Preface

Technology is creating change in almost every industry. If the goal of education is to prepare young people to successfully enter the workforce, technology must be integrated into our schools to ensure students are fluent in it when they graduate. It's my belief that all classrooms will eventually blend online and offline learning. That blend will take many forms, but it *will* happen. Technology is radically changing how our society communicates, connects, and shares. This must impact the way we teach students if the skills learned in the classroom are going to be transferable to their lives beyond.

Ultimately, the impact of technology on learning depends on the teacher. Blended learning provides a path forward in education that values the teacher's role in blending technology and tradition. The success of blended learning hinges on the teacher's ability to skillfully select blended learning models and technology tools that meet specific learning objectives. This book is designed to help districts, schools, and leaders build a robust and sustainable professional learning infrastructure to support teachers as they shift to blended learning.

If you are picking up this book, I assume you do not need to be convinced of the merits of blended learning. For those who *do* need convincing, I've written two other books on the subject, *Blended Learning in Grades 4–12* and *Blended Learning in Action*. My first book, *Blended Learning in Grades 4–12*, supports individual teachers attempting to shift to a blended learning model. My second book, *Blended Learning in Action*, supports schools and districts making this shift by providing resources for teachers and leaders.

Schools are investing a lot of money into purchasing devices and building up their technology infrastructure, but few are investing equally to build a professional learning infrastructure. However, if schools do not develop a clear plan for supporting teachers as they shift to blended learning, then the financial investment in technology will not yield powerful shifts in teaching practices. Teachers need to continue learning if they are going to use technology to transform learning in their classrooms. This requires a commitment on the part of school leadership to prioritize professional learning and weave it into the fabric of the school.

This book presents a professional learning path for schools committed to blended learning. This path is not an easy one. It demands resources, dedication, and sacrifice. The reward is a school community working to blend technology and tradition to provide the most engaging learning experience possible for its students.

This book is written for school leaders and the coaches who work directly with teachers. Chapters 1–4 and Chapters 11–12 are written for *both* leadership and coaches and are identified by the following icon.
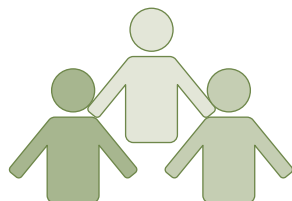
School Community Leaders & Coaches

Chapter 1 emphasizes articulating the *why* behind a shift to blended learning. Too often leaders begin by tackling the *what*. They make purchasing decisions about what technology to buy before they articulate the *why* driving the shift to blended learning. Leadership must articulate the *why* to get teachers on board with this shift.

Chapter 2 presents a roadmap for building a professional learning infrastructure. This roadmap will require that leadership make key decisions about how money is spent and how resources are allocated.

Chapter 3 reviews key elements of effective professional development and acknowledges the role an expert can play in helping to define the *why* and in unpacking the blended learning models so teachers understand their value. The expert can provide a spark, but the coaches and professional learning community are crucial to the long-term success of a shift to blended learning.

Chapter 4 defines the term *blended learning coach*, introduces the coaching cycle used in this book, and reviews the blended learning models.

Chapters 5–10 focus on providing blended learning coaches with concrete strategies and resources they can use to support teachers as they set goals, design blended lessons, implement blended learning models, and reflect on their practice. These chapters are identified by the following icon.

BL
Coach

POWER UP BLENDED LEARNING
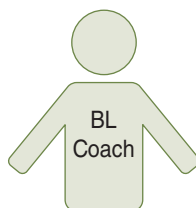
Chapter 11 focuses on the role virtual coaching can play in scaling high-quality coaching and connecting qualified coaches with teachers in various geographic locations.

Chapter 12 emphasizes the importance of gradually releasing professional learning to the teachers by building a professional learning community (PLC) in which teacher teams meet regularly to gather evidence, develop strategies, implement new strategies and models, analyze the impact of these strategies, and apply new knowledge.

Schoolwide change requires people at all levels—leadership, coaches, and teachers—to work together to define a clear vision and make that vision a reality. That's why this book is written with all three of these stakeholders in mind. In writing this book I've drawn heavily from my own work and experiences as a teacher, blended learning coach, and education consultant supporting districts as they shift to blended learning. I hope what I have learned will help support others as they navigate the changing landscape of education. It's time to invest in professional learning to support the shift to student-centered, student-paced learning environments that use technology strategically to place students at the center of learning.