Relevance and Community

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Relevance and community are two of the dispositions highlighted in this course.

Relevance relates to the way the mathematics at hand is perceived as relevant to the individual doing the mathematics. In this manner, relevance is ultimately determined by students rather than teachers. Relevant mathematical experiences connect to the places and lived experiences of students which may often be distinct from the experiences of teachers.

Community refers to the sense of connection and trust that develops when groups of individuals engage in meaningful activity over time. Community doesn't necessarily happen as a matter of course, but more often must be deliberately developed through careful design and facilitation of experiences aimed at bringing students together.

Relevance and community can be fostered in classrooms that position students as active participants in meaningful mathematical inquiry. For example, during a unit on the statistics process, students might investigate screen time habits by collecting and analyzing data from their peers. As they move through the statistics process, they engage in mathematics that directly relates to their daily lives. Through discourse, they compare findings, justify choices about which data displays best represent their results, and consider different perspectives. This shared mathematical experience builds community while reinforcing the relevance of statistics as a tool for understanding the world around them.

By intentionally designing mathematical experiences that are relevant to students' lives and fostering a collaborative community, we help students see the purpose and possibilities in mathematics and strengthen their ability to engage in it together.

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