

JAGUANANA LATHAN: So, as a school, we've been focusing on critical thinking and, um, and math. And looking at student work and actually listening and hearing students explain their thinking.

LESLIE THORNLEY: What kinds of activities have the staff been involved in to -- to make that a focus in -- in terms of what -- what's being evidenced in the student work and the teachers' understanding of critical thinking?

JAGUANANA LATHAN: Right. So, students actually explaining their thinking, use -- being able to use pictures, words, diagrams, at higher levels. Are students able to apply what they've learned from the content in, in everyday, um, work and in their mathematics work?

LESLIE THORNLEY: How is this different than the -- the focus from previous years?

JAGUANANA LATHAN: Well, I think the focus from previous years was basically trying to build to get to the point where we are now. We have a lot of growth to go, but, um, it was some "drill and kill," the math program that we had. Teachers were learning at that time how to engage students more in their -- in their thinking. And so, we're at a point now where that's more of a focus. There's no more "drill and kill." It's more, um, based on content, content knowledge. And how are students able to understand the mathematics? How are they able to explain the mathematics?

LESLIE THORNLEY: What have you seen as a result of mathematical professional development in your teachers?

JAGUANANA LATHAN: Content growth has been a big one. You go into the classroom and you can tell that teachers are really understanding the math and able to give that -- pass that information on to students and help students understand the content of the math. I've also seen a shift in pedagogy. The approaches that teachers are using are, um, more engaging for the students. There's a lot of research-based practices that foster inquiry for our students. Teachers are more confident in their ability to deliver lessons. So, when I walk into a classroom, it's -- it's no more, you know, nervous looks, you know, that "I don't really understand this." Where teachers are confident that they can go on and build off of what they already know. And they're helping their students explain and defend their thinking. The teachers are really modeling their thinking of the math, and therefore, the students are able to do that with their peers. And, uh, another thing are -- is that teachers are considering their self -- their selves learners now.

LESLIE THORNLEY: What specifically are you seeing in the classrooms that's keeping the kids more engaged in the mathematics?

JAGUANANA LATHAN: I see students working together in teams, doing a lot of pair-shares and, um, even [inaudible] sometimes. It's really the other partner listening to what the student is saying. And students getting -- using -- students working in groups is a big one, using chart paper.

LESLIE THORNLEY: What the kids are doing in terms of their -- their own content growth and understanding, what kind of shifts have you seen? And what do you attribute those shifts to?

JAGUANANA LATHAN: I think students are more confident in explaining their thinking.

They have more --

LESLIE THORNLEY: Go ahead.

JAGUANANA LATHAN: -- of a background of the content now. So, they're understanding the big idea. And if they don't understand the big idea, they're willing to work with partners, work with their teachers, in digging into the content so that they can understand it.