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Partnership

Partnership

is about

the theory behind impact schools

that recognizes the complexity of

helping

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identity

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status

motivation

that is grounded in

principles

equality

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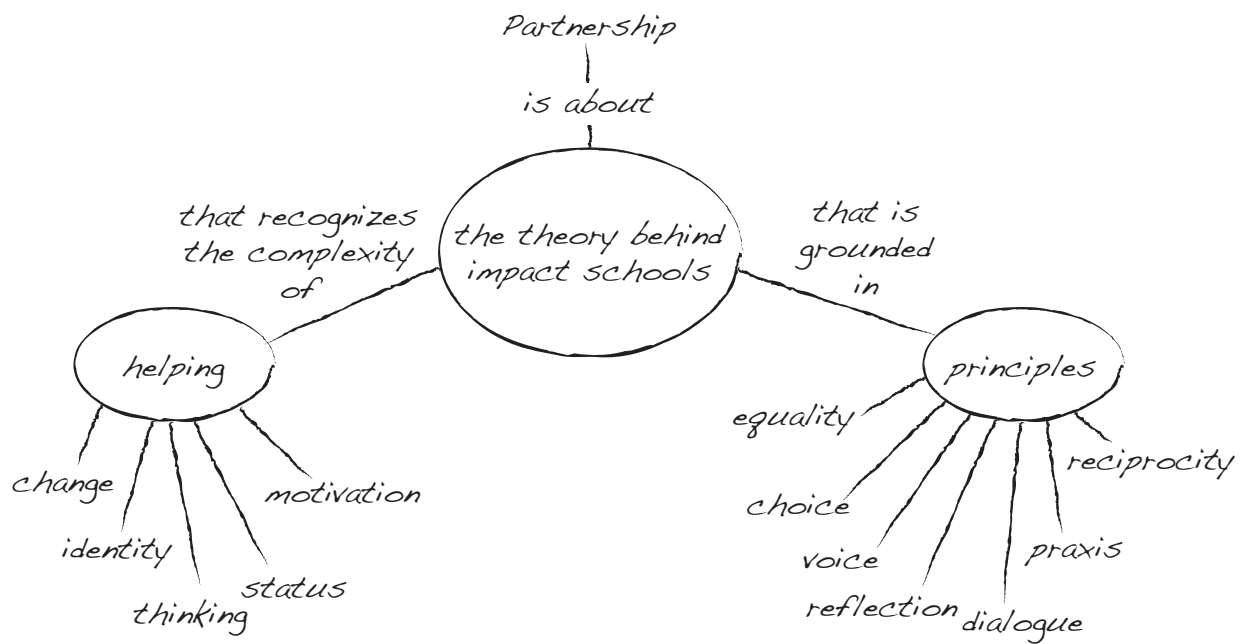Du001uring one of our instructional coaching institutes at the Kansas Coaching Project, a charming, warm-hearted leader from a struggling inner-city school said what many people have said to me in one way or another over the years:

> We can't wait. Our kids need to do better today. We can't wait to be nice to teachers. We can't do all this touchy-feely, listening stuff. Our teachers need to get better now. Or they need to be gone. Because our kids deserve better.

I am moved by her passion and her love for the children in her district, and I wholeheartedly agree that every student deserves nothing less than excellent instruction every day in every classroom. I also realize that instructional improvement would be much easier if we could just give teachers a script to follow. But teachers are not workers on assembly lines, and they are not working with inanimate objects. Teachers are living, breathing, complicated professionals, and they work with living, breathing, complicated young human beings. To bring about the improvements we hope to see, we need to recognize—in fact, honor—the complexity of providing support within professional relationships.

Professional learning fails when change leaders underestimate how complicated change can be. Just telling people what to do and expecting them to do it might work for simple tasks like stocking shelves in a grocery store, but such an approach is seldom motivating or effective for professionals. In education, effective professional learning must be grounded in an understanding of how complex helping relationships can be. Failing to understand the nature of helping relationships can doom leaders of change.

This chapter introduces five factors that are at play in almost all helping relationships—change, identity, thinking, status, and motivation. Additionally, the chapter introduces the seven partnership principles, the theoretical framework behind Impact Schools, and a simple response to the complexity of helping.

Helping Others

Change

James Prochaska and his colleagues (Prochaska, Norcross, & DiClemente, 1994) at the University of Rhode Island have conducted more than 55 clinical studies of more than 1,000 people attempting to

make major changes in their lives. Their findings have contributed greatly to our understanding of how people experience change. According to the researchers, change involves six stages:

1. Pre-contemplation, when we are unaware of our need for change;

2. Contemplation, when we weigh the advantages and disadvantages of changing to a new way of doing something;

3. Preparation, when we prepare to implement a change;

4. Action, when we implement a change;

5. Maintenance, where we sustain our implementation plan; and

6. Termination, when we are no longer changing because we have completed the change process.

Change leaders are often most troubled by the researchers' findings about precontemplation. According to Prochaska and his colleagues (Prochaska et al., 1994), many people are simply unaware that they need to change. Quoting G. K. Chesteron in their book, the authors highlight the precontemplative's predicament: "It isn't that they can't see the solution. It is that they can't see the problem" (p. 40). Precontemplators, Prochaska and colleagues comment, "love denial . . . Despite all evidence to the contrary, they can't admit to their problems" (p. 83). Most of us, I suspect, are precontemplative about some aspect of our behavior.

In our study of teachers and coaches, we also see plenty of evidence to support the suggestion that teachers can be precontemplative. Educators, like everyone else, can be blissfully unaware of their own need to improve. As a result, when teachers watch video recordings of themselves, they are often shocked to see that the way they teach or coach bears little resemblance to how they imagine it to be. For example, when they watch recordings of themselves teaching, teachers who believe they are very positive can be shocked to discover that they correct students six times as much as they praise them. Similarly, coaches who think they are excellent listeners, realize, after they watch recordings of themselves coaching, that they talk 90 percent of the time.

I have had this experience. When I have watched video recordings of myself interacting during meetings or discussing home renovations with my wife (yes, I really have recorded such a conversations with Jenny!), I have been shocked and, in truth, ashamed to see how

frequently I interrupt, how poorly I listen. Watching myself on video feels like hearing my voice on a recording—multiplied to the power of 10. Change leaders need to recognize that the teachers with whom they work often do not see what everyone else sees.

> **A Simple Truth About Helping:** People often do not know that they need help.

Status

When two people come together to discuss professional practice, there is always the possibility that issues of status will arise. Edgar Schein makes this case in his book *Helping: How to Offer, Give, and Receive Help* (2009):

> All human relationships are about status positioning and what sociologists call "situational proprieties." It is human to want to be granted the status and position that we feel we deserve, no matter how high or low it might be, and we want to do what is situationally appropriate. We are either trying to get ahead or stay even, and we measure all interactions by how much we have lost or gained. (p. xi)

According to Schein, we feel a conversation has been successful if we are given the status we think we deserve.

> When a conversation has not been equitable we sometimes feel offended. That usually means that the value we have claimed for ourselves has not been acknowledged, or that the other person or persons did not realize who we were or how important our communication was. (p. 30)

Schein cites Thomas Harris, who suggests that when we interact with others, we have the choice to act as a "child," "adult," or a "parent." "In general, if the helper acts parental, the client may feel patronized; if the helper takes on the role of the child, the client is confused and wonders if the roles need to be reversed" (p. 25). Schein suggests that helping is "optimally an adult-to-adult activity" (p. 25).

The subtle dance of roles and status is at play whenever a teacher and coach or principal come together to discuss instruction. The very act of helping, Schein says, puts the helper "one up" in a relationship, and because a teacher most likely does not want to be "one down" in the relationship, he or she may resist a coach's suggestions just to retain equal status. Schein, again, describes this situation well:

> Helping situations are intrinsically unbalanced and role-ambiguous. Emotionally and socially, when you ask for help you are putting yourself "one down." It is a temporary loss of status and self-esteem not to know what to do next or to be unable to do it. It is a loss of independence to have someone else advise you, heal you, minister to you, help you up, support you, even serve you. (p. 32)

At the Kansas Coaching Project, we see the impact of status in coaching relationships when we watch video recordings of coaches and teachers interacting. Effective coaches intuitively recognize that they need to, as Schein says, "equalibrate" the relationship, so they are quick to downplay their own status and elevate the teacher, congratulating the teacher on their skill, calling attention to their collaborating teacher's insights during conversation, and downplaying their own skill and success. Skillful coaches use a variety of subtle communication strategies to create equality between themselves and their collaborating teachers.

> **A Simple Truth About Helping:**
> If people feel "one down," they will resist help.

Identity

A third factor complicating helping relationships is the way our understanding of who we are, our identity, is intimately connected with the work we do. As we move through the day-to-day ambiguities of our lives, experiencing the inevitable joys and frustrations, we have to make sense of our experiences. Our days are filled with successes and failures, positive and negative interactions, and over time we create our own story of why life occurs the way it does. Douglas Stone, Bruce Patton, Sheila Heen, and Roger Fisher from the Harvard Negotiation Project, suggest that three identity issues are particularly common: "Am I competent?" "Am I a good person?" and "Am I worthy of love?" (2000, p. 112).

Our understanding of how good and competent we are is frequently tied to our success or failure in our work. In schools, this means that teachers' identities are wrapped up in how they perceive their ability to teach. As Parker Palmer has commented, "No matter how technical my subject may be, the things I teach are things I care about—and what I care about helps define my selfhood" (1998, p. 17).

For many of us, whether in the classroom, in our homes, or in society, our stories about ourselves can be biased slightly in our favor. Consequently, in our minds—we are more often the hero than the villain. We invest a great deal of psychic energy explaining why we are

not at fault in a particular situation. In order to protect their self-esteem, their identity, many teachers over time may develop stories that explain why they are not achieving their goals. Of course, some or all of the stories might be true—students lack motivation, the curriculum is impossible to implement, there are too many distractions, the class size is too large, the parents should be more involved in their children's learning—but the most important issue is that the stories we create as we develop our identity become very important in our understanding of who we are in the world. Thus if we comment on how a person teaches, we are saying something that will likely be taken personally.

A conversation someone has with me about how I teach is much more than a talk about some abstract technical skill—like how to program a DVR. A conversation about how I teach brings me face to face with who I am as person. Stone, Patton, Heen, and Fisher have written about the anxieties we might feel when we participate in conversations that threaten our identity:

> Our anxiety results not just from having to face the other person, but from having to face *ourselves.* The conversation has the potential to disrupt our sense of who we are in the world, or to highlight what we hope we are but fear we are not. The conversation poses a threat to our identity—the story we tell ourselves about ourselves— and having our identity threatened can be profoundly disturbing. (2000, pp. 112–113)

A Simple Truth About Helping:
Criticism is taken personally.

Thinking

Thomas Davenport (2005) has described the attributes of knowledge workers, professionals who use their knowledge, skills, strategies, and brainpower to do their work. Knowledge workers, Davenport tells us, are people who think for a living. Clearly, a teacher teaching 32 children, who is trying to be clear, to keep each student engaged, and to gauge how well each student is learning, is a prime example of a knowledge worker.

In his book *Thinking for a Living* Davenport reports on interviews and surveys he has conducted to identify the attributes of knowledge workers. "One important characteristic of knowledge workers," he reports,

> is that they don't like to be told what to do. Thinking for a living engenders thinking for oneself. Knowledge workers are paid for their education, experience, and expertise, so it is not surprising that they take offense when someone else rides roughshod over their intellectual territory. (p. 15)

These findings are not surprising. One of the most rewarding aspects of work is tackling challenging problems. People enjoy the chance to use their brains to invent an elegant solution to a thorny problem. Work that is at an appropriate level of challenge (not so easy as to be boring, not so challenging as to cause frustration) is a central part of a meaningful career (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990), so trying to take the thinking out of teaching runs the risk of removing much of the joy as well.

One way to test out Davenport's (2005) ideas is to consider your own work. What would your response be if you were given a script to follow each day, if you were told exactly what to do hour by hour, and indeed, you were watched to ensure that you did what you were supposed to do? My guess is you wouldn't like it; indeed, you might vigorously resist any attempt at reducing the complexity of your work. Of course, today, many teachers are confronted with scripts and pacing guides that they are told to follow to the letter, along with other well-intentioned but problematic models for change. Not surprisingly, when the thinking is taken out of teaching, teachers resist.

> **A Simple Truth About Helping:**
> If someone else does all the thinking for them, people will resist.

Motivation

Imagine that a man, let's call him Rocky, reads an article about a new diet in an airline magazine as he flies home. Concerned about his weight, Rocky becomes engrossed in the article, and by the time the plane lands, he has decided that he will adopt the diet. On the way home, he stops at his local Whole Foods store, picks up all the right foods for the diet, and takes them home, looking forward to his new, healthier way of living.

Now, imagine that a second person, let's call him T-Bone, flies on the same plane and reads the same magazine. T-Bone also becomes engrossed in the writing about the new diet, but he is interested for different reasons. Concerned about his wife's weight, T-Bone decides this diet is exactly what she needs. On the way home, T-Bone stops at the same store, buys the same food, and brings it home to his unsuspecting wife, telling her that he has discovered the perfect diet for her.

Who do you think is more likely to stick with the diet, Rocky or T-Bone's wife? What the research on motivation says is that Rocky has a much better chance of success because he has chosen the goal. I suspect we probably don't need research to figure this one out. Indeed, some of us might worry that T-Bone could be in some trouble for showing up with such a plan. Goals that others choose for us seldom motivate us to change.

In *Drive: The Surprising Truth About What Motivates Us* (2009), Daniel Pink makes the same point. After reviewing hundreds of research articles about motivation and goals, Pink concludes that "Goals that people set for themselves and that are devoted to attaining mastery are usually healthy. But goals imposed by others—sales targets, quarterly reports, standardized test scores, and so on—can sometimes have dangerous side effects" (p. 50).

Pink describes many of the dangerous side effects of simplistic forms of goal setting and motivation. Traditional motivation, he says, "wasn't exactly ennobling. It suggested that, in the end, human beings aren't much different from horses—that the way to get us moving in the right direction is by dangling a crunchier carrot or wielding a sharper stick" (pp. 19–20).

In the research literature, Pink finds ample evidence to show that traditional forms of motivation, using extrinsic rewards, can make things worse. For example, he cites Deci's meta-analysis of 128 research studies showing that rewards decrease intrinsic motivation. He also cites Russian economist Anton Suvorov's conclusions, which, as Pink states, "make sense to any parent who's tried to get her kids to empty the garbage . . . By offering a reward, a principal signals to the agent that the task is undesirable" (p. 54).

The Seven Deadly Flaws of Extrinsic Rewards According to Daniel Pink

1. They can extinguish intrinsic motivation.
2. They can diminish performance.
3. They can crush creativity.
4. They can crowd out good behavior.
5. They can encourage cheating, shortcuts, and unethical behavior.
6. They can become addictive.
7. They can foster short-term thinking. (2009, p. 59)

Pink adds another layer distinguishing between "algorithmic" and "heuristic" work. Drawing on the findings of behavioral scientists, he explains that "An algorithmic task is one in which you follow a set of established instructions down a single pathway to one conclusion. That is, there's an algorithm for solving it" (p. 29). In contrast, "A heuristic task is the opposite. Precisely because no algorithm exists for it, you have to experiment with possibilities and devise a novel solution" (p. 29).

Researchers, such as Teresa Amabile at Harvard Business School, have found that while rewards work well for algorithmic tasks, they can be, as Pink notes, "devastating for heuristic ones" (p. 30) since they reduce intrinsic motivation and the value people assign to each task. People need to receive equitable payment for their work, of course, but beyond that, professionals doing non-routine work are usually motivated in other ways.

According to Pink, three factors especially motivate people doing heuristic work: mastery, autonomy, and purpose. First, people doing complex work are motivated by the feeling they get by doing a job well. Indeed the ongoing pursuit of mastery is an important part of a professional's motivation. Second, to accomplish mastery, people need to have the freedom to choose their goals and how to achieve them. Autonomy, Pink suggests, "appears to be a human concept rather than a western one . . . Even in high-poverty non-Western locales like Bangladesh, social scientists have found that autonomy is something that people seek and that improves their lives" (p. 90). Finally, people are motivated by doing work that makes a difference. When all is said and done, most of us want to make an impact. Mihalyi Csikszentmihalyi, quoted by Pink, puts it this way: "One cannot lead a life that is truly excellent without feeling that one belongs to something greater and more permanent than oneself" (p. 143).

If we pay no attention to the importance of mastery, autonomy, and purpose for the professionals in our schools, if we assume we simply need to prescribe to teachers what they need to do and then hold them accountable to do it, we trample over much of what we scientists have learned about motivation. We do so, it must be added, at our peril.

A Simple Truth About Helping: People aren't motivated by other people's goals.

Five Simple Truths About Helping

1. People often do not know that they need help.
2. If people feel "one down," they will resist help.
3. Criticism is taken personally.
4. If someone else does all the thinking for them, people will resist.
5. People aren't motivated by other people's goals.

When administrators, coaches, and teachers set out to improve instruction, they are up against a formidable challenge: how to help in a way that makes an impact and still respectfully acknowledge the complexities of helping. I propose a simple solution: we should take the partnership approach and treat adults like adults. The rest of this chapter describes what an adult to adult conversation looks like.

Partnership: The Theory Behind Impact Schools

At its core, the partnership approach is about a simple idea: treat others the way you would like to be treated. You can get an understanding of the partnership approach by considering how you would answer a simple question: "If someone was talking with you about your work, how would you like them to relate to you?" Chances are you would want them to treat you as an equal, to respect your knowledge enough to let you make some decisions about how you do your work. You would probably also want them to ask your opinion and listen to your voice, to talk with you in a way that encouraged thought and dialogue about your real-life experience. If they also demonstrated that they expected to learn from you, it would probably make it all the more likely that you would listen to them.

The partnership approach embodies all of the above ideas expressed in seven simple principles: (1) equality, (2) choice, (3) voice, (4) reflection, (5) dialogue, (6) praxis, and (7) reciprocity. These principles represent the theory that underlies professional learning in Impact Schools. I use the term *theory* here as it is defined in the *Oxford English Dictionary*, a "systematic conception or statement of the principles of something." Further, William Isaacs has described the important role that theory can play in shaping our actions:

> When we undertake any task, like run a meeting, negotiate an agreement, discipline a child—even meditate—we operate from a set of taken-for-granted rules or ideas of how to be effective. Understanding these tacit rules is what I mean by *theory*. The word *theory* comes from the same roots as the word *theater*, which means simply "to see." A theory is a way of seeing . . . Without a theory, however—some way to assess what is happening—we shall be forever doomed to operate blindly, subject to chance. (1999, p. 73)

This approach is an extension of ideas first suggested in the fields of education, business, psychology, philosophy of science, and

cultural anthropology in the work of authors such as Freire (1970), Eisler (1988), Fullan (1993), Block (1993), Schein (2010), Senge (1990), Bernstein (1983), Isaacs (1999), Showkeir, Showkeir, & Wheatley (2008), Wheatley (2002) and Rifkin (2009). The partnership principles, described below, stand at the heart of professional learning in Impact Schools.

Equality: Professional Learning With Teachers Rather Than Training Done to Teachers

There is a delightful scene in the movie *Il Postino,* a film about Pablo Neruda's stay on the island of Capri while he was politically exiled from Chile. In the film, Neruda has a conversation about poetry with the young man who delivers his mail—the postman who is the focus of the film. It is hard to imagine a more unequal situation: Neruda the great poet—Gabriel Garcia Marquez called him the greatest poet of the 20th century in *any* language—and the postman who barely has basic literacy. However, they have a delightful conversation that embodies the principle of equality.

What strikes me about the scene is the respectful way that the poet interacts with the young man. The postman struggles to find words, stumbling and apologizing his way through the conversation. However, Neruda's every word and action encourages the postman to speak. Despite the profound difference in their knowledge about poetry, Neruda gives all of his attention to the postman. Sitting on a beach, Neruda turns his body toward the postman, listens with great care and empathy, encourages him, and treats him like an equal. Neruda, too, is rewarded because the conversation is joyful, thought provoking, and warm hearted. After their talk, both partners are encouraged, happy, and closer to being friends.

People who embrace the principle of equality see others, as Neruda does in this scene, as having equal value. They listen to everyone with the same care and attention. The superintendent, the experienced teacher, the para-professional, the new teacher one day out of college, the principal—all receive the partnership facilitator's full attention.

Equality is central within any partnership. Partners do not decide for each other; they decide together. In a true partnership, one partner does not tell the other what to do; they discuss, dialogue, and then decide together. Partners realize that they are one half of a whole, and in healthy partnerships they find that they are a lot smarter when they listen to their partner . . . when they recognize their partner as an equal.

Peter Block's Four Requirements of Partnership

In his seminal book about partnership relationships in organizations, *Stewardship,* Peter Block (1993) identified four requirements for a partnership.

Exchange of Purpose

Partnership means each of us at every level is responsible for defining vision and values. Purpose gets defined through dialogue. Let people at every level communicate about what they want to create, with each person having to make a declaration. (p. 29)

Right to Say No

Partners each have a right to say no. Saying no is the fundamental way we have of differentiating ourselves. To take away my right to say no is to claim sovereignty over me. For me to believe that I cannot say no is to yield sovereignty. (pp. 29–30)

Joint Accountability

Each person is responsible for outcomes and the current situation. There is no one else to blame . . . if people want the freedom that partnership offers, the price of that freedom is to take personal accountability for the success and failure of our unit and our community. (p. 30)

Absolute Honesty

In a partnership, not telling the truth to each other is an act of betrayal. One of the benefits of redistributing power is that people feel less vulnerable and are more honest. (pp. 30–31)

Close to half a century ago, Paulo Freire (1970) described the importance of equality and partnership in learning, emphasizing that education should be "cointentional." "Authentic education is not carried on by 'A' *for* 'B' or *by* 'A' *about* 'B,' but rather by 'A' *with* 'B'" (p. 82). For Freire, an educator's goals,

from the outset . . . must coincide with those of the students to engage in critical thinking and the quest for mutual humanization. His effort must be imbued with a profound trust in men and their creative power. To achieve this, he must be a partner of the students in his relations with them. (p. 62)

Educators who embrace the principle of equality recognize that in a partnership, the goal is not to win the other side over to their view. Rather, the goal is to find a match between what they have to offer and what a teacher can use. In the truest sense, if a teacher does not agree with our view of the world or our perspective, in a partnership, the first step is not to argue our point more persuasively, but to try to fully understand the collaborating teacher's.

Choice: Teachers Should Have Choice Regarding What and How They Learn

In a partnership, one individual does not make decisions for another. Because partners are equal, they make their own choices and make decisions collaboratively. Indeed, choice is essential for a fully realized life because it is through choices that we make decisions about what we do and who we are. As Freire (1970) states, "freedom . . . is the indispensable condition for the quest for human completion . . . without freedom [we] cannot exist authentically" (p. 31). Similarly Peter Block (1993) emphasizes the primacy of choice: "Partners each have a right to say no. Saying no is the fundamental way we have of differentiating ourselves. To take away my right to say no is to claim sovereignty over me . . . If we cannot say no, then saying yes has no meaning (pp. 30–31). Without freedom to choose, we are doomed to live someone else's life.

In *The Art of Choosing*, Columbia University professor Sheena Iyengar reviews several studies and concludes that "the desire to choose is . . . a natural drive . . . so great that it becomes not merely a means to an end but something intrinsically valuable and necessary" (2010, p. 10).

Iyengar draws on Eric Fromm to clarify our understanding of choice. In *Escape From Freedom* (1941), Fromm indentifies two important parts of freedom (and by extension, choice). First, freedom is often understood as freedom from something. For example, freedom can be "freedom from the political, economic, and spiritual shackles that have bound men" (cited in Iyengar, 2010, p. 63). There is a second aspect of freedom, however, and that is "freedom to." For Fromm, freedom to refers to our own ability to achieve a goal or desired outcome. Iyengar writes of this distinction that

"Freedom from" and "freedom to" don't always go together, but one must be free in both senses to obtain full benefit from

choice. A child must be *allowed* to have a cookie, but he won't get it if he can't reach the cookie jar high on a shelf. (p. 36)

Both "freedom from" and "freedom to" are essential conditions for realizing our authentic selves, but such freedom of choice is rarely seen in modern organizations. Peter Block has observed that

> In some ways we are a nation profoundly conflicted about what we believe. We live with political institutions that celebrate the rights of individuals to express themselves, to assemble, to pursue happiness and individual purposes, to pick their own political leaders. We pay enormous attention to the rights and procedures of due process. At times we seem to be on the edge of anarchy and yet we tenaciously cling to our political beliefs and rituals with all their flaws and contradictions. Yet when we enter the factory door or the lobby or the business cathedrals in our major cities, we leave our belief in democratic principles in the car. The halls and chambers of these buildings have flourished on a very different set of beliefs and rituals . . . In the case of most corporations the beginning line is, "I believe in Compliance . . ." (1993, pp. xii–xiii)

When considering the complexity of helping, there are even more reasons why offering meaningful choices is important. For example, Daniel Pink (2009) explains that people are rarely motivated when they have little choice or autonomy. Similarly, Thomas Davenport (2005) notes that knowledge workers resist change initiatives when they are not offered choices because choice is so central to reflection. This view is echoed in Edgar Schein (2010), who pointed out that people resist various forms of assistance when change leaders put themselves "one up" by telling people what to do without offering choices. Practically speaking, failing to provide real choice in helping relationships is a recipe for disaster.

What does this mean in schools? Is everyone free to choose whatever they wish at all times? Can a teacher choose to just stop learning? Can a teacher choose to have low expectations for students or to treat students with a lack of respect? Aren't there times when an entire school needs to join together to implement practices schoolwide? Is it best if everyone just does what they please at all times?

Clearly, complete freedom is not the solution. Total choice, without structure, would likely lead to total, unproductive chaos. Imagine, for example, what would happen if all the signal lights went dead

in New York City. Drivers would be free to drive without restriction since there were no lights signaling them to stop and go. The absence of the restriction of lights signaling stop and go, however, would actually limit each driver's freedom since a snarling traffic jam would likely bring traffic to a stop.

Barry Schwartz, in *The Paradox of Choice,* deepens our understanding of choice, and the need for form to structure choice, by arguing that too much choice is not desirable. "Choice is essential to autonomy," Schwartz writes, "which is absolutely fundamental to well-being" (2004, p. 3). Indeed, according to Schwartz,

> When people have no choice, life is almost unbearable . . . But as the number of choices keeps growing, negative aspects of having a multitude of options begin to appear. As the number of choices grows further, the negatives escalate until we become overloaded. At this point, choice no longer liberates, but debilitates. It might even be said to tyrannize. (p. 2)

Schwartz's main point is that too many choices can contribute to "bad decisions, to anxiety, stress, and dissatisfaction—even depression" (p .3). Anyone who has sat through a poorly organized planning session where everyone speaks but nothing is resolved knows that choice without structure or form is not the kind of freedom we want. But form without choice is oppressive. What is needed for choice to flourish is a structure that reconciles freedom and form.

The solution is to create structures that provide focus for human experiences, while respecting the autonomy of each individual. Schwartz suggests that we should "learn to love constraints . . . to view limits on the possibilities we face as liberating not constraining" (p. 235). Iyengar makes exactly the same point by urging us

> to look to those who have shown how constraints create their own beauty and freedom. Inventors and artists and musicians have long known the value of putting constraints on choice. They work within forms and strictures and rules, many of which they break only to establish new boundaries, sometimes even tighter ones. (2010, p. 213)

Iyengar supports her assertion by including an interview she conducted with the jazz great and Pulitzer Prize-winning composer Wynton Marsalis, who describes how the freedom of jazz exists within form: "You need to have some restrictions in jazz. Anyone can improvise with no restrictions, but that's not jazz. Jazz always has

some restrictions. Otherwise, it might sound like noise" (p. 214). The ability to improvise, he said, comes from fundamental knowledge and this knowledge "limits the choices you can make and will make. Knowledge is always important where there's a choice" (p. 214).

Productivity guru Scott Belsky (2010) makes the same point. Form, in the structure of constraints on creativity, he proposes, is essential for getting things done.

> Constraints—whether they are deadlines, budgets, or highly specific creative briefs—help us manage our energy and execute ideas. While our creative side intuitively seeks freedom and openness—the blue sky projects—our productivity desperately requires restrictions.

Choice stands at the heart of Impact Schools, but choice occurs within a structure. Much of the rest of this book articulates how freedom and form co-exist, indeed how meaningful choice can only occur within a structure.

Voice: Professional Learning Should Empower and Respect the Voices of Teachers

If partners are equal, if they choose what they do and do not do, they should be free to say what they think, and their opinions should count. For that reason, those taking the partnership approach recognize that professional learning needs to value the opinions of all participants, not just those of the change leader. In fact, learning is significantly limited unless everyone's voice is encouraged and heard.

When we take the partnership approach, we create opportunities for people to express their own points of view. This means that a primary benefit of partnership is that everyone gets a chance to learn from others because others share what they know. In partnership workshops, for example, all participants have the freedom to express their opinions about the content being covered. Similarly, during partnership coaching conversations, the coach creates a setting where collaborating teachers feel comfortable saying what they think. We hear the real truth when we engage in a real partnership conversation.

To encourage people to share their thoughts honestly, change leaders taking the partnership approach often adopt a method aptly summarized in Stephen Covey's (1989) phrase, "seek first to understand, then be understood." Thus, they enter into conversations by asking

questions, and they wait for others to say what they think. By temporarily setting aside their own opinions so they can really hear what others have to say, change leaders powerfully demonstrate that they truly value their colleagues' perspectives. When we empathetically listen to others' ideas, thoughts, and concerns, we communicate that others' lives are important and meaningful.

When leaders do not honor teachers' voices, however, telling them to implement step-by-step programs or practices without asking for their thoughts or suggestions, they communicate the message that they do not trust teachers to think for themselves. To silence the voices of teachers by asking for compliance (just follow the script) rather than ideas and feedback is dehumanizing—treating teachers like objects rather than thinking creative professionals. "Every prescription," Freire explains, "represents the imposition of one man's choice upon another, transforming the consciousness of the man prescribed to into one that conforms with the prescriber's consciousness" (1970, p. 31).

Parker Palmer and Teachers Finding Their Voice

Parker Palmer's *The Courage to Teach* (1998) celebrates the importance of teachers finding their voice. Here are a few of his most important thoughts:

> The salvation of this human world lies nowhere else than in the human heart, in the human power to reflect, in human meekness and in human responsibility. (p. 20)

> Any authentic call ultimately comes from the voice of the *teacher within*, the voice that invites me to honor the nature of my true self. (p. 29)

> Authority is granted to people who are perceived as authoring their own words, their own actions, their own lives, rather than playing a scripted role at great remove from their own hearts. When teachers depend on the coercive powers of law or technique, they have no authority at all. (p. 33)

Teachers often feel silenced when they are told to implement scripted programs right off the shelf exactly as they are written. However, we do not have to share effective practices that way. Tools that empower teachers to be more organized, to connect with more students, and to prompt thought and mastery can help teachers find their voice in the classroom.

I had this experience when I started out as a teacher at Humber College in Toronto, where I was coached by Dee LaFrance, a wonderful, incredibly kind-hearted teacher. Dee, partnering with me, taught me how to implement *The Sentence Writing Strategy* (Schumaker, 1985) a "scripted" program. When coaching me, even though I was a brand-new teacher, Dee always sought my opinions and listened to my thoughts and concerns.

Through our conversations and by watching Dee model lessons in my classroom, I learned about the importance of scaffolded lessons, formative assessment, modeling, constructive feedback, and perhaps most important, the necessity of always holding high expectations for students. With Dee's help, trying out what she shared, I started to find my voice as a teacher, and those early coaching session shape my teaching practice today. Indeed, I was so affected by the power of the tools that Dee shared that in 1992 I moved to study with the strategy developers at the University of Kansas Center for Research on Learning, where I continue to work more than two decades later.

Parker Palmer has written beautifully about the importance of teachers finding their voice. "Any authentic call," he writes, "comes from the voice of the teacher within, the voice that invites me to honor the nature of my true self" (1998, p. 29). According to Palmer, silencing teachers and telling them what to do splits their "personhood" from their "practice," cutting them off from what matters most, "the human power to reflect, in human meekness and in human responsibility" (p. 31).

By contrast, to put another person at the heart of the conversation, by asking questions, listening, and respectfully providing powerful tools, provides an opportunity for people to find their voice. Covey (1989) puts it this way: "The more deeply you understand other people, the more you appreciate them, the more reverent you will feel about them. To touch the soul of another human being is to walk on sacred ground."

Reflection: Reflection Is an Integral Part of Professional Learning

When we take the partnership approach, we don't tell others what to believe; we respect our partners' professionalism and provide them with enough information so that they can make their own decisions. Partners don't do the thinking for their partners. Rather, they empower

their partners to do the thinking. Reflection stands at the heart of the partnership approach, but it is only possible when people have the freedom to accept or reject what they are learning as they see fit.

Influenced by the writing of Donald Schön (1991) and Joellen Killion, (Killion & Todnem, 1991), I have come to see reflection as occurring in three ways: *looking back, looking at,* and *looking ahead*. When we *look back*, we consider an event that has passed and think about how it proceeded and what we might have done differently. When teachers look back at a lesson, for example, they explore what worked and what didn't work, and a look back often prompts them to plan to act differently in the future. Schön refers to this as reflection on action.

When we *look at,* we are thinking about what we are doing in the midst of the act itself. We are monitoring how well an activity is proceeding, considering adjustments that have to made, and making decisions about what the best method might be for going forward. This form of reflection is a defining characteristic of great teachers. To keep students engaged and learning, teachers need to be watching all the time, making adjustments, and differentiating the way they guide learning every minute of the day. Great teachers are thinking all the time. Schön (1991) refers to this way of thinking as reflection in action.

Looking ahead is thinking about how to use an idea, practice, or plan in the future. When we look ahead, we consider something we have to do in the future and what we can do to ensure success. Change leaders who take the partnership approach make it possible for teachers to experience numerous opportunities to "look ahead" and explore how an idea might be shaped, adapted, or reconstructed so that it fits with their way of teaching and meets the needs of their students. Killion and Todnem (1991) refer to this as reflection for practice. Whether looking back, looking at, or looking ahead, teachers are quintessential "knowledge workers" because so much of their professional practice involves thinking.

As Thomas Davenport (2005), quoted earlier in this chapter, notes, knowledge workers requires autonomy. The real joy of being a professional lies in using your accumulated knowledge to tackle a thorny challenge. To reduce the amount teachers reflect on their practice is to reduce the amount teachers enjoy their practice. School leaders who do not create frequent opportunities for teachers to reflect, do so at their peril.

When leaders choose to do the thinking for teachers—by creating scripts, pacing guides, and step-by-step procedures to be followed blindly—they engage in short-term thinking. Pacing guides and similar prescriptions may lead to a quick bump in test scores, but the

long-term impact can be disastrous. Schools need to celebrate and retain their star teachers and nourish the development of other outstanding professionals. However, as Rob Goffee and Gareth Jones have written, outstanding employees "will only stay if you can offer them a great place in which to express their cleverness and other clever people to work with" (2009, pp. 15–16).

In schools, this means that prescriptive practices may scare away the best teachers and quite possibly impoverish the thinking of those left behind. Impact Schools, as described in this book, make reflection a part of all forms of professional learning.

Dialogue: Professional Learning Should Enable Authentic Dialogue

We live in an antidialogical age. The people celebrated in the media are the antithesis of dialogical. In politics, media celebrities from the left and the right thrash it out until, it seems, the last shouter is left standing. In sports, many of the most popular shows are debates between journalists and former athletes, everyone intent on talking louder, not wiser. In reality shows, we see manipulation and intimidation celebrated—kindness and respect voted off the island.

To engage in dialogue, then, is a countercultural act. It is, however, also a sign that we truly respect our partners. Dialogue is talking with the goal of digging deeper and exploring ideas together. As David Bohm (1996) has written, dialogue is "thinking together." Since dialogue is a way of communicating where there is equality between speakers, where ideas are shared, and where every partner's ideas are respected, dialogue is the goal of change leaders taking the partnership approach.

Bohm's short book *On Dialogue* is a concise introduction to this way of interacting. Bohm begins by uncovering the etymology of the word *dialogue,* explaining that the original Greek meaning of *logos* is "meaning" and that the original Greek meaning of *dia* is "through." Thus, dialogue is a form of communication where meaning moves back and forth between and through people. Bohm explains,

> The picture or image that this derivation suggests is of a *stream of meaning* flowing among and through us and between us . . . out of which will emerge some new understanding. It's something new, which may not have been in the starting point at all. It's something creative. And this *shared meaning* is the

"glue" or "cement" that holds people and societies together.
(1996, p. 1)

Paulo Freire (1970) describes dialogue as a mutually humanizing form of communication. My dialogue partners and I become more thoughtful, creative, and alive when we talk in ways that open up rather than shut down. As Martin Buber (1970) explained close to half a century ago, if I use language to get people to do what I want them to do, if I manipulate, then I treat them like objects, not subjects. In this way, an antidialogical approach is truly dehumanizing. It is only when I encourage and tap into my partner's imagination, creativity, knowledge, and ideas, that I truly respect them as fully human.

Freire (1970) has identified five requirements for dialogue: humility, faith, love, critical thinking, and hope.

Humility

"Men who lack humility (or have lost it) cannot come to the people, cannot be their partners in naming the world . . . Dialogue cannot exist without humility" (p. 79). People who take the partnership approach recognize that humility is a prerequisite for dialogue. After all, if I know it all, what could I possibly learn from you?

Humility is manifested in many actions during dialogue. First, we need to go into conversations as learners more than teachers. When we talk with others with the goal of learning from them rather than teaching them, our way of conversing changes. We begin as listeners and turn the focus onto our partners. During dialogue, the humble communicator is fully present, paraphrasing what is heard, hearing the emotion and meaning of what is said in addition to the actual words.

Humility also means that we are more concerned with getting things right than being right. Therefore, we ask good questions, real questions, to which we don't know the answers, and we listen for the answers. We stop trying to persuade and start trying to learn. As David Bohm has written, "If something is right, you don't need to be persuaded. If somebody has to persuade you, there is probably some doubt" (1996, p. 15).

Too often, our conversations are self-centered rather than learning-centered. When this is the case, we listen for evidence that our conversation partners agree with us, and when they don't agree, we work hard to show them we are right and they are wrong.

Humility in dialogue often means that we simply withhold our opinion so that we can hear others. This may involve a kind of radical

honesty. That is, rather than covering up the flaws in our argument or hiding our ignorance, in dialogue we display the gaps in our thinking for everyone to see. If we want to learn, we can't hide behind a dishonest veneer of expertise. Indeed, treating others as equals demands that we tell them truthfully about what we believe, assume, know, and do not know.

In dialogue, we humbly let go of the notion that there is only one right answer—our answer!—and we see conversation as a testing ground for ideas. If the purpose of conversation is learning, the last thing we should be doing is confirming our own misconceptions by solely seeking others who see the world the same as us. As David Bohm has said, "If you are defending a position, you are pushing out what is new" (1996, p. 15).

Humility also lays the foundation for one of the most important practices within dialogical conversations—questioning assumptions. Usually, our assumptions go unquestioned, and we assume that what we assume is the truth. When we take our assumptions for certainties, it leads to many conflicts and failures of understanding when we encounter people whose unquestioned assumptions conflict with ours. Dialogical conversations at their best enable us to explore our assumptions, through conversation, so that we will be better able to learn from others.

Faith

"Faith in man is an *a priori* requirement for dialogue; the 'dialogical man' believes in other men even before he meets them face to face" (Freire, 1970, p. 79). When I engage in dialogue, I recognize that those I speak with are equal to me, and I work from the assumption that they hold within them wisdom, knowledge, ideas, and gifts. When we take an antidialogical approach and tell people what to do without listening, or try to persuade people to do what we think is best for them, without their choice or voice, we show a profound lack of respect for their humanity. Dialogue is never manipulative; it is grounded in free conversation between people who respect each other as equals. If we are equals, I should value your words as much as I value my own.

When we have faith in others, we let go of the notion that we need to control them, tell them what to do, or hold them accountable. We see people as autonomous individuals deserving of our respect. William Isaacs elaborates on respect in his book *Dialogue and the Art of Thinking Together*.

> Respect is not a passive act. To respect someone is look for the spring that feeds the pool of their experience . . . At its core,

the act of respect invites us to see others as *legitimate.* We may not like what they do or say or think, but we cannot deny their *legitimacy* as beings. In Zulu, a South African language, the word *Sawu bona* is spoken when people greet one another and when they depart. It means "I see you." To the Zulus, being seen has more meaning than in Western cultures. It means that the person is in some real way brought more fully into existence by virtue of the fact that they are seen. (1999, p. 111)

When I have faith in my conversation partners, there is a much greater chance that they will trust me, too. Without mutual trust, there is little chance that a conversation will be open enough for true dialogue to occur.

Love

"If I do not love the world—if I do not love life—if I do not love men—I cannot enter into dialogue" (Freire, 1970, p. 78). Dialogue is only possible if we have empathy for others. In dialogue, we start by being empathetic, respectful, and nonjudgmental rather than taking a superior approach, starting by judging others. When we are empathetic toward others, when we move from love rather than control, we recognize our mutual humanity, the great bonds we share with others just because we are all people. This is especially important for people with whom we disagree. Isaacs also recognizes empathy as a core part of dialogue:

One lens that can reduce the temptations to blame and increase respect is to listen to others from the vantage point that says, "This, too, is in me." Whatever the behavior we hear in another, whatever struggle we see in them, we can choose to look for how these same dynamics operate in *ourselves.* (1999, p. 124)

Love is necessary for dialogue, but love can also be created by dialogue. As David Bohm writes, "love will go away if we can't communicate and share meaning . . . However, if we can really communicate, then we will have fellowship, participation, friendship, love, growing, and growth" (1996, p. 41).

Critical Thinking

"Only dialogue . . . is . . . capable of generating critical thinking" (Freire, 1970, p. 81). When we go into conversation to confirm our views rather than to learn, we choose to think by ourselves rather

than with others. If I only want to hear you tell me that you agree with me, then I don't really want to hear your thoughts at all. If we truly want to learn from a conversation, we are wise to go into it looking for ideas that disprove our way of thinking rather than looking for confirmations that our opinion is correct.

Dialogue is the thinking approach to communication. In the best situation, our ideas flow back and forth so freely that we start to think together—we reach a point where we lose sight of whose ideas are whose. Such conversation is energizing, humanizing, and the most natural way for partners to communicate.

Hope

"Dialogue cannot be carried on in a climate of hopelessness. If the dialoguers expect nothing to come of their efforts, their encounters will be empty, sterile, bureaucratic and tedious" (Freire, 1970, p. 80). Dialogue cannot occur when people are paralyzed by hopelessness. Dialogue can only flourish in situations where there are many possibilities.

In part, this means that a conversation that is dialogical must be open ended. If I come to you with a plan, and I expect you to implement it, I am not engaging in dialogue. Dialogue occurs when we start by trying to understand together, when we listen and learn rather than tell and resist.

Finally, hope too, for me at least, means that every act of dialogue is a hopeful act, a sign that we believe a better future is possible. When I listen to you, and you listen to me, there is the hope that we can create something new and better, that we can advance thought, and, through dialogue, create a better tomorrow.

Praxis: Teachers Should Apply Their Learning to Their Real-Life Practice as They Are Learning

What do we desire as educational leaders? We surely want the people with whom we work to learn new ways to help students, to reflect on what they do, to change for the better. To encourage such reflective action, we may give teachers many chances to mull over how they might plan to use the new ideas being discussed. For that reason, in a partnership learning workshop, teachers, like children having fun with modeling clay, are able to reshape each new idea until they can see how it might look in their classroom. When we act on the principle

of praxis, teachers have opportunities to think about how to apply new ideas to their real-life practices.

Praxis is a rich philosophical term for the creative activity illustrated above. Simply put, praxis describes the act of applying new ideas to our own lives. When we learn about content planning, for example, and spend a great deal of time thinking about and developing guiding questions that focus and reshape our units, we are engaged in praxis. When we learn about telling stories, and then create our own new stories to weave into our lessons, we are engaged in praxis. And when we learn about a new teaching practice or theory, think about it deeply, and decide not to use it in our classes, we are engaged in praxis. When we learn, reflect, and act, we are engaged in praxis.

The concept of praxis has many implications. Most important is the assumption that if we are to apply new knowledge to our lives in some way, we need to have a clear understanding of our current reality. Paulo Freire has suggested that praxis is a profound and important activity because it leads to really analyzing our lives and the world in which we learn. For Freire, praxis is revolutionary: "it is reflection and action upon the world in order to transform it . . . To speak a true word is to transform the world" (1970, p. 75).

In many ways, it is easier to describe what praxis is not, than what it is. Praxis is not memorizing a new routine so that we can teach it in our classes exactly as we memorized it. Praxis is not using cooperative learning activities to ensure that teachers fully understand how to score an assessment tool. Praxis is not running a workshop so that the picture in our mind ends up exactly the same in the minds of all of the other participants. Rather, praxis is enabled when teachers have a chance to explore, prod, stretch, and recreate whatever it is they are studying—to roll up their sleeves, really consider how they teach, really learn a new approach, and then reconsider their teaching practices and reshape the new approach, if necessary, until it can work in their classroom.

Because reflection is central to the partnership approach to learning, praxis is impossible without a partnership relationship. As Richard J. Bernstein observed, "praxis requires choice, deliberation, and decisions about what is to be done in concrete situations" (1983, p. 160). In other words, if participants in our workshop are going to make plans to use what we're explaining, they'll need to feel free to make their own sense of the materials. They will have to be true partners—equal, free to say no, and, we hope, excited by possibilities offered by the new ideas they are learning.

Reflection   Action

Praxis

Real Life
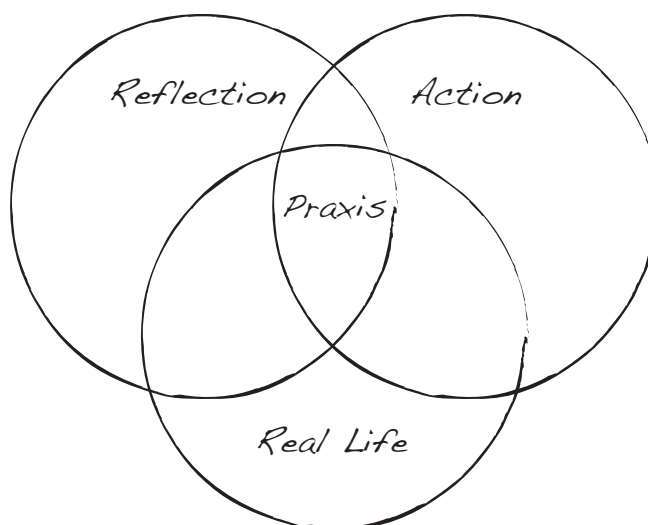
Reciprocity: We Should Expect to Get as Much as We Give

A few years ago, I went to Florida with a group of researchers to study highly effective coaches at their schools. Using the interview methods of anthropologists, we talked with coaches, teachers, principals, and district supervisors of coaches to find out what distinguished these outstanding professionals. We discovered that outstanding coaches love to learn. This did not surprise me because I believe learning leaders cannot succeed unless they live and breathe learning themselves. As the famous symphony director Ben Zander has said, "you cannot be a coach . . . unless you are coach-able" (Liu, 2004, p. 197). The give-and-take of learning, what I call *reciprocity,* is an essential part of the partnership approach.

Reciprocity is the belief that each learning interaction is an opportunity for everyone to learn—an embodiment of the saying, "when one teaches, two learn." People who live out the principle of reciprocity approach others with humility, expecting to learn from them. When we look at everyone else as a teacher and a learner, regardless of their credentials or years of experience, we will be delightfully surprised by new ideas, concepts, strategies, and passions. If we go in to an experience expecting to learn, much more often than not, we will.

When people take the partnership approach and act on the partnership principles, reciprocity takes care of itself; it is the inevitable

outcome of a true partnership. Seeing our partners as equals means we come into a conversation respecting and valuing them. Freeing our partners to make choices means they are free to surprise us with ideas that are new and important, and encouraging them to say what they think, to find and express their voice, means we will have an opportunity to hear and learn what it is important for them to share.

Reflection, dialogue, and praxis also increase the chances that we will learn from our colleagues because we are engaged in work focused on real-life situations, and because our mode of communication is designed for sharing ideas. When we think together, when we ensure that reflection is a part of learning, we will be delighted by what others create, imagine, or design. Partnership is about shared learning as much as it is about shared power.

Learning is infectious, energizing, and humanizing. Learning helps us to live fuller, richer lives. When we are engaged in learning, our imagination, brains, and hearts all come alive. If a coach, principal, workshop leader, or intensive learning team facilitator is turned on by learning, his or her enthusiasm breeds energy in others that can be powerful.

When teachers are passionate about learning, their love of growth and development rubs off on students and often infects them with the same passion. Most of us can remember a teacher whose genuine passion for learning drew us in and inspired us to be more than we realized was possible. When coaches are learners, their openness to learning fosters trust and richer communication. When principals are learners, their desire for knowledge and wisdom is a catalyst for everyone else's growth.

Schools, too, can learn. In learning schools, everyone's knowledge matters, and the unavoidable, reciprocal give-and-take of ideas makes everyone smarter. Peter Senge, who popularized the concept of the learning organization, described it this way:

> Learning organizations are possible because, deep down, we are all learners. No one has to teach an infant how to learn. In fact, no one has to teach infants anything. They are intrinsically inquisitive, masterful learners who learn to walk, speak and pretty much run their households all on their own. Learning organizations are possible because not only is it our nature to learn but we love to learn. (1990, p. 4)

Impact Schools are designed to give life to people's innate love of learning through the partnership approach.

To Sum Up

There are at least five simple truths about helping relationships: (1) people often do not know that they need help; (2) if people feel "one down," they will resist help; (3) criticism is taken personally, (4) if someone else does all the thinking for them, people will resist, and (5) people aren't motivated by other people's goals.

The partnership principles provide the theoretical foundation for Impact Schools. The principles are

Equality—professional learning is done with teachers rather than training done to teachers.

Choice—teachers should have choice regarding what and how they learn.

Voice—professional learning should empower and respect the voices of teachers.

Reflection—reflection is an integral part of professional learning.

Dialogue—professional learning should enable authentic dialogue.

Praxis—teachers should apply their learning to their real-life practice as they are learning.

Reciprocity—we should expect to get as much as we give.

Going Deeper

Helping

James Prochaska, John Norcross, and Carlo DiClemente's *Changing for Good* (1994) is an accessible, classic work on how people experience change. Coaches working with the Kansas Coaching Project have used the authors' six-stage model as a way of understanding how to differentiate support to teachers.

Douglas Stone, Bruce Patton, Sheila Heen, and Roger Fisher's *Difficult Conversations* (2000) is one of several outstanding communication and negotiation books developed at the Harvard Negotiation Project.

Davenport's *Thinking for a Living* (2005) provides an overview of the characteristics of knowledge workers.

Edgar Schein's *Helping* (2009) is a very useful explanation of how status affects and shapes any helping relationship.

Daniel Pink's *Drive* (2009) is an enjoyable and thought-provoking summary of the research on extrinsic motivation.

Partnership

Paulo Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1970) is in many ways the central text behind the partnership approach described in this book. Friere's book is not an easy read, but the effort it takes to understand his ideas is richly rewarded. His book introduced me to the concept of praxis and the power of dialogue to create mutually humanizing conversations.

Peter Block's *Stewardship* (1993) first introduced me to the idea of partnership as a metaphor for human interaction among equals. Block explains why choice and reflection are essential aspects of partnership.

Riane Eisler's books, in particular *The Chalice and the Blade* (1988) provide a feminist, anthropological perspective on partnership relationships.

Sheena Iyengar's *The Art of Choosing* (2010), and Barry Schwartz's *The Paradox of Choice* (2004) both provide great insight into the complexity of choice while also offering fascinating anecdotes about their topic.

David Bohm's *On Dialogue* (1996) is a short book but with clearly explained, simple, and powerful ideas about how to interact respectfully. William Isaac's *Dialogue* (1999) is the definitive book on the topic, and it is packed with powerful, useful ideas.

Parker Palmer's *The Courage to Teach* (1998) is a beautifully written, powerful description of how the head and heart come together in the art of teaching. Palmer has much to say about the role of authentic reflection within the professional work of teaching. Finally, Donald Schön's *The Reflective Practitioner* (1991) is the classic work on the topic of reflection.