Personal Statement

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Learning and the Role of a Designer

As learning experience designers, we are tasked with developing spaces that engender learning. In the flawless world of theory, this would be a space in which learning is implicit in a person's mere occupancy of it. As mortals, we are bound by the practicalities of resources, time, and the dedication of our stakeholders to best practices. And yet, despite these constraints, we can design excellent learning experiences. We begin with a crystal clear understanding of the need and what will constitute proof that learning has occurred. We focus on the people

[I'm writing to figure out what I'm saying, and I'm going to stop here & outline my thoughts]

- What do we mean when we say that learning has taken place?
    - Learners are able to do something they weren't able to do before.
        - Includes nuance - Maybe I could ride a bike before, but now I can ride a bike considerately.
- What is it a designer does?
    - Understands & respects the learner
        - Time
        - Intelligence & Experience
        - Motivation

- Creates a clear path (or better still, paths) to achieving a practical goal or inherently enriching goal (i.e. learning designed for museums, etc.)
- Finds the most effective methods given the constraints of resources, time, and dedication of stakeholders to best practices
- Revisits and adapts - Iteration!

Clarifying the Need

- What is the need that brought the client to me/us?
    - "I just need to do this for compliance; just give me a quick ppt" - okay, so how compliant are your employees? (The difficult client: give me bullet points! Bullet points can still be arranged such that they drive inquiry, retention, and practice)
- What does success look like?

Focus on the People

- How does the need benefit the learners: begin with 'what's in it for me'.
- Who are our learners?
    - Experience
    - Time
    - Energy
    - Work culture
    - Personal values
- Accessibility - can this course be accessed by everyone? UDL first!
- Differentiation
- Stakeholders are people too!
    - Respect their Time, Experience, Energy, and Values
    - SMEs
        - Respect their knowledge
        - LISTEN (active listening skills - summary, clarifying questions, empathy, paraphrase)
        - Communicate

- Boundaries - "This is the work that I do for you" (So you don't need to do it. No really, please don't.)

Designing the Experience

- Alignment, alignment, alignment
- UbD
- UbD drives inquiry-based learning
    - From my Philosophy of Teaching in 2014:
    "I use an Understanding by Design framework and inquiry learning in my lessons. I believe that learning is easier for students when they can connect knowledge and skills to big ideas, and I believe students are more motivated to learn when they have a puzzle to solve. Both aspects of my lessons are particularly well suited to differentiated instruction. Inquiry learning makes connections stronger and more meaningful; through this approach, knowledge and skills become easier to retain. Coupled with strong transfer and meaning goals, I can create multiple paths – some narrower and some broader – for students with different needs to reach those goals."
- Project Management
    - Who are our stakeholders & what are their needs
    - What are our milestones?
    - Contingencies?
    - What resources will effect the strongest outcome?
    - What model - ADDIE? SAM? Agile?
    - Make sure there are clear channels of communication & boundaries

Evaluating

- User testing
- Feedback
- Lessons Learned

Why am I in this Field?

- Good training in a world of crappy training (even 'boring' training can be engaging)
- Learning is frickin' awesome
- A healthy respect for the learner's dignity and time (I am resentful of whoever in HR thought pet store employees would appreciate a note with a cute bunny that said "Thanks for hopping to it!" I'm not in elementary school, I don't need a gold star & a cutesy message. A raise would be nice. I'm also resentful of the training video at Applebees with actors who were creepily into their jobs)

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My personal experiences
(to be sprinkled in throughout as appropriate)

- Middle School Education
- Curriculum redesign Every. Single. Year. to make the Latin program better adapt to student and parent frustration with a 6th required academic subject, to make room for new STEM classes, to fight program extinction, etc. (The life of a Latin teacher). Constant analysis of "Why is this important" and "Why teach Latin"
- K-Adult Education
- Middle School through Adult tutoring
- Adult education through local hobby groups
- Project management through local hobby group (arranging the camping for 90 odd people for two weeks)
- SME experience helping develop marketing strategies for our department specialists (at our auction house - fine art, asian art, books and manuscripts, americana, fine jewelry, contemporary design, etc.). Lots of boundary setting!

- Online-learning addict (I'm taking approximately 10 online learning programs, most fairly informally, atm)