

November 2006



# The PassKey

## Mark Your Calendar

- January 9 - *Partners' Meeting*
- January 11 - *Foundations Leadership Mentor Meeting*
- January 12 - *Foundations Mentor Meeting*
- Check our website for PLN 1 and PLN 2 course dates at [www.pacoaching.org](http://www.pacoaching.org)

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## Funded By



## Administrators Retreat at Penn Stater

State College, PA - The Pennsylvania High School Coaching Initiative (PAHSCI), an instructional coaching model designed to build teacher capacity and increase student achievement in 26 high schools from 16 school districts statewide, held its first Administrators' Retreat from November 1 to 2 at The Penn Stater in State College, Pennsylvania.

Over forty PAHSCI participating administrators, Foundations leadership mentors, and partner representatives from Foundations, Research for Action (RFA), and Penn Literacy Network (PLN) attended. The retreat's purpose was to create a forum for administrators to deepen their understanding of instructional coaching, their critical role in supporting teacher leaders, and the impact that coaching is having on transforming our schools.

The two-day agenda included presentations and thought-provoking discussions. Diane Brown and Pierre Duplessis from RFA presented data from their report on the first

year of the Initiative. This data is used to provide feedback on project implementation for administrators to take back to their districts. Tim Lucas, one of the authors of *Schools that Learn* and a Professor of Practice at Lehigh University, shared insights and facilitated an interactive session that provided tools for school leaders to facilitate collaborative practices and help schools move forward with continuous improvement efforts. The presentation divided the *Core Competencies for Schools that Learn* into three components: *Defining Our Aspirations*, *Holding Meaningful Conversations*, and *Dealing with Complexity*. Retreat participants also engaged in discussions on numerous ways to successfully implement a systems approach to schools.

Foundations leadership mentors and school administrators plan to continue conversations on lessons learned at the Penn Stater, including the topic of a systems approach to schools. Study groups will also be facilitated around Professor Lucas's book, *Schools That Learn*.

## Points to Ponder: National Trends

National - Literacy prepares students for college and the workforce.

High school students' ability to read complex texts is strongly predictive of their performance in college math and science courses. (ACT, 2006)

The 25 fastest-growing professions have far greater than average literacy demands, while the fastest-declining professions have lower than average literacy demands. (Barton, 2000)

However, millions of American students are leaving high school unprepared for the literacy demands of college and work.

Roughly 23% of high school graduates are not ready to succeed in an introductory-level college writing course. (ACT, 2005)

About 40% of high school graduates lack the literacy skills employers seek. (Achieve, 2005)

(Source: Alliance for Excellent Education, *Adolescent Literacy Fact Sheet*, 2006, <http://www.all4ed.org/publications/ReadingNext/AdolescentLiteracyFactSheet.pdf>)



Tom Sebastian from Foundations (left) and George Schuler, Leadership Mentor (right), collaborate

*“Coaching has made me evaluate myself and decide whether or not I’m doing things in the most effective way, and if not, what can I do to change that.”*  
*English Teacher,*  
*Abraham Lincoln High School*

## Coaching Opens Doors for Teachers and Learners

By Judith Singh  
*Literacy Coach, Abraham Lincoln High School*

“Reading is fun!” exclaimed an ordinarily half-asleep tenth grader during a paired reading of the Japanese folktale, “Momotaro, The Boy of the Peach.” After students shared their highlights from reading with the class, the teacher said, “The kids were really engaged!” Such magical moments are becoming the norm in classrooms where relationships have been formed between teachers and instructional coaches.

Coaching, at its best, is centered upon a trusting professional partnership that promotes awareness or consciousness: consciousness of our roles as educators, built through reflection, conversation, collaboration, instructional support, and, consciousness of *who our students are* and what they need in order to succeed. Coaching encourages teachers to take risks, to move out of survival mode and into high gear, co-creating ideal learning situations.

“Coaching has made me evaluate myself and decide whether or not I’m doing things in the most effective way, and if not, what

can I do to change that,” said one English teacher. Coaching supports teachers in reflecting upon their beliefs and practices and in opening their minds to clarifying and finding methods to achieve their goals. “We use Please Do Nows regularly, chunking, John Collins [Writing], and text renderings, especially with poetry.”

Coaching moves the focus of instruction from the teacher to the students. Placing students in charge of their own learning is “the best way for [students] to retain the information, it’s the most enjoyable, it motivates them. There have been many moments that stand out, but the first one I can think of is with *To Kill a Mockingbird* when [my students] were actually ... doing the reasoning, thinking, questioning, as if they were members of the jury, coming up with really sophisticated questions.”

“My ideal classroom? There are on-going projects; they’re working in pairs, in groups. I’m facilitating 90% of the time.” Hearing these words from teachers, seeing students actively engaged, thinking critically, taking ownership, feeling valued and empowered, gives credence to the fact that coaching supports teaching and learning.

## Foundations and PLN Work With Coaches and Teachers

PAHSCI - As Foundations and Penn Literacy Network (PLN) continue to provide professional learning opportunities, both organizations are presenting strategies for improving student achievement to administrators, coaches, and teachers.

The Administrators’ Retreat was not the only venue for Foundations’ work in November. Larry Devine, Foundations consultant, has begun creating a “Scrapbook” that will include materials that coaches and school leaders developed and used successfully to facilitate the coaching process in participating school districts. The “Scrapbook” is an attempt to organize and consolidate efforts across PAHSCI and to provide a vehicle for sharing them. The

“Scrapbook” will include field-based materials and instruments used by coaches, such as checklists, forms, schedules, draft text for letters and memos, and procedures and protocols.

PLN 1 and PLN 2 Regional Courses are underway in each region. Strategies for improving student achievement are the foci in each session with literacy across the content as the unifying theme. Teachers are working hard to implement the strategies learned. PLN’s Gina Calzaferrri recently stated, “It is evident that teachers are putting forth extreme effort to make this [implementation of PLN strategies] work in their classrooms.”

## A Principal's Perspective

By Diane M. Williams  
*Principal, Bellwood-Antis High School*

The Pennsylvania High School Coaching Initiative (PAHSCI) was received with some reservation and skepticism when it was introduced to the Bellwood-Antis High School faculty last January. Change at any level for any reason is always difficult.

Following eleven months of training, collaborating, questioning, and eventually re-discovering the passion for teaching, the thirty-four member team has embraced the Initiative's philosophy. An observation of numerous classrooms is a reflection of a conscious effort to redirect the focus from a teacher-centered perspective to the student. The use of Penn Literacy Network (PLN) strategies have become routine procedures in the delivery of instruction.

The *trained* staff is sharing ideas and activities with those waiting to experience the formal PLN training. Our school's Math and Literacy coaches have graciously provided numerous opportunities for all teachers to become familiar with the strategies that have proven successful in engaging students; the impact has been overwhelming.

"With the use of the Word Splashes and other strategies, the students' writing is creative and focused. Plus, the students are

more receptive to writing as well as to reading. After 32 years of teaching, I have been through many workshops. The PLN is the most effective I have ever seen," said Sara Weamer, English Teacher, in regard to implementing PLN strategies in her classroom.

Charlie Burch, Social Studies Teacher, stated, "I now have the students telling me what is important...it's not me telling them....the PLN training has had an immediate impact on my teaching and planning."

The real justification is revealed by increased student achievement. Barely completing one year in the Initiative doesn't provide a great deal of quantitative data regarding student achievement. However, the additional use of authentic forms of assessment such as the implementation of portfolios as a means to document individual progress as well as the increase in frequency of writing in all content areas is successfully improving the quality of student performance.

Teacher performance related to instructional delivery of content and assessment are key components in raising the bar to school improvement. The PAHSCI has had the most significant impact on education that I have witnessed in over thirty years. As a district, we greatly appreciate the opportunity to participate in such a meaningful project.

## RFA Researches PAHSCI

PAHSCI - Research for Action (RFA) is continuing its on-going research and evaluation of the PAHSCI project.

RFA has designed evaluations for the December Networking Sessions that will offer feedback of PAHSCI events that assist partners in planning upcoming professional development. RFA has also created individual questionnaires for coaches, mentors, and administrators to collect mid-year data. The questionnaires will request feedback from PAHSCI participants on project implemen-

tation. They will also help RFA to collect and disseminate qualitative data on participants' reactions, learnings, organizational changes occurring, and point to the potential for student learning outcomes.

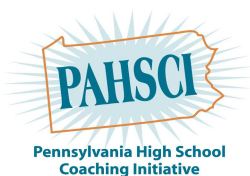
RFA will be working with Robert Slavin, Director of The Center for Data-Driven Reform in Education, headquartered at Johns Hopkins University, to conduct the quantitative data collection and analyses for PAHSCI. The first quantitative report is expected in late January 2007.

*"Districts are collaborating across boundaries in unprecedented ways in a very short time. Support and collaboration are contagious and are producing positive deviance in some very unlikely contexts."*

*Chris Kingsbery,  
Literacy Mentor*



Debbie Jackson, Superintendent (left), and Lia Hahn, Assistant Principal (right), from Burgettstown School District at the Administrators' Retreat



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We're on the web!  
[www.pacoaching.org](http://www.pacoaching.org)



Tim Lucas, Professor of Practice at Lehigh University, presents at Administrators' Retreat on *Schools that Learn*.

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,

The goal of the National Staff Development Council (NSDC) is that "All teachers in all schools will experience high-quality professional learning as part of their daily work." To apply this standard in each of our schools, there must be a shift in thinking and in practice. Schools must be seen as learning environments not only for students, but for teachers and administrators, as well. Nourishing the professional growth of all participants creates an environment conducive to sharing and practice.

Just as our teachers are searching for ways to make learning relevant to their students, administrators must make professional learning relevant to their teachers. The NSDC stresses that "school systems must shift from district-based to school-based learning." (*The Learning System*, Vol.2, No. 4) The less effective, large group profes-

sional learning does not address the critical needs of learners and must be replaced with more practical, yet engaging sessions devoted to improving both student achievement and developing teachers as reflective practitioners.

Successful professional learning is ongoing, tied to standards and curricula, connected to teacher practices, and guided by data. Administrators and teachers who collaborate on instructional needs and plan professional learning are leaders in their communities of practice. They value learning beyond the textbook and district mandates and hold themselves responsible for student learning. They share a vision and join together to create learning communities that ultimately change student outcomes. They touch the teaching and learning soul of every individual.

Ellen B. Eisenberg, Project Director