Frequently Asked Questions

1. How can help students transfer knowledge when they have no prior knowledge of a concept? Ask the students to anticipate what the knowledge you about to acquire could be used for.

2. I work on a cross-curricular team. How could I encourage transfer effectively between the disciplines?
   You are in a perfect situation for transfer. As you meet with your team, plan opportunities for transfer. For instance, if you are writing a research paper in English, use a science or history topic for inquiry. This will help to show that the process of inquiry can be similar among disciplines.

3. Teaching to transfer sounds like it will take a lot of time. How will I teach all of my content?
   Transferring doesn’t have to occur outside of your subject area, although that would be ideal. Disciplines don’t exist in a vacuum. In addition, the connections you help the students make to the “real” world situations can prove to invaluable to them and provide a context for your teaching.

4. What are some ways I can encourage transfer in my classroom?
   Make it personal, think of ways to connect the knowledge to the students’ lives. Give positive feedback when students are engaging in transfer. Model transferring in your own life.

Favorite Quote

“Every educator dreams about how learning and teaching might be better” (Tishman et al. 185)

A Culture of Thinking in Virtual Environments

Workshop 6: Teaching for Transfer

Michele Schmidt Moore
George Mason University
mmoorea@gmu.edu
**Definition**

**Transfer:** “Acquiring knowledge in one context and putting it to work in others” (Tishman et al. 155)

**Why is it Important?**

Transfer is important because it enables a student to use the inert knowledge s/he may be gathering and to change it to active knowledge that will be retained longer and serve a purpose.

**Recommendations**

- Before beginning a book in the novel unit ask the student to make personal connections to the subject of the book. In addition, employ pre-reading strategies such as activating prior knowledge.
- Provide models for transfer. Share with the student situations that required you to transfer knowledge.
- Ask students to anticipate applications for the knowledge they are learning.

**Supporting Evidence**

Transfer is the ability to apply knowledge in a variety of contexts. Transfer can be near or far. For instance, transferring knowledge from one aspect of the English discipline to another would be considered a near transfer. However, the transfer of knowledge from one discipline to another would be considered a far transfer. Likewise transfer can be positive and negative. If it is positive you gain knowledge by transferring. If it is negative then the acquired knowledge gets in the way of acquiring other knowledge. Regardless, transfer does not occur automatically.

**Supporting Evidence**

- The ability to transfer allows student to increase their ability to cope with a variety of situations.
- Making personal connections in the transfer process aids in reading comprehension.
- Transferring to real world applications provides a context for learning.