# Exploring Engagement

I found several blogs I read recently that reminded me of the need to be continually examining teachers' impact on student engagement and engagement's impact on student achievement.

In a post titled **Active' Student Engagement Goes Beyond Class Behavior, Study Finds**, Sarah D. Sparks reports that engagement is more than behavior and includes emotion and cognition.

She cites a study that examined three areas of school engagement:

• Behavioral engagement, including how often the student completed homework on time, followed school rules, and responded in class discussions;

• Emotional engagement, including whether the student felt interested in his or her class subjects and accepted in the school culture;

• Cognitive engagement, including how well the student managed and monitored his or her own learning.

The study illustrates the complexity of engagement.

"……giving students more choices and control over their schoolwork did not improve their motivation or make them feel more academically competent unless the choices were **aligned with the students' personal interests**. "Opportunities for decision-making or freedom of action are less important than the extent to which the decision-making and action opportunities available reflect personal goals, interests, or values.

Dan Meyer poses a challenge when sharing a survey where 38% of teacher respondents said that students who are uninterested was the greatest limitation to their teaching of mathematics. He suggests it's like firefighters saying that *"fires are the*

*limiting part of the job…creating student interest is the job of teaching."*

If you follow Dan's blog and videos you know that he constantly shares his own and other teachers' examples posing math problems that catch student interest.

Here's a good example of a math problem redo:

In a blog titled ***Unengageables***, Dan shares three strategies he uses in math that I believe certainly have application in any content area.

#1 Model Curiosity- He suggests pulling facts and figures not necessarily a math connection. What's the highest temperature recorded in Alaska? What does the average American wedding costs?

#2 Ask students," What questions do you have?"- show students a visual or a video clip and have them write down a question. This models and encourages intuitiveness.

#3 Practice estimation often- begin with more concrete problems, collect student guesses, highest/lowest and then share the answer.

Bill Ferriter takes a look at technology and motivation in **Technology is a Tool, Not a Learning Outcome:**

Ferriter suggests that teachers may mistakenly see technology as the motivator. He states that students are…*"motivated by opportunities to make a difference in the world; they are motivated by opportunities to ask and answer their own questions; and they are motivated by opportunities to learn together with like-minded peers."*

Summer is a great time to be thinking about how as a teacher you can create the curiosity that might trigger the student engagement that drives learning. Enjoy pondering.