DESIGNING FOR AUTHENTICITY

A competency-based approach to designing authentic learning experiences

#1 START HERE: THE AUTHENTICITY CONTINUUM

Okay, so maybe you're not going to launch a world-changing project every week with your students. We hear you—you've got a lot on your plate! But the beauty of designing for authenticity is that it's not an all-or-nothing proposition. Authenticity falls on a continuum, and understanding the *levels of authenticity* can help you design with intention.

	Non-Authentic	Simple Authentic	Simulated Authentic	Bounded Authentic	Complex Authentic
Authentic Context There is a meaningful and relevant context and/or problem	🚫	✅	✅	✅	✅
Authentic Tasks The product/performance reflects real-world work	🚫	🚫	✅	✅	✅
Authentic Audience There is a public audience beyond the classroom	🚫	🚫	◐	✅	✅
***Authentic Impact** The work meets a real need and will reach intended users or beneficiaries	🚫	🚫	🚫	◐	✅

Adapted from: Belfiore, G. (2016, November 4). *Hard to Do Well: Project-Based Learning and Authentic Learning Design* [Opinion]. Education Week.

	Non-Authentic	Simple Authentic	Simulated Authentic	Bounded Authentic	Complex Authentic
Examples:	Test Essay Poster Problem Set	Multimedia presentation: *How do we make and lose friends?* Learn physics by investigating the question, *Why don't I fall off my skateboard?*	Role play as an advisor to the president Develop a game for your computer science classmates	*Reach or impact on intended users is limited by constraints (e.g., controlled setting, some variables held constant)* Propose a design for a new play area in a nearby park Develop a conflict resolution plan for your school	*Student work shapes real outcomes, decisions, or experiences without constraints* Produce and publish a podcast for visitors to historic sites in your community Plan and execute an environmental clean-up project in the community

LEARNING SCIENCE CONNECTION:

Our brains are built to learn through experience, not just exposure. *We form strong, flexible neural networks when we apply knowledge in meaningful, goal-driven contexts. Authentic tasks activate multiple brain systems at once: working memory pulls in prior knowledge; the prefrontal cortex plans, monitors, and directs; and the reward system releases dopamine when effort leads to meaningful impact.*

CBLPARTNERS

building21