Teaching for Transfer: Writing across the University

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Whenever I learn a new skill I concoct elaborate fantasy scenarios where it lets me save the day.

Oh no! The killer must have followed her on vacation!

But to find them we'd have to search through 200 MB of emails looking for something formatted like an address! It's hopeless!

Everybody stand back.

I know regular expressions.

xkcd.com/208/
Transfer
Writing Transfer
Writing Transfer

• Students don’t expect to transfer first-year writing experiences.
  • “personal and expressive” (Bergmann and Zepernick)
  • “Mutt genres” (Wardle)

• Students’ school writing could cause negative transfer to community writing if students are not rhetorically aware of context. (Bacon)
Writing Transfer

- Students are novices moving among multiple discourse communities. (Beaufort)
- Faculty across the university use different terminology to talk about writing. (Nelms and Dively)
- Faculty often don’t recognize students’ transfer attempts. (Nowacek)
38 days since someone reset this sign

Assignment

Xkcd.com/363/
• What else are my students learning and doing? What other activity systems (beyond my class) are they/have they been part of?

• What knowledge and experiences do they bring from those other activity systems?

• What can I do to help them make that other/prior knowledge visible – to me and to their classmates?
• What writing will students be expected to complete in future learning/work contexts in my discipline?

• What writing habits can I help students practice (related to those future writing expectations)?

• What authentic exigencies for writing can I introduce into the classroom?
• How can I help students learn to analyze the context for future writing? What tools can they use to examine context? To assess how similar or dissimilar the new context is to their practice contexts?

• What might promote students’ conscious reflection on writing strategies they are using for the current context/activity system?
## More about First-Year Writing

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WPA Outcomes Statement for First-Year Composition</th>
<th>Writing about Writing/Intro to Writing Studies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rhetorical Knowledge</td>
<td>Introduces disciplinary knowledge about writing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Critical Thinking, Reading, and Writing Processes</td>
<td>Students often reading writing studies research</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge of Conventions</td>
<td>Teaches concepts “helpful for literate learners navigating their way through varied rhetorical situations” (Wardle)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Composing in Electronic Environments</td>
<td>Intended to help students understand writing and learn how to learn about writing</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

All posed as “by the end of first year composition, students should...” and “Faculty in other programs... can build on this preparation by...”
Thank you!

Xkcd.com/363/