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Title: The influence of affect on participation in problem-solving activities.

Authors: Schneider, Alfred Franz, U Georgia, US

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Abstract: An investigation of the influence of affect on participation of high school students in mathematical problem solving activities was conducted over a period of two school years. During the first year the focus of the study was on mathematics problems 51 algebra students selected on their own from given problem sets. These problem sets consisted of 22 problems with three different degrees of difficulty. Students were not told which problems to do, but were only required to earn a minimum number of points that were associated with each problem. The focus during the second year of the study was on participation in problem solving activities that were mandatory. Observations about and questionnaires of 119 students were used for finding out what factors caused students to engage or disengage in mandatory problem solving activities. Of the three categories of problems that were offered students selected primarily the easiest type of problem to earn the minimum number of required points. More difficult problems were clearly avoided. The more difficult problems were also immediately

rejected or eventually abandoned when they were mandatory, unless the teacher intervened with strategies that reduced the emotional arousal experienced by students. Since predominant beliefs, attitudes, and emotions of many students revolved around aspects that were not school or mathematics related, problem solving activities were perceived only as low-level plans and were therefore abandoned when a major emotional arousal occurred, unless external interventions counteracted these pre-existing trends. The teacher became the primary intervention agent in the dynamic interplay between students and problem solving activities. Although the teacher did not have any direct control over reaction patterns of students about problem solving activities, indirectly he had an impact on participation in problem solving activities by responding in certain ways to students' emotional status. The response patterns of the teacher evolved out of events that were repeatedly experienced when interacting with students. A variety of arousal patterns were found and appropriate intervention strategies were suggested and compared with objectives and goals of NCTM publications about problem solving. (PsycINFO Database Record (c) 2012 APA, all rights reserved)

Subjects: *Emotional States; *High School Students; *Mathematics Education; *Problem Solving; Teacher Student Interaction

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