



MATH COACHING MEMO

STUDY CONTEXT AND LEARNING QUESTIONS

This study elevated community insights from K-12 mathematics educators about their experiences with instructional coaching and potential inequities in access to and benefits gained from instructional coaching. Elevating these insights helps to identify equitable and sustainable solutions to address these inequities.



Learning Question 1:

How do K-12 public school math educators describe their past and recent instructional coaching experiences?

Learning Question 2:

How do K-12 public school math educators compare their instructional coaching experiences to their experiences of seeking or receiving other forms of professional development or instructional support?

METHODOLOGY

In November, ResultsLab invited math educators in the K-12 Practitioner Panels to participate in 30-minute Microsoft Teams interviews. Participants in the K-12 Practitioner Panels must have >51% Black/African American and Hispanic/Latinx students or have >51% of their students qualify for free or reduced lunch. After fielding an interest survey to establish a pool of potential interviewees, ResultsLab selected participants after considering distribution of participant demographics, school demographics, and professional experience. Priority was given to educators in densely populated states (Washington, California, Texas, Florida, and New York).

Eight educators participated in the study, including three middle-school and two high-school classroom teachers, with a range of 4 to 19 years of teaching experience. Five of the participants

identified as women and three identified as men. One participant self-identified as Hispanic or Latinx ethnicity, and self-identified races were reported as follows: 3 White, 2 Black or African American, 2 declined/unknown, and 1 Multi-race. Participants reported 8 different states of residence, including Alabama, Washington, Nevada, New Mexico, North Carolina, Virginia, Wisconsin, and the District of Columbia. Seven participants work at schools where 51+% of their students qualify for free or reduced lunch.

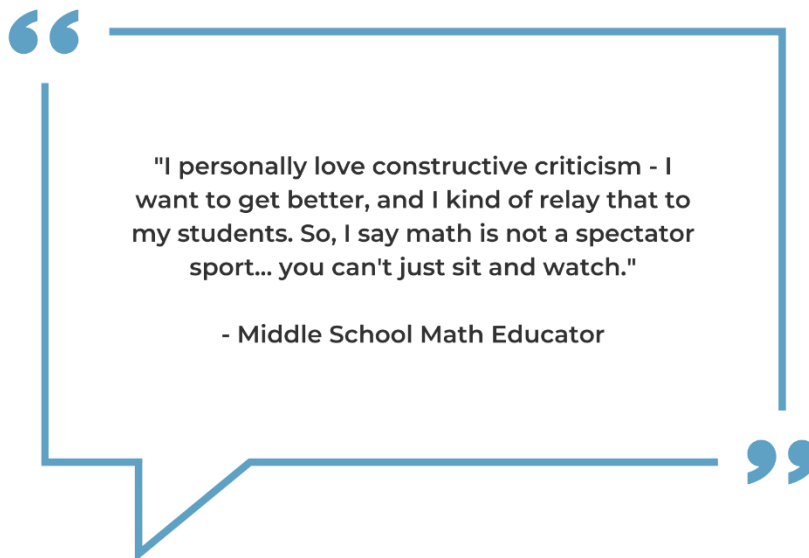
This study included additional eligibility requirements related to instructional coaching to ensure that selected participants would be reporting on recent experiences with instructional coaching and more likely to recollect details of their particular coaching interactions. Five out of the eight participants reported receiving their most recent instructional coaching during the current academic year (2022-2023), and the remaining three participants reporting receiving their most recent coaching during the prior academic year (2021-2022).

INSIGHTS



Learning Question:

How do K-12 public school math educators describe their past and recent instructional coaching experiences?



Participants in our study described a wide variety of recent experiences with instructional coaching. While many of the experiences were driven by mandatory or district requirements, the individuals charged with delivering the coaching varied widely, from dedicated district personnel, to part-time instructor/coach peers or data specialists, to outside coaching contractors.

Educators also described their instructional coaching engagements in varying contexts (both individual and small-group activities) and frequencies (single session vs. monthly). Positive sentiments among our participants centered around the value of an instructional coach's direct observations and specific

feedback, as well as opportunities for routine observation-feedback cycles being offered implemented in many schools.



Learning Question:

How do K-12 public school math educators compare their instructional coaching experiences to their experiences of seeking or receiving other forms of professional development or instructional support?

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"I'm shown how to adjust based on my population of students, because what may work for this group may not work for [another] group.

So my instruction coach has been quite helpful - I feel like every time I leave, I get something that I can go and implement the very next day."

- Middle School Math Educator
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In addition to the positive coaching experiences in general recalled by our interviewees, most participating math educators reported their coaching experiences to be just as much, if not more helpful relative to other recent professional development opportunities or interactions. A number of participants highlighted recent coaching interactions that were centered around reviews of math achievement data, noting the helpfulness of meetings to review successes and struggles of particular students in their classroom and discussions around strategies and opportunities to improve instruction for particular cohorts or at-risk student groups that educators wouldn't necessarily receive during other professional development events or in-service meetings.

Some participants expressed concerns about equity in the instructional coach hiring/selection process. For example, several participants indicated that their in-house coaching personnel were recruited from non-instructional staff, or with little or no prior instructional classroom experience. However, there were no explicitly negative comments concerning inequities or fairness in opportunities for coaching or in the direct interactions between coaches and educators. We discuss additional opportunities around this feedback below.

ADDITIONAL TRENDS AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

This study, as originally conceived, had a particular focus on drawing out inequities in the math instructional coaching experience. We anticipated that our voluntary panelist participants, under anonymous and confidential conditions, would feel comfortable sharing personal or professional experiences with workplace inequity. Although a number of participants expressed concerns with potential inequities in the recruitment, hiring, and training of instructional coaches, none of our participants explicitly mentioned or addressed inequity in either their instructional coaching experience narratives or responses to direct follow-up questions about equity/inequity in participants' interactions or engagements with instructional coaching professionals.

Given that our K-12 practitioner panel includes a number of active instructional coaches, we see additional opportunities to explore social and professional dynamics around the instructional coaching role and its broader impact on student math learning and achievement.

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