

Read about the impact of The Penn Literacy Network on teachers, students, and instructional practices. Change has occurred at the PAHSCI schools, especially with the consistency of language and practice provided by the Penn Literacy Network framework and implemented in collaboration with teachers, coaches, mentors, and PLN facilitators.

The Penn Literacy Difference

By Joseph Ginotti, Associate Director, Penn Literacy Network

The importance of fostering teacher collaboration is at the heart of the coaching movement in education. The focus on developing a staff's vision of student learning and quality instruction to enrich the nature of that collaboration is a unique aspect of the Pennsylvania High School Coaching Initiative. As a lead partner in the initiative, The Penn Literacy Network has provided a collaborative journey for school leaders, coaches, and classroom teachers to explore and develop a better understanding of how best to impact student learning.

PLN has provided three years of professional development founded on a research-based framework that stresses building student-centered classrooms rich in reading, writing and talking activities that enhance student learning in all content areas. Developing a critical mass of educators exploring and applying a consistency of belief and practice deeply impacts two critical areas: student engagement and literacy and staff collaboration. The common language and best practices provided allow coaches and teachers to work more effectively together in improving classroom instruction. This structure of professional development allows for a shared ownership of the initiative with teachers, coaches, and school and district leaders working together to develop the highest quality of classroom instruction in all content areas and for all students.

The quality of the professional development provided by PLN has been enhanced in this initiative by listening and responding to the needs of our schools: providing an English Language Learner component for interested schools in our year one course, PLN1; stressing the practice of literacy study groups in our year two, PLN2 seminar; developing year three courses focusing on instruction for special needs students, informational reading and writing, and curriculum backmapping, among others. The collaboration with and support of the Foundations mentors has also been critical to the success of the integration of practice at the school level.

The research on effective reform often talks to the need for a change in culture as a requisite for success. The professional development and leadership provided by the Penn Literacy Network has afforded the vision and the possibility central to that change. It is that change that has been referenced again and again at every level – teachers, coaches, facilitators, mentors and school and district leaders – as essential to the success experienced. Schools where common language, common vision, and consistent practice is the focus of every educator;

where coaches are respected and valued; where administrators are instructional leaders; and where teachers feel ownership of their own professional growth, that is a culture of success. It is a culture where students will be valued and nurtured and surrounded with the tools for their own success. The Penn Literacy Network is proud to have played a part in creating such a positive difference.