Teaching Writing Across the University: Building on What Students Know from First-Year through Graduation

University of North Carolina - Wilmington

February 12, 2018

Jessie L. Moore
Director, Center for Engaged Learning
Associate Professor, Professional Writing & Rhetoric
Elon University

jmoore28@elon.edu | @jessielmoore
Teaching Writing Across the University: Building on What Students Know from First-Year through Graduation

Thinking about your own most recent writing experience, what could you tell students about that experience that would help them understand writing in your field?
Who’s in the Room?

• Students
• First Year Writing Teacher
• College of Arts & Sciences
  – Arts & Humanities
  – Social Sciences
  – Mathematics and Natural Sciences
• School of Business
• College of Health and Human Services
• College of Education
• Other Programs

• 1-3 years at UNCW
• 4-6 years at UNCW
• 7-12 years at UNCW
• 13+ years at UNCW
• Identify as a writing studies professional
• Conduct writing studies research

Jessie L. Moore (jmoore28@elon.edu)
Center for Engaged Learning Research Seminars

ELON UNIVERSITY

Center for Engaged Learning

http://www.CenterForEngagedLearning.org
@CEL_Elon
2011-2013 Research Seminar

• Critical Transitions: Writing and the Question of Transfer

• Two (2) year project w/ three (3) summer meetings

• Seminar Leaders: Chris Anson, Randy Bass, Jessie L. Moore
2011-2013 Research Seminar

• Institutional research projects and 10 multi-institutional research projects

• 45 participants from 5 countries and 20+ institutions

• Range of institution types → Broader range of contexts
Special issue of *Composition Forum*, volume 26 (Fall 2012) - http://compositionforum.com/issue/26/

**Critical Transitions: Writing and the Question of Transfer**, Edited by Chris Anson and Jessie L. Moore (WAC Clearinghouse/UP of Colorado, 2016/2017) https://wac.colostate.edu/books/ansonmoore/

Transfer

xkcd.com/208/
Writing Transfer?

Writing transfer refers to a writer’s ability to repurpose or transform prior knowledge about writing for a new audience, purpose, and context.

Prior Academic Writing Experiences

Self-Sponsored Writing Experiences

Extra- and Co-Curricular Writing Experiences

Writing in...
- Concurrent courses
- Subsequent courses
- The workplace
- Civic and personal contexts
- Graduate studies

Jessie L. Moore (jmoore28@elon.edu)
What does the concept/idea emphasize?

Learner, Learner's Actions, or Learner's Process:
- Generalization
- Repurpose
- Troublesome Knowledge

Boundary Crossing Transformation:
- CHAT
- Consequential Transition
- Communities of Practice
- Threshold Concepts
- Remix

Describing Context / Comparing Situations:
- Near Transfer
- Far Transfer
- Low Road Transfer
- High Road Transfer

Knowledge

Moore & Anson (2016/2017)
Borrowed Legends – Perkins and Salomon

Both automatic?
Near transfer!

Automatic → Standard
Far Transfer

Creative Commons – Attribution, MSVG

Creative Commons – Attribution, Roger Blake

Jessie L. Moore (jmoore28@elon.edu)
Borrowed Legends – Perkins and Salomon

David N. Perkins and Gavriel Salomon

High Road ➔ Mindful Abstraction (Bridging)

Low Road ➔ Practiced Habits (Hugging)

Jessie L. Moore (jmoore28@elon.edu)

Creative Commons Reuse Copyright by Colin Wilson
Borrowed Legends – Tuomi-Gröhn and Engeström

Prepare learners to be boundary-crossers and change agents

Build on activity theory
Borrowed Legends – King Beach

Transition:
Knowledge generalized across social space and time

Consequential Transition:
Transition is **consciously reflected on**, shifts individual’s sense of self or social position
Borrowed Legends – Meyer and Land

Jan Meyer and Ray Land
Threshold concepts = transformative, core of the disciplinary world view

Jessie L. Moore (jmoore28@elon.edu)
Essential Principles of Writing Transfer?

Working Principles

- Requires meta-awareness
- Involves knowledge, skills, and dispositions
- Is shaped by writer's identity and history
- Must be supported by institutional practices

→ Confidence Rankings
→ Evidence from Research
→ Essential Principles

Learn more: http://www.centerforengagedlearning.org/elon-statement-on-writing-transfer/
Successful writing transfer requires transforming or repurposing prior knowledge (even if only slightly) for a new context in order to adequately meet the expectations of new audiences and fulfill new purposes for writing.
Principle 1

Text
(Genre, content, media, etc.)

Purpose for Writing

Writer
(Knowledge, expertise, intentions, etc.)

Reader
(Knowledge, expectations, feelings, etc.)

Context
(Social, cultural, disciplinary, etc.)
Principle 1

What does “writing knowledge” entail in your major/minor/program?

| Genres (e.g., lab report, case file, literary analysis, memo, press release, etc.) |
| Citation Style |
| Conventions for integrating evidence |
| Style conventions (e.g., tense, active or passive voice, etc.) |
| Arrangement/organization conventions |
| Other features of “good writing” in your discipline or program? |

Jessie L. Moore (jmoore28@elon.edu)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Prior Writing Knowledge You <strong>Know</strong> Students Bring to Your Class</th>
<th>Prior Writing Knowledge You <strong>Hope</strong> Students Bring to Your Class</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What writing knowledge have past students consistently demonstrated they have when they enter your class?</td>
<td>What writing knowledge do you hope students bring to your class based on their prior coursework (e.g., ENG 101, ENG 201, prior University Studies courses)?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Based on their prior coursework in your major/minor/program?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

What writing knowledge will students take away from your class?
Writing transfer is a complex phenomenon, and understanding that complexity is central to facilitating students’ successful consequential transitions, whether among university writing tasks or between academic and workplace or civic contexts.
Principle 2

“The hardest thing with writing is not getting enough instruction.” – Nicolette Mercer Clement

Western Civilization

Nursing Plans in Class

Nursing Plans in an ICU

Honors Seminar

Jessie L. Moore (jmoore28@elon.edu)
## Principle 2

**What writing knowledge is troublesome for students writing in your discipline?**

- What are you consistently commenting on?
- What “trips up” the majority of your students when they write in your major/minor/course?

**How do your assignment guidelines and course activities help students work through this troublesome writing knowledge?**

- In what ways do your assignment guidelines anticipate troublesome writing knowledge and provide scaffolding for students?
- What course activities call attention to and provide instruction on this troublesome writing knowledge?

Jessie L. Moore (jmoore28@elon.edu)
Principle 3

Students’ dispositions (e.g., habits of mind) and identities inform the success of their unique writing transfer experiences.

Jessie L. Moore (jmoore28@elon.edu)
**Principle 3**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>University of Johannesburg</th>
<th>National University of Ireland, Maynooth</th>
<th>George Washington University</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>&quot;I am a writer.&quot;</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>49%</td>
<td>76%</td>
<td>67%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;I am confident about my ability to write at the university level.&quot;</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>71%</td>
<td>72%</td>
<td>84%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Completed one or more longer papers in final year of high school.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19%</td>
<td>95%</td>
<td>88%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Jessie L. Moore (jmoore28@elon.edu)
Principle 4

University programs (e.g., first-year writing programs, writing across the curriculum programs, majors, etc.) can “teach for transfer.”

Enabling practices that promote writing transfer include...
Enabling practices that promote writing transfer include:

- constructing writing curricula and classes that focus on the study and practice of rhetorically-based concepts (such as genre, purpose, and audience) that prepare students to analyze expectations for writing and learning within specific contexts.
Enabling practices that promote writing transfer include:

- asking students to engage in activities that foster the development of metacognitive awareness, and

- explicitly modeling transfer-focused thinking.
Enabling practices that promote writing transfer include:

- constructing writing curricula and classes that focus on the study and practice of rhetorically-based concepts (such as genre, purpose, and audience) that prepare students to analyze expectations for writing and learning within specific contexts
Communication Knowledge and Practices: Threshold Concepts, Big Ideas, & Core Tasks

- Jan Meyer and Ray Land
- Core of the disciplinary world view
- Transformative
- Probably irreversible
- Integrative
- Potentially troublesome

Jessie L. Moore (jmoore28@elon.edu)
Communication Knowledge and Practices: Threshold Concepts, Big Ideas, & Core Tasks

- Grant Wiggins & Jay McTighe
- *Understanding by Design*

**Big Ideas:**
- “Pointing to ideas at the heart of expert understanding of the subject”
- Enable learner to:
  - Make sense of prior experience & Make unfamiliar more familiar

**Core Task:** Key Performance Demand in a Field

Figure 3.3: Clarifying Content Priorities (p. 71)
Teaching for Transfer Key Terms

- Rhetorical Situation
- Exigence (the call to write)
- Audience
- Genre (text type)
- Reflection
- Context
- Knowledge
- Purpose
- Discourse Community

Big Ideas
(Including some TCs)

Kathleen Blake Yancey
Liane Robertson
Kara Taczak

Jessie L. Moore (jmoore28@elon.edu)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Threshold Concepts</th>
<th>Other Big Ideas</th>
<th>Core Tasks</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The purpose of much philosophical writing is to present a reasoned defense of a thesis.</td>
<td>In philosophy, readers expect writers to incorporate reasons as backing for claims.</td>
<td>Criticizing a thesis; presenting counter-examples to a thesis; offer reasons in support of a thesis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In molecular biology labs, the purpose of lab books is to document process and facilitate replication.</td>
<td>In molecular biology labs, readers expect detailed, precise accounts of processes and reactions. Lab books may be the property of the lab, not the researcher (author).</td>
<td>Describing a lab procedure; describing a reaction; “translating” lab results for an audience of non-specialists</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>History is a constructed narrative, and multiple historical narratives can exist about the same historic details.</td>
<td>To understand a primary source document, historians must consider who produced the document, who its intended audience was, and the purpose of the document.</td>
<td>Examining genre conventions of primary source documents; exploring the historical context for documents; distinguishing details from narrative</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Jessie L. Moore (jmoore28@elon.edu)
Enabling practices that promote writing transfer include:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Our Threshold Concepts &amp; Other Big Ideas</th>
<th>Our Core Tasks/Performance Demands</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Constructing curricula and classes that foster the <strong>study and practice of rhetorically-based communication concepts</strong></td>
<td>What do students need <em>to know</em> about expectations for writing in my discipline?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>What do students need <em>to do</em> as writers in my discipline?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Where is this knowledge introduced? Reviewed/reinforced/practiced?
Core Task Example:
Writing for Authentic Audiences

• Writing always has an audience
  – How do you persuade your readers? What do they need to know? What will they already know?
  – What will they expect in terms of content, genre, format, etc.?

• Can still be disciplinary writing (articles for publication, proposals, financial reports, etc.)
Client-Based Writing about Science: Immersing Science Students in Real Writing Contexts

Kate Kiefer, Colorado State University, and Aaron Leff, Front Range Community College

Abstract: "Giving students direct experience with the writing contexts and demands they will soon face as professionals focuses their attention on learning as much as possible... Our approach has concentrated on developing an experiential (client-based) curriculum to provide students the benefits of writing for real audiences as well as meeting both student and teacher goals—engagement with real content, authentic practice of key writing skills, and sophisticated analysis of rhetorical context."

http://wac.colostate.edu/atd/articles/kiefer_leff2008.cfm
Advantages of Client-Based Approach

“Organizing and managing their time to work with site partners definitely challenges students in this new version of the course, but the rewards more than outweigh the effort, in our view. Students must grapple with rhetorical decision-making to meet the exigencies of an immediate writing context. They gain first-hand experience with the complexity of sometimes contradictory advice about their emerging drafts as well as the shifting needs of government and community agencies, researchers, and educators. Perhaps most important, they must accept responsibility for their work not only as a student but also as a writing partner, a role few of them experience before they begin this project.”

Jessie L. Moore (jmoore28@elon.edu)
• Colorado Climate Center Colorado Water Research Institute
• CSU Equine Extension
• CSU Oceanography Project
• Discovery Science Center
• Environmental Learning Center
• Ft. Collins Audubon Society
• Poudre Valley Hospital System
• Garbage Garage (Larimer County Dept. of Waste Management)
• Larimer County Dept. of Health and Environment
• Little Shop of Physics
• Rangeland Resources Agriculture Research Station
• Rocky Mountain Raptor Center
• Trees, Water, People
• USGS Biological Resources
• Walgreens Pharmacy
• Various departments and research projects on campus
(Re)Designing for Writing Transfer

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Enabling practices that promote writing transfer include:</th>
<th>My assignment:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>constructing curricula and classes that foster the study and practice of rhetorically-based communication concepts</td>
<td>Threshold concept or big idea about writing in the discipline?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Core tasks?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Supporting tasks?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Jessie L. Moore (jmoore28@elon.edu)
Supporting Task Example

Rhetorical analysis: For this assignment...

– Who is the intended audience? What do we know about them? What are their expectations for evidence/support?

– What types of texts/genres would be appropriate? What would the audience expect about your selected genre? Why style expectations would they have?
Writing Across the Curriculum

First-Year Writing; Foundations

University Studies Approaches and Perspectives

Jessie L. Moore (jmoore28@elon.edu)
Supporting Task Examples: Hugging and Bridging Strategies

Hugging Examples
Writing a Project Summary for a Grant Proposal in a Sophomore-Level Writing-Intensive Course in the Major

→ Writing a Grant Proposal in a Capstone Course in the Major

Bridging Examples
Writing an Annotated Bibliography in a Sophomore-Level General Education Course

→ Writing a Literature Review in a Capstone Course in the Major

Jessie L. Moore (jmoore28@elon.edu)
Enabling practices that promote writing transfer include:

• constructing writing curricula and classes that focus on the study and practice of rhetorically-based concepts (such as genre, purpose, and audience) that prepare students to analyze expectations for writing and learning within specific contexts
Enabling practices that promote writing transfer include:

- asking students to engage in activities that foster the development of metacognitive awareness, and

- explicitly modeling transfer-focused thinking.
(Re)Designing for Writing Transfer

Enabling practices that promote writing transfer include:

| Constructing curricula and classes that focus on the study and practice of rhetorically-based communication concepts |
| Asking students to engage in activities that foster the development of metacognitive awareness |
| Explicitly modeling transfer-focused thinking |

My assignment:

- Threshold concept or big idea about WID?
- Core tasks?
- Supporting tasks?
- Reflection/theory building?
- Forward-transfer?
Supporting Task Example
Fostering Metacognitive Awareness

Reflecting on prior knowledge...

– What writing have you done before that you think would be similar to the writing you’re being asked to do for this assignment?
– What strategies did you use successfully for that writing?
– What might you need to do differently?
Supporting Task Example

What did you learn about writing for this audience or purpose that might be applicable to future writing in ________?

(this course, the field, a specific anticipated writing context...)

Jessie L. Moore (jmoore28@elon.edu)
### Supporting Task Example

#### Modeling

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reflecting back...</th>
<th>Bridging forward...</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Examples:</strong></td>
<td><strong>Examples:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When I approach this type of writing, I draw on...</td>
<td>This assignment required you to develop/practice [specific writing knowledge]; I find myself using that knowledge when I...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In the last assignment, you needed to [specific writing knowledge]; this assignment is similar but requires you to adapt that knowledge in this way...</td>
<td>The [specific writing knowledge] you practiced in this assignment will be relevant when...</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Jessie L. Moore (jmoore28@elon.edu)
Recognizing and assessing writing transfer requires using a mix of qualitative and quantitative methods looking at both critical transition points and longitudinal patterns of learning.
Assessment (& closing the gap)

Longitudinal study

Students as co-inquirers

Scholarship of teaching and learning
Assessing Writing Across the Curriculum

Course-Based Assessment

100-level courses in the major

200-level courses in the major

300-level courses in the major

400-level courses in the major

Program-Wide Assessment

Jessie L. Moore (jmoore28@elon.edu)
Teaching Writing Across the University: Building on What Students Know from First-Year through Graduation

How might you apply what we’ve discussed today to your teaching this spring? In future semesters?

Questions?

Jessie L. Moore | jmoore28@elon.edu