



Delaware Social Studies Education Project  
Research Corner

## Definitions and Types of Transfer

- **Definitions of Transfer**

when learning in one context enhances (or undermines) a related performance in another context. (Perkins and Salomon, 1992)

the ability to extend what has been learned in one context to new contexts (Brandsford, Brown, Cocking, 1999)

the process of using knowledge or skills acquired in one context in a new or varied context. (Alexander and Murphy, 1992)

- **Types of Transfer**

- \* Positive transfer - when learning in one context enhances a related performance in another context.
- \* Negative Transfer - when learning in one context undermines a related performance in another context.
- \* Near transfer - transfer between very similar but not identical contexts.
- \* Far transfer - transfer between contexts that, on appearance, seem remote and alien to one another. Applying learning to situations that are quite dissimilar to the original learning.
- \* Low road transfer (a.k.a. reflexive transfer) involves the triggering of well-practiced routines by stimulus conditions similar to those in the learning context.
- \* High road transfer (a.k.a. mindful transfer) involves deliberate effortful abstraction and a search for connections.
- \* Forward reaching transfer (a form of "high road" transfer) – one learns something and abstracts it in preparation for application elsewhere.
- \* Backward reaching transfer (a form of "high road" transfer) – one finds oneself in a problem situation, abstracts key characteristics from the situation, and reaches backward into one's experience for matches.

There are other types of transfer described in the literature as well as other



attempts to distinguish levels of transfer. One source actually lists and describes 20 distinct types which we can share with those who express interest.

