THE ROLE AND CONTRIBUTION OF MENTORS TO THE PENNSYLVANIA HIGH SCHOOL COACHING INITIATIVE (PAHSCI)

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The PAHSCI Mentor Study was commissioned by the Annenberg Foundation as one of several components of the assessment of its $30 million initiative, the Pennsylvania Academy High School Initiative (PAHSCI), which began in 2006 and will enter its fourth year this fall. At its height, the PAHSCI initiative operated in 24 high schools in 16 high-need school districts in the state of Pennsylvania.

The purpose of the PAHSCI Mentor Study is to examine closely the roles played by the mentors and their contribution to the initiative. PAHSCI employed nineteen mentors, seven as math mentors, seven as literacy mentors, and five as leadership mentors. For this study, the research team interviewed all the currently employed mentors, as well as a sample of the coaches, principals, and central office administrators involved with PAHSCI in eleven Pennsylvania high schools.

Research Methodology

The PAHSCI Mentor Study was conducted in March-August 2008 by the Academy for Educational Development (AED), headquartered in Washington, DC, with assistance from Research for Action (RFA), based in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, under a grant from the Annenberg Foundation. The purpose of the study was to document and analyze how mentors, a key element of the PAHSCI model, carried out their roles and how they and the other key players in PAHSCI understood that role and its impact.

Research Questions.

1. What are the key roles that mentors have played in supporting the goals of PAHSCI?
2. How did mentors build relationships with coaches and school leaders? What were the turning points, obstacles and challenges to overcome, and how long did it take the mentors to establish their credibility?
3. With whom did mentors work, and how did they work with them to strengthen coaches' capacity to improve instruction and to coach, and to strengthen the capacity of school leaders to support PAHSCI?
4. Have mentors used the BDA cycle in working with coaches and school leaders?
5. How have mentors worked with coaches and school leaders to help them resolve the obstacles and challenges that have gotten in the way of their PAHSCI work?
6. Were there important school-based factors that influenced the context within which mentors worked?
7. How did mentor teams function?
8. What did mentors do for their own professional growth?
9. Have changes occurred within the PAHSCI schools or districts that were influenced by the presence of mentors, and are these changes sustainable?

Protocols. The study team developed semi-structured interview protocols, paralleling the research questions, for the interviews with content mentors, leadership mentors, coaches, principals, and central office staff members, including superintendents. Interviews conducted during the site visits and subsequent telephone interviews were primarily qualitative and focused upon each respondent's observations of the roles of mentors and mentor teams, their functions in furthering the PAHSCI initiative, their relationships with others engaged in PAHSCI, their roles in overcoming challenges and obstacles, and their impact on the schools and districts in which they worked.

Site Visits. The AED and RFA teams conducted interviews with coaches, principals, and central office administrators from a sample of 11 schools that participated in the PAHSCI project from academic year 2005-2006 through 2007-2008. Whenever possible, the teams interviewed the content mentors and leadership mentors assigned to those schools on site. AED staff interviewed the remaining mentors by telephone. A total of 77 people were interviewed: 12 content mentors, 7 leadership mentors, 41 coaches, 11 principals, and 6 superintendents or other central office staff members.

Data Assembly and Analysis. After data collection, the interview data were organized by protocol questions and compiled into charts. Data on each topic were then compared across roles to identify common themes, distinctions, and overall patterns.

Protection of Confidential Data. This study seeks not to reveal information about any participating individuals, including school district staff members, mentors, or anyone affiliated with the PAHSCI initiative. No names are included in this report, or other information that could identify individuals.

The Model of Mentoring

The model operates through services provided by PAHSCI and four additional partner organizations that provide program support, fiscal administration, and research and evaluation: Foundations, Inc., the Penn Literacy Network at the University of Pennsylvania, The Philadelphia Foundation, and Research for Action. Additional research support is provided by the Center for Data Driven Reform in Education at the Johns Hopkins University, MPR Associates, Inc., and the Academy for Educational Development. The following are key components of the initiative:

- Onsite, job-embedded professional development for teachers and administrators;
- Specially trained coaches, who are teachers drawn from participating schools;
- Improved classroom instruction through content-based professional development;
- Over-the-shoulder classroom support for teachers, including help in identifying academic needs of students, determining which evidence-based practices will bridge learning gaps, and planning for and debriefing on specific lessons;
- Sustainability through creation of professional, collaborative learning communities created within schools and districts;
- Support for district administrators and coaches through onsite mentors provided by Foundations, Inc.; and

- Research and development of the model through ongoing documentation, assessment, and reflection.

The Role of the PAHSCI Mentor

Most of those interviewed, with the exception of a few principals and coaches, understood and viewed very positively the role of the PAHSCI mentors.

Coaches. Of the 41 coaches interviewed, all but two reported that they had depended a great deal on assistance from the math and literacy mentors, particularly in the first year of the initiative. They cited many ways that mentors provided support and guidance: they attended PLN training with coaches, role-modeled, shadowed coaches in classrooms, provided books and other resources, set up guidelines and language of coaching, took part in study groups, used PLN as the guiding framework, and modeled Before-During-After (BDA) strategies. On occasion, mentors mediated between coaches and their administrators, double-checked action plans, and provided information from Foundations, Inc. Some coaches use superlatives to describe their mentors: "She has been marvelous"; "Content mentors are our spiritual guides."

Of the two coaches who did not find the mentor helpful, one felt she didn't need their assistance: "Sometimes their visit just took time from our work." The second coach reported that her mentor's behavior in the classroom was very unprofessional. A third coach, delighted with her mentors overall, reported an incident in which another mentor had publicly berated her coaching team for becoming involved in curricular issues.

Principals. Of the 11 principals interviewed, 10 were positive about the presence of the PAHSCI content mentors; 8 principals seemed to have some kind of ongoing relationship with a leadership mentor, the other 3, only a casual acquaintance.

Those principals who thought the mentors were very important to PAHSCI shared a common understanding of their roles: the content mentors as supporting coaches ("the mentors are coaches to our coaches"), and the leadership mentor as the point person for logistics—"tells me where to be and not to be"—and in a few cases, "as a friend." One principal described the mentor role as the feature that makes PAHSCI different—in a good way—from other reforms.

The principals who saw less value-added by the mentors' presence were those who saw little of their leadership mentor. The only principal who did not see value-added by the content mentors reported that mentors had provided helpful resources, but asserted that the PLN training and coaches were all that was necessary to implement PAHSCI.

Superintendents/Central Office Administrators. Of the six administrators interviewed, all were positive about the mentors, noting their professional credibility as individuals with years of school district experience, their value as "guide through this journey," as resource to coaches, agents for collaboration among coaches and teachers, nudger, cheerleader, remover of obstacles and roadblocks, and source of constructive feedback.

What do the mentors themselves have to say about their roles?

Content Mentors. Across the board, the 12 content mentors interviewed had clear and fairly consistent views of their own roles in implementing PAHSCI. Within that consistency, however, several noted the need to adapt the specifics of their work to the culture of particular schools, the logistics of scheduling, and, of course, the personalities of coaches and administrators.

The key role of the content mentor is to support coaches, they reported: "My role is similar to the coaches' role with teachers: help them know how to coach, give them tools and support." When asked about their roles, mentors tended to emphasize the coaching more than the instructional aspects of their work with coaches. When that was noted however, several suggested that the two were seamless aspects of the work. Some mentors focused on "support the coaching process of the one-on-one BDA method." Another noted "We implement the PLN strategies as the framework." Another stated "To be sure the literacy coaches understood the PAHSCI goals, were involved in the BDA coaching model, and had the content knowledge." The ongoing monitoring process was viewed as extremely important by mentors, as was shadowing and giving feedback, being and providing resources, being a listening ear, offering "gentle and fierce reminders of the project goals," helping problem solve, helping set goals for the coming year, and ensuring that coaches followed the school's action plan.

Several content mentors noted that their role evolved over the three years as the coaches grew in their practice. For example, one mentor reported: "The first year was initiation, the second a lot of implementation, and the third year was refinement of skills." A math mentor echoed that analysis, noting that at the beginning, most coaches did not know what coaching was, so that mentors needed to begin by defining coaching, and as the coaches became comfortable in their role, "help them to refine their skills in terms of going into the classroom." Other mentors remarked that they had to adapt what they did from one school to another. As one observed "I had to be very careful in this district, with the egos involved….The coaches here thought they already knew everything." A math mentor noted that the very challenging math curriculum in one school led her to adjust her role.

Leadership Mentors. The 7 leadership mentors were often more articulate in these interviews about what they did, why, and its importance to the PAHSCI initiative, than others asked about the leadership mentor role, including content mentors. Part of this may be due to the confidentiality of many of their conversations with administrators, or to the classroom-based focus of PAHSCI interventions.

Leadership mentors described themselves as communicators, facilitators, and advocates. They shared a conviction that "the initiative is only going to be successful if it has the support of the administration." Like the content mentors, they remarked on the many roles they undertook, but most had to do with sustaining administrative support for PAHSCI. An early and important activity was explaining the project, goals, protocols,

and expectations to administrators in the school district and also to coaches: "In most districts, even the principals had no idea what this project was. Initially that was the largest role of the leadership mentor." As time passed, conversations with principals and, usually, central office administrators, continued to be important.

- To increase the instructional knowledge of the administration;
- To keep things focused and push forward with the components of the initiative;
- To be a model and a liaison between the administration and the coaches;
- To pave the way, removing administrative road blocks so coaches can spend more time in classrooms with teachers than on administrative tasks;
- To plan with school leadership how we continue to move forward, help them reflect, and realize how far they've come; and
- To work as a team member with the content mentors.

Like the content mentors, the leadership mentors noted that their roles changed over time, from district to district, and even with each visit, depending on conditions in the schools. "I think it took most of my first year to get an idea what was doing on." A few noted that their relationship with a school leader had evolved beyond the bounds of PAHSCI to dealing with the workload and stress of a school leadership role.

How Mentors Built Relationships

With a few exceptions among the leadership mentors, the PAHSCI mentors entered the school districts to which they were assigned unknown to the coaches and school leaders with whom they were charged with building relationships that would touch on sensitive and challenging issues for school personnel. Nevertheless, the mentors were more often than not able to build effective working relationships in relatively short order through the following attributes—credibility, stance, practice, and trust—discussed below.

Credibility—the reputation for experience and expertise with which they walked in the door—counted a great deal, certainly with the principals and other school leaders at PAHSCI schools. As one principal observed, "His experience gave him credibility with me." Leadership mentors were particularly conscious that their experience gave them an advantage: "When you come in as a former principal, you automatically have credibility, and that opens a door." Many of the mentors had fairly extensive professional networks throughout the state, which gave them both connections and credibility. Coaches also reported that shared experience led them to "immediate connection" with mentors, whether the common background was simply teaching, or teaching the same content area, or hailing from the same district or bargaining unit.

A second factor, described by one principal as "*their stance*," was also critical in their relationship building. Successful mentors did not "rush to advise," rather they engaged in problem solving, positive reinforcement, and listening. There appears to be great variety in the balance between the personal and professional in the "getting to know you" process among different mentors, coaches, and administrators, but the *stance* is similar. Most

mentors were perceived as cordial, professional, helpful, great listeners, open, and expert at making others feel at ease.

Third, mentors reinforced the credibility by reputation with which they entered their schools through their *practice*: "You gain credibility by talking and discussing options and alternatives," noted one mentor. "They saw I had experience," remarked another, "I was able to share resources that fit right into his [a school leader] project." By the knowledge, level of preparedness, ideas, and orientation to continuous improvement that mentors brought to the issues faced by the schools, they demonstrated their expertise, while also affirming the message that "they'd walked in our shoes." Similarly, one coach, commenting on debriefing with her mentor about a classroom observation, noted that the mentor "was highly experienced and could be specific about suggestions."

The nature of the relationships between coaches and content mentors seem to invite deep connections around the work. As one coach observed, "They made meaningful connections with us, just like teachers must make meaningful connections with their students." Coaches and their mentors in the course of their work were continually observing one another, a process that, at best, contributed to trust: "Credibility was established when I got my first feedback from her from a classroom visit." Coaches noted that they watched how the mentor interacted with coaches and teachers, how they played the role of teachers, gaining a sense, at best, not only of the mentor's expertise but also the respect with which she regarded educators, regardless of their skills or challenges. It was also an advantage, several coaches and school leaders noted, that they had a lot of time together at the outset, at PLN training and other networking events.

The turning point, as one coach commented, "is when you tell yourself I *trust* this person." Once trust was achieved, coaches began to feel easier "venting" about the work or their administration. Mentors mediated difficulties within the coaching team. As it became possible to become more direct, the relationships strengthened: "When we got past the 'love, love' and got real about the work, it got easier—when we took on real questions about what we're doing and where we're going," noted one coach. One mentor observed that by working through an issue with a coach who was having difficulties, "we began to develop that trust: she could talk to me about her perception of things, and she knew that that would stay with me, and I could help her resolve some of these issues." The relationships continued to develop as the mentors continued to show up, offering resources and encouragement, demonstrating not only their knowledge and experience of education, "but in addition to that, you became knowledgeable about the problems and the challenges facing them in their particular school."

For some coaches and school leaders, the personal touch—"he wanted to learn about me as a person, not just jump into coaching"—was important to trust building. "I found out as much about them as they did about me," remarked one coach. Another coach reported that "their care and concern went beyond the PAHSCI initiative." A leadership mentor recalled that in order to schedule a first meeting with an over-committed school leader, he arranged a dinner meeting, "and that's what started a wonderful collegial working relationship. We didn't talk about education that night, just about family, because I

wanted to open up the avenues of communication. My credibility was established, and over time, we've just gotten closer."

Obstacles and Issues in Relationship Building

Not all was rosy in these relationships of course. Several interviewees refer to conflicts successfully negotiated. Others noted that it takes time to build relationships, and mentors had to do so with a variety of people. They noted personality conflicts and prejudices that people bring with them. A couple of coaches commented that the visits from mentors were too sporadic or brief; another said that the mentors were coming too often and the purpose of their visits was unclear: "The meetings are getting to be a nuisance, pulling us out of the classroom." Several coaches and mentors mentioned personality clashes. A couple of coaches mentioned transitions from one mentor to the next as difficult. More than one mentor noted that coming late into the initiative seemed to have made it more difficult to create relationships.

The Role of the PAHSCI Coach

Across the board, interviewees agreed that the work of the coaches gets to the heart of the PAHSCI initiative. As one mentor explained, "The coaches are the actual players: the program is directed to getting a coach into the classroom with the teacher, to support the teacher in learning how to make those changes, to bring resources into the classroom." Or as a coach explained her role: "We are a catalyst for change for the entire school."

It is important in that context that both coaches and mentors state that many coaches, at the outset of PAHSCI, did not understand the coaching role: "In the beginning," commented one mentor, "It was 'What is coaching?' We defined it, and helped them refine their own skills in terms of going into the classroom." In contrast to the instructional practices taught at the PLN trainings, PAHSCI offered no parallel training on the purpose and practices of coaching, several interviewees noted. One coach remarked that she "wished we'd had the book on instructional coaching sooner—coaching isn't just a set of skills." Another coach noted that PAHSCI had brought in no training in the beginning, but that last year their district brought in a trainer from the Center for Cognitive Coaching. Not surprisingly, some coaches remarked they also weren't sure what a mentor was, either, at the outset.

All the coaches interviewed primarily defined their roles in terms that fit the PAHSCI model. (Two coaches, however, also mentioned test support, tutoring students, and other support functions that provide service to the school but not to the goals of PAHSCI.) They defined the coaching role as providing support for teachers through working with them one-on-one in the classroom, using the BDA process, examining data and enabling teachers to allow data to drive instruction, modeling and demonstrating instructional strategies, shaping instruction toward student engagement, and professional development. A few coaches noted that they were part of the school's senior management team, or took part in other weekly leadership meetings, providing a link between the teaching staff and

administration, and serving as consultants able to offer guidance to administrators as well as teachers.

Principals spoke appreciatively and respectfully of the coaches and their contribution to change not only in the teaching practice but the climate of the school. Several noted that coaches were members of various leadership teams within the school and district (instructional, strategic planning, leadership, and climate), a measure of the respect with which they're regarded. As one principal noted, they're "the experts," "the ones with the ideas." It is nevertheless true that within at least some of the PAHSCI schools, there were struggles to ensure that coaches had the time to remain focused on their PAHSCI work, and be protected against the administration's need for student tutors, exam proctors, substitutes, and other extra assistance.

As might be expected, given their expertise, the content mentors defined the role of coaching in the most textured language. Most referred to the BDA peer coaching model, one-on-one coaching, embedded BDA in the classroom and the building, as the core of the work. Some mentioned implementation of PLN strategies in classrooms. They noted that coaches must be both respected as content leaders and equipped with strong interpersonal skills. One mentor observed that PAHSCI coaches have carried out "all the ten roles of coaching."[1] They engaged in meaningful conversations where they supported teachers—asking rather than prescribing, modeling strategies, demonstrating best practices, serving as confidantes to some teachers and pushing others. In all these ways, the role of the coach has been about effecting change.

How Mentors Worked with Coaches

The research team asked each coach and content mentor interviewed to talk, first, about how they worked together to improve the capacity of the coaches in instructional practice, and secondly, how they worked together to improve their capacity as coaches. Their answers often combined instructional and coaching capacity.

To Improve Instruction. Coaches noted that they attended PLN courses with the mentors, who made sure that coaches were engaged in the courses and used the strategies learned there. Mentors provided resources, great books, and materials on literacy. They took part in study groups, using PLN as the guiding framework, modeled techniques like jigsaws and Gordon's Ladder. Mentors explored classroom management studies and embedding PLN in different content areas.

Asked whether they've seen growth in their understanding of instructional practice, most coaches pointed to changes in the practices of the teachers with whom they've worked, notably an increase in classroom activities designed to engage students as well as evidence of actual increased student engagement. They noted a change in teacher conversations—more discussion of professional issues and instruction, and more interest

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[1] "The Ten Roles of Coaches," Joellen Killion, Director of Special Projects, NSDC. http://www.edportal.ed.state.pa.us/portal/server.pt?open=512&objID=482&&PageID=291286&level=3&css=L3&mode=2&in_hi_userid=2&cached=true

in planning together. Several coaches noted changes in themselves: "I will never be the same. I consider this a three-year sabbatical." They discussed having learned about formative assessment, having become more comfortable with instructional practice that engages students, in place of the traditional teacher stance at the front of the classroom. Two coaches believed that it was PLN training rather than mentors that changed their perspective on instruction.

One mentor, in fact, stated that she regarded strengthening coaching, and *not* instructional practice, as the role she was supposed to play. Other mentors noted a variety of ways in which they'd worked with coaches around instructional practice:

- Helping them communicate with teachers in lesson planning;
- Modeling successful instructional practices, making them aware and informed about proven, research-based practices which enhance the possibility of success;
- Modeling strategies—having coaches engage in the strategies and share resources with teachers that demonstrate the effectiveness of the strategies;
- Modeling from Randall Sprick's *Discipline in the Secondary Classroom: A Positive Approach to Behavior Management*[2], which addresses classroom management;
- Helping them integrate PLN and "Learning Focused Schools" as best practice-focused models;
- Helping reading programs by suggesting reading lists and creating literacy circles;
- Attending study group meetings; and
- Establishing a common language.

Mentors reported seeing growth in coach understanding of instructional practice, some using language such as "monumental," "lots of growth." One noted much more use of data, PSSA data, and benchmark data. Coaches also "recognize what good looks like," and understand how to use reading and writing strategies in the math classroom. Coaches noted the more effective implementation of strategies: "Now when I see do-nows, they're related to the rigor of the lesson, and the teacher is providing feedback and giving the kids a chance to share."

To Improve Coaching. In terms of coaching practice, the mentors identified several primary strategies for working with coaches. Mentors shadowed the coaches, engaging in pre-conversations, visitations, and post-conversations (debriefing) with coaches. They role-played constantly. At the outset, they worked to create a safe environment within which "coaches could take roles and we could get to the nitty-gritty." Another early task was helping coaches open the doors with resistant teachers, part of that coming to see that even the resistant teachers have something to contribute. They continued to model: for

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[2] Randall S. Sprick (2006). *Discipline in the Secondary Classroom: A Positive Approach to Behavior Management*. Jossey-Bass Teacher.

example, "If I hear a study group moving away from the text, I'll model bringing it back and hope the coach picks up on that."

Most coaches were very positive about the ways that mentors worked with them to improve their coaching practice, and most believed that their understanding of coaching has grown as a result. They reported different ways that mentors had worked with them:

- Modeled BDA, accompanying me to the classroom at first;
- Gave examples and explored protocols of coaching conversations, reflective listening, questioning technique, goal setting with teachers, role playing;
- Set up guidelines and language of coaching;
- Showed us how to engage teachers beyond the scheduled PD, established relationships, and opened dialogues;
- Shadowed us to help us reflect on practice;
- Provided extensive feedback;
- Debriefed on classroom visits;
- Asked questions with the door closed;
- Collected data about my coaching and gave feedback;
- Sustained the coaches as a team;
- Set up monthly or weekly study groups and networking meetings for professional learning, book studies, modeling coaching strategies, role playing, sharing ideas across schools;
- Provided guidance as to how to use data;
- Helped us get organized, stay focused, secure information at our fingertips;
- Demonstrated how to be tougher and ensure teachers respect a coach's time;
- Emphasized the importance of working individually with each teacher;
- Confirmed that there is no magic blanket formula;
- Told us what *not* to do, like tutoring students;
- Provided lots of professional development and support;
- Sent e-mails with links to various resources; and
- Reviewed our logs to see where extra help might be valuable.

The BDA Cycle. All the content mentors stated that modeling how to carry out the BDA cycle was an important aspect of their work with coaches. They modeled BDA while shadowing coaches, in professional development sessions, while collecting data. BDA was the model regardless of whether the intervention was literacy or classroom management or something else. It was a key aspect of the coach-mentor interaction, whether or not the mentor was present: "My role in BDA was to support it when I'm there or when I'm not there." One mentor observed however that once a month visits tended to mean "a less intense relationship with the BDA cycle." Another mentor observed that coaches began to find themselves more able to work with the BDA cycle "once they got the idea that it's not something that you have to be mindful of, but that it's a relationship that becomes natural."

Growth in Coaching Practice

Content mentors believe they saw growth in the practice of coaches and cite as examples:

- More and higher quality reflection that connects to their own practice, teaching practice, and student achievement; and
- More coaches examining student achievement, informal assessments, 4Sight assessments.

Coaches also point to examples of growth in their understanding of coaching practice:

- I focus on the positive in a teacher, and pick one thing at a time to change;
- I'm more confident modeling PLN strategies;
- I question a teacher rather than suggest what to do;
- I've learned to help a teacher reflect rather than show off my own expertise;
- I've learned how to build rapport with teachers, help them grow, be patient;
- I think about teaching objectively rather than personally and don't worry about hurting people's feelings.

How Mentors Worked with the Coaching Teams

Coaches and mentors agreed that the mentors have worked to build and support the coaching team. Some mentors placed team building front and center during their initial work with the coaches: "We started the whole mentoring process just as team building. Building a team was just as important as getting people ready for instructional changes. Each school had unique personalities and each team had to be built to work together. Even in terms of this year, team building is still very important."

Mentors continue to make team building an aspect of the monthly or bimonthly meetings with coaches, setting aside time for explicit team building as well as shared meals: "The mentors help support the team, that's their goal each time." In addition to explicit team building, however, mentors are conscious that day-to-day work with coaches can be structured to affirm their sense of working as a team: "that helped build the team because we heard them and we validated that what they were going through was perfectly normal." Others spoke about helping individuals focus on their common ground, as well as developing greater respect for each other's differences and strengths.

Both coaches and mentors are positive about the times that mentors intervened with struggling teams: "Yes, they are good at conflict resolution, and had fierce conversations with us." Mentors helped coaches work through issues with other team members, mediated if necessary, and did not avoid conflict: "The math team has had difficulties and the math mentor was instrumental in pulling us together and making us meet."

One coach was less positive about the team building aspect of mentoring, finding icebreakers, meeting norms, and other strategies not very helpful. "All they've done is

say, 'You guys have a great team.'" Two others noted that their team problems were minor and resolved among themselves rather than brought up with a mentor.

One practical way in which the mentors supported coaching teams was to run interference, particularly in the event of conflict with a principal or central office administrator. One mentor offered as an example the time that a principal vetoed a plan to enable a literacy coach to work officially with a group of teachers: "It became a district conversation because we [the mentors] took it there. I can't be naïve about the power of boundary. So I asked, can I bring it up. Because she [the coach] would have had to go through her principal to go to the district. So I raised it, so there was no way it could be perceived as coming from a complaint."

How Leadership Mentors Worked with Principals

Most principals interviewed were aware of the leadership mentors and generally positive about their work. Three described it as a "casual connection," infrequent, and not particularly substantive. Principals typically met with the mentors once a month, but ongoing email contact and even phone calls occurred between meetings. Principals appreciated the "reinforcement and encouragement to support this initiative."

Part of the work was simply ensuring that principals understood the PAHSCI goals. This was accomplished through one-on-one conversations with mentors, through study groups (with books such as *Schools that Learn*[3] and *Quality Teaching in a Culture of Coaching*[4]), and through persuading principals to attend PLN trainings and statewide networking sessions. If a principal could not attend a study group, mentors might brief the principal on the session. Not only were the statewide sessions helpful in increasing principals' understanding of PAHSCI, the messages had "more credibility because it was principal to principal," noted one leadership mentor. Beyond the goals of PAHSCI, leadership mentors sought to ensure that principals had a deeper understanding of the processes: "It's about building relationships, collaboration, conversation, and letting teachers and coaches work it out rather than mandating."

It was important that mentors recognize the reality of the daily demands on a principal, a few noted: "You're not going to have their undivided attention. You have to work around all those things and you have to be unobtrusive." Mentors helped principals cope with the demands of their role, helping them strategize how to release staff to attend professional development, for example, or resist the temptation to send coaches to cover empty classrooms or tutor students for test preparation.

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[3] Peter M. Senge, Nelda H. Cambron McCabe, Timothy Lucas, Art Kleiner, Janis Dutton, Bryan Smith. (2000). *Schools That Learn: A Fifth Discipline Fieldbook for Educators, Parents, and Everyone Who Cares About Education*. Doubleday Business.

[4] Stephen G. Barkley. (2005). *Quality Teaching in a Culture of Coaching*. ScarecrowEducation

Rarely do leadership mentors appear to have used the BDA framework explicitly with school leadership, although some leaders were exposed to it at networking sessions. Several principals noted however that BDA did occur, at least implicitly, in some of the structured interactions, and mentors noted that they modeled BDA in many activities. Action planning, for example, fit the BDA model, as did some walk-throughs. One principal called BDA "a problem solving model—in almost everything you do as an administrator, there is a BDA process. It may have to do with PAHSCI, or not."

Some principals came to appreciate the leadership mentor as an advocate on their behalf as well as PAHSCI's, whether through liaison work with the district's central office or with the coaches themselves: "They taught me how to work with coaches so that I'd get them to do what I wanted them to (i.e., get into the classrooms of difficult teachers)." Mentors also recognized the importance of advocating for the principal: "You act as a kind of facilitator between the principal's role in the global view and the PAHSCI view."

Many principals reported that their work with the mentors had shifted their viewpoint in important ways. One noted that he'd been persuaded that it was important to attend conferences and spend time with the team. Another noted that he'd come to see that "I don't have to do this all alone—others out there have ideas." Another observed that she was now "better at tolerating different perspectives, and I engage the staff the way I ask them to engage students."

How Leadership Mentors Worked with Other School Administrators

The degree to which the seven leadership mentors worked with administrators other than principals seems to have varied from district to district and mentor to mentor. Five had some contact with superintendents, either through brief visits, email correspondence, participation in district leadership meetings, or attendance at networking sessions. Only one superintendent interviewed cited substantial one-on-one work with a leadership mentor as an aspect of their interaction. Most noted that individual meetings provided general information about PAHSCI, rather than dealing with specific issues.

Much of the more substantive work seems to have occurred in meetings. "Ninety percent of the time," reported one superintendent, "I join them [the mentors] in their meetings with the coaches." Several superintendents reported working on the annual plan as part of the district leadership team along with the leadership mentor: "I hear all the good and the bad of what's going on and I'm also part of the solution to make things better."

The significance of the superintendent's role, or lack of a role in some districts, was noted by a few superintendents and leadership mentors. One superintendent commented that he thought there should have been a mandatory meeting for superintendents, that the project would have benefited from more superintendent engagement, that "having a POC [point-of-contact] made it easy for them to get out of it." One leadership mentor remarked on one superintendent who became very active with the principals, talked to them on a weekly basis, and let them know that the mentor was there to help them, which the mentor believed had significant impact on the quality of the PAHSCI initiative in that

district. Mentors, superintendents observed, had set accountability standards for the coaches, had ensured better use of data in the district, as well as more consistent and improved instructional strategies and curriculum.

Other than superintendents, the leadership mentors in different districts worked with other school staff members in varying combinations. For example, five of the leadership mentors also worked with directors of curriculum and instruction. Four had interaction with IU staff. Many of these interactions were information exchanges, or had to do with removing logistical barriers to PAHSCI work.

Six leadership mentors reported interactions with assistant principals, noting that these administrators are often the designee for instruction, particularly in larger districts. These interactions also included individual conversations and participation in networking sessions and district-based study groups.

Four leadership mentors reported interactions with lead teachers, and with department heads or chairs, either as participants in walk-throughs or meetings that have to do with instruction. A few reported limited interaction, typically around a specific information request, with guidance counselors, librarians, special education liaisons, assistant superintendents, data information specialists, a middle school principal (to discuss possible expansion of PAHSCI to middle school), and a director of security. Three reported limited interaction with school boards: one met twice with the school board president, another took part in a presentation to a school board member on campus, and another helped the coaching team assemble a presentation for the board of directors.

Functioning of Mentor Teams

The concept of the mentor team—each with a literacy, math, and leadership mentor—is fundamental to the PAHSCI model. PAHSCI mentor teams worked together in different ways, yet there is considerable consistency among principals, coaches, and mentors themselves as to the value and function of the team structure.

Doing things "whole group". Most mentor teams deliberately showed up together at schools and meetings to emphasize that, although each member of the team had a distinct role, they were nevertheless a team. They were together in school leadership meetings, district meetings, networking meetings, coaching events, and other public venues. Some teams deliberately planned events that would bring all coaches and mentors together.

Saying/believing the same things. Mentors were conscious of staying on message, and conscious that this was another way to reinforce their identity as a team. Team members spoke to and so reinforced the PAHSCI core principles, language, and goals while feeling free to disagree with one another about strategy, next steps, and the like.

Planning and strategizing together. Mentor teams typically found time to plan and strategize as a three-some, whether by phone and e-mail between visits, traveling together to sites or events, or making time during visits to share dinner or otherwise compare

notes. Mentors reported that all these ways of staying in contact during and between visits served to build rapport and bring the teams closer as professional colleagues. Some, but not all, leadership mentors participated in content mentor meetings with coaches and other events.

Our team modeled everything we were asking them to do. Many mentors were quite conscious of deliberately choosing to model working as a team with the coaches: "We made our team-ness very transparent; we talked about it all the time." Because coaches were asked to work as a team, to collaborate with each other and teachers, the value of this approach is obvious: "When they see mentor teams work together ... collaborate and model ... it's effective modeling, it's not showing off, it's an example of what the collaboration and cooperation should be."

Mentors expressed appreciation for the comradeship of the team: "I feel like I'm not a lone wolf in the wilderness." They also emphasized that the strength of the team structure was precisely the values that teamwork brings at its best: "Our strength is being able to collaborate and work together ... to talk to each other, strategize, plan, and reflect."

Coaches were generally positive in their comments about the mentor teams. They commented on how well the mentors communicated among themselves, how they delivered clear, calm messages, and stayed on the same page and in tune with one another: "We don't get mixed messages from them." Mentors visited their schools together and "presented themselves as a team." Most coaches viewed their mentors as "definitely, very much a team," although a team in which the individuals played distinct roles, and often brought both "different strengths" and "different personalities" to the table that "complement" each other. Mentors were friendly with one another, had a natural interpersonal relationship, and got along well with one another.

In fact, while coaches generally praised the mentors as a team, some underscored their value as individuals: "They present themselves as a team, but their strength is one-on-one." Others noted how valuable it was to hear their differences, to observe different perspectives and styles of mentoring. "They offered different viewpoints, and that's good because you can decide for yourself." On the other hand, one coach had begun to find the team tiresome: "One mentor would have been plenty; we don't need to see all three of them at the same time anymore."

Principals also generally regarded the mentor teams as having added value to the PAHSCI initiative in their schools. They consistently viewed the mentor teams as united, collaborative both with one another and with school staff, reinforcing of each other and the initiative, and more likely to visit together than not.

Content Orientation of Mentor Roles. There is an interesting variety of opinion about the PAHSCI model of mentor teams whose individual members brought different expertise. Most agree, as one principal stated, "Content and leadership mentors have to be different people—no one person could bring such breadth of expertise." Some noted that the math and literacy expertise was especially critical in working with new coaches. Coaches were

delighted to have three different mentors, including a leadership mentor to help clear obstacles with the administrators. Several mentors emphasized the contribution of the leadership mentor role: "I don't know how this could have worked without the collegial support we've had. Invaluable. Quiet and behind the scene. These ex-superintendents … related well to these administrators." One of the leadership mentors noted that content mentors don't have the "comfort level" to deal with the administrators, underscoring for him the value of this team approach in trying to make change happen within schools.

A few mentors observed that, particularly as time went by, the specialization mattered less: "I think that what happened in my districts, it was about instruction and good planning. If you could develop a relationship outside the content area, that was fine. And that was not condoned at the beginning."

Professional Development for Mentors

The mentors reported a variety of ways in which they ensured their own continuing professional learning and growth, both in pursuit of their lifelong professional interests and in new areas. They reported "pushing myself" to learn more about coaching and PLN strategies, for example. Many cited their individual reading of books and articles and visits to listservs and book groups as important. Most also cited conferences, including those sponsored by math and reading professional organizations. Several mentioned the value of a conference featuring Jim Knight on instructional coaching.

Most of the mentors cited conversations with their peers as a significant element of their professional development: "We're always reading and telling each other about that." In addition to conversations at PAHSCI sites, during travel, between visits, and emails, mentors noted that the PAHSCI gatherings were important not only for their formal agendas but also for the informal side conversations that occurred with their peers.

Several mentors remarked that the coaches were also a source of professional development for mentors. Sometimes this was as simple as coaches' sharing resources that they discovered in the course of their work. Mentors also reported learning from the professional development presentations prepared by coaches.

Foundations, Inc. Most mentors spoke positively about the professional development provided by Foundations, Inc., although some offered criticisms. Mentioned as helpful were the protocols shared, as well as other materials and resources related to coaching.

In terms of the monthly meetings in Philadelphia and the networking meetings, mentors mentioned a number of presentations as particularly helpful: sessions on listening, coaching and trust, professional learning communities, and classroom management. In addition to the formal presentations, mentors noted that the sharing of ideas and challenges that mentors face in their districts was very helpful: "I've grown to count on my peers." Two mentioned as helpful the planning that mentors did together for networking sessions and PD for coaches, and a third mentioned the development of the

electronic log. Several mentors were critical of the monthly meetings, finding them too rushed, or too narrowly focused on administrative tasks.

Challenges to Mentoring

In contrast to coaches, mentors seem to have encountered fewer challenges in their work except insofar as they became partners in helping coaches overcome their obstacles—such as resistant teachers, uncooperative principals, and so forth.

Time on task was occasionally an issue, as several coaches noted that the mentors could only visit once a month because they had too much ground to cover. They arrived late and left early, according to one coach. Another noted that too much of their limited monthly meeting with the mentors was taken up by the action plan, which meant the team never got to one-on-one work. Another expressed annoyance at structured time, which again, did not allow coaches to raise their concerns in person with mentors. One mentor noted the distance that their team had to travel to the PAHSCI site and back had a negative impact on their capacity to shadow coaches.

Transitions, when new mentors joined the team, were cited by a couple of coaches and mentors as a challenge, even when the change strengthened the team. "When a new person comes on, you forget you need to bring them on."

Four content mentors and coaches suggested that some *leadership mentors* were unsure or unassertive in their role. As one content mentor said, "We felt that our leadership mentor didn't entirely know what to do. We felt a little burdened by him. He tried his best. He didn't have as much knowledge as we did." One coach noted that their leadership mentor never met with their principal, and believed that this contributed to that principal's failure to understand PAHSCI. Another coach spoke about an incident where a leadership mentor was publicly critical of a coaching team.

Obstacles to PAHSCI

Those interviewed noted many challenges to PAHSCI's implementation, most having to do with the roles, responsibilities, and understandings of the key players in the school systems and buildings who together were responsible for its implementation. In some cases these challenges lessened over time, as implementation progressed and resistance to PAHSCI eased, especially among the teaching staff.

Challenges of the Coaching Role. Challenges in implementing the role of the coach were cited by many as issues in realizing PAHSCI. Some of these challenges had to do with the role as it was designed:

- Understanding what coaching is—many coaches began their work with a vague understanding of their role;
- The challenge coaches faced in leaving the classroom for a leadership role;
- The hesitancy some coaches felt about coaching "outside" their content area;

- Barriers that coaches faced in gaining entry to teacher's classrooms;
- Difficulties that coaches faced in building relationships with teachers, especially older teachers who had more tenure and were closer to retirement;
- Selecting coaches for their promise as coaches not for their seniority; and
- Challenge of creating and sustaining a coaching team.

Other barriers had to do with coaches performing work that was not in the PAHSCI job description, sometimes, although not always, at the direction of their principals.

- Coaches acting like teachers aides;
- Coaches filling in as substitute teachers;
- Coaches working with students rather than teachers, including tutoring;
- Coaches staying in their offices, relying on written communication and waiting for teachers to contact them;
- Coaches getting pulled into other things, particularly student assessments, including the PSSA and the Pennsylvania 4Sight Benchmark Assessments;
- Coaching teams that were short one or more coaches or never large enough to serve the size of the campus and teacher population; and
- Allocating too many assignments to coaches—making the work impossible.

As coaches explained, "We were pulled to do things that were school-related and helped the culture of the school, but might not have been coach-related." Another remarked, "Testing is a big one: I know everybody has to help but it takes up a lot of time."

Challenges of Training. All the principals, mentors, and coaches who mentioned PLN training had only positive things to say about the trainings they attended. The one critical comment was that explicit training in coaching should have been part of the first year's formal sessions: "We jumped into PLN trainings, and then backed into coaching." Many issues faced by coaches, they argue—simply understanding the role of coach, learning about strategies for dealing with resistant teachers, gaining guidance on communication strategies with teachers—could have been eased with formal, introductory coursework, as well as the embedded PD provided by the mentors.

Challenges of Resistant Teachers. Another frequently cited barrier was the resistant teacher, although most of those interviewed saw this issue as one that was largely overcome by the third year, as a result of retirements as well as inroads made by PAHSCI. Some teachers simply resisted, promising they'd get involved but not doing so. Some were more willing to "try it," but didn't want to "change all my units." Some teachers felt threatened by coaches, viewing them as administrators in an evaluative role. As more than one participant observed, "Teachers who need the help the most are often the ones who won't open their doors to coaches."

In a few schools, those with higher test scores and academic records, the challenge was changing the attitudes of teachers who felt, "We're a good school—why do we need to change?" Regardless of the school setting, "teachers needed time to make the cultural

shift of letting someone come into their classroom with ideas; both teachers and the union needed time to come to believe that coaches were not in an evaluative role."

Challenges of Principals and Central Office Staff. When administrators either did not understand the goals of PAHSCI, or chose not to commit to it, their lack of support or active interference could be a major impediment to PAHSCI's implementation. As one leadership mentor expressed it: "The administration can be an issue. If you don't have a decent administration, it won't work."

One common challenge was the temptation that many principals seem to have felt to "see coaches as able bodies," with the result that coaches were pressured to take on roles ranging from substitute teacher, to student tutor, to standardized assessment coordinator, even to lunchroom monitor—or had their assignments abruptly changed. Some administrators simply had difficulty grasping the concept of 100% release time for coaching positions—"what do they do all day?" The challenge of the first year, one mentor summarized, was to define for the administration "what the coaches are doing, the value of it, and then persuade them to give them the opportunity to do it."

Another major obstacle was confidentiality. Several coaches and mentors described problems with administrators who wanted them to be eyes and ears, "to tell me who you work with and what you talk about."

Another issue occurred in those districts where the administrators were "not strong advocates for academic learning…. You need to put the learning goals of students ahead of the schedule and make decisions that are good for students." Several administrators were mentioned who had their own ideas about how things should be carried out in schools "and unfortunately a lot them are not built around instruction." These administrators placed more emphasis on discipline than on instruction, and more stress on control than on management.

In such districts, the climate is not collaborative. Indeed, the idea of collaboration was a special challenge for districts that operated in a "top down style." One mentor described the challenge of helping a principal understand that "this is a collaborative, cooperative project, and the modeling that takes place is also one of collaboration, cooperation, and support rather than beating people into submission."

Other climate issues noted included:

- Teaching and administrative staff turnover;
- Scheduling and release time issues;
- Different curricular and instructional initiatives introduced each year;
- Poor communication between the principal and the coaching team; and
- Lack of engagement or leadership from the central office or building administrators.

One superintendent who was very engaged in PAHSCI objected to the concept of the POC (point-of-contact). The superintendent was adamant that PAHSCI should have secured more superintendent engagement, including a mandatory meeting, and that "having a POC made it easy for them to get out of it." A number of mentors also commented on the boost the project received from real central office commitment, and the problems caused by the lack of the same.

Challenges of Scheduling. Positive as they were about the PLN training, several principals and mentors noted that it created real scheduling difficulties, particularly in the second and third years. It presented difficulties to schools both in terms of finding enough substitutes to cover the absences, but also in justifying the absence of a considerable number of teachers for a considerable period of time. At least one principal found himself in substantial conflict with his school board over the issue.

Indicators of Change

All of the principals and central office administrators interviewed, when asked to report whether there were indicators of change having occurred in their schools and districts as a result of the PAHSCI intervention, were generally positive. Some were prepared to go as far as to call what had taken place "cultural change," with the potential for sustainability that the term implies. "If you look at what's changed in the classrooms, and how the strategies are being applied, there's a culture change in how the organization organizes, plans, implements, and reflects on instruction."

In the classroom. One-third of the coaches, one-third of the mentors, and three principals spontaneously noted concrete evidence of substantially increased student engagement as an indicator of change in the schools: "Instead of sending the kid to the board, now the students pass the chalk, promoting the idea of student-centered practice." One principal observed that the practices meant to engage students, such as the do-now, pair-share, ticket-out-the-door, had become "second nature." Another principal affirmed that "Incredible changes" were taking place, both in classrooms and in student achievement. Coaches also reported that instead of teachers lecturing, they were seeing activities planned to engage students. Students, another coach observed, "know expectations for them are the same no matter what classroom they walk into." Mentors also commented on the better quality of the student engagement strategies observed three years into PAHSCI. Of course, a few among the mentors and coaches worried that the changes might not be broad or deep enough to be sustainable, for example, guessing that "only 25%" of the staff had truly bought in, or that "BDA is the only new strategy" that had enduring commitment from the teachers.

In the teaching community. Again, mentors, principals, and coaches who thought that teacher resistance had been an issue initially believed that far fewer teachers continued to resist PAHSCI: "Coaches are now welcome," commented one principal. Principals reported more receptivity among teachers, more collaboration among teachers, more implementation of PAHSCI strategies, lesson plans that reflected the PAHSCI work. Several coaches and mentors commented on a shift in the "quality of teacher

conversations": that teachers now could be overheard talking about instruction, about professional issues, about planning together—a dramatic change in school climate. Others noted the use of PAHSCI "language" in these schools (as was also evident during the site visits conducted for this study). Others noted that many teachers had liked and learned from the PLN courses.

A few also noted that in the later years of PAHSCI, coaches began to use data more extensively with teachers, looking at PSSA and benchmarking data.

In the coaching community. Mentors and coaches alike were usually positive about the changes they'd seen in the work of the coaches, in terms both of their instructional and coaching practice. Two coaches thought the PLN training was the major influence in changing their perspective on instruction, most credited their work with mentors. Many acknowledged that not only had they had to go through the transition from teacher to coach, but also from one style of teaching to a new approach: "Before I was semi-constructionist, usually in front of class. I'd never seen this in all the years I'd taught." Some mentors were similarly effusive about the changes in coaches in term of instructional practice—"monumental growth." One mentor noted "Coaches are reflecting in their logs, and doing so in ways that connect to the effectiveness of their own practice, of teachers, and how well the students are doing."

Other coaches emphasized the growth of their coaching skills that had occurred as a result of their work with mentors: understanding the importance of working one-on-one, focusing on the positives in a teacher, modeling strategies, helping teachers reflect, building rapport with teachers, helping them grow, being patient. Mentors noted that the coaches had improved in their understanding of the coaching role as being a facilitator, a catalyst for change, rather than a teacher.

In the front office. As one principal observed, "PAHSCHI forced me to get out of the walls of my school and see we aren't the only ones fighting what we're fighting." Others showed their commitment to PAHSCI by including coaches in the building leadership team, and valuing their role. Mentors observed changes among administrators that clearly reflect PAHSCI principles: administrators working collaboratively alongside coaches and teachers, attending PLN sessions, generally demonstrating more engagement as well as more trust of their staff. Several principals believed their schools had earned a reputation within the district for the "effectiveness of our professional development." Another mentor concurred, "Yes, there's a culture that supports student engagement and achievement: the teachers are using the strategies; it's become part of their culture… It's well past the point of convincing people that this is the direction to move."

Sustainability

The question of PAHSCI's sustainability was greeted with some optimism by the principals and central office personnel interviewed. One suggested that simply instituting the PAHSCI structure for three years would have an impact. As one principal summarized the situation: "The shift in mindset to a collaborative posture is what ensures

sustainability. There are enough teachers here who are excited and have bought into the initiative. We have department heads and union buy in. We're getting close, but I'd like to have one more year to be sure." Another noted that "we're moving toward the systemic, having the systems processes and supports in place to make it happen."

Some mentors suggested the three years had been long enough to demonstrate the value to schools and students of coaches working one-on-one with teachers, including how to improve student scores by using coaches correctly. In addition, "The school culture is really embracing it, teachers are really using the strategies, they want to learn more." Others noted as sustainable the BDA, increased engagement of students in classrooms, and PLN: "I don't think classroom instruction will ever be the same after PAHSCI," said one mentor. Teachers, noted another mentor, "see that their job is more rewarding and made easier when the students are actively engaged in the learning."

There were two caveats to their optimism. First, in the words of one mentor, "Yes, so long as there's support from administrators." Several mentors and principals noted that the principal must be prepared to insist that PAHSCI and the new instructional strategies be sustained, and that the principal must have support from the superintendent.

Secondly, some of those interviewed were convinced that some continuation of the coaching role was key to sustainability: "Without coaches," one mentor said, "I think inertia will set in. To ensure that the changes are as permanent as they can be, does require some form of coaching so that it continues. Teachers need someone to go to, a human resource that they can interact with." Because of this, they were also concerned about the capacity of the school districts to maintain the number of coaches and the focus on those staff members on professional coaching duties.

Conclusion

The PAHSCI Mentor Study addressed nine research questions, examining closely the roles played by the mentors as well as their contributions to the initiative.

(1) What are the key roles that mentors have played in supporting the goals of PAHSCI?

Coaches, content mentors, principals, and central office administrators generally shared the view that the *content mentor's* key role in PAHSCI was to support the coaches. They noted the professional credibility of the math and literacy mentors, and their value as resource to coaches. All but two of the 41 coaches interviewed reported that they had depended a great deal on assistance from math and literacy mentors, and cited many ways that mentors had provided support and guidance.

Initially, the primary role of the *leadership mentors* was communication, to ensure that principals and central office administrators understood the purpose and process of PAHSCI. They continued to be important "point persons," for the logistics of PAHSCI, but their role also evolved into providing facilitation, advocacy, and even friendship for the administrators with whom they worked.

(2) How did mentors build relationships with coaches and school leaders? What were the turning points, obstacles and challenges to overcome, and how long did it take the mentors to establish their credibility?

Most PAHSCI mentors, with the exception of a few leadership mentors entered the school districts unknown to the coaches and administrators with whom they were charged with building relationships. Those interviewed credited the capacity of most mentors to build effective working relationships in short order to their credibility as professionals, the nonjudgmental and non-prescriptive stance with which they approached their collaborative work with schools, the way in which they modeled their practice, and the trustworthiness they demonstrated in everyday ways and around issues of confidentiality. Some interviewees noted the complexities of building relationships, but were generally positive in their perspective on how mentors approached these complexities, noting conflicts and transitions from one mentor to another successfully negotiated.

(3) With whom did mentors work, and how did they work with them to strengthen coaches' capacity to improve instruction and to coach, and to strengthen the capacity of school leaders to support PAHSCI?

Both content mentors and leadership mentors played significant roles in strengthening the capacity of coaches and school leaders to support PAHSCI. To strengthen the capacity of coaches to improve instruction, math and literacy mentors attended PLN courses alongside coaches, helping them engage in the courses and implement the strategies learned there. Mentors provided resources, great books, and materials on literacy. They took part in study groups, using PLN as the guiding framework, and modeled techniques like jigsaws and Gordon's Ladder. Mentors explored classroom management studies and embedded PLN in different content areas.

In terms of strengthen the coaching practice of coaches, mentors and coaches identified a number of primary strategies. Most coaches were very positive about the ways that mentors worked with them to improve their coaching practice, and most believed that their understanding of coaching has grown as a result. Mentors shadowed coaches, engaging in pre-conversations, visitations, and debriefing with coaches. They role-played constantly. At the outset, they worked to create a safe environment where coaches could explore their roles.

Leadership mentors provided information and encouragement to ensure that administrators understood and actively supported the PAHSCI goals. This was accomplished through one-on-one conversations, through study groups, and through persuading principals to attend PLN trainings and statewide networking sessions. Some principals came to appreciate the leadership mentor as an advocate on their behalf as well as PAHSCI's. Many principals reported that their work with the mentors had shifted their viewpoint in important ways, toward a more collaborative working style, and toward more openness to new ideas and perspectives.

(4) Have mentors used the BDA cycle in working with coaches and school leaders?

All the math and literacy mentors stated that modeling how to carry out the BDA cycle was an important aspect of their work with coaches. They modeled BDA while shadowing coaches, in professional development sessions, while collecting data. BDA was the model regardless of the intervention—literacy or classroom management or something else.

Leadership mentors appear to have rarely if ever explicitly used the BDA framework with school leadership, although administrators were exposed to BDA at networking sessions. Several principals noted that BDA did occur, at least implicitly, in some of the structured problem-solving interactions, and mentors noted that they modeled BDA in many activities—through action planning, for example, which fit the BDA model.

(5) How have mentors worked with coaches and school leaders to help them resolve the obstacles and challenges that have gotten in the way of their PAHSCI work?

A key aspect of the math and literacy mentor role was to help the coaches resolve challenges in the way of their PAHSCI work. One major challenge was to help the coaches simply understand their coaching role and resist pressures to perform tasks not central to coaching, such as tutoring. Another major challenge at the outset was dealing with resistant teachers, although most of those interviewed saw this issue as one that was largely overcome by the third year, as a result of retirements as well as inroads made by PAHSCI. Mentors modeled strategies for approaching such teachers in positive rather than confrontational ways. Both content mentors and leadership mentors served as advocates for coaches and for PAHSCI with administrators whose policies or style interfered with the goals of PAHSCI and the role of the coaches. Leadership mentors also worked with principals and administrators who supported PAHSCI but faced obstacles in doing so, such as, for example, resistance from school boards who objected to the amount of release time and substitutes required to support the attendance of school staff at PLN training.

(6) Were there important school-based factors that influenced the context within which mentors worked?

When administrators either did not understand the goals of PAHSCI, or chose not to commit to it, their lack of support or active interference could be a major impediment to PAHSCI's implementation. One common challenge was the temptation that many principals seem to have felt to "see coaches as able bodies," with the result that coaches were pressured to take on roles ranging from substitute teacher, to student tutor, to standardized assessment coordinator, even to lunchroom monitor—or had their assignments abruptly changed. Another major obstacle was confidentiality. Several coaches and mentors described problems with administrators who wanted them to be eyes and ears. Another issue occurred in districts whose administrators did not focus on learning, who placed more emphasis on discipline than on instruction, on control than on

management. The concept of collaboration was a special challenge for districts that operated in a "top down style."

Other climate issues noted included:

- Teaching and administrative staff turnover;
- Scheduling and release time issues;
- Curricular and instructional initiatives rapidly introduced and abandoned;
- Poor communication between principal and coaching team; and
- Lack of engagement or leadership from the central office or building administrators.

(7) How did mentor teams function?

The concept of the mentor team—each with a literacy, math, and leadership mentor—is fundamental to the PAHSCI model. Many mentors were quite conscious of deliberately choosing to model working as a team with the coaches. Although each mentor team had its own style, there are commonalities in how they functioned. Most mentor teams deliberately showed up together at schools and meetings to emphasize that, although each member of the team had a distinct role, they were nevertheless a team. Mentors were conscious of staying on message, and conscious that this was another way to reinforce their identity as a team. They reinforced the PAHSCI core principles, language, and goals while feeling free to disagree with one another about strategy and next steps. Mentor teams found time to plan and strategize together, whether by phone and e-mail between visits or when traveling together. Although coaches generally praised the mentors as a team, some also underscored their value as individuals, specifically how helpful it was to hear their differences, to observe different perspectives and styles of mentoring.

(8) What did mentors do for their own professional growth?

Mentors found various ways to ensure their continuing professional learning, both in pursuit of lifelong professional interests and in new areas related to PAHSCI—reporting "pushing myself" to learn more about coaching and PLN strategies, for example. Many cited conferences, as well individual reading and visits to listservs and book groups. Most cited conversations with their PAHSCI peers as a significant element of their professional development. Several remarked that the coaches were also a source of professional development for mentors, through their presentations as well as resources they identified.

Most mentors spoke positively about the professional development provided by Foundations, Inc., although some offered criticisms. Mentioned as helpful were the protocols shared, as well as other materials and resources related to coaching, and presentations on certain topics, such as the one on listening skills.

(9) Have changes occurred within the PAHSCI schools or districts that were influenced by the presence of mentors, and are these changes sustainable?

All of the principals and central office administrators interviewed, when asked to report whether change had occurred in their schools and districts as a result of the PAHSCI intervention, were generally positive. Some were prepared to call what had taken place "cultural change," with the potential for sustainability that the term implies. One-third of the coaches, one-third of the mentors, and three principals spontaneously noted concrete evidence of substantially increased student engagement as an indicator of change in the schools. Mentors, principals, and coaches who thought that teacher resistance had been an issue initially believed that far fewer teachers continued to resist PAHSCI: Principals reported more receptivity among teachers, more collaboration among teachers, more implementation of PAHSCI strategies, and lesson plans that reflected PAHSCI. Mentors observed changes among administrators that clearly reflect PAHSCI principles: administrators working collaboratively alongside coaches and teachers, attending PLN sessions, generally demonstrating more engagement as well as more trust of their staff

Mentors and coaches alike were usually positive about the changes they'd seen in the work of the coaches, in terms both of instructional and coaching practice. Most coaches credited their work with mentors as the major influence in changing their perspective on instruction. Other coaches emphasized the growth of their coaching skills and believed that had occurred as a result of their work with mentors. Mentors noted that the coaches had improved in their understanding of the coaching role as being a facilitator, a catalyst for change, rather than a teacher