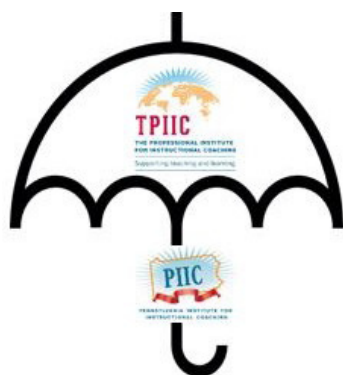


IU PIIC News

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"It was the best of times; it was the worst of times..."

By Joanne Yanchick, Instructional Coach and Deanna Semyon, Social and Emotional Instructor
Tunkhannock Area School District

"It was the best of times; it was the worst of times..." Today's students, surrounded by sophisticated technology, devour online articles about artificial intelligence, gravitational waves and time travel. They are inundated with social media and can get sensory overload. Teen suicide and depression, drug and alcohol abuse, cyber-bullying, and homelessness are disturbing realities—the fallout in a country reeling from an opioid epidemic, school shootings, and political polarization. How can instructional coaches support students and teachers as they navigate these hopeful yet hazardous times? While curriculum, assessment, standards, and effect sizes are important pieces of educational transformation, the social/emotional needs of students and teachers cannot be ignored. Schools and communities can do much to address these needs, and here coaches can shine in their role as change maker and leader.

Supporting students socially and emotionally starts with the educator and respecting the value of teacher self-care. Neuroscience reveals the negative effects of stress on brain and body, which is why coaches need to share the "science of stress" and the mind-body connection along with strategies and resources that can be used to promote social/emotional well-being. Education via small-group professional development, workshops, and after-school sessions are ways to promote teacher self-care and the benefits of mindful practices. Resources to consider are *Mindfulness for Teachers* by Patricia Jennings and *The Way of Mindful Education* by Robert Rechtshaffen. Coaches can host "Ten-minute Take-aways" for teachers, paraprofessionals, and administrators to explore mindfulness apps like *Headspace*, *Calm*, and *10% Happier*.

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Student and family education, and a safe, supportive classroom culture are also important. Together, coaches and teachers can help students identify their feelings, and the way their brains and bodies respond to stress. Educators can provide students with options that will help them manage their emotions in healthy ways by introducing resources like *MindUP*, *Calm Classrooms*, *Yoga Calm*, and *Zones of Regulation*. These avenues provide excellent opportunities for modeling, co-teaching, and supportive feedback. Hosting "appy hours" to share mindfulness apps like *Mind Yeti*, *GoNoodle*, *Class Dojo*, and *Stop, Breathe, Think* will empower staff and students. Newsletters and information tables at parent-teacher conferences and other school events can offer families helpful

resources. Coaches can support teachers' efforts to create safety, belonging, and trust by sharing evidence-based approaches like Responsive Classrooms that use

daily morning meetings, circles of power and respect, and closing circles to build community and connection. Through the BDA cycle, many of these coaching conversations can help teachers understand more about creating healthy classroom environments.

Viewing social/emotional learning as an overarching "instructional strategy" is a prerequisite to self-actualization, creativity, and the transformation we seek in our schools. Instructional coaches, serving as a resource, guide, and learning partner, should be integral to bringing this to the forefront in their work with teachers and the school community.

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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

Childhood stress has increased over the last several years. In some neighborhoods, vandalism, street drug use, drive-by shootings, store robberies, and other blue-collar crimes are frequent occurrences. These are all too common for many of our children. In other neighborhoods, white collar crime may be the culprit, creating environments where children are subjected to nonviolent crimes including corporate, environmental, or economic corruption. So many of our children are experiencing stress from a variety of “manmade” crimes in addition to the conditions which they cannot control including floods, fires, illness, and tragic accidents. And, we are not even talking about test anxiety in our climate of accountability and responsibility.

How our students handle the stress varies. We like to say children are resilient. That is, as long as they have the skills to cope with the stresses they encounter. But, what if our children do not have the coping skills needed to endure the ongoing stresses from traumatic experiences? What if they cannot feel “free” to engage in their learning because the reality of their situations generates that anxiety and stress? In fact, “...an anxious brain can’t absorb new information or even retrieve previously learned information as effectively as a non-anxious brain” (<https://www.weareteachers.com>).

So, how can instructional coaches help teachers understand and address

issues of anxiety and stress in their students and also in themselves when they know that they are answerable to parents and the larger school community for their students’ growth?

Support and strategy are interdependent. Instructional coaches offer ample opportunities for their teaching colleagues to talk about issues that stress students and teachers. But, talking is just the start... working together to identify the stressors and then discovering ways to alleviate those stresses provide a blueprint for moving forward. Through the BDA cycle of consultation, coaches and teachers work together to talk about problems of practice, social-emotional well-being, and effective instructional delivery.

Teachers cannot only worry about planning, developing curriculum, and designing creative classrooms; they must understand the social and emotional characteristics of teaching and learning. Data indicate that more than half of all children in the US have experienced some form of trauma (Edutopia, October 2017) and our teachers are tasked with providing more than just the eligible content and testing components so their students “score” well on the standardized tests. They need to understand how to cope with their students’ trauma while balancing their own emotional state as they watch their students suffer.

One way to deal with classroom/student trauma is to connect with colleagues.

Micere Keels from the University of Chicago and founder of the TREP Project states that “reducing professional isolation is critical” for teachers to understand student trauma and identify ways to handle the stress that comes from these uncontrollable conditions. That’s a perfect position for instructional coaches.

Coaches engage regularly in conversations with their teaching colleagues enabling them to collectively problem-solve, collaborate in real time, and reinforce a community of practice where critical thinking is the norm. Teachers and coaches make time to talk about practice and how to strengthen those practices without fear of evaluation or negative responses. It’s not just about the student stress; it’s about how teachers can cope with the pressure and help their students find ways to cope with their stressors as well.

It’s all about practicing ways to maintain balance and giving “permission” to get support along the way. Students are not alone in this process and neither are their teachers. Coaches are not only the learning partners but the supportive voice helping teachers recognize the traumas that surround many students, identify ways to confront those stressors, and propose ways to maintain a balance in their own lives as well.

Sincerely,



Instructional Coaching in Action: An Integrated Approach That Transforms Thinking, Practice, and Schools. Now available on ASCD.org and Amazon.com!

Motion Leadership: The Skinny on Becoming Change Savvy

Book Review by Jordan Lozosky, IU 1 PIIC Mentor

Michael Fullan’s Motion Leadership provides valuable insight on how educational leaders can implement change. In his work, Fullan describes the basic ideas, perceptions, and obstacles a leader will face when implementing change. The relatively short read will encourage you to take the next step forward in becoming a true change agent in your school.

“Often, a fear of change serves as a major road block for true change to occur.”

expressed around the following key elements: change problems, change itself, connecting peers with purpose, transparency, trust, and resistance. He also makes a strong argument that building an organization’s capacity to engage everyone in leadership is the true goal of his work. Expanding organizational capacity and overall buy-in from teachers is essential for transformation and ultimately student achievement in our schools.

Fullan states that the “skinny on motion leadership” can be best

Problems will undoubtedly arise when any change occurs. Often,

Continued on page 3, Motion Leadership

a fear of change serves as a major roadblock for true change to occur. Fullan illustrates that leaders must take the fear out of change with his example of Sallyann Stanton. Sallyann is a newly appointed-grade level leader from England. She informed her teachers that she would first try out new ideas and take responsibility if they failed. This allowed her to gain the trust and respect of the staff while consciously building relationships. After she developed rapport with the staff, she was able to bring them on board; they were willing to take the steps to instill change within her school. An effective leader and change advocate is willing to take these risks to move both individuals and institutions forward. As a PIIC mentor, I strongly feel that developing a good rapport and building trusting relationships with the individuals with whom I work has enabled me to become a true catalyst for change.

Additionally, I felt that Fullan does an exceptional job explaining change itself. He provides the example of ready-fire-aim as a metaphor for how change is too often implemented. The key to change is to develop relationships first. Leaders must be careful when entering a new setting. He states, "If the leader comes on too strong, the culture will rebel." There is a good deal of truth to this statement. Leaders need to build trusting and strong relationships with individuals before any radical change can be made. They must not forget to listen and learn from the veterans as well. Fullan suggests that leaders should reach out to those veterans for valuable insight and suggestions that can best benefit the institution.

Fullan ends Motion Leadership with the paradox that becoming

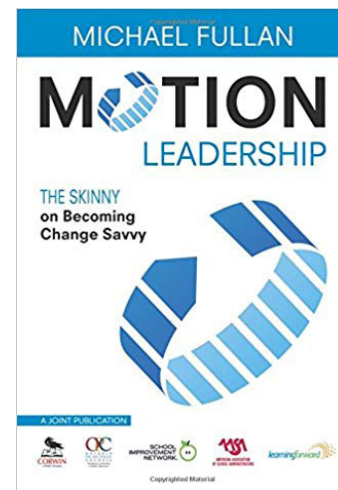
change savvy makes you both confident and humble at the same time. He closes with stating that motion leaders have two main responsibilities: to be a learner and refine the skinny of change, and to realize that they have an equal responsibility to teach others the same. Fullan's insight is something every leader should take into deep consideration when implementing change.

As a PIIC Mentor working with coaches for nearly a decade, I have discovered that change is both necessary and attainable if the right scaffolding is in place. The role of the coach to nurture and support those folks willing to take a risk for change can blossom into something truly remarkable if all components necessary for change are in place.

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"Leaders who want to become savvier about change have to practice being nonjudgmental because it does not come naturally."

Motion Leadership: The Skinny on Becoming Change Savvy



Finding Balance As A Coach Before Helping Anyone Else

By Donette Porter, IU 4 PIIC Mentor

Philosopher Herb Shepherd describes a healthy balanced life around four values: perspective (spiritual), autonomy (mental), connectedness (social), and tone (physical). George Sheehan, the running guru, describes four roles as: being a good animal (physical), a good craftsman (mental), a good friend (social), and a saint (spiritual). Stephen Covey names one of his "7 Habits of highly effective people" as "sharpen the saw" meaning to "exercise all four dimensions of our nature, regularly and consistently in wise and balanced ways." However you describe it, the premise is that we need to have balance in all aspects: work, fun, relaxation, exercise, etc. Without balance in our life, we are probably ignoring at least one of the tenets, and when we neglect one area, all areas can be negatively impacted in turn.

As instructional coaches, we provide many layers of support to the teachers with whom we work. Sometimes we

are the cheerleader, other times we are the shoulder to cry on, or even other times we are the one to help put things in perspective. Some days the best coaching we can do is to provide our teachers with coping mechanisms first—strategies that help teachers deal with social and emotional stress. Some ways coaches can address these stresses with teachers is to guide teachers

"The goal in this is to give teachers concrete ways to find balance in our very crazy world."

in goal setting to help set priorities or perhaps work through some time management exercises. The goal in this is to give teachers concrete ways to help find balance in our very crazy world. Effective coaching can happen in small group or one-on-one support. Instructional coaching is always supporting reflective and non-evaluative practices and

that is certainly the case here.

Eleanor Roosevelt said, "It is not fair to ask of others what you are not willing to do yourself." In order for coaches to function in these roles, they have to first find their own balance, set their own goals, and practice effective time management practices. During the safety lessons on an airplane before taking off, we are always told to "Put on your own oxygen mask first before helping those around you." The premise here is you have to take care of you first otherwise you may not be able to help others. Stephen Covey says, "We must do it for ourselves... take time to sharpen the saw...this is the single most powerful investment we can ever make in life—invest in ourselves, in the only instrument we have..." In order to be the best coach we can be, we need to find our own balance.

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Coaches and Teachers Addressing Student Adversity

By Sharon Deiling, Instructional Coach, and Bob Brightbill, Building Construction Technology Instructor,
Dauphin County Technical School

Recently, the captain of the football team for one of our sending schools was killed in an accident. After an incident this close-to-home, memories of emotional events surfaced throughout the school. Teachers worried about students who watched their beloved teacher fight but lose her battle with cancer. Others mentioned students who dealt with shootings in their neighborhoods. Not as dramatic but no less significant are students dealing with the effects of local flooding. Finally, a colleague shared his memory of leading his students through the aftermath of an accident, which killed three classmates and critically injured a fourth. Interestingly, he describes the time after as the best teaching days of his life. All of these life experiences affect how students learn and how teachers teach.

"Depending on the situation, the coach may end up supporting the teacher in creating something bigger than either expects."

You might ask, "How is this possible during a dark period in a career?" His answer – he was given the unique opportunity to teach life lessons, ones as simple as explaining appropriate funeral wear and as complex as understanding how to channel grief."

What's the connection to instructional coaching? Reaching out to a coach is only natural during tough times since effective coaching is established through trusting relationships. When faced with the challenge of assisting teachers to support students, the coach should rely on coaching's intentional practice: non-evaluative, reflective questions within a BDA cycle. These ongoing conversations get to the heart of what students need and how their teachers can support them.

In the *before* conversation, the team (coach and teacher) explores the type of support the students need. Does the stressor require developing an activity which directly teaches a skill or one which provides an outlet to express feelings? Or, is it best to encourage normalcy and not vary anything? Questions are asked and goals are co-constructed creating the path of the instructional delivery. *During* classroom visits, should the coach and teacher co-teach a tough subject, or should the coach simply watch student reactions to teacher decisions? *After* the activities, is the teacher satisfied with the results?

Throughout these coaching interactions, the coach very often wears a counselor's hat and helps the teacher deal with his/

her personal feelings before tackling the students' challenges. The teacher must understand how his/her feelings impact the teaching. Coaches ask questions that the teachers must answer, helping teachers recognize strengths and areas of need.

Coaches do not do this alone; they have a confidante, aka their mentor, to lean on when their own emotions are challenged, and impartiality is critical for the conversation to continue. That mentor is the coach's support system and helps the teacher navigate the issues that plague their students.

Depending on the situation, the coach may end up supporting the teacher in creating something bigger than either expects. Such was the case as my colleague and I dealt with the

accident. The year after the event, this building construction teacher decided to take a disaster relief trip with a group of students. Not only did it provide a chance for an authentic building experience, but it taught the student survivors about living. Although I did not participate in this first trip, the teacher and I, through countless BDA cycles, developed an organization to continue yearly disaster relief trips, which teach students valuable life lessons and continue to support students in events over which they have no control.

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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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