

PIIC News

The Pennsylvania Institute for Instructional Coaching

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Benefits of the BDA Cycle

By Melissa Merry, Otto-Eldred School District Literacy Assessment Data Liason & Instructional Coach

The BDA (Before, During, After) cycle, beneficial to both the teacher and the instructional coach, is an effective model to utilize in a coaching experience. Because an evaluative piece is not part of the BDA cycle, the teacher is more apt to share his/her concerns and questions dealing with instruction and student achievement, creating a positive, collaborative experience between the instructional coach and teacher. The BDA cycle is an informative process allowing the teacher and the coach to explore an open conversation in

order to determine best instructional and engagement practices that will be of value for both the teacher and the students.

Before the lesson, the instructional coach and teacher conduct a confidential pre-conference which helps to create a respectful environment. Purposes of the lesson are presented, student and teacher responsibilities are defined, formative assessments are determined, and focus areas for the coach are identified. Most recently, I met with a teacher and determined that the purpose of the lesson was to identify if and when students are engaged in higher order thinking skills throughout the lesson. In this lesson, I utilized Bloom's Taxonomy to determine areas of the lesson that engaged students in higher order thinking skills. Thus, based on our pre-conference, I was able to provide the teacher with measureable evidence which was collected during the lesson.

After the lesson, the teacher and instructional coach meet to debrief and reflect upon the lesson. The post-conference focuses on the look-fors

determined in the pre-conference. Collaborative discussions are held based on successes and improvements to support instructional delivery. The purpose of the post-conference is not for me as the coach to give my opinion, but to discuss the data collected, successes that were evident, and possible improvements that could be made. The post-conference and future meetings also help me as an instructional coach to determine professional development opportunities that could benefit the teachers as well as allow the teachers to set instructional goals.

Using the BDA cycle promotes collaborative relationships and provides

the necessary evidence that can lead to best instructional practices and student success. Educators must take the necessary steps to plan effectively and self-reflect in order to meet the needs of our students. The components of the BDA cycle produce invaluable benefits for the teacher, the instructional coach, and the student.

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"Using the BDA cycle promotes collaborative relationships and provides the necessary evidence that can lead to best instructional practices and student success."



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

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Conference Center
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May 5-7, 2014
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PIIC would like to
wish everyone a
very happy and
healthy New Year!

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

The current key issue in education is the evidence of effectiveness. Students must “score” well in standardized tests, especially since their schools, teachers, and administrators are held accountable. It is true that recognizing students’ needs, identifying the priorities to address those needs, and developing strategies to tackle those needs are critical for school success. If the school community knew exactly what to do to address all of these issues, wouldn’t the individuals and collective communities do something to make positive changes in school climate, instructional programs, and student learning?

Change occurs when the communities of learning and practice share a vision and discuss ways to increase student engagement, build teacher capacity, and improve student outcomes. This dialogue comes through collaboration, collective problem-solving, critical thinking, and open communication. It comes through the understanding, acknowledgement, and investment that schools make about teacher professional development and learning.

We know that the quality of instruction and school leadership are the two most important factors in schools. It is the school community’s responsibility to ensure that students are in classrooms with highly

effective teachers, in schools with highly skilled administrators, and in communities that provide the best learning environments and experiences for all school stakeholders. We must ensure that teachers and administrators are recipients of the “gold standard” in professional learning. We must support that learning so that continuous improvement remains the primary responsibility of every educator.

In the spring 2013 PIIC survey conducted by fhi360, teachers were asked about changes in classroom practice resulting from working with an instructional coach. 96% of teachers that experienced a high level of one-on-one coaching and participated in coach-led small group or whole school professional development reported changes in classroom practice; 99% reported an impact on student engagement and 98% reported an impact on student learning. In *Coaching Matters* (www.learningforward.org), Killion, Harrison, Bryan and Clifton state that, “... professional learning is a powerful intervention for increasing teaching effectiveness and student learning if it incorporates classroom-and school-focused support in the form of coaching...”.

Coaches work one-on-one and in small groups across all content areas. They

work with teachers using the **Before, During, and After** cycle of coaching and PIIC’s 4 quadrant framework. They engage in deliberate conversations about literacy learning using classroom and school wide data to help teachers assess student needs. They help teachers focus on reflection and effective instructional practices in non-evaluative ways. Coaching has a cumulative effect: how often a teacher and coach work together, over what time period the teacher and coach work together, and the kinds of discussions about student learning in which the teacher and coach engage have an impact on teachers’ instructional practices and, in turn, can help change the nature of teaching in ways that lead to improved student learning. (See Abstract, *Instructional Coaching and Student Outcomes: Findings from a Three Year Pilot Study*, www.pacoaching.org.) Coaches are teacher leaders who influence student learning, help teachers implement effective instructional practices, and create positive changes in school wide performance. It is a process that takes time.

Sincerely,



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Embedded Formative Assessment

Book Review by Virginia Glatzer, PIIC Regional Mentor Coordinator (RMC)

Embedded Formative Assessment by Dylan Wiliam begins by discussing the importance of educational achievement and why it needs to be a national priority. It then asks the question: How will you know if your students understand the content?

According to Wiliam, how content is taught is more important than what is taught, which leads us to the conclusion that the critical difference between academic success and failure is teacher quality. Since there is a wide body of research saying that formative assessment (FA) impacts student achievement – and quickly – Wiliam’s premise is that implementing

FA with fidelity improves teacher quality.

Wiliam defines FA as activities which happen during the learning and provide actionable feedback to the teacher. As it would follow, the teacher then uses the data to modify teaching and learning activities. FA helps the teacher to define misconceptions and mistakes mid-stream. It is assessment FOR learning.

“Rather than focusing on deficiencies, feedback should focus on how to improve performance.”

According to Wiliam, in order for assessment to be formative, it should help students to be successful. It should help them understand the gaps between where they are and where they want to be – and the steps they need

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to follow to get there. When designing FA, the teacher must consider what is going to be done with the data. As a result, the questions that are asked are key. William is clear that it is critical to design questions that do not cause the teacher to mistakenly conclude that learning is occurring.

Looking at this from a PIIC point of view, this is where the instructional coach enters the picture. In the *Before*, the coach helps the teacher think through what is going to be done with the data. Then, coaches and teachers co-create good questions and determine a plan for how to use FA. The teacher and coach ask if the questions could lead to inaccurate assumptions about the data. Chapter 4 of William's book walks the reader through questioning scenarios and the resulting misconceptions. It also emphasizes the role of questioning in student engagement. Returning to the BDA, coaches can look for evidence that FA techniques are used in the *During*, and coaches can help the teacher to reflect on how it was used in the *After*.

Good quality feedback is crucial if it's going to be productive. This book takes a look at quality vs. quantity, timing, and mindfulness about how the feedback is used and attributed. William says that feedback moves learning forward if it is incremental. Rather than focusing on deficiencies, feedback should focus on how to improve performance. To make this happen, a coach plays an important role in helping the teacher to identify learning outcomes and sources of evidence.

William spends time discussing the role of metacognition in monitoring progress to goals. He also shares evidence-based practical techniques for students to monitor their understanding and relates it to motivation.

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*"The quality of teachers is the single most important factor in the education system."
Embedded Formative Assessment*

A Coach's Journey: Preserving the Four Lenses in a Digital World

By Tara Young, Sun Valley High School Instructional Coach

In 2009, I began my journey as a full-time instructional coach at Penn Delco School District. It was then that I became part of PIIC and participated in the PLN 1 course. As an English teacher, I was immediately drawn to the Four Lenses. During my first two years as a coach using the PIIC BDA cycle, using the Four Lenses and establishing active reading and writing to learn strategies that PLN provided was the primary objective. In the following years, my district sent small teams of teachers to PLN 1. Eventually, our administration was so convinced of the value of PLN strategies across the curriculum that Joe Ginotti came to professionally develop our entire secondary staff. Our staff has integrated Modified Collins Writing, I-Search, and Text-rendering into their classrooms as regular practice. We have seen positive results, especially in the area of reading and analyzing non-fiction texts. Now a part-time coach and part-time English teacher, it is clear to me that research-based literacy practices across the

curriculum are crucial to promoting real learning and to fully align with Common Core Standards in literacy. With this in mind, I embark on a new chapter of instructional coaching with an emphasis on technology integration.

2014 is the year of the laptop for our district. After much thought, research,

"...research-based literacy practices across the curriculum are crucial to promoting real learning and to fully align with Common Core Standards in literacy."

piloting, and planning, Sun Valley High School begins a 1:1 technology initiative in January. As a PIIC coach and considering the efforts and results of the PLN training the district has received, my primary focus has been on finding ways to preserve the Four Lenses and to continue to support the acquisition of active reading strategies and writing to learn in meaningful ways using technology. The goal is to continue building classrooms that are

Social, Meaning-centered, Language-based and Human. In working with the teachers in my department, one of the primary concerns in transitioning to a technology-based environment was that basic literacy skills would get lost in the digital divide. Therefore, since the beginning of this school year, we have been working together to build standard practices for text-rendering and supporting the writing process using Google Drive, Adobe, and Word. Our teachers have been training to use and teach students how to use these tools. As a coach, I have been able to model these instructional practices and let teachers gradually get comfortable using them before our students get their devices. There is a good bit of trepidation and excitement in transitioning to a 1:1 environment, but there is comfort in establishing instructional strategies that help preserve the professional development that has taken place over the past several years regarding PLN.

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The BDA Process is a Non-Evaluative Practice

By Dorie Martin, IU 23 PIIC Mentor

The basis for teacher and student growth is non-evaluative formative feedback. The Pennsylvania Institute for Instructional Coaching (PIIC) utilizes the **Before**, **During**, **After** cycle to provide a process that lends itself to reflective, non-evaluative dialogue between teacher and coach.

The **Before** conversation is a venue for a teacher to share his/her needs, concerns and focus areas for growth with their coach. During this conversation, the coach is actively listening and is fully present.

Without being judgmental, this process sends the non-evaluative message that the coach is truly trying to understand the teacher's perspective as opposed to determining what needs to be "fixed."

The BDA cycle is a non-evaluative process in nature.

In the **Before** conversation, a coach can achieve deep communication and avoid evaluative tendencies by listening with understanding. This means seeing the expressed idea and attitude from the teacher's point of view, sensing what the teacher is feeling, and achieving the teacher's frame of reference about the subject being discussed. Research has shown that such empathic understanding—understanding with a person, not about her—is so effective that it can bring about significant changes in personality (Barker, 2013). The change in personality is the catalyst to bringing effective change in practice. The **Before** conversation provides the foundation of support for such evolution.

The dialogue presented in the **Before** conversation provides the "look-fors" in the **During** component. The look-fors are areas of growth identified by the teacher. Through strategic questioning in the **Before** conversation, the coach and teacher co-create a data tool to be used in the **During** component of classroom visitation with the teacher. The data tool should contain a non-evaluative criterion that is linked to state, district and school initiatives that will improve student achievement. The non-evaluative criterion will then keep opinion and evaluative language out of the visitation. The tool can note evidence of learning for the teacher and points of reflection for the **After** conversation. The data tool, which contains the coach's scripting, notation or tally marks, should then be left with

the teacher, and not saved on a computer or laptop.

The data provided from the data tool must be meaningful, providing the teacher with clear and actionable feedback. This feedback serves only to inform practice and does not contribute to formal evaluation results.

It is important that in the **Before** conversation, a date is established for the **During**. Additionally, it is also essential

that at the conclusion of the **During** a date be set for the **After** conversation within a couple of days. This provides just enough time for the teacher and coach to review the data provided and reflect upon the practice

and turn feedback into action.

The **After** component of this process begins with the coach asking the teacher his/her thoughts on the data. Similar to the **Before** conversation, it is crucial for the coach to listen to what the teacher shares about the practice and analysis of the data. The coach can pose a question for clarity or paraphrase the teacher's thoughts. If there is a misunderstanding, this provides an opportunity for the teacher to explain further. This will send the non-evaluative message that the coach is trying to understand the teacher's perspective, provide tailored guidance through questions for reflection and be a supportive resource. The data collected from the data tool will provide a continual point of reference for any further meaningful feedback. The **After** component then leads to the next **Before** by discussing next steps for growth.

PIIC's mission is to support instructional coaching which helps teachers strengthen instructional practice, increase student engagement, and improve student learning. The BDA process provides the cyclical level of one-on-one professional development support necessary to increase teacher effectiveness and improve student learning.

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"The BDA process provides the cyclical level of one-on-one professional development support necessary to increase teacher effectiveness and improve student learning."

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