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In understanding the coach's role in the implementation of the PA core, the coach must first understand, "why the PA Core?" The PA Core State Standards were developed to provide a consistent, clear understanding of what students are expected to learn to help them progress toward college and career readiness. At the heart of the new PA Core Standards is a focus on higher expectations and a shift to more rigorous instruction. The conversation between coaches and teachers will continue to include the need to align classroom instruction, resources, and assessments with the core standards. This alignment will provide the necessary framework for more rigorous instruction. Still, we cannot assume that simply adopting the standards provides a rigorous environment for students. Rigor is more than what you teach. Rigor is creating an environment in which each student is expected to learn at high levels, each student is supported so he or she can learn at high levels, and each student demonstrates learning at high levels (Blackburn, 2012).

A coach needs to ask the question, "how might teachers adjust instruction to increase rigor?" A valuable tool for coaches to understand and use in their support with teachers for increasing rigor is Webb's Depth of Knowledge. The Depth of Knowledge, or DoK, is a scale of cognitive demand and a way to think about content complexity, not content difficulty.

If students are expected to learn at higher levels, the first component of a rigorous classroom, coaches can support teachers during their conversations on designing lessons that will embed questions in classroom instruction. Higher-level questioning is an integral part of a rigorous classroom. Look for open-ended questions that are at the higher levels of DoK. Still, a coach can observe student and teacher behaviors. Listen for teacher responses to student responses. Does the teacher ask a high level question and accept low-level responses? Do teachers use extending questions to probe and guide the student to an appropriate response when that initial response is a lower level response?

For the second component of a rigorous classroom, teachers must create the environment that supports student learning at higher levels. Coaches can continue to assist teachers to strengthen their instructional practice by being purposeful in their selection of strategies to scaffold instruction as well as emphasizing the use of evidence-based literacy practices and research based techniques.

The third component of a rigorous classroom is a classroom where each student has multiple opportunities to demonstrate their learning at high levels. Demonstrations of learning mean that instruction is not teacher-centered. One way to accomplish a more student-centered classroom is through increased student engagement

What is the coach's role in assisting with the PA Core transition? Through the PIIC 4 quadrant model and BDA cycle, the coach encourages an understanding of cognitive rigor by using one on one and small group support, evidenced based literacy strategies and techniques, collecting, analyzing, and using data while supporting reflective practices and increasing meaningful student engagement - the core of coaching.

Blackburn, B. R. (2012). The beginner's guide to understanding rigor. In *Rigor Made Easy: Getting Started* doi: [w](#)  
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