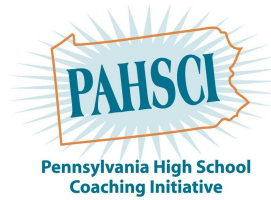


December 2006



The PassKey

Mark Your Calendar

- February 8 - Foundations Leadership Mentor Meeting
- February 9 - Foundations Mentor Meeting
- Check our website for PLN 1 and PLN 2 course dates at www.pacoaching.org

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Coaching in Pennsylvania: Universal Expectations

By Gerald L. Zaborchak, D.Ed.
Secretary of Education, Pennsylvania

Teacher coaching has proven to be a valuable way to increase educator effectiveness in the classroom, thus boosting student achievement. Coaches enhance teachers' knowledge, skills, and practices to help students achieve at greater levels.

The Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE) utilizes coaching in several of our statewide initiatives, but it's important to find a way to strengthen those individual components by helping them work collaboratively. As an initial step, the high school statewide initiatives with a coaching component have worked collaboratively using the Annenberg initiative, the Pennsylvania High School Coaching Initiative, as a model for training their coaches.

Innovative programs like PAHSCI, Reading First, Classrooms for the Future, Science: It's Elementary, Getting To One, and the Accountability Block Grant each depend on unique coaching components that vary in terms of function and expectations. To ensure a level of consistency among all coaching components, I have appointed the Coaching Collaboration Board.

The Board will meet each month to develop a framework to facilitate collaboration among coaches in distinct programs within the same school district, between schools/

districts, and across the Commonwealth. Qualifications and expectations for coaches must be consistent, regardless of the program. Additionally, we must have a common set of criteria with which to assess coaches' impact on student achievement.

The Board is first working to define the attributes that every qualified coach ought to possess in every program utilizing coaching. They've already started their efforts to develop this common set of expectations as well as a means of evaluating the impact of coaches. At its first meeting, the Board consulted with project managers and evaluation teams from each PDE program to begin establishing a universal set of criteria to assess coaching outcomes through data collection and analysis.

Pennsylvania is also providing educators with valuable coaching professional development. This summer we're again holding regional Governor's Institutes on Literacy and Math Coaching (approved for Act 48 continuing education credit hours).

The 2007 Institute will be planned by the Collaborative Coaching Board and will focus on the knowledge, skills, and strategies that coaches need to effectively impact teachers' instructional practice and, ultimately, boost student achievement. The two-day Institutes are expected to be held in July 2007 at three regional sites. Details will be posted at www.teaching.state.pa.us.

Points to Ponder: National Trends

National - Each year, approximately 1.2 million students fail to graduate from high school (*Education Week*, 2006).

Source: Alliance for Education *Fact Sheet, Graduation Rates*, (Revised August 2006) <http://www.all4ed.org/publications/>



Erie School District's Anna Wieczorek (left) and Mike Cutter (right) attend the Regional Networking Sessions in Cranberry.

*"Teachers
are trying new strategies to
help students pass."*

Kent Jackson in

"Getting a Read

on Students:

Seminar Helps Teachers

Learn Strategies to Help

Improve Literacy."

Hazleton Standard Speaker,

December 6, 2006

PAHSCI Participants Network at Regional Sessions

Lehigh Valley and Cranberry, PA – The Pennsylvania High School Coaching Initiative (PAHSCI) held its Eastern Regional Networking Sessions on December 11 in Lehigh Valley, PA and its Western Regional Networking Sessions on December 14 in Cranberry, PA. The Networking Sessions were organized to provide opportunities for collegial sharing among Initiative participants. In total, 92 coaches, 7 teachers, and 31 administrators attended the sessions.

Foundations' mentors facilitated sessions throughout the day on strategies and tools that enhance instructional coaching. Research for Action (RFA) evaluated the sessions using a participant survey. According to the survey, 'Questioning that Generates Collaboration,' a professional development session facilitated by Foundations' mentors, was one of the day's highlights in both Lehigh Valley and Cranberry. According to the survey's results, 95.1% of Eastern Regional Session participants and 97.9% of Western Regional Session participants strongly agreed or agreed that the session "was useful in enhancing their work in the coaching initiative." The session provided tools for coaches to enhance questioning that inspires teacher reflection and implementation of instructional strategies.

Hazleton PLN Session Receives Special Visitors

Hazleton, PA - Penn Literacy Network (PLN) conducted a PLN 2 Regional Session on December 5 for Hazleton and Scranton School Districts, but this time with additional visitors.

PLN's Senior Advisor, Dr. Morton Botel, addressed the course participants on the heart of PLN's instructional framework as a tool for literacy development. Dr. Botel addressed the challenges that teachers face saying, "Unfortunately the problems of teaching are such that we lose heart fast." Dr. Deb Carr, Director of Curriculum and Instruction at Hazleton Area School Dis-

trict, stated, "It was exactly what was needed to refocus and feel better about what they were trying to accomplish."

Mentors also facilitated two well-received break-out sessions: one for coaches on 'Inquiry in Context' and the other for administrators on 'Walk Throughs.' RFA's survey showed that 100% of administrators, from both the Western and Eastern Networking Sessions, reported "that they plan to institute 'Walk Throughs' this year." Foundations has provided support, through PAHSCI, to administrators on the implementation of effective 'Walk Throughs' in schools. It is a non-evaluative method for principals to get a quick snapshot of student learning and to engage teachers in conversations about improving teaching. For more information, read "Walk-Throughs Are On the Move!" featured in *Education World* at http://www.education-world.com/a_admin/admin/admin405.shtml.

The Networking Sessions also provided opportunities for session participants to collaborate through 'Open Space Activities and Sharing.' Overall, in both sessions, more than 90% of participants felt "the day provided adequate opportunity for sharing and networking with [their] colleagues in the initiative." The next statewide Networking Meeting will be held on May 21st at the Nittany Lion in State College, PA.

Kent Jackson, a reporter from the *Hazleton Standard Speaker* also joined the session. In an article featured in the newspaper's December 6 issue, Mr. Jackson referred to PLN instructional strategies presented at professional development sessions as a means for improving student achievement. He wrote, "Teachers are trying new strategies to help students pass." PLN sessions introduce strategies that "teachers can use to resolve various problems."

Instructional Coaching Supports Teaching and Learning

By Lisa Templin-Blimline
Literacy Coach, Reading High School

Instructional coaching looks different at each educational level and within each school district. At the core of instructional coaching is the support of teaching and learning, rooted in a trusting relationship between coach and teacher. Such partnerships are essential for effective support, valuable feedback, and meaningful professional development.

Coaches support teachers through visitation, modeling, and co-teaching. Visitations allow teachers to receive valued and significant feedback. This feedback opens up essential conversations where problems can be identified and solutions collaboratively created. Modeling and co-teaching take support to the next level with lesson 'tryouts.' Modeling gives the teacher the opportunity to focus on what the lesson might look like without concern for delivery. Through co-teaching, the coach provides direct support in the delivery of new lessons. These supportive systems are wrapped by an essential conversation in a pre or post-conference tailored to support the teacher's needs.

Feedback is an indispensable part of instructional coaching. A post-conference conversation can foster and further develop what was the focus of the pre-conference discussion. In these discussions, feedback focuses on student classroom behavior, content knowledge, instruction and assessment.

National Research: Teaching Impacts Student Learning

National - Effective teaching makes the greatest impact on student learning. "Decades of research clearly demonstrate that a quality teacher, more than any other factor, enables students to overcome obstacles to learning like poverty and can even erase the achievement gap." (*Alliance for Education, 2006*)

But many teachers are not properly trained for high level teaching. One in four high school classes is taught by a teacher without a college

Feedback should always be presented with specific examples that cultivate teacher reflection and lead to effective solutions. These collaborative solutions are the result of effective coach support.

Onsite and ongoing embedded professional development through instructional coaching is fundamental to supporting teaching and learning. Coaching has provided the opportunity for professional development to be presented to the staff on an individual, partial or whole staff basis. For teachers in a coaching cycle, professional development is a continuous improvement of instructional practices and student achievement. Study groups provide teachers with the opportunity to learn and discuss specific educational issues pertinent to their needs. In-service days have become more meaningful for the entire staff as proven educational strategies are presented. In support of teaching and learning, instructional coaches have a wide repertoire of techniques to share with their staff.

Although instructional coaching may look different in each school, the support for teaching and learning is similar. Classroom visitations, open conversations and feedback, built upon a trusting relationship, open the door for positive change for both teachers and their students. This positive change is the ultimate result of instructional coaching.

major or minor in that subject. (*Carey, 2004*)

Teachers who participate in quality professional development advance teaching skills which can lead to improved student achievement. (*Alliance for Education, 2006*)

Quality professional development is ongoing, long term, focused on subject matter, and requires adults to be active learners. (*Garet, 2001*)

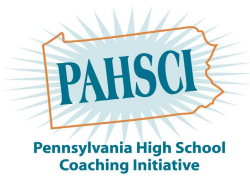
"For teachers in a coaching cycle, professional development is a continuous improvement of instructional practices and student achievement."

Lisa Templin-Blimline
Literacy Coach,
Reading High School



Joetta Britvich, Albert Gallatin High School Administrator, listens intently at the Regional Networking Sessions in Cranberry.

The Pennsylvania High School Coaching Initiative



PASSKEY TO STUDENT SUCCESS

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We're on the web!
www.pacoaching.org



Research for Action's Roseann Hugh (center left) networks with Erie School District's Mike Cutter (left), Heather Kensill (center right), and Marlene Radov (right) at Regional Networking Sessions.

The Annenberg Foundation and The Pennsylvania Department of Education began implementation of the Pennsylvania High School Coaching Initiative (PAHSCI), a \$31 million, three-year high school coaching initiative, during the 2005 - 2006 school year. PAHSCI's goals are to improve student achievement, build teacher capacity, and prepare students for the workforce through researching and developing a distinctive instructional coaching model.

PAHSCI places one literacy and one math coach for every 600 students in 26 high-need high schools located in 16 districts across the State of Pennsylvania. Coaches at the selected sites facilitate in-class coaching and modeling, peer collaboration and instructional training in order to improve teaching and learning at their schools.

To support this extensive effort, the Pennsylvania Department of Education has partnered with the University of Pennsylvania's Penn Literacy Network (PLN) and Foundations, Inc. to provide intensive professional development for coaches and school leadership teams. Other partners include Research for Action, which is documenting and evaluating the results from this work, and The Philadelphia Foundation, which serves as the program's fiscal administrator.

Letter from the Project Director

Dear Colleagues,

"Unless you try to do something beyond what you have already mastered, you will never grow." These words from Ralph Waldo Emerson depict a coaching philosophy that recognizes coaches as learners, too. Our PAHSCI coaches have adopted this philosophy into their own thinking. Our coaches, teachers, and administrators have become reflective practitioners, learning through collaborative practice.

This sounds so easy, but there is nothing further from the truth. In many instances, coaches became seniors among their peers without the benefit of an initial training program. Yesterday, they were colleagues in the teachers' room; today, they are asking for permission to visit. Yesterday, they were talking about professional development sessions; today, they are asking for professional learning opportunities. Yesterday, teachers

were practitioners who practiced alone; today, teachers are working together, engaged in conversations around student work. Today, all are learning together.

This does not happen overnight. Collaboration and collegiality occur through a well-designed coaching plan. Our coaches work diligently to create and nourish a relationship built on trust and mutual respect. They model reflective practices to help teachers understand how adult learning impacts student learning. They recognize the strengths in others and build on those strengths; they appreciate the challenges of teaching and know there is no greater good than to reach our youth. Most importantly, they understand what it means to be a member in a community of learning.

Sincerely,

Ellen B. Eisenberg, Project Director