

Math Coach Interview
January 2011
MIST WEBSITE

Before turning the tape recorder on:

1. Explain the purpose of the interview.

Thank you for taking the time to meet with me today. In this interview I am going to be asking you questions about your role as a coach, including how you work with teachers and the administration, as well as what supports have been provided to you as a coach. (If the coach is teaching as well, please remind her/him to respond as a coach, not a teacher.)

2. Consent Process: Please be sure to consent the participant if s/he has not consented before (see Interview Process document). In all cases, tell the participant:

Before we begin the interview, I want to remind you that participating in this study is voluntary and your responses are completely confidential. At any point during the interview, if you would like me to turn off the recorder, just tell me to do so. Do you have any questions about the study before we begin?

Becoming a Math Coach

1. How long have you been working as a coach? How long at this school?
 - a. What did you do before you became a coach? Where?

****Note to Interviewer: Only ask #2-3 of new coaches (new to study or new to position).***

2. How did you become a coach?
 - a. Who hired you for this position? What was the process?
3. How difficult was it to transition from a teacher to a coach?

Communication about the Role of Math Coach

I'm going to start by asking a few questions about how your position has been described to you by the district and the principal(s) at the school(s) you serve. Before I ask those questions, I want to clarify whether you work most closely with the principal or the assistant principal at your school.

[*Note to Interviewer: If the interviewee tells you another administrator is responsible for math instruction, ask about that person too (e.g., assistant principal). However, make sure you always ask about the principal.]

4. To whom are you accountable (e.g., district math leaders, principal, both)?
 - a. For what?

5. What are the district (math) leader's expectations for you in your role as a math coach?
 - a. How do district leaders expect you to support teachers? (*e.g., by modeling, coach cycle, providing professional development*)
 - b. Do district leaders expect you to work with teachers individually? With groups of teachers? Both?
 - c. How have these expectations been communicated to you?
 1. By whom?

6. What are the principal's (assistant principal's) expectations for you in your role as a math coach?
 - a. How does the principal expect you to support teachers? (*e.g., by modeling, coach cycle, providing professional development*)
 - b. How have these expectations been communicated to you?
 - c. *If the district and principal expectations differ, ask what do you do given that the principal's expectations differ from those of the district?*

7. *Only ask of coaches who are returning to a school.* How, if at all, has your role as a coach changed this year?

8. *Only ask of coaches who are new to a school.* This year, how were you introduced as a coach to the math teachers at your school?
 - a. How was your role described to the math teachers?
 - b. To what extent do the math teachers that you work with in your school share a similar view to you regarding your role as a coach?
 1. How do you know?
 - c. How did the principal (assistant principal) help teachers understand what your role would be?

9. *If the coach is/was a coach at another school in the past or the coach is in more than one school currently, can you explain how your role as a coach is (was) different across the schools you work(ed) in?*
 - a. Why do you think the roles are/were different?

10. *If a coach is also a teacher, how do you balance being a coach and a teacher?*
 - a. How are the roles different?

Vision of High Quality Coaching, Goals for Math Instruction, Vision of High Quality Math Instruction, and Assessment of Math Teachers

Now I'm going to ask you a few questions about your views on coaching and instruction, your goals for working with math teachers in your school, and for you to provide an assessment of the math teachers at your school.

11. What are your overall goals when you work with teachers to help them improve their instructional practices?

- a. Who or what has influenced you most regarding the goals you have set for teacher improvement?
 1. In what ways?
 - b. How do you know when teachers have learned _____ (*reference the coach's goal*)?
12. What are some major challenges that you have experienced in supporting teachers' learning?
- a. What do you see as the main challenges for teachers in using the curriculum effectively?
13. If you were asked to observe a teacher's math classroom for one or more lessons, what would you look for to decide whether the mathematics instruction is high quality?

**Notes to interviewer:*

- Probe on **depth/specificity** of response until you understand what the participant describes (e.g., If a teacher says "student engagement," ask "Engaged in what?").
 - Keep the **form/function** distinction in mind. Ask participants why they think _____ is important (e.g., Why do you think it's important for kids to work in groups? Why do you think it's important to hold a whole class discussion?).
 - If the interviewee talks about the **structure of discourse** (who's talking to whom and when) probe on **content** (and vice versa). If the interviewee says, "Teachers (or students) should be asking questions," probe to find out the kinds of questions the teacher (or students) should ask and for what purpose, as well as whether they conceive of discussion as happening in whole class settings and/or in small groups alone.
- a. What are some of the things you would expect to find the teacher actually doing in the classroom for instruction to be of high quality?
 - b. What kinds of problems or mathematical tasks would you expect to see the students working on for instruction to be of high quality?
 - i. Can you please describe a _____ [*use the word or phrase—e.g., "task" or "problem"—that the participant used for "task"*] that you would consider to be of high quality?
 - c. Can you please describe what classroom discussion would look and sound like if instruction were of high quality?
 - i. Would you expect to see the entire class participating in a single discussion, or would students be talking primarily small groups?
 - d. Is there anything else you would look for?
 - i. *If so*, what?
 - ii. Why?
14. Have your views on what you described as high quality instruction changed since you became a coach?
- a. In what ways?

15. To what extent do others in your school (math teachers, the principal) differ in their view of high quality math instruction from what you just described?
 - a. How do you know?

16. Could you give me an overall assessment of the quality of math teaching in your school in relation to what you just described as high-quality math instruction?
 - a. *(If coach describes any relatively accomplished teachers, ask)* In what ways do you make use of _____?

17. What are your expectations regarding how math teachers should adjust their instruction for different groups of students?
 - a. Do you have any specific strategies that you suggest that teachers use to engage different groups of students, for example English Language Learners and low-performing African American students, in math?
 1. *If so*, please give an example of a specific group of students (e.g., ELLs) and a strategy that you suggest.
 - b. To what extent do you see teachers making adjustments in their instruction for different classes or groups of students?
 1. Could you please describe things that you've seen teachers do that you consider particularly worthwhile or effective?

Coach Activities

Next I'm going to ask you some questions about what you spend your time doing as a coach, and specifically how you work with teachers.

18. What are the main types of activities on which you spend your time as a math coach?

****Note to Interviewer:*** Please probe on each of the activities listed below. ***Press for the content of each type of activity and the depth of interaction that takes place between coach and teacher(s).***

- a. Do you provide and/or organize school-based PD for teachers?
 1. *If so*, what types of activities do you conduct with teachers during PD?
 2. Can you please describe some of the activities that you do with teachers?
 3. What are the purposes of _____ (*ask about the activities that the coach tells you about*)?

- b. Do you observe math teachers in their classrooms?
 1. What is the purpose of your classroom observations?
 2. Do you follow-up with teachers after classroom observations?
 1. *If so*, what kinds of feedback do you typically give the teachers?
 2. Do you typically provide written and/or oral feedback?
 - a. *If written*, ask do you use a rubric or form?

- i. *If so, ask who created the rubric?*
 - ii. *Ask coach for a sample of what s/he provides.*
 3. Can you please describe a recent time when you provided feedback after the lesson?
- c. Do you ever model instruction in teachers' classrooms?
 1. Why do you think it is important to model instruction?
 2. How do you decide what to model?
 3. What do you hope the teacher will focus on while you model?
 4. Do you and the teacher talk about the modeling afterwards?
 1. *If so, can you describe to me a recent conversation you had after modeling?*
- d. Do you ever co-plan or co-teach with your teachers?
 1. How do you typically go about co-planning for instruction?
 2. If you co-teach, do you talk about the experience afterwards?
 1. *If so, can you describe to me a recent conversation you had after co-teaching?*
- e. Do you have regularly scheduled meetings with groups of teachers?
 1. Who leads the meetings?
 2. Who typically attends these meetings?
 3. What is **your goal** in bringing groups of math teachers together?
 4. What do you typically do in these meetings?
 1. *Ask coach to explain what they do in the meetings (e.g., lesson planning—Can you describe to me how you actually go about lesson planning? What does it look like?).*
 5. Does the principal or an assistant principal typically attend these meetings?
 1. *If so, what is the nature of his/her participation?*
- f. Do you work with all your teachers in the same way?
 1. Are there any specific teachers that you work with more closely?
 2. Can you describe what you do when working with these teachers?
 3. Who decides that you will work with a particular teacher?
 1. What is the reason for these decisions?
 2. Are there any teachers that you don't work with? *If so, why?*

Principal-Coach Relationship (including Support)

Now I'd like to ask you a few questions about your working relationship with your principal (and assistant principal).

[**Note to Interviewer*: Make sure you ask this set of questions about the principal. However, if the interviewee told you earlier that another administrator is responsible for math instruction, ask about that person too (e.g., assistant principal).]

19. How would you characterize your working relationship with your principal?
 - a. What does your principal do to support your work as a coach?
 1. Please describe any particular resources (e.g., time, money, materials, training, meeting space) that the principal provides.
 2. Does s/he organize the schedule so that you are able to meet with groups of math teachers?
 - b. What else would you like your principal to do to support your work as a coach?
 1. In your view, how feasible would it be for your principal to do _____?
 - c. Does your principal ever seek your help when making decisions about matters of math instruction?
 1. *If so*, please provide an example of when the principal sought your advice and what advice you gave.
 2. Does your principal ever ask you to help him/her interpret what he/she observed in a math classroom?
 1. *If so*, please describe a time when you did this with your principal.
 3. Does your principal ever ask you to evaluate or report to him/her about what teachers are doing in their classrooms?
 4. Does the principal ask for your help when deciding which teachers teach which classes?
 1. *If so*, how do you make these decisions?
 5. Does the principal ask for your help when purchasing instructional supplies for math teachers?
 - d. Have you experienced any challenges when working with your principal on issues of math instruction?
 1. *If so*, what have those challenges been? (e.g., *lack of resource/support from the administration*)
 - e. Do you meet with the principal on a regular basis?
 1. What is the purpose of those meetings?
 2. What do you discuss during these meetings?
 1. Do you ever discuss the progress that math teachers are making in terms of improving their instruction?
 - a. Do you ever discuss *why* some teachers are not making as much progress?
 - b. *If so*, what are the reasons why some progress more than others?

2. Do you ever discuss the content of teacher professional development sessions?
- f. Do you ever review or discuss the following with your principal? *Math Standards, Curriculum Frameworks, Test scores in mathematics, Student work in mathematics.*
1. *If so, what do you discuss?*
 2. Do you ever find that you interpret or use _____ differently than the principal?
 1. *If so, how do you resolve the discrepancy?*
20. Are there ever instances when you act as a mediator (share concerns) between the math teachers and the principal and/or assistant principal?
- a. *If so, can you please provide an example of when you recently did this?*
 - b. Are there ever instances when you share math teachers' concerns with the district mathematics department?
 1. *If so, can you please provide an example when you recently did this?*

District Supports for Coaches

Now I'd like to ask you some questions about the supports you've received from the District.

21. How has the district supported you to do your job effectively?
- a. Can you describe the professional development you have received in the **past year** and/or what you are currently receiving at the district level?
 1. What activities are normally part of PD?
(For each activity that the coach tells you about, ask for a concrete example and follow up with a question about what the coach feels was the purpose of that activity. If the coach does not talk about the activities listed below in #1-5, please ask about them directly. We are most interested in finding out the routines of interaction that characterize the PD in which the coach participates.)
 1. As a group of coaches, do you ever spend time on how to use the curriculum?
 - a. *If so, what do you focus on in the curriculum? (mathematical ideas, how to teach a particular topic, etc.)*
 - b. Please provide an example of what you did in a session when working with the curriculum.
 - c. In your view, what was the purpose of _____ *(use what the coach told you in 1b)?*
 2. As a group of coaches, do you ever analyze mathematical tasks or lessons in terms of the underlying mathematics?

- a. *If so*, please provide an example of what you did when analyzing math tasks or a lesson in a session.
 - b. In your view, what was the purpose of _____ (*use what the coach told you in 2a*)?
- 3. As a group of coaches, do you ever analyze the strategies that students use to solve particular math problem?
 - a. *If so*, please provide an example of what you did when analyzing student strategies in a session.
 - b. In your view, what was the purpose of _____ (*use what the coach told you in 3a*)?
- 4. As a group of coaches, do you ever spend time discussing how to work effectively with math teachers?
 - a. *If so*, please provide an example of what you discussed regarding how to work effectively with teachers.
- 5. As a group of coaches, do you ever spend time on strategies for meeting the instructional needs of low-achieving students? (e.g., supports for ELL students)
 - a. *If so*, please provide an example of what you did.
- b. Has the district provided any additional supports to you that you found particularly helpful?
 - 1. *If so*, can you please describe them?
- 22. Do you feel that you have been adequately prepared to support teachers in using the curriculum?
 - a. *If not*, why not?

Coach Networks

Last I'd like to ask you some questions about who or what influences the work you do.

- 23. Do you talk regularly with other math coaches, in addition to organized PD sessions?
- 24. To whom do you turn for help when you have a question about how to provide support to the math teachers in your school?
 - a. What role does that person play?
 - b. What do you typically talk about with that person?
 - c. Can you give me a specific example of a conversation you had recently with that person? How did you use that help/advice?

Closing Question

25. Is there anything else that I have not asked about that would help me better understand your role as a coach, including how you work with teachers and the administration, as well as what supports have been provided to you as a coach?