

# THE PASSKEY

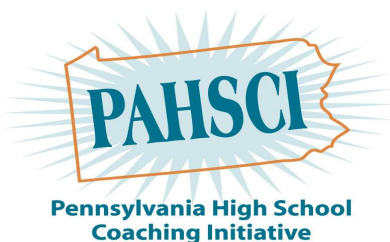
HELPING TEACHERS HELP STUDENTS

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## THE CHICKEN, THE EGG, AND THE COACH

by *Kathy A. Yorks, Literacy Coach, Central Mountain High School*

Which came first – the chicken or the egg? Not sure? Well, how about another dilemma – does student engagement impact classroom management or does classroom management impact student engagement? Let us start with how student engagement impacts classroom management. Every teacher and administrator understands that the more students are actively engaged, the fewer classroom management issues arise. What is less understood is how to achieve and maintain engagement consistently, and for every student.

We know there are a plethora of reasons why a particular student may not be engaged, ranging from personal issues to non-differentiated instruction

to lack of interest. Many students earn good grades primarily because they are compliant, i.e., they are good at following directions and parroting back what they have heard us say. Compliant students, while successful, may also become management issues when their lack of engagement leads to boredom. These students can be quite adept at playing the game, not because they are inherently disobedient, but because they have been rewarded with satisfactory grades. All students need to appropriately struggle and be challenged with rigorous tasks. We need to move them from regurgitation and Stepford-like task completion to active

engagement and deeper processing.

Comedian Phyllis Diller once said that we spend the first twelve months of our children's lives teaching them to walk and talk and the next twelve telling them to sit down and shut up! As teachers, we also struggle to balance keeping order and maintaining control while encouraging participation. We all know the potential consequences of a poorly managed class-

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## WHEN INSTRUCTIONAL COACHING IS NEW

by *Deb McKinney, Math Coordinator, PLN*

Three months ago you were a classroom teacher spending your planning periods interacting with colleagues, sharing weekend plans, and talking "kids" and lessons. Now, you are their coach. *What does that mean? Why has your relationship with them changed? Why does talking often stop when you enter the teacher's lounge? Who can you share concerns and successes with – the principal, the teachers?* Your role has changed. Now, you must come up with the perfect plan to solve any problem about which you are asked. You must be collaborative in the planning process so it is effective and efficient. You must help to supply data and develop a plan to interpret it to drive instruction.

*How will you do all of this and maintain some semblance of sanity?* The professional development sessions presented by Penn Literacy Network in Literacy and in Math offer you, as a new

coach, a foundation to discover to what extent collaborative inquiry practice with teachers becomes more reflective. The math facilitators base the professional development on three main components: 1) mathematical content and the teacher's knowledge of content; 2) student learning and teacher pedagogy; and 3) the intellectual community of the classroom – how does the teacher learn more deeply to facilitate the intellectual community over time. Our aim is to help coaches promote a common vision and coherent classroom practices within and across grade levels and to enhance their teachers' abilities to promote student learning through intensive professional development.

Coaches need to have time for reflection and frequent, focused conversations about factors

*Continued on page 2, New*

### PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT INFORMATION

May 17 (evening) - 18

PAHSCI/PIIC

Hershey Lodge and Conference Center

See our website for more information:

[www.pacoaching.org](http://www.pacoaching.org)

## LETTER FROM PAHSCI'S EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

“Students want to learn both content and appropriate behavior. And they can only do it in a safe, structured classroom.” (Rick Smith and Mary Lambert, *Educational Leadership*, September 2008.)

Effective techniques for classroom management and classroom discipline are vital to success in any classroom. Students want to know that they are important to the classroom structure and that they are valuable contributors to the learning process. They need ownership and to be architects of their own learning. Teachers need to manage that process and create a safe environment where learning, collaboration, and creativity can thrive. At the same time, teachers must maintain a classroom environment where “no child is left behind” and must meet the individual needs of the students while establishing a mutually respectful and dignified atmosphere.

PAHSCI has certainly addressed classroom management and behavior issues. We have also shared techniques for engaging both students and teachers with an array of strategies that help teachers teach in divergent ways. We

have reinforced the notion that building relationships and making personal connections help generate positive learning.

When I began teaching in 1973, I was warned not to smile, laugh, or engage in niceties and maybe I'd last until April. If I passed that magic month, I'd probably last until June. After that, there were no guarantees! Those beginning months were brutal. I used the same lesson plan format all year, never realizing that the disengaged students in my classroom were recipients of an irrelevant, unsophisticated, unchallenging set of arbitrary lessons I thought were so important. I did not have a mentor, colleague or friend to help share new learnings or the current trends in education. What I had, though, was the sage advice of a wise man who asked me the same question every day, “Do you like the students you teach?”

At first, I answered emphatically, “Of course not. How can I like students who talk incessantly, refuse to complete homework assignments, argue with each other over coveted window seats, and seem apathetic about reading the great American novel?” Fortunately, I survived those trying times and began to

see my students as people, as individuals who had a voice and who wanted to read to learn, not just learn to read. They wanted to share in the learnings of others, to be asked their opinions, and to help make meaningful decisions. They wanted to be recognized and welcomed into my classroom. They wanted me to care about them, their families, and their thinking.

The PAHSCI instructional coaches and mentors have fostered an ethic of caring in classrooms and schools; they have reiterated that content and process are undeniably important to the learning process. After all, without the appropriate tools, can the job be accomplished? They have also helped others to see not only the importance of pencil and paper assessments as tools to improve student outcomes, but that developing caring relationships built on trust, respect, collaboration, and partnerships show that we believe in our students and their ability to learn.

Sincerely,



Ellen B. Eisenberg

*New, continued from page 1*

that impact student learning. So, what is it that teachers need coaches to do? **Coaches need to...**

- Model – teachers need real opportunities to see what the desired teaching looks and sounds like;
- Provide opportunities and first-hand experiences to help teachers become familiar with new strategies;
- Encourage teachers to investigate the math they will be teaching and provide opportunities for them to collaborate with their peers;
- Promote discussion opportunities for teachers to collaborate about effective questioning techniques;
- Offer professional development experiences that challenge teachers' beliefs about teaching and learning mathematics;
- Identify/establish protocols for examining student work and facilitate time for teachers to do this;
- Help teachers to collaborate and engage in professional conversations that nourish their own understanding about how students learn mathematics;
- Facilitate opportunities and a suitable structure for teachers to visit one another and debrief the experience;
- Create a safe environment for teachers to question, investigate and grow as learners.

The role of a coach is overwhelming, but the opportunities abound as you help teachers positively influence student learning and build teacher capacity in schools across the Commonwealth.

### ~ STAFF ~

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## STUDENT ENGAGEMENT AND THE EFFECTIVE CLASSROOM

by Cheryl Greenwood, Literacy Coach, McGuffey High School, IU #1

Students at McGuffey High School are learning – learning in a way that the likelihood of that learning being placed into long-term memory is great. The level of student engagement ensures that classroom management issues are rare to nonexistent; the students have an ownership stake in their learning. This is not uncommon at McGuffey High School, and as more teachers participate in PLN seminars, work with PAHSCI coaches, and create ways to collaborate, their number increases. Three of these teachers gave me their thoughts on the importance of student engagement in their classrooms.

Janice Ruffolo, a public speaking and media teacher told me, “I don’t have a discipline problem. I am really fortunate because my students are really engaged in what they do.”

For Janice, the principal reasons for the high level of engagement are the interaction that comes as the students work together as partners and in small groups as well as the ownership they

have of their speeches and projects. The most significant aspect in establishing that ownership is the choice, both managed and free, that they have in selecting topics and structuring projects. Mrs. Ruffolo also credits self and peer evaluation, both formative and summative, as contributing to the levels of engagement and ownership. She added that well articulated and consistently followed routines and procedures provide the framework needed for student engagement to occur.

Heather Schmidt, a world cultures teacher, stated that engaging students is the key not only to classroom management but also to long-term learning. For her, the crucial elements to achieve such engagement are emphasizing the processes in learning, employing instructional strategies that enable students to work collaboratively and give voice to their ideas, encouraging ownership of their learning, and having them make connections between elements that are common to various cultures and those same elements in their personal lives.

Linda Fulton, an English teacher, also successfully employs myriad instructional protocols that promote ownership, engage students in her lessons, and promote deep understanding. She pointed out another teaching quality that

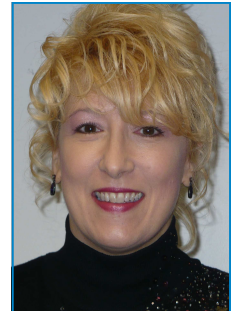
fosters student engagement, thus reducing classroom management problems, a quality also evident in many of the classrooms at McGuffey High School.

“I passionately believe that nothing productive can happen in a classroom until one thing takes place: students must sincerely believe that their teacher cares about them and is invested in their individual success. Teachers must always treat each student with respect. What makes you a teacher is engaging individual human beings.”

Student engagement, as these teachers know, is key to classroom management as well as to student learning. Engaged students are internally motivated, and internally motivated students expend their energies on learning. Well-planned activities that are grounded in the four lenses of learning, clearly stated and consistently applied procedures and routines, student ownership, and a caring, secure environment produce engaged, motivated students and effective classrooms.



Janice Ruffolo, Public Speaking and Media Teacher at McGuffey High School



Linda Fulton, English Teacher at McGuffey High School

### *Chicken, continued from page 1*

room and probably have felt the urge to shout for order. Marzano and Marzano state in their article, “Building Classroom Relationships: The key to Classroom Management,” published in *Educational Leadership*, that of all the variables that impact student achievement, classroom management has the largest effect. Marzano also states in the book, *Classroom Management that Works*, that “the quality of teacher-student relationships is the keystone for all other aspects of classroom management.” His discussion of the characteristics of an effective teacher-student relationship includes descriptions of specific teacher behaviors including being aware of high-needs students. Is a compliant student a high-need student? Yes, if his/her compliancy impacts the rest of the class and the ensuing behavior.

All of the above is neither new nor surprising; yet, it does remind us that these are the issues that coaches and administrators must address with their teachers. So, how do we coach engagement and classroom management or more importantly, how do we get our teachers to want to be coached in

these areas? The key is data – data that provides tangible evidence of levels of engagement as well as student behavior.

In their book, *Coaching Classroom Management: Strategies and Tools for Administrators and Coaches*, Sprick, Knight, Reinke, and McKale provide both the rationale and the tools for gathering data that can help teachers improve student engagement and better manage their classrooms at the same time. The two are inexorably interwoven and when we braid in another strand, coaching based on data, we have a strong lifeline that so many of our students need. We may need to use study groups or large group settings to show teachers what kind of data we can provide them, thus helping them see us as problem-solving partners rather than judges.

Football coach and analyst John Madden once said, “Coaches have to watch for what they don’t want to see and listen to what they don’t want to hear.” It is the talented and far-sighted instructional coach who adds, “My eyes and my ears are the tools of the teachers I serve, and together we can be a tide that lifts all students.”

## COACHING, MENTORING, AND SUSTAINED PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

by G. Brian Toth, Superintendent, Bellwood-Antis School District

Organization-wide change often goes against the very values held dear by long-time members in the organization. Change may go against how members believe things should be done. As an experienced superintendent, I can affirm that we have begun to alter the beliefs and values of our veteran staff and have greatly influenced our younger teachers.

As a change agent, the superintendent is usually responsible for transforming the district's vision into a realistic plan that can be implemented. Coaches and mentors have done this for PAHSCI; we have mirrored this through our team wide efforts to sustain change. Communications about

change have been frequent and included all organization members. To sustain our changes, the structures of the organization itself have been modified, including changes in personnel, strategic plans, policies, and procedures. Any resistance has been addressed through increased and sustained communication and education. Thus far, each change is going well.

For Bellwood-Antis, each year's plan focuses on student achievement and is another rigorous change-oriented endeavor. As superintendent, I must focus on the main item in the plan – student achievement. The rigor and relevance framework, PAGE 1, targeted student assistance, Response to Intervention, Guided Reading, Dual Enrollment, after school and summer school academic programs, technology integration, the PLN strategies, data analysis, and instructional coaching will hopefully sustain our current achievement and provide for continued growth. Informed changes in

instructional practices will be made evident through portfolios, professional growth projects, 4Sight and PSSA results, and a variety of student work. These data sources all help to inform decision-making around our student achievement goals.

Lastly, our plan also addresses professional learning communities. Through the use of Microsoft Sharepoint and CFF technologies, we are now able to host on-line discussions with any computer in the world connected to the internet. Professional development can be completed by 'pointing' and 'clicking.' Teachers need to become continual learners; their

**“Teachers need to become continual learners; their professional growth directly impacts student achievement.”**

professional growth directly impacts student achievement. On-line resources enhance professional learning and allow collaboration, reflection, and discussion of effective instructional strategies. At Bellwood-Antis, collaboration between the CFF coach and the PAHSCI instructional coaches helps change instruction to meet student needs.

Going forward, my greatest hope is to sustain instructional coaching and mentoring as we have in PAHSCI, year 4. Coaching, mentoring and professional development are the avenues to improve instruction and improve student achievement. We need to rethink professional development expenses, develop partnerships with universities, use block grant funds more efficiently and lobby, lobby, lobby. Let's not let instructional coaching drift aside as many initiatives often do. We have seen the benefits of our efforts: student achievement and professional growth.

### BEST WISHES FOR A HAPPY & HEALTHY NEW YEAR

## NEXT STEPS... FROM INITIATIVE TO INSTITUTE

For over three years, PAHSCI has demonstrated that one-on-one instructional coaching can lead to significant changes in classroom instruction and student engagement – and can contribute to significant increases in pupil achievement, including scores on standardized tests.

The content and processes piloted through PAHSCI have become the foundation of a statewide system of training and support for instructional coaches and mentors. Lessons learned from the evaluation of PAHSCI will help shape initial efforts to determine the most effective and sustainable strategies for service delivery that supports instructional coaching. In a statewide effort designed to develop and support high

quality instructional coaching, ongoing mentoring, and sustained professional development, the Annenberg Foundation and the Pennsylvania Department of Education are partnering to establish the Pennsylvania Institute of Instructional Coaching (PIIC). PIIC will work to expand the use of a wide range of instructional coaching strategies across Pennsylvania through the implementation of consistent statewide approaches to selection, training, support, and assessment with these primary goals: a) providing a professional development model for the consistent delivery of research based literacy strategies and instructional coaching skills; and b) helping IUs develop and build mentor capacity.

### PENNSYLVANIA HIGH SCHOOL COACHING INITIATIVE

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