

# THE PASSKEY

HELPING TEACHERS HELP STUDENTS

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Pennsylvania High School  
Coaching Initiative

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## IT'S ALL IN THE TIMING!

by Diane Hubona, Literacy Coach, Bellwood-Antis High School

As Bellwood-Antis High School enters Year 4 of PAHSCI, we are filled with enthusiasm as well as appreciation. Principal Diane Williams' excitement at the prospect of Year 4 is evident. "I am elated that Bellwood-Antis has been selected to participate in Year 4 of PAHSCI. We truly feel we are on the threshold of establishing a sustained effort that promotes and integrates the PAHSCI model and beliefs."

During Year 4 of our school's participation, many projects will remain a constant. The small learning communities we have fostered, the one-on-one coaching, the embedded professional development, the planning, and implementation of interdisciplinary units, the parent/child book club, the summer reading program, the community read, and the district-wide celebration for Read Across America will all remain intact. However, there will be a few major additions that our district is planning for the 2008-2009 school year since the timing is perfect.

With an eye to the future, Superintendent Brian Toth reflects, "For year 4 we are looking toward sustainability. The impact of instructional change has been huge at the high school level. Our literacy and math coaches are being trained as PLN facilitators this summer in order to train 10 elementary and 10 middle school teachers in our district next year. It is time to build upon the solid foundation laid in the high school. With Year 4, we hope to establish a

more engaging environment for all students by integrating literacy instruction from K-12."

An additional focus for Year 4 will be the initiation of curriculum backmapping, spearheaded by Tom Otto, Director of Curriculum. The teachers are now prepared for this next step. Lesson planning has taken on an entirely new dimension and our classrooms are so interactive. Tom stated, "What has me intrigued is that in order to sustain change, we need embedded professional development. I feel like we are on the brink of total sustainability and need our



Diane Williams, Principal of Bellwood-Antis

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## PAHSCI HELPS TEST SCORES RISE

**Education is a shared priority, and the Pennsylvania General Assembly right now is working with Gov. Ed Rendell to target limited state resources to programs proven to enhance student achievement. Serious consideration should be given to PAHSCI, where results demonstrate the success of one-on-one instructional coaching, mentoring, and professional development.**

**Preliminary data from the last two years show marked progress in math and reading scores in schools supported by the Pennsylvania High School Coaching Initiative (PAHSCI). Eighteen of 21 schools with data for 2004 and 2007 exceeded the state percentage change in the proportion of students reaching "advanced" or "proficient" in math, and 15 of 21 schools exceeded the same in reading.**

**PAHSCI has garnered widespread media attention for improving the classroom dynamic and changing the way teachers teach and students learn in schools across the state. More and more people are beginning to understand the value of instructional coaching in the equation to raise test scores in reading, writing and math. Make your voice heard. The state budget must be adopted June 30. What we do today will have an impact on education tomorrow. For more information, visit [www.pacoaching.org](http://www.pacoaching.org). Call your legislators now!**

## LETTER FROM: PAHSCI'S EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

"To create a high-performance team, we must replace typical management activities like supervising, checking, monitoring, and controlling with new behaviors like coaching and communicating" (Ray Smith, CEO, Bell Atlantic). Such is the PAHSCI message expressed in so many ways since its inception in 2005 – changing beliefs determines actions which impacts results.

Coaches, teachers, administrators, and students are experiencing a paradigm shift as the focus on school improvement is changing from the "hit and run" professional development sessions to the relevant, rigorous, relationship building professional learning opportunities that are designed to promote real learning and real partnerships between and among colleagues. These professional learning opportunities allow staff members to make time to think about their thinking and learning, to take time to ask for support, to offer responses to their colleagues' questions, and to follow up on any feedback. These learning opportunities help to create the connections necessary to sustain professional growth and maintain an environment where teaching and learning are priorities for student success.

PAHSCI schools have come a long way. Teacher leaders have emerged and have become skilled facilitators, bridging the gap between what students need to know and how teachers can meet the growing demands of improving student outcomes. Ongoing professional

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**"Helping students, teachers, and administrators engage in reflective practices has made an incredible difference in teaching and learning."**

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conversations, data dialogues, study groups, learning walks, and sustained professional learning opportunities are the norm. Helping students, teachers, and administrators engage in reflective practices has made an incredible difference in teaching and learning.

As I reflect on the last three years of the Pennsylvania High School Coaching Initiative, I am encouraged by the changes in each participating high school. Through the "over-the-shoulder" one-on-one instructional coaching and mentoring, teachers and administrators are able to identify the strengths and weaknesses of their

programs, address any areas of need, and implement the changes in practices that promise to yield positive results. Through the Collaborative Coaching Board, we have helped to align all initiatives with instructional coaching components such that schools across the Commonwealth have embraced and institutionalized a culture of coaching within and among schools and school districts. And, when students, parents, and teachers ask if their schools implement an instructional coaching model of leadership, we will know that a transformation has taken place in Pennsylvania high schools.

Best wishes for a wonderful, relaxing summer. Read lots of good books, take time to reflect and re-energize your soul. Get ready to communicate. As Robert Hargrove says, "The primary medium for all coaching interventions is conversation." Sincerely,



Ellen B. Eisenberg



Pat Jacobs (L) and Carol Sienkiewicz (R) networking on May 5.

### *Timing, continued from page 1*

coaches to assist in the development of distributed leadership." This notion of distributed leadership also prompts another timely change for Year 4. The trained PLN teachers will assume an even greater role in professional development sessions as well as study groups. We began this on a small scale in the first year of PAHSCI and will continue to expand the

teachers' roles.

Lastly, we will introduce our faculty to the newly developed peer observation format. Teachers will have the opportunity to conduct walk-throughs as well as full-period classroom visitations. Collaboration continues to flourish and our teachers now see it as a natural part of their daily planning. Bellwood-Antis High School Guidance Counselor, Sue Estep, encapsulates what our district can look forward to with the recent extension to Year 4 of PAHSCI. "One thing I can say is that student engagement is at an all time high. I see students working together frequently in pairs and or small groups. Reading, writing, speaking skills, and math abilities are soaring. I have witnessed the excitement in the classroom while students debate and problem solve. My favorite experience is when a student begins a sentence with *what if*. That shows me the wheels are turning. The windows of the brain are opening! Our brain development and growth potential are huge during the years from age 15 to 25 so much so that it parallels that of an infant's learning from birth to 2 years."

### ~ STAFF ~

|                         |   |
|-------------------------|---|
| Ellen B. Eisenberg      | Executive Director, PAHSCI                    |
| Peggy J. Trusty         | Communications Manager and Editor             |
| Lesley Stone-Hyman      | Communications Assistant and Assistant Editor |
| Leslie Rumble-Davenport | Administrative Assistant                      |

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## MOMENTUM CARRIES COACHING INTO FOURTH YEAR

by Anne-Marie Layhue and Jennifer Philips, Math and Literacy Coaches, Albert Gallatin High School, IU#1

While formulating the work plan for an additional year with PAHSCI, Albert Gallatin Area School District administrators became excited about the prospect of continuing the momentum into another school year. Teachers, administrators, and even students were saddened at the thought of not having the coaches around for at least another year. We truly hit the ground running in year three and with that, our legs are still pumping for a fourth year. We are very thankful for the opportunity to continue to impact the teachers and students of AGHS.

Over the past three years, our principal has been encouraging the teachers to include PLN strategies in their weekly lesson plans. These strategies acted as a “foot-in-the door” for our coaching group and have since been integrated into the culture of our building. We are constantly refining our techniques of professional development delivery and our teachers are doing the same. During the 2007 – 2008 school year, we noticed a favorable change surrounding the Before-During-After instructional coaching model. A sense of positivity, humility, and consistency of language used among the coaching staff has helped us overcome certain barriers to help create a culture of collaboration. Teachers are

more comfortable in creating student-centered classrooms and are approaching coach-conducted professional development with a revived sense of purpose and involvement. We are very eager to continue these practices into another school year to see and experience even more growth and development.

One of the major stepping-stones for year three has been our “in-house,” two credit, professional development course designed by our coaches to take place during the school day. Teachers have expressed their interest in sustaining this type of professional development and the need for this course to continue.

Given the opportunity for this fourth year, we are planning to run new courses for our teachers. With the addition of “Classrooms for the Future” in our school, we know that our teachers need continued support with technology-enhanced instructional strategies. Each new piece of equipment offers a library of uses in the classroom and our teachers will need

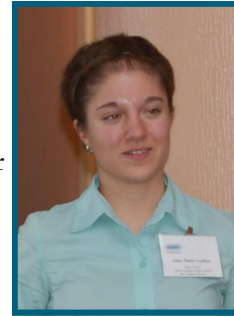
additional support when integrating technology to enhance instruction using the effective instructional strategies learned through the PLN framework.

We have designed a “Technology Strands for the 21st Century Learner” course, to be facilitated by our own “Master Teachers” of technology. This course will follow the BDA model and will include a peer-coaching component. Additionally, through our “Techniques for Instructional Coaching” course, teachers will be trained to work with their colleagues on specific coaching techniques.

The students, teachers, and administrators of Albert Gallatin High School have communicated through conversations and classroom practices, their commitment to the goals of the Pennsylvania High School Coaching Initiative. In Year 4, we look forward to building even stronger collaboration, instructional refinement, student achievement, and overall professionalism to ensure continued success for teachers and students alike.



Jennifer Philips (t) and  
Anne-Marie Layhue (b)



## PAHSCI IS ALIVE AND WELL AT AGHS

by Joetta L. Britvich, Principal, Albert Gallatin Area High School, IU#1

The thought of PAHSCI ending after the three year implementation at Albert Gallatin Area High School was met with despair on the part of teachers and administrators alike. Teachers, principals, and staff were positively gleeful to find out that AGHS has been selected for funding for an additional year. This is due to the impact PAHSCI has had on our classrooms – not only in the areas of mathematics and English, but in science, social studies, foreign language, and more.

When asked about the importance of this program in our school, second-year science teacher, Kim Swaney said, “The strategies introduced by the coaches were a great strength.” Kim also stated that being able to participate in brainstorming activities in the presence of the coaches and other teachers made a lasting impact on her and has provided her with a much stronger ability to provide differentiated instruction.

The Year 4 plan involves further effort from our teachers

in all areas, with particular interest in the new one credit technology course developed by our PAHSCI coaches. This course will incorporate the PLN strategies into various formats supported by our new technology gained through the “Classrooms for the Future” grant.

Plans are also in place to continue the “Effective Strategies” course – also written by our coaches and implemented this year in our school. The “New Teacher” meetings which have been supported by our PAHSCI coaches are also in line to continue in 08-09, along with one-on-one coaching using the BDA format.

As English teacher, Cindy Halfin states, “What the coaches have done here is positive; they have provided a great deal of support” – and Albert Gallatin Area High School is grateful for a fourth year of continued support through PAHSCI.



## CELEBRATING PAHSCI - MAY 4-5, 2008 - CELEBRATING PAHSCI



**Look for the next issue of THE PASKEY in September 2008.**

### 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 Foundation.

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

**The Annenberg Foundation**  
**150 North Radnor-Chester Road, Suite A-200**  
**Radnor, PA 19087**  
**Phone: 610.341.9066 Fax: 610.964.8688**  
**eeisenberg@pacoaching.org**

**Moorestown West Corporate Center**  
**2 Executive Drive, Suite 1**  
**Moorestown, NJ 08057**  
**Phone: 856.533.1608**  
**Fax: 856.533.1651**