Deciphering Off-Task Talk
Chavez, R., Langer-Osuna, J., Gargroetzi, E., Munson, J., Lange, K.
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How Off-Task Talk Functioned to Support Student Access to Collaboration

Functions	Definition
Warm-up to collaboration	Off-task interactions that mark the beginning of the collaborative activity and function to support initial connection and interactions with peers so that students can begin work as a group.
Gain access to collaboration for self	Off-task interactions that enable a student who was previously not participating in the collaboration to enter and begin mathematical work with the group.
Recruit others to the collaboration	Off-task interactions that bring one or more students who were previously not participating into the collaboration and lead to joint mathematical work.
Gain the attention of others	Off-task interactions that get peers to look at or turn toward the speaker and give the speaker the opportunity to engage in conversation.
Resist domination	Off-task interactions that serve to ignore or deflect efforts by a peer to position one group member as more powerful than the rest.

Questions to Ask When Listening to Off-Task Talk

Ask Yourself:	Look and Listen For:
Are students trying to get into the collaboration?	- Where the materials are located. Are they bunched by one student, or central? - How students' bodies are positioned. Are they facing one another, or is someone getting the cold shoulder? - Calling one another's names. Are they trying to get each other's attention? - Someone clearly on the outside of the work and talk. Is anyone being excluded and not getting in?
Could students be taking ownership of the task?	- Negotiating whose materials get used. Are students trying to include everyone's work? - Negotiating roles. Are students trying to figure out what role each person can play?
Do students believe that they are finished?	- No attempts to get back to work, especially at the latter part of the work period. Is the off-task talk sustained? - Declarations of being finished. Are they saying they are done, or asking if there is anything else to do?

Gargroetzi, E.C., Chavez, R., Munson, J., Langer-Osuna, J.M., and Lange, K. (in press). Can off-task be on-track? *Phi Delta Kappan*, May 2019.