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HOW LEADERSHIP SUPPORTS COACHING & PROFESSIONAL GROWTH

By Deborah Jackson, Superintendent, Burgettstown Area School District

In the Burgettstown Area School District, a Culture of Learning exists that includes the administration, faculty, and students. Professional development for administrators through the University of Pittsburgh’s Principals Academy, the Educational Leadership Initiative, and the Pennsylvania High School Coaching Initiative (PAHSCI), assist principals to learn and practice leadership skills which enhance their daily practice.

Prior to being named a PAHSCI participant, principals used walkthroughs as a means of encouraging positive instructional practices. The use of this evaluation model built a trust between administration and faculty. Since being included in PAHSCI, the principals have attended PLN1 and PLN2 training in Lancaster and at regional workshops. Immersion into the literacy practices has enabled principals and other administrators to establish credibility with the faculty and to work alongside the literacy and math coaches to update teaching practices.

Recent changes to the collective bargaining agreement have encouraged the faculty to take ownership of their own professional growth. A three-tiered evaluation model that includes clinical observations, walkthroughs,

and personal growth allow administrators and teachers to focus on instructional strengths and improve upon areas that need to be addressed. The personal growth strand complements the need for study groups and permits teachers to observe one another informally in a classroom setting. With teachers electing either the walk-through or personal growth model of evaluation, principals have more time to work with new faculty as they enter a most demanding profession. The addition of three forty-five minute time periods allows principals, coaches, and teachers increased professional development time weekly.

This attention to professional growth has emerged from the shared understanding that a Culture of Learning arises through collaborative leadership that addresses the aggregate needs of students, faculty, and administration.

Please visit the Annenberg Institute for School Reform’s *Tools for School Improvement Planning on Leadership*. This web page provides resources for school leaders on evaluating leadership needs, skills, and effectiveness:

<http://www.annenberginstitute.org/tools/Tools/results.php?fid=3>

POINTS TO PONDER:

THE LEADERSHIP EFFECT

The Mid-continent Research for Education and Learning (McREL) examined the effect of superintendent leadership on student achievement in a research study using quantitative methods. The study’s findings show: a statistically significant relationship between district leadership and student achievement (a positive correlation of .24); effective superintendents focus their efforts on creating goal-oriented districts; and length of superintendent tenure in a district positively correlates to student achievement. (Waters, J.T., & Marzano, R.J. (2006). *School District Leadership that Works: The Effect of Superintendent Leadership on Student Achievement*. McREL.)

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THE PRINCIPAL AS INSTRUCTIONAL LEADER: A DIFFERENT VIEW

By Charley Territo, PAHSCI Educational Consultant

During the past decade it has become commonplace (and almost clichéd) to refer to the school principal as “the instructional leader” of the building. There is a plethora of research confirming the Principal’s critical role in developing a school where students learn and achieve well. While the Pennsylvania High School Coaching Initiative (PAHSCI) has not formally researched the Principal’s role in implementing our project, we have informally observed this key piece of the school reform puzzle. Our experience has demonstrated that it is crucial for the Principal to give legitimacy to the role of Instructional Coach if the Before, During, and After (B,D,A) process is going to work effectively. Teachers must see the Coach as an integral part of the organization with expertise to share, and the Principal is in the position to provide that understanding. Likewise, the Principal’s role in supporting the use of the PLN strategies in the classrooms is also essential. The expectation that students are actively involved workers in every classroom is supported by supervision techniques such as classroom walkthrough visits and lesson plan review.

However, I would like to share a somewhat different view of the Principal’s role than the one suggested by the title “the instructional leader.” Often the language we use to describe an idea shapes the way we conceptualize the issue. For me, the title “the instructional leader” suggests that leadership is assigned to a role in the organization and that the responsibility is posited in one office. Anyone who has spent time in a comprehensive high school knows that it is a highly complex organization requiring expertise in many different areas. No one person, not even one person and several assistants, can provide all of the leadership necessary to make that organization move forward. I prefer to think of leadership as a *function* necessary in an effective school. This function may be performed by the Principal, but it also can be performed by the ninth grade physical education teacher who is willing

to take a risk with a new idea. Everyone in the school has the capacity to lead in some way. It is the Principal’s responsibility to encourage and enable them to do so. Developing leadership skills in all teachers is essential to the ongoing success of every school.

PAHSCI has designed a process to create a formal *teacher leader* role titled “Instructional Coach.” The Coach can give a voice to teachers in a variety of activities and decisions that are made in and about the school. Professional development, instruction, assessment, and data analysis are obvious issues that the Coach can support both directly and indirectly. But the truly effective Principal will go beyond the Coach in developing and nurturing the leadership potential in every staff member. That building leader will coax the leadership ability out of each teacher and find opportunities for those abilities to be put to use. The outstanding Principal will then mentor the individual through the process, ensuring that it is a successful experience. Once teachers have a satisfying leadership experience they will look forward to another. This is a perfect training ground for the next generation of school administrators.

The role of the Principal in instruction is not diminished in this process. In fact, it is enhanced and strengthened. The Principal becomes “the leader of instructional leaders.” In this view of the role, the Principal works to develop the leadership skills of others, coordinates their work, and facilitates an ever growing educational environment. The term “instructional leader” was developed to shift the focus of the job away from management issues and put the spotlight on instruction. It is time for the next logical evolution of that description. Whatever the correct descriptors may be, the role goes beyond instructional leadership. The outstanding Principal creates an environment that enjoys the benefits of leadership from every level of the organization.

“...the truly effective Principal will go beyond the Coach in developing and nurturing the leadership potential in every staff member. That building leader will coax the leadership ability out of each teacher and find opportunities for those abilities to be put to use.” - CHARLEY TERRITO, PAHSCI EDUCATIONAL CONSULTANT

“OWNERSHIP” OF PROFESSIONAL LEARNING EXTENDS TO COACHES

Foundations’ mentors have observed PAHSCI Principals transferring the leadership of professional development to coaches and teachers.

Numerous examples demonstrate this development. Mentors have observed that content for professional learning is guided by coach data analysis and needs assessments of teachers. As coaches assess these needs, structural changes have been made that support differen-

tiated learning. Many coaches influence changes by serving on school leadership teams. Increased collaboration among teachers has been observed as well. Coaches have also been facilitating and designing learning opportunities that include collegial study groups. These groups have exhibited a higher level of participation.

PAHSCI, through the model’s design, continues to guide coaches in enhancing their roles as teacher leaders.

HOW DOES COACHING NURTURE TEACHER LEADERS?

By Catherine Michini, Math Coach, Germantown High School, Philadelphia

A few months ago, I came across a quote by author Karen Kaiser Clark: “Life is change. Growth is optional. Choose wisely.” It touched something inside of me; I shared it with a close friend/colleague and used it the next week at the top of my study group agenda. I believe the reason I find the quote so powerful is that it describes one of Joellen Killion’s nine roles of a coach: Catalyst for Change. That role is paramount in nurturing teacher leaders.

As coaches, we are privileged to be leaders of change in our schools. I lead best when I feel something deep inside, an idea or belief worthy of my conviction. The cause itself comes bubbling out of me; I couldn’t resist it if I wanted to! This awareness allows me to become Killion’s ‘Catalyst for Change.’

Karen Kaiser Clark also said, “You’ll never go wrong if you listen deep inside and say what is in your heart.” Much of coaching is listening - not just deep inside ourselves, but to our teachers, inside and out. I asked teachers in our school for their perspective about

how coaching nurtures leadership. All of the teachers I talked to said that they relied on bouncing ideas off their coaches. The coaches are great sounding boards. With such intense listening, a coach can also see a teacher’s leadership potential, and share that with the teacher. This can give teachers the confidence they need to take steps towards becoming leaders.

I also interviewed coaches for their viewpoint. All of the coaches mentioned that they were able to empower teachers by providing support and resources, and by modeling communication and collaboration (as well as PLN strategies) in an “unconsciously skilled” manner. One coach noted that the sharing environment of her study group gave teachers confidence to bring up their pertinent issues and take the lead in discussions.

Coaches recognize and value their role in nurturing teacher leaders. One coach said it best, “We are the soil and the teachers are the seeds. We provide nutrients for them to grow into flowers.”

“As coaches, we are privileged to be leaders of change in our schools. I lead best when I feel something deep inside, an idea or belief worthy of my conviction. The cause itself comes bubbling out of me; I couldn’t resist it if I wanted to!”
- CATHERINE MICHINI, MATH COACH, GERMANTOWN HIGH SCHOOL, PHILADELPHIA

PDE ADOPTS JOB DESCRIPTION FOR COACHES

The Pennsylvania High School Coaching Initiative (PAHSCI) is effecting statewide work on instructional coaching through its participation in the Collaborative Coaching Board, coordinated by the Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE). Through this Board, PDE has adopted a common job description for coaches to be used across statewide initiatives.

The Collaborative Coaching Board was convened in 2006 by Dr. Gerald Zahorchak, Secretary of the Pennsylvania Department of Education, to establish consistency among the five Pennsylvania initiatives that currently have major coaching components as part of their improvement design. In addition to PAHSCI, the Board consists of representatives from five Pennsylvania coaching initiatives impacting student achievement: Accountability Block Grant, Classrooms for the Future, Getting to One, and Reading First. The adoption of the job description developed by the Board is a key step in providing a common language for the field of instructional coaching.

In the adopted description, the role of a coach is described by PDE as one of leadership. Coaches serve on a school’s leadership team to provide job-embedded and ongoing professional development for teachers,

staff, and administrators. Coaches reinforce the improvement of student achievement through data analysis that impacts instruction and professional development that increases student engagement and learning. Coaches deliver high quality professional development that will advance content knowledge and instructional strategies.

Relationship building is seen as a component of this leadership role. Coaches should spend most of their time in classrooms, but their role is non-supervisory and non-evaluative. As the description states, “The coach advocates for, facilitates, and supports the work of the teacher, but never performs supervision or evaluation.”

The Board has also adopted a list of assurances for coaching initiatives, and plans to further develop its work. For more information, visit *Role of a Coach* on our website at www.pacoaching.org.



Coaches Debbie Welesko from Burgettstown (left), Cheryl Greenwood from McGuffey (middle), and Anna Wiczorek from Erie (right) collaborate.

LETTER FROM: PAHSCI'S EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Dear Colleagues,

Dennis Sparks, the Executive Director of the National Staff Development Council (NSDC), states that: "The habits that produce significant change in teaching and learning begin with significant change in what leaders think, say, and do" (*Results*, NSDC, October 2003). Successful school leaders understand that change cannot come from the top down. They understand that promoting the professional growth of teachers begets a process which bubbles up from within; that is, helping teachers become reflective practitioners ultimately creates an environment conducive for professional growth. It is this footprint which marks the path of authentic leadership.

Listening to teachers' needs conveys a message of respect and regard for teachers and students. These needs arise from a collective look at student data and from a shared understanding that to change schools, people must change. Successful leaders recognize the value of nurturing the professional growth of teachers based on their needs, and they commit to the promise of deliberate professional learning to support continuous improvement of teachers and schools.

Teacher leaders must be cultivated and acknowledged for the talents they bring to the school. As John Gardner proffers, "To help others believe in themselves is one of a leader's highest duties" (*Leadership: An Overview*. Washington, D.C: The Independent Sector, 1988).

Sincerely,



Ellen B. Eisenberg
Executive Director, PAHSCI



Coaches Todd Edwards from Albert Gallatin and Janice Hatfield from Mapleton collaborate (front), and Coaches Harry Lynch from Charleroi and Jennifer Phillips from Albert Gallatin share (back).

PENNSYLVANIA HIGH SCHOOL COACHING INITIATIVE

Instructional coaching has emerged as a promising strategy for increasing student achievement and affecting education reform nationwide. In 2005, The Annenberg Foundation partnered with the Pennsylvania Department of Education to implement the Pennsylvania High School Coaching Initiative (PAHSCI). Funded by The Annenberg Foundation, PAHSCI is a three-year, \$31 million instructional coaching initiative. Four additional partner organizations provide support for program implementation: Foundations, Inc., Penn Literacy Network from the University of Pennsylvania, Research for Action, and The Philadelphia Foundation. Research support is also provided by the Center for Data Driven Reform in Education from the Johns Hopkins University and by MPR Associates, Inc.

The PAHSCI model is designed to provide trained teacher-leaders, or coaches, to schools and school districts. The Initiative places one literacy and one math coach for every 600 students in 26 high-need high schools located in 16 school districts across Pennsylvania, with a total enrollment of over 32,000 students. Instructional coaches sustain ongoing, site-based, job-embedded professional development for teachers and administrators. They also facilitate in-class coaching and modeling, peer collaboration, and teacher training in order to improve learning at participating schools.

We're on the web!

www.pacoaching.org

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