

Discovering Fun Self-Directed Projects: A Word Association Activity

Adapted from Leave School: What teachers can't tell you. By Jim Flannery

Set a timer for two and a half minutes.

Write down whatever comes to mind for each prompt during those two and a half minutes.

It's okay if you repeat ideas for multiple prompts.

- 1) Skills you have...
- 2) Skills you want to have...
- 3) Interests you have...
- 4) Interests you want to have...
- 5) Problems to solve that are global...
- 6) Problems to solve that are national...
- 7) Problems to solve that are local...
- 8) Problems to solve that are personal...
- 9) List of things you want to do before you die...
- 10) Things I do for fun alone...
- 11) Things I do for fun with others...
- 12) Big questions you have...

Recognize the difference
between an interest and a skill.

Skill: "I know how to do..."

Interest: "I know about it"

Now take these different sections and start combining different items to create a new project.

One way to go about this is to combine an interest and a skill.

Here's an example from Jim's book: "I have a skill for stand-up comedy and I'm interested in mental health and education so a lot of my stand-up comedy is about mental health and education. Since I have a skill for doing comedy and I have some skills in making videos and have an interest in physics I'm working on making a physics sketch comedy show. Since I had a skill for video and computers and I am interested in mental health activism a few years ago I offered to live stream a protest on the internet."

Your bucket list could also be a project. If you dream of skydiving why not set that as an immediate goal? There's so much to learn from a technical perspective about skydiving plus the personal development of overcoming your fears. There is tremendous educational value in personal pursuits.

You really only need one or two ideas that you are super excited about to start moving forward but it helps the first start with a huge list of ideas and then start to narrow it down to which ones you will actually pursue. It's okay if you only come up with one idea and equally okay if you have 20 ideas.

