PAHSCI PORTFOLIO

FALL 2007

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SECRETARY ZAHORCHAK ON INSTRUCTIONAL COACHING

Instructional coaching is increasingly recognized as an effective strategy for improving student performance, and Pennsylvania is proud to be at the forefront of this movement.

The Pennsylvania High School Coaching Initiative is not only highlighting the benefits of instructional coaching; it is helping to break new ground in this emerging area. We are proving that coaching is a smart, effective way to improve instruction, raise student achievement, and encourage high school reform. In an effort to standardize practices and ensure consistency and effectiveness for instructional coaching, we also are helping to refine the role of instructional coaches. PAHSCI is central to this endeavor, and it is one of several ways we are using coaching to improve public education in Pennsylvania. Currently, PAHSCI places one math and one literacy coach for every 600 students in each of its 24 high schools across the Commonwealth. The goals are to improve student achievement and to help build capacity and nurture teacher leaders in our schools.

Other statewide coaching initiatives include our Accountability Block Grant program, Getting to One, Reading First and Classrooms for the Future.

Classrooms for the Future is a wonderful example of how coaching improves education. When we launched this three-year initiative in 2006-07, we knew coaching would have to be an integral part of making it work. To that end, we made certain that funding was provided not only for laptops and other classroom technology, but also for staff development to ensure teachers knew the best practices for incorporating high-tech tools into the curriculum.

Of course, to reap the full benefits of collaborative coaching, we need to assure its sustainability in Pennsylvania.

In order to help sustain instructional coaching, the Department of Education has created a Collaborative Coaching Board, which meets monthly, and is working to develop a common model of coaching and evaluation in order to demonstrate the tremendous impact coaching can have in the classroom. The Board will help maintain consistency among coaching initiatives and provide guidance to districts as they develop coaching initiatives. The Board also is researching ways to tie data from all of the initiatives together to illustrate the impact of instructional coaching at the state level.

In addition, instructional coaching is included in the Accountability Block Grant program, making it one of the options districts can select to utilize the state funding. This allows districts to support the coaching model at all grade levels and in all content areas while assuring accountability through required reporting of program outcomes.

Coaching has a tremendous ripple effect in the educational field. Solid professional development creates a well-trained teacher, a teacher who can motivate students to achieve and aspire. Those students, in turn, help us to create a better Pennsylvania.

(L to R) Joseph Beech, Math Coach, Wm. Penn HS; Joetta Britvich, Principal, Albert Gallatin HS; Anne Marie Layue, Math Coach, Albert Gallatin HS; and Angela Mollis, Literacy Coach, Uniontown HS

PENNSYLVANIA HIGH SCHOOL COACHING INITIATIVE

PAHSCI SUPPORTS COLLABORATIVE LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS

By Ellen B. Eisenberg, Executive Director, PAHSCI

What is more important than valuing students, their teachers, and learning? What is more important than providing an environment that is conducive to learning, collaborating, planning, and reflecting on practices that have incredible impact on teachers and the students they teach? What is more effective than creating an atmosphere that nurtures learning and values the practices that help teachers help students?

Research shows that teacher quality affects student achievement. One key to impacting teacher quality is professional learning. Teachers who participate in quality professional development advance their teaching skills which can lead to improved student achievement. The Pennsylvania High School Coaching Initiative (PAHSCI), funded by The Annenberg Foundation, is an instructional coaching model that provides one-on-one support to enhance teacher quality with meaningful professional development tied to standards, curriculum, research and best practices. PAHSCI school coaches and administrators receive professional and program support from the Initiative's team of mentors and facilitators, working together on a cycle of preparation, implementation, assessment and feedback.

PAHSCI aims to improve student achievement and build teacher capacity. We provide an instructional coaching, mentoring and professional development model that focuses on teaching, learning, and school practices that lead to changes in student outcomes. As indicated in our 2007 teacher surveys, we are on our way to meeting these goals. Of teachers who experienced ongoing one-on-one contact with instructional coaches:

- 91% reported that their coach addressed their needs as a teacher;

- 83% reported that the coaches are catalysts for learning among staff members at their schools;

- 81% reported that their knowledge of research-based literacy strategies increased and deepened as a result of working with their coach;

- 86% reported that PAHSCI could be a catalyst for high quality, high school teaching, and that the Initiative should focus on helping all teachers become effective with at-risk learners.

We are helping to transform our 24 high schools in Pennsylvania into schools that recognize the impact of teacher collaboration, understand how to promote reflective practices, and support teaching and learning through a variety of data. We are helping practitioners to practice with each other and helping to change the culture of our schools, one conversation at a time.

For more information about PAHSCI, please access our website @ www.pacoaching.org.

THE PROMISE AND POTENTIAL OF LITERACY COACHING

By Rita Bean, University of Pittsburgh

The recognition that we need to do a better job of educating our high school students has led educators to seek ways of improving classroom instruction. One approach is that of instructional coaching. Perhaps it is time for a cautionary note—one that highlights the roadblocks that may limit the effectiveness of coaching. If coaching is to be more than a band-aid or temporary solution to educational concerns, the following issues must be addressed.

DEFINE WHAT COACHING IS — AND IS NOT. (See table on page 3.) Coaching is based on research that highlights the value of on-going, on-the-job professional development. When teachers are provided with opportunities to learn more about the content they teach and how to teach it, there tends to be improved student learning (NICHD, 2000; Darling-Hammond & McLaughlin, 1995). Those who coach have roles that are very different from any found in schools previously. Although coaches, in their role, may help to locate materials or other resources for teachers, they need to be careful that their position does not evolve into one in which they spend the majority of their time duplicating or organizing materials. In addition, experts who write about coaching emphasize the fact that coaching is not an evaluative position.

Coaches are there to support the work of teachers. The most effective way to do this is to respond to needs identified by teacher and coach; various types of data can

THE PROMISE AND POTENTIAL OF LITERACY COACHING

be used to identify these needs. Given that the goal is school-wide improvement, coaching must be available to all teachers. There are many different ways to support teachers and books such as those written by Kise, 2006; Puig & Froelich, 2007; and Toll, 2007 can be useful references. The websites of the Literacy Coaching Clearinghouse (**www.literacycoachingonline.org**) and, of course, **www.pacoaching.org,** also provide valuable information.

AN ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE THAT PROMOTES COACHING. Coaching thrives in a context in which there are positive relationships and a sense of community in the school. Features that are especially important include the following:

- A supportive principal who understands and values coaching. Coaches identify their relationship with the principal as a key factor for success (Bean & Zigmond, 2006). They cite specifics about ways a principal provides support, e.g., arranging the schedule so that there is opportunity for teacher interaction; meeting on a regular basis with the coach; and supporting the notion of coaching as a key to school improvement. Coaches also indicate that supportive principals recognize that coaches have to maintain confidentiality in terms of what they see and hear in classrooms;

- The school has a common vision and goals with an instructional framework that helps establish a roadmap for teachers;

- Teachers have high expectations of students;

- The school supports teachers as learners; teachers interact with each other, value each other, and are willing to accept constructive criticism about their work.

NEED FOR DATA ABOUT COACHING. In order for coaching to be supported by policy makers, school boards, and other potential funders, we need evidence that coaching makes a difference in terms of teacher practices and student achievement. As indicated in *Standards for Middle and High School Literacy Coaches* (IRA, 2006), there are "few studies — and no systematic body of research — reporting on the direct link of literacy coaching to student learning." (p.2) Without that evidence, coaching may disappear as have other educational initiatives. What we have at the present time are some small numbers of studies that investigate teacher and coach perceptions of coaching and the effect of coaching on teacher practices (Bean, Belcastro, Hathaway, Risko, Rosemary, & Roskos, 2006). What is promising, however, is the research that is currently

being conducted about the various initiatives in schools across this country.

Coaching holds much promise; it provides the support that enables teachers to design and implement the best possible instruction. It is based on a model that identifies the teacher as a reflective professional responsible for making decisions about how to best structure instructional experiences for students. It would be unfortunate if such a model did not achieve its potential because it was misunderstood or implemented inappropriately.

Dr. Bean's complete article with references is posted on the www.pacoaching.org <http://www.pacoaching.org> website.

DEFINING COACHING: WHAT IT IS AND IS NOT

Coaching IS:
Job-embedded professional development that is on-going and sustained;
Support for teachers (both individual and groups);
Based on teacher and student needs as identified by multiple sources;
Form of inquiry and reflection;
Cooperative and collaborative;
Building school capacity;
Means of improving school achievement.

Coaching IS NOT:
Evaluative in nature; that is, coaches are not there to "judge" teacher performance;
Administrative with major role to handle paperwork, budgets, order and organize materials;
Serving as a Teacher's aide;
Assessing students only;
Data entry only;
An instructional role, e.g., teaching students with problems.

OVERVIEW OF COLLABORATIVE COACHING BOARD

October 2006 through August 2007

D r. Gerald L. Zahorchak convened the Collaborative Coaching Board in October 2006. Its focus is to establish consistency among the five Pennsylvania initiatives that have major coaching components as part of their school improvement design. Representatives from all instructional coaching initiatives attend the monthly meetings. Additional Board members represent the Pennsylvania Department of Education, higher education, and the intermediate units.

The first order of business was to determine a common language so that terms such as "coach" and "mentor" carried the same meaning across the initiatives. Coaches are district level personnel, while mentors may be state or regional level personnel, retired teachers or coaches. Mentors are typically funded by the initiative to provide support, guidance and professional development to district coaches and administrators. All initiatives will use the same terminology.

The next essential task of the Board was to identify which initiatives were implemented in each of our participating districts. A matrix was developed and populated with appropriate information. This helped build awareness for directors of the multiple coaching projects in the same school, projects that should be communicating and engaging in common planning for school improvement regardless of the content area or funding stream. As part of the effort to enhance cross initiative work, this matrix is available to the coaching initiatives and district staff. Professional development is a primary task of every initiative for coaching. Although each initiative has content specific training, there is a common need for general training for coaches as well. The Board worked with Michael Toth of Learning Sciences, Inc., to understand the on-line coaching courses that are available and being used by some

(L to R) Kimberlee Cruz, Math Coach, McCaskey East HS; Gus Patukas, Literacy Coach, McCaskey HS; Patricia Jacobs, Literacy Coach, McCaskey HS; and Angela Fry, Literacy Coach, McCaskey HS

of the initiatives as required professional development for teachers and coaches. The Pennsylvania High School Coaching Initiative (PAHSCI) coaches and administrators regularly engage in ongoing professional learning opportunities as part of their regional course work from the Penn Literacy Network and via their networking sessions. Mentors from Foundations, Inc., also provide PAHSCI coaches' training to Classroom for the Future coaches. Additional planning is taking place to facilitate strong cross-initiative training for coaches.

Evaluation has been a critical component of all coaching initiatives. The Board decided to compare processes such as data collection, evaluation design, and data analysis strategies. Documents were collected from each initiative and the Board continues to work with this task. This process has been of particular benefit to the Classroom for the Future project as it is only in year one and can benefit from the experiences of the other projects.

Continuing in the effort for consistency, the Board has developed a draft set of common assurances and a draft common coach job description to be used across initiatives. The documents are posted on the PDE website.

Another issue that the Board is actively considering is the implementation of planned professional development leading to some form of endorsement for coaches. Dr. Rita Bean, of the University of Pittsburgh, conducted a survey of other states to establish an understanding of common practice pertaining to coach certification. Although actual certification is not currently under discussion in other states, the Board will establish recommendations that will be forwarded to Dr. Zahorchak for consideration.

(L to R) Charlotte Samuels, Math Mentor, Foundations, Inc.; Dave Marino, Math Coach, Central HS; Don D'Amico, Leadership Mentor, Foundations, Inc.; and Mary Margosian, Literacy Coach, East HS

HOW CENTRAL MOUNTAIN HIGH SCHOOL USES DATA

By Kathy A. Yorks & Tina M. Killinger, Literacy/Math Coaches

There's a small sign hanging in our coaches' office at Central Mountain High School that reads, "We make lemonade." It's been our motto since we began this coaching adventure and grew out of the saying that when life gives you lemons, you make lemonade. So what does this have to do with using data to inform instruction?

Many would consider tests such as PSSA and 4-Sight to be a truckload of lemons, bitter to the taste and virtually unpalatable without a lot of sweetening. That's where coaches and well-designed data-management tools come in. We cannot make the lemons/tests go away, but we can use them to create a product that can be just as appreciated and useful as a glass of lemonade on a hot summer day.

In the November 2005 edition of Educational Leadership, Jay McTighe and Ken O'Connor provide a practical guide to using assessments to enhance learning and teaching in their article, "Seven Practices for Effective Learning." We have found practices 3 (Assess before teaching) and 7 (Allow new evidence of achievement to replace old evidence) to be especially important as we try to help teachers understand the value of summative and formative assessments and the importance of using the data these tests provide to guide their instruction. We then have worked very hard to model for teachers how to sort, analyze and regularly use this data to improve their instruction.

One of the central challenges we have faced is getting teachers to truly embrace the practice of assessing before teaching. As secondary teachers, assessing post-teaching is as expected as the sun setting at the end of the day, but pre-testing or using existing data is not so natural. Our challenge is not just changing practice, but making sure that teachers understand why they must assess their students before they start teaching. Teachers must ask themselves:

- What do my students already know about this topic?

- What misconceptions do they hold; In what areas do they have the greatest need?

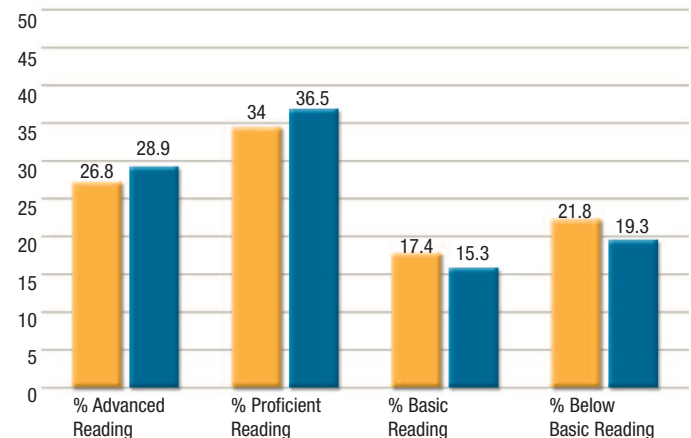- Do they have the prerequisite background knowledge and skills to achieve my learning objectives?

In order to help teachers move in this important direction, all teachers at Central Mountain High School participated in professional development centered around examining and
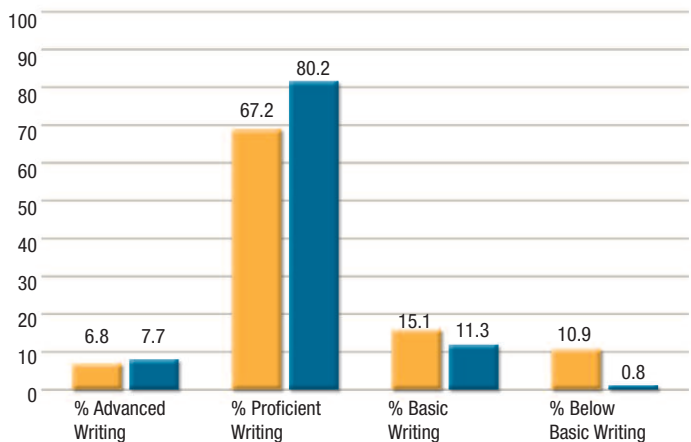
PSSA Math Results in PAHSCI Schools
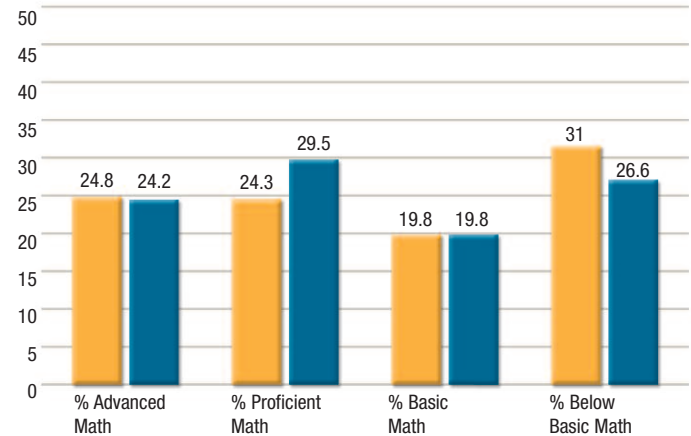
PSSA Reading Results in PAHSCI Schools

PSSA Writing Results in PAHSCI Schools

■ School Year 2004 – 2005   ■ School Year 2006 – 2007

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HOW CENTRAL MOUNTAIN HIGH SCHOOL USES DATA

analyzing 4-Sight data. Funded by our PAHSCI Implementation Grant, substitute teachers were brought in so that all staff could be trained in a small group setting. Teachers were given reports printed from the Success For All site based on their content area. Many teachers received both reading and math data. We reviewed the benchmarks and provided specific examples of test items that measured them. Using a coach-developed scale, we modeled for teachers how to use this numeric scale to determine if students were in a beginning (red) stage of understanding, developing (yellow) stage or mastery (green) stage. Teachers were then given appropriately colored highlighters and instructed to analyze their students' stages of understanding. The striking nature of the highlighted reports revealed key insights and stimulated meaningful conversations. As a group, we then brainstormed ideas of how to use this knowledge in designing instruction. As a follow-up to this training, study groups were held that moved teachers to the next step, analyzing their own classroom-generated data in this fashion, and using new tools and strategies to make this practice more systematic.

While we are only in the fourth week of school, we have wasted no time in revisiting and reemphasizing the importance of accessing and using data. Teachers already are participating in small group professional development training in which they are learning how to access their students PSSA, Terra Nova, and 2006-07 4-Sight data using OnHand Schools data system from EdInsight. By the beginning of October, teachers also will have access to the scores of the recently adminis-tered baseline 4-Sight. Having all of this data, partnered with a friendly and effective way to access it, allows us to emphasize McTighe's and O'Connor's practice #7 – *Allow new evidence of achievement* to replace old data or as we phrase it, regularly determine how well your students are progressing towards mastery.

As a result of participating in a variety of professional development activities over the past year, CMHS teachers have a new attitude toward test-provided data and have benefited in many ways. They now:

⚬ Have a deeper understanding of the PSSA and 4-Sight tests which has in turn allowed them to better understand the reading and math eligible content. Evidence of this can be seen in teacher-generated tests that include questions modeled after the PSSA, and in lesson plans;

(L to R) Central Mountain High School's Judith Petruzzi, Director of Special Education; Tina Killinger, Math Coach; Kathy Yorks, Math Coach; Karen Probst, Principal; and Kelly Hastings, Director of Curriculum / Special Projects

⚬ More effectively implement PLN strategies, especially as they serve as useful pre-assessment tools and evidence of working towards mastery. For example, our teachers use word sorts to assess beginning levels of understanding and subsequent sorting of the same words to monitor growth;

⚬ Engage in meaningful conversation with each other and more importantly with their students about tests and what they tell us. Our students are given their scores by their math and English teachers, using a coach-developed form that facilitates discussion about strengths and weaknesses. Thus, our students seem to be taking the tests more seriously which we believe is providing us with more reliable data;

⚬ Seek out the coaches for help in analyzing and using data. The growth of one-on-one deep coaching opportunities has kept us happily busy!

Abraham Lincoln once said, "Am I not destroying my enemies when I make friends of them?" For too long, we have viewed mandated tests as our enemies. With proper tools and support, they can be our friends. Perhaps someday they'll be gone; until then, we can use these tests/lemons and make and drink our lemonade, knowing we're doing what is best for our students.

McTighe, J. & O'Connor, K. (2005). Seven practices for effective learning. *Educational Leadership,* 63(3), 10-17.