Sparking Passion: Engaging Student Voice through Project-Based Learning in Language Classrooms

By: Christy Ball and Sarah Martin
San Diego City College, English Department
Project-based learning that puts student voice and capacity at the center of culturally responsive curriculum sparks passion.

- **Project Based Learning** is a teaching method in which students gain knowledge and skills by working for an extended period of time to investigate and respond to an engaging and complex question, problem, or challenge.
Meaningful Projects Tied to Student Interests and Talents Works

• Given the challenges we face, education doesn't need to be reformed -- it needs to be transformed.

• The key to this transformation is not to standardize education, but to personalize it.

• Build achievement on discovering the individual talents of each student.

• This puts students in an environment where they want to learn and where they can naturally discover their true passions.
“Empowerment, Engagement, and Equity” in Action

• “Working hard for something we don’t care about is called stress. Working hard for something we love is called passion.” —unknown

• “Don’t try to figure out what other people want to hear from you; figure out what you have to say. It is the one and only thing you have to offer.” —Barbara Kingsolver

• “If you tremble with indignation at every injustice, then you are a comrade of mine.” —Che Guevara
The Passion Project Five Ps

• Poems
• Prezis/PowerPoint
• Posters (Piktochart, Infogr.am, Canva)
• Public Service Announcements (PSAs)
• Performances (skits, songs, panel discussions)
In this section we will share what project-based learning looks like, how it ties to SLOs, and student examples.
We learn as we go, adding to our skill set based on what we need to know to advance the project. We practice new skills and gain new knowledge in the context of the passion project. We then apply that new knowledge immediately to the project in some way.
• What problems do we have and how might we go about solving them?
  Whole Class Project: Building Tiny Homes for the Homeless in SD
  – *Storied Streets*, documentary film
  – #ReThinkHomelessness, PSA
  – Several articles on the Tiny Home “Housing First” Movement
  – Homeless to Housed Coalition Guest Speakers
  – Students formed “crews” based on interests and talents

• Purpose/Audience
  – To get college president Anthony Beebe’s endorsement of the Homeless to Housed project, his signature on the petition to the mayor, and his picture while holding their sign “I am with #H2H”
The Power of Passion to Transform Our Classrooms

H2H Guest Speakers/Student Crews

Tiny House Build in Pacific Beach
Tabling, T-Shirt, and Photography Crews
Film and Builder Crews
More Samples—Poster and Prezi

• #ReThinkSDCC Poster Project—Disrupting Stereotypes—posted around campus
• Sea World “Animal Rights” Prezi
• ReThinkSDCC Posters
  https://www.facebook.com/groups/rethinksdcc/?ref=br_tf
• Animal Rights—Prezi
  https://prezi.com/bk4txldiqfib/edit-this-one/#
Project-Based Learning and Your Foreign Language Classroom
SLO—Spanish 101
- Use basic Spanish grammatical structures, vocabulary, and idiomatic expressions to describe daily life situations and routines, extend greetings and farewells, express feelings and preferences, talk about simple situations and events in the past, and obtain information about people, places and things.

Problems/Projects
- The challenges of taking public transportation in San Diego
  - Cost
  - Delays
  - Time spent from A to B
  - Dirtiness
- Attend meetings of public transit advocacy groups and report back
- Write a poem, create a poster to raise awareness or advocate change, start a petition
- Publish the poem, poster, or petition on campus
Now It’s Your Turn—Individual Brainstorm, Pair/Share/Debrief

Christy Ball,
cball@sdccd.edu
Sarah Martin,
slmartin@sdccd.edu