

Burlington School Board Curriculum/Personnel Committee  
January 7, 2019, 6-8pm  
Sustainability Academy, Community Room

Minutes/Notes from BSD Instructional Coach Meeting - January 7, 2019

*NB: I took these notes to help have a record of the themes and topics of the conversations at this informal meeting between BSD School Board members and BSD Instructional Coaches and Administrators. When I include people's names, it is not to imply that I am quoting them directly or word for word, but to give context to who was speaking at a given time. Also, writing that is in italics is to show my words or comments, which were not included in the meeting. – ppv*

*Many thanks to our district parent volunteer and linguist Polly Vanderputen for taking such detailed and complete notes of Monday's discussion.*

*I have highlighted some parts of this document that I feel are relevant to the current board discussion and questions about current practice. (SC)*

Notes on abbreviations:

SC = Stephen Carey  
IC = Instructional Coach or Coaches  
BC = Behavioral Coach or Coaches  
PD = Professional Development  
SA = Sustainability Academy  
IAA = Integrated Arts Academy  
PPV = Polly Vanderputten

Agenda, introduced by School Commissioner Stephen Carey:

- Welcome – SC & exit cards & distribution of 26 questions
- Purpose: Gather further information in a less formal setting re: BSD's embedded coaching model
- Who are we?
- Handouts: Questions, List, Index cards for questions
- Coaches – Stephanie
  - Board Q's
  - Other Q's

- One voice at a time
- Exit cards
- Thanks in advance

Stephen started the meeting by proposing that the group run through the questions. (See Memo previously distributed to Board.)

**Question # 1** asks about the cost of the embedded coach model. According to information from Nate Lavery, in 2018-19, it is \$1,561,753.00, but **the cost to the district is actually \$740,655** because of grant money and federal funding.

**Question # 2** : Why was number not included in the tally? There was reference to a Board presentation on Dec. 4, where the 4 FTE's of Instructional Coaches (IC's) were presented. These FTE's are funded locally.

**Question # 3**, about how coaching and mentoring overlap.

The mentoring coach (*Colleen Cowell*) said she started the mentoring program, and it needs to be improved. They are working in particular with teachers who are moving from one grade to another (like 2<sup>nd</sup> to 5<sup>th</sup>, for example). There was an example given of how there are 6 new teachers at Champlain this year, and the mentoring coach can't meet with all of them, so the Instructional Coaches (IC's) have helped with the new teachers.

Bobby Riley, IAA principal: I feel like the coaching model is more robust than the mentoring model.

Question from a Board member: Why would an IC meet more frequently with a new teacher than a mentor?

Answer: Because IC's are building-based, and mentors are not always—they can be moving around the district

One of the coaches: **Our primary job is to support all teachers.**

Question from SC: So IC's are doing mentoring?

Answer from a coach: Yes, we are embedded, but mentoring is not our primary job.

Question from PPV: Mentors have to go through mentor training; is there an equivalent for IC's, or is it just assumed they can be mentors because they are IC's?

Answer from Stephanie: the IC's had to attend 3 days of VT-NEA mentor training last August; the BSD is looking at making it mandatory throughout the BEA.

**Questions # 4 & # 5**, regarding how often coaches model instructional strategies and how many individual teachers have been coached this year:

Stephanie and the coaches: The goal is that every teacher in every school is going to go through the IC cycle; some will stay coaches for longer than others. The expectation is that the coaches meet with every teacher, but they need to have the teacher's trust; the trust factor and building trust are very important. They say they are constantly working with teachers.

Terry: **The IC's have to keep a log that Stephanie looks at every week. I am in cycle with 8 teachers, with bringing them on board.**

Comment from coaches: The goals were not finished until the end of October (*not clear if these were teacher goals or IC goals*), which delayed when IC's could start working with teachers.

**Question # 13**, about how often coaches meet outside of assigned schools:

Terry is a Literacy coach, and Shannon is a Math coach, both full-time. Fridays are the IC's PLC times; Stephanie, Bonnie and Victor are still working on a long-term development plan for the IC's PLC's. Currently, Fridays are used for a lot of planning. The IC's are in the building a lot.

Comment from Terry: I am doing two jobs for the price of one.

IC's are planning district PD and PLC time together based on teacher requests.

Stephanie is required to bring together K-8 coaches once a month to continue to get federal funding. One Friday morning each month, she meets just with coaches, and another Friday morning, she meets with coaches and principals.

**Question # 14**, about how work gets disseminated:

Terry and Shannon response: Our (IC) work together at meetings is about learning coaching and how to be an embedded coach, how to be better at it. Shannon attends two PLC's/week and shares the information with an Interventionist, who actually does the work with the student(s). The work and focus change depending on requests.

The behavior coaches and IC's are all on Leadership teams.

Terry: Fountas and Pinnell are used intensively by her; the IC and the content expert determine assessment practices.

*(Here is a link to the Fountas and Pinnell website for further information):*

<https://www.fountasandpinnell.com/>

**Question # 7**, about a coach's daily schedule:

Response from coaches: The IC schedule looks different every day. Currently, they are preparing for the NAPE website/assessment on February 8. *(I'm not sure what NAPE is, but I think it might be the National Alliance for Partnerships in Equity.)* There are two pre-cycle meetings and meetings with coaches.

Judy Klima at IAA: We need to meet with various community partners to keep connections going for our programs; this is unique to IAA as a Magnet school in the BSD.

Comment from the coaches: if they have an hour free, anyone can meet with them; just check their schedule.

**Question # 10**, about the protocol for meeting with a coach:

Shannon: a form was sent to teachers at the beginning of the year to invite them to meet with the coaches.

SC: How does that work for teachers? I understand there is very little free time in the elementary school schedule.

Judy Klima: IC's have a list of opportune moments to meet with teachers; they are aware of teacher schedules.

Terry: Meetings with coaches are always driven by the teachers, not the IC's. It's not the coaches pushing an agenda on teachers; it's up to the teachers to seek help, or schedule a meeting. There is a Building Sub available to fill in for teachers meeting with coaches.

Meg O'Connor, teacher at SA: I have not been able to take advantage of the IC model. It's a great idea, but it's not working for me. I don't have time to meet with a coach when I am developing curriculum for my classroom. I have 21 kids, 9 of them are on IEP's, I am developing new curriculum, and we are missing a Spec. Educator at SA, though it looks like they are hiring one soon, which is badly needed. The behavior coach is at SA only 2 days a week, which is not helpful when there is a crisis with a student and we need an intervention. Even if I do write sub plans, there are so few subs through Kelly Services, it's hard to find someone to cover for me.

We need more classroom teachers, special educators, and paraeducators. The mixed grades are always shifting; teachers are moved from grade to grade every year with little to no consistency. The kids' and teachers' basic needs are currently not being met.

Terry: The mixed grade classrooms at SA are historical; they've always been here. It's awkward now because of grade-specific curriculum, which means a teacher has two distinct grades in one class and it's not truly blended.

Amy LaChance: Teachers used to have more discretion over curriculum planning for mixed grade classrooms, but that has changed.

**Question # 17:** Is there work on a survey that gives authentic feedback?

Stephanie: We have that. It was Nellie Mae, and now an End of Year survey will be put in place by EDC. The evaluation cycle is evolving.

Discussion about losing a teacher at SA: Sharing specials teachers has been hard; Bobby Riley at IAA sent a teacher over, but that teacher has been repurposed for something else.

SA (*not sure if this is this year or last year*): 2 Kindergartens, two 1<sup>st</sup> grades, two 2<sup>nd</sup> grades, three 3/4 classrooms and 1 fifth grade; they lost one of the 3/4 grades.

**Question # 16,** about how much IC's are planning interventions or working one-on-one or with small groups of kids:

Coaches: It's not our job. We would meet with a teacher, but not with students. We never do interventions with small groups of students. We work with a teacher or a team of teachers to look at their data, and the teacher makes an intervention plan.

Judy Klima: I am instructing all the time, going into classrooms all the time.

Terry: Tomorrow, I will be working all afternoon with a teacher on an intervention. She had a writing lesson that did not go well and needs my help.

SC: Will you be working in the classroom with her?

Terry: No, we are meeting one-on-one.

SC: Who will be with the teacher's students while you work with the teacher?

Terry: The Building Sub will be in her classroom with her students.

Yaw Obeng: Teachers may not feel comfortable going to the principal with their concerns about how things are going in the classroom; instead, they will go to the coaches to share concerns.

Terry: The teacher I will be meeting with watched a video of herself and reached out to me.

Comment from coaches: We are all doing direct instruction.

**Question from PPV:** How long is a coach a coach? Is it indefinite once you've established your role as a coach, or is there a rotation?

Stephanie: We are making a serious financial investment with this group of coaches. I will be revisiting the question with Yaw Obeng about staggering the coaches. They need to be embedded for a length of time; currently, we are looking at a five-year cycle. We don't know from the beginning how long the cycle will be, and as this is just the first year, we don't yet know how long.

Shannon: The more time you're out of the classroom, the less you're in touch with the realities of the classroom.

Bobby Riley: But the coaches have improved the climate at IAA; they've raised consciousness about instructional issues and helped new teachers feel more comfortable.

Amy LaChance: That used to be the job of mentors; if we had more mentors, new teachers would need less coaching. (Note from ppv: Mentor teachers are typically full-time, experienced classroom teachers or special educators who receive VT-NEA mentor training. They are compensated by a modest stipend for the year or two that they are mentors, but they are not pulled from classroom work/responsibilities to do this job.)

LaShawn, principal at SA: The goal is to close the achievement gap. The IC's are there to help teachers perfect their craft.

Terry: I will be meeting with a veteran teacher who wants feedback. This teacher is thrilled to have it.

Bobby Riley, IAA: The IC's allow us to triage the mentorship when we have so many issues in our schools. The support has been enormous for an administrator.

**Question from Mike, Board member:** How do we quantify how effective the coaching model is?

Stephanie and Terry: Every new program needs time to collect data.

Mike: Are you looking to tie data from coaches to teachers on classroom improvement year to year:

Terry: We are using Jennifer Seravello and John Tapper as resources; they are coming to do PD with us. We are on a quest for high quality instructional development. The week after school gets out, there is a full week of professional development, but it's optional for teachers. This kind of PD needs to be high quality and it needs to be required. Consistency of instruction is paramount, and embedded coaches are there to support the teachers.

*(Here are links to more information about Jennifer Seravello and John Tapper):*

<http://www.jenniferserravallo.com/>

<https://www.cvedcvt.org/our-instructors/john-r-tapper-ph-d/>

Amy La Chance: For the past several years, teachers worked with interventionists to close the achievement gap, and they **DID** close the gap according to the data; then, the Interventionist position was lost.

Terry: There has been very high turnover in the BSD, and IC's are needed to help the new teachers. A huge number of skilled teachers have left the district.

Stephanie: The PD model we are working on is a one week readers and writers workshop to learn more about the Responsive Classroom. There are federal funds that will partially pay for the PD week. The EDC will help the IC's collect data at the end of the year.

LaShawn: We need to give the IC model three years; we need to follow a cohort of students to see what kids need and how it's working out. We need to be careful about what we choose and what changes we make.

Comment from Miriam E-Cating: Teacher-training model in Rochester, NY is very highly regarded. First year teachers are called "interns" and they are mentored throughout the year, with very few actual teaching assignments. Second year teachers are called "residents," with some more teaching responsibility, but still a lot of mentoring. Third year teachers are considered full-fledged professionals, but are still expected to engage in peer review and coaching.

One of the best ways to improve and develop is through embedded professional development; it needs to be peer-driven.

Many of today's teachers were trained in a time when students were different and teaching methods were different; this is why we need mentoring, peer-review and coaching.

I chose to coach with some reluctance, but then I thought, 'Imagine how big the ripple can be if instead of just teaching 1000 kids in my career, I teach one teacher who teaches 1000, and another teacher who teaches 1000...'

(Miriam cont.) There is a .5 grant secured for an ELL teacher at Sa and IAA, but everyone should have training in ELL. Professional development is happening at all times when someone is embedded.



Comment from Laura (?): My first couple of years as a teacher were very difficult. I needed a coach to help me through it.

**Question from SC:** Four IC's were hired, and grant money funds their salaries now; what happens when the grant money runs out?

Stephanie: There was a Proficiencies Coach at BHS, but the grant money from Nellie Mae ran out, so the BSD has gone to other federal funds to pay for the position. We don't know until May how much money we are getting from federal funds; there can be changeability in the amount.

There is something called Title 2A, which is a category of federal funding specifically to pay for coaches, and the money comes based on a formula. Coaches are named a strategy according to this funding...

SC: Is this because the schools were classified as being in need?

Stephanie: Yes, Burlington was classified as having "failing schools." The school improvement money was to be for coaches; it is a unique allocation of funds. We went from NCLB to Every Student Succeeds...there have been changes in funding.

**Question from Board about PD training for coaches:**

Terry: Jim Knight is training all the coaches. They go to 3-day conferences he holds and read all of his coaching books. There is time set aside regularly for coaches to meet, read chapters from his books and discuss them. There is constant professional growth and development. PD for coaches is paid for by federal money.

(Here are some links with information about Jim Knight):

<https://www.instructionalcoaching.com/>

<https://kucrl.ku.edu/jim-knight>

<https://www.cvedcvt.org/our-instructors/jim-knight/>

**Question from Board:** What do the Behavioral Coaches do? How are they different?

Laurie (?): They meet with Planning Room paras to look at data from office referrals. The behavior coach model is new; there is not as much training, or as many models, for this type of coach. They go into classrooms and they work with teachers.

Question from SC: Do they go to all classrooms?

Laurie: They only go where they are welcome. Some teachers do not welcome them.

The BC's are tracking feedback, but not all of it.

**Question from Board:** How are BC's more valuable?

Laura: Schools have lost Special Educators, and funding for Special Ed. There is a legal obligation in meeting IEP requirements, but funding is augmented, then cut.

Meg O'Connor, SA: My students are not getting their needs met.

Laura: There are not enough classroom teachers, and not enough special educators. There are 166 paras in K-12 in the BSD. Kids are identified more and more with disabilities; they get pulled out of direct instruction to another, lesser kind of instruction with less-qualified people, which compounds the problem. We need more behavior interventionists, more teachers, and smaller classes.

**Question from Liz Curry:** Is there a plan for measuring outcomes?

Stephanie: Repeats EDC/Nellie Mae evaluation info from earlier.

In the first year of the coaches, the plan is to develop a baseline. Coaches keep a log, and when teachers are finished doing a cycle with a coach, they do a survey.

It needs to be set up for three years, then we can establish measures.

**Question from Liz Curry:** When will student outcomes be tracked?

Coaches: When cohorts have been established. We also need to look at the Annual Snapshot, which includes proficiencies and PLP's at BHS, climate/culture, test scores, bullying and harassment reports...these are all part of the Annual Snapshot.

Talk of the bar graph shown at a previous meeting: something about Karen Fogle (?) and the Fountas and Pinnell literacy standards...the bar graph compared reading scores in BSD from Fall 2015 to Fall 2018 and scores went down.

Terry: Scores went down because experienced teachers left, and the district lowballed on hiring new teachers. They did not hire well. When more than 20% of kids are not able to be in Tier 1 instruction, you're in trouble. They go from Tier 1 to Special Ed. almost immediately, and it's partly due to poor Tier 1 instruction. We are not consistent across the district.

LaShawn: There is very little training for mixed grade classrooms, and no discussion around the philosophical basis for it. Teachers are trying to hone their craft, and they can't do it well with the shift to mixed grades.

[There is Board concern about the missing Special Educator at SA, and why it wasn't requested as an urgent need for next year.]

**Question from Keith:** How many teachers do you need, and how many do you have? Please tell us; these numbers don't make it into the report.

LaShawn: SA needs twelve classroom teachers; we have nine.

Comment from Keith: This is a magnet school, with great appeal through its focus on environmentalism. It really fits well with a lot of what Burlington is about. It should be drawing people in with common interests; you need to recruit more families, because this is your mission as a magnet school.

**Question from Liz Curry:** Would adding teachers at SA create inequality at other schools? If you compare it?

Meg O'Connor: It would only replace one inequality with another inequality.

Kathy: The high numbers in classrooms really needs to change; it did not used to be this high. 21, 22, 23 kids in classrooms from K-3 is simply too high a ratio. We need to reduce class sizes. Historically, this was not the case in Burlington schools.

**Question from Keith:** How are schools drawing people in?

PTO parents: We will be present in the next few weeks to show people around. We are trying to figure out how to get other families interested in our school, and it seems like we can't win the competition, like when another school in the District offers free pizza at the Kindergarten night...Do we need to offer free pizza?

Keith: It's not a competition between schools in our district; please don't see it that way.

*Motion to adjourn; meeting adjourned.*

Included here are "exit card" comments and questions. (SC)

1) What makes an Instructional Coach qualified to be an Instructional Coach? Who decides, and how?

2) Have coaching models in other states been reviewed? For example, a school district in Cincinnati, Ohio requires each teacher to "coach" for a 2 years, then return to the classroom. Does BSD have to have these coaches in place for a minimum of 5 years to know the model is effective?

3) During the voluntary PD week in June 2019, do coaches get paid? How much? Where does the money come from? If coaches get paid, why not teachers, since they are all technically teachers?

4) Does federal funding pay for all of the coaches' conferences with Jim Knight, and pay for the materials? Will federal funding pay for Jennifer Serravallo and John Tapper in June?

5) I feel strongly that a survey needs to be given to teachers so they can provide feedback on the coaching model.

7) I do believe that we as a district should be in the business of teaching children NOT training teachers. We are apparently a district that can not afford enough staff to teach the students who struggle. I feel the coach model would be great in a district that was overflowing with funds. We do not have that luxury and need "boots on the ground" staff- staff who work with students. We need more social workers , counselors and para educators. In my opinion the 18 coach positions

in our district should be eliminated, use master level teachers to mentor new teachers and principals to help teachers who need more instructional support. (my opinion of this is not personal, I like and respect the coaches I have met but it is a matter of prioritizing needs.)

7) We are Burlington and we should want the best for all kids. It shouldn't be either or. It should be everything that will engage all students and improve education.