

## Education

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### Teaching the teachers

Instructors watch each other work to get ideas and spot areas for improvement.

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NORTHEAST GLENDALE — Wilson Middle School students Wednesday named types of quadrilaterals and proved Pythagorean's theorem in some of the lessons in Paula Jackson's seventh-grade math class, one of 12 stops for teachers from Toll, Rosemont and Roosevelt middle schools.

Every year for almost a decade, teachers have observed, inspected, recorded and shared everything they see in their peers' classrooms as part of an instruction and curriculum improvement program.

The program, Focus on Results, provides a framework for teachers to share the best instructional practices and identify areas of improvement, officials said.

"We're looking at instruction and what's taking place in the classroom," said Matt Dalton, a math and science teacher at Toll Middle School.

"Each time we meet, it's great because we get to refocus on what we're doing as a school, and refocus on where we're at, and address those issues."

Focus on Results encompasses every school in a systemic, behind-the-scenes operation that is Glendale Unified's engine of improvement, Supt. Michael Escalante said.

"Our profession is a process of continuous improvement," he said.

"If you sit back and don't allow for improvement, it's like not maintaining your home.

"Five years down the line, your house is in disrepair because you haven't done a good job of maintaining it, and it's far more difficult to catch up."

The walk-throughs were the last step of the process, which involves analyzing and cross referencing student data drawn from multiple measures.

Teachers divided their observations from student engagement to lesson objectives and identified "checking for understanding" as among the more nettlesome areas of instruction.

"It's the most impossible thing to do well for teachers," Ken Wolcott, an eighth-grade history teacher at Roosevelt, said to his team.

"Even if [students] say the right answers, you still don't know if they got it."

The most critical element is arguably selecting one problem area where teams of teachers work to enhance instruction and brainstorm outside aid opportunities in current research or development conferences.

In Wilson's case, administrators selected the Latino population, and the group's 44% proficiency level in math and 52% in English.

"We're helping Wilson to analyze evidence relating to their academic challenge," said Verjina Karnik, a math teacher at Clark Magnet High School, and a facilitator for the Focus on Results team.

"It's a goal in the direction of helping student learning and achievement."

Teachers observe and record what students are saying, what questions the teacher's asking all with the goal of making themselves and Wilson teachers better.

"All that evidence will help instruct Wilson [staff] to move toward improving the challenges they've identified," Karnik said.

"Even though we're here for Wilson, we'll all get something to take back to our own sites."

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