

PIIC News

The Pennsylvania Institute for Instructional Coaching

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The Pennsylvania Institute
for Instructional Coaching
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1, 2017
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Creating and Sustaining Change Through Instructional Coaching

By Ann Black, Director of Curriculum and Instruction, Vickie Heath, Instructional Coach, Matt Siembida, Principal, Franklink Area SD, and Denise Ross, IU 6 PIIC Mentor

Franklin Area School District, with the assistance of PIIC and the RIU6 mentor, is working to build a structured framework for transformational change through the implementation of instructional coaching for teachers of students in Kindergarten through Grade 6. This change is reaping benefits in increased student engagement, academic success, collaboration among faculty members, and emphasis on a culture of learning for all.

The current climate of continuous improvement and accountability in education often requires that principals encourage teachers to investigate and seek out new ideas in regard to instructional practice. It can be difficult for a building principal to provide meaningful professional learning to all teachers under their supervision when the needs of those teachers may vary significantly. Likewise, the "one & done/ sit & get" workshops traditionally provided by districts fail to meet the needs of most teachers at the time they are conducted.

During the 2015-16 school year, this district began to shift professional development for elementary teachers from a traditional model to one utilizing instructional coaches. Together teachers, administrators, and coaches established a collaborative and cohesive learning culture in our elementary schools. Job-embedded, just-in-time instructional coaches provide a more effective way for teachers to increase their professional knowledge base and facilitate change in their practice in a no-risk, non-evaluative environment.

The FASC instructional coaches continue to provide teachers with tools that promote

effective support for job-embedded professional learning for the district's teachers and, in turn, instructional support to the students. For example, engaging in the **Before, During, After (BDA)** cycle of consultation provides an effective protocol to narrow and focus on teacher and student needs simultaneously. The BDA cycle has proven essential for establishing a sustainable cultural shift, one that the instructional coaches will maintain. The cycle provides an opportunity for the coaches to focus on the four goals of dynamic instructional shifts: increasing student active engagement, creating student-centered learning environments, building teacher leadership, and building a more cohesive and

collaborative team that uses promising practices across the district. The FASC coaches work to ensure the implementation

of effective instructional practices.

It has been our experience that an effective instructional coach both directly and indirectly helps teachers foster a growth mindset which further supports the cultural shifts we are striving to reach as a district. We see teachers beginning to seek out coaches in order to find ways to meet the needs of all students with new practices for core instruction, strategies to support struggling students, and lesson designs that challenge those already at the highest levels of achievement. The enthusiasm, respect, and need for instructional coaching deepens with each teacher's positive experience. The culture is changing and instructional coaching has a prominent place in the FASD.

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"The BDA cycle has proven essential for establishing a sustainable cultural shift, one that the instructional coaches will maintain."

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

"Every successful organization has to make the transition from a world defined primarily by repetition to one primarily defined by change. This is the biggest transformation in the structure of how humans work together since the Agricultural Revolution" (Bill Drayton).

While repetition may establish a pattern, does that pattern ensure sustainability? Does that pattern ensure that effective instructional practices are implemented in all classrooms every day? Are the needs of a diverse student population addressed? Is the "teaching of teachers" encouraged, supported, valued and an integral part of the school community?

Repetition is obvious in children's songs and rhymes; sometimes it is necessary as a reminder e.g., telling your partner to put the top on the toothpaste; and sometimes the repetition becomes the rehearsal for practice because "practice makes perfect." But, does that repetition create change, ongoing learning, or sustainability?

Have you thought about how change = learning = sustainability? These are the essential components of school transformation and must be in place before, during, and after the commitment to create change takes place. Frequent transparent conversations, collective problem-solving, and intentional collaboration help create an atmosphere where meeting the goals of school wide improvement, building teacher capacity, and increasing student engagement are the priorities for creating sustainable change in schools.

Change and sustainability of that change are both tied to teacher practices, classroom practices, school climate, and culture. The environment must be ready for change and the school community willing to commit to making decisions that address the needs of the students and their teachers. Schools must be willing to create learning opportunities that value teaching and deepen the learning for all stakeholders. Schools must be a safe place for both students and teachers; that is, a safe place to learn and a safe place to explore new ideas without fear of failure. Continuous efforts to increase student engagement along with administrator support of teachers and programs are critical for successfully sustaining initiatives designed for school wide improvement. A shared vision, common goals, and transparent communication are essential for supporting and maintaining school transformation. When these are in place, leadership may change but that shared vision and plans for school wide improvement remain with everyone committed to moving that agenda forward.

Instructional coaches and other school leaders need to develop leadership and communication skills that promote vision, teamwork, commitment, confidence, responsibility, and trust. These skills are developed over time and create a culture change. No one person is responsible for creating change but rather the entire school community is collectively responsible for working together to identify areas of need and capitalize on areas of strength. Building an environment that is conducive for

change begins with the end in mind and focuses on short, middle, and long range goals to ensure that the change takes "root" at each stage of the implementation curve. One person alone cannot make that change happen; only when the school community comes together with a shared vision, purpose, and action plan, can change trigger movement and effectively carry out the work towards sustainability.

Learning must be respected every day, not just during a school wide professional development session. Instructional coaches and mentors collaborate to ensure that coaching interactions both one-on-one and in small groups honor the teachers' voices and foster a collaborative environment. Creating and maintaining this learning ethic helps institutionalize the idea that professional growth is how teaching and learning improve. It creates teacher ownership and agency. And, to ensure this happens, instructional coaches provide ample opportunities for colleagues to work together, grow together, and promote ongoing learning and continuous improvement. So, sustain change, learning, and growth, by implementing a strategy that impacts teacher quality which is the most significant factor affecting student achievement... make sure that instructional coaches are part of the equation... they help align, implement, and sustain the kinds of initiatives that influence student learning and create positive change.

Sincerely,



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

Humble Inquiry

Book Review by Andy Gavalis, IU 29 PIIC Mentor

Humble Inquiry is a book built around the idea that it is more helpful to ask questions than offer unsolicited solutions. Rather than telling others what one thinks they need to know, Schein asserts that taking a questioning stance will open one up to meaningful and productive discussions that build positive

relationships with others. Schein begins the book by defining humility and humble inquiry. He describes humble inquiry as minimizing personal bias and preconceptions about others while maximizing curiosity through non-threatening questions. As Schein explored humble inquiry, he artfully navigates the cultural, relational, and personal "inhibitors" to developing humble

"The distinctions made between different types of inquiry may help a coach reflect upon and enhance the types of inquiry he or she uses in practice."

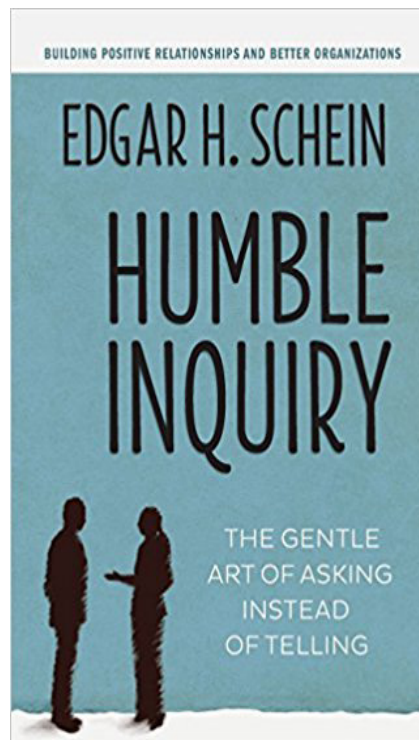
Continued on page 3, [Humble Inquiry](#)

inquiry before explaining how to develop this stance.

Chapter three may be exceptionally helpful to coaches because it distinguishes between the different types of inquiry. As Schein states diagnostic inquiry and confrontational inquiry are used when one wishes to direct a conversation. While they may be used for as a means to an end, they are definitely not forms of humble inquiry. Process-oriented inquiry, on the other hand, may be humbling depending on one's approach. The distinctions made between different types of inquiry may help a coach to reflect upon and enhance the types of inquiry he or she uses in practice.

Overall, this short read is an excellent guide to questioning for anyone with a coaching role. Schein illustrates his points through relatable case studies. Each chapter concludes with thought-provoking questions. Schein's voice exemplifies the art of humble inquiry from beginning to end. This book could be completed in one sitting. The read is light, but powerful. Whether one reads the whole book or merely selections, one's time is well spent because of the invaluable insight Schein presents.

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"Building relationships between humans is a complex process. The mistakes we make in conversations and the things we think we should have said after the conversation is over all reflect our own confusion about the balancing of asking and telling, and our automatic bias towards telling."
Humble Inquiry

How to be the Well-Functioning Squeaky Wheel

By Andy Gavalis, IU 29 PIIC Mentor

The old adage that the squeaky wheel gets the oil often rings true. Careful analysis of the saying might lead us to note that squeaky wheels are not always broken. Wheels may function quite well despite being loud. To support sustainability, being a squeaky wheel is positive, especially if we are a well-functioning squeaky wheel. Coaches and mentors are highly skilled at practicing what we preach, but to affect sustainability, we must preach louder. We should be the well-functioning squeaky wheel. However, we must make student success obvious and visible. These are the two obstacles of sustainability.

The first obstacle is that what is visible is not always obvious. If you read Hatchet by Gary Paulson, you might remember when Brian was almost stepping on the rock grouse as he was hunting for them. Until he could see the outline of the rock grouse in the landscape, he was unable to hunt them, even as they were just under his feet. Student learning is similar because it is visible, but not obvious unless the observer

knows how to distinguish it from the school landscape. As PIIC coaches and mentors, it is easy to see how coaching affects student learning. However, this is not easy for others to see. Being a well-functioning squeaky wheel means translating student learning into obvious outcomes. Collecting data is important. However, sharing data is not enough unless we are interpreting what the data

"Being a well-functioning squeaky wheel means translating student learning into obvious outcomes."

means for stakeholders. Imagine the difference between merely showing a school board achievement scores and explaining how coaching helped achieve those outcomes. If we make the impact of coaching obvious, it improves sustainability and benefit students.

The second obstacle is the exact opposite: Making what is obvious, visible. This is about amplifying our voices—being louder. Air is obvious, but not visible until it manifests as

a storm. Just think about the impact of one school board presentation. Now imagine the impact monthly presentations. There are many ways to achieve visibility--sharing outcomes at local meetings or in school newsletters. Merely talking to school leaders helps us make what is obvious more visible. The goal is to get stakeholders to see what coaches are doing. The key to visibility is that stakeholders see our outcomes as often as we do.

To sustain coaching, we must make the student learning outcomes both visible and obvious. Now is always the time to start.

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HAVE A GREAT SUMMER!

Sustaining Coaching Through Reflection

By Heather M. Moschetta, Ph.D., IU 3 PIIC Mentor

Spring provides us a sense of renewal. It is a beautiful time to both reflect and plan. One goal of reflective instructional coaches is to make themselves indispensable to their schools.

Peter Charlton (2010), in his *Sustaining and Embedding Innovations: A Good Practice Guide*, identifies five conditions necessary for sustainability: changing people and culture; embedding or aligning with strategies, systems, initiatives, and services; creating tools and resources; creating appropriate organizational structure; and becoming more businesslike and entrepreneurial.

Since Charlton's work focuses on digital technologies, he does not provide many answers for sustaining instructional coaching. And neither will this article. Think about it: if we follow someone else's model, are we really developing our own sustainability? So instead, in the spirit of building capacity for sustainability, this article will provide reflective questions within each of Charlton's five conditions, which coaches and administrators can consider as they strive to make coaching an integral part of their school.

1. Changing People and Culture

- Is there a shared understanding among teachers, coaches, and administrators of the role of the coach?
- Are there opportunities for collaboration within and outside of the school day?
- Is the concept of instructional coaching valued and embraced in the school?

2. Embedding or Aligning with Strategies, Systems, Initiatives, and Services

- Are there schoolwide or districtwide goals and initiatives?
- Do coaches focus their work with teachers around schoolwide goals and initiatives?
- Do teachers embrace the BDA cycle as a way of collaborating with their coach to help them reach their professional goals?

3. Creating Tools and Resources

- Do coaches participate in professional learning to grow their resource "toolbox"?
- Are teachers aware of the resources available to them through their instructional coach?

- Do coaches use data as a tool for collaborating with teachers?

4. Creating Appropriate Organizational Structure

- Do school leaders commit to providing effective coaching for all teachers?
- Is a commitment to coaching part of the school's or district's vision for instructional excellence?
- Are appropriate resources allocated to strengthen coach and teacher practice?

5. Becoming More Businesslike and Entrepreneurial

- Do coaches continually search for innovative ways to support teaching and learning?
- Are coaches actively marketing their availability for one-on-one and small group support for teachers?
- Is there a partnership among administrators, coaches, and teachers that supports instructional coaching?

"Just as the goal of coaching is to build and strengthen teacher practice, the goal of a sustainable coaching program is to continually build and strengthen itself."

If the answer to any of these questions is "no," then the next logical question is "What can we do?" And if the answer is "yes," then the next logical question is "What more can we do?" Just as the goal of coaching is to build and strengthen teacher practice, the goal of a sustainable coaching program is to continually build and strengthen itself.

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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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