



The First Coaching Conversation: A Script for MQI Coaching

ABOUT THIS RESOURCE:

The following document is a sample kick-off coaching script used as a reference for introductory calls between teachers and coaches in the **Mathematical Quality of Instruction Coaching** project housed at the Center for Education Policy Research at Harvard University. Under the direction of Dr. Heather Hill, the purpose of the project is to develop and evaluate a teacher coaching program focused on developing teachers' common-core aligned instructional practices that will support students' critical thinking and raise their achievement in mathematics.

PURPOSE

This initial 45-minute conversation is focused on relationship building to work as a team, clarifying the coaching cycle process and the coach's role, and setting up goals and expectations for the work ahead. Throughout this document we've provided sample conversation prompts and questions; please feel free to use your discretion in choosing and adapting them for your conversations.

As the conversation unfolds, we advise paying close attention to cues about teachers' confidence in teaching math (e.g. "I was a math major," "I just moved from second grade to fifth grade and am a bit nervous about interacting with students around the new content," or "I signed up for this study because I feel more comfortable with literacy than math"), comfort level with filming their practice, or comfort level with discussing practice with a coach ("Will you be giving me specific things to do?" or "I'm so excited to talk about my practice with someone-I never get to do that"). Take notes on anything relevant in these domains, as they will inform your planning and interactions with the teacher in your working relationship. In this way, the coach's role is to individualize the professional development experience to meet teachers where they are rather than deliver a prescriptive program.

We have provided maximum time estimates for each section. There is no need to fill the whole time if the topic has been fully explored in less time! Every conversation is different.

OUTLINE FOR THE FIRST COACHING CONVERSATION

TOPIC	TIME
General Introduction	5 minutes
Background and Defining the Coach-Teacher Relationship	12 minutes
Connecting the MQI to Teacher Goals	10 minutes
Reviewing the Coaching Cycle	7 minutes
Introduce the CCASP Module	6 minutes
Scheduling and Next Steps	5 minutes



The First Coaching Conversation: A Script for MQI Coaching

1. General Introductions (5 minutes)

Goal: The purpose of this piece is primarily relationship building and information sharing, gathering the teacher's background and providing the coach's background to establish expertise and credibility.

Sample Framing: "Thanks for talking to me today. Before we get started, I want to let you know about some of the things I hope we will accomplish in this call. I hope we can learn a bit about each other, talk about the project generally and address any questions you might have, let you know a bit about myself and my role, and learn what you hope to get out of this coaching experience so that we can make sure this is most productive and relevant for you moving forward."

(a) Names, pleasantries (where you live, etc.)

(b) What you do and your background

- Teacher should say what grade(s) s/he teaches and amount of classroom teaching experience
- Coach should mention relevant experience, including background in math, math teaching, math coaching, MQI scoring, etc.

QUESTION 1:

PLEASE LIST RELEVANT EXPERIENCES AND BACKGROUND INFORMATION THAT YOU MAY DISCUSS WHEN INTRODUCING YOURSELF TO THE TEACHER.

2. Background and Defining the Coach-Teacher Relationship (12 minutes)

Goal: The purpose of this section is to learn more about the teacher's motivations, background, and comfort level, and to align expectations for participation in this project.

Sample Transition: "So, I'm hoping to learn a little bit more about you as a math teacher before we embark on this journey together. In this I'm hoping to get to know your background and interests so that we can set up a coaching plan that best meets your needs."

(a) Motivation for Participation in the Project

Questions for the teacher:

- Why did you volunteer to participate in this project?
- What do you hope to gain?

(b) The Coach-Teacher Relationship

Questions for both the teacher and coach to share:

- How do you see yourself (and your role) in this relationship?

Note: In describing your role, it's important to clarify the boundaries of the coach's work—this is a collaborative process rather than a strictly directive one. In addition, balancing your expertise with expressing an authentic desire to learn from others is helpful to building an open and trusting relationship.

Sample text for Coach: "The way I see myself in this coaching role is really as a collaborator to help you look at your practice and use the lens of the MQI to help you identify areas for growth. My role is not to tell you what to do but to help guide you through the process of gathering data, identifying opportunities for growth, and brainstorming specific strategies to try. Talking about practice is always inherently interesting and insightful for me, and I know that I always learn something new along the way."

- What should we know about each other to best work together (e.g. communication style, best way to reach me, internal vs. external processor, etc.)



The First Coaching Conversation: A Script for MQI Coaching

Note: It will be helpful to identify the processing style of the teacher. Some people like to think aloud before coming to a conclusion while others benefit from silence to think and process an idea before responding. Particularly because of the long-distance nature of the relationship, acknowledging and incorporating this upfront will help keep these conversations productive.

QUESTION 2: DESCRIBE YOUR OWN PROCESSING STYLE.

(c) Mathematics Teaching and the MQI

Note: Assessing the teacher's comfort level with math and math instruction will be critical to matching strategies and questions to the teacher's level of readiness to take next steps in their learning trajectory. That is, introducing different ways of thinking early on that are in opposition to the teacher's beliefs may close off the teacher to the process. For example, if a teacher strongly believes that students should never be re-directed to try a different strategy from the one they feel the most comfortable, you would not advocate for the teacher to stray from this approach in the first few coaching cycles.

Questions for the teacher:

- Is teaching math something that is comfortable/enjoyable for you?
- How confident do you feel teaching the content at your grade level?
- How did you feel about math as a student?
- Do you have any strong beliefs about the best way to teach math?

3. Connecting the MQI to Teacher Goals (10 minutes)

Sample transition: "The next thing I'd like to do is to hear about some of the goals for your own mathematics instruction that you identified after learning about the various dimensions of the MQI."

Questions for the teacher:

- When you learned about the MQI was there anything that stood out to you (either positively or negatively)?
- Do you have any questions for us about the instrument itself?
- Do you have the Goal Setting page that you completed after the training? These can certainly change over the course of the year, but I want to hear about what you are hoping to work on.
- Which in particular are you interested in keeping in mind as we begin to look at your instruction?
- Are there any that are related to or you would like to relate to things you are already working on, for example if you wrote professional goals for your school this year that relate to your math instruction?

QUESTION 3:
REFERENCE THE MQI COACHING GOAL SETTING SHEET, YOU WILL NOTICE THAT SAMPLE GOALS ARE PROVIDED FOR BOTH YOU AND THE TEACHER. HOWEVER, ONE CODE WITHIN THE CCASP DIMENSION DOES NOT HAVE A STATED GOAL, PLEASE WRITE ONE IN YOUR OWN WORDS.



The First Coaching Conversation: A Script for MQI Coaching

4. Reviewing the Coaching Cycle (7 minutes)

Sample transition: “This kind of goal-setting is something we will do regularly and incorporate into our conversations about instruction and your practice. We’ll be starting with the Common Core Aligned Student Practices domain in our work, and there will be flexibility to discuss other aspects of practice throughout. Before we zoom into the CCASP domain, I think it would be helpful to take a step back and take a look together at an overview of the Coaching Cycle process. I know it was mentioned at the teacher training, but it’s worth checking in on to ensure we have a shared vision of our work. Do you have your copy from the teacher training sessions?”

Question for Teacher:

- What questions do you have about the coaching cycle process? Would you like use to walk through it step-by-step? (Note: the teacher may have logistical questions about videotaping, meetings, preparation work, etc.) (Note: the teachers have an abbreviated version of the cycle - it does not list all of the resources you will be using to structure the conversation. Something they may want to add: teacher and coach will be scoring the stock clip on certain codes/dimensions)

QUESTION 4:

LIST TWO PEOPLE AND THEIR EMAIL ADDRESSES WHO YOU CAN CONTACT IF YOU DO NOT KNOW THE ANSWER TO YOUR TEACHER’S QUESTION.

5. Introduce the CCASP Module (6 minutes)

Sample Transition: “So, the MQI has a number of components we can look at, but of course we’re not going to study them all at once. As I mentioned earlier, we were thinking that a good place to start is the Common Core Aligned Student Practices domain, which looks at the degree to which students are participating in the math, whether verbally or engaging in demanding work. It’s a great starting point because it’s one that teachers are constantly working on all the time. We’ve seen a lot of really great instruction in classrooms, and even our most expert teachers say that there is always something to work on there.”

Note: If the teacher has expressed a priority for a dimension other than CCASP, you can acknowledge that along the way you will aim to identify and pull in threads to address the other dimension (ex. linking when introducing fractions or multiplication).

Question for Teacher:

- What questions do you have about the CCASP domain in particular? [Note: Teachers may need a quick refresher about this dimension and its codes.]
- Are there any codes which particularly interest you as we look at your teaching practice?
- Which teaching goal would you like to use as the focus for the first lesson of yours that we’ll look at together?
- What lesson will you be teaching in the next couple of weeks that may highlight that area of practice? We can use it for your first video.

QUESTION 5:

THE TEACHERS HAVE A COMPLETE VERSION OF THE MQI FOR WHICH YOU CAN USE IN YOUR COACHING CONVERSATIONS. HOWEVER, THEIR TRAINING FOCUSED ON THREE CODES WITHIN CCASP, LIST THE THREE CODES FOCUSED ON.



The First Coaching Conversation: A Script for MQI Coaching

6. Scheduling and Next Steps (5 minutes)

Sample Transition: “I’m really looking forward to working together this year. One logistical piece that will support our work is having a consistent hour set aside every other week to talk. In my experience, it’s really one of the most important factors in ensuring a productive and positive experience, but it’s also one that’s very challenging. Looking our schedules this year, it would be ideal to find an hour of what I call “sacred time.” That means it’s an hour every other week that is set aside for our conversations, and one we can confidently stick to without giving it away to anyone or anything else. Can you think of a time like that when you have access to a quiet and private space, away from interruptions and distractions? I know, that’s a tall order in the field of education!”

Note: While there may be planning periods in the school day, most teachers have expressed that these are less than ideal times because they are more easily usurped by last-minute meetings. After school, evenings, and weekends tend to be more consistently productive times for coaches and teachers.

QUESTION 6: WHEN (TIMES OF DAY) CAN YOU GUARANTEE “SACRED TIME?” WHEN CAN YOU NOT GUARANTEE “SACRED TIME?” WHERE IS THE BEST PLACE FOR YOU TO MAKE ALL YOUR COACHING CALLS FROM (E.G. OFFICE, BASEMENT OF THE HOUSE WHERE DOG AND CHILDREN CANNOT FIND ME)?

Sample Transition:

“So, before we talk on <insert date>, you will videotape yourself teaching a math lesson, keeping in mind your goals within the CCASP dimension of the MQI. I will then watch your lesson, thinking about these same things, and select two short clips within your lesson that we can talk about in more depth. If, after you film your lesson, you have a particular portion of your lesson that you are most interested in receiving feedback about, you can let me know and I will make sure to choose one of the clips from that segment. You can also email me with anything you want me to know before watching the lesson. I’m happy to hear from you either way.”

Final question for teacher:

- When do you plan to videotape and upload the lesson video for me to watch? I’ll need a few days notice before our next conversation.
- Do you have any questions on the videotaping process? Note: Coaches can facilitate technical questions with the MQI staff.
- What’s the best way to reach each other between now and our next conversation (text/phone/email)?
- Do you have any other questions for me? (Feel free to reach out via email if you think of things later.)

Sample Closing

“Thanks so much for talking with me—it’s been great getting to know you. I look forward to having many more conversations with you about math instruction!”

QUESTION 7: WHICH PART(S) OF THIS CONVERSATION SEEM LIKE IT WILL BE HARDEST TO FACILITATE?

QUESTION 8: DO YOU HAVE ANY QUESTIONS ABOUT THE FIRST MEETING PROTOCOL?