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PREFACE

The Question That Started It All

Many years ago, several participants stopped to talk to me after a workshop on critical and creative thinking. As the first woman stepped up to me, she reached out to shake my hand and greeted me with these words, 'This was great! I really enjoyed the day, but I can't use these ideas with my kids or my content.' Needless to say, I was not only disappointed in the remark but also bothered by my inadequacy to reach the participant in a relevant way.

As I turned to leave, another woman plunged toward me and hugged me with all her might. She gushed with compliments about the day and said something I remember vividly to this day, 'You have changed my teaching forever. I can never go back to what I was doing before today. Now, I know too much about how to make my kids think. Thank you for making it so easy for me to take these ideas back to my classroom,' and off she went with a bounce in her step and a huge smile on her face.

The contrast between the two participants was so striking it took me a minute to recover. I remember thinking to myself, 'What is it I did for the second woman that I did *not* do for the first woman? Why can one see *no* relevant possibilities, while the other one sees myriad ways to use the material we worked with today? What might I do differently to foster transfer for all the participants?' That



was the question that plagued me for quite some time following that day.

At one point, as I tried to describe to a colleague the incident of the woman who did not see relevant connections from the workshop to her classroom behaviour, the image of an ostrich with his head in the sand came to mind. The metaphor suggested that, in this case, the learner had her 'head in the sand' (intentionally or not) and was missing the obvious connections that others had seen. Somehow, the message was not connecting.

This metaphor was to become a lasting image that guided my work in professional development. This image haunted me during my early doctoral studies. Ultimately, it was this image that shaped my dissertation thesis. Six 'bird' metaphors that describe levels of transfer are derived from my eighteen years as a consultant and staff developer in education and my dissertation.

Over time, as my partner and colleague, Brian Pete, and I have worked with this idea, seven transfer strategies have emerged and become clearer and more purposeful in our work with teachers. These seven strategies have proven to be powerful and empowering for teacher participants as they bridge the learning from the staffroom to the classroom.

Enjoy.

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Transfer in Theory: Six Levels

The theory of creative transfer involves two distinguishable clusters of transfer: simple or near transfer and complex or remote transfer. *Simple* transfer is almost automatic because it ‘hugs’ the original learning situation and takes little effort to apply the skill or idea to a novel situation. *Complex* transfer requires thought and effort because it is transfer that is remote from the original learning and takes conscious awareness to find connections or to ‘bridge’ ideas to novel situations that make relevant transfer.

The theory of creative transfer involves two distinguishable clusters of transfer.

Within the realm of simple transfer, there seem to be three levels of transfer: (a) missing the opportunity to transfer, (b) duplicating and practising exactly as learned and (c) replicating the learning by tailoring it slightly. Within the realm of complex transfer, there also are three levels of application that seem to occur: (d) integrating by assimilating the new into the old, (e) propagating or spreading the strategies through intentional mapping and (f) innovating with creative flair. Together these six distinct levels of transfer comprise the continuum from no apparent transfer to purposeful, relevant and observable transfer.

These situational dispositions toward transfer are given metaphorical bird names that frame the various levels of transfer in highly descriptive ways and provide an easy way for adult learners to talk about transfer with their peers (figure 1.1).