Teachers learning together: Teachers' collaborative conversations as a resource for learning

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In the United States, teaching is an isolated profession. At the same time, ambitious forms of teaching have been shown to benefit from teacher collaboration. What is it about collegial conversations that supports teachers' ongoing professional learning? In this presentation, I synthesize findings from prior studies on mathematics teachers' collaborative conversations, focusing my analysis on collective pedagogical reasoning. I examine four facets of collegial conversations that support refinements in this reasoning. These facets are: interactional organization, engagement of individual teachers in a group, epistemic stance on mathematics teaching, and locally negotiated standards of representational adequacy. Together, these aspects of teacher talk differently organize opportunities for professional learning.

Ilana Seidel Horn is an Associate Professor of Mathematics Education at Vanderbilt University. She focuses on ways to make rigorous mathematics accessible to students, particularly those historically disenfranchised from school. One line of her research specifies the practices of equitable teaching. What do teachers need to do to teach students effectively? Her other line of work inquires into pre-service and in-service teacher learning, with an eye toward making teacher education at both levels more effective.

Lily Orland-Barak is the present dean of the Faculty of Education, University of Haifa. Her research focuses on professional learning, mentoring and curriculum development in the context of teacher education. Her work has been recently conceptualized in her book Learning to mentor-as-praxis: Foundations for a curriculum in teacher education (2010), published by Springer.