

We invite you to read the words of Tom Sebastian, Director of High School Coaching for Foundations, Inc., who offers our readership a guide through the two days of the Spring Statewide Conference held on May 4th and 5th in State College, Pennsylvania.□

PAHSCI held its spring state-wide networking conference on May 4 and 5, 2008 at the Penn Stater Conference Center Hotel in State College, Pennsylvania. Seventy-four instructional coaches and thirty-four administrators from twenty-four high schools were in attendance. Also present were Foundations Inc. Mentors, PLN Facilitators, RFA Evaluators, and representatives from the Annenberg Foundation, PDE, and The Philadelphia Foundation.

The conference began the evening of May 4th with a reception followed by a dinner meeting. The program provided ample opportunities for networking, reflecting, and socializing.

The session on day two of the conference opened with a welcome provided by Dr. Gerald Zahorchak, Pennsylvania Secretary of Education, who congratulated the participants for their contributions to enhanced professional learning and student achievement in the PAHSCI schools. This address was followed by a series of activities focused on leadership and collaboration. These central themes were further articulated through a core of breakout sessions designed and facilitated by instructional coaches and/or school administrators. The sessions offered during the two time slots included: Instructional Coaching: Luxury or Necessity?; PSSA Gallery Walk for Literacy: A Virtual Tour; Differentiation Using the Tiering Model; Teaching Towards the Big Ideas in Algebra; Asking Questions the “High” Way; Maximizing the Use of Data to Inform Instruction; Using Primary Source Video: Can it be Engaging?; Making the Most of Professional Development; Data in the Math Classroom; and Voices from the Civil Rights Movement.

The conference culminated with Gail Levin, Executive Director of the Annenberg Foundation, leading the PAHSCI partners in recognizing the instructional coaches and school leaders for their participation in the Pennsylvania High School Coaching Initiative. In her comments, Dr. Levin noted, “We took an idea – a relatively developed idea but still an idea – and we gave it substance. Today, we have realized much of the promise that was once only in the eye of the beholder, and we celebrate the hard work that went into such realization. . . . Fortunately for us, we now have a large cadre of well trained, confident, experienced teacher leaders who can function at multiple levels within a school. As such, they now have a better understanding of what it takes to work in this kind of environment – an environment in which change is, in fact, a constant – and they have the flexibility to surmount the challenges.”

Participants received certificates in acknowledgement of their services and provided feedback through their conference evaluations. Their feedback indicated a very high degree of satisfaction with the conference and an appreciation for the pairing of professional learning and celebration.

