

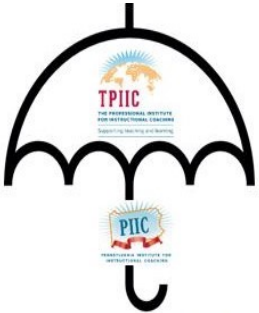
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July 2020
Volume 2, Issue 3

Reaching, Sustaining, and Supporting Teachers

By Marcielayne Lloyd, Ephrata Area School District Teacher



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Albert Einstein once said, "Life is like riding a bicycle – in order to keep your balance, you must keep moving."

I came across this quote and immediately thought of the two instructional coaches I have worked with in the Ephrata Area School District, Meghan Hooper and Dawn Butt.

I am that teacher that began with mimeograph machines, black boards, chalk, over-head transparencies, and books on my bookshelves that the students checked out. As I enter my 28th year of teaching, I am that teacher who witnessed many changes in education. These changes made me question things, made me frustrated, and yes, made me feel very old.

As I reflect over the years, I think about learning to ride a bike. It's a lesson in how developing a powerful relationship with my PIIC instructional coaches has made me transform my educational practices.

Six years ago, I sat on my bike unsteady. Meghan and Dawn introduced evidenced based literacy practices to the staff. These practices included: Frayer Vocabulary, Booka Kucha, 8p*RTS. They offered to co-teach lessons, Wednesday Writing Workshops, and so much more.

The training wheels were on to keep me balanced. If I tipped, they were there every step of the way. However, I knew it was time to conquer the hill ahead of me. The first hill I rode up was vocabulary comprehension. This is when I was coached on the Frayer model. We planned the lesson together, we co-taught, and then we did a reflection on the lesson—a complete BDA cycle.

The next hill was grammar. Still having the training wheels on, back I went for help and they introduced the 8p*ARTS *EduProtocol*. We fol-

lowed the same process as we did for the Frayer Vocabulary. It truly was a light bulb moment for me, the whole process. I can remember thinking, "Why didn't I build this partnership earlier?"

Finally, I ride my bike on my own. We continue to plan together and look at data together. Before the pandemic, we planned and co-taught a lesson on writing a TDA. They help me look at my instruction differently; they ask me questions that make me think; they take time to sit down with me and talk through ideas and lessons.

As I write this, my hope is that you develop a relationship with your instructional coaches. There will most likely be more hills to climb and you may feel unsteady. This is when you grab your instructional coach, go for a bike

ride, keep pedaling, become balanced, and conquer those hills together.

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"It's a lesson in how developing a powerful relationship with my PIIC instructional coaches has made me transform my educational practices."



Have a safe and healthy
summer!

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

The fundamental role of effective leadership is critical for school transformation. But I don't mean only the role of the building or district administrator. I mean the leadership role of the entire school community. Everyone is a leader and member in a community of learning and practice. Everyone has a responsibility to establish ways of making individual and collective contributions to the group environment and to sustain those changes for ongoing school wide improvement. It is a shared role that involves participation on all levels – students, teachers, instructional coaches, administrators, parents, and all key stakeholders – in the process of education.

No one leader is responsible for all changes to take root. That is grossly unfair and doomed to failure. However, a leader must emerge to start the ball rolling and create an atmosphere that is conducive for sustainable change.

Transformational leadership has research roots as early as 1978 when James McGregor Burns, the founder of modern leadership theory, defined a transformational leader as one who “looks for potential motives in followers, seeks to satisfy higher needs, and engages the full person of the follower” (<https://www.advanced.org/source/transformational-leadership-matter-perspective>). From his teachings, the following seven characteristics for effective transformational leaders emerged: 1) building school vision and establishing goals; 2) creating a productive school culture; 3) providing intellectual stimulation; 4) offering individualized support; 5) modeling best practices and important organizational values; 6) demonstrating high-performance expectations; and 7) development structures to foster participation in school decisions (Leithwood, K. Begley, P.T. & Cousins, J.B., Developing Expert Leadership for Future Schools, 1994). These characteristics must be front and center for school transformation to take place. They are the building blocks of the process for change and educational transformation.

Sure, everyone wants the school to change. Who's willing to go first? And, to what extent are the participants willing to step out of their comfort zones to impact change, especially without fear of negative evaluations or making mistakes? “A

life spent making mistakes is not only more honorable but more useful than a life spent in doing nothing” says George Bernard Shaw and I couldn't agree more! The mistakes are not the important part; the important part is reflecting on the learning, determining if the goals were met, and what adjustments are needed to move forward.

But, leadership is not for the faint of heart. It is messy and challenging, just like instructional coaching! Stephen Covey says it best, “*When we say leadership is a choice, it basically means you can choose the level of initiative you want to exercise in response to the question, ‘What is the best I can do under the circumstances?’*” Recognize that a step out of the box is needed and challenge the status quo. Without this civil disobedience, no change will take place.

Schools must take a close look at how they are functioning and meeting the needs of the students and teachers. Is everyone on the same page with a shared vision of goals, values, and objectives? Did everyone have a voice in defining the core values? Was the vision built from the bottom up or the top down? Who has a voice and who contributed to the plan? Now, let's take it one step further... how does working in a remote environment confirm, challenge, or change the blueprint of transformational leadership?

Microsoft has developed a school transformation process (edudownloads.azureedge.net/msdownloads) that includes six phases for visualizing, directing, and supervising change (microsoft.com/education/leaders) which is applicable to school transformation, especially when implemented with fidelity to create a plan for continuous improvement. Note that transformation is the operative word, not reform. “Reform” means to maintain the original form and make changes for the better; “transformation” means to completely overhaul the original and generate something new and different which is accomplished by applying what was learned and creating the metamorphosis.

The process includes the six “I’s”: 1) Introspection – adopt an approach that welcomes multiple perspectives and promotes continual change; 2) Inquiry –

explore, question, and identify promising practices that can be replicated to meet your school's needs; 3) Inclusion – gather the collective wisdom of other groups and ensure all voices are heard; 4) Innovation – identify ways to make the vision a reality and ensure all are on the same page; 5) Implementation – what's the plan for successful implementation and sustainability; 6) Insight – review, reflect, and revise the plan to ensure continuous improvement.

The premise of the plan starts with answering an essential question, “What does success look like?” So, what does success look like and how is it achieved? For sure, different strokes for different folks is the answer. Success is not a cookie cutter model, and either is an effective instructional coaching model. However, there are some components that are non-negotiable. That is, certain elements must be present in order for an effective school climate and culture to exist. But are these elements different in a remote environment?

Since March, transformation has taken on a whole new meaning! While the environment has changed, the questions still remain the same: *What am I doing to help teachers change and improve their practice* and *What am I doing to help teachers increase student engagement and outcomes?* The bottom line is that we need to ensure a school culture that addresses student and teacher needs regardless of where that happens, i.e., a face-to-face venue, a virtual one, or a blended approach that marries both.

What does success look like, how do we achieve it, what activities must we implement; and what should we continually think about as we make plans for continuous improvement for school transformation? What is my role in the process? These are all questions that need to be addressed when undertaking the commitment to transform schools. And in the process of transforming schools, don't forget your goals of building teacher capacity, increasing student engagement, and improving outcomes.

Sincerely,

Allen B. Eisenberg

Teaching the Core Skills of Listening and Speaking

By Eric Palmer, Reviewed by Kelli Livermore, Altoona Area School District Instructional Coach

How do you teach good listening skills? How do you teach good speaking skills?

My new favorite book, *Teaching the Core Skills of Listening and Speaking*, is filled with classroom examples and activities targeted in helping students acquire these skills. I was shaking while reading this book. It's that good. Good for building the listening and speaking capacity of students. Good for a professional book study. Good for my toolbox as an instructional coach. Good listening and speaking practices targeted for all ages and grades. Is anyone listening? This is a GOOD book!

Why are students continually giving speeches in school, yet not improving their speaking skills? Is it possible to practice a skill and not get better at it?

According to Erik Palmer, practice doesn't make a skill better, good practice makes a skill better. In his compelling book, *Teaching the Core Skills of Listening and Speaking*, Erik Palmer shares concrete instructional practices for developing listening and speaking skills. Palmer, a veteran teacher of 20 years, focuses instruction for listening and speaking through the lenses of the Common Core Standards. Palmer's approach is aligned to the six Common Core standards for speaking and listening with a focus on 21st century skills. A clear distinction is made between listening and speaking activities and listening and speaking instruction.

For teachers, this means reflecting on current practices and reexamining

current practices. His focus on the standards is to make instruction for listening and speaking more purposeful, directed, and precise. The book includes many activities connected with the Common

"His focus on the standards is to make instruction for listening and speaking more purposeful, directed, and precise."

Core's Speaking and Listening Standards. Palmer provides direct and explicit instructional activities for building strong listening and speaking skills. This book is designed to encourage reflection on effective listening and speaking practices used in the classroom.

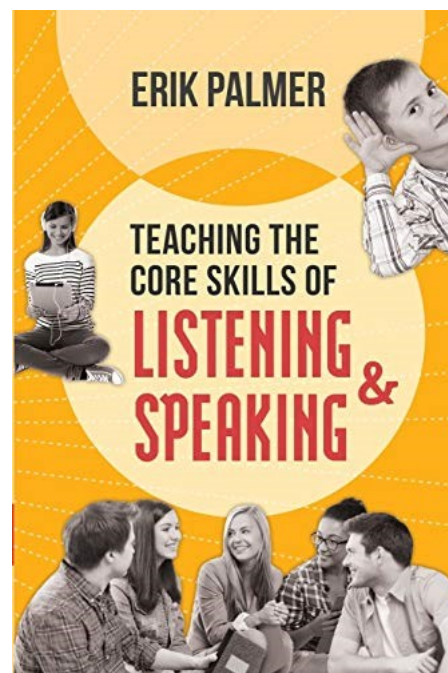
For coaches, this means, providing professional learning in listening and speaking instruction, modeling evidence-based practices, and supporting teachers through reflection and practice in developing these skills. *Teaching the Core Skills of Listening and Speaking* by Erik Palmer is a practical and indispensable resource for coaches and teachers. Coaches looking for a current and engaging topic for a PLC and/or professional book study will not be disappointed in choosing this title. A study guide to encourage discussion for *Teaching the Core Skills of Listening and Speaking* is available on the internet at no cost. This is an added benefit for anyone planning a professional book study. Coaches will be able to springboard instructional practices from this book into engaging BDA sessions.

Have we been shortchanging instruction for listening and speaking

in the classroom? Take this opportunity to dive deeper into instructional practices that support listening and speaking instruction that will impact student achievement. Fostering good communication skills will impact our students in the classroom and beyond.

Did you hear me? This is a GOOD Book.

For more information, contact: Kelli Livermore, klivermore@altoonasd.com



"Listening and speaking are skills, and like all skills, they can be improved significantly with deliberate instruction and purposeful practice."

-Erik Palmer, Teaching the Core Skills of Listening & Speaking

Look for *Instructional Coaching in Action: An Integrated Approach That Transforms Thinking, Practice, and Schools*. Available on ASCD.org and Amazon.com!

Establishing a Culture of Coaching—One District’s Story

By Angela Mitstifer, Daniel Kauffmann, and Steve Rhoades, Wilson School District Instructional Coaches

According to Ellen Eisenberg, “Coaching is a deliberate, intentional conversation between colleagues with the ultimate goal of strengthening instructional practice.” Many educators, however, identify who they are by what they do. Teaching is intensely personal, so having another person come into their “world” and look around can seem intimidating or even invasive. How do we, as coaches, build a culture of reflection and growth among the teachers in our district?

Wilson School District currently has three instructional coaches specializing in the areas of ELA, Math, and Science who have participated in professional learning conferences from the PA Institute for Instructional Coaching (PIIC) and been supported by their PIIC instructional mentor. Originally, coaches were brought on to support the district’s 1:1 technology initiative. Leaders soon realized the need and desire to support the entire instructional process. The coaches now work with teachers in any content area, from kindergarten to twelfth grade, with a focus on instruction. Making the transition was not easy, as many teachers and even administrators still saw the coaches primarily in a tech support role. Collectively, the coaches visit each building in the district at the beginning of the year to promote different ways they can collaborate with staff members. Initially relying on personal connections made with colleagues while they were in the classroom, word of mouth has helped to spread the benefits of these working relationships, establishing trust, and providing positive results with students.

Angela Mitstifer, ELA coach and reading specialist, taught in multiple elementary buildings before becoming a coach. Through the Instructional Learning Visit model, she leads teachers in their own self-directed professional learning. She helps teachers identify a goal, arranges classroom visits of colleagues who want to share their expertise, and then debriefs and supports the visiting teacher as he or she incorporates new ideas. Through Instructional Learning Visits, Angela is helping to build a culture of collaboration among teachers in the district.

Dan Kaufmann, Wilson’s math coach, was a high school teacher before he became a coach. When the district decided to look for a new elementary math curriculum, Dan took the

lead by researching different programs and guiding the process through various pilots. In his coaching role, he creates and facilitates professional learning sessions, plans with teachers through the BDA cycle, and co-teaches lessons to provide teachers with a deeper understanding of the program’s philosophy and processes.

Steve Rhoades was a middle school science teacher before coaching. This year, he is leading the science department through a book study about visible learning and what it looks like in the science classroom. The work is opening the door for deep conversations concentrating on what students are learning, why they are learning it, and how they know when they have mastered concepts.

“But developing relationships and helping teachers, new and veteran, to identify and work toward instructional goals is creating a culture for instructional coaching to thrive at Wilson.”

Is there still work to be done? Absolutely. Do the coaches still help teachers with tech issues? Sure. But developing relationships and helping teachers, new and veteran, to identify and work toward instructional goals is creating a culture for instructional coaching to thrive at Wilson.

For more information, contact:

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The PIIC 4-Quadrant Framework

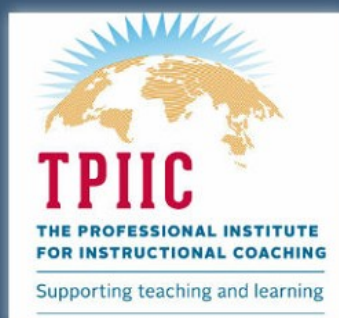
PIIC advocates **one-on-one and small group support** for teachers, coaches, and school leaders using the **BDA cycle of consultation**

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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