

THE PASSKEY

HELPING TEACHERS HELP STUDENTS

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The ANNENBERG FOUNDATION

NOVEMBER 2007

VOLUME 3 / ISSUE 2



**Pennsylvania High School
Coaching Initiative**

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FOR PAHSCI, THE FUTURE IS NOW - INSTRUCTIONAL COACHING PROGRAM FACES UNCERTAIN FUTURE AFTER JUNE 2008

by *Kera Walter, Ceisler Jubelirer - Media and Issue Advocacy*

The Pennsylvania High School Coaching Initiative (PAHSCI) is a \$31 million, three-year instructional coaching program funded by the Annenberg Foundation. Begun in 2005, PAHSCI provides one math and one literacy coach for every 600 students in 24 high schools across 15 school districts in Pennsylvania. These coaches facilitate the implementation of research based literacy strategies through one-on-one instructional coaching and are supported by PAHSCI mentors and facilitators who assist in guiding professional development for teachers and administrators with the goals of improving student achievement and building teacher capacity in schools.

The program has been generating real results in classroom instruction and student learning over the last two years. But all that progress could soon grind to a halt. In June 2008, private funding for PAHSCI will run out. Efforts are under way to work with the General Assembly and Governor Edward G. Rendell to find a way to keep the program running – and even expand its successes statewide.

PAHSCI is considered *the* instructional coaching model for classroom excellence among teachers and stu-

dents. The Department of Education, a PAHSCI program partner, has adopted PAHSCI's "coaching" language and standards, and utilizes PAHSCI's services when facilitating professional development for other statewide coaching initiatives, including the administration's Classrooms for the Future project.

Data over the last two years show marked progress in PSSA math and reading student achievement scores in schools supported by PAHSCI. Between 2004 and 2007, PAHSCI schools have shown greater increases than the state as a whole in PSSA math and reading scores.

The proof of PAHSCI's impact is in the results. Because of PAHSCI, teachers have changed, classrooms have changed, and students have changed. To ensure continued success, we need your help. Share your stories with elected officials. Help them understand how important it is we all work together to keep instructional coaching, mentoring, and professional development available to high schools across the state. Make sure they know how effective PAHSCI has been in your classrooms and school districts. Giving students the best education possible is a shared priority.

**“Because of PAHSCI, teachers
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THE FUTURE OF PAHSCI IS NOW

The Pennsylvania High School Coaching Initiative has generated real results in classroom instruction and student learning over the last two years. Several schools report the successful implementation of this instructional coaching, mentoring, and professional development model. Funding for PAHSCI ends in June 2008.

Efforts are under way with the General Assembly and Rendell administration to keep the program running. You can help. Get the word out about PAHSCI and the impact it has had in your classrooms and school districts. Learn more by visiting www.pacoaching.org.

LETTER FROM: PAHSCI'S EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Coaching has been around for years in athletics, performing arts, apprenticeship programs, and in corporate America. It has even enjoyed a de facto presence in education, i.e., teachers discuss student learning with each other, department meetings often focus on teachers using new materials, and conversations at social events frequently revolve around new trends in education. All of these occasions demonstrate the need for teachers to talk to one another and offer support; that is, to provide each other with an opportunity for coaching. Joyce and Showers (1982) state that “the coaching relationship results in the possibility of mutual reflecting, the checking of perceptions, the sharing of frustrations and successes, and informal thinking through of mutual problems.”

Who can argue that this kind of scaffolding is unproductive? No one. Coaching improves teaching, confidence and raises the bar on professionalism (Barkley). The elephant on the table, however, is how to sustain something that costs money no matter how effective it is.

Schools must begin with the end goal in mind. One-on-one instructional coaching is a cost effective intervention, especially when student outcomes are impacted. 18 of 21 schools with data for 2004 and 2007 exceeded the state percentage change in the proportion of students reaching advanced or proficient levels in math. 15 of 21 schools with data for 2004 and 2007 exceeded the state percentage change

in the proportion of students reaching advanced or proficient levels in reading. This speaks to the efficacy of a one-on-one instructional coaching, mentoring, and professional development model.

Schools need to show improvement. They need to show that their coaches are skilled and provide evidence of that skill set; they need to design an ongoing professional development plan that incorporates literacy strategies across all content areas and develop district-wide policies that help improve teaching and learning. There must be a plan to maintain instructional coaching in the event that key people leave the school or grant funding ends.

Districts must provide adequate resources and make time for coaches to work with teachers. If district leaders believe coaching makes a difference in their schools, they must creatively leverage other state funds to maintain their instructional coaches. School and district administrators must enlist the support of key stakeholders and decision makers who understand quality teaching and what it takes to change the culture of a school. They must make their voices heard.

Sincerely,



Ellen B. Eisenberg

“There must be a plan to maintain instructional coaching in the event that key people leave the school or when grant funding ends.”

REFORMING HIGH SCHOOLS THE PAHSCI WAY

By Charles Territo, Educational Consultant to PAHSCI

In the fall of 1983, then Secretary of Education Terrell Bell released a landmark study that came to be known as “The Nation at Risk Report.” That document decried the state of the academic programs in our nation’s high schools and made a compelling argument for change in high school education. In the twenty-five years since the publication of that call to action, there have been myriad

attempts to reform the institution. Those restructuring efforts include, but are not limited to: sharing the leadership of the school with both parents and teachers, restructuring the school day, and increasing the rigor of the curriculum. Each of these endeavors has met with some success and also a few failures. One approach to school reform, however, has proven to be effective in improving student achievement. This approach focuses on increasing teachers’ skills in delivering instruction in the classroom – the place where education really happens. Changing how teachers approach their craft is a difficult task. One promising approach to improving teacher effectiveness is one-on-one instructional coaching, the approach taken by the Pennsylvania High School Coaching Initiative (PAHSCI).

University of Kansas research has shown that simply providing teachers with professional learning opportunities, such as workshop attendance, results in changed instruction 10% of the time. When those professional learning oppor-

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*This newsletter is made possible through a generous grant from
THE ANNENBERG FOUNDATION*

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tunities are accompanied by the on site support provided by an instructional coach, the implementation rate increases to 85%. Further, the process works best when the professional development is delivered on site and is embedded in the regular work day. Again, this is the advantage of the instructional coaching model developed by PAHSCI.

PAHSCI is now two years old and we have been able to develop a body of data to confirm the success of the model. That evidence can be seen in test results that show

steady gains in the achievement of students attending our PAHSCI schools. While two years is too short a time to confirm long term trends, the early results are encouraging. Between 2004 (the year before the project began) and 2007,

the percent of students in PAHSCI schools scoring Advanced or Proficient on the reading section of the PSSA increased by 10.5 points. During the same time period the statewide student reading scores increased by 4.6 points. In the math section of the PSSA, the students in the PAHSCI schools scoring Advanced or Proficient increased 11.9 points while the Statewide scores increased by 4.6 points.

Perhaps a more compelling set of data are the testimonials of school professionals involved in the project. These first hand reports provide a perspective that is not apparent in the numerical accounts of the project's success. For example, Diane Williams, Principal of Bellwood Antis High School reports, "This Initiative has by far, in the last thirty years that I have been involved in education, had the biggest impact that I have ever witnessed, and largely because you are addressing core values in the classroom." Delores Williams, Principal of Simon Gratz High School in Philadelphia comments, "We made AYP for the first time - for the first

time ever. And we were only one of only two comprehensive high schools in the city of Philadelphia [to make AYP]. People were blown away. The first time ever - and we will do it again this year for sure, I know we will."

Many school administrators value the results of instructional coaching enough to invest local funds in support of the project. Charles Machesky, Superintendent of Uniontown Area School District states, "If we wanted it [PAHSCI] would have cost us practically nothing because of the support of the Annenberg Foundation. But we also have some

"Many school administrators value the results of instructional coaching enough to invest local funds in support of the project."

local foundations that will provide us support and we are willing to use funding from the school district to support coaching." George Schuler, Leadership Mentor for the Reading School Districts observed, "One of the most unique aspects of the project that I see is the fact that central office

has the opportunity to spend some money and train many more teachers than are trained in other school districts. They spent a lot of their central office budget money to train sixty additional teachers on Saturdays as a means of institutionalizing the model."

The PAHSCI mentors visit each of our participating schools at least one time per month. During the past two years the mentors have observed significant changes in every school. Those changes are a direct result of their PAHSCI involvement.

During the past two years the Pennsylvania High School Coaching Initiative has proven to be an effective vehicle to achieve high school reform. Evidence of that success can be found in improved test scores, third party observations, and perhaps most convincingly, in the experience of the professionals working in the schools.

THE PAHSCI CHANGE

- School professionals, who are often skeptical of new initiatives, have accepted the project as a positive influence in the school. Administrators view instructional coaches as a resource and as advisors in instructional matters. Teachers rely on instructional coaches as a support system in the effort to improve student achievement;
- School principals have made structural changes in the school to support instructional coaching; i.e., lesson plan forms and teacher observation report forms have been changed to reflect the coaching model. School schedules and calendars have also been altered to accommodate the process;
- Professional conversations have changed and now include structured study groups that focus on current issues in education as well as instructional improvement;
- Administrators have learned to value the benefits of peer relationships as a support for school improvement. Teachers are seen as partners and teacher leadership is viewed as critical to reform;
- The ownership of professional learning activities has shifted from the principal's office to the teachers and the teacher leaders who are the instructional coaches;
- Administrators understand that student engagement requires a different kind of classroom and encourage the "good noise" created by truly effective instruction.

MARK YOUR CALENDAR**DECEMBER 11****Regional Networking Session
Lehigh Valley****DECEMBER 12, 2007****Collaborative Coaching Board
Meeting
Harrisburg, PA****DECEMBER 13****Regional Networking Session
Cranberry, PA****WE'RE ON THE WEB!****www.pacoaching.org**

coaches to guide and model effective, research-based instructional strategies and to most efficiently plan, problem solve, and reflect with classroom teachers. These frameworks likewise provide administrators further support in their role of instructional leader.

The regional course facilitators of PLN have noticed changes in teacher practices through participant journal assignments and in-class discussions. Teachers often reflect on their newfound understanding of the role student engagement plays in the learning process.

One teacher wrote: "Now I finally get it! Learning is only meaningful to the students if they have an active role in

FACILITATORS OF CHANGE*By Gina Calzaferri, Penn Literacy Network*

Within the structure of the Pennsylvania High School Coaching Initiative (PAHSCI), Penn Literacy Network (PLN) provides professional development structured around instructional frameworks and best practice providing a common language and vision to learning communities of school leaders, coaches, and classroom teachers. PLN supports the ability of

the learning process. The more we engage the students in reading, listening, writing, and speaking activities, the higher stake the student takes in his/her own educational process."

Teachers have reported an increase in student engagement as demonstrated by enhanced writing skills in mathematics classrooms, student reflection, active reading, and pair-share and whole-group-share.

Participants also reflect on the shifts in school culture to more collaborative learning environments. PAHSCI and PLN courses have fostered collaboration, sharing, and the use of common language both between educators and between students.

One teacher wrote: "My observation confirms that cooperative teaching leads to cooperative learning. Immediate student progress, engagement, and motivation were observed."

Facilitators have also noticed a change in the teachers enrolling in PLN regional courses. In year three, PLN 1 participants are starting courses with a prior knowledge of the PLN framework and strategies as shared by colleagues. Having this prior knowledge will allow facilitators to introduce a greater wealth of knowledge to participants.

Through PAHSCI, PLN is helping provide teachers with frameworks that build communities of learners and the use of common language. Indeed, the importance of building a professional community that shares such a common vision and language focused on effective instruction and student achievement is seen as critical to the success of high school reform initiatives (High Schools That Work, 2000).

PENNSYLVANIA HIGH SCHOOL COACHING INITIATIVE

Instructional coaching has emerged as a promising strategy for increasing student achievement and affecting education reform nationwide. In 2005, The Annenberg Foundation partnered with the Pennsylvania Department of Education to implement the Pennsylvania High School Coaching Initiative (PAHSCI). Funded by The Annenberg Foundation, PAHSCI is a three-year, \$31 million instructional coaching initiative. Four additional partner organizations provide support for program implementation: Foundations, Inc., Penn Literacy Network from the University of Pennsylvania, Research for Action, and The Philadelphia Foundation. Research support is also provided by the Success for All Foundation from the Johns Hopkins University, MPR

Associates, Inc., and the Academy of Educational Development.

The PAHSCI model is designed to provide trained teacher-leaders, or coaches, to schools and school districts. The Initiative places one literacy and one math coach for every 600 students in 24 high-need high schools located in 15 school districts across Pennsylvania, with a total enrollment of over 32,000 students. Instructional coaches sustain ongoing, site-based, job-embedded professional development for teachers and administrators. They also facilitate in-class coaching and modeling, peer collaboration, and teacher training in order to improve learning at participating schools.

PENNSYLVANIA HIGH SCHOOL COACHING INITIATIVE

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