

June 2013
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Professional Development Dates:

October 29-31, 2013
Penn Stater
Conference Center
State College, PA

January 8-10, 2013
Penn Stater
Conference Center
State College, PA

More information
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websites:
www.pacoaching.org

www.instituteforinstructionalcoaching.org

Instructional coaches provide professional development for teachers and school leaders focused on classroom practices to increase student engagement and improve student learning.



Honoring Voice and Choice through Study Groups

By Leah Dobrowolsky, Tyrone Area School District Instructional Coach

In an effort to meet more of my colleagues' coaching needs, I added a voluntary aspect to our mandatory professional development sessions by offering study groups during the meetings. The study group topics were based on coaching conversations, administrative observations and staff suggestions. Prior to the meeting, teachers signed up for their study group of choice. Here's what a few folks at Tyrone Area High School (TAHS) had to say about this method of differentiated coaching:

Tiffany Bradford,
Math Teacher:

"I found [study groups] to be helpful, and I felt like this year, when we could choose

our study groups, it was much more applicable to our content area. [Study groups] also gave us time to collaborate with others in similar situations or subjects.

I learned different ways to incorporate technology in the classroom, which is quite often a struggle in math. It is so easy to get [caught] in the rut of doing the same thing day in and day out."

Teresa Myers, Science and Health Teacher:
"I loved our study groups even though they occurred after a long day of working. I'm always looking for ways to improve, and I loved the fact that we were able to 'steal' ideas... I also liked having time to discuss ideas with our departments.

Connecting with others is extremely important for me. Not just connecting by email or phone, but face-to-face discussions."

Cummins McNitt, History Teacher:

"I loved the time to sit in groups... It gave me

a chance to hear what others were doing in an informal setting. I came away with some excellent ideas and feedback on what I was doing in the classroom. Often, the questions others were asking of me and my plans were quite insightful and made me rethink and, at times, redo some of what I was doing with my students. For example, I got several good ideas on what others were doing with literature circles and what was and wasn't working. Perhaps the best feedback came on my I-Search project--I wasn't looking at things with a broad enough perspective."

Kathy Beigle,
English Teacher:

"I loved our study groups! As a department, we rarely get to meet and share ideas. It's also nice to have more interaction with adults."

"...when we could choose our study groups, it was much more applicable to our content area. [Study groups] also gave us time to collaborate with others in similar situations or subjects."

After receiving such positive feedback, study groups are here to stay for our BDA gatherings!

For more information, please contact:
Leah Dobrowolsky,
lrdbrowolsky@tyrone.k12.pa.us



PIIC would like to wish everyone a very happy and safe summer!

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Letter from PIIC's Executive Director

"Coaching is a profession of love. You can't coach people unless you love them" (Eddie Robinson, Head Football Coach, Grambling University). Certainly coaching is a labor of love, intended to generate collaborative conversations about making changes that yield positive results and to help practitioners become more reflective and meditative. First, however, a coach must think about and understand his/her own practice before helping others develop goals, objectives, and long range planning. A coach has to understand a variety of instructional and adult learning strategies, have content knowledge, understand the difference between instructional supervision and instructional coaching, be willing to go the "extra mile" to support teachers, and have a love of learning that stretches across all content areas and disciplines.

How often have you heard, "It's not what you say but rather how you say it" that makes a difference in communicating with your peers? An effective coach listens more than he/she talks (ergo two ears and one mouth) and when talking does occur, it is deliberate, specific, thought provoking and inquiry-based. It is all about how coaches collectively problem solve with teachers and challenge them to think deeply, share their thoughts, and promote discovery about self, beliefs, and habits. It is all about a coach who loves to work

with his/her colleagues in ways that are supportive, instructive, and purposeful - all without an ego that intervenes and the need to be the "expert."

Not every teacher is ready to be a partner in the coaching cycle; not every coach is ready either. Time is needed to build trusting relationships, to dissect the learning process, to discuss the philosophy of learning, and to reinforce respectful conversations where partners can disagree without being disagreeable. It is not a "tell" or a "should" moment; it is a conversation, not an interrogation. It is what Cicero meant when he said, "Silence is one of the great arts of conversation." An effective coach must know when to question, when to answer, when to remain silent, and most importantly, when to say, "I don't know." Coaching conversations are not the "blame game" or the "I told you so" lament. They are teachable moments when both the coach and the teacher (or administrator) reflect, respond, and restart the dialogue that will move practice forward.

Instructional coaches are passionate about their work. They help teachers and administrators move to a new level of understanding about teaching and learning. They are non-judgmental visionaries who are critical friends, helping to equip teachers with the tools, knowledge, and opportunities to

develop themselves and become more effective contributors in the learning process. They recognize that in order for the students to be the beneficiaries of an effective instructional environment, classroom practices must be thought about, discussed, witnessed, and non-threatening to the learners. Instructional coaches are "at the ready" to support, assist, build partnerships and focus on every stakeholder being a member in a community of learning and practice. Coaches are the heart and soul of change. They may not feel successful every day, with every person, yet they embody these words from Helen Keller: "The best and most beautiful things in the world cannot be seen or even touched. They must be felt with the heart." Tests cannot measure how the heart and soul work together to create change. But coaches know! They have heart.

Have a wonderful summer filled with time to reflect, re-energize and rethink the possibilities that are accomplished through the B, D, A cycle of instructional coaching. Thank you for all you do.

See you in September.
Enjoy and be safe!

Allen B. Eisenberg

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

Differentiated Coaching: A Framework for Helping Teachers Change

Book Review by Diane Hubona, IU 8 PIIC Mentor

In a recent co-planning session with two of my newer IU 8 instructional coaches, I referenced that effective professional learning must foster teacher collaboration, rather than professional development which appears to be done to them. They need to be active participants in the professional learning process. In Jane Kise's Differentiated Coaching: A Framework for Helping

Teachers Change, she presents viable suggestions for coaching teachers from this perspective.

The goal of effective staff development should be teacher-centered, with the ultimate goal of liberating teachers, not controlling them. "The art of staff development is helping

teachers understand where their strengths and beliefs lock them into practices that limit their freedom to help students succeed. It isn't freedom for teachers to do what they please,

but freedom for them to entertain possibilities and stay open to new avenues for professional growth." This will change the coach's goal from enforcing a mandate to helping teachers develop their own sense of discipline. Coaches

should strive to have teachers regularly examine their beliefs and practices and then move them toward affirming, modifying or changing as necessary to help students learn.

In order for staff development to help teachers develop their

"The goal of effective staff development should be teacher-centered, with the ultimate goal of liberating teachers, not controlling them."

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own sense of discipline, Kise asserts that there must be two elements present: (1) a common framework for discussing teaching and learning and (2) an emphasis on experiences that can alter beliefs. While Kise's work explores personality type identification to assist coaches, she also offers general guidelines for establishing a common framework:

- The model describes preferences for learning in a nonjudgmental way.
- The mental model should be strengths-based rather than describing the teacher deficits.
- The model also needs to work within and honor different cultures.

When coaches consider this common framework, it opens up conversations about beliefs as well as reminding teachers of their own educational biases. Once teachers have collaborated and accomplished this first step, the next stage is to help provide evidence to help teachers modify beliefs that don't fit with the reality of student needs. For teachers, this type of freedom means believing that they can help more students be successful. It means being able to question their classroom practices without feeling threatened.

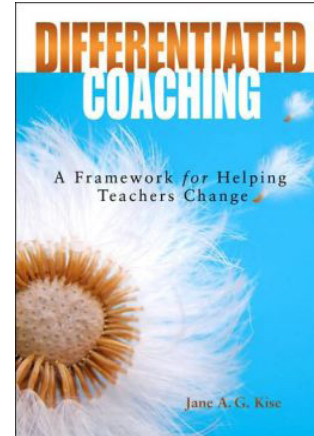
All instructional coaches need to consider the following key points when working with teachers:

- Did the experience provide knowledge, theoretical or practical, connected with the teachers' needs? If not, it may seem a waste of time to teachers.
- Did the teachers walk away with immediate applications for their classrooms? Often workshops energize teachers with new ideas, but the new information is then placed aside to use it, but weeks slip by and it is forgotten.

- Were the teachers fully engaged during their experience? And, did it help teachers develop the attitude that staff development is worth it, or something to be avoided?

I found Kise's suggestions practical and steeped in research. If you are an instructional coach, administrator, mentor, or staff developer who is looking for an approach to affect change in a school, I highly recommend this book!

For more information, please contact:
Diane Hubona, dih@blwd.k12.pa.us



"Teachers need to work out of their strengths, but understanding how those strengths drive their beliefs about what 'should' happen in their classrooms is key to understanding how those beliefs might affect students who are very different from them."

-Differentiated Coaching

Coaching in Career and Technical Education to Improve NOCTI

By Michelle Bonser, Monroe Career and Technical Institute Instructional Coach

Coaching in career and technical education (CTE) requires working with instructors who have very specific trade related content that integrates state standards in reading, writing, and mathematics. The National Occupational Competency Testing Institute (NOCTI) requires students in their senior year of high school to take a written and practical test in their trade area. The scores are an important indicator of student achievement and school success.

In fall 2010, the coaches were asked to provide the teachers with instructional strategies to improve NOCTI written test scores. After reviewing test content, test taking procedures, program and individual scores, and disaggregated English and mathematics standards test data, Monroe Career and Technical

Institute coaches met individually with instructors. Conversations occurred in the PIIC BDA format and centered on reviewing the data from the 2010 graduates' NOCTI post-tests. Data from current seniors' pre-tests and instructional strategies

"The commitment of the teachers to improve test scores paid off as the 2011 NOCTI overall school scores increased to 90.3% advanced or proficient."

that could improve scores were also reviewed. Some teachers invited the coaches into their classrooms to model literacy strategies and calculator use. Professional development time was devoted to content retention and vocabulary strategies. The commitment of the teachers to improve the scores paid off as the 2011 NOCTI overall

school scores increased to 90.3% advanced or proficient. Teachers and coaches met again in the fall of 2012. They compared the data, discussed strategies they implemented last year, and strategies they wanted to include in the coming school year. In 2013 the scores increased again to 94.9%. The entire school has benefited from the coaches and teachers using data and working together to improve student achievement.

For more information, please contact:
Michelle Bonser, mbsoner@monroecti.org

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Differentiated Instructional Coaching

By Amy Walker, IU 4 PIIC Mentor and Charles Territo, Regional Mentor Coordinator (RMC)

When reviewing all of the “big ideas” in education today, one would have to consider differentiation, or meeting the needs of all learners, as a dominant theme. While most educators would agree that tailoring one’s instruction to the individual is a great idea, the actual task can be quite challenging. For instructional coaches, the task of meeting the needs of both a group of teachers and the system in which they work can be especially difficult. However, when you dig a bit deeper, you find that effective instructional coaches differentiate their coaching, most without ever recognizing it.

Successful instructional coaches provide a variety of supports for teachers. In a single day they may: suggest resources for a teacher starting a new unit; give feedback on another teacher’s lesson plan; sit in on a class to gather data about student engagement; and co-teach a lesson with an experienced teacher and reflect on the strengths and weaknesses of that particular lesson. When talking with instructional coaches about differentiation, it is beneficial to start with what they are already doing. This makes the process much less intimidating, and connects with what they already know about good instruction—that one-size does not fit all. One differentiating strategy that coaches can use is found in the concept of heavy and light coaching activities. Heavy coaching activities like facilitating a lesson study with teachers are risk intensive. Light coaching activities include suggesting a novel for use in sixth grade language arts class. Light coaching activities are less risk intensive and can be implemented during all stages of the coaching relationship. Instructional coaches need to understand the concept of risk and the need to move between and among heavy and light coaching activities as necessary to meet the needs of the individual teachers.

One way to determine teacher needs is through the use of data. Instructional coaches collect data through observation, formal surveys and informal conversations. This data can be used to determine the teacher’s level of readiness for coaching intervention and the level of intensity that intervention should take. In addition, instructional coaches must take into account the personality of the teacher. It is important to recognize that some teachers are open

to collaboration and co-teaching while others feel more comfortable with a traditional visitation and feedback format. While both approaches can be successful in changing instructional practice, the instructional coach must work in partnership with the teachers and use professional judgment to decide which format will be most successful.

Good teachers recognize that all students, even adult students, have a variety of preferred learning styles. For example, some students are visual learners who need pictures, graphs and demonstrations to learn. Other students are kinesthetic learners who need to move about in their environment to learn best. Still others are tactile learners who need manipulatives to help them acquire new knowledge. Auditory learners can learn new information best by listening. Those teachers also

acknowledge the impact of individual personalities on learning groups. The effective instructional coach understands that the teachers with whom they work also have individual learning styles as well as personality preferences. They must plan coaching activities to accommodate the needs of both the staff and the school organization.

For more information, please contact:
Amy Walker, amy.walker@miu4.org

“...data can be used to determine the teacher’s level of readiness for coaching intervention and the level of intensity that intervention should take.”

The PIIC 4 Quadrant Framework

PIIC advocates **one-on-one and small group support** for teachers, coaches, and school leaders.

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** and research-based instructional techniques.

PIIC supports **reflective and non-evaluative** practices.

The Holly Building
104 1/2 Forrest Avenue
Suites 21-24
Narberth, PA 19072
484-278-4147 (O)
484-278-4148 (F)
info@pacoaching.org
www.pacoaching.org
www.institutefor
instructionalcoaching.org



The Pennsylvania Institute
for
Instructional Coaching

Staff
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