

Authentic Learning: The Manifesto



Play chords, not single notes.

A string, no matter how out of tune, can play a note. It can resonate and reverberate for all that it's worth, but a single string can never play a chord. It can never join together with others to create complex music, moving and memorable.

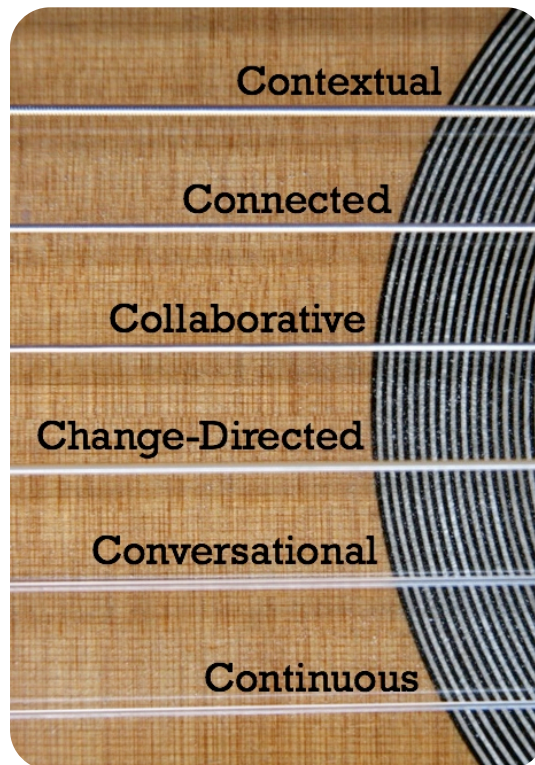
Such strings are abundant in personal and professional learning. They are the singular solutions to complex problems that are so easy to hear. They appear original and hopeful because we want learning to be the natural product of stretching out our fingers towards one foundational standard. And yet, learning is complex, and reaching for it should not result in the atonal nightmare of plucking at the first things that our fingers run across. It is only through carefully planned finger placement and calculated strumming that Authentic Learning is achieved.

So, what are the right strings to strum our fingers across? How should we tune our learning and working environments to make them Authentic?

An Authentic Learning Environment is the foundation for any classroom, community, or business (both online and f2f). It is

the one place that asks individuals to take full ownership of their learning by coupling the technologies of creation with the work of critical thinking, curation, and inquiry.

The six strings of Authentic Learning do not ask you to use technology because it is somehow virtuous or out of fear of an increasingly flat world. Rather, they are an integral part of the Environment because it is impossible to create immediate context, find elusive connections, collaborate fully, change direction adeptly, forge ongoing conversations, or learn continuously through any other medium.



The Six Strings: Explained

Learning is Change, Inc.

Each string must be fully understood if it is to be played with an expert's ear. These explanations will further define the Authentic Learning Environment that is vital for all students to experience.

Contextual (Relevant)

All information that is disseminated, and content that is uncovered has a greater context in the past, present, or future of our lives. It is curated according to our needs.

In the Environment: Isolated concepts do not exist. The connectedness of learning is made obvious to all, providing easier contextualization between all challenges and projects, disciplines and departments. The transfer of learning an early expectation, and no one is allowed to be a silo.

Connected (Hyperlinked)

All concepts are linked to others' ideas, whether they be original source documents, experts in the field, or peer experts who already have an advanced understanding.

In the Environment: We have the power to look deeper into content or projects. In a hyperlinked world, all known quantities can be questioned and researched. Every resource created is linked to what came before. The network that is created each day by learners and knowledge workers in the field is vital. It joins support to every decision made and work created, seamlessly.

Collaborative

Each project or task has the potential for working with others to brainstorm, create, refine, or revise.

In the Environment: Such endeavors as collaborative note taking allow us to join together and collect resources to aid us all, whereas collaborative documents allow us to work asynchronously on projects and analyze data gathered in far-flung locations. All communications can be archived, so that no great idea is lost or overlooked because of a loud voice or a lack of time.

Change-Directed

All knowledge is constantly changing, and so are our understanding and demonstration of knowledge.

In the Environment: We have the power to change both product and process. Constant reflection and feedback guide decisions. By working together and receiving constant feedback from one another, we can truly differentiate for the greatest learning effect.

Conversational

Understanding is created through thoughtful discussion, conversation, and debate.

In the Environment: Understanding any content, tool or project is a personal process that involves taking a concept or idea and making meaning out of it. This process is made visible in the form of backchannels while working and discussions after the fact. Conversations help to make meaning, and so they are an integral part of an Authentic Learning Environment.

Continuous

We can pursue all of our inspiration for learning. It does not have to wait until we see one another next or until we get home because we have access to the technology and the freedom of the environment.

In the Environment: We have access to tools of curation, community, and serendipity. We will be responsible for taking ownership of our own learning, taking continual and successive lines of inquiry as the basis for this ownership.