**Ways of Talking**

The way we talk in schools is critical to professional community and, therefore, student achievement. To develop shared understanding and be ready to take collective action, working groups need knowledge and skill in two ways of talking. When conversations are organized for a purpose, there is a point of deliberation about whether the conversation is focused on deepening understanding (dialogue) or making a decision (discussion):

**Dialogue:**

* Group members seek to understand one another's viewpoints and deeply held assumptions.
* Group members inquire into their own and others' beliefs, values, and mental models.
* Listening is as important as speaking.
* Group members suspend judgment in order to understand the thinking of others.
* Collective understanding leads to shared goals and shared practices.

**Discussion:**

* Group members make decisions that have examined effects of proposed actions and solutions.
* Discussion includes problem-solving, planning, and decision-making.
* Group members exhibit flexibility and capacity to consider a "balcony view."
* Skills for productive discussion include generating ideas, organizing ideas, analyzing ideas, and deciding among alternatives.
* Discussion includes sustained critical thinking, careful consideration of options, and respect for conflicting points of view.1

**Reflection**

How might these two lenses support professional community and adaptivity in your organization?