Assessing Secondary Teachers’ Algebraic Habits of Mind

In a new NSF-funded collaborative project between Boston University, Education Development Center, Inc., and St. Olaf College, researchers are developing a collection of instruments to assess secondary teachers’ mathematical habits of mind (MHoM). We define MHoM to be the specialized ways of approaching mathematical problems and thinking about mathematical concepts that resemble the ways employed by mathematicians.

Our work over the past decade has convinced us of the importance of MHoM for students and for teachers of mathematics, particularly at the secondary level. Our hypothesis is that teachers who not only possess strong content knowledge but also the habits of mind used by many mathematicians can teach in ways that result in increased student learning and achievement.

Recognizing the need for a scientific approach to investigate the ways in which MHoM is an indicator of teacher effectiveness, we are conducting a research study centering on the following question:

What are the mathematical habits of mind that secondary teachers use, how do they use them, and how can we measure them?

To investigate this question, we are developing a paper and pencil assessment measuring how teachers’ engage MHoM when doing mathematics for themselves and an observation protocol measuring the nature and degree of teachers’ use of MHoM in their teaching practice. In this session, I will report on the paper and pencil assessment, sharing examples of items and rubrics.

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