

★ Optimize Choice and Autonomy



Day 54 **Innovate**

If you have read Daniel Pink’s book *Drive* (2011), you know about companies that encourage employees to spend a portion of their time engaging in passion projects. In some workplaces, these projects are launched and completed in a single day. In others, a percentage of each week is dedicated to these creative endeavors.

This idea has migrated to the field of education, and many districts now hold an “innovation day” each year or each semester. Other schools implement this idea in a different format. For instance, they may provide a bit of project time each week. These shorter segments are given different names by different educators (e.g., genius hour, personal interest projects). While the names of this practice may vary, the goal is almost always to provide students with opportunities to dive into their own questions and learn with and from peers.

Teacher-blogger Vicki Davis (2022) has adopted this practice. In her secondary classroom, students pitch projects they deem worthy or meaningful. Once approved, they are given several class periods to explore their topic and create related materials. This is UDL and then some. Not only do learners have choices in what material to study, but they can also select how to spend their time (e.g., planning, reading, performing) and how to share their learning with a broader audience (e.g., art show, website).

Innovation day projects may include creating a Rube Goldberg machine, writing and performing a comedy act, learning a baton routine, producing a highlight reel of the school’s basketball team, designing an experiment, creating an upcycled sculpture, or developing a plan to clean up a local trail.