

PIIC News

The Pennsylvania Institute for Instructional Coaching

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Building Relationships between Administrators and Coaches

By Sharon Deiling, Alicen Hoy, and Joanne Custer, Dauphin County Technical Institute Instructional Coaches

Instructional coaches have a unique role, constantly keeping a balance between administration and teachers. Sometimes the walk is on a balance beam, but sometimes it's a tightrope. The keys to constructing a successful program where coaches work with administration without alienating staff are communication and trust.

clearly understood by all involved, a critical component of trust cannot be established.

As the coaching program grows, communication and trust continue to be key factors. In addition to informal conversations, regularly scheduled meetings between coaches and administrators allow communication

to build. By scheduling them in advance, meetings become a priority for all parties in an environment where interruptions are commonplace. Co-created agendas

could include topics such as goal setting, school climate, teacher and learner needs, data analysis, professional development planning, and outside networking. Moreover, in order to maintain the trust of teachers, confidentiality in communication must be understood and practiced at all times.

After trust of the program has permeated the culture of the school and a collegial relationship between the administrative team and coach have been established, the coach's role expands to school leader. This both opens the door for transparent coaching opportunities and helps to transition a school from delivering professional development sessions to establishing professional learning communities. At this point, the ultimate intention of coaching is now present: a culture of peers coaching peers with the guidance and support of instructional coaches.

For more information, please contact:
WAITING FOR CONFIRMATION

When implementing a program, coaches and administrators need to begin with a common philosophy on

coaching. Collaboratively participating in training through PIIC's Professional Learning Opportunities is the optimum activity to build an understanding of coaching. Here, both administrators and new coaches learn about PIIC's four quadrant framework: advocate one-to-one and small group support, focus on collecting, analyzing, and using data, emphasize the use of evidence-based literacy practices, and support reflective and non-evaluative practices. If attendance at a PLO is not possible, members of the PIIC network may be able to recommend a resource for a collaborative book study. The following books might be a good place to start: *Quality Teaching in a Culture of Coaching* by Stephen Barkley (2010), *Coaching Matters* by Joellen Killion et al. (2012), and *Taking the Lead: New Roles for Teachers and School-Based Coaches* by Joellen Killion and Cindy Harrison (2006).

Once philosophies are aligned, initial conversations should define the expectations of a coach, clarify the administrator's role in supporting the coach, and determine how to explain the coaching process to teachers. When agreement in the roles is not

"Once philosophies are aligned, initial conversations should define the expectations of a coach, clarify the administrator's role in supporting the coach, and determine how to explain the coaching process to teachers."



The Pennsylvania Institute for Instructional Coaching
A Partnership of the
Annenberg Foundation and the
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Professional Learning Opportunity Dates

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

January 11-13, 2016
Penn Stater
Conference Center
State College, PA

More information available on our websites:
www.pacoaching.org

www.instituteforinstructionalcoaching.org

www.cultureofcoaching.blogspot.com

Follow us on Facebook and Twitter @PIICoach!

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

"Teamwork is the ability to work together toward a common vision, the ability to direct individual accomplishments toward organizational objectives. It is the fuel that allows common people to attain uncommon results" (Andrew Carnegie). What a great definition of teamwork which is the cornerstone of every effective instructional coaching model and any school's improvement plan!

I don't think Andrew Carnegie thought about instructional coaching when he was building his empire but I do think he was aware of how important relationships were to the success of the mission.

Instructional coaching is one of those endeavors that requires total concentration, deliberate thinking, visible respect, and consistent support to create a working environment free from risk, evaluation, and ego. Although a coaching relationship somewhat resembles an arranged marriage in that neither the coaches nor teachers can select their working partners, the relationship must be built on mutual respect and a shared vision with goals that all parties agree are critical for success. That's why instructional coaches and their teaching colleagues

need to make time to communicate, collaborate, and collectively problem-solve from the very beginning. Being transparent, appreciating the differences among colleagues, and establishing healthy connections with peers are foundational to building a trusting coaching relationship.

Joellen Killion suggests the many roles of coaches and Jim Knight proposes the partnership principals to focus a coach's ability to launch coaching opportunities with their colleagues. PIIC provides the before, during, and after (BDA) cycle of consultation and the 4-quadrant framework to help coaches attend to the content and process of instructional coaching. In addition, PIIC recognizes the importance of a coach's coach and provides opportunities for coaches to work with their own coach to continually develop the art of listening, expand their effective questioning skills, build content knowledge, and sustain healthy relationships.

Building relationships with others also involves a deep understanding of one's self and responsibility. Do I honor my colleagues and treat everyone with respect? Do I understand adult learning

styles? Do I value my colleagues and their ideas? Do I talk more than I listen? Do I demonstrate reflective practice? Do I approach the feedback loop with more questions than answers, helping my colleagues come to their own conclusions rather than telling them what I think they should know or do? Do I think instructional coaching is about right and wrong, win or lose? Do I understand that teamwork means strength in numbers and together everyone is part of the process?

The answers to the above questions are not as important as the process behind the thinking about the answers. Coaching is a reflective practice which demands thoughtfulness, deliberate planning, and ongoing support. It requires self-assessment, effective leadership, and a balanced approach between authority and responsiveness. Coaches need to be leaders without the ego; they need to nag and nurture; and know when to pat and push, all elements of initiating and sustaining effective relationships.

Sincerely,



Please access PIIC's online resource, ***The Instructional Coaching Resource Guide***:
www.instituteforinstructionalcoaching.org

Coaching Matters An Understatement

Book Review by Stacy Ricciotti, West Branch Area SD Instructional Coach

Coaching Matters is an extensive nonfiction book including recent research devoted to instructional coaching. Chapters 8 and 9 will serve as the focal points in this review, as they embody the critical relationships between administration and the instructional coach. The lead author, Joellen Killion, is well renowned for her many written works on instructional coaching. For newer coaches, or those that are looking to strengthen their web of support with key leaders inside and outside of their district, this would be a valuable resource.

There is a clear and consistent theme threaded throughout both of these chapters—leadership support is critical to a coach's success. It must be a symbiotic relationship

in order to move in a forward and unified direction with student achievement at the forefront. Coaches need “district support, peer support, principal support, and external support”—tiered support from a variety of resources.

“When all is said and done, having a collegial and respectful relationship between administrators and instructional coaches is one important ingredient for success.”

In the West Branch Area School District, now finishing its second year with PIIC, instructional coaching is taking root with positive momentum stemming directly from the

Superintendent, Michelle Dutrow. Mrs. Dutrow established clear goals for the district-- one of which was to establish instructional coaching as a pillar of support for teachers-- in order to provide the “systematic change to the quality of teacher instruction” that is necessary to increase student achievement

Continued on page 3, Coaching Matters

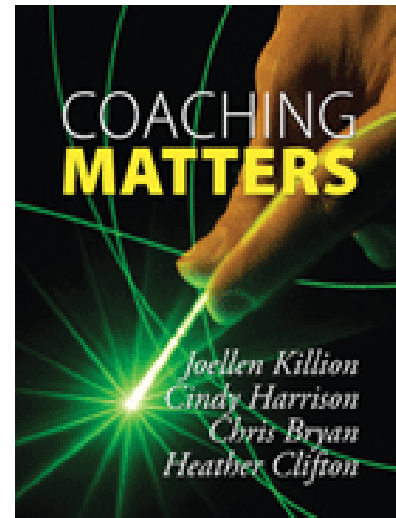
referred to by the authors. In her own words, Mrs. Dutrow believes, “teacher quality is the single most important factor contributing to student achievement and effective instructional coaching serves as the means to enhance that quality.”

The instructional coaching team, Stacy Ricciotti, Phillip Wood, and Greg Hubler, meet regularly for peer-support, improvement of their own practices, problem solving, planning, and reflection. Stacy Ricciotti, full time instructional coach said: “Mrs. Dutrow has changed the way we looked at instructional coaching in our district. She sets clear goals, expectations, and has been the driving force behind our success. She brought our district into PIIC, which has been critical to our ‘external support’ that the authors discuss in *Coaching Matters*. Her continual communication of instructional coaching as the heart of a school’s success has been crucial to the culture of coaching within West Branch Area School District.”

In addition, the instructional coaches, under the direction of Mrs. Dutrow, draw from the PDE Comprehensive Plan, the Local Comprehensive Literacy Plan, District Annual Priority Goals, and an annual Professional Development Needs Assessment to guide and evaluate their work. PIIC professional learning opportunities are also attended, with administrators rotating to attend alongside the coaches, to expand learning and develop clear goals. Also, in the fall of each year, administrators and coaches partner to establish action plans to accompany the annual coaching goals. When all is said and done, having a

collegial and respectful relationship between administrators and instructional coaches is one important ingredient for success.

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“Coaches may get district-level support from a designated coach champion, who is a district-level administrator who has a vision for the coaching program and takes responsibility for overseeing the program.”
Coaching Matters

Prosperous Partnership

By Leslie Kraft-Herring, Pottsville Area SD Instructional Coach

Being a coach is much like competing on the television show Top Chef. While all of the contestants have already proven themselves as great chefs, the winner of each season possesses an ability to adapt to ever-changing conditions and variables, all while keeping a clear head. This winner is able to control his or her emotions and use his or her knowledge, even when faced with many unforeseen obstacles. In the same way, coaches, as change agents, are never simply perfecting the “old” and “comfortable.” The PIIC model advocates for support for all teachers, coaches, and school leaders, and as such, coaches are constantly learning new skills and information to share with their colleagues. Amidst this environment of change however, coaches need one constant to be effective – a supportive, available, and trust-worthy administrator.

The relationship between coach and administrator in many ways defines the atmosphere of the school and the tenor of all professional relationships therein. Open, frequent communication is a big

factor in a successful coach-administrator relationship. Being accessible to staff encourages teachers to approach coaches with questions, concerns, and requests for help. This not only opens doors for coaches to develop professional

“The relationship between coach and administrator in many ways defines the atmosphere of the school and the tenor of all professional relationships therein.”

relationships with teachers, but also gives time “back” to administrators.

To maintain these open lines of communication, coaches and administrators must maintain a high level of both trust and respect for each other. This means that administrators will not ask coaches to break the confidentiality of a teacher and the coaches will not press administrators to share information. It also means that when coaches and administrators disagree on a course of action, they do so behind closed doors.

While each must respect the other enough to be able to voice concerns privately, each must also implicitly trust the other to temper comments publically. Presenting a unified front is necessary to maintaining a strong coach-administrator relationship.

Finally, coaches must be flexible and always willing to adapt his or her plans to work in concert with administration. There are times when schedules do not always align and both parties need to be able to show that flexibility in order to continue with the important work of coaching. In this way, coaches and administrators are a team and need to work toward the same outcome – bettering teachers to ensure an increase in student achievement.

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Instructional Coaches and Administrators: Supporting Teachers and Impacting Practice

By Randall Grove, Conrad Weiser SD Superintendent

My first experience with instructional coaching was in the wake of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA). School districts were given substantial additional dollars for two years. The goal was to use the funding to make changes that would be sustainable. One of the suggested uses for these funds was instructional coaching. At the time, I was an assistant superintendent at a small, rural school district in south-central Pennsylvania.

We used a good portion of our ARRA allotment to pull two teachers from the elementary teaching ranks and utilize their skills and talents as instructional coaches. We were then able to partner with the Pennsylvania Institute for Instructional Coaching (PIIC) and secure coaching training, IU PIIC mentoring, follow up support, and statewide participation in the PIIC conferences for our coaches.

During this two-year period, we utilized the coaches in two areas: adult learning and content; in addition to helping teachers implement effective instructional practices, one coach focused on math instruction while the other coach focused on reading instruction. Both coaches worked directly (within the boundaries of confidentiality) and hand-in-hand with our elementary building principals and in tandem with the assistant superintendent's office. We were in the midst of many changes throughout the district including the adoption of a new math series, moving from four small elementary schools into two K-2 centers and a new 3-5 intermediate building, and the implementation of new types of data testing and collection measure. The coaches were instrumental in helping ensure a smooth transition.

Any one of the above changes would be daunting in its own right, but all of these changes were needed to develop curriculum alignments, instructional supports, and enhanced measures to help our students achieve at greater levels. The instructional coaches were the equivalent of having extra experienced professionals to help support the teachers in making these changes.

The literacy coach worked with teachers to help them learn a

new data collection process and then she circled back to them to assist with instructional strategies in their classes. Our district had recently embarked on a journey to implement the Daily 5 tenants in all elementary classrooms. The instructional coach worked with teachers to co-develop their learning stations and co-create activities that focused on the literacy help and support their students needed. This often took on the form of modeling and co-teaching.

The math coach collaborated with teachers to enhance their skills in teaching math content using many of the new tools and online supports available. The math coach also modeled lessons

and co-taught lessons to help teachers who wanted to build confidence in using new types of manipulatives or online tools.

The relationship between the coaches and the administrative team was initiated and strengthened by our camaraderie and desire to help our teachers and students succeed. We had a shared vision to support learning. Throughout that two-year time span, the instructional coaches were the practitioners helping teachers improve their craft, focus their instruction, and develop classroom practices that positively impacted students.

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"The relationship between the coaches and the administrative team was initiated and strengthened by our camaraderie and desire to help our teachers and student succeed."

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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