John (Leadership coach) author

Title: Schools that coach : leading schools through the power of  
coaching / Christian van Nieuwerburgh, Jim Knight, John Campbell.

Description: Thousand Oaks, California : Corwin, [2027] |  
Includes bibliographical references and index.

Identifiers: LCCN 2026030743 | ISBN 9798348856908 paperback |  
ISBN 9798348856915 epub | ISBN 9798348856922 epub |  
ISBN 9798348856939 pdf

Subjects: LCSH: Mentoring in education | Teachers—In-service training |  
Teaching—Vocational guidance

Classification: LCC LB1731.4 .N534 2027  
LC record available at <https://lcn.loc.gov/2026030743>

This book is printed on acid-free paper.

26 27 28 29 30 10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

DISCLAIMER: This book may direct you to access third-party content via web links, QR codes, or other scannable technologies, which are provided for your reference by the author(s). Corwin makes no guarantee that such third-party content will be available for your use and encourages you to review the terms and conditions of such third-party content. Corwin takes no responsibility and assumes no liability for your use of any third-party content, nor does Corwin approve, sponsor, endorse, verify, or certify such third-party content.

Copyrighted Material, www.corwin.com. Not intended for distribution.

For promotional review or evaluation purposes only. Do not distribute, share, or upload to any large language model or data repository.

# Contents

|                                                                  |     |
|------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|
| Acknowledgments                                                  | vii |
| About the Authors                                                | ix  |
| Introduction                                                     | 1   |
| <b>Chapter 1:</b> Toward Ideal Environments for Learning         | 5   |
| <b>Chapter 2:</b> Telling Versus Partnering                      | 27  |
| <b>Chapter 3:</b> The GROWTH Model                               | 47  |
| <b>Chapter 4:</b> Ensuring the Success of Instructional Coaching | 69  |
| <b>Chapter 5:</b> The Partnership Principles                     | 87  |
| <b>Chapter 6:</b> Next-Level Communication Skills                | 101 |
| <b>Chapter 7:</b> Positive Approaches to Coaching                | 121 |
| <b>Chapter 8:</b> How Leaders Create Schools That Coach          | 139 |
| <b>Chapter 9:</b> Leading With a Coaching Approach               | 159 |
| <b>Chapter 10:</b> Putting It All Together                       | 179 |
| References                                                       | 189 |
| Index                                                            | 199 |



# Acknowledgments

We are deeply grateful to all those who have supported and inspired us throughout this journey. We would like to start by acknowledging the work and support of our colleagues at the Instructional Coaching Group and Growth Coaching International. None of this would have been possible without the dedication and commitment of our people.

We are especially grateful to the educators who have taken the time to share their stories and insights with us: Steven Dellinger-Pate, Karen Endicott, Meg Groseclose, Claudia Owad, Scott Springston, Mark Verde, and Penny Verdich.

We are also grateful to Kirsten McBride, who has helped strengthen Jim's writing for more than two decades. Her thoughtful edits helped us clarify ideas and smooth out many awkward passages throughout this book. We are also deeply grateful to Dan Alpert, who served as a content editor for the book. Dan offered hundreds of suggestions that made the ideas clearer, stronger, and more useful for readers.

Creating this book has been a joy thanks to the wonderful team at Corwin. Megan Bedell, Natalie Delpino, Lucas Schleicher, and Zack Vann were consistently encouraging, patient, and supportive throughout the process. Pam Schroeder provided outstanding copyediting and Lawrence W. Baker's proofreading was excellent. Our ideas about coaching in education are informed by the many conversations and experiences we have when we engage with educators—at conferences, in workshops, in schools, and online. We are grateful to you for the work you do. This book is far better because of everyone mentioned here, and we are sincerely thankful for their wisdom, generosity, and support.



# About the Authors

## Prof. Christian van Nieuwerburgh

---



**Christian van Nieuwerburgh** is professor of coaching at the Centre for Positive Health Sciences at RCSI University of Medicine and Health Sciences (Ireland) and strategic partner of the Instructional Coaching Group, a global provider of coach training and consultancy for the education sector. In recognition of his contributions to the fields of coaching and positive approaches, he is principal fellow of the Centre for Wellbeing Science at the Melbourne Graduate School of Education, University of Melbourne (Australia). Christian is a certified executive coach and has authored, co-authored, and edited numerous books and publications

on coaching and positive approaches. His best-known books include *An Introduction to Coaching Skills: A Practical Guide* and *Radical Listening: The Art of True Connection*. Christian regularly speaks internationally on the topics of coaching, positive approaches, and wellbeing.

## Dr. Jim Knight

---



**Jim Knight** is co-founder of the Instructional Coaching Group. For more than three decades, he has studied instructional coaching and professional learning, becoming one of the leading voices internationally in the field of instructional coaching.

Jim wrote the first article and book on instructional coaching and has authored numerous influential books and articles on instructional coaching, leadership, and effective teaching practice. *The Impact Cycle: What Instructional Coaches Should Do to Foster Powerful Improvements in Teaching*; *Better Conversations: Coaching Ourselves and Each Other to Be More Credible, Caring, and Connected*;

and *The Definitive Guide to Instructional Coaching: Seven Factors for Success* are considered seminal texts in the field. Jim regularly presents and consults internationally, leading workshops, institutes, and keynote presentations across the United States and around the world. Through his work with educators and school systems, he has helped shape coaching practices that support meaningful professional growth and improved outcomes for students.



## John Campbell

---

**John Campbell** is founding director of Growth Coaching International, an organization that provides coaching and professional learning services for school leaders and teachers across Australia, New Zealand, and the world. John has worked as a high school teacher, curriculum development adviser, and management consultant in the corporate sector. He has co-authored several books on the topic of coaching in education, including *The Leader's Guide to Coaching in Schools: Creating Conditions for Effective Learning* and *Growth Talk: A Coaching Way of Leading in Schools*. He is a leading

figure in the field of coach training and regularly delivers workshops and keynote presentations on coaching in education throughout Australia and internationally.

# Introduction

As you begin reading this book, we invite you to see it not simply as a collection of strategies or frameworks but as a gateway into a different way of thinking about professional learning and growth in schools. At the heart of our work is a belief that educators and educational leaders are thoughtful, capable professionals who are most likely to thrive when they are engaged in respectful, trust-based conversations that encourage reflection, agency, and possibility. Across decades of working in schools and educational systems around the world, we have seen repeatedly that coaching can positively influence not only professional practice but also relationships, school culture, wellbeing, and ultimately outcomes for learners.

This book represents an important moment in our professional journeys. Although each of us arrived at coaching through different pathways, we have all come to see coaching as one of the most powerful and respectful ways of supporting growth and learning in educational settings. Jim Knight has spent decades developing the field of instructional coaching and working alongside teachers across North America. John Campbell has dedicated his professional life to building and leading Growth Coaching International and supporting schools throughout Australia, New Zealand, and beyond. Christian van Nieuwerburgh has focused much of his academic and professional work on coaching and wellbeing in education across the United Kingdom, Europe, and internationally. Although our contexts and experiences have differed, we have been united by a shared commitment to improving outcomes for learners by supporting the growth and development of educators and educational leaders.

In many ways, this book brings together three substantial bodies of work and lived experience. It reflects conversations that have unfolded over many years, across countries and continents, in schools, conference venues, universities, virtual meetings, and writing retreats. The process of writing together has itself been deeply meaningful. We have drafted chapters independently, rewritten sections collaboratively, debated concepts, refined language, and spent many

hours discussing how best to communicate ideas that matter deeply to us. Throughout this process, we have drawn on the coaching principles and approaches that we advocate in this book. We have listened carefully to one another, explored points of difference respectfully, remained curious, and stayed focused on our shared purpose: creating something that would genuinely be helpful for educators, leaders, and coaches working in schools.

Our first attempt at writing together was a chapter on coaching in education for the book *Professional Coaching: Principles and Practice*. That experience was both challenging and rewarding. For the first time, we attempted to bring together our different traditions, models, language, and assumptions about coaching in a single piece of writing. At times, the process felt difficult enough that we were uncertain whether we would be able to produce something coherent together. Yet those moments of tension proved to be valuable opportunities for learning. As we worked through our differences, we discovered that the areas of shared belief were far more significant than the points of disagreement.

We found that we were deeply aligned in our commitment to supporting the professional learning of educators and educational leaders in ways that recognize and honor their professionalism. We shared a belief in the importance of what might be described as a “coaching way of being”: approaching conversations with respect, humility, curiosity, care, and trust in the capacity of others. We agreed that meaningful one-to-one conversations, grounded in trust and guided by a clear conversational process, can become powerful vehicles for reflection, growth, and learning. We also shared a belief in the importance of core coaching skills, including listening carefully, asking thoughtful questions, noticing patterns and possibilities, and helping people think more clearly about the future they wish to create. Over time, we came to realize that many of our differences related more to terminology, emphasis, and nuance than to fundamental principles. In fact, the process of bringing our ideas together enriched each of our individual perspectives and strengthened our collective understanding of coaching in education.

This book also brings together three geographical perspectives on coaching in schools. Jim’s work is grounded largely in North American educational contexts. John’s work reflects extensive experience across Australia and New Zealand. Christian’s work has developed primarily within British and European educational settings. Although educational systems differ considerably across contexts, we have been struck by the extent to which educators around the world share similar hopes, challenges, and aspirations. Teachers and leaders consistently seek meaningful professional learning, supportive relationships, opportunities

for reflection, and approaches that allow them to grow without diminishing their professional agency. We believe this book is one of the first attempts to bring these three educational and cultural perspectives together in a single volume focused specifically on coaching in schools.

At the same time, we recognize that there is no single blueprint for becoming a “school that coaches.” Every school exists within its own context, history, and culture. For that reason, this book is not intended to provide rigid prescriptions or simplistic formulas. Instead, we hope it offers ideas, frameworks, examples, and practical approaches that can support your own thinking and help you identify what may be most useful in your setting. Many readers may choose to read the book sequentially, following the progression of ideas that we have intentionally designed. Others may prefer to focus on particular chapters that connect more directly with their current priorities or areas of interest. We encourage you to engage with the book in whatever way feels most meaningful and helpful to you.

Finally, we want to express our sincere gratitude to you for choosing to spend your valuable time engaging with these ideas. Whether you are a teacher, school leader, instructional coach, mentor, consultant, or researcher, we know how busy things are. We hope these pages support your work in ways that are both practical and personally enriching. Our shared aspiration is simple: that the ideas in this book contribute, in a meaningful way, to schools becoming places where people learn, grow, flourish, and feel valued. We also hope that this book serves as a starting point for further exploration and conversation. Through the ongoing work of the Instructional Coaching Group and Growth Coaching International, there are many additional resources and communities that may support you on your journey. Above all, we hope this book encourages you to continue exploring how coaching can help create schools in which both educators and learners can thrive.

# IDEAL ENVIRONMENTS FOR LEARNING

↓  
IS ABOUT

↓  
realizing the full  
potential of  
coaching in schools

↓  
THROUGH  
COACHING FOR



---

## Chapter 1

# Toward Ideal Environments for Learning

*You never walk away unfulfilled if you've had a good, focused-in coaching conversation. You feel heard, you feel listened to, you know where you're going. That's what I want for our teachers. I want them to feel heard. I want them to feel they've got a voice. I want them to know where they're going. And I want to learn with them. I want them to share their learning, so that we can grow as a culture and a school. You can't do it on your own. You've got to do it together if you want to make it work.*

—Mark Verde, Dulwich College, Bangkok, Thailand

Mark Verde is the founding head of Primary at Dulwich College in Bangkok, Thailand. In 2026, he had the exciting opportunity to imagine and plan, from the ground up, what elementary education would look like when Dulwich College opened its doors to students for the first time. Mark had many factors to think

through when he made his plans, but one of his central considerations was coaching. Planning for the future at Dulwich, Mark told us, was “a wonderful opportunity to lead out on coaching across the school. It’s been in my head since the day I got the job.”

Mark has had extensive professional learning on coaching—he has become a well-respected coaching leader in Thailand. He has attended many of the coaching workshops offered by the Instructional Coaching Group (ICG) and Growth Coaching International (GCI), achieved European Mentoring and Coaching Council Certification through GCI’s coaching accreditation program co-facilitated by one of the authors (Christian) and participated in ICG’s one-to-one impact coaching for coaches with another author (Jim). Mark has seen the power of coaching and was determined to create a coaching culture at his school. “In the back of my mind,” Mark said, “I definitely wanted to involve not just the teachers, not just the leaders, not just the children learning how to coach one another but also parents.”

To help you imagine what coaching can be in a school, in this chapter we’ll share Mark’s plans for each of those groups. We hope Mark’s inspiring vision will give you some ideas for how coaching can look in your school.

We wrote *Schools That Coach: Leading Schools Through the Power of Coaching* to provide leaders like Mark with research-supported knowledge, strategies, and inspiration they can use to help them integrate coaching into their educational setting. Like Mark, we are convinced that coaching can have an unmistakably positive impact on the students, teachers, leaders, and parents who make up a school community. For this reason, our goal is to support every leader’s growth by describing the knowledge and skills they need to use coaching as a lever for helping all members of their school community to learn and grow.

Collectively, we have been studying coaching for more than 70 years. John has spent more than 20 years founding and developing Growth Coaching International and shaping the GROWTH Model with Mandy O’Bree, work that has influenced how facilitative coaching is practiced around the world. Christian has spent more than two decades researching coaching at the University of East London, Henley Business School, and RCSI University of Medicine and Health Sciences with a focus on how it can help people learn and develop. Jim has spent the past 30 years studying instructional coaching, first at the University of Kansas Center for Research on Learning and then through his work at the ICG. Among us we’ve written more than 20 books on coaching. But what matters more is our conviction that *coaching done well is perhaps the best way to help schools become places where every child can succeed.*

We have had the privilege of learning from tens of thousands of educators and leaders, and each of us has played a significant role in developing the field of coaching in education. We began our respective professional careers as educators, and our belief in the power of education to change lives in a positive way has grown exponentially in our years of service. We've seen the difference coaching can make, and we believe its potential is even greater than has been realized. This book is our effort to describe what we have learned about coaching and what we think it can mean moving forward. In this first chapter, we will share Mark's vision for Dulwich to help paint a picture of what coaching can do in any school, but before we go deep into Mark's plans, we'll begin with a quick overview of the book and some definitions of coaching.

## Defining Coaching

---

Coaching is a collaborative partnership in which individuals are empowered to reach more of their potential. In such collaborations, one person facilitates the learning and growth of others by helping them (a) set meaningful goals, (b) explore their current situation (where clients<sup>1</sup> perceive themselves to be with respect to the goals they've identified), (c) consider multiple pathways toward attaining their goals, and, finally, (d) commit to small steps toward their desired futures.

## Coaching and Mentoring

---

Coaching and mentoring both aim to support personal and professional growth, but they differ in structure and focus. Coaching is typically understood as a structured conversational process in which two people think together—as equals—in the interest of stimulating growth and positive change. Mentoring, in contrast, often involves a less formal relationship in which an experienced mentor provides guidance and advice to a mentee based on their own experiences.

Both approaches are valuable and can be tailored to meet the unique needs of individuals. In educational settings, coaching and mentoring offer unique benefits. Coaching supports teachers so they can set clear student-focused goals and adapt their teaching to have greater impact on student learning.

---

<sup>1</sup>We considered many terms to describe the person who is the recipient of the coaching process, including *learning partner*, *conversation partner*, *collaborative teacher*, and *coachee*. We decided to adopt *client*, despite its traditional business connotations, because it is the term most commonly used in the literature on coaching.

Mentoring helps early career educators learn from the real-world experiences of more seasoned educators. Together these approaches can enrich well-rounded professional development programs that support continuous improvement.

The research and practice that inform this book provide strong backing for one of its central premises: *School leaders can leverage coaching to create supportive and nonjudgmental learning environments in which individuals are encouraged to take ownership of their professional learning by focusing on strengths and possibilities.* In the process, they are empowered to develop their own solutions and action steps to reach their desired outcomes rather than taking advice and direction from mentors or those in more senior-level positions. In this way, coaching is also an effective methodology for empowering individuals to achieve their personal and professional goals in ways that boost self-esteem and self-confidence.

## Coaching in Education

---

School-based coaching, a relatively recent practice that began in the late 20th century, has grown and flourished. Not only has it been implemented by schools around the globe as a powerful intervention that can support both educators and learners (Campbell, 2016; Knight & van Nieuwerburgh, 2012; van Nieuwerburgh, 2012; van Nieuwerburgh & Barr, 2017; van Nieuwerburgh et al., 2019), it has also been supported by a number of influential educational organizations, including Learning Forward (<https://learningforward.org/consulting/coaches-academy>) in the United States, the Department for Education and Skills (2003) in the United Kingdom (U.K.), the National College for School Leadership (Creasy & Paterson, 2005), the Scottish College for Educational Leadership (2016) in the U.K., and the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (2016) in Australia. Furthermore, the research base on the effectiveness of coaching in schools continues to grow. And perhaps even more important, increasing numbers of teachers and educational leaders in schools and colleges around the world have been coached and/or trained as coaches and can attest to the transformative benefits of coaching—both for themselves and those they have coached.

## The Natural Home of Coaching

---

Some readers might assume that coaching has been imported into education from other fields such as sports or psychology, but we argue that education is the natural home of coaching. Consider the following matter of record: The first use

of the term *coaching* to refer to a one-to-one supportive relationship occurred in an educational setting! Etymologically, the word *coach* was used to denote a type of horse-drawn carriage called a *kocsi* in the Hungarian language because these carriages were built in a village called Kocs in Hungary. In the 1830s, educators at the University of Oxford extended the concept of a vehicle that takes a person from Point A to Point B by using the term *coach* as an informal term to refer to a tutor who supports students to pass exams. In other words, the tutor (or coach) would take a person from “not knowing enough” (Point A) to “knowing enough to pass the exam” (Point B). Notably, the first recorded use of the word *coach* in an athletic context did not occur until 1861, some three decades after its use in an educational setting.

Etymology aside, it makes intuitive sense that places of learning (such as schools, colleges, and universities) are ideal settings for coaching to flourish because coaching and education share the same purpose: supporting people to learn, grow, and develop. One could also argue that, at its core, coaching is simply a form of highly personalized learning. Jim, in his book *Better Conversations*, noted that schools are only as good as the conversations that take place within them (Knight, 2015). In other words, not all conversations are created equal. The distinction of *coaching* conversations—in contrast to routine or transactional interactions—is that they are, essentially, *learning* conversations.

## Further Elaboration of Our Definition of Coaching: *Coaching in Education*

---

Earlier in this chapter, we presented our definition of coaching in general:

*Coaching is a collaborative partnership in which individuals are empowered to reach more of their potential. In such collaborations, one person facilitates the learning and growth of others by helping them set meaningful goals, explore their current situation (where clients perceive themselves to be with respect to the goals they've identified), consider multiple pathways toward attaining their goals, and finally, commit to small steps toward their desired futures.*

In the following section, we elaborate on this definition by zeroing in specifically on coaching used in schools—instructional coaching. If you ask any two coaching experts to provide you with their definition of coaching, you are likely to receive at least two different responses. But although there are many definitions of

coaching (including our own), most would agree that coaching includes the following three components:

1. Coaching is “a managed conversation.”
2. Coaching “aims to support sustainable change to behaviours.”
3. Coaching “focuses on learning, development and growth.”

(van Nieuwerburgh, 2026, p. 5)

We use the term *coaching in education* to cover a range of interventions and approaches that are intended to improve the performance and wellbeing of learners and educators. For the purposes of this book, we use the following definition:

A one-to-one conversation that focuses on the enhancement of learning and development through increasing self-awareness and a sense of personal responsibility, where the coach facilitates the self-directed learning of the client through questioning, active listening, appropriate challenge, and the dialogical sharing of knowledge, where appropriate, in a supportive and encouraging climate. (adapted from van Nieuwerburgh, 2012, p. 17)

Educational leaders will immediately notice some important elements within this definition. First, educational leaders are ultimately responsible for enhancing “learning and development” opportunities within their institutions. They are also interested in encouraging higher levels of “self-awareness,” “personal responsibility,” and “self-directed learning” in both students and staff within their organizations. Finally, educational leaders appreciate the value and importance of “supportive and encouraging” educational environments. In sum, coaching in education is a powerful means to empower learners, increase learner engagement, and create positive learning cultures.

## The Global Framework for Coaching in Education

---

Because Mark Verde has spent a lot of time learning with the authors of this book, it’s not surprising that the four areas he identified in his vision for coaching (leaders, teachers, parents, and students) align closely with the four portals of The Global Framework for Coaching in Education (van Nieuwerburgh et al., 2019). We developed this framework to help leaders, like Mark, broaden how they think about coaching and to support the implementation of a wide range

of coaching approaches. From the beginning, we intended the framework to be useful in many different contexts, including the kind of coaching work Mark hoped to develop in his school.

One lesson has become clear through our work with schools and systems around the world: *Context matters*. As a result, our framework is nonlinear, which means leaders do not need to follow a fixed sequence. We see the framework as a practical, flexible guide that helps leaders think more clearly about how coaching can support improvement in their schools (see Figure 1.1).

**Figure 1.1 • The Global Framework for Coaching in Education**



Source: Adapted from van Nieuwerburgh, C., Knight, J. & Campbell, J. (2019). Coaching in education. In S. English, J. M. Sabatine, & P. Brownell (Eds.), *Professional coaching: Principles & practices* (pp. 411–426). Springer.

The four portals of the framework—leaders, teachers, students, and parents—bring clarity and coherence to the process of assessing needs and pinpointing resources. Leaders and leadership teams, therefore, can use the framework to assess their current use of coaching (if any) within the four portals and, subsequently, identify areas for development. Similarly, researchers can

use the framework to identify focus areas for new research into coaching in education. Each of the four portals of the framework is described in the sections that follow along with Mark's vision for what his school can do in the future in each area.

## Leaders

---

Mark had seen the power of leadership coaching at his previous school. He told us that he found “leaders to have a very high level of skill before coaching, but when they started moving into coaching skills, they were able to focus in more on how to listen and question.” “At first,” Mark said, “leaders found it very hard not give in to ‘the advice monster’ [Michael Bungay Stanier’s tongue-in-cheek description of the strong impulse to tell people what they should do]. When they saw the empowerment coaching gave, and the energy it produced, and the impact it had on teachers, the impact on learning, they felt they were doing a good thing.”

Because Mark was one of only two leaders when Dulwich opened, his most immediate concerns were not about leadership. Nevertheless, he expected that coaching would be a big part of how people lead at Dulwich. “Looking ahead,” Mark said, “we’ll be looking at how we bring in leadership coaching so that leaders can grow people in their teams by having coaching conversations.”

The leaders portal of the framework includes a range of interventions that Mark could tap into to improve the quality of leadership in his school. Broadly speaking, the portal addresses two major sources of support: (a) executive coaching for educational leaders and (b) professional development that prepares school leaders (primarily principals) to apply coaching skills in their interaction with faculty and other staff members to become coaches.

**Executive Coaching: Being Coached.** Being a school principal is not for the faint of heart: It is often a high-pressure and lonely job (Levin & Bradley, 2019). Principals not only have high levels of accountability and responsibility, but they must also navigate a continually changing educational landscape. As is the case for many of us when we enter new positions, principals—especially those who are new to a school—benefit from the wisdom, advice, and guidance of experienced mentors. Executive coaching is a form of support that is backed by research. For example, one U.S. longitudinal study showed that feedback *with coaching* made it more likely that principals would change their professional practices rather than feedback alone (Goff et al., 2014).

In many authorities in the United Kingdom and school districts in the United States, first-time principals are automatically provided with mentors. However,

we propose that many of these emerging principals—especially those who have already served in leadership roles—would be better served by having access to a coach. That is, even those who have already served as principals or assistant principals in previous assignments will benefit from access to a thinking partner as they consider the needs of their new institution as well as the positive impact they would like to have on their students, staff, parents, and the community at large. In this regard, programs such as First 100 Days described in the following *In Context* box might be helpful in a variety of contexts.

### **In context**

#### **First 100 Days Coaching**



The start of a new principal's tenure can be akin to a trial by fire, especially during the first 100 days. First 100 Days coaching programs provide powerful strategic support to new school leaders during an important period in their professional lives, during which leaders often set their vision and begin to develop their leadership habits.

In an ideal scenario, leaders have access to a coach immediately following their appointment. During the contracting phase, when the coach and leader discuss and agree on how coaching will proceed, the coach clarifies that the coaching agreement will conclude 100 days into the new principal's contract at the school. This time limit is intentional in that it prevents the formation of dependencies and helps both the leader and the coach address essential questions early on, such as the following:

- What is your vision for this school?
- What will you have achieved by the 100th day?
- What kind of a leader do you want to be in this school?
- How will you know that you have achieved what you have set out to achieve?

Usually, this coaching agreement encompasses four to six online coaching sessions.

Aspiring school leaders can also benefit from coaching support. Some training and development programs for aspiring school leaders include executive coaching sessions for their participants, typically delivered by former or

experienced school leaders. In the best cases, when they experience this form of “preservice” coaching, they are more likely to consider becoming principals. Aspiring leaders who have access to external coaches in a relationship that ensures confidentiality are more open to raising sensitive matters and possibilities that they might not feel safe discussing with their own principals.

### **Professional Development—Coach Training Programs: Becoming a Coach**

Principals can also receive professional learning to become coaches themselves. We believe that learning to coach is an essential leadership skill. As authors Jane Creasy and Fred Paterson wrote in *Leading Coaching in Schools* (2005, p. 23), “To first develop a system, develop yourself.” Similarly, the Centre for the Use of Research and Evidence in Education (2005) proposed that learning to become a coach or mentor is one of the most effective ways for leaders to become excellent practitioners. Indeed, subsequent research has found that educators who undertook a coaching skills course gained insight into their own behaviors and relationships, suggesting that such training can be developmental beyond the course content (Barr & van Nieuwerburgh, 2015). Not only does learning to become a coach support principals to introduce or embed coaching within their institutions, but it can also lead to improvements in their own role as leaders. In short, leaders who have worked to master and use coaching skills add significant value to the schools they serve. The following *In Context* box summarizes some of the potential benefits.

#### **In context**



##### **Why Do We Need School Leaders Who Are Trained Coaches?**

- Coaching can be used to maintain energy and motivation in oneself and in others.
- Training to become a coach encourages reflective practice and self-development— essential attributes for leadership.
- Coaching skills are transferrable—that is, principals can use these skills in their leadership roles in ways that strengthen their interactions across the school community, including those with peers, staff, students, and families and caregivers.
- School leaders with coaching training are equipped to provide coaching support to future and aspiring leaders, not only within their organizations but across the educational system as well.

- Coaching processes can be put to use in different contexts, including leading meetings and delivering professional development. This not only facilitates the learning and growth of staff but also helps strengthen trust and psychological safety.
- Those who have learning conversations with leaders who apply a coaching approach are more likely to implement sustained changes.
- School leaders who model the use of coaching skills in their interactions effectively lead by example. In doing so, they encourage more people within the organization to adopt coaching practices, ultimately leading to a school-wide culture of coaching.

To sum up, the leaders portal focuses on providing leaders with access to coaching or building their coaching skills. In both ways, the quality of educational leadership can be improved with immediate and positive effects on the entire school community. Because coaching fosters professional learning in others, we believe learning to coach and adopting a coaching approach are two of the most important leadership practices any leader can apply.

## Teachers

Mark started promoting coaching in his school by ensuring that he hired teachers who embraced coaching as a positive learning opportunity. He explained to each person he interviewed that at Dulwich, “We want our teachers to be able to look at the children, to be able to listen to the children, to notice them, and to really be able to question them. And for that, we are going to definitely be setting up instructional coaching as a way of being within the school from the word go.” Mark asked each potential teacher, “How does that sit with you? How do you feel about that?” “If coaching doesn’t sit well with them,” Mark told us, “then we’re not going to be the school for them.”

In his years as a coach and leading other coaches, Mark had recognized the power of student-focused instructional coaching and the effectiveness of the Impact Cycle (Knight, 2018; see Chapter 4). He told us, “I want teachers to open up children’s lives in different ways, because we actually see what they really, really need and want. We’re going to help them progress, academically, holistically, emotionally, and socially.”

As Mark looked ahead to the start of the academic year, he told us that he was looking at peer-to-peer coaching where those peer-to-peer coaches have the

tools to instructionally coach or have dialogical conversations. “I think,” he said, “it’s more about better conversations than anything else.”

Mark planned to start providing coaching professional development opportunities even before the start of the school year. “Within my training plan for everyone,” Mark told us, “I want them to practice the skills of how to really listen, to really notice, ask good questions, and how to paraphrase. In those first few weeks it’s really about clarifying where we want to go as a school.”

Mark recognized that establishing peer coaching would take time and that the first semester would involve a lot of practice to create the kind of culture in the school where everyone felt safe learning from everyone else. “They’re going to have to build a sense of trust because they’re going to have to be vulnerable, honest, and open so they can give the best for children. To my mind, coaching is probably one of the most important skills you can have to hear and see and listen to what needs to be done for children,” Mark noted.

The teachers portal relates directly to school-based coaching that supports educators’ professional growth, increases their impact on the students they serve, and promotes student and teacher wellbeing. (Whereas some school- and district-based coaching programs primarily focus exclusively on teacher performance, in particular, how a teacher’s pedagogy, actions, and decisions affect student achievement and wellbeing, we argue that that teacher wellbeing is equally important.) In the following section, we present three approaches to coaching for educators.

**Instructional Coaching.** Through the Kansas Coaching Project, Jim (Knight, 2007) has undertaken significant research into effective ways of improving teaching practice through coaching. His model of instructional coaching, which has been implemented on all continents except Antarctica, is backed by significant evidence and is a proven means to support teachers in improving student outcomes such as engagement, achievement, and wellbeing (Knight et al., 2018). In this approach (described in greater detail later in this book), the instructional coach partners with teachers to help them get a broader picture of their classroom, set student-focused goals that matter to teachers, and identify teaching strategies that teachers might implement to achieve their goals (Knight, 2021; Knight et al., 2018; Knight & van Nieuwerburgh, 2012). Sometimes, the teacher knows or has a sense of which strategies they want to use to achieve their goal, and other times the teacher will benefit from suggestions from the coach. Then, together the teacher and coach move adaptively through stages of a coaching cycle until the goal is met.

Instructional coaches have expertise, but they don't *act* like experts; they act like partners engaging in professional dialogue with teachers. Instructional coaches should have a deep understanding of what evidence says about effective instruction, and they need to know how to gather data on student achievement, engagement, and teaching practice. With that said, coaches should share that knowledge only when it is helpful, and when they share it, coaches should take a dialogical approach to interaction. This means coaches don't default to giving advice ("You should use an attention signal like I did when I taught") without allowing clients the opportunity for teachers to explore their own situations and come up with their own solutions. A partnership implies that the partners are on an equal footing. Jim's seven Partnership Principles (Knight, 2007), described in Chapter 5, enable coaches to respect teacher professionalism by humanizing interactions between coaches and teachers and empowering teachers to think for themselves.

**Peer Coaching.** The term *peer coaching* applies to multiple professions and disciplines in which it denotes a reciprocal relationship between two colleagues (Foltos, 2013; Robbins, 2015; Robertson, 2008). In the context of coaching in schools, two educators collaborate with one another in the interest of improving their own and each other's teaching practices. Sometimes peer coaching is informal, with teachers planning lessons together or deciding on changes to classroom practice. This is followed by the new practice being trialed in the classroom before reconvening to reflect and evaluate the success of the lesson plan or new practice. At other times, peer coaching is more formal, with teachers implementing a coaching model, such as the GROWTH Model described in Chapter 6 or a coaching cycle, such as the Impact Cycle, described in Chapter 4 (see also Knight et al., 2025). Whether teachers adopt an informal or a more formal approach to coaching, we suggest that it is helpful for them to receive professional development on the partnership approach described in Chapter 2, the Next-Level Communication Skills described in Chapter 6, and the coaching model or cycle they will be implementing.

Peer coaching is one way of providing cost-effective support for educators to improve their teaching practice in classrooms (Kidd, 2009). Studies have also shown that peer coaching can also enhance the development and wellbeing of both partners (e.g., Robertson, 2008). Both peer coaching and instructional coaching provide nonthreatening, tailored support to teachers that can lead to tangible improvements in classroom practice and, ultimately, student outcomes. Furthermore, both coaching interventions respect the professionalism of educators and encourage experimentation in the classroom with the intention of improving teaching and learning.

## Implementation of Coaching

**Follow-Up Support.** Workshops are an effective way to introduce strategies or ideas to large groups of people, but they rarely lead to deep implementation. The reality is that most people start to forget the details of teaching practices within hours after completing a workshop (sometimes even before the workshop is over), and within 3 days most of what people were taught during a workshop is forgotten. And that small percentage of educators who actually end up implementing new practices usually have to reteach themselves what they learned in the workshop. Implementation coaching provides follow-up support so that teachers are better able to implement new practices effectively.

During implementation support, the coaches act as the memory for the teacher and provide the assistance the teacher needs to effectively implement new practices, and they use many of the elements of instructional coaching to provide that support. For example, coaches providing implementation support might invite teachers to set goals perhaps based on student outcomes or quality of implementation (this could be measured with a checklist). Coaches might explain strategies using checklists to make it easier for teachers to implement and offer opportunities for teachers to see the strategy being implemented by others (see Chapter 4 for suggestions on how this might take place). Coaches might also video record teachers and invite them to review their video with a checklist in hand to identify strengths and areas for improvement. Most likely, too, they would partner with teachers to make adaptations to the strategies so that they are most effective for students and to best take advantage of the teachers' strengths.

The evidence base that supports the use of follow-up coaching continues to grow. In fact, some research studies have found that although training courses may seem time effective, some of these “spray and pray” professional development events actually do more harm than good. In particular, teachers who attend mandated “one-shot” workshops with no follow-up opportunities may find themselves frustrated when they are unable to implement what they were taught (Knight, 2000). Multiple research studies have concluded that, on average, teachers require 30–80 hours of combined instruction, practice, and coaching to master new strategies and skills (Banilower, 2002; French, 1997; Joyce & Showers, 2002; Yoon et al., 2007).

Following a review of the academic literature, Cornett and Knight (2009) concluded that traditional training methods did not lead to changes in classroom practice. Knight (2012) subsequently referred to the “failure of traditional professional development” as a reason for introducing coaching into educational settings. Joyce and Showers (1995), in a seminal study, showed that coaching

can increase implementation of practices learned on training days. Subsequent research by Shidler (2008) underscored a significant positive correlation between the number of hours spent coaching teachers on use of specific practices to achieve intended academic outcomes and student success in reaching these outcomes.

All this suggests that providing coaching to educators who have participated in professional development programs increases the likelihood that they will find ways to apply the new learning to their everyday practice. Not only do teachers stand to benefit from follow-up coaching, but administrative and support staff who have been charged with introducing new technologies, strategies, or ways of working also have much to gain from participating in similar efforts.

## Parents

---

Parents were also a big part of Mark's vision for coaching at Dulwich. Mark told us, "If we have our parents understanding and believing in what we're doing with coaching, it could be massively positive." Mark wanted "parents to see coaching not just as a wishy-washy add-on but actually as a value to a child's learning." Mark was convinced that if parents understood coaching skills and knowledge, it could be really important for the school's culture of coaching." (When we talk about parents, we also include caregivers, community leaders, and other stakeholders who can positively affect the learning experiences of students.)

Mark also said that on a personal basis he wanted to have coaching conversations with parents. Mark explained that asking parents simple questions, like "What's on your mind," "What are your challenges," and "How can I help you overcome that," can improve a conversation with them and help resolve issues. Mark hoped that all teachers would learn how to adopt a coaching approach in conversations with parents.

The idea of using coaching to create connections with parents in the ways that Mark suggested is appealing, and although coaching and parents has received attention recently, the topic remains relatively under-researched (van Nieuwerburgh & Campbell, 2015). We included parents in the Global Framework for two reasons. First, when parents learn how to coach their children, they are often better able to support their children's learning experiences. Second, we can improve the ways in which our schools connect with parents and other stakeholders with appropriate coaching interventions and approaches.

**Parents as Coaches.** Parents and caregivers of students are often better able to support the learning and affective needs of their students by applying

coaching-related skills. Some schools have developed their own parent-as-coach programs in which school-based staff provide parents with coaching education and practice. Parents who have learned and mastered these skills report better relationships with their children and an improved ability to support their learning (Bamford et al., 2012). They not only gain greater insight into coaching approaches and their uses but also become more confident in their ability to support their children's learning (Golawski et al., 2013; Wilson, 2011).

**Using a Coaching Approach in Interactions With Parents.** Some educators have found that they can improve their communication with parents by taking a coaching approach when they talk with parents. Let's be real: There are few conversations more complicated and personal than talking with parents about their children. Taking a coaching approach to interactions with parents, because it is a partnership way of interacting (see Chapter 3), allows educators a chance to communicate that they respect parents' knowledge about their children and parenting. Also, because a coaching approach positions parents as the decision-makers, it can lead to more open and productive dialogue. Overall, when educators take a coaching approach in communicating with parents, they can improve their relationships with parents, especially when the shared interests of all parties (supporting the success and wellbeing of the student) are established at the start of any interaction.

Although we acknowledge the need for further research on these coaching applications, we believe in their potential to build a positive school community and improve school, parent, and community relationships.

## Students

---

Everything Mark does circles around students, so it's not surprising that he would be interested in how coaching could also apply to the children in his school. As he told us, "The last piece in the coaching jigsaw puzzle—what has always been my dream—is to have a school where the children are coaching each other. It could start at a simple level where children who are 6 or 7 have questions that predominantly start with what or how, so they're learning how to question one another and then listen and give feedback. Then we can grow that into more complex things as a children get older. I've seen that work brilliantly with think/pair/share where even 6-year-old children either agree, disagree, or they challenge—and this was at 6 years old. If children can do this on the think/pair/share carpet space, why can't we do it in a classroom environment? So I'm really, really excited about how to do this!" Ultimately, Mark believed, a coaching approach with students will give students a voice in changing what learning can look like.

Although students are at the center of the Global Framework, the benefits they can receive from being coached and learning to be coaches can be overlooked. Researchers have documented the positive effects of such coaching-based interventions on student success and wellbeing (Devine et al., 2013). In one study in the U.K., 16-year-old students received coaching over a 3-year period. Compared to the control group (students who did not receive coaching), these students showed improvements in their examination performance as well as increased levels of hopefulness (Passmore & Brown, 2009). Another study, based in Australian schools, evidenced similar results: Coaching provided by school-based staff led to increased student resilience, wellbeing, and hopefulness (Campbell & Gardner, 2005; Green et al., 2007). A separate Australian study found that 11th-grade students who were coached by teachers demonstrated increases in their academic goal-striving (Green et al., 2013). Finally, two studies conducted in England have suggested that coaching can have a positive impact on young people categorized as “at risk” (Pritchard & van Nieuwerburgh, 2016; Robson-Kelly & van Nieuwerburgh, 2016). Overall, the growing body of research in this area gives us reason to be hopeful about the positive effects of providing coaching directly to students in our schools.

Additional studies have concluded that students who are trained and given the opportunity to coach other students also experience positive outcomes, including enhanced communication skills, improved problem-solving abilities, and increased levels of confidence in finding solutions (van Nieuwerburgh et al., 2012). In a related mixed-methods study, 17- to 18-year-old high school students were trained to become coaches. After these novice coaches coached other students in their school, the researchers found evidence of increases in their emotional intelligence scores. The newly trained student coaches also reported improvements in their study skills, self-confidence, communication skills, and relationships with others (van Nieuwerburgh & Tong, 2013).

Peer coaching has also shown positive effects on elementary-age children (Briggs & van Nieuwerburgh, 2012). In an earlier study, Briggs and van Nieuwerburgh (2010) found that elementary-school children could learn some peer coaching skills, even at the ages of 9–11. In a follow-up study, children were able to reflect on the reasons why they were more likely to accept feedback from some people than others (Dorrington & van Nieuwerburgh, 2015). Although the use of coaching in elementary-school settings requires further research, initial findings are encouraging.

## Structure of the Book

---

The 10 chapters that make up this book are organized around three parts. Part 1 provides definitional clarity and a broad overview of the field by explaining what coaching is and exploring its application in educational settings. Part 2 focuses on the importance of adopting a coaching approach as a leader, providing key principles, positive approach theories, and relevant conversational skills. Part 3 provides practical ideas for how you can support coaching initiatives in your educational settings. Following are brief descriptions of each chapter.

### Part 1: The Potential of Coaching in Education

1. **Toward Ideal Environments for Learning:** This opening chapter shares an inspiring vision of what coaching can provide for educational settings. The Global Framework for Coaching in Education provides a broad conceptual framework and context for coaching in schools.
2. **Telling Versus Partnering:** This chapter explores the distinctions between using a telling approach or a partnering approach in your work as a leader. In particular, we stress how partnering fosters collaboration and mutual respect, leading to more effective and empowering conversations.
3. **The GROWTH Model:** This chapter outlines a conversational framework that provides the basis for many coaching programs in educational institutions.
4. **Ensuring the Success of Instructional Coaching:** This chapter provides an overview of instructional coaching, exploring its role in enhancing teaching practices and improving student outcomes and wellbeing.

### Part 2: Understanding the Coaching Approach

5. **The Partnership Principles:** This chapter explores Jim's Partnership Principles, emphasizing collaboration and respect between coaches and educators to foster effective professional development.
6. **Next-Level Communication Skills:** This chapter delves into advanced conversational skills that leaders can use to foster meaningful dialogue and effective coaching relationships within their teams.
7. **Positive Approaches to Coaching:** In this chapter, we explore positive, strength-based approaches that support personal, professional, and organizational growth. In particular, the solution-focused approach that underpins the GROWTH Model is ideally suited for use in educational contexts.

### Part 3: Supporting Coaching in Your Educational Context

- 8. How Leaders Create Schools That Coach:** This chapter offers strategic and practical ideas for how to develop and sustain a coaching culture.
- 9. Leading With a Coaching Approach:** This chapter considers how all members of the school community can apply a coaching approach to their conversations in a manner that supports both individual and organizational growth. Readers are introduced to the concept of GROWTH talk, a conversational approach to supporting the learning and development of others in everyday situations.
- 10. Putting It All Together:** The final chapter reviews the main concepts covered in the book, highlighting the importance of wellbeing and ongoing reflective practice. It presents a vision of the contribution that coaching can make in schools.

## Conclusion

---

We hope that this brief overview of the Global Framework for Coaching in Education helped clarify your thinking about how coaching can be used to support not only yourself but also your staff, students, and other stakeholders. The evidence base in support of coaching in education is impressive; in addition, we (the authors) have long observed its numerous, positive effects in schools we have partnered with around the globe. We've also learned that educational leaders' engagement with coaching can be pivotal in defining and shifting the culture of schools. In fact, one recent research study underlines the critical role leaders play in the experience of educators who report that they are flourishing at work (Rehal & van Nieuwerburgh, 2022).

### To Sum Up

The Global Framework for Coaching in Education is a simple model that can be used to plan and organize coaching in four areas:

**Leaders:** School leaders can have executive coaches to help them navigate the challenges of leading schools, or they can learn to coach or take a coaching approach as a part of their leadership practice.

**Teachers:** Teachers can be coached by instructional coaches who help them implement and achieve powerful changes in student learning,

outcomes, or wellbeing, or they can engage in peer coaching, working with a colleague to improve their teaching practice.

**Parents:** Educators can enhance the quality of their conversations with parents by taking a coaching approach to conversations with parents, and parents can improve the quality of their conversations with their children by adopting a coaching approach.

**Students:** Educators can have a positive impact on student success by coaching students, and students can learn important skills by learning how to coach each other.

## Going Deeper

Our two organizations, the ICG and GCI, offer courses on all four portals described by the Global Framework for Coaching in Education, so if you're interested in learning more about professional development for you or your colleagues, please look into our websites. Additionally, in combination, our two websites offer hundreds of free resources related to coaching in education.

### Instructional Coaching Group

<https://www.instructionalcoaching.com>

### Growth Coaching International

<https://www.growthcoaching.com.au>

## Making It Real

As you read this book, you may find it helpful to think about, as Mark did, your vision for what you hope coaching can be in your school or what you hope to achieve by reading this book. Toward that end, you may find it helpful to start a learning journal to capture your thoughts as you read. Finally, to frame your reading, consider jotting down your answers to the questions that follow before getting into the next chapter.

- What do you hope to learn by reading this book?
- What is your current view of coaching?
- How would you define “coaching in education” in one sentence?
- What type of leader are you striving to be?
- What type of leader does your school require?
- What would convince you that reading this book was a good use of your time?

# IDEAL ENVIRONMENTS FOR LEARNING

↓  
IS ABOUT

↓  
realizing the full  
potential of  
coaching in schools

↓  
THROUGH  
COACHING FOR

←  
**Leaders**

- being coached
- coaching others

↓  
**Teachers**

- instructional coaching
- peer coaching

↓  
**Students**

- being coached
- coaching each other

→  
**Parents**

- as coaches
- experiencing a coaching approach