

## STUDENT ENGAGEMENT

# For The Love of Learning

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## Tags

*All Grades*

**Teacher  
 Collaboration:  
 When Belief  
 Systems  
 Collide**

**What I Love  
 About  
 Teaching**

**How Do We  
 Know When**

For schools, what is our pearl of great price? Last week, I had the opportunity to learn at the feet of a great man, Jeffrey R. Holland (1). He was the president of BYU while I attended there, so I also feel some sort of connection. Actually, I was translating from English to Spanish for about a thousand people in the audience. And even though I was busy translating, a few things stuck in my mind during the process; I suppose you could call that learning.

Anyway, I would like to recount one of the stories that he told and relate it to what we educators do. While I cannot remember exactly the words that he used, the following is the gist of the story.

A humble farmer was out working in his field and uncovered a large, perfectly formed pearl (no, this is not the Steinbeck version). He rejoiced in his discovery and was in awe about the transcendent beauty he saw in that pearl. He concluded that since the pearl was so beautiful the whole world should be able to look on it and rejoice in its radiance and that he would be terribly selfish to keep this wonder to himself.

As a result, he sold all that he had in preparation to put this pearl on display for everyone. It occurred to him that the pearl deserved a box worthy to demonstrate its beauty. He made a box out of fine hardwood, engraved it with many beautiful designs, encrusted it with gold, silver, and jewels and placed a beautiful blue velvet cloth on the inside. The man then placed the pearl in this box and put it on display for everyone to see. Thousands came from all the neighboring cities and viewed the display.

After three days of hearing the same thing from every visitor, the former farmer was so disillusioned that he decided to stop displaying the pearl and never display it again. For three days, without fail, each visitor after seeing the display would comment on the beauty of the wood, and the fine carving and filigree, or comment on the ingenious design of diamonds and rubies decorating the outside of the box, or even commented on the beautiful velvet within. The old man overheard long conversations about the origin of

**Students Are Engaged?**

the wood, or who the artist was, and was even questioned about where similar beautiful velvet could be obtained. But never once did any visitor comment on the beauty of the pearl.

**Making Connections**

I happen to work at a school that is beautiful. We have, for the most part, great facilities and wonderful grounds. I thought about this story and wondered, "If Southside High School is the beautiful box then what is the pearl?" I asked some of my staff this question. One replied, "the staff," another said, "the students" and a third said, "learning." While I cannot disagree with all three of their opinions, I think perhaps, there is an even more fundamental pearl.

What gets overlooked in the conversations about data, budgets, and copy machines? I feel that the pearl of Southside High School and perhaps all high schools is a simple but profound idea that gives life to all of the school facilities and programs that support it. The pearl, in my opinion, is a belief that knowledge must be shared and that it has the power to transform every student willing to embrace it.

Thousand of students each year witness the display and enthusiastically describe their school in terms of the box -- not recognizing the true pearl for what it is. This allegory can also be taken down to the classroom level, even to each daily lesson. I believe that as students are allowed to embrace knowledge rather than just listen to it, participate in learning instead of witnessing it, and discover truth instead of filling in the bubbles, students will begin to truly value the real pearl of each lesson, each classroom and each school.

If your classroom is the box, what is the pearl you are trying to display?

**Source:** [www.edutopia.org/blog/love-learning-pearl-story-ben-johnson](http://www.edutopia.org/blog/love-learning-pearl-story-ben-johnson)

**Links**

**1** [en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jeffrey\\_R.\\_Holland](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jeffrey_R._Holland)

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