

# PIIC News

The Pennsylvania Institute for Instructional Coaching

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## Triple Threat Coaching

By Joanne Krett, Woodland Hills SD Instructional Coach

At our most recent statewide PLO, PIIC Executive Director, Ellen Eisenberg, was clear that all the work we coaches do can be traced back to a single, overarching role—that of a change agent. For many, including me, that can be a very daunting idea.

So, with March Madness on the horizon, allow me to overburden a basketball metaphor to discuss the role of the coach in transforming these formidable opponents: resistance and reluctance to change.

First, the triple threat position. Young basketball players usually want to start dribbling as soon as they get their

hands on the ball offensively. A fundamental skill they must develop is assuming the triple threat position: stop for a moment and square up to the basket so defenders don't know if they're going to shoot, dribble or pass. Putting themselves in position to do any of those three things gives them an advantage.

If coaches want to be part of a school-wide transformation, they must also work to establish a triple threat position.

First, stop and square up. With all the support coaches get from PIIC, especially in terms of ongoing professional learning, it's easy to become impulsive, wanting to adopt each and every idea and tool we encounter in our trainings. Once we slow down to really eye up the shot, we adopt the role of *visionary*. Coaches can help establish a vision for student success that fits their staff, their students and their building culture. This can't be done until student data is analyzed and staff needs are assessed, but a coach

is part of transforming teacher practice by envisioning what that learning could be.

If there's no clear shot, triple threat puts a player in position to pass the ball to a teammate. I think of this coaching role as *professional confidante*. Teachers have to be comfortable throwing ideas around with each other and with their coaches in order for meaningful change to occur. Whether they want to discuss a new PDE initiative, a new instructional strategy or any idea, teachers have to know that the conversation they have with their coach is a safe space for thinking through a challenge.

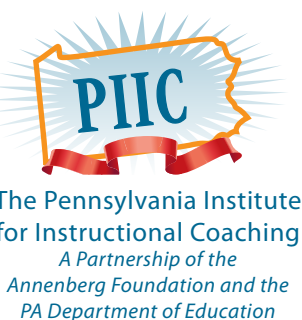
As we pass ideas around in the BDA cycle, we can reduce teacher isolation and support them as they discover new teaching practices that lead to more student success, slowly threatening resistance and reluctance one conversation at a time.

Finally, if there is no shot and a player can't pass, it's time to dribble. Coaches must be willing to walk the proverbial walk through *modeling*, the third coaching role that leads to transformation. In classrooms, faculty lounges, formal PD sessions, staff meetings and offices, coaches lead by example.

So watch out, status quo. Coaches are working with teachers to disrupt your hold on student learning. We are establishing a triple threat to score more student success!

For more information, please contact:  
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*"As we pass ideas around in the BDA cycle, we can reduce teacher isolation and support them as they discover new teaching practices that lead to more student success, slowly threatening resistance and reluctance one conversation at a time."*



### Professional Learning Opportunity Dates

May 4-6, 2015  
Penn Stater  
Conference Center  
State College, PA

October 12-14, 2015  
Penn Stater  
Conference Center  
State College, PA

More information  
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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 PIIC's Executive Director

At their December 2014 annual conference, *Learning Forward* shared a new vision and mission. Their new vision statement is, “*Excellent teaching and learning every day.*” Their new mission is, “*Learning Forward builds the capacity of leaders to establish and sustain highly effective professional learning*” (*Learning Forward's PD Watch, January 2015*). This new vision and mission statement are truly mirrored by the PA Institute for Instructional Coaching (PIIC), the Pennsylvania Department of Education, and our participating intermediate units. This is the message conveyed by our PIIC instructional coaches and mentors who work side-by-side with teachers and administrators, analyzing data, and ensuring that all students are in classrooms with highly qualified teachers every day.

Instructional coaches understand the tenets of adult learning and how to help teachers implement effective instructional practices. But first, they work with the school to build awareness of how instructional coaching and coaches are part of a school wide professional development plan that can transform classrooms and school practices into effective professional learning. Coaches have partners; teachers, coaches and administrators work together to collectively problem-solve and build

teacher capacity so that both instructional habits and student learning change.

Coaches are not in schools to reform customs and traditions. Coaches are in schools to help transform instructional practice, delivery, and know-how by working in partnership with their colleagues around a shared vision and mission... increasing student engagement, building teacher capacity, and improving student learning. They work to create daily opportunities for teachers to enhance, apply, and sustain learning by working one-on-one and in small groups to support the school community. They are the critical friends that reinforce reflective and non-evaluative practice, helping teachers and administrators recognize what works well in classrooms and what needs to be scaffolded differently.

*“Although change is unpredictable, you can set up conditions that help to guide the process”* (Fullan, *Leading in a Culture of Change* workbook). Effective coaches are in schools every day, often disrupting the status quo. They are the practitioners who encourage reflection, metacognition, transparency, and yes, self-assessment. They influence teaching and learning in ways that inspire, nurture, promote, and persuade members in a community of learning and practice to adjust instructional

priorities so that students are at the center, and make those adjustments where it counts – in classrooms.

In an article from 2004 Curriculum Corporation Conference entitled “*Breaking the leadership rules: What is the educational ‘bottom line’?*” author Paul Power says, “...school staffs are collections of like-minded professionals who are dedicated to the highest standards of quality and to improvement in teaching and learning within their school community. They are passionate about what they do; support one another professionally; challenge each other to attain excellence; commit to lifelong learning; seek feedback from others on their own performance; and offer balanced feedback to their colleagues to help them improve their practice.” These words describe how instructional coaches work with their colleagues each day and answer the following question, “What am I doing as a coach to help teachers change, further their practice, and improve student learning and engagement?” Ask how coaches do these things and you’ll see how instructional coaches are transforming schools and changing the landscape of teaching and learning.

Sincerely,

*Allen B. Eisenberg*

Please access PIIC's online resource, **The Instructional Coaching Resource Guide:**  
[www.instituteforinstructionalcoaching.org](http://www.instituteforinstructionalcoaching.org)

## The BDA Cycle of Consultation is Where it Starts...

Adapted from a PIIC Mentor Blog

Ask ten different people their definition of instructional coaching and 10 different definitions materialize! In spite of the differences, however, in definitions, roles, and responsibilities, the one thing that remains constant throughout any of those conversations with instructional coaches and mentors is that coaches build relationships with teachers during the BDA cycle of consultation.

Kelly Galbraith, a former IU PIIC mentor, describes her experiences. “When I began coaching in the same building where I taught, I wasn’t sure where to start. Many teachers were familiar, but I had never been in any of their classrooms. We started with me introducing myself to the faculty as an instructional coach and explaining my new role. I

*knew I needed to re-negotiate my role as a coach to begin working with my colleagues in a different capacity.*

*“The first quarter ended and I had few volunteers. I decided to ‘meet and greet’ each member of the English department in early November. I attended the next English department meeting and announced that I’d be scheduling 15-minute meetings with each of my colleagues to talk about teaching and learning.*

*“At those meetings, I asked each teacher a key question: ‘Think about your students. What do you wish you had the time to do to impact student learning in your content?’ This question was key; it wasn’t about what they needed*

***“Coaches must build awareness and help others understand their coaching role and the BDA process.”***

Continued on page 3, The BDA Cycle



help doing. It was about time, and it made the conversation less intimidating. This key question gave me an opportunity to listen to the goals for their students. It also opened the door for us to begin talking about a partnership to help them achieve their goals. I was careful to maintain confidentiality and guess what? Business began to pick up!

*“From that point forward, I met with every teacher in the building, establishing trusting relationships that would lead to productive work together in their classrooms. These meetings were the precursor to ongoing work using the BDA coaching cycle of consultation.”*

What Kelly shares is the sometimes daunting task of wanting to work with colleagues but not knowing exactly where to start. Having the ongoing opportunities to meet and plan (**before**), to be a silent partner in watching or sharing some expertise (**during**), and then re-convening to debrief and share feedback (**after**) are the steps necessary in not only building those

relationships but in providing students with an instructional design that had been co-constructed, shared in real time, and reflected upon, in, and on action, all with a trusted colleague.

The BDA cycle is a conversation between a coach and teacher. It is a collaborative effort that provides an opportunity for the teacher and coach to share ideas, discuss instructional strategies, and collectively problem-solve. It is an agreement for working together as partners, a place to “rehearse, review, and re-adjust” the instructional practices in a non-threatening environment.

Coaches must build awareness and help others understand their coaching role and the BDA process. They need to reinforce the connections among the 3-pronged approach to school wide improvement starting at the level that makes the most impact: the classroom. This process is a framework that sets a context, content, and conversation where coaches help teachers implement effective instructional practices in order to increase student engagement and improve student learning.

## Rigorous Reading: 5 Access Points for Comprehending Complex Texts

Book Review by Kim Kichline, Manheim Township SD Instructional Coach

In *Rigorous Reading: 5 Access Points for Comprehending Complex Texts*, Fisher and Frey provide teachers and coaches with intentional instruction for working with complex texts. The first access point is **purpose and modeling**. Fisher and Frey present how to establish a purpose for reading complex texts and the importance of modeling for students. In the next chapter, the access point they present is an instructional plan for **close reading and scaffolded reading instruction**. The third access point is **collaborative conversations**. Fisher and Frey provide structures and opportunities for collaborative conversations by students. These focused conversations refine the students’ understanding of complex texts. The final two access points are an **independent reading staircase** that moves readers through increasingly complex texts and **demonstrating understanding and assessing performance** or utilizing formative assessment. These 5 access points fit seamlessly with the PIIC 4 Quadrant Model and can be utilized by instructional coaches during the Before, During, After (BDA) cycle with teachers.

Each chapter has language and connections to the core standards. Teachers and instructional coaches are provided clear and concise explanations of the access points along with principles, strategies, tips, descriptions, suggestions, charts, teacher documentation supports and sheets (figures in the text) that could

be utilized for planning, data collection and reflection, among other uses. A key component to this book and each chapter are the videos included throughout each of the chapters. Classroom video clips at a variety of grade levels and presentation videos by Fisher and Frey are available through QR codes included in the book.

This book provides an excellent resource for teachers and a thorough plan for professional development (PD). The end of the book is a *Professional Learning*

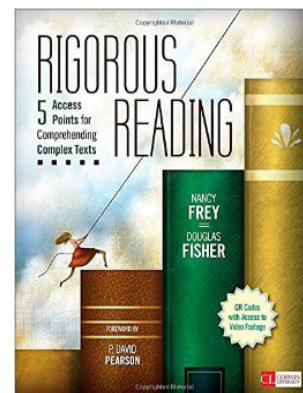
***“This book provides an excellent resource for teachers and a thorough plan for professional development.”***

*Guide* that provides a framework for professional development across the grade levels. PD sessions could be conducted at the school building level or with grade level or cross grade level groups by instructional coaches. Additionally, it is the perfect guide for a professional learning community. Instructional coaches working in the PIIC framework will find this book easy to incorporate into their work with teachers. Additionally, it is the perfect guide for a professional learning community. The *Professional Learning Guide* is divided into six modules. Modules include estimated time, materials needed, PowerPoint slides, videos and copies of teacher supports and documentation sheets (figures referenced in the text).

Material in the *Professional Learning Guide* can be utilized by instructional coaches in their work with teachers in the Before for planning, the During, or the After for reflection and follow up with colleagues. Each module is divided into segments with clear directions.

*Rigorous Reading: 5 Access Points for Comprehending Complex Texts* is a must have for instructional coaches working with teachers and complex texts. It is an important resource that aligns reading instruction, text complexity, and Common Core in a powerful and very useful and strategic way.

For more information, please contact: Kim Kichline, kichliki@mtwp.net



*“The five access points build a bridge between the reader and the text, and are accomplished through intentional instruction.”*  
***Rigorous Reading: 5 Access Points for Comprehending Complex Texts***

## Formative Assessment: Beyond the Classroom and into Coaching

By Candace Hall, Fleetwood Area SD Instructional Coach, and Melissa Devlin, IU 14 PIIC Mentor

As coaches, we support teachers in utilizing formative assessment in their own classrooms. We model formative assessment practices and support teachers in implementation. We capture data to help teachers gather information. We support the cycle of assessment and instruction to support student achievement. We work with teachers to evaluate and pour over student work to turn data into informed decision making for instructional practices.

We, in turn, are often mindful of demonstrating and modeling the kinds of practices we hope that teachers employ in their classrooms with their students. As we take a deep look into the role of formative assessment, it is critical to consider how it is used as a tool within the embedded professional development and work that we do with teachers. Not only is it a practice that we can utilize to inform and modify our own instances of professional development with teachers, but it can serve as a valuable model for teachers as they see the range of forms and functions of formative assessment. I recently learned some new methods for using response cards. After the PIIC Professional Learning Opportunity (PLO) in September, I procured some ideas from the *Digging Deeper with Formative Assessment* session that I could use for an upcoming professional development (PD) day. During the PD session with my teachers, I created some response cards that allowed me to model various ways in which we could gauge student learning and provide immediate feedback to students by using the response cards. My cards had YES, NO, TRUE, FALSE, and Multiple Choice options on each card. The teachers embraced this idea because they were not limited in the types of questions they might ask throughout a lesson. Many even asked if they could have a classroom set to use in their own classrooms.

Formative assessment becomes not only a tool for us to gauge learning with participants but as a tool for our own reflection. Another idea that I used from the PIIC September 2014 PLO was the four-corner idea, and this translated smoothly into an activity to model with teachers during professional development. I wanted an activity that would get teachers to discuss their feelings yet move around, so through the four-corner activity we were able to move around, discuss our ideas in depth, reflect on our thoughts, and move again (if

teacher ideas changed). As I work with teachers, I find that I use formative assessment consistently to find out teachers' further needs, areas where support may be necessary, or areas where I need to step back and reconsider my own approach. I analyze the data we receive through formative assessment and utilize it for adapting future work with teachers. I am able to improve and refine our own skills through this same analysis.

*"I analyze the data we receive through formative assessment and utilize it for adapting future work with teachers."*

There is no end to the value of formative assessment in improving instruction. As coaches, we are constantly refining and reflecting on our practices. When we model worthwhile strategies and ask teachers to debrief, teachers become more reflective. As they implement and refine

their practice, they know and understand their students better as individuals and can modify their instruction to meet the needs of all learners in a classroom more effectively. When we model best instructional practices and follow behind with ongoing support for teachers individually, we help to create a culture in which teachers seek opportunities to hone their craft. As teachers debrief and discuss how they saw the effects of worthy change, they continue to try new things, take chances, and are comfortable making mistakes, which makes it easier for them to commit to making growth a lasting part of their work.

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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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