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Making a Difference: Year Two Report of the Pennsylvania High School Coaching Initiative

An RFA research team led by Diane Brown recently completed [Making a Difference](#), the year two evaluation report of the [Pennsylvania High School Coaching Initiative \(PAHSCI\)](#). An [executive summary](#) of the report is also available.

PAHSCI is distinctive in its direct focus on improving classroom teaching through instructional coaching. Most high school reforms have focused on structural changes such as the creation of small schools. It is ambitious in its scope as a statewide initiative. Working in 26 high-need secondary schools, PAHSCI has placed one literacy and one math instructional coach for every 600 students. These coaches work one-on-one with teachers in their classrooms to help them adopt the research-based instructional strategies for teaching literacy developed by the [Penn Literacy Network](#). PAHSCI also provides experienced educators from [Foundations, Inc.](#) who serve as mentors to principals and coaches.

RFA's multi-site mixed method evaluation research has focused on PAHSCI's impact on the intermediate outcomes that are likely to lead to improved student achievement. Team Leader Diane Brown reports, "In this second year report we demonstrate that PAHSCI is 'making a difference' in classrooms because instructional coaches have been successful at helping teachers make real and effective changes in their practice."

Lessons for other education reformers interested in adopting instructional coaching include:

- Tie the work of coaches to research-based instructional strategies that are central to the school's approach to overall school improvement
- Make one-on-one consultation with teachers a high priority for coaches and use a standardized framework for coaches' work
- Make certain that there is a clear, shared understanding about the role and responsibilities of instructional coaches
- Assign more than one coach to a school and intentionally build a coaching team that works with other school leaders to establish instructional priorities and the role of coaches in meeting those priorities

PAHSCI's focus on improving the literacy learning of adolescents reflects increasing national attention to high schools. Our evaluation research builds a knowledge base for the growing efforts around high school reform.

Jolley Bruce Christman, Ph.D. and Eva Gold, Ph.D. - Founders and Principals

Children, Youth and Environments Publishes Paper on Youth Organizing

"The Time Is Now: Youth Organize to Transform Philadelphia High Schools" by Gretchen E.L. Sues and Kristine S. Lewis appeared in the [Children, Youth and Environments](#) issue on youth participation (Volume 17, Number 2). The authors found that the experiences of youth organizers "offer important lessons about persistence in the midst of turnover, the impact of intergenerational organizing, and the significance of youth involvement in school reform." The youth leaders remind adults "that shiny new buildings or simply 'smaller' schools will not tackle the severe inequities that are embedded throughout their school district."

RFA Completes Need in Deed Report

A research team led by Tracey Hartmann completed [Teachers and Students Learning through Service](#), a report on RFA's evaluation of [Need in Deed \(NID\)](#)'s work with teachers during the 2006-07 school year. NID works with teachers to integrate *My Voice*, a service-learning framework, into the classroom. The mixed method evaluation aimed to learn more about the impact of NID's work on teacher practice. The evaluation found that teachers were both excited and challenged by using service learning strategies that incorporate student voice. Teachers reported benefiting from involvement in NID in a number of areas including learning how to develop a service learning project and developing an understanding of how to make connections with students' communities.

RFA in the News

RFA's teacher quality research is cited in the Harper's Index section of the November 2007 issue of [Harper's Magazine](#).

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