What the Research Suggests About Supporting Transfer of Learning: Summary Points for Practice

Transfer means using knowledge and skills in contexts beyond the initial context in which it was learned. Applying knowledge in multiple contexts leverages learning and fulfills the promise of formal instruction in the real world. Transfer requires deep learning *and* the ability to extract it from the context where it was learned to use it elsewhere.

We already know a lot about educating for transfer. What does the research say? What are examples of "to do's" for workforce educators based upon the findings?

1. **Transfer doesn't usually just happen. It typically needs support.**
   Teach thinking moves asking learners to "connect back" to prior knowledge and "connect forward" to future possible applications. Encourage learners to use these moves to seek and support transfer on their own.

2. **Knowledge and skills must be learned deeply in order to transfer meaningfully.**
   Engage learners in active processing to try out new ideas and skills, reflect upon them, and articulate the underlying principles or rationales. Teach learners the necessary learning skills to engage in active processing and deep learning on their own.

3. **Knowledge and skills must be extracted from the original learning context in order to be flexible enough so that learners can transfer it.**
   Invite learners to dis-embed the knowledge by helping them to see multiple applications. This can be done through case studies, imagining transfer possibilities together, and other transfer thinking moves. Teach learners to practice this on their own.

4. **Deep learning happens best within contexts because learners can see nuances and can learn to adjust the contexts to enhance their learning and performance.**
   Educational opportunities should not be isolated from the rich and dynamic contexts in which the learning will be relevant. This argues for work-based programs, internships, and when that is not possible, bringing forth as much context as possible through case studies and similar approaches.

5. **However, learning in context often gets stuck there. This can put deep understanding and transferability at odds.**
   Developing models that take advantage of workplace contexts AND that look across contexts (by using a rotation process, techniques designed to dis-embed the knowledge being learned, or similar techniques) hold promise for developing richly textured knowledge that is flexible and transferable.