

## Youth Advisory Council - Paradigms & Possibilities Series

### AUTHOR INFO



From: Boise, ID

5 emojis that describe me:



"My best learning experience ever was Biology Club. We dissected some cool stuff, like gophers and ducks, and did lots of bird watching and got to feed the tank full of super awesome fish."

"I'm curious to learn more interesting, blow-your-mind facts. I love knowing crazy and hard to believe things about the human body, animals, the world, etc."



**PASSIVE VS. ACTIVE LEARNING & LEVEL OF ENGAGEMENT:** I want to look at why students are always taught in the "traditional" ways, like taking notes, teacher lectures, writing essays, taking exams, doing worksheets, reading out of a textbook, etc. I also want to see if "untraditional" ways of learning are just as effective, like labs, hands-on activities, experiments, field trips, demonstrations, real-life scenarios, real-world projects, etc.

Not all students learn the best by taking notes, listening to lectures, or reading textbooks. And there are lots of students who don't like tests/exams, or just aren't good test-takers. I also think students get bored when they are not actively engaged in their learning (like me). And when students are bored, they don't have motivation to learn and grow. In my experience, what needs to shift is the way of learning and the students' level of engagement/hands-on learning that happens in our education.



### KEY RESOURCES:

- [Why choice matters to student learning](#)
- [To engage students, give them meaningful choices in the classroom](#)
- [The secret of student motivation: Motivation is a choice](#)

## CONSIDERING DIFFERENT APPROACHES

Giving students the choice about the tasks to perform, ways to report, and learning goals improved results and engagement. It helps them feel ownership.

Motivation can be fueled by extrinsic motivators (rewards, praise, grades, punishment, shame), but the long-term goal should be to develop intrinsic motivation (enjoyment, satisfaction, and purpose) resulting in more meaningful learning.

In one example that worked well, a teacher gave her students the choice of the context for the math warm-up problem they would be doing at the beginning of class. The results were great - the students were more engaged in the warm-up problem and tardiness decreased.

In another example, that didn't work as well, a teacher gave students the choice of what set of problems to work on, depending on difficulty. The students were bored and tended to pick the easy ones that weren't challenging them.

I learned from these examples that not all choices that are presented to students will motivate them in their learning. It can all depend on little details of the choice being presented, like if there are too many or too few options, if the students understand the choice and how it's important or relates to them, if they feel separated because of their individual choice or not, and how big or small the choice is.

**INTERVIEW QUESTIONS****GATHERING IDEAS FROM OTHER YOUNG PEOPLE...**

Are you more likely to take a class if it's hands-on learning rather than traditional learning?

- Yes. Hands-on.
- Not necessarily. It depends on what I want to learn about, it depends on the subject. Like painting would need to be hands-on, but like psychology, it doesn't matter.

What class have you taken that had good student engagement in the learning process?

- Photography
- French, most of my classes are pretty good at engaging.

What things would you like to see in classes that would make learning more engaging?

- Group or partner learning
- Projects. I like projects more than assignments.

Do you think students learn better when they are actively engaged?

- It depends on the person. Hands-on is for me, but it might not work for someone else.
- Yes. If you're not actively listening or being in the class then you're not going to learn.

