

COGNITIVE ENGAGEMENT SCENARIOS

Scenario #1

John Smith High School has recently deployed a student engagement survey to begin an intervention to increase student engagement. When you visit the school, you notice:

- Few teachers are greeting students at their door during passing period.
- Students are actively participating in on-topic group discussions.
- Teachers seem to be more like authoritarian figures, barking orders in the halls.
- Students can recite answers, but seem to have difficulty summarizing their learning in their own words.
- Teachers report that students oppose writing in math class, asking “Why are we doing this, this isn’t English!”

The results of the survey were eye-opening. Some of the stand-out results include:

- My teachers treat all my friends fairly. (38%)
- My teachers respect me as an individual. (42%)
- When learning new information, I try to put the ideas in my own words. (21%)
- When learning things for school, I often try to associate them with what I learned in other classes. (27%)

Scenario #2

During an observation of Mrs. Harvey’s Science class at John Smith High School, you notice:

- Some students loudly exclaimed “This is boring!”
- Student conversation is not allowed.
- Classroom tasks involve rote memorization—no novelty or authenticity.
- Student writing consists of note-taking and cloze-style worksheets.

Responses of note from the student engagement survey for Mrs. Harvey’s students include:

- My teachers treat all my friends fairly. (38%)
- My teachers respect me as an individual. (42%)
- When learning new information, I try to put the ideas in my own words. (21%)
- When learning things for school, I often try to associate them with what I learned in other classes. (27%)

Scenario #3

Sally Doe, a student in Mrs. Harvey's Science class at John Smith High School, was willing to sit down for a short interview with you. During this interview, she revealed:

- "In this class, it's all about memorizing stuff to pass a test. It's just not interesting to do the same thing every week."
- "I don't really get what Mrs. Harvey wants from us. I thought this was a science class, not English. She tries to get us to do some writing every once in a while."
- "Mrs. Harvey is normally using her computer when we come into class. I feel like she doesn't even notice me until she calls my name during roll."
- "We never get to talk or do group projects in this class. I learned a lot more in my science class last year because I got to talk to people more often."

A small sample of Sally's responses on the student engagement survey reveal her perceptions:

- My teachers treat all my friends fairly. (3 out of 9)
- My teachers respect me as an individual. (4 out of 9)
- When learning new information, I try to put the ideas in my own words. (2 out of 9)
- I try to think through topics and decide what I'm supposed to learn from them. (2 out of 9)