

PIIC News

The Pennsylvania Institute for Instructional Coaching

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October 2017
Volume 8 - Issue 1



The Pennsylvania Institute
for Instructional Coaching
A Partnership of the
Annenberg Foundation and the
PA Department of Education

Professional Learning Opportunity Dates

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1, 2017
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Maintaining Confidentiality in the BDA Cycle of Coaching

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

For many years in PIIC, we have discussed the merits of the BDA cycle and shared strategies to manage the BDA process to structure our coaching activities, strengthen teachers' classroom practice, and deepen teacher reflection. It is also important to stress that confidentiality throughout the BDA cycle will foster trusting relationships between coaches and teachers.

BEFORE

Clarifying with administration the confidentiality agreement between teacher and coach is the most critical "Before" conversation to have. This discussion should happen before you, the coach, begin the BDA cycle with any teachers. This meeting would be a great opportunity to introduce your principal to your coach mentor, and the mentor can reinforce the importance of confidentiality.

"It is also important to stress that confidentiality throughout the BDA cycle will foster trusting relationships between coaches and teachers."

During the "B" conversation with a teacher, it is important to emphasize that your work together is confidential. You might say, *"I believe that our collaboration will work best if you know that any information I collect in your classroom is confidential. Please understand that our work together is just between us – any data gathered during our collaboration will only be shared anonymously and with your permission."* And then stick to it!

DURING

Depending on how you and the teacher define your role in the "D," you may collect data on the agreed-upon areas of focus, including anecdotal records of student and/or teacher behaviors. Thus, it is important that the data stay between you and the teacher and guide the "After" conference. If a teacher shows even the slightest hint of being uncomfortable about what might happen with the data between the "D" and the "A," you can easily ease his/her concerns by giving your notes to the teacher before you leave the

room, asking the teacher to examine the data and bring the notes to the "After" conference.

AFTER

After you have completed your BDA cycle with a teacher, it is important that everything you discussed remains confidential, unless you have the teacher's permission to share any details. If an administrator asks about your specific work with teachers, a benign answer from a coach might be, "I have been working with many teachers. I think the work we have done is evident in their classrooms, which you can see when you conduct your walkthrough observations." Maintaining confidentiality throughout the BDA cycle is one of the most powerful ways to build trust among your colleagues, and it

will pay off with repeated requests to work with you.

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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

"Confidentiality is the cornerstone to effective instructional coaching" (Eisenberg, Eisenberg, Medrich, and Charner. *Instructional Coaching in Action: An Integrated Approach That Transforms Thinking, Practice, and Schools*, p. 64). Without it, teachers will not trust that their coaching interactions are "exclusive"; that is, *who else knows about our conversations and what were they told about my instructional practices?*

Although we are not referring to cyber-attacks and breaches in those kinds of high-risk security endeavors, we are discussing the kinds of confidential records, discussions, shared thinking, and vulnerability that are associated with instructional coaching. We are referring to the *"intimacy between client and the coach that allows them to work together more openly and honestly"* (Killion, *Taking the Lead*, p. 119). Teachers will admit they don't know something when they feel safe and are treated with respect without fear of failure or negative evaluations. They will feel comfortable requesting and accepting support when they know that asking questions is recognized as a valuable learning experience. This engenders independence, collective responsibility, growth, and increased engagement that supports school-wide improvement.

But, confidentiality is not only consigned to the coaching relationship

between coach and teacher. It is also a commitment that must be explicit, acknowledged, and maintained by the school administration. Trusting relationships are built upon the mutual understanding that confidentiality must not be breached; the coach cannot divulge content discussed in a coach-teacher meeting and the administrator cannot ask the coach what was discussed either. *"Administrators need to make themselves visible and see what is happening in the classrooms that is having a positive impact on student learning, rather than ask the coach for updates"* (Eisenberg, et al, p. 64). Changing thinking, practice, and beliefs is a difficult undertaking in and of itself; adding opportunities albeit unintentional ones to challenge coaching relationships must be avoided entirely.

Administrators, however, have the right and responsibility to know what is happening in their buildings. So, how does the coach balance the "need to know" with the "want to know" when confidentiality is a central element of instructional coaching and effective collegial relationships?

The administrative team must be visible and share a vision with the coach for school wide improvement. This includes creating the plan for improvement that is developed collaboratively with an environment that is conducive for collective problem-solving, creativeness, and

communal decision-making. There is no room for ego-driven decisions or for the 'might makes right' kind of forced choice. Any administrator can force an issue but only those decisions that reinforce choice and voice will result in substantial systematic, innovative, and inquiry-based discussions that advances learning. The coach's role is to provide ample opportunities for teachers to learn, practice, and grow together so that the suggestions made and ideas shared are thoughtful ones that get to the heart of teaching and learning.

Coaches should share the learning topics but not their learning partners. When administrators walk around the building, they see firsthand the instructional practices being implemented. Issues of breaching confidentiality are minimized when the administrator sees the instructional practices being repeated in multiple rooms and doesn't need to ask the coach any questions that may infringe upon the privacy of any conversation nor put the coach in a compromising situation. The trust factor is one of the most important things to consider when implementing an instructional coaching model; without it, there is no chance that the school is a place where teacher confidentiality and safe conversations come first.

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!

Taking the Lead: New Roles for Teachers and School-Based Coaches

Book Review by Diane Hubona, IU 10 PIIC Mentor

"One of the most unheralded and hopeful developments in public education is the emergence of school-based coaches. These highly experienced and skilled educators provide just-in-time professional learning that addresses real problems individual teachers encounter in their classrooms"

(Hayes Mizell, NSDC's distinguished senior fellow).

"Part 2 is invaluable since its focus is implementing and sustaining coaching programs."

When I began my career as an instructional coach, there were few books on the subject on the market, and many of them merely scratched the surface of the breadth and depth of instructional coaching. A mere listing of possible duties wasn't what I needed as a new coach, but

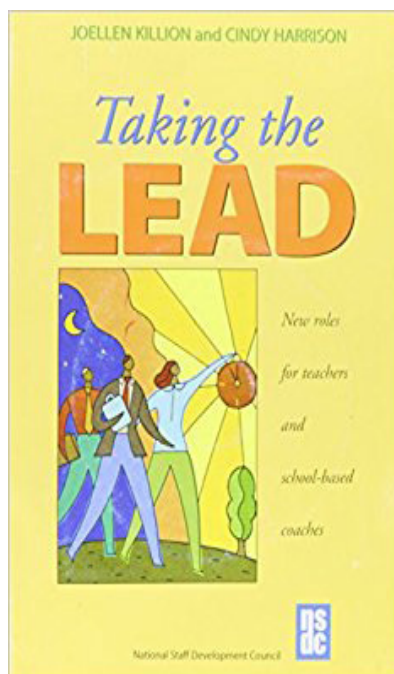
Continued on page 3, Taking the Lead

then I found Killion and Harrison's book, *Taking the Lead: New Roles for Teachers and School-Based Coaches*. This book transformed my coaching practice as well as informed what my daily duties should include. I strongly recommend *Taking the Lead* for new and novice coaches, as well as coaching mentors and administrators. Part 1 of the book delves into the roles that teacher leaders and coaches fulfill. This portion of the book is helpful and filled with resources, ideas, and links to accomplish each potential role of a coach.

Part 2 of the book is a gold mine for all parties vested in a successful coaching program. I find myself revisiting this book as a mentor of eight years regularly. Part 2 is invaluable since its focus is implementing and sustaining coaching programs. From selecting coaches, establishing an effective framework for professional learning, and ultimately framing what the coach's day should look like, this book, published by the National Staff Development Council, is approachable for the reader and is filled with practical steps that coaches and school districts should take to establish a solid coaching program.

*The next issue of the PIIC Newsletter will include a review of our newly published ASCD book, **Instructional Coaching in Action: An Integrated Approach That Transforms Thinking, Practice, and Schools**.*

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"... coaching contributes to change – in student learning, in teaching, in professionalism, and in school culture – it creates a professional culture of shared responsibility and accountability for student success."
Taking the Lead

Advocacy While Respecting Confidentiality

By Andy Gavalis, IU 29 PIIC Mentor

Coaches have two seemingly dissonant objectives: keeping coaching confidential and advocating for coaching in their school. Both objectives are equally important. Confidentiality is a means of creating a strong and trusting bond between coaches and teachers with the goal of improving student learning. However, advocacy may spare coaching from an existential threat in one's school. Consider this scenario: A school is considering axing instructional coaching and you, as the coach, are tasked with giving a convincing presentation to the board. What information can you present? How will you share data without breaking confidentiality? Here are three possible ways of creating an effective presentation to the board without breaking confidentiality.

Numbers - Numbers do not lie. If you share how many teachers are being coached, you are sharing how teachers value coaching without breaking confidentiality. You may also be able to share data that show student growth generated among coached teachers as long as they are aggregated

so that teachers are not identifiable. Therefore, sharing anonymous data on the quantity of coached teachers or showing their student's growth outcomes may help. However, numbers do not offer context, which may be important. Perhaps, the best way to advocate for instructional coaching without breaking confidentiality is by sharing outcomes.

Outcomes - An outcome is a qualitative

"Confidentiality is paramount to building strong coach/teacher relationships. However, ignoring advocacy will jeopardize those relationships as well."

change that has been made in teaching that supports student learning. Instructional coaching brings about numerous outcomes. The key to keeping confidentiality is knowing exactly what is confidential. The coaching process is confidential. The process being how the coach and teacher arrived at improved student learning. The results of that process—outcomes—are less

likely to be confidential. These can and should be shared copiously because many teachers will want to share their success stories. When you are unsure if you are breaking confidentiality, ask the teacher if he/she minds you sharing changes in instruction resulting from the coaching process. Better yet, ask them to share their coaching outcomes.

Testimonials - The best way to advocate for instructional coaching while respecting confidentiality is to allow coached teachers to provide testimonials. Is there a better way to convince a board that coaching works than to show them with a living example of improved instruction through reflective practice? Who better to explain it than the teacher who experienced it firsthand?

Confidentiality is paramount to building strong coach/teacher relationships. However, ignoring advocacy will jeopardize those relationships as well.

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Confidentiality Within the Coach-Teacher Relationship

By Cindy Shaffer, IU 7 PIIC Mentor

A critical component in a successful Coach-Teacher Relationship is confidentiality. The pressure of high stakes testing and teacher accountability tests our role as instructional coaches on a daily basis. Confidentiality is the key to assuring a safe environment for teachers to practice and reflect without fear of retribution.

In the new book, *Instructional Coaching in Action: An Integrated Approach That Transforms Thinking, Practice, and Schools*, Ellen Eisenberg and the other authors identify confidentiality as one of the basic elements for helping instructional coaches succeed. Possessing a strong sense of confidentiality not only earns you respect from the teacher(s) with whom you are working but with all staff members that share the common goal of improving practice in the classroom which leads to student achievement.

"Although an instructional coach does not share individual names of teachers working with them, s/he certainly can share the kinds of professional development topics that are being addressed..."

Instructional coaches are privy to hearing and seeing information that others do not. An instructional coach who is committed to confidentiality finds that the coach-teacher relationship is much more productive when a coach and teacher have an open line of communication that allows them to collaborate and brainstorm about what impacts instruction in the classroom. A teacher who knows that s/he can practice and refine skills in a trusted environment will be more willing to think outside of the box and be comfortable with the inevitable mistakes that will be made along the way.

By breaking confidentiality, an instructional coach risks losing a dynamic collaborative relationship with the teacher. Chances are the teacher who feels betrayed will share this experience with colleagues, leading to the whole building becoming resistant to coaching. What happens in a BDA cycle of consultation should stay in the BDA cycle of consultation!

Instructional coaches need to work with administrators to make them understand that the coach-teacher relationship is non-evaluative. It is extremely important that the principal understands that confidentiality is paramount to the coach-teacher relationship. An important component in the instructional coaching process is co-planning with an administrator to share the vision of coaching

in his/her building. The instructional coach is there to provide individual and group support to teachers, talk about and encourage teachers to refine their practices in the classroom, and provide embedded professional development around the BDA cycle of coaching.

Although an instructional coach does not share individual names of teachers working with them, s/he certainly can share the kinds of professional development topics that are being addressed and should be noticeable when moving around the building. They should never share how they feel a teacher is doing. An instructional coach is not the educational scout for the building. Remind the coach to reiterate that administrative

walk throughs give a snapshot in time and need to happen without the coach.

Instructional coaches have the unique opportunity to enhance the professional

growth of each and every teacher with whom they work. Protecting and cultivating a trusting relationship will help an instructional coach move teacher practices forward and contribute to overall student learning.

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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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