

October 2006

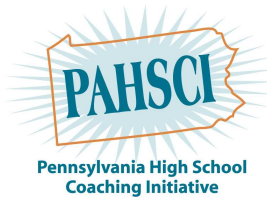
Mark Your Calendar

- November 16, 17; December 8; January 12 — *Foundations Mentor Meeting*
- November 30 — *Foundations Leadership Mentor Meeting*
- December 6 — *Partners' Meeting*
- December 11 — *Networking Meeting for PA East Schools*
- December 14 — *Networking Meeting for PA West Schools*
- **Check our website for PLN 1 and PLN 2 course dates at www.pacoaching.org**

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Advisory Board Meets to Discuss Initiative

Harrisburg, PA - The Pennsylvania High School Coaching Initiative (PAHSCI), an instructional coaching model designed to build teacher capacity and increase student achievement in 26 high schools from 16 school districts statewide, launched its first Advisory Board meeting on October 18 in Harrisburg.

Dr. Gail Levin, Executive Director of The Annenberg Foundation, convened the Board to provide guidance and direction for expanding the PAHSCI model beyond the scope of the three-year project. Board members were chosen based on their support for school reform and for their work within the education community as advocates. The members represent business, government, school boards, public and higher education associations, and foundations communities.

Dr. Levin addressed the Board and expressed the urgency for reaching schools through reform efforts. She also expressed hope that a promise lies in a highly committed partnership of public and private interests and in the PAHSCI design. Dr. Levin closed her remarks by stating that, "With the help of this Advisory Board, the goals of the coaching strategy are within reach – to improve teacher capacity, to enable schools and districts to serve as hospitable operating environments for this work, and to demonstrate a positive effect on student

performance."

Why PAHSCI? Ellen Eisenberg, PAHSCI Project Director, explained that the Initiative focuses on direct support to teachers. Ms. Eisenberg shared the Initiative's distinctive features: the role of mentors as the coach's coach and administrators' support, content-based professional development using the Penn Literacy Network (PLN) framework, and school-based hired coaches as job-embedded professional development staff. She also mentioned that coaching is a potential career ladder for teachers and one possible solution to teacher attrition.

Research for Action (RFA) shared their findings of the Initiative's first year through the publication of their report, *Promising InRoads: Year One Report of the Pennsylvania High School Coaching Initiative*. RFA also discussed the model's enabling conditions designed to provide a framework for ensuring sustainability in schools.

Board member questions were interactive as attendees discussed the project's structure and goals, resources, the role of higher education, and sustainability.

PAHSCI plans to continue its outreach. Two educational consultants are interviewing Board members across the Commonwealth to seek additional guidance.

RFA Shares Year 1 Findings

PAHSCI - After releasing its first year report, Research for Action (RFA) presented their findings to the Initiative participants. These findings provided feedback for strengthening the multi-layered project. In addition, RFA presented "Instructional Strategies for Implementing Instructional Coaching" at the Keystone State Reading Association Conference on October 22 - 25 in Champion, Pennsylvania. Additional presentations across the Commonwealth are planned.



Michelle Merkle, Reading SD coach (left), and Anna Howell, Erie SD coach, at the summer centralized course in Hershey.

“They are a part of the school fabric and may be the best coaching team in the state.”

Principal, PAHSCI participating school

PDE Coordinates Coaching Across the State

Harrisburg, PA - PAHSCI is not alone in its efforts to implement instructional coaching across the State of Pennsylvania. Coaching models are currently being used in six Pennsylvania statewide initiatives that support educational reform. In an effort to ensure consistency among these initiatives, the Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE) has convened a Coaching Collaboration Board that will meet monthly to bring effective coaching to schools and districts across the state.

During its first meeting, the Board recognized that in order to reflect a common statewide approach to coaching as job-embedded professional development, the initiatives must be cohesive. At present, the initiatives, which include PAHSCI, Classrooms of the Future, Getting to One, Reading First, and the Accountability Block Grant, have common features but do vary

slightly in their content focus, grades targeted, size, type of professional development, and project evaluation. The initiatives range in focus from math and literacy coaching to the integration of technology into the classroom. Most of the initiatives focus on grades 9-12, with only Reading First focusing on K-3, and the Accountability Block Grant covering K-12. Most of the initiatives use an instructional framework or some type of course work as a means for professional development, and only one initiative does not utilize an outside evaluator.

The group plans to address how to effectively evaluate the impact of coaching as a job-embedded professional development model in its next meeting. Two primary elements to be collected will include data on student achievement and changes in instructional practice.

Foundations and PLN Work With Coaches and Teachers

PAHSCI - Foundations and Penn Literacy Network (PLN) continue to collaborate on enhancing their work with coaches, teachers, and administrators, while independently moving the Initiative forward.

One of PAHSCI's goals is to improve student achievement. Partners agree that an additional focus on Math and support for special needs students are necessary to achieve that goal. As Dr. Gail Levin stated at the Advisory Board meeting of October 18, “In Pennsylvania, results of the 2005 state assessment tests showed that...51% of 11th grade students had demonstrated proficiency in math. These percentages are above the national average but hardly a cause for rejoicing: if you consider the percentages conversely, it is alarmingly clear that...a whopping 49% of our 11th graders are doing math at or below basic levels.”

Foundations and PLN plan to meet to discuss how to further develop the math component of the Initiative while still emphasizing literacy skill development in all content

areas. Foundations mentors are providing content support to coaches, and PLN is creating two Regional Courses for Math and a course that addresses special needs students.

Incredible turnout marked a successful kick-off to PLN 1 and PLN 2 Regional Courses across the state. Over 300 new participants registered for PLN 1 and over 200 returning participants registered for PLN 2. In addition to the many teachers who attended the Regional Courses, at least one coach from each participating school district attended the courses. Administrators from most districts attended as well.

Foundations mentors continue to implement changes in response to lessons learned. In addition to transitioning new mentors into their PAHSCI roles, all mentor teams meet individually and collectively to discuss feedback from coaches and administrators. All feedback from Initiative participants and partners shape each professional learning session.

Writing Engages Student Thinking: A Guide for Math Teachers

By Todd Edwards, Math Coach, and Jennifer Philips, Literacy Coach


Albert Gallatin High School - Student writing can take many forms, and for mathematics classes, this is no exception. Student performance can improve if students in mathematics classes are engaged more frequently and at a higher level. Writing is a highly effective tool with which teachers can facilitate the engagement process for students. Here are some effective techniques with which you can begin to engage your mathematics students in the writing process:

Begin with ease

Asking students to write about their thinking process can be difficult. The academic rewards, though, far outweigh the learning curve. Writing fosters a necessary skill in students: the ability to effectively communicate an idea. Along the way to teaching that skill, the process of learning to write engages students in thinking about their own learning process (metacognition).

It is important to start out with writing prompts that promote student interest. Begin with content that students understand and questions they can answer. Teachers can help students by building scaffolded structures for developing student thought, such as a 3 column table with the following titles: *My Work*, *What I Did*, and *Why I Did It*.

Points to Ponder: National Trends

 National - What are the top four reasons for teacher attrition?

- 65% Lack of planning time
- 60% Too heavy workload
- 53% Problematic student behavior
- 52% Lack of influence over school policy

(Source: *The Alliance for Excellent Education, Teacher Attrition: A Costly Loss to the Nation and to the States 2005*)

This structure can be applied to any mathematics problem. Asking students to write about their reflections is another great way to get students to write in class.


Provide effective teacher feedback to student writing

This is perhaps one of the most difficult tasks for teachers to effectively complete. Students need to know how they are doing on a consistent basis. Student writing provides a glimpse into their internal thinking process. Let your students know that you are invested in their learning process by providing that individualized teacher feedback.

However, for the amount of writing that is necessary in mathematics class, it is hard to provide detailed feedback on each student writing assignment. Try some other kinds of feedback. For example, try stars, stickers, stamps, checks, pluses and minuses, etc. Provide feedback by sentences or lines that helped you see their thinking. Be creative, be feedback oriented.

Use writing as a way of teaching content

Writing allows students to examine their problem solving and thinking processes. Give it a try, and with time, patience and practice, you and your students will wonder how you ever got along without it.

 National - High school dropouts cost the U.S. \$325 billion in lost wages, taxes, and productivity over lifetimes. The total lost earnings for high school dropouts from the State of Pennsylvania came to a total of \$9,779,380,000.

(Source: *Alliance for Excellent Education, <http://www.all4ed.org/>*)

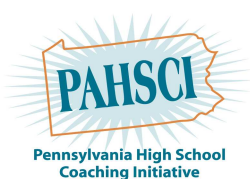
“It’s been very helpful to have someone to talk to who really has an understanding of the class and can really make some real tangible suggestions because [she] knows the class well enough.”

Teacher, PAHSCI participating school



Jay Badams, Erie SD administrator (left), Dick Gross, Foundations mentor (center), and Liz Krug, Erie SD Administrator (right)

The Pennsylvania High School Coaching Initiative



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www.pacoaching.org



Don D'Amico, Foundations mentor (left), Anne Nowaskie, Erie SD coach (center), and Suzanne Jones, Scranton SD coach (right), sit at Centralized Training breakout sessions.

The Annenberg Foundation and The Pennsylvania Department of Education began implementation of the Pennsylvania High School Coaching Initiative (PAHSCI), a \$31 million, three-year high school coaching initiative, during the 2005 - 2006 school year. PAHSCI's goals are to improve student achievement, build teacher capacity, and prepare students for the workforce through researching and developing a distinctive instructional coaching model.

PAHSCI places one literacy and one math coach for every 600 students in 26 high-need high schools located in 16 districts across the State of Pennsylvania. Coaches at the selected sites facilitate in-class coaching and modeling, peer collaboration and teacher training in order to improve teaching and learning at their schools.

To support this extensive effort, the Pennsylvania Department of Education has partnered with the University of Pennsylvania's Penn Literacy Network (PLN) and Foundations, Inc. to provide intensive professional development for coaches and school leadership teams. Other partners include Research for Action, which is documenting and evaluating the results from this work, and The Philadelphia Foundation, which serves as the program's fiscal administrator.

Letter from the Project Director

Dear Colleagues,

In Year 2 of the PAHSCI, it is critical that we focus on both the implementation and sustainability of our instructional coaching model. This is the only initiative of its kind: a statewide, job-embedded professional development model designed around the PLN framework and facilitated by school-based coaches who are supported by Foundations mentors.

The coaches are committed to helping teachers deepen their content knowledge and strengthen their teaching methods. They are committed to giving teachers the tools that are necessary to change their teaching practices. They are committed to helping reduce the achievement gap between low and high performing students. The only way this can be accomplished is to enhance the way teachers teach and students learn. Opportunities for coaches and teachers to

work together, engage in inquiry, and become reflective practitioners are essential components to accomplish the goals of improving student achievement and building teacher capacity. The culture of teaching and learning develops as teachers and coaches integrate these new practices into routine activities. Schools become collaborative environments promoting collegial sharing and peer coaching. Once a culture of coaching is an accepted practice and becomes the norm, organizational changes such as turnover and budget cycles do not threaten its survival. The sustainability of these accepted teaching practices ultimately helps institutionalize a promising strategy for improving teaching and learning.

Sincerely,

Ellen B. Eisenberg
Project Director