

Call for Contributors

Constructing the Threshold: A Reference Work of Concepts between Teaching for Transfer and Teaching Writing

Introduction

Jan (Erik) Meyer and Ray Land's notion of *threshold concepts* has been applied widely in writing studies to understand learning transfer. This notion, as Myer and Land explain it, is that conceptual knowledge enables learners to gain access to and participate in a discipline or discourse community socially and epistemologically.

Threshold concepts also apply to teaching. Lee Schulman argues that successful teaching requires heightened expertise: not only must teachers possess expertise in their discipline, but they must also possess "pedagogical content knowledge," or knowledge of how to teach that particular discipline. Bransford, Brown, and Cocking substantiate that claim, explaining that expertise of any kind, including teaching, requires "well-organized knowledge of concepts and inquiry procedures" (155). A teacher's disciplinary expertise--both in terms of content and pedagogy--impacts student learning. Without knowledge of appropriate threshold concepts in teaching and learning transfer, it seems unlikely that teaching and transfer would occur at all.

In the discipline of writing studies, we are accumulating, using, adapting, and theorizing threshold concepts about teaching and transfer from fields such as cognitive and educational psychology as our discussions of writing transfer expand. We are also inventing the language of writing transfer as new scholarship in our discipline emerges (Anson and Moore). All of this enables us to help our students transfer their learning from our writing courses to outside contexts. Now is the time to collect these ideas and theories in one location--in a reference work that provides resources both for teaching practice and for research. We anticipate that this work could serve as a resource not only for writing instructors, but also for instructors in other disciplines in which writing is taught.

This call invites authors to write encyclopedic reference entries for threshold concepts that can inform teaching for transfer (TFT) of writing—concepts not only from within our discipline, but also outside of it. Such concepts should inform our discipline's understanding of learning transfer while enabling us, as writing teachers and researchers, to teach for transfer in the classroom. The threshold concepts we, the editors, plan to document in a robust one-volume encyclopedia should have the ability to inform research and/or teaching practice (though it is anticipated that most concepts could do both).

Description of Proposed Reference Entries

The editors of this volume (Tom Skeen, Sherry Rankins-Robertson, and Duane Roen) are seeking reference entries about threshold concepts that can inform writing instruction from disciplines such as:

- Writing Studies
- Race Studies
- Cognitive / Educational Psychology
- Neuroscience
- Education
- Gender Studies
- Sociolinguistics
- LGBTQ+ Studies
- Applied Linguistics
- Women's Studies
- Communication
- English Language Learning
- Any other relevant discipline

Threshold concepts from these disciplines should offer utility to writing teachers and researchers. Their “utility” might include helping writing teachers perceive and address constraints on learning in the classroom (e.g., the effect of assessment on student dispositions or the effect of systemic race issues that constrain learning), provide “how-to” knowledge for classroom teaching and teaching for transfer (e.g., the need for regular review in classroom learning), and/or point to gaps in knowledge that require further research in writing studies (e.g., “How might concept X in English Language Learning help us understand learning transfer better?”). Threshold concepts may enable teachers and researchers with resources for practices such as:

- Classroom pedagogy
- Curriculum development
- Teaching for Transfer
- Social Justice and/or Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Belonging
- Informal and formal assessment of student learning
- Writing Program Administration
- Any other practices, from systemic to practical, that impact student learning

Who May Participate in this Project?

- We highly encourage any interested teacher / scholar to write a reference entry. Graduate students, BIPOC students and teachers, scholars from the fields listed above, established scholars in writing studies and transfer, and others are all welcome.

Step 1: Choose a Concept (by February 15, 2022)

- Interested authors may choose from a working list of concepts to be covered here:
[working list of concepts](#)

- Interested authors may also write a brief (100-150 word) proposal to suggest a concept that is not on the list. What is the concept? Where does it come from? How might it be related to teaching writing for transfer? We consider our list to be a work in progress that should represent our collective understanding as much as possible, and we appreciate any suggestions you have. This should be a crowdsourced project.

Step 2: Contact the Editors

- Interested authors may email their requests or proposals to:
WritingTransferEncyclopedia@gmail.com

Step 3: Write the Entry (by May 15, 2022)

- Once you have established a concept with the editors, please write your encyclopedia entry. A mock-up of two sample entries can be found here:
[☰ sample encyclopedia entry mock-ups](#)
- We anticipate that reference entries will consist of 500-2000 words, although word count for the finished reference entry may vary widely depending on the concept; the word count is a suggestion and not a limit. Our goal is to develop good resources.
- Entries should define a threshold concept that can enable writing teachers to gain epistemic and/or practical access to disciplines that help us understand learning more broadly, as well as teaching writing more specifically.
- For finished reference entries, authors should include supporting research or scholarship that the concept represents or upon which the concept is founded.
- The editors anticipate using the MLA 9th Style Guide for formatting—please submit a manuscript that follows MLA 9. You can find a sample for manuscript formatting here:
https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/research_and_citation/mla_style/mla_formatting_and_style_guide/mla_sample_paper.html

Authors should also consider:

- Discussing the concept's history
- Offering anecdotes or experiences from the author about the reference entry (or the original author of the concept) in which the concept applies to a teaching or research context
- Exploring brief connections between disciplines (listed above) that the threshold concept enables
- Explaining how some concepts in writing studies have been adapted from other disciplines and made more specific to teaching for transfer in writing
- Identifying opportunities for further research or gaps in knowledge

Step 4: Submit a Draft of your Entry

- WritingTransferEncyclopedia@gmail.com

We look forward to hearing from you! It is our hope that this project will contribute to a sense of community among scholars/teachers around writing studies and transfer.

Works Cited

Anson, Chris, and Jessie L. Moore. "Introduction." *Critical Transitions: Writing and the Question of Transfer*, edited by Chris Anson and Jessie Moore, University Press of Colorado, 2017, pp. 3-13.

Bransford, John. D., Ann L. Brown, and Rodney R. Cocking, editors. *How people learn: Brain, mind, experience, and school*. National Academy Press, 2000.

Meyer, Jan H. F., and Ray Land. "Threshold Concepts and Troublesome Knowledge: An Introduction." *Overcoming Barriers to Student Understanding: Threshold Concepts and Troublesome Knowledge*, edited by Jan Meyer and Ray Land, Routledge, 2006, pp. 3–18.

Shulman, Lee S. "Knowledge and Teaching: Foundations of the New Reform." *Harvard Educational Review*, vol. 57, no. 1, 1987, pp. 1-22.