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On the Path From Professional Development to Professional Learning

By Jana DelMarcelle, Bear Creek School Instructional Coach

Many people think of “personalized learning” as an ideal looming in the distance, something that, given current constraints, is unattainable. However, perceived distance must not be allowed to cause discouragement. Personalized learning of any kind is a journey, not a destination. When viewed as a process, steps toward that perceived ideal are readily attainable. Many districts are taking these steps in relation to student learning, yet are not making the same type of progress toward a personalized learning environment for teachers.

The fact is that true, individualized coaching exemplifies the path to personalization when it is done following the principles of PIIC and utilizing the BDA cycle.

Individualized, sustained, and job-embedded are all facets of personalized learning. Coaching is individualized, because it relates to one’s own goals and levels of expertise. Coaching is sustained, which leads to a productive struggle with new information and learning. Coaching is job-embedded, within each teacher’s learning environment, making it meaningful. The professional learning practice of instructional coaching truly embodies the definition of personalized learning. The challenge is to transfer these principles that are demonstrated in true, individualized coaching to whole-group professional development sessions. Reflecting on how whole group professional development sessions are planned and facilitated can lead to a more personalized learning experience for teachers involved.

Reflective Questions to Take a Step Forward on the Path to Personalization:

1. Is this professional learning opportunity relevant and meaningful to each party involved? Can this learning apply to multiple contexts?
2. Are data points being used (patterns of observation, progress toward the vision, or student

achievement results) to guide planning?

3. Are the digital tools available in our district being used to their greatest capabilities to create a personalized environment?
4. Are guided reflection strategies being used to determine how learning is transferred to action in the school setting? Is this knowledge then guiding the next steps for professional development planning?

Reflecting on the current model of whole group professional development and steps that can be taken on the path to personalization of teacher learning will lead to more autonomy and personalized growth for

teachers. This shifts the paradigm from the idea that professional development is something that is “done to” professionals toward the idea that professionals are the key driver in their own professional learning.

“Personalized learning of any kind is a journey, not a destination. When viewed as a process, steps toward that perceived ideal are readily attainable.”

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Check Out These Books!

Instructional Coaching in Action: An Integrated Approach That Transforms Thinking, Practice, and Schools (Eisenberg, Eisenberg, Medrich, and Charner)

Investigating Disciplinary Literacy: A Framework for Collaborative Professional Learning (Dobbs, Ippolito, and Charner-Laird)

Creating a Culture of Reflective Practice (Hall and Simeral)

PIIC’S MISSION: To support instructional coaching which helps teachers strengthen instructional practice, increase student engagement, and improve student learning

Letter from TPIIC's Executive Director

Ongoing conversations about education continue to focus on school transformation. How can we prepare our students for the future? How do we do "it"? What do we need to do? Who will come along for the journey? How can we meet the needs of a diverse population in meaningful ways? Are our teachers prepared? These questions sound so simple to answer but they are far from simplistic to execute. Of course, I think that an effective instructional coaching model implemented with fidelity, dosage, and ubiquity ensures that a plethora of goals supporting school change is accomplished.

Many believe that instructional coaches must meet the needs of the teachers with whom they work. And, they in turn, must meet the needs of their students. That is true. However, if we only meet the needs of our population and never move beyond that stage, how do we really push learning to the next level?

Instructional coaching is not a cookie cutter model. Coaches are poised to help teachers implement effective instructional practices with a diverse population of teachers and students. Maybe this is where instructional coaching as a personalized learning plan for teachers helps define the roles and responsibilities of an instructional coach.

Richard Culatta, CEO of the International Society for Technology in Education, states that personalized learning should: *"Provide all students with learning opportunities aligned to their needs and interests. Personalized learning is not about software—it's about changing culture. We have become far too complacent with a*

model that places schedule consistency over student learning."

Instructional coaching is all about personalized learning and changing culture – for both the teacher and students! But, just as there are multiple definitions of instructional coaching, there are several definitions of personalized learning. Instructional coaches can help shape that definition for teachers and schools by modeling how to shift teaching and learning so that everyone is a member in a community of learning and practice, prioritizing the importance of learning every day.

For teachers to personalize learning for their students, they must build their content expertise and the delivery of instructional practices in a safe, no-risk environment where they are rewarded for their innovation and not negatively evaluated for something tried without reaching the intended outcomes. Teachers cannot do this in isolation. They need to explore, experiment, and evolve into a different kind of learner before they can revolutionize how their students learn. They need the support of instructional coaches who practice personalized learning.

In the iNACOL blog (March 2017) I recently read, the staff wrote a 3-part series about personalized learning and what it looks like in schools. They recognize the challenges of teaching a full class with a variety of learning styles and expectations of moving students forward. They believe that effective personalized learning empowers both students and teachers and that many teachers prefer personalized learning because they can focus on a deeper

understanding of their students and how they learn. They believe that interest and relevance should drive the curriculum, not a textbook. This ideology fosters the idea of learning ownership; that is, teachers and students can become architects of their own learning. In other words, teacher and student agency.

Effective instructional coaching occurs when a solid, trusting relationship is established. Coaches and their teaching colleagues respect each other's voice, expertise, experience, and willingness to learn. They help each other make data-driven decisions that move practice and learning forward. They may meet in small groups but the support is tailored to the individual's needs. *"In a personalized learning environment, teachers are no longer the keepers of knowledge, basing instruction on standardized curriculum at one level. Instead a teacher's role is to manage the resources and supports that students need, when they need them, in order to reach mastery"* (S., Williams, M, Moyer, J, George, M & Foster. *Shifting Paradigm of Teaching: Personalized Learning According to Teachers.* KnowledgeWorks 2016).

Effective instructional coaching helps teachers reach their full potential so that their students can reach theirs. Clearly, instructional coaching is personalized learning for teachers.

Sincerely,

Allen B. Eisenberg

"It's a sure sign of summer if the chair gets up when you do." Walter Winchell
Enjoy the summer... take time to refresh, renew, and re-energize. See you in September!

This is Disciplinary Literacy: Reading, Writing, Thinking and Doing... Content Area by Content Area

Book Review by Diane Hubona, IU 10 PIIC Mentor

Reading across the content areas is not a new idea; however, many books on the subject explore the necessity but neglect the actual steps taken to make literacy-based instruction a reality. Instructional coaches are asked to help classroom teachers implement meaningful reading and writing that's rooted in the discipline.

This is Disciplinary Literacy: Reading, Writing, Thinking and Doing... Content Area by Content

"The book analyzes the scaffolding of learning so that even the most reluctant teacher can embrace one instructional strategy at a time while creating a collaborative, student-centered classroom."

Area by Releah Cossett Lent provides coaches who are asked to move teachers from a teacher-centered to a student-centered environment an amazing opportunity. The book offers coaches as well as teachers a unique opportunity to establish literacy-rich classrooms, regardless of the

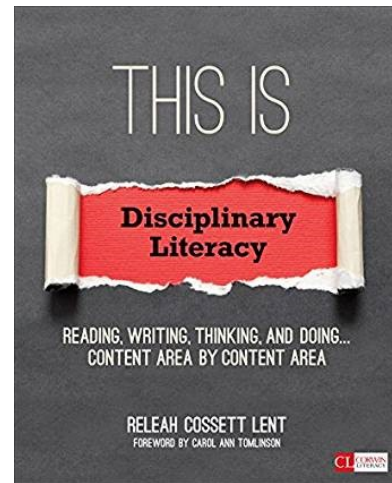
Continued on p. 3, Disciplinary Literacy

specific discipline.

The book is so useful because it explores all the essential components for science, math, social studies, and ELA lessons but also includes practical techniques teachers can take back and successfully implement, particularly with the help of a coach. Each chapter explores literacy-based instruction and how to incorporate reading, writing, inquiry learning, and collaboration in the various disciplines. Teachers require hands-on suggestions, and each chapter is equipped with a host of effective strategies and techniques that coaches can help teachers implement in their classrooms. Most important, teachers will experience success in engaging students in a much deeper learning. The book analyzes the scaffolding of learning so that even the most reluctant teacher can embrace one instructional strategy at a time while creating a collaborative, student-centered classroom.

This is Disciplinary Literacy successfully blends theory with practical application, and I highly recommend it for a book study, as well as for coaches to hone their craft and confidence in working with all content area teachers.

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“This new model, aptly called ‘Disciplinary Literacy,’ recognizes that reading, writing, thinking, reasoning, and doing within each discipline is unique—and leads to the understanding that every field of study creates, communicates, and evaluates knowledge differently.”

This Is Disciplinary Learning

Instructional Coaching... a Growth Model for Teacher Leaders

By Donette Porter, IU 5 PIIC Mentor

Instructional coaching is a proven model for improving teacher practice for all teachers and especially our teacher leaders. School systems often struggle with the idea of how to grow “proficient” and “distinguished” teachers. When you’ve reached a pinnacle, how can you still improve? There is always room for learning and growing, and instructional coaching is a growth model for our teacher leaders. Let’s think for a moment about the elite professional athletes or great musicians who surround themselves with coaches to help build skills and improve. Some may think professional athletes don’t need coaches—they’re the best already-- yet they all have them. Why, you may ask? Coaching can help people to gain self-awareness, clarify goals, achieve their development objectives, unlock their potential, etc. A coach can even act as a sounding board.

Jobs for the Future, US Department of Education released a tool titled, *Growing Teacher Leaders: Building a Community of Leaders Through Distributed*

Leadership (2014). The Teacher Leader Model Standards define teacher leadership as, “The process by which teachers, individually or collectively, influence their colleagues, principals, and other members of the school community to improve teaching and learning practices with the aim of increased student learning and achievement.” Teacher leadership, therefore, can be formal or informal and

“Teacher leadership, therefore, can be formal or informal and can be implemented by any one teacher at any given moment in any situation.”

can be implemented by any one teacher at any given moment in any situation. This sounds just like coaching!

Coaching in schools can best improve teacher practice when it's teacher-centered, no-fault, and strengths-based. Instructional coaching can contribute to the growth and development of teacher practice and can also help to develop skills and talents which, in turn, increase student achievement. Schools looking to create

teacher leaders and continue to improve the school system and culture can implement a model of instructional coaching. They may even want to consider utilizing some of these teacher leaders as coaches. A school that focuses on providing continued opportunities for growth and learning to teachers can positively impact student learning. In today’s schools, collaboration is key.

Some questions schools can consider:

- Are there opportunities in place for teachers to collaborate?
- In what ways do teachers work on the improvement of their teaching?
- How are teachers supported to be high quality, reflective teachers?

How does a school work towards answering these questions? Schools can use coaching as a growth model for teacher leaders.

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Taking Professional Learning By Storm

By Shelly Mrozek, Laurel SD Instructional Coach

One of my professional goals for the 2018-2019 academic year was to personalize learning for the teachers in our district. I would like to take you on a journey through the school year as we move through PIIC's 4-quadrant framework and take professional learning by storm. Along the way, please take notice of the items in bold referencing the framework.

At the beginning of the school year, the English Language Arts (ELA) teachers in grades four through eight decided to sharpen their instructional practices for text-dependent analysis (TDA). During the first month of school, the students were asked to respond to a TDA prompt. In October, I conducted a **small-group workshop** with the ELA teachers to identify students' strengths and areas of concern. After **reviewing the students' work**, we felt it would be beneficial to focus our attention and instruction on deconstructing the prompt and identifying reading elements.

Throughout the month of November, the principal and I worked collaboratively during our weekly meetings to design an action research project in order to **collect and analyze data**. Before Christmas, each of the ELA teachers administered a TDA pre-inventory to their students. They were asked to identify the possible reading elements embedded in each of the ten prompts. The inventories were scored, and the **results were analyzed**.

Traditionally, the month of January is a time for reflection and redirection. During our second TDA workshop, we **reflected on the data** and devised a plan of action. We took out our calendars and scheduled times to meet for **one-on-one support**. Each teacher moved through the **BDA cycle of consultation** at his/her own pace. It was time to implement **evidence-based literacy practices**. During the two coldest months of the school year, January and February, the teachers worked diligently to implement **evidence-based literacy practices** tailored specifically to meet the needs of their students.

In the midst of March Madness, the teachers administered the TDA inventory for a second time to the students. Their responses showed they had made moderate growth in the area of deconstructing the prompt. In the middle of April, the state will shower the students with rigorous questions and prompts to assess the students' learning as well as the effectiveness of the instructional practices implored by teachers throughout the

school year. For the three months following the PSSAs, our school district will anxiously await the arrival of the data collected by the state. We can then begin our journey to personalize professional learning and move through the 4-quadrant framework all over again, reminding us that learning is a recursive process.

- *Are you ready to take professional learning by storm?*
- *How do you plan to personalize learning for the teachers you support?*
- *How will personalized professional learning impact the students' learning in your district?*

"We can then begin our journey to personalize professional learning and move through the 4-quadrant framework all over again, reminding us that learning is repetitive."

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The PIIC 4-Quadrant Framework

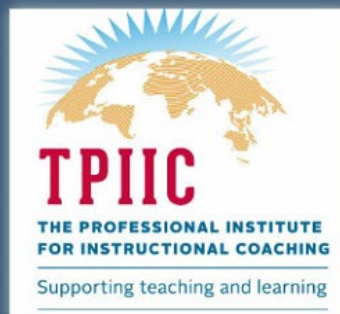
PIIC advocates **one-on-one and small group support** for teachers, coaches, and school leaders using the **BDA cycle of consultation**

PIIC focuses on **collecting, analyzing, and using data** to identify student needs, assess changes in classroom instructional practice and measure student progress.

PIIC emphasizes the use of **evidence-based literacy practices**.

PIIC supports **reflective and non-evaluative** practices.

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