

THE PASSKEY

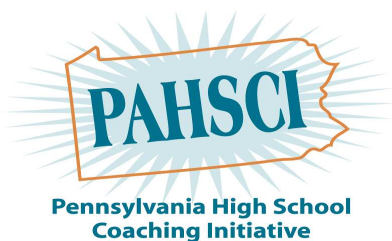
HELPING TEACHERS HELP STUDENTS

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Letter from PAHSCI's Executive Director	2
Coaches Support Data Analysis	3
Using Informal Assessments	3
Mark your Calendar	4

'YOU ARE HERE': USING ASSESSMENT DATA IN THE CLASSROOM

by Alice Marie Marotta, Literacy Coach, McGuffey High School and Brad Burnett, Science Teacher, McGuffey High School

Imagine that you are driving from Maine to California. At the beginning of your trip, you would have consulted maps to plot your route. Along the way, you would periodically check road signs and your maps to determine your progress. At the end of each day, you would assess your progress and make adjustments to your route.

In essence, you would be using summative and formative assessments as tools to measure your progress and reach your goal. Each type of assessment has its strengths and the two types – when utilized together – are a dynamic combination.

The fundamental question is, what should we measure? In *A National Perspective: An Exploration of Professional Learning Communities and the Impact on School Improvement Efforts* Hughes and Kritsonis note that, in a traditional school, what students are taught seems to outweigh whether or not they learned. In the professional learning community that PAHSCI seeks to develop, educators shift their focus from what is taught to what is learned. DuFour (2004) points out that, once this shift begins, educators will ask themselves three critical questions: (1) What do we want each student to learn? (2) How will we know when each student has learned it? and (3) How will we respond when a student experiences difficulty in learning?

Brad Burnett is making that shift. A science teacher at McGuffey High School, Brad utilizes PLN principles to help develop a variety of meaningful formative assessments

which are essential in a successful learning community. This enables him to monitor and adjust his teaching.

As part of the Coaching Initiative, I encouraged Brad to review the work of Jerome J. Schultz, Director and Clinical Neuropsychologist at The Learning Lab at Lesley University on what Schultz calls the hybrid teacher (a new kind of professional who creatively builds bridges between curriculum and kids). There were a number of connections Brad made

“Each type of assessment has its strengths and the two types – when utilized together – are a dynamic combination.”

between the author's description of a “hybrid teacher” and his own methodology. For example, Brad noted that he continues to review what was taught previously and carefully gauges the students' feelings of success with that material.

His formative assessments vary, but often include a Collins Type 1, 2 or 3 writing. Brad relies on these writings to give him the feedback he needs to continue the spiral of learning.

Brad views curriculum as a “living document” and knows the importance of focusing on the learner first and the curriculum second. He works to cement new learning in a positive frame before moving on. In addition, Brad believes in the need to expose students to a variety of stimuli and to demonstrate what they have learned in various ways. He works to connect students emotionally and cognitively to the learning experience. For example, Brad has used the following challenge: Imagine yourself as an H₂O molecule. Describe where you have been in the past week. His directions

Continued on page 2, You Are Here

THE FUTURE OF PAHSCI IS NOW

The Pennsylvania High School Coaching Initiative has generated real results in classroom instruction and student learning over the last two years. Several schools report the successful implementation of this instructional coaching, mentoring, and professional development model. Funding for PAHSCI ends in June 2008.

Efforts are under way with the General Assembly and Rendell administration to keep the program running. You can help. Get the word out about PAHSCI and the impact it has had in your classrooms and school districts. Learn more by visiting www.pacoaching.org.

LETTER FROM: PAHSCI'S EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

In the fall issue of the PAHSCI Portfolio, Dr. Elliott Medrich of MPR Associates said that "... good data are essential to making good decisions about our programmatic investments. Data are always our best friend, never our worst enemy." He explained that data can take many forms and that the most important thing is to understand how to use the collected data properly.

Both quantitative and qualitative data are essential but a team of expert analysts collecting and analyzing that data is not imperative. Members of the school community as well as critical friends groups can offer sound advice about using data appropriately, especially when that data is tied to outcomes. Testing students and reporting scores are important. So are promotion rates, graduation rates, dropout rates, and student attendance rates. Student and teacher surveys, classroom visitations, and interviews can also provide valuable and reflective data that drive school improvement. PAHSCI uses data to plan, coordinate, collect, interpret and report our findings to our stakeholders.

In 1998, practitioners from the Annenberg Challenge* sites determined at their second annual conference that accountability was key to improving instruction.

Beginning with the expectations of meeting high standards, they designed a framework that focused on answering

whether students were learning at expected levels of achievement. They determined that effective accountability must also include: 1) equal distribution of responsibility for who is accountable, for what, and to whom; 2) optimal conditions and resources for schools to enable students to achieve high standards; and 3) promotion of ongoing and reflective use of data to meet school and community expectations.

PAHSCI aims to identify strategies and practices that schools can implement to reflect, measure, and communicate our transformation over time. Using and analyzing the collected data, we anticipate meeting our objectives.

Best wishes for a happy and healthy New Year. May the year 2008 bring us the support we need to institutionalize a statewide one-on-one instructional coaching, mentoring and professional development model in high schools across the Commonwealth.

Peace,



Ellen Eisenberg

*from *The Annenberg Institute for School Reform at Brown University*

“PAHSCI uses data to plan, coordinate, collect, interpret and report our findings to our stakeholders.”

You Are Here, continued from page 1

included using 10 sentences, 4 biological areas (living), 4 physical areas, 1 introductory sentence, and 1 concluding sentence.

As expected, Brad spends a lot of time using a variety of lab work. But one of Brad's favorite ways to engage students is through the use of the "I-Search" paper. By developing "Burning Questions" about a topic they are interested in researching, students are able to focus their research efforts and develop a well-supported paper on a scientific topic. As Brad wrote in his final PLN 2 Reflection Journal, "I find that this method allows me to help students organize

their thinking and writing, to support their statements with data, and to develop informed arguments. Maybe most importantly, the method allows all of my students to take part."

Because Brad considers each child to be a unique individual, the information he gathers about his students serves to inform his instruction. He examines his classroom practices frequently and invites feedback from a variety of sources so that he can clearly identify those practices that work best. He is always willing to have others visit his classroom and freely shares his successes and failures.

Finally, he sees the Four Lenses of Learning as central to a student-centered classroom. As he reflected in one of his PLN response journals, he sees his role as a facilitator of learning not just a dispenser of information in his content area. While he originally felt the Collins method and PLN techniques would be an intrusion on his "content time," he now realizes that these techniques empower students and enable them to become more independent learners.

The Pilot Program for IU #1 PAHSCI Schools involves a focus area for each of the schools. It is meant to institutionalize one of seven practices that will be presented and reinforced by the coaches. At McGuffey High School, Writing in the Classroom is the focus area. This includes expanded use of the John Collins Writing Program.

~ STAFF ~

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COACHES SUPPORT DATA ANALYSIS

by *Jarol G. DeVoge, Ed.D., Director of Instructional Support Services, Intermediate Unit 1*

Intermediate Unit 1 has a consortium of seven schools involved in PAHSCI. Intermediate Unit 1 facilitates the project implementation by helping to coordinate regional trainings, hiring coaches/coordinators for some districts, and by intermediate unit staff participating in the training for coaches, teachers and administrators. One advantage of the direct involvement of Intermediate Unit 1 staff with the project has been the ability to link the PA Coaching Initiative content with other Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE) and local initiatives.

A critical role that intermediate units play is that of helping districts to integrate and implement PDE initiatives. Data analysis and data informed decision making for instructional change are integral parts of several PDE initiatives. One way that Intermediate Unit 1 has extended and integrated the learning for PAHSCI is to invite Intermediate Unit 1 coaches to other Intermediate Unit 1 trainings and workshops. Coaches have attended sessions on Pennsylvania Value-Added Assessment System (PVAAS), 4Sight, EMetric, school improvement planning, Reading Apprenticeship, and E-strategic Planning. These additional learning opportunities have enhanced the knowledge and skills of the coaches enabling them to better assist their schools in analyzing and using data to inform instruction.

Currently Intermediate Unit 1 has obtained Benedum Foundation funding to support the design and implementation of coaching courses. During the 2006-07 school year, Judy Psenicska, an administrator for the Albert Gallatin School District, developed an IU 1 CPE course focused on analyzing the 4Sight assessment data. The course was taught on site at Albert Gallatin. Since her retirement, Judy has offered the 4Sight course for teachers at the Intermediate Unit Central Office training site. This school year, coaches at Al-



Coaches for Intermediate Unit 1's consortium of seven schools involved in PAHSCI.

bert Gallatin have developed and are teaching a two credit graduate level CPE course, which is held during the day at Albert Gallatin. The course provides staff development on effective instructional strategies with teacher implementation between instructional sessions. Coaches at McGuffey High School and Jefferson Morgan are also developing courses. The courses held on school district sites are extending the capacity of the coaches to share best practices with more school staff.

Data collection and analysis are key components in a standards based system. The student interventions and professional development needs identified through the discovery and solution phases of data analysis require planning, time, and follow-up support. Coaches in Intermediate Unit 1 have developed delivery options that extend their capacity to share best practice in curriculum, instruction, and assessment with significant numbers of their colleagues.

USING INFORMAL ASSESSMENTS

by *Bill Feeley, Math Coach, J. P. McCaskey High School and Lisa Marshall, Math Teacher, J. P. McCaskey High School*

The ultimate goal of informal assessments is to regularly gather data on whether or not students are demonstrating the learning objective(s). It is most effective when the data gathering process is begun early and is ongoing throughout the units of study. This data gathering process can be introduced to students in various ways. In Lisa Marshall's math class at J. P. McCaskey High School, informal assessments such as Do Nows, Tickets Out the Door, Quizzes, simulations of test mode, and other routines are used.

Mrs. Marshall: "I want you to clear your desks in the next thirty seconds. I'm about to show a special question on the overhead, and you're going to simulate test mode."

The students hustle to comply; the room is quiet. The

lights in the room are dimmed and the question appears.

"This entire process with the students took less than five minutes; the class transitioned back into the lesson."

Within a minute during a typical day of student learning, young achievers begin implementing evaluation tools that will assist them on the unit assessment and on the PSSA. The questions model the PSSA format inclusive of multiple choice or open-ended, and the students engage individual skills that will also be necessary.

Mrs. Marshall: "Remember why we are doing this. I want you to feel what it's like to do this type of testing and I want to check our progress."

Lisa Marshall practices these strategies mastered at PLN trainings routinely with her students. They expect it. They

Continued on page 4, Informal

MARK YOUR CALENDAR**JANUARY 14****Partners' Meeting
The Annenberg Foundation****FEBRUARY 11****Partners' Meeting
Research For Action****WE'RE ON THE WEB!****www.pacoaching.org***Informal, continued from page 3*

have been taught in a simulated test mode. Though students may answer only one or two questions, teachers are provided with data concerning how students will perform when they are formally assessed. The Informal Assessment data becomes a tool for the teacher, the coach, and the individual students to create action plans that will meet the students' needs and enhance their probability of high achievement. These action plans are typically developed through reflective dialogue during our planning sessions. For example, "problem experts" can be called upon to provide support to students that have not yet demonstrated mastery of the content. Another example may involve Marshall's choice to revisit a topic in the next day's Do Now assessment.

This entire process with the students took less than five minutes, after which the class transitioned back into the lesson. This particular day, student responses were collected and set aside for a quick analysis immediately after class and prior to the next period. The teacher and I sorted the informal assessments into two piles: correct and incorrect. We expected the correct pile to be larger; since this was not the case, it was apparent we needed to be deliberate in the days to come about the instruction and student practice of this particular skill. Since we are still early in the unit, there is time for more emphasis on the topic. Our next teacher/coach planning session began with how to proceed with instruction in light of the data we gathered.

Mrs. Marshall and I work collaboratively to identify and meet students' needs by informally assessing them on a regular basis. These "snapshots" of performance have helped us improve student achievement. We identify this strategy as effective yet easy to implement.

*Have a Healthy & Happy
New Year!!*

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 joined 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 Success for All Founda-

tion from the Johns Hopkins University, MPR Associates, Inc., and the Academy of Educational Development.

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 24 high-need high schools located in 15 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.

PENNSYLVANIA HIGH SCHOOL COACHING INITIATIVE

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