

Every week teachers all across the Wake County leave their individual classrooms to meet together in professional learning teams for one hour but what doing and how is it improving instruction. We're here at Jone's Dairy Elementary school to get some answers to these questions.

These fourth grade students in Mrs. Cynthia Major's class at Jone's Dairy Elementary school are learning about Geometry. Thanks to Mrs. Majors participation in grade level professional learning teams she is learning new teaching strategies and ideas to help ensure that all the students in her classroom understand the concepts being taught. Having one hour a week to discuss such topics with other fourth grade teachers is helping them all become more effective in the classroom.

One thing that we're working on right now it's geometry if we can sit down and talk about it everybody here to gets an idea of the places Oh I never thought about doing it that way with my students. And it's giving us time to listen to other teachers that what she is working on it was difficult specialization this year teachers in all the way county schools gather once a week for an hour to me by grade level or subject area and professional learning teams--also known as PLTs. After their students have been safely loaded on the buses or picked up by their parents, the teachers have time to meet together without distractions to discuss ways to improve instruction. Principal Mike Chapel says having this uninterrupted time is invaluable to his staff "In an elementary school uh... teachers are with their children all day long with the exception of one forty five minute period that they may be in music or art class. That's the only time that they have to actually be away from the students and those are like grade level meetings or to run of copies. It's the mechanical things that they have to do mechanics that they have to do to keep the school running. It's likely the time in the afternoons is devoted just to discussing the students in discussing they'd have to work out for team meetings that conversation is focused on discussing data and instruction and follow a fairly structured agenda regardless of grade level we generally start our meetings up with kid talk which gives us a really great opportunities to talk about individual students in our classroom you know students who are struggling students who are excelling and different things that we can do to better meet their needs on and that's a really great opportunity for us on one of their biggest resources we have is each other I mean you know we've got a great bunch of colleagues here and to be able to draw on that and not be rushed on that. I have a question you know to really get to focus on that has been really wonderful I think.

Following kid talk, teachers usually focus on the data they have collected. Well if you see this child, for example, that you anecdotally think that this child is not progressing like you think they would you go in and actually crunched the numbers and you give them pretest, posttest, Blue Diamond. Another area that we use in order to perhaps we have talked you can give a Blue Diamond assessment in grade three, four, and five and a teacher can very quickly see how many of the people in the class grasp the concepts that we need to and how many didn't. It may be that they need to re-teach a piece of it. The staff at Jones Dairy Elementary say having just trying to focus on students and data is improving the instruction being delivered at their school which in turn is benefiting their students. I know that the things that my colleagues have given me has helped make me a better teacher. And it has given me wonderful lessons that I've used in my class in that I wouldn't have otherwise come up with and that you know especially if you have something that you've teacher and any of your children just aren't quite getting it. If they can give you a new idea and I mean for me at that lots of great new lesson plan ideas for different things that have definitely help my students with concepts that right now that otherwise have well from one year to the next last year just using last year's better in the greatest of last year we were up almost nine percentage points in just about everything we did here and I do attribute a lot of their directly back to the fields each time that we had last\ year well this year it's even more focused and more accessible to us because we have these Wednesday afternoon. I would venture to say the we certainly hope to see improvement because we're able to focus in on those children that needed help we are able to spend the time talking about them and what we can do to help them and that's the piece out of that I think they are going to come out for. For parents and family wanting to know more about what actually takes place in their schools PLTs giving answers is fairly simple. I guess the easiest way is to ask the classroom teacher because we're all in those meetings every Wednesday and can easily share that information on the telephone with you and how we use it and how it benefits the students. We have since the very first PLT since the July the 8th we have archived it on our website under PLT news. We have each grade level do a summary of what they've done that particular Wednesday and we post that on our website so if you click on that our website click on field three news you'll see the latest installment of what we did that last Wednesday.