Foreword

Mornings at my house are the worst. If my three kids and I all get out the door on time, not forgetting anything, and with smiles on our faces, I pretty much feel like I've already won the day. But it rarely happens. Despite all my planning and best efforts, most mornings are chaotic, and I spend them trying to find any trick that might make them easier.

One day, amid my flurry to get all of us to school on time, my oldest son threatened to make the mornings even more turbulent than they already are. "Mom," Evan implored, "I need you to make me breakfast. I'm hungry by 9:30 and I don't eat lunch until 12:30. I really need a big breakfast in the mornings."

My anxiety rose. "I don't have time to make you breakfast, get everyone ready, and get to school on time. You know this. You're going to be sixteen soon. There's no reason you can't keep getting your own breakfast," I spat back.

"But Mom. I need a *big* breakfast. Like eggs or a protein smoothie. Something that gets me past 9:30 in the morning. Not cereal or toast."

I just looked at him without saying anything. In my mind, I was frantically trying to do the math. How long would this take me every morning? How much earlier would I need to get up each day? How many minutes would this take away from the hours I stole from the early morning to get ready to teach?

Before I said anything else, Evan hit me with a calm declaration: "I'm happy to do it myself, Mom. But you haven't taught me how to do it yet."

I hadn't taught him how to do it yet. Of course. I hadn't taught him how to do it yet because it was always just easier and more efficient for me to do it. I made less mess, fewer mistakes, could move faster around the kitchen by myself. His words stuck with me. By the time I got to my own high school English classroom, the weight of those words reverberated off the walls at school just as they had at home.

So often, our best intentions preclude the learning of others. Some of us are helpers or fixers by nature; others of us crave efficiency and control. Yet, we must give much of that up when we invite someone else to learn. As a teacher, this means I ask questions instead of giving answers. It means that instead of efficiency, I choose messy.

Teaching Evan how to make his own breakfasts would mean a time where the morning routine would take longer and create messes. He'd make mistakes I'd rather not have to clean up; however, *this is also precisely where the learning would happen.* Unless I invested in the mess now, I'd never release him to mastery and independence.

This lesson is as relevant today as it's ever been, for both teachers and parents. As we face a year where we'll experience an array of face-to-face, hybrid, online, and at-home learning configurations, the foundation we've known feels shaky. Yet this is also a powerful time to re-center ourselves on the importance of learning—what it really looks like

and how we can foster it together. As parents, we don't have to be experts, but we do need to engage with our learners. Instead of worrying about having answers, we can ask our children to talk about their processes, ask them how they can find resources, and become curious about what they're *learning* instead of what they're *doing*. We can utilize the valuable practices and key mindframes described in this book, and help our children adopt them as well. As much as we crave efficiency amid the chaos, it's important for us to remember to take the time to model patience and curiosity amid uncertainty. This book will show you precisely how. In these pages, Rosalind, Doug, Nancy, and John explain how your children need to hear the adults they look up to saying things like, "It's okay to make mistakes and not get this on the first try," or "The mistakes are good because that means you are learning," or "I see that you did well on that test, and it's because you put in the extra effort and worked hard to take notes and reread the book," or "This makes me think about _____, what about you?" Parents don't have to be teachers, but they can be formidable influencers in helping their children learn to learn.

As a teacher, I need this lesson too. I can't expect my students to be able to learn independently before I've taught them how. Just because they've reached a certain age or grade level doesn't mean they've been taught *how* to solve that kind of problem, how to read that kind of text, how to make that kind of breakfast. I can't hand out assignments and pick them up and call that online learning. Instead, I need to focus on creating learning experiences, not tasks, for my students. As susceptible as I am right now to the pull of efficiency, I can't confuse that with the nuanced and individualized learning experience my students most need.

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Our children have a part in this lesson as well. We need to teach them how to ask for help. We need to give them permission to be uncertain, confused, even frustrated. We need to model that frustration isn't failure; rather, it's a sign that learning is about to happen. We need to remind them that their parents aren't responsible for fixing the frustration, but we can listen with patience and curiosity as they figure it out.

Together, we are the ecosystem that will secure success for our students, our children, and ourselves this year. This book will help you see exactly what your part can look like. With their calm and reassuring advice, Rosalind Wiseman, Doug Fisher, Nancy Frey, and John Hattie help frame what's ahead and offer concrete, practical advice for creating family and classroom systems that enable our students to thrive.

And—in case you're curious—the time it took to teach my son *how* to make his own breakfasts instead of just *telling* him what to do has paid off. He's self-sufficient and less hungry—and he's taught his younger brother how to do it, too. The magic is in the mess, my friends.

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