

In response to a *Patriot-News* editorial, PAHSCI Executive Director Ellen Eisenberg and SciTech High School Director Michael Reed were prompted to write Letters to the Editor.

The Patriot-News Friday, December 21, 2007

Mentoring teachers brings students up

Mentoring programs improve classroom dynamics, changing the way teachers teach and students learn. As *The Patriot-News* notes (“Study shows students perform much better when their instructors mentor one another,” editorial, Dec.3), more schools need to take advantage of this effective education tool. Fortunately, many are.

The Pennsylvania High School Coaching Initiative (PAHSCI) is at the forefront of “instructional coaching,” a groundbreaking strategy for increasing student achievement in 24 high-need high schools located in 15 school districts across Pennsylvania, including SciTech High School in Harrisburg. Total PAHSCI enrollment is more than 32,000 students.

Formed in 2005 as a partnership between The Annenberg Foundation and the Pennsylvania Department of Education, PAHSCI represents a \$31 million, three-year investment. PAHSCI is the nation’s only multi-tiered teacher coaching initiative – providing trained teacher-leaders, called coaches, to schools and school districts. Coaches and school principals, in turn, receive professional and program support from the initiative’s team of mentors and facilitators.

How successful has it been? At SciTech High School, PSSA scores have risen appreciably since the introduction of the PAHSCI model. With one literacy coach in place, the 11th grade results of the 2007 PSSA show reading has increased 23 percent and math 7 percent. SciTech exceeded the percentage of students in the state who scored proficient and advanced in writing: state – 87.9 percent; SciTech – 99 percent. The school credits PAHSCI for the results.

Education is lifelong endeavor – not just for students but for teachers, too.

The Patriot-News Monday, February 18, 2008

Teacher-to-teacher an effective program

Pennsylvanians want to improve education in our public schools, especially in urban areas. One of the most effective programs in place in our city schools is the teacher-to-teacher support that occurs when outstanding classroom teachers are trained to be coaches.

Harrisburg has been a part of an Annenberg Foundation initiative called the Pennsylvania High School Coaching Initiative (PAHSCI) for three years and the results are quite positive. At SciTech High, where the student body reflects the average and above students in the Harrisburg School District, 11th grade reading scores on the 2007 PSSA increased by 23 percentage points, and the writing scores exceeded the state average for proficient and above

by 11 percentage points, a number that is higher than surrounding suburban districts. At the same time, math scores improved by 7 percent. What accounts for the increased scores? The teachers and administrators at the school say that much of the credit goes to the presence of one literacy coach and her work with teachers in all areas of the curriculum. As we see results such as these in schools across the state, the message is clear: funding for peer coaching initiatives such as PAHSCI should be continued and increased. We know that peer coaching is effective in strengthening and supporting teaching and learning in our classrooms. The cost of adding teacher-leaders who are trained as coaches to all of our schools is an investment in the education and lives of our children.