

"The primary purpose of professional learning is to improve educator practice and student results. Continuous improvement of individuals, schools, and school systems depends on high-quality professional learning (*Standards for Professional Learning*).\" Instructional coaches are in a perfect position to provide ongoing, job-embedded professional learning for teachers and help them implement effective instructional practices. Of course, providing professional learning around the PA Common Core, SAS, PVAAS, Keystone Exams, CDTs, teacher effectiveness, and a plethora of other statewide initiatives are the content many coaches are asked to support. Don't despair...coaches and teachers can collaborate on a multitude of professional learning opportunities that all fit within the PIIC 4 quadrant framework.

Whether you are a part-time coach or a full time coach, you will be expected to offer high quality professional learning to your colleagues. You will be sought after to distribute school, district, and IU policies and facilitate modules of learning. Always remember that you are an instructional coach who is focused on classroom practices that increase student engagement and improve student learning. How you provide that professional learning will make all the difference.

Effective coaches establish strong relationships built on confidentiality, collaboration, collective problem solving, and continuous communication. Content is important so that coaches know what they are supporting. Critical, however, is the need to maintain a balance between the content of the coaching and the consistency, integrity, and amount of the coaching provided to colleagues.

Think for a moment about a coach who is helping teachers implement PA CCSS in math. The coach is a skilled colleague who has been trained and really knows his/her "stuff." If the coach, however, doesn't work one-on-one with teachers or only meets selected teachers in his/her coaching cohort once or twice a month, how can that infrequency create strong relationships that result in more effective instructional practices? The coach needs to meet with teachers to plan (before), to visit (during), and to debrief (after) in order to benefit from the complete coaching cycle. Don't allow a part-time schedule to interfere with your goal of sharing the learning regularly, often, and intentional. Connect those dots between what (content) needs to be conveyed, use collected data to make instructional decisions, focus on evidence based literacy practices to help students make meaning from their texts, and work with teachers in non-evaluative ways so that they become reflective practitioners.

Professional learning can occur in many ways. The learning may be one-on-one, in small

groups, virtual, or a combination of all three. Although some ways may feel more comfortable than others, the idea behind professional learning is that the learning is nonstop so that improvement is continuous. "Drop-in" professional learning is nothing more than the simple exposure to some content; there is no collaborative exchange, no "side-by-side" support, no feedback that promotes reflection, and no opportunity to think aloud and hear what effective teaching looks like, sounds like, and feels like. Make every effort to maintain your integrity and provide high quality professional learning in ways that help teachers implement effective instructional practices, all day, every day.