By Mandie Manning, Penn Cambria School District Instructional Coach

For a true assessment of the impact of coaching on our school, I recently reflected on what changes have occurred in the past two years since I accepted the position as a coach. I considered all the roles of a coach: working one on one with teachers, providing professional development, being a link between faculty and administration, implementing the BDA cycle of consultation, and a host of other roles that fit into my coaching responsibilities. I know what my goals are and I think I've shared the goals with my colleagues. I also think I have made a positive impact; however, my *perception* isn't what counts the most. My colleagues need to weigh in on "how I'm doing" as a coach. I asked for feedback from my colleagues and administration about how having a coach in our district has transformed our school.

When we first implemented 25 minutes of professional development each week, the faculty was skeptical. Few teachers wanted to share or discuss anything. However, after dedicating an entire semester to strategies for reading, writing, and vocabulary, attitudes have changed. The whole school has an environment of collaboration, from the hallways to the lunchroom, and even the gym! Educators are discussing literacy, classroom practices, lesson plans and resources. Classroom doors and minds are opening.

I know how vital my own PIIC mentor is to me, and how invaluable the PIIC Professional Learning Opportunities (PLO) are to my professional growth. I know how lucky I am to not only have the opportunity to network with coaches from across the state and learn so many crucial literacy strategies, but these comments tell me that the turnaround on what I learn is actually impacting instruction for our students. Transforming a school isn't easy or instantaneous, but it is possible. Two years ago I didn't know what an instructional coach was, but now I know; I am one.

"This is the first time that both the administrators and teachers are working together to improve literacy across the curriculum."
-Assistant Principal

"I see a notable change in our school's collaboration level since the incorporation of a literacy coach."
-High School English teacher

“They (the teachers) are focused on the same goals, expectations and strategies. They have stepped way outside of their comfort zones and are willing to share what’s working and what is not working with their colleagues. The focus has truly shifted from ‘what’s best for me’ to ‘what’s best for our students.’”
-High Sschool Principal

“I was looking for a way to increase student engagement. My coach helped me select short readings, group students, use pair share strategies and critical thinking skills to select important points from an excerpt…and gave me the idea to use dry erase boards for students to hold up their ‘most important tip’ to show me and the whole class during a demonstration.”
-Family Consumer Science teacher

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