

Real-World Engagement Guide





Overview

As humans, curiosity is our natural state. We're born eager to explore, ask questions, and discover what's possible. This instinct is the key to a lifelong love of learning—and it soars when paired with purpose.

Kids are driven to understand their world, build skills, and find their voice. When they know their ideas matter, they feel empowered to learn, grow and use their ideas and skills to make a difference in their communities and beyond.

What if learning nurtured this innate curiosity and prioritized discovery, inspiring kids to pursue their interests as they master real-world skills?

Too many schools focus on rote learning and memorization. True learning comes when kids engage in deep exploration of topics they care about to solve problems that matter to our world.

This guide has two sections to help you move towards deeper learning: practical steps to enhance your current approach and strategies for transforming learning with project-based experiences.

Strategies You Can Try Tomorrow

Tip 1: Focus on your students' interests

Make a list of all the things your students love. Use those interests as a way to create a hook for a lesson or connect a skill to something that feels relevant to them.

Tip 2: "Let's Learn" board

At the start of the year, have kids write down all the real world things they want to learn about and post them to your "Let's Learn" board. Try to incorporate those interests into reading choices, discussion and enrichment. Star or check off topics as you cover them.

Tip 3: Taking sides

Pick a question with clear differing perspectives. Have students present an argument for both sides of the issue and then engage in a debate.

Tip 4: What If...?

Pick a real-world object and ask questions about how you could improve it? How could we make it work better, easier to use or expand its use in other ways?

Tip 5: Set and reflect on goals

Set goals for real-world skills kids want to learn related to careers of interest.

Tip 6: Other choices

Offer a time each day or week where students can go deep and explore areas of interest.

Tip 7: Connect to current events

Connect learning to current events that are impacting their lives. It can be school events, community events or even world events. Start small by making space each day to just discuss current events and then refer back to them when you naturally see connections in learning.

Tip 8: Create a career wall

Create a wall of careers kids want to learn more about. When you learn something new ask students which careers of theirs they think that learning, skill or topic could apply to and why.

Tip 9: Organize a field trip

Take students on a virtual field trip. Zoos, museums, shows, performances, community theatre, and other organizations offer live virtual field trips, some are free. If you don't have the budget to book a live virtual experience, find a virtual field trip on YouTube (there are hundreds) and make an event out of it. Make popcorn, tickets, and hold a viewing party.

Tip 10: Share your "why"

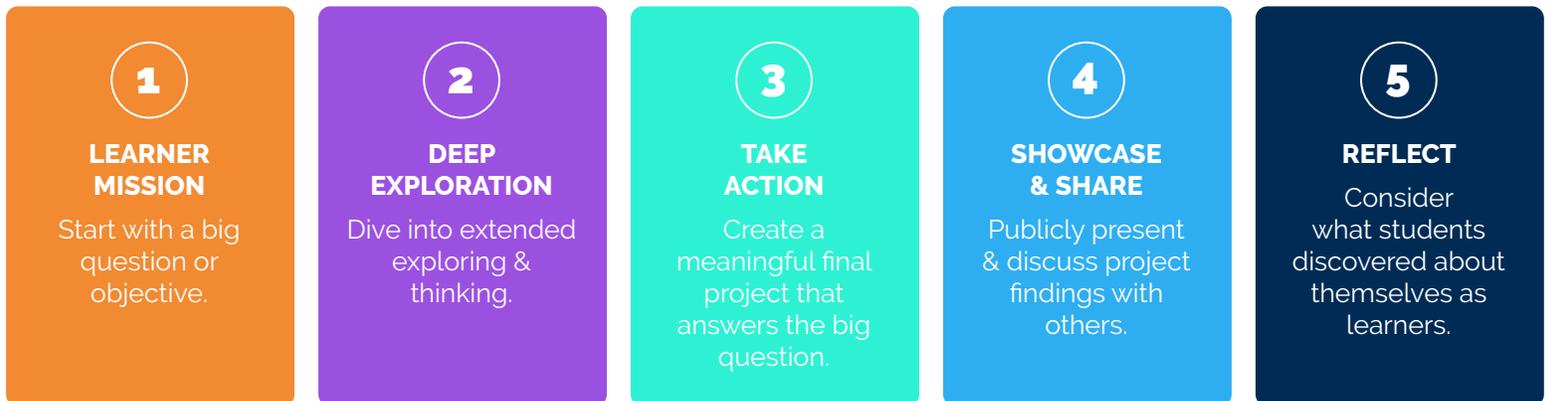
Kids want to build a relationship with you and want to know why you think learning a topic or skill matters. Show them why it matters to you personally or the value you see in the learning. Share about your life and why something like a project about protecting the rainforest matters to you.

PART 2

Project-Based Learning: A Deeper Learning Strategy to Help Transform Learning

Deeper learning brings curiosity and purpose back to education. It goes beyond memorizing facts, focusing instead on real-world skills like critical thinking, collaboration, and communication. The key is merging fun, purpose, and challenge. Project-based learning (PBL) is a powerful way to achieve this.

Components of project-based learning:



Projects engage students to go deep for a period of 4-6 weeks.

How to integrate PBL into your program

You can easily add projects into your science or social studies time or easily turn a writing unit into a project-based unit. Using a curriculum? Adapt an existing unit so it's framed around a mission and culminates in a project.

At Rock by Rock, we design projects that empower kids to use their strengths and passions to make a difference—for themselves and the world around them. Here are some of the steps we take to plan our projects. You can do the same thing in your learning environment.

Project-Based Learning Quick Start Guide

Step 1: Pick a Topic: What is something you want to learn more about? Examples:

Video Games

Weather

Food & Plants

Animals

Step 2: Identify your “Mission:” What is one meaty question you want to answer about your topic? *(Ideally the answer will lead to a project that helps others in some way.)*

- **Video Games:** Should we play more or less video games?
- **Weather:** How can we best prepare for a natural disaster in our community?
- **Food and Plants:** How can we reduce food waste and help address hunger?
- **Animals:** How can we save an endangered species?

Step 3: Deeply explore your topics. (Plan materials and resources)

- Research the topic through books, articles, videos, podcasts.
- Use science experiments and hands on activities to deepen and extend learning.
- Engage in discussion and debate to grapple with big ideas surfaced during learning and form a perspective for the final project.

Step 4: Pick a final project to take action and complete your Mission. Take Action Projects could include:

- **Podcast:** Record a podcast teaching others about your topic. Then create a slideshow of images to play along with the podcast.
- **Graphic Design:** Create an advertising campaign to promote your solution.
- **Picture Book or Comic Book:** Create a picture book to raise awareness about your mission and solution through a story.
- **Song:** Write a song to teach people about your topic.
- **Mural:** Create a mural to illustrate your problem and solution.
- **Exhibit:** Design a hands-on museum exhibit.
- **Prototype:** Develop a prototype that solves the problem.
- **New Story:** Create a news story to raise awareness about your project.
- **Public Service Video:** Produce a public service video to rally the community around your solution.

Want support bringing deeper learning to life—igniting engagement and saving time?



Try Rock by Rock for FREE for one month.

Our easy-to-use content platform has dozens of highly engaging, flexible, immersive projects designed to help empower your K-5 learners and spark their thirst for discovery. Each fully planned project combines fun interactive lessons with hands-on materials and activities, guest experts, virtual field trips, and more.

Our topics range from endangered species to food insecurity, recycling to gaming, extreme weather to exploring space. Designed for flexibility with microschoools and homeschooling in mind, Rock by Rock projects work in any/all contexts—from whole-class, small-group and self directed, to classroom, hybrid, virtual and asynchronous—easily integrating into existing programs.

Learn more at rockbyrock.com

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