

LESLIE THORNLEY: How have you promoted a professional learning community around mathematics?

JAGUANANA LATHAN: Creating a space for collaboration and collective responsibility around student achievement, and ensuring every student learns at high levels. Um, we keep the focus on student learning and student achievement. Some of the areas in which we do that are the grade level collaborations where teachers meet a couple of hours every other week. And in that, some of the teachers are using a lesson study design model and they're going into classrooms, observing each other's work, looking at...planning together, planning lessons together, looking at student work, and then going back and revising from there. I see a lot of debriefing; teachers actually talking about the work that they've done and getting feedback from their colleagues, or from the math coach, or from myself. There are also whole staff professional developments every week. One in particular is dedicated to math, which is the math focus group. And from there teachers are able to...the small group of teachers that are working together are also doing lesson study and looking at problem of the month coming together across grade levels. So I believe it's like K teachers, first grade teachers, all the way to 6th grade teacher. And they use the same math problem that the teachers are able to work together across grade levels and looking at the students' work from the math problem of the month.

LESLIE THORNLEY: What, if you could...maybe you could spend a little bit talking about how the focus group got started at the summer retreat, and how the idea evolved, and just what kind of things you've seen.

JAGUANANA LATHAN: I don't remember all of it. Okay, so the math focus group met, well the focus groups met in August.

LESLIE THORNLEY: And the teachers decided which focus group that they would join.

JAGUANANA LATHAN: Yes. They decided which focus group they would join and during the time that they had to meet with the math coach, with you, they decided to do problem of the month; that was very important them, and the link to the critical thinking, that was a major focus of the school. And so the teachers felt like the problem of the month would help them get there, um, to help them meet the goal of students thinking more critically and more deeply about the content and about the mathematics.

LESLIE THORNLEY: So it was really...there was a lot of teacher ownership in terms of them choosing to be involved in the mathematics focus group versus the science or the art and music, and them collectively deciding on their own that they wanted to make problem of the month focus.

JAGUANANA LATHAN: Yes, yes. That was all teacher initiated, even the actual problems the teachers are choosing together, um, the different strands that they want to focus on.

LESLIE THORNLEY: What kind of feedback have you gotten from the teachers in terms of their involvement on the focus group, either formally or informal feedback?

JAGUANANA LATHAN: I think most of the comments have been around the collaboration, um, the camaraderie between the teachers looking at student work across the grade levels, and comparing what students are actually, um, how students are thinking about the math in the lower grades and the upper

grades, and what the progression looks like. So I've heard the different conversations about that and the lower grade teachers are really working on how to prepare students, so that when they get to the higher levels of the problem of the month and the upper grades, that they will have a foundation to work with and to work from. So I hear that quite a bit.

LESLIE THORNLEY: What are some trends that you are seeing with the mathematics in the live student work that we've looked at together, as well as some of the formative and summative data that we've looked at?

JAGUANANA LATHAN: Writing is developing more. I'm thinking more specifically of the performance based type assessments. You can really tell student thinking...

LESLIE THORNLEY: With the MARS task?

JAGUANANA LATHAN: Like the MARS task, yes. You can really see, um, students explaining their thinking, again the number -- using their numbers, and using their words, and using diagrams, and, you know, pictures. Um, so in that way it's developing.