

Engagement for Success: **Performance Coaches Collaborating for Success**

Overview

Innovation at a Glance

This Success Case highlights four performance coaches who enhanced their implementation of the GLISI Leadership Preparation Performance Coaching™ (LPPC) process and their coaching practices by forming a learning community to facilitate their work with aspiring and developing leaders from the seven Georgia districts served by the Oconee Regional Educational Service Agency (RESA).

Impact at a Glance

By working as a learning community, the four LPPC-trained performance coaches pooled their knowledge, skills, and resources, which resulted in promotions to leadership positions for four of the 14 candidates they coached in the GLISI Rising Stars aspiring leader program. Through their collaboration, the coaches also achieved a higher level of self-confidence in the five phases of GLISI's performance coaching process.

The Impact Story

Background/Context

The GLISI performance coaches worked with Rising Stars candidates from the six of the seven school districts in the Oconee RESA service area of middle Georgia. These districts have a high percentage of students classified as economically disadvantaged: Baldwin (60 percent), Hancock (86 percent), Jasper (61 percent), Johnson (72 percent), Putnam (71 percent), Washington (68 percent), and Wilkinson (77 percent). Predominantly rural, the districts have student populations ranging from a low of 1500 in Hancock County (three schools) to a high of 6000 in Baldwin County (six schools). The districts' tight budgets afforded limited opportunities to allocate resources for recruiting teachers and leaders outside the districts. Thus, it was imperative that they "grow their own" leaders.

In the 2006 school year, several of the superintendents in the Oconee RESA service area recognized the critical need for a systemic process that would assist them in developing high-performing leaders from within their districts. They wanted a

What are GLISI Rising Stars Collaboratives™? Rising Stars Collaboratives™ are GLISI-facilitated alternative leader preparation programs formed around partner collaboration. Partners may include school districts, RESAs, and/or universities. GLISI created the Rising Stars model in 2003, and funded by a grant from the U.S. Department of Education, expanded the Collaboratives statewide. By 2009, over 500 leaders statewide had taken advantage of this unique model of performance-based training.

What is the GLISI Leadership Preparation Performance Coaching Program™? LPPC was developed in 2005 with a grant from the Wachovia Foundation to support GLISI Rising Stars Collaboratives™ aspiring leader program. Distinct from the concept of mentoring, *performance coaching* includes analyzing performance factors and giving feedback against clear criteria. GLISI's LPPC program trains performance coaches who work within Rising Stars, university, district, and/or RESA structures to help aspiring leaders reach greater competency in less time.

process that would reduce the time to competency for aspiring leaders (and in some instances, current leaders) new to their positions. Working through Oconee RESA and in partnership with Georgia College and State University, the first cohort of a Rising Stars Collaborative™ (a GLISI program that provides on-the-job, real-time performance-based training) was created, consisting of nine aspiring leaders from four districts (Hancock, Putnam, Baldwin, and Wilkinson). A RS second Rising Stars cohort was formed in the 2007-2008 school year, which included 14 aspiring leaders from four districts (Hancock, Putnam, Baldwin, and Washington).

What Was Done?

Recognizing that performance coaching for the leadership candidates is an essential requirement of GLISI's Rising Stars program, the superintendents in Oconee RESA identified experienced and seasoned leaders to be trained in GLISI's Leadership Preparation Performance Coaching (LPPC) program. Each coach was assigned one or more aspiring and/or developing leaders and tasked with guiding, assessing, and supporting those leaders in the learning and practice of the high-impact leadership skills that are known to make a difference in student achievement.

First Cohort (2006-2007): During the first Rising Stars cohort, each performance coach executed the five phases of GLISI's performance coaching process independent of the other coaches. They coached candidates from different districts, but they utilized the same three GLISI Performance-based Modules as curriculum resources and planned and worked with their assigned leader(s) in isolation. The coaches frequently attended the university-sponsored classes with their Rising Stars candidates and occasionally discussed concerns or questions related to the performance coaching process with the other coaches after class. Having recently gone through the coaching training, they were not yet completely comfortable with the performance coaching process and these brief conversations were opportunities to compare thoughts and strategies.

Second Cohort (2007-2008): The second Rising Stars cohort in this area differed from the first cohort as there were no university-sponsored classes to attend because these candidates already held leadership certification. Therefore, the four coaches decided to develop a meeting schedule in which they would come together to share, plan, and implement a curriculum that would include authentic leadership experiences and activities for the candidates. Each coach was still assigned one or more leaders from different districts to coach, but the coaches began to model a team approach to leadership development by using their individual strengths, talents, and experiences to implement the curriculum and to meet the individual and collective needs of the candidates they were coaching. They scheduled a time to meet once per month to develop, refine, and update the Rising Stars syllabus and calendar for the year. One of the coaches commented that it was during the second cohort that "we scheduled training sessions as a collaborative of coaches where we networked to provide the best training for our candidates."

When the coaches began to meet and plan the syllabus and calendar together for the second cohort of Rising Stars, they realized that they became more effective performance coaches. They found they were better-organized, and that they had essentially created their own "support group" with whom they could share concerns – a recommendation in the original GLISI training. They worked together to select GLISI Performance-based Modules aligned with the needs and tasks expected of

each candidate in his or her current job. The coaches reached consensus on the requirements for the Performer Portfolio and they designed a plaque to present to each candidate (at a Board of Education meeting or other recognition event) to recognize successful completion of the Rising Stars program. The coaches worked with one another and the districts to request release time from the superintendents for the Rising Stars in the second cohort, which allowed the candidates to attend classes during the workday. Furthermore, the coaches maintained minutes at the monthly meetings and followed a Plan-Do-Check-Act format in their work together, just as they do with their candidates (a process taught in the GLISI training). They were available to support each other in addressing any issues arising during the year. One coach stated that discussions with the other coaches provided her additional resources and ideas for coaching, and she was able to learn from the experiences of the others, thus making her a better coach.

What were the Results?

As a result of the collaboration, the coaches felt that they were better able to follow the Plan-Do-Check-Act cycle and become more confident in the work of performance coaching. One of the coaches commented, “The fact that we were better-organized as a group also resulted in our being more effective in the individual work with the leaders we coached.” Working together allowed the coaches to pool their knowledge and resources to provide customized support and teaching. In addition, the coaches aligned the needs of their candidates to the appropriate performance-based work and also worked to align the requirements to provide consistent and specific feedback to candidates. The coaches took full advantage of the opportunity to work with one another to better complete the job of coaching aspiring leaders through professional growth and development.

What was the Impact?

The greatest value to the districts in the Oconee RESA region is that these coaches have assisted them in developing a pipeline of leaders equipped with the skills and knowledge that will allow them to “hit the halls running” when they are appointed or promoted to leadership positions. The action research projects which the coaches guided and supported the Rising Stars in the second cohort to implement resulted in a more focused attention on student learning in their schools and on the leadership competencies that can have the greatest impact on teaching and learning. One of the coaches stated that many of the projects emphasized a team-based approach for addressing improvement issues, which she believes resulted in the establishment of team-based protocols in the schools of these Rising Stars candidates. She also said that the assistant principals in the second Rising Stars cohort appeared to be more committed to being instructional leaders.

Ultimately, it is the future success of the four Rising Stars candidates that were promoted that will determine the value that these coaches have brought to them and to their districts. At the conclusion of the first Rising Stars cohort, only one of the nine candidates was promoted to a leadership position in his/her district, but the promotion rate increased among the participants in the second Rising Stars cohort. In an interview with the coaches, they stated that they believed it was the establishment of a more formal collaborative relationship among themselves that contributed to their success in better executing the performance coaching process during the second cohort. The coaches predict that more promotions will follow as opportunities open up in the districts.

Next Steps

The four districts in cohort two are continuing their participation in the Rising Stars program in 2008-2009, along with the four performance coaches who began this learning community. An additional coach also trained by GLISI has joined the group and she expressed her excitement for the opportunity to work collaboratively with these four veteran performance coaches.

The coaches have developed a schedule for their 2008-2009 meetings to once again design and execute a syllabus and calendar that is best for the aspiring/developing leaders to whom they will be assigned to coach. These coaches have demonstrated that they are accountable to each other as well as to the candidates and school districts they support. They will carry this sense of ownership for the success of each candidate into their work with the next cohort of Rising Stars.