

Leaders in Mathematical Thinking

Christine Suurtamm - Enhancements in Learning

>> I think that sometimes people are looking for a silver bullet. So if only we did this, everything would be better. And it's just not that simple. Teaching mathematics is complex. Enhancing professional learning is complex. All of these things take time. We need people to develop their own ideas. There is nothing we can do. I mean, it's somewhat like the student who would come to me the night before a calculus test -- "Okay, we've got the test tomorrow, I don't need to understand this, just tell me what I need to do to be able to pass." And it's not like that. It wasn't like that in calculus, and it's not like that in terms of enhancing math education. It's complex, and it takes them a while. But to kind of twist that question around, one thing that is interesting me lately in terms of something that I'd like to pursue for research is that in secondary schools, there's been a lot of talk about something called "spiralling the curriculum," which is sort of doing a little bit of different strands and ideas in the curriculum, and then sort of repeating them. That would be an interesting thing, I think, as a research study, because I find that across the province, people are doing it in very different ways, and interpreting in very different ways. And we don't really have any research that talks about its effectiveness. So that would be something that would be interesting to kind of pursue, because I see it happening. I think the power of teacher-directed professional learning, with all of these nine different schools that are part of this project, I really see a lot of excitement in those schools that really the teachers in the project took on what it is that they wanted to work on and developed. I find their language changes, their pedagogy has changed, and the way they even think about students has changed. So I think there's a lot of power in terms of professional learning when teachers decide themselves what kinds of things they want to enhance.