

INTRODUCTION

Psychological safety in the workplace is a shared belief that it is safe for us to ask questions, express concerns, try new strategies, and challenge the status quo without fear of humiliation, punishment, or retaliation from colleagues. Psychological safety has been shown to have a significant influence on how happy we are at work and how effectively we collaborate with our colleagues. Yet, when I started writing this book there were not any books available that focused on psychological safety among K-12 educators. At that time, most of the research and resources explored the topic within corporate settings, health care, and a variety of other fields, but little attention was paid to how psychological safety develops within schools. Educators face unique challenges and considerations when it comes to creating psychologically safe teams and work environments.

After reviewing the research and familiarizing myself with the work of psychological safety thought leaders, such as Amy Edmondson and Timothy Clark, I turned to my fellow educators as a primary source of insight. As a consultant and coach, I have the honor to work with educators across the country and beyond. In the years leading up to the publication of this book, I invited educators to share their experiences of working in psychologically safe as well as psychologically unsafe schools. I spoke with educators who taught in urban, suburban, and rural communities; in private, public, and charter schools; and across grade levels, content areas, and departments. Their stories informed the topics you will read about in this book, ranging from painful experiences of workplace bullying to inspiring journeys of transformation and collective efficacy.

Although this book is titled *The Other Teachers*, any professional who works in schools may find it to be a helpful resource. The stories contained in these chapters were also inspired by interviews I

conducted with superintendents, district administrators, school principals, paraprofessionals, school counselors, school psychologists, and education support professionals. Regardless of your professional role, know that each individual influences the psychological safety of their school. When staff members and leadership work together to cultivate and sustain a more psychologically safe school, all members of the school community benefit.

I've been fortunate enough to assist schools in their efforts to develop psychological safety among staff and seen firsthand the positive effects this work has on reducing burnout, strengthening collaboration, and improving student outcomes. As you will learn in this book, there is no one-size-fits-all approach to creating a psychologically safe environment for staff, students, and families because each school community is unique. However, we will explore stages of psychological safety that provide insight into the ways our relationships, teams, and school culture can foster greater belonging, trust, and impact.

This book is not complete without you. As you read this book, I invite you to engage with the reflection questions and add your own insights to the key takeaways, strategies, practices, and tools. My hope is that this book enhances your awareness, knowledge, insight, skill, and ability to nurture psychologically safe relationships with your colleagues. May you and your colleagues create schools where everyone feels included, inspired to learn, appreciated for their hard work, and mutually supported through teamwork.