

By [IU PIIC Mentors Diane Hubona and Jeremy Gabborin](#)

School board members voluntarily take on the role of guiding school-wide district decisions and are charged to make fiscally responsible choices. As PIIC coaching mentors, we both acknowledge the arduous task board members face as they ask: Why should we invest in instructional coaches? Shouldn't teachers already know how to teach? How can we afford the cost of coaching positions?

Before we examine the logic that supports instructional coaching, it is crucial to admit that not all coaching is equal. What the Pennsylvania Institute for Instructional Coaching is accomplishing is unparalleled due to the extra layer of mentoring for coaches, the focus on embedded professional learning, and the 4 quadrants of coaching that PIIC utilizes.

So why PIIC coaching?

Already-established teachers are making the shift from content-driven, teacher-centered classrooms to student-centered classrooms where the learners take charge; ready or not, this is today's teaching reality. Introducing PIIC's literacy-based quadrant of coaching, where coaches work with staff to implement research-driven, literacy-based instructional strategies, supports this goal. This isn't addressed in many teacher preparation programs, and it's vital that teachers work with their students integrating reading, writing, speaking, and listening in all content areas.

Our PIIC framework also incorporates the data-analysis quadrant, where coaches assist staff in analyzing and evaluating data; however, data doesn't change instructional practice by merely examining it. Coaches facilitate the process of exploring data to make adjustments in curriculum, instruction, and assessment.

The PIIC framework for instructional coaching honors the self-reflection quadrant as well; coaches work with their staff to understand not only how to implement new teaching strategies in their classrooms but also why they are doing it. Many educators do not have reflection time amidst their hectic teaching schedules, so PIIC coaches design and foster this reflection, both individually and collaboratively.

At the heart of PIIC's work is the one-on-one and small group instructional coaching quadrant. Coaches work with mentors extensively to differentiate for the most seasoned as well as novice teachers, helping them adjust classroom instruction to actively engage learners in the learning process. It is critical to also provide opportunities for teachers to work with their peers in a constructive, collaborative environment, and the PIIC model fosters this.

To conclude, a few words of advice from your IU10 and IU28 PIIC mentors....

Don't present coaching as a new (or continuing) initiative. Instead, after discussing problems, needs, program deficiencies, present coaching as the viable solution to the issue.

Be able to share specifically how coaching can change teaching and learning in your district.

Be able to cite examples of how coaching has improved teaching and learning in neighboring districts (if applicable)

Instructional Coaching covers a lot of ground. Before working with the board, choose which aspects will be your focus, based on district needs. PIIC's 4 Quadrants of Coaching embed an invaluable framework with results that support all school districts in their pursuit of excellence.

As PIIC coaching mentors, our question to school boards would be, "How can you afford **not to** have PIIC instructional coaches?"