

District Leader Interview
Office of English Language Learners
January 2008
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 in the district, the Office of English Language Learners' role in the current middle school math initiative(s), and how the different units in the district office work together to promote instructional leadership and improvement in middle school mathematics instruction.

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?

Background

1. Could you tell me about your current position in the district?
 - a. What are your current job responsibilities?
 - b. How many years have you been in this position?
2. What did you do prior to this position?
 - a. Have you ever taught in the classroom?
 - b. *If so*, what subject(s)?
 - c. What grades?
3. Can you describe to me the various language groups in your district and how they are faring in mathematics, particularly in the middle grades?
4. Can you provide me with an overview of how the needs of English Language Learners are met in the district?
 - a. How do you expect schools to be organized in order to meet the needs of ELL students? (e.g., ELL class, inclusion of ELL students in mainstream class, etc.)

Mathematics Instruction

Now I would like to ask you some questions about your perspective on middle school math instruction, especially for ELL students, and supports your office provides for school leaders and teachers.

5. We are interested in knowing your view of what counts as high quality instructional leadership in mathematics, especially for ELLs.

- a. What do you think is important for middle school principals to know and do to be effective instructional leaders in mathematics for ELLs?
 - b. For example, if you were to go into a middle school, how would you know that there is high quality instructional leadership in math for ELLs?
6. Does your office hold middle school principals accountable for anything regarding ELL students?
- a. *If so*, what are they held accountable for?
 - b. Anything specific to mathematics education?
7. What sources of assistance or support does your office provide to principals to help them meet district expectations for ELLs?
- a. Do they receive any professional development on how to meet the needs of ELL students in the mainstream classroom, especially in mathematics?
8. Does your office offer any assistance or support to math coaches to help them meet district expectations for ELLs?
- a. Do they receive any professional development on how to meet the needs of ELL students in the mainstream classroom, especially in mathematics?
9. What are some of the challenges in developing instructional leadership for ELLs in this district?
- a. How is the district dealing with these challenges?
10. 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, **especially for ELLs**?

**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 in small groups?
- d. Is there anything else you would look for?
 - i. *If so*, what?
 - ii. Why?

11. What sources of assistance or support does your office provide to mainstream middle school teachers to help them meet district expectations for ELLs?

- a. Are any of these supports or assistance specific to mathematics instruction?
 - i. Do they receive any professional development on how to meet the needs of ELL students in the mainstream classroom, especially in mathematics?
 - 1. *If so*, can you please describe the content of these PD sessions?
 - 2. Who leads the sessions?
 - 3. Generally speaking, what are the teachers' responses to the sessions?
 - ii. Any other supports?

Relationships between District Units

Now I'd like to ask you a few questions about the relationships between units of the District Office as they relate to math instruction and about your contact with different groups of people in the district.

12. What are your office's major responsibilities in the district?

- a. Does your office have any responsibilities specific to mainstream middle school mathematics instruction?
 - i. Math curriculum (e.g., securing Spanish editions of a math curriculum)
 - ii. Translating information for parents

13. To whom do you report?

- a. On what criteria are you evaluated?

14. In general, how would you describe the working relationship between ELL and the following units:

- a. Curriculum and Instruction
 - i. In a district initiative around math instruction, how does policy for ELL fit with mainstream education?
 - ii. Does your office have any influence on policy for mainstream students in Curriculum and Instruction in math education?
 - 1. *If so*, in what ways?
- b. Leadership
- c. Research, Evaluation, and Assessment
- d. Special Education

15. Are you generally "on the same page" as other district units regarding decisions about middle school math instruction and instructional leadership?

a. *If not*, in what ways do you differ?

16. Do you participate in regularly scheduled meetings with:

a. members of other district units?

1. How often do you have these meetings?

2. What do you generally discuss or decide at these meetings?

3. What materials do you use in these meetings to help communicate expectations for instructional leadership or math instruction? (e.g., *curriculum framework, standards, student achievement data*)

i. *If they do use these materials, ask*, Do you generally find that you are using these materials in similar ways?

1. *If not*, can you give an example to help me understand how you were using _____ in different ways?

2. Were you able to resolve these differences?

A. *If so*, how did you do so?

b. principals and/or assistant principals?

1. How often do you have these meetings?

2. What do you generally discuss or decide at these meetings?

3. What materials do you use in these meetings to help communicate expectations for instructional leadership or math instruction? (e.g., *curriculum framework, standards, student achievement data*)

i. *If they do use these materials, ask*, Do you generally find that you are using these materials in similar ways?

1. *If not*, can you give an example to help me understand how you were using _____ in different ways?

2. Were you able to resolve these differences?

A. *If so*, how did you do so?

c. math coaches?

1. How often do you have these meetings?

2. What do you generally discuss or decide at these meetings?

3. What materials do you use in these meetings to help communicate expectations for instructional leadership or math instruction? (e.g., *curriculum framework, standards, student achievement data*)

i. *If they do use these materials, ask*, Do you generally find that you are using these materials in similar ways?

1. *If not*, can you give an example to help me understand how you were using _____ in different ways?

2. Were you able to resolve these differences?

A. *If so*, how did you do so?

d. groups of math teachers?

1. How often do you have these meetings?

2. What do you generally discuss or decide at these meetings?
3. What materials do you use in these meetings to help communicate expectations for instructional leadership or math instruction? (e.g., *curriculum framework, standards, student achievement data*)?
 - i. *If they do use these materials, ask*, Do you generally find that you are using these materials in similar ways?
 1. *If not*, can you give an example to help me understand how you were using _____ in different ways?
 2. Were you able to resolve these differences?
 - A. *If so*, how did you do so?

17. Is there anything that I have not asked that would help me better understand your role in the district, the Office of English Language Learners' role in the current district math initiative(s), and how the different units in the district office work together to promote instructional leadership and improvement in mathematics instruction?