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Knight, Jim. (2011). *Unmistakable Impact: A Partnership Approach for Dramatically Improving Instruction*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin.

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Over the past twelve years, Jim Knight has published several books and articles focused on the connection between instructional coaching, professional development and students benefiting from effective instruction. In his writing, Knight prefers to use the term “partnership learning” to represent the complex process undertaken by teachers and instructional coaches to collaboratively create effective instructional activities with noteworthy benefit for students. *Unmistakable Impact*, and a companion book, *Instruction That Makes an Impact*, (in press) introduces the reader to the theoretical framework, strategies, structure and findings from qualitative studies on instructional coaching to explain how partnership learning supports effective instruction and student achievement. The goal of this reviewed text is to help

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teachers, teacher educators, administrators and superintendents understand how to establish and nurture mechanisms so research-based instructional strategies become embedded within school cultures and impact students in desirable ways. Other related resources that Jim Knight has created are an online professional development opportunity, *Instructional Coaching*, and workshops offered through the University of Kansas Center for Research on Learning (<http://www.kucrl.org/classes>).

Unmistakable Impact is organized so all educators can use this book as a guide to reconsider and enhance instructional practices, on a personal level or within a specific school or district. At the conclusion of the forward, Knight provides a sequence of core questions to guide our definition of the ultimate goal(s) to create schools that meet contemporary, context-framed, educational demands (p. xix). All subsequent chapters begin with a concept map so the reader has an overview of the chapter's concepts, how they are interrelated and who is involved so each described aspect of partnership learning can become a successful experience for all concerned. Each chapter concludes with two sections: To Sum Up and Going Deeper. Not only do readers have a brief version of the concepts discussed in the chapter, but we also have a list of books for further reading. These works are typically cited in the chapter. The volume also contains two resources, the Impact Toolkit (guiding questions, forms, checklists used during partnership learning) and synopses of research Knight and his colleagues recently completed on coaching, workshops and intensive learning teams.

Chapter 1 provides the rationale for why partnership learning is needed to address the demands of educational settings today and explains the structure and purpose of the subsequent chapters of the book. A quick overview of statistics regarding American student performance and abilities is shared to demonstrate the need for new solutions and strategies to create impact schools of partnered learning so "we can move closer to the goal of every student receiving excellent instruction in every class every day" (p. 6). Knight believes that creating such impact schools will address students' educational needs and create schools where teachers and educational staff

will thrive as professionals. Knight seeks the empowerment of teachers and students through creating impact schools where humanity, respectful interchange, valuing individuals, open communication and listening support and define the daily interactions and work in schools.

Due to the complexity of school environments, Knight proposes specific interactions, actions and focused discussions yielding key decisions, stemming from his reading of the literature on change leadership, systemic change, social interactions, project management and pedagogy. The primary partnership learning task of impact schools' staffs is to pinpoint core instructional practices and resources that are studied, customized and embraced over time and connected with system-wide accountability efforts. This demanding process is documented through a simple plan, a one-page target. Knight provides some key perspectives so educators succeed in identifying and adopting research-based core instructional practices, documented in the one-page target. "Simplicity [of the outcome when developing the target] is working a problem until the way out becomes clear and never settling for a lack of clarity" (p. 13) explains Knight, so the instructional practices are understood, manageable and attainable. Due to the complexity of classrooms, it becomes necessary to remove distractions and focus on the crucial key behaviors that are nurtured over time yielding the desirable changes associated with the one-page target. To facilitate noting how well teachers, administrators and students understand and implement the key behaviors associated with the target, Knight has created a series of exemplar checklists. The empowering use of checklists in the delivery of medical treatment (Gawande, 2010) serves as the basis for educators to notate how well target behaviors are achieved. Teachers and administrators are to collaboratively develop checklists that resonate with contextually defined targets implying that rarely does one size fit all. Knight focuses on the process that guides educators to define these targets and to create and use these checklists, as schools transform instructional practices to become impact schools.

In chapter 2, "Partnership," Knight presents underlying factors and values that influence the degree to which innovations and new ideas are adopted or rejected within

organizations. Citing the work of Proschaska, Norcross, and DiClemente (1994), Knight identifies six stages of change linked to an increased awareness of individuals' behaviors' impact on others within an organization or setting. Knight points out the necessity of equilibrating relationships within schools, which are traditionally hierarchically structured, in order to create atmospheres where change and experimentation have value and can thrive. Knight explains in depth the key characteristics of environments where intellectual acuity guides teachers to adopt changes that nurture transformative practices found in impact schools. These factors stimulate enriching partnerships (as described by Block, 1993) and repeatedly reappear in subsequent chapters, as they are fundamental to Knight's process of partnership learning for desirable transformation of schools. To achieve these desirable factors, Knight intends for educators to work within settings imbued with seven principles or practices: equality, choice, voice, reflection, dialogue, praxis, and reciprocity, and predicated on all members of the organization valuing humility, faith, love, critical thought, and hope.

Starting with chapter 3, Knight provides a description of the role of various educators and structures within schools, as school communities are transformed into impact schools. Chapter 3 focuses on the mindset and work of principals. Knight views the principal as the "heart of the professional learning ... [to] vocally, symbolically, and authentically stress the importance of instructional improvement" (p. 50). Through the principal's actions and perspectives, the key characteristics, principles and practices described in chapter 2 are continually modeled and nurtured. Chapter 3 also explains the process to create the one-page instructional improvement target and how to encourage reflection on classroom events and their impact on learners and teachers alike. Supportive tasks for defining, documenting and assessing the target's impact are generating guiding questions and a series of learning maps while increasing understanding and skillful implementation of four key aspects of Danielson's (2007) *Framework for Teaching*. Examples of observation and interview tools are provided toward the end of the volume, so administrators and teachers can have a better sense of how feedback is framed for ongoing discussions within this partnership learning framework. Often these

discussions are structured around “design thinking” (Brown, 2009), so collected and analyzed data inform decisions to generate innovative practices and strategies that help teachers and students gradually embrace and adopt target behaviors. The goal of the principal’s active role in collaborative partnership learning is to support educators’ gradual acquisition of these mindsets, values, behaviors and reflective practices so each impact school can become a natural part of the educational landscape supportive of – and supported by – the local context and all members of the educational community.

Chapter 4 focuses on the mindset and work of instructional coaches. Knight describes the fine line instructional coaches walk as they interact with teachers and guide them to understand and (hopefully) eventually embrace desirable target behaviors and perspectives. Desirable skills are described: possessing and modeling a deep knowledge of research-based content and strategies (pedagogy), but equally valuable, how to communicate and engage in supportive, meaningful, dialogical conversations where teachers perceive compassion, respect, optimism and become infected with the joy of teaching and learning. Instructional coaches (like principals/administrators) also ideally imbue their interactions with teachers with the principles, practices and values that are foundational to partnership learning (as described in chapter 2). Knight values the power of video technology as a means to capture and critique performance or behaviors, share feedback and guide teachers to suggest goals and identify future steps to reach each goal. This iterative process over time supports teachers’ personal growth through the instructional coach’s emphasis on listening and demonstrating a balanced amount of humility and ambition. Favorable conditions exist when “principals provide top-down leadership to support coaches’ bottom-up support” (p. 129). Pragmatically, Knight also shares descriptions of instructional coaches, whose efforts did not yield desirable changes in schools, anticipating that we can learn from these challenges and less desirable situations.

Chapter 5 focuses on key characteristics of effective workshops and how educators organize and facilitate workshops that promote partnership learning. Here again, concepts explained in chapter 2, as fundamental principles, practices and values that are foundational to partnership

learning, and powerful communication skills, infuse the ten factors of effective workshops conducted in impact schools. Knight reminds us that how the workshop and its related content is designed will influence the degree to which teachers respond favorably to the ideas and strategies shared in the workshop. Whether the administrator or the instructional coach will facilitate the workshop (both are recommended), their level of preparedness and command of the topic is central to workshop effectiveness. Knight identifies research that clarifies how to structure workshop sessions to engage the teachers (Medina, 2008), appropriately design and use presentation software (Duarte, 2008; Gallagher, 2009) and introduce/demonstrate and guide teachers to strategies and skills that can be readily implemented, such as reflection learning activities (citing fellow researcher, Susan FitzRandolph). Additional examples of behaviors that engage teachers during workshop sessions are explained in depth.

Chapter 6 focuses on practical step-by-step procedures used by intensive learning teams due to the power gained through harnessing the collective intelligence within schools. These seven steps produce a plan for instructional coaching. After laying the groundwork for content or pedagogical exploration, team members exchange ideas, establish team values, unpack the instructional standards related to the identified target(s), develop guiding questions and relevant learning maps, and integrate supportive strategies and practices which will define the plan for instructional coaching for the team members. These plans are customized to identify specific goals and skills for individual teachers within the team. The goal of creating a partnership learning setting that is reflecting core principles and practices (as described in Chapter 2), is accomplished through authentic, responsive and ongoing dialogue among all participants of the intensive learning team. Individual intensive team members will bring to the discussions their concerns and suggestions. Knight describes several strategies and actions to reduce tensions or friction that tend to stymie the goals of identified targets and partnership development. Examples of how these strategies have been used to yield desirable changes are also shared in this chapter.

Chapter 7 focuses on the role of effective communication and listening for this process to yield desirable outcomes over time. Knight reminds us that through adopting the partnership principles as described in Chapter 2, participants gain acumen as effective listeners and communicators. Knight provides explanations of questioning techniques, dealing with emotions, creating common ground, paying attention effectively, and creating relationships so partnership learning thrives and produces sought-after outcomes. Communication strategies, the milestone pledge and a list of good questions (collected during workshops) are shared in this chapter.

If educators choose to create impact schools, Knight reminds us that the time and work investment may be demanding and coordinated effort is critical for success in these efforts. Creating impact schools depends on many people agreeing to work together, over time, investing much of themselves in the process, as described in detail by Jim Knight. This process is not a silver bullet to address the needs of students in our 21st century schools. For those readers familiar with schools, enacting this process may seem daunting, while for others it may provide a sound framework for guiding teachers' and administrators' efforts to meet students' and a community's needs, while creating and promoting an environment where people enjoy teaching and learning.

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