

Teaching Concepts

Authentic Contexts

To be an effective and efficient problem solver and lifelong learner, skills must be practiced again and again in authentic problem context.

There is an old saying that it takes an entire village to raise a child. Business and community partners can be especially helpful in providing authentic problem solving contexts. Experts in the field can provide resources and information about strategies they use in solving problems they encounter. Students can then research a relevant problem using real data, and begin to make decisions and recommendations. It is important that students be exposed to the **multiple perspectives** of as many stakeholders in a given situation as possible; stakeholders are those people directly affected by the issue. There may be short- and long-term benefits and costs associated with any decision.

When requesting information or assistance from business and community agencies, **be specific**. Chances of obtaining useful information will be greatly increased if you or the student state exactly which materials are needed, in which issues you are interested, or what questions you want answered. If students wish to interview an expert, they should generate a list of questions and their reason for asking. All pertinent questions can then be mailed. The teacher should get permission before having students call in their questions or requests. Allow plenty of advance time if planning to schedule a speaker or expert for collaboration.