

## What the Research Suggests About Fostering Agentic Learners: Summary Points for Practice

Being agentic in learning and the workplace is critical to doing our best learning and to performing our best in workplace contexts. Further, being an agentic learner is essential to life-long learning and transfer because educators can't follow learners through their careers. Fish modify the environment by creating vortices in the water that they can push off from to swim faster. How can we help learners to modify their learning and work contexts for their best performance?

We already know a lot about encouraging learners to be agentic and to behave like “fast fish” in creating the contexts that help them to learn and perform at the highest levels. What are examples of “to do’s” for workforce educators based upon the findings?

- 1. Set up contexts that invite agentic learners to have the awareness of occasions to pursue active learning, the ability to do so, and the inclination to follow through.**  
It is not enough to have ability to behave in agentic ways. We must help learners to recognize opportunities when they can pursue active learning instead of passively waiting for “learning to come to them.” This means starting out by cueing them when an opportunity exists and telling them what it is. Then start fading the cues by being less specific (i.e., “Is there anything you might do to actively process this information?”) so that they begin to recognize the instances on their own.
- 2. Create opportunities for them to recognize areas for improvement and to act upon that recognition, and support their motivation to follow through.**  
Help learners recognize opportunities for gathering feed-forward information. Instead of feedback that has a “past tense” feeling to it, encourage them to always ask what they might be doing next and what information they need to do it and what would support them in following through.
- 3. Make space for agentic learners to bring their whole selves—emotional, social, physical, and cognitive—to learning opportunities and to manage those aspects of the context. The social, emotional, physical, and cognitive contexts should be malleable.**  
Agency is best supported when learners can bring their whole selves to learning. Point out instances when bringing an integrated sense of self supports high level performance. For example, talk with learners about ways that anxiety can impact their focus or how stepping back to assess how their feelings and cognition are working together might help them change their approach. Or help them see that they may be physically more able to do certain tasks at certain times (such as when they are not sleepy).