

December 2010  
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Professional  
Development  
Dates:

January 26-28, 2011  
Penn Stater  
Conference Center  
State College, PA

May 4-6, 2011  
Radisson Penn Harris Hotel  
Camp Hill, PA

More information  
available on our  
website:  
[www.pacoaching.org](http://www.pacoaching.org)

*Instructional coaches  
provide professional  
development for  
teachers and school  
leaders focused on  
refining classroom  
practices, increasing  
student engagement,  
and improving student  
achievement.*



Pennsylvania Institute for Instructional Coaching  
Presents to PA Math Leaders

By Gen Battisto, PIIC Mentor

The PA Council of Supervisors of Mathematics was chartered in 1977 as an organization of mathematics leaders to provide opportunities for professional development, networking and up to date information on mathematics education initiatives to its members. At that time, leaders of mathematics education in schools were primarily mathematics supervisors. Since then, leadership roles have shifted and, for the past few years, the organization has grappled with the notion of a name change. At its 33rd Annual Meeting in November 2010, the organization formally accepted the change and is now known as PCLM, PA Council of Leaders of Mathematics. An important motivation for the change was the recognition of coaches as instructional leaders. PCLM seeks to reach out to coaches, lead teachers and others in similar roles that would benefit from this rich professional network.

The program for the 33rd Annual Meeting reflected the emphasis on new leadership roles. Gen Battisto, a long standing member of PCLM, led a panel discussion to inform PCLM members about the work of the Pennsylvania Institute for Instructional Coaching (PIIC). Mentors Nancy Neusbaum and Lynne Fedorcha volunteered to be panelists and each invited an instructional coach to participate. The panelists responded to questions about the typical roles of coaches in their settings and stressed the one-on-one BDA model supported by PIIC. Mentors indicated

the manner in which they support coaches with networking, on-site support and opportunities to reflect on practice. Coaches gave examples of how literacy strategies are implemented in mathematics instruction and placed a high value on the Penn Literacy Network (PLN) classes as a source for learning engaging classroom practices. Mentors and coaches stressed the importance of administrative support in preserving coaches' time for working with teachers and keeping a school-wide focus on improving student achievement. PCLM members gave a very enthusiastic response to the panel discussion.

Also included on the program was Dr. Skip Fennell, professor of mathematics education at McDaniel College and past president of the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics. He currently heads a national effort by the Association of Mathematics Teacher Educators to promote the position of mathematics specialist teachers, especially in elementary and middle schools. Dr. Fennel highlighted a challenge common to any 'one of a kind' practitioner in a school; there is no support system and few opportunities for collaboration. His findings reinforce the PIIC model of mentor support for coaches, providing them with school-based support, collaboration and opportunities for reflection. Access the website, [www.mathspecialists.org](http://www.mathspecialists.org), to learn about the different models of math specialist positions and the challenges similar to the various coaching roles.

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Featuring:

Letter from PIIC's Executive Director .....	p. 2
Taking Action on Adolescent Literacy .....	p. 2
The Power of Professional Development .....	p. 3
PIIC Participants Continue Learning at October PD .....	p. 4

PIIC would like to wish everyone  
a happy and healthy New Year!

## Letter from PIIC's Executive Director

In most social settings, the conversation usually revolves around politics, religion, and/or education. The political environment is quite challenging and religious ideology is best left to the individual. But education... now, that's a conversation for everyone! If you are a parent, you want to ensure that your children have the best and the brightest teachers around in literacy-rich schools charged with engaging children, improving achievement, and readying students for college and career. If you are an educator, you want to work in an environment that is conducive to both student and teacher learning. After all, how else can teachers nourish their own professional growth and provide many opportunities for student growth?

The Pennsylvania Institute for Instructional Coaching (PIIC) has initiated several conversations among school leaders, coaches, mentors, district staff, legislators, and other interested educators. Our message – advocating instructional coaching as an important approach to helping teachers improve their practices – has emerged as an essential component in school improvement. Especially in times of economic stress, there is recognition that coaches make an incredible contribution to schools and provide the ongoing professional development that schools cannot otherwise offer to staff to ensure

sustainable teacher learning.

Instructional coaches use a “train the trainers” model and provide turn around training to help school staff collect and analyze data to measure student growth and target future improvement efforts so that student progress is always central to building teacher capacity. We believe that teachers learn best from each other. Teachers are supported by instructional coaches who are supported by instructional mentors – skilled, experienced professionals who help coaches improve their practice so that they can work more effectively with teachers and other school leaders.

PIIC is a multi-tiered approach that encourages all staff members to become members in a community of learning and practice. In the December 2010 issue of *Education Leadership*, (Vol. 68 No. 4, pg. 37), Charlotte Danielson states that “A commitment to professional learning is important, not because teaching is of poor quality and must be fixed, but rather because teaching is so hard that we can always improve it.” Instructional coaches do not “fix” teachers; they provide professional learning through onsite, “at the side” professional development, targeted to individual needs and focused around PIIC’s four core components: **providing one-on-one support** for teachers and other

school leaders; **collecting and analyzing data** to identify and address student needs and measure student progress; **implementing evidence-based literacy practices** across all content areas; and **emphasizing reflective and non-evaluative practice** to determine what worked well in classrooms.

Coaching is part of a whole-school improvement strategy that fosters collective problem-solving and offers highly targeted professional development embedded in teachers’ daily work. It is a structure designed to enhance practice, build collaborative cultures and improve student learning through the deliberate and intention support that honors teacher professional learning. Through the B, D, A (before, during, after) cycle of consultation, collaboration, collective problem-solving and constructive feedback, coaches and teachers work together in a non-evaluative process that encourages teachers to try innovative ways to engage students in a risk-free environment. Instructional coaches provide a “lifeline” to learning; it doesn’t get much better than that!

Sincerely,



Ellen B. Eisenberg

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## Taking Action on Adolescent Literacy By Irvin, J., Meltzer, J., and Dukes, M Book Review by Tom Sebastian, PIIC Mentor

Our work with the Pennsylvania Institute for Instructional Coaching (PIIC) brings us into close contact with teachers and administrators who recognize the importance of embedded professional learning and systemic literacy development. By focusing on evidence-based literacy practices, research-based instructional techniques, reflective practices, data-driven decision making, and one-on-one coaching, we support improvements in classroom instruction that promote enhanced learning and lead to increased student achievement.

Although many schools have made a commitment to instructional coaching and school-wide literacy development, few have a well-articulated model for implementing and sustaining such initiatives. The authors of *Taking Action on Adolescent Literacy* address the issue by providing a

“Leadership Model for Improving Adolescent Literacy.” This book, written for middle school, high school, and district leaders, recognizes that adolescent literacy is in a state of crisis, requiring leaders to develop and communicate a literacy vision, translate the literacy vision into action, and to create and sustain a supportive, literacy-rich environment. It also corresponds to the PIIC core elements and the Penn Literacy Network (PLN) framework making it compatible with the PIIC instructional coaching model.

The authors, who have considerable experience in literacy research and development, and secondary school education, believe that “a well-designed, thoughtfully implemented literacy action plan can serve as a lever for school reform, and that the ultimate goal of literacy improvement is student

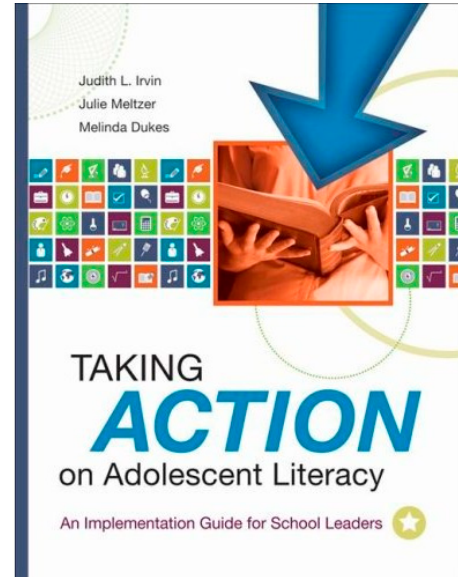
*Continued on page 3, Literacy*

motivation, engagement, and achievement... Literacy is not something to add to an already crowded plate; literacy is the plate.”

The proposed model has goal and action components. Proposed goals include increasing student motivation, engagement, and achievement; integrating literacy and learning across content-area classrooms and using literacy interventions; and sustaining literacy development by including the school environment, parents and community, and the district. The five action components include implementing a literacy action plan; supporting teachers to improve instruction; using data to make decisions; building leadership capacity; and allocating resources.

A graphic that depicts all components illustrates the relationship of each part to the whole. This illustration contributes to an understanding of the “big picture” and provides a context for each component. The authors also provide an in-depth description of each component and include several examples of school-wide literacy action plans, data analysis formats, and options for teacher leader development.

While one could argue that integrating and sustaining literacy development is the catalyst for achieving student motivation, engagement, and achievement, the fundamental model proposed adds clarity and structure for schools interested in implementing a school-wide literacy program. The model captures the essence of a systems-oriented approach to program implementation that is easily integrated with school improvement plans.



*“What does literacy have to do with high drop out rates, low test scores, frustrated teachers and students, and irate employers? Just about everything.”*

*-Taking Action on Adolescent Literacy*

## The Power of Professional Development: Opening Doors and Opening Minds

By Diane Hubona, IU PIIC Mentor

“We now accept the fact that learning is a lifelong process of keeping abreast of change. And the most pressing task is to teach people how to learn.”—Peter Drucker

This quote epitomizes the need for ongoing professional development for educators, particularly instructional coaches, who embrace the task of assisting teachers in their learning process. In

my current role as PIIC mentor, I work with coaches to develop the necessary skills to help their teachers. In order for instructional coaches to be the most effective, they require continuous, embedded, and differentiated training in order to create, collaborate, cooperate, and communicate with their teachers.

While PIIC statewide networking opportunities provide quarterly trainings

for instructional coaches from across the state, it becomes a mentor’s role to support and sustain the coaches’ growth via IU coaching workshops. With the monthly coaches’ trainings, it becomes

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possible for coaches to share both their successes as well as their struggles as they collectively hone their coaching skills. It’s also the perfect opportunity for coaches to assist in small-group professional development sessions where they facilitate sessions in a safe, non-threatening environment.

Dedicated time for coaches to immerse themselves in a host of essential topics,

such as literacy-based instructional strategies, the characteristics of adult learners, the collection and analysis of formative and summative data, and the development and delivery of effective professional development, is essential. These prerequisite coaching skills serve as the backdrop for coaches to paint a new vision for 21st century educators. Professional development for instructional coaches is essential in order to

help coaches navigate the obstacle-laden path that lies before them. As mentors, it becomes our obligation to assist coaches in navigating this journey. Regularly scheduled trainings, as well as on-site trainings, are imperative to support coaches. The benefits are unimaginable as we help coaches nurture collaboration in schools, while coaches help unlock classroom doors as well as minds.



## PIIC Participants Continue Learning at October PD

By Erin Saunders

Over 140 coaches, mentors, teachers, school, and district administrators attended PIIC's recent statewide professional development conference at the Penn Stater Conference Center in State College, PA from October 27-29, 2010.

Sessions on a range of topics were offered to participants beginning with PIIC's Before, During, and After cycle of consultation. General sessions also included discussions on *Difficult Coaching Conversations*, facilitated by PIIC Mentors, Diane Hubona and Nancy Neusbaum; and the follow-up feedback conversations *Reflection – Stop, Think, Reflect* facilitated by PIIC Associate Director, Bruce Eisenberg, PIIC Mentor, Lynne Fedorcha, and Instructional Coach, Mary Anne Rood.

Continuing her success from July's Professional Learning Opportunity, Elizabeth Powers facilitated breakout sessions on Elementary Coaching on each day of the event, totaling almost four hours over the course of three days. Other multi-day breakout sessions included *Literature Circles* facilitated by PIIC Mentor, Lynne Fedorcha and Instructional Coach, Deb Zosky; *Effective Professional Development and Facilitation*, facilitated by PIIC Mentor, Nancy Neusbaum; and *Developing an "I Search" paper* facilitated by PIIC Mentor, Kathy Yorks.

*Part-time Secondary Coaching* facilitated by IU PIIC Mentor, Karen McCartney and PIIC Field Support Mentor, Kathy Gori, and *21st Century Skills* facilitated by PIIC mentors, Jess Jacobs and Gen Battisto, were also session topics.

On Day 3, AED's Ivan Charner moderated a panel discussion entitled, *Working with Reluctant Teachers*. Coaches Mike Baker (Altoona School District), Susan Reutter (SE Delco School District), Sharon Spada (McKeesport Area School District), and Tara Young (Penn Delco School District) answered questions, shared stories, and gave advice relating to their experiences about working with difficult teachers.

In addition to the PIIC PD event, administrators from participating PIIC IUs networked with their statewide colleagues in the last 2 sessions of the Act 45 *PLN for School Leaders* course on October 27 and 28. School administrators earned Act 45 credit and graduate credit for successfully completing this course.



Elizabeth Powers, center, during her elementary coaching breakout session.

Participant feedback regarding the PIIC PD event was positive: "I always enjoy PIIC sessions. They are always energizing and filled with cutting edge information for instruction which will help our staffs provide better instructional services. Our district is moving in the right direction through the direction of our superintendent and the mission of the PIIC teachings. PIIC needs to be spread to ALL districts in PA."

-District Administrator

"This conference was so wonderful! I am a new coach so it was so good for me to collaborate with other coaches and not feel so alone. I understand that this is a slow process and right now I need to be building relationships and providing for teachers."

-Elementary Coach

Our next PIIC Professional Development is January 26-28, 2011 at the Penn Stater Conference Center in State College, PA. For more information, visit our website, [www.pacoaching.org](http://www.pacoaching.org), or contact your PIIC mentor.

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