

# ON BEING A FACILITATOR:

## THE ROLE OF THE TEACHER IN *ALIEN RESCUE*

As the classroom teacher, your role in *Alien Rescue* is that of a facilitator. Students take the lead in determining the tasks they must complete in order to develop a solution plan; your job is to support them as they engage in these tasks. The following suggestions should give you an idea of ways you can interact with students to facilitate their work during *Alien Rescue*.

- **Allow students to determine what they need to know in order to develop a solution.** In most instructional activities, it is the teacher who sets objectives and determines how these objectives will be met. *Alien Rescue* is designed so that, in the course of their work, students realize they need certain skills and information. They are the ones who determine what they must learn.

- **Encourage students to use the resources within *Alien Rescue* to find the information they need.** Much of what students need to know to develop a solution can be found within the program. When they realize they lack skills or information they need, they may be tempted to turn to you immediately for help, asking the familiar question “What do I do now?” However, *Alien Rescue* provides an excellent opportunity to encourage students to be self-reliant. When students ask questions, don’t provide the answers. Instead, ask them what they have done to try to find the answer on their own, refer them to their classmates, or guide them through questioning to find helpful resources.

- **Ask questions designed to get students to articulate their reasons for needing particular information.** A frequent question heard in schools is “Why do we need to know this?” Usually it is a student doing the asking. *Alien Rescue* gives you the opportunity to turn the table on students, and have them explain the value of particular skills and information. This also helps students to see knowledge as a tool that can be used to accomplish tasks and solve problems.

• **Encourage discussion and debate among students.** Successful work during *Alien Rescue* depends on students providing each other with information and ideas, and catching each other's mistakes. During whole class discussion and presentations, encourage students to review and critique the information presented.

• **Don't be passive.** Just because you are not taking charge of students' work does not mean that your role is not an important one. In fact, you are the one who is going to turn a rich opportunity into a successful learning experience. Ask probing questions, engage students in one-on-one discussions about their process and understanding. Bring interesting facts into class discussions. Encourage collaboration. Support students who are having trouble by brainstorming with them ways they can address their difficulties. Simple questions like "What are you working on? Why are you doing that? How are you doing that?" can get students to articulate their ideas and processes. Your involvement will make a huge difference in the quality of students' experience in *Alien Rescue*.