



# Passion-based Learning



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## Overview

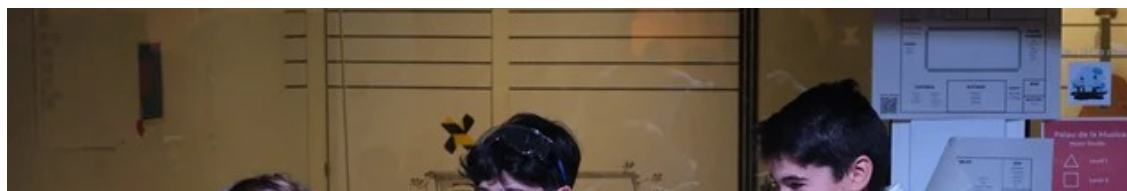
The image of learners working on their own individual projects, guided by their passions rather than standards, probably sounds idealistic.

If you've been a teacher long enough, you've certainly come across the term passion-based learning. The term has trended and, like many other educational fads, has largely faded away, as curricular standards, mandated testing, and institutional constraints have all crowded it out.

Yet, passion-based learning is indeed possible, even within a structured curriculum, and its value far outweighs the challenges of negotiating space and time for it to happen.

In a passion-driven classroom, learners develop the critical and creative thinking skills, autonomy, and intrinsic motivation necessary to be agile candidates in the job market and successful in whatever pursuit they may follow.

Read on to find out more about what passion-based learning is and how you can make it work in your community.





## **What is passion-based learning?**

Passion-based learning is an approach that focuses on engaging students by allowing them to explore and learn about topics they are passionate about.

This method shifts from a traditional, standardised curriculum to a more personalised, student-centred experience, where learners have significant control over their learning journey.

## **Why is passion-based learning important?**

Passion in learning contributes to a richer, more effective educational experience and better long-term outcomes for students. It aligns with students' intrinsic interests, making them more engaged and motivated. When students are passionate about a subject, they are more likely to put in the time and effort needed to master it. This intrinsic motivation leads to deeper involvement and sustained interest, which are essential for deep learning.

When learners are passionate about what they are learning, they are more likely to think creatively and try new things. They are not just trying to meet basic requirements but are inspired to explore new ideas and solutions. This creative exploration is a skill that will serve them for life.

It may become a part of their approach to problem-solving and a method for finding deeper enjoyment in tasks, both in school and in daily life. Creativity is a skill high in demand as we move towards a more automated, AI-driven future and will be a vital skill for any candidate entering the job market.

Engaging in activities they are passionate about can significantly improve learners' mental and emotional wellbeing. It provides a sense of purpose, reduces stress, and increases overall happiness and satisfaction with their educational experience. Moreover, students learn to persevere through difficulties when working on something they care deeply about. This resilience is an important life skill that helps them handle future challenges in their personal and professional lives.

Passion of learning promotes deeper understanding by encouraging students to explore topics in depth. They are more likely to ask questions, seek additional resources, and engage in critical thinking. This deeper engagement leads to a more thorough understanding of the subject matter as students go beyond surface-level learning.

Passion-based learning cultivates a lifelong love for learning that extends beyond the classroom. Learners who learn to pursue their interests and passions are more likely to continue learning throughout their lives. This lifelong learning is crucial in a rapidly changing world where continuous education and adaptation are necessary.

## **How to grow a passion for learning**

Growing a passion for learning involves creating an environment and mindset that foster curiosity and a love for learning. Allowing learners the space and time to engage with their learning and dive deep into topics that interest them will give learners the time they need to better understand what motivates and excites them about learning.

One of the most valuable ways to spark a passion to learn is to encourage curiosity. Encourage students to ask questions about the world around them. Create inquiry-based learning opportunities and

encourage students to investigate and discover answers on their own. Design learning experiences that foster curiosity and engage different learning methodologies. Making learning fun and engaging by encouraging creative expression through arts, music, writing and other creative projects.

Some young learners might be excited by a nature walk, which allows them to engage in hands-on exploration of the world around them. Others' might be more inspired by play-based learning experiences. You can encourage children to grow their passions by incorporating play and creativity into their learning.

In the Imagine building block at our Eco Hub, for example, learners are invited to imagine and create anything they'd like related to one of their interests. During one Imagine block, a learner created a functional prototype of flip-flops from cardboard. She measured her feet, sketched a design, and then cut and coloured until, after many iterations, she had a prototype that worked.

Another day, she spent time creating a drawing of the clouds above her head. Then she used bits of rolled up paper and dabs of glue to affix 3D raindrops. She made a frame for the drawing from construction paper, sticks, leaves, pipe cleaners, and stickers. Part of the success of Imagine is that it boosts learners' creativity through access to a treasure trove of materials, from traditional art supplies to found objects, the kinds of materials this learner used for her 3D drawing and flip-flops.

As much as possible, it is important to connect learning to personal interests. Tailoring learning experiences to individual student's interests and strengths can make learning more relevant and exciting for them. Wherever possible, allow learners to incorporate their hobbies and interests into their projects and assignments.

One way to do this is to offer students options in what and how they learn. Allowing students to pursue projects and topics of their choice gives them a powerful sense of control over their learning. This can increase their investment in their education, help develop a passion for

learning, and create intrinsic motivation which will propel them forward towards truly autonomous learning.

An environment of collaboration and social learning supports passion-based learning. Collaborative projects allow students to learn from each other and gain different perspectives. Creating opportunities for learners to teach each other reinforces their own learning, helps them build confidence, and fosters a low-risk learning environment where failure can be seen as an opportunity for deeper learning.

An important piece of the puzzle is creating a learning environment where teachers guide from the side, and use their expertise to create engaging learning activities where learners can navigate their own learning experiences. The teacher can provide valuable mentorship in this role, offering advice, scouting resources, making suggestions, creating collaborative learning opportunities, and providing constructive feedback and support to help students navigate challenges and stay motivated.

Moreover, creating a mentorship programme that pairs students with teacher mentors who can guide and inspire them in their areas of interest is one more way that teachers can shift to a support role rather than driving learning from the front of a classroom.

By implementing these strategies, educators can help students discover and cultivate their passions, turning learning into a joyful, lifelong pursuit.

## **How does passion-based learning happen at Learnlife?**

At the Urban Hub, secondary learners have the chance to take a building block called Studios each cycle. Based in our maker spaces, these studios include coding, music, sport, woodworking, cooking, art, multimedia, fashion, and a recently added studio on plastics recycling.

Studios allow learners to engage with a wide range of learning

experiences and to tap into their own creativity in hands-on ways. They provide learners with appropriate tools and the expertise of a learning guide to help guide them as they engage with their learning.

For learners who need more space and time to tinker, experiment, and engage their creativity, there is a building block called Open Path. Open Path gives learners a block of unplanned time to explore any path of interest they want. Some learners use this time to upskill, teaching themselves technical skills such as photography, video editing, sewing, music, or fine art, to name a few.

The learning guides that oversee Open Path time create regular activities that might spark learners' interest. These can be as simple as drip painting techniques or using leaves and plants to create textural stamping. In addition to hands-on learning opportunities, visits from experts and entrepreneurs provide learners with real-world insights and inspiration and show learners how people turn their passion into a rewarding job.

Learning guides survey learners about what they want to learn and try to bring in experts who can help them develop skills or inspire passions, beyond the learning guides' own expertise. Recent visitors have included a DJ who led a workshop on building a sampled track and an entrepreneur who's grown a chain of successful coffee shops. Participating in these workshops is always optional for learners.

One of the key success factors in Learnlife's passion-based learning programme is the development of a growth mindset among all learners from primary to secondary. Learning guides show learners that abilities can be developed through effort and practice, and encourage them to view mistakes as learning opportunities rather than failures. Recognising and celebrating effort and progress, not just achievement, encourages a growth mindset.

At Learnlife, learners are supported throughout their journey through regular mentoring. They are encouraged to set meaningful and personal learning goals that are challenging yet achievable. Learners regularly

reflect on, review and track these goals in a number of ways including journaling, reflection and 180 and [360 feedback processes](#) each cycle. This work of goal setting is helpful to keep learners motivated and aware of their progress, as well as to help them reflect on their passions and new ways to grow them.

It is vital to model lifelong learning with our learners. Learning guides share their passions with learners and show enthusiasm for learning new things themselves. This helps learners see that learning is a lifelong process.

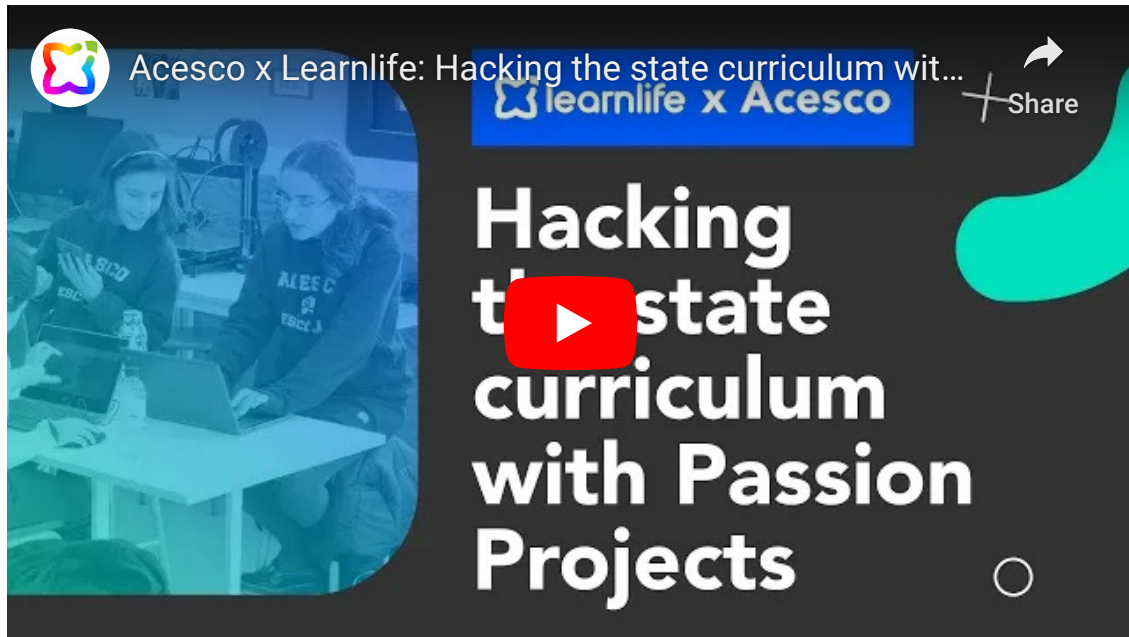
Learning guides are not afraid to share when they don't know an answer, and they're eager to take on new learning experiences alongside learners, especially as they guide learners through passion-based projects. In both hubs, learning guides foster a positive learning environment where learners feel safe to express their ideas and take risks.

## **Hacking the State Curriculum with Passion-based Learning**

Many educators tell us they're interested in launching passion-based learning in their community but worry about the mandates and constraints of state guided curriculums.

Through our work with Acesco School in Catalunya, we have proven that a creative approach can make it work. [In his book](#), Devin talks in detail about the project, about the work it took to create a vision and make it work within the school's curricular framework and for their specific needs. He also talks about the step-by-step process the teachers went through to ensure that their vision was executed properly, and shows how design thinking is essential to the process.

Check out the video below to see how Acesco made learning come alive for their learners through [our custom designed training programme](#).



## In Summary...

Passion-based learning aims to create a more engaging, meaningful, and effective learning experience by tapping into what students are genuinely interested in and passionate about. This approach not only enhances academic learning but also helps in developing critical life skills such as creativity, critical thinking, problem-solving and self-directed learning.

Passion in learning transforms the learning experience from a passive receipt of information to an active, engaging, and deeply fulfilling journey. It prepares students not only for academic success but also for a rewarding and adaptable life in an ever-changing world.

## Valuable resources on learner autonomy

- [Learning Methodologies Unpacked: Passion-based Learning](#)
- [Learnlife-Acesco Hubling Partnership - hacking the state curriculum](#)



- [Hacking the State Curriculum with Passion Projects](#)
- [The Future Will Not Be Taught](#)
- [Passion Based Learning Training for Schools](#)

## Growing passion-based learning in your school

More and more schools are looking for guidance on how to re-ignite the spark of passion in their classrooms.

We have the pleasure of sharing our experience to help schools integrate passion-based learning in a way that's tailored to their unique goals and has school-wide impact.

We've trained hundreds of teachers in schools worldwide, guiding them in creating a learner-centred culture where learners and educators balance freedom and accountability.

If you're interested in growing passion-based learning at your school, [we'd love to hear from you](#).

## Elements of the Learning Innovation

Check out some further resources from our Elements of Learning Innovation - an agile roadmap for supporting transformation in education.

- [Passion Based Learning](#)
  - [Deep Learning](#)
  - [Play-Based Learning](#)
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