



BUENA PARK SCHOOL DISTRICT

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PRESS RELEASE

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CONTACT: Raymond Mendoza
(909) 374-1534

Buena Park School District Boosts Math Learning Skills through New Instruction, Partnership

BUENA PARK, CA – Buena Park School District is revamping its curriculum and bolstering support through a partnership with University of California, Irvine that puts doctoral students into classrooms to observe and share feedback for improving instruction, and through its popular Math Academy, which challenges students to apply real-world scenarios to boost understanding.

Now in its second year, the Math Academy focuses on small group breakout sessions and fun activity-driven lessons in grades three through five, providing individual coaching and Cognitively Guided Instruction (CGI) for student-centered teaching.

The UCI partnership, which launched this school year, allows three doctoral students to regularly visit Whitaker and Gilbert schools to observe and report on math lessons while providing instructional support to classroom teachers.

The Math Academy, supported by Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER II) Funds, is a three-year program created to reduce class sizes during math instruction. More than 1,240 students participate in the program across the District. The UCI partnership is a three-year grant funded by the William T. Grant Foundation to support K-12 schools in improving in-class math lessons.

Using CGI, the Math Academy aims to teach students how to use their own knowledge of math to nurture thinking, rather than relying on algorithms. The Academy provides students with rigorous and structured one-hour math lessons that include warm-ups, problem-solving time, counting by large groups of numbers and quizzes.

“CGI is based on almost 40 years of research about children’s thinking – it’s about building understanding of student thinking,” Orange County Department of Education Math Coordinator Dr. Jody Guarino said. “We then use that student thinking to drive instruction.”

Guarino provides the District’s Math Academy teachers, and all elementary teachers, with regular professional development training to teach them new and insightful ways to engage with their students, including new listening methods, connecting on a social-emotional level, teaching grade-appropriate lesson strategies and promoting equity for genders and people of color.

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The District's partnership with UCI not only provides support for math teachers during class sessions, but also provides feedback based on in-class observation to improve future lessons.

The UCI team also works with families by holding community talks to showcase everyday ways they can teach math – such as buying food at a grocery store, finding batting averages during Dodgers baseball games or using fractions with ingredients while making dinner.

“Buena Park School District is really pushing to evolve math standards and our Math Academy and UCI partnership are amazing new examples of how we're staying ahead of the curve for the benefit of our students,” Superintendent Dr. Ramon Miramontes said. “We're making sure our students are more active in math instruction so that they adapt and understand. Meanwhile, our teachers are constantly improving and making their lesson plans better.”

PHOTO CAPTIONS:

MATH1: Fourth-grader Jed D. gets help with a word problem from Emery School teacher and Cotsen Fellow Arla Little during a Math Academy lesson.

MATH2: (Left to right) Corey School fourth-graders Stella D., Madilyn C. and Emily M. discuss which math problem solution they believe to be the most useful during a Math Academy lesson.

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