Handout H2.1
Dialogue Versus Discussion: Two Ways of Talking

	Dialogue	Discussion
Definition	"Dialogue is a reflective learning process in which group members seek to understand each other's viewpoints and deeply held assumptions." (Garmston & Wellman, 1999, p. 55)	Discussion is a form of discourse by which group members seek to present different views about a subject and reach agreement and make a decision or choice. (Senge, 1990, pp. 244-246)
Intention	Understanding	Decision making
Root	Greek *dia-*, "through" + *logos* " the word": making meaning through words	Latin *discussus* "to break up" or "to smash to pieces"; similar roots as percussion, concussion, discus; connotes a hurling of ideas
Skills Required	Suspend judgment; monitor internal experiences; practice collaborative norms	Detach; think critically; practice collaborative norms; advocate
Examples	"An assumption I have is that our own instruction is really the biggest factor influencing student learning." "Help me understand how you are interpreting the data."	"I think we have to do something about our writing program." "I don't think there is anything wrong with our writing program. Nobody can write with the kind of pressure these kids feel."

Adapted from Robert Garmston and Bruce Wellman, 1999, *The Adaptive School: A Sourcebook for Developing Collaborative Groups*. Norwood, MA: Christopher-Gordon Publishers, Inc. Used with permission.

Questions for Discussion

1. What is the difference between dialogue and discussion?

2. When have you experienced each?

3. When might our team choose discussion? When might we choose dialogue?

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