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Identifying The Key Components Of Place-Conscious Pedagogy To Help Maximize Rural Potential

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IDENTIFYING THE KEY COMPONENTS OF PLACE-CONSCIOUS

PEDAGOGY TO HELP MAXIMIZE RURAL POTENTIAL

A Masters Thesis

Presented to

The Graduate College of

Missouri State University

In Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Science in Education, Secondary Education

By

Amber Marie Dlugosh

December 2016

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IDENTIFYING THE KEY COMPONENTS OF PLACE-CONSCIOUS

PEDAGOGY TO HELP MAXIMIZE RURAL POTENTIAL

English

Missouri State University, December 2016

Master of Science in Education

Amber Marie Dlugosh

ABSTRACT

By using reflective and observational data from a rural high school English classroom's endeavor to launch a community-wide online literary magazine, this study uncovers the key components of place-conscious curriculum and instruction that must be present for benefits to transpire. Focusing on a rural, predominantly-caucasian school district, the study tracks 64 students who were enrolled in four sections of a senior-level writing course. Previous research asserts that place-conscious curriculum choices that involve student contributions to the community prove to have significant potential for rural schools. The investigator observed a significant decrease in student apathy, academic gains within the content area, disarmed negative stereotypes, financial gains via community partnerships, a maximization of roles through various avenues of collaboration, and a cultivated sense of sustainability within the school and community. All of these observations align with the existing research, but this study sought to further the discussion of place conscious pedagogy by confirming the positive outcomes and uncover the foundational elements of successful place-conscious endeavors.   For rural districts, these findings should encourage innovative practices that empower teachers to combat unique obstacles by uniting the community and its students.

KEYWORDS: place-conscious, place-based, high school, literary magazine, rural, action research, community

This abstract is approved as to form and content

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Chairperson, Advisory Committee
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I dedicate this thesis to my Class of 2015 English IV students. Without your bravery and innovation, none of this would have been possible.

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INTRODUCTION

As educators strive to make classrooms engaging while keeping up with the high demands of raising standards, most are realizing that many traditional methods of instruction do not suffice in a modern, global society. Because students hold access to a diverse catalog of educational stimulus and experience thanks to modern technology, rote memorization is not as critical in a modern world. With the click of a button, any literate person can locate and sift through a vast amount of information. Therefore, students must be equipped and trained to handle such immediate access to the world at large. The National Education Association (2014) published a document that reads, "What was considered a good education 50 years ago [. . .] is no longer enough for success in college, career, and citizenship in the 21st century" (p. 3). In response to this modern educational shift, the NEA suggests educators focus on equipping students to be skilled in the "Four Cs": Critical Thinking, Communication, Collaboration, and Creativity. The latest educational approaches strive to integrate as much technology to cultivate these skills.

However, the exposure to technological connectivity sadly seems to downplay the importance of local community involvement, causing students to lose sight of the valuable experiences and potential impact within their immediate worlds. Though time dedicated to technological connection and contact demonstrates a deep desire for fellowship, students are visibly losing the motivation to engage within their local communities. All the while, schools are pressed for higher standards to better equip students for the jobs they will soon obtain, which have not yet been created due to the

fast-paced morphing of societal norms and demands. These demands have caused

tension for teachers as they feel pressed to teach global skills yet have very little time to

explore how these skills apply within their local context. David Gruenewald and Gregory

Smith (2014), teachers and researchers who are proponents for local sustainability, argue:

> Just as local communities often suffer the negative impacts of globalization, so do
> children and adults at all levels of schooling. The process of formal education in
> schools and universities is often totally isolated from the immediate context of
> community life. Interaction with the wider community and all the learning
> opportunities these could afford is overlooked in the push for each student to meet
> prescribed content area standards through decontextualized classroom instruction
> (p. xvii).

Rural school districts are harder pressed during this transition of globalized, isolated

education, for the value systems of their communities often reveal desires for differing

outcomes than those of school administrators and employees.

Rural communities present a variety of challenging realities that schools must

address: families with low socioeconomic status, negative stereotypes about education,

prejudices rooted in innocent ignorance, failure-accepting perceptions, professionally-

isolated teachers, and a growing lack of funding. School representatives expend a large

amount of energy attempting to combat these obstacles. Teachers, administrators, and

school boards attempt to fight negative stereotypes and ignorance by modeling the

importance of education for local parents and students by going to great lengths to seek

out personal and professional development.

Though these pursuits are noble and worthwhile, one monumentally impactful

alteration often remains untouched: curriculum. Schools across the nation are expected

to produce similar outcomes, but it is easy to see that one-size-fits-all approaches to

education, which are often endorsed alongside nation-wide objectives, do not work. Why

then, is the coursework of a rural student strikingly similar to that of an urban pupil, though modern standards outline lists of desired *outcomes*, leaving the path to achieving said outcomes wide open? Teachers are no longer handed a list of required reading; instead, they are told to conduct their classrooms in such a manner that each student might be able to read grade-level appropriate texts with proficient comprehension. As the world continues to advance, government and school systems alike rework standards, hoping to facilitate the creation of critical thinkers and citizens amidst a global society. Because the standards permit, school districts should be constructing curriculum with the goal of maximizing the resources and potential each unique community presents. Sadly, many are not.

School systems hold the ability to disarm negative stereotypes while empowering the positive aspects of their local community, which targets the specific needs and strengths of students as producers and consumers of information amid this fast-paced world. Within my own experience, rural communities have a sense of town-pride. These groups of people come from legacies of hard-work, cultivation, and sustainability. Teachers can use the classroom to demonstrate how formal education can play into the age-old values of community members. Ironically, this requires a relinquishing of age-old classroom approaches to curriculum and a refreshing of methods with a place-conscious mode.

In contrast to prior approaches, place-conscious curriculum recognizes and utilizes the local community as the primary stimulus for learning. A school can enrich a student's educational experience by purposeful integration of the value systems, real-life

experiences, and authentic audience of his or her local community. The Rural School and

Community Trust quotes Margaret Maclean (2011):

> Place based learning takes the real world around the school -- the community --
> and turns it into a 21st century learning laboratory. Students learn skills and
> concepts while learning about and contributing to their place. By working on
> things like oral histories, water quality studies, community gardens, or student-led
> community tax centers, students are active learners, engaged and making a
> difference (p. 1).

By utilizing locality and one's immediate surroundings as the unique learning

environment that it is, teachers can better ensure that students feel the weight and impact

of education, while positively altering their surroundings. For a rural district, this type of

impact is critical for a school and its community to thrive. Because rural areas offer

unique obstacles and potential, place-conscious curriculum choices best serve students,

the school, and the community academically, personally, and economically, both in the

present and future.

Teachers can feel burdened with recognizing the necessity for high standards

while feeling like personal and emotional growth is sacrificed at the expense of

standardized intellect. Frantically searching for ways in which the classroom can attempt

to conquer the complex task of growing the entire student, as a living, breathing human,

many rural teachers like me are desperate for new approaches to material. In response to

new demands, schools seem to be pushing the three, big Rs: Rigor, Relationship, and

Relevance. Place-conscious curriculum holds the potential to unite the three, forming a

powerful learning experience for all students while developing a deeper appreciation for

community.

Rationale for the Study

As schools push for relevance and relationship, many teachers are latching onto the pedagogy of place. Personally, I recognized that the benefits of place-conscious approaches matched my desired outcomes for modern learning. Teachers, like myself, flood the collaborative sphere with examples of how place-conscious lessons have taken shape within their classrooms; however, many still find these contributions to fall short, for the logistical ins and outs of this style of instruction are not explored.

The benefits of place-conscious curriculum are easy to identify, but the implementation of such an approach is not always easy. Collaborative attempts have been made by sharing out examples and success stories in educational communities; however, transfer to new communities proves difficult, for the goal of place-conscious pedagogy serves to expound upon the uniqueness of individual locale. Because the examples that currently exist within educational spheres do not always result in the same outcomes once the locale is changed, key components must be explored and examined to ensure that transferability of place-conscious benefits can occur. By documenting a process that can easily transfer to a wide variety of communities and needs, this study identifies the components necessary to make place-conscious instruction a success in diverse communities.

Many of the examples of place-conscious instruction that teachers provide do not maximize the potential of the approach, for they often neglect exploring or identifying the key elements of successful place-conscious lessons, which would enable others to apply the ideas and replicate the benefits of place-conscious pedagogy in their own contexts. Instead, they provide lesson ideas, which often leave investigating teachers at a loss of

how to implement within their own locale or confused when they do implement the idea, only to see it fail.

I personally labored over the frustrating tension of implementing place-conscious units while seeing student disengagement continue to thrive in my classroom. I struggled to grasp why I was seeing very little change in my classroom dynamics, though my approaches were morphing to fit the lessons I had read about in place-conscious texts. The focus of this study is a high school English classroom in a rural community. This study seeks to offer an analysis of those benefits in addition to adding a template for success for other districts seeking to better integrate students into the everyday functions of their local place.

Purpose of the Study

By using reflective and observational data from a high school English classroom in a rural school district, this study documents, describes, and analyzes the key components of successful place-conscious pedagogy that includes elements of student contributions to the local community.

Research Questions

Within my English classroom, I found a general lack of engagement with lessons that had previously thrilled students. I couldn't understand why certain lessons were taking flight and others were falling flat, though all of them were technically place-conscious approaches. I wanted to experience the promised benefits, especially because I

had experienced them at times already. Because of this experience, I began my study

with five foundational questions:

- What are students' perceptions of place-conscious curriculum?
- What are community members' perceptions of place-conscious curriculum?
- How does place-conscious curriculum impact student learning?
- How does place-conscious curriculum strengthen a sense of community?
- How can collaborative attempts be improved in regards to place-conscious classroom successes?

As research and observational data were gathered, the questions began to narrow:

- How does place-conscious curriculum maximize rural potential?
- How does an element of student contribution impact place-conscious outcomes?

Research Design

This action research study follows four sections of a senior-level writing course

that was predominantly place-conscious. During the last eight weeks of the school year,

students identified major problems within the course, the school, the district, and our

community. After extensive dialogue, they requested an amendment to the course

structure; they wanted to contribute by creating a literary magazine for the community.

The study compiles observational data gathered by the investigator, reflective responses

from both students and community participants, and unit artifacts to document, describe,

and analyze the key components that make place-conscious curriculum successful.

Significance of Study

Sadly, the large majority of available resources and professional collaborative

attempts do not capitalize on the immense benefits of place-conscious instruction. Carol

MacDaniels with Robert E. Brooke (2003) identify that average, modern curriculum

"focuses on generic content, presented in one-size-fits-all, less-expensive, mass-produced textbooks and workbooks." Resulting from this focus, "[n]othing local enters into a student's experience, sending the clear message that events, people and places closest to the student are of the least value" (p. 156). As the natural movement of the education sphere gravitates toward mass-produced, technology-driven instruction, educators will have to restructure curriculum approaches if they want to cultivate the empowering understanding of being a part of a community.

As teachers seek restructuring, the demand for place-conscious ideas and resources will rise. In and of themselves, though, the curation of place-conscious resources will leave teachers missing the mark at times, for a great irony exists: in order for this approach to work, it must transfer, but it is local, which isn't transferable. Therefore, researchers and teachers must begin examining the success of place-conscious curriculum through the lens of critical, transferable elements. We know well the benefits of place-conscious pedagogy, but we don't often focus on the elements needed to enact the benefits. This study seeks to examine a successful place-conscious project to identify these elements and offer insight about how to maximize place-conscious potential, specifically within rural communities, in hopes that educators can grasp the essentials of place-conscious curriculum design that will emulate promised results while allowing educators to tailor lessons to the context of their own locale.

Assumptions

To ensure the study's findings were valid, I had to make certain assumptions. To analyze student perceptions accurately, I had to assume students would write reflective

responses truthfully. To make claims that can accurately generalize to other rural

districts, I had to assume that the students in the study represented typical twelfth graders

in rural districts and that each student received the same opportunities to participate.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

By using reflective and observational data from a high school English classroom in a rural school district, this study seeks to document, describe, and analyze the success of place-conscious pedagogy that includes elements of student contributions to the local community, seeking to uncover the critical elements of success. The educational sphere continues to grow in its exploration of place-conscious pedagogy. Researchers and teachers alike publish examples of successful lessons and reflections about the practice. These contributions excite educators who are hopeful to make shifts--from standardized curriculum to personalized, local curriculum--within their own classrooms. etc. Rural schools, specifically, possess unique characteristics that make them prime candidates for experiencing the benefits of place-conscious curriculum at the local level, which empowers students to enter into global discourse. The current literature helps teachers identify place conscious curriculum as a great fit for rural schools and their unique characteristics; however, there remains insufficient research regarding the underlying theory and foundational components that make place-conscious approaches triumph. As a result of this deficit in the literature, the educational sphere is not seeing as many teachers implement place-conscious instruction successfully.

In this chapter, the foundational research and related issues to be reviewed are as follows: (a) a synopsis of the major shifts in education that pose unique obstacles for rural schools; (b) an exploration of the basic academic benefits place-conscious curriculum can offer; (c) an extensive summary of the communal benefits of place-conscious pedagogy, specifically those unique to rural communities; (d) a forthcoming

glance at the benefits place-conscious schools can anticipate; and (e) a discussion of the thematic problems identified within research for teachers striving to implement place-conscious pedagogical changes. The chapter concludes with a brief summary of the foundational principles discussed and links them to the purpose of this study.

The Academic Benefits of Place-Conscious Curriculum

  Increasing Rigor. Though the traditional approaches to education require students to work through difficult tasks, they do not always represent the stronger sense of rigor that accompanies place-conscious instruction. When comparing rigorous, meaningful tasks with difficult, meaningless ones, teachers recognize that the depth of knowledge is stronger with the prior. David Sobel, an advocate for place-conscious instruction, tells the story of kindergarten teacher Roberta Sullivan in his book *Place-Based Education: Connecting Classrooms & Communitie*s (2004). Sullivan's class visited their local pediatric care facility, which was temporarily housed in the hospital emergency room. The students collaborated, interviewed, and problem-solved to create a solution to the problem they collectively identified: the setting of the waiting area was not welcoming to young children. The kindergarten students in Sobel's article explored a task that many would claim was far too difficult for their age bracket. However, the meaningfulness of their purpose served as scaffolding, enabling them to conquer more than many would have thought initially. Though it is not mentioned in the article, it is probably safe to assume the lessons learned within the hospital project were long-lasting because they were stored in a variety of schemas, for each student was making various

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connections to the process in which they were involved, resulting in advanced, transferable mastery.

Place-conscious curricula also strengthens understanding by increasing rigor due to the complexity found amidst real-world problems. The world proposes situations that demand understanding of complex causes and effects. This requires students to utilize their understanding of their variety of coursework content and recognize how they interact and react to one another. Teachers enrich learning as students are able to associate interactions cross-curricularly, make connections emotionally, and explore content physically. Because students' contributions impact actual lives and the overall function of their local community, learners become equipped to grasp that their learning and mastery matters.

Fostering Relationship. The contributions made by participating in a place-conscious approach help foster a vital component of education: relationship. By structuring coursework to demand exploration of the local community, students will naturally come into contact with the lives and stories of those who have shaped the overall identity of their area. Though the results of said contributions are not always pleasing to students, exposure to the impact an individual can have on his/her surroundings is crucial for a student's maturity. This allows young people to recognize their potential and responsibility as a member of the human race. Modern technology dulls the repercussions of actions by creating [cyber]space between decisions and impact, allowing people of all ages to believe that individual contributions neither hurt nor better anyone. This is simply a lie that degrades the beauty of community. Within my personal teaching experience, students surprised me with a collective lack of empathy. After

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pushing their thinking during class discussions, they corporately came to the conclusion

that they interact with billions of people's ideas on a daily basis. If one person was

missing from that interaction, no one would notice on a global scale. Their conclusion

shocked me: individuals are not as valuable as we think. From my perspective, I could

instantly see the fallacious thinking that had inundated their minds. By putting students

in situations that allow them to see both the virtue and vice that stem from the human

story, educators deflate these types of lies bred by modern trends. This allows students to

grow in a deeper appreciation of human life and collective interactions, strengthening the

overall relationship of the school and communal experience. In the article "Place-Based

Education", author Gregory A. Smith, an expert in literacy and learning and alternative

schooling, (2002) states that place-conscious education:

> . . . enhances achievement, but, more important, it helps overcome the alienation
> and isolation of individuals that have become hallmarks of modernity. By
> reconnecting rather than separating children from the world, place-based
> education serves both individuals and communities, helping individuals to
> experience the value they hold for others and allowing communities to benefit
> from the commitment and contributions of their members. (p. 584)

As the community witnesses the beautiful impact of students' contributions, a stronger

sense of support from the outside will emerge, demonstrating another cyclical benefit of

place-conscious classrooms. This reaction from the community enhances the meaningful

nature of the content, showing students that their pursuits are worthwhile.

Building Connections with Relevance. As students endeavor through place-

conscious curriculum, they will be more likely to engage due to the relevance. Students

spend countless hours questioning the validity of course content. Questions like, "When

will I use this?" and "Why do we have to know this?" spout forth like fountains of dying

water. These questions speak of an underlying issue: If students find instruction

meaningful and relevant, they are more willing to learn. Like most people, kids do not

want to waste their time with something unnecessary. Place-conscious curriculum allows

students to make meaningful connections to the relevance of content. After analyzing the

effectiveness of a place-conscious approach in a variety of classrooms, Amy Powers,

cofounder of and evaluation co-director for Program Evaluation and Educational

Research Association, (2004) shared, "Place-based educators posit that by grounding

education in the local community, students can see the relevance of what they are

learning and therefore become more engaged in the learning process" (p. 17). So often,

in rural communities, students struggle to see how their course content relates to life

outside of the classroom. When teachers strive to reconstruct their curriculum to create

relevance to the things and experiences with which students are most familiar, the content

holds weight, demanding mastery. The goal is not to teach a unit about place, but to use

place to teach a unit, which requires students to master content in order to benefit or

empower the place in which they reside and, so often, for which they care. In rural areas

especially, teachers must tap into the interests and passions that already exist within their

students' lives and find ways to make course objectives transferable. The transaction will

often be reciprocated as students transfer passion and interest back to the content.

 Uniting the Three Rs. The place-conscious approach to the classroom creates a

strong, interacting trifecta of rigor, relationship, and relevance. As the content becomes

more relevant, a higher rigor seems achievable in the eyes of students. As stronger

relationships are built, content becomes more relevant. As rigor increases, relationships

become even stronger, causing the entire process to be strengthened. On paper, this

seems like a win-win for all; however, a lot of work and preparation must be built into the

course content to scaffold such outcomes. Equipping students with confidence is key, for this approach to schooling typically requires more risk and vulnerability. As students take these steps and teachers guide with caution, a greater sense of accomplishment, mastery, and appreciation emerges from all parties, making the classroom experience one of great reward. The benefits do not come without a cost, though. In rural areas, critics tend to demonize modern educational shifts. Place-conscious education, however, empowers all involved, allowing both the educational community and physical community to share common goals.

The Communal Benefits of Place-Conscious Curriculum

Forming New Educational Allies. When an educator chooses a place-conscious approach to classroom curricula, community pushback may occur, simply because the approach is uncommon and unknown. The approach itself, though, holds the key to disarming cautious and antagonistic criticisms. Because place-conscious approaches link to the locality of a school district, teachers are able to align their classroom content with the value systems of their community more naturally. At the basic human core, personal philosophies develop concerning the world and an individual's role within it. Communities tend to form around shared philosophies and perceptions. By forming curriculum goals around a local community, and therefore its overarching philosophies, schools form educational allies where pushback may have once been present.

Gaining aid and support from the community is crucial for student success within a rural school system. Rural schools suffer from a variety of immediate disadvantages in comparison to more urbanized school districts. Financial challenges, geographic

isolation, lower teacher salaries, less advanced degrees in teacher possession, and some teachers' lack of certification in designated content area all pose threats to educational performance, which proves lower in math and reading than suburban areas (Gibbs, 2005). With such an array of disadvantages coming against rural students, educators must strive to overcome by creating avenues for community involvement and support. Continuing in true trifecta form, place-conscious education provides an outlet for not only student benefit, but also community and teacher growth.

Easing School Burdens. Place-conscious curriculum eases the burden schools often feel to make a positive impact upon the community. Rather than creating new, extracurricular avenues for community involvement, schools, instead, conquer this feat curricularly by utilizing the unique aspects of locality for instruction. Naturally, this empowers a community as students turn to it as the source of their educational experiences and inquiry. Place-conscious approaches do not set out only to take from the community, though. Instead, they seek also to equip students with the skills and tools to problem solve, enrich, and cultivate within a local place.

Roles are limited in rural areas, so the student contribution facet of place-conscious education appeals greatly to the members of small communities. The traditional approach to education confines students to stay within the classroom walls. Sadly, this silently stifles their potential contributions and benefits for their communities. As a result, students grow to think they have not yet entered "the real world," when, in all actuality, they are very much so a part of a real society with real problems and real solutions, which could be discovered and implemented by their individual pursuits. When place-conscious curriculum is implemented purposefully within a rural

community, citizens gain from the educational process as students fill vital roles within community. As citizens grow more willing to allow students to be a part of daily functions, students will grow in intellect, for their course work will come with strong accountability and relevance. When this give and take is effective, it can ignite the desire for further giving from the community.

Overcoming Finances. Funding is a continual struggle, especially in rural school districts. Taxpayers have grown accustomed, and sometimes numb, to fundraisers and lobbying for increased funds in schools. Arne Duncan (2013) states, "Some believe rural districts are too poor to pioneer innovation and technology. They lack the resources and the leadership pool to turn around low-performing schools. They are losing population-- and the tax base necessary to drive powerful partnerships in the community." Though this may be the observation of some, place-conscious educational approaches, however, curb funding issues in a variety of unique and beneficial ways. Bold educators can seek to utilize their students as the problem solvers for funding crises. Once again, this alleviates the burden of limited roles within a small community, for students become valuable participants in the problem-solving process. Utilizing knowledge across curriculum, students must demonstrate mastery with more than their understanding of course content, for high-stakes problem solving demands persistence, risk, and critical thinking. Educators may also find less financial strain by pursuing place-conscious classroom approaches because their physical classroom is no longer the stage for learning. Rather than attempting to simulate real-world experiences from a desk, classrooms physically enter the real world. This does, however, pose a new set of

financial difficulties: how does one fund consistent real-world contact? The answer is found within the contacts themselves.

Like a great cycle, the local community is often more likely to pour back into the school financially when it has reaped benefits from the school system. As students become impactful and effective members of the immediate society in which they reside, supporters will arise. The results of place-conscious education are visible; citizens know to what they are donating more obviously than any mundane fundraiser. Gibbs (2005) asserts that rural school districts are at a unique disadvantage because there is often less community support, for the payoff is not as visible. As students leave the community to pursue higher education, they do not typically return to better their home community, resulting in continued economic strain and a lack of community development. Place-conscious approaches combat this underlying bitterness by utilizing the education of a student to incite direct community gain. Students and communities are not the only ones benefiting from the altered approach in a rural area.

Engaging in Collaboration. Rural teachers have much to gain from transforming classroom practices to mirror the place-conscious approach. Making the decision to teach in a rural area often results in geographic isolation, lower pay, and less professional development. With the extra work to alter classroom practices, though, educators may notice extreme benefits from rural placement. Stereotypically, rural communities tend to be more tight-knit than those in suburban areas. As a result of time and tradition, it is often difficult to integrate into a community like this, though it appeals to many. As the barriers of school and society are diminished through the practice of place-conscious curriculum, teachers, along with students, will become inherently close with their local

place, and therefore, the local people. Sharon Bishop (2003) reflects upon how

collaboration within her own school enriched her place-conscious attempts to take her

students into the local wetlands of Henderson, Nebraska. "My own knowledge of the

natural environment is limited." she says, "I turned to the science department in our

school--one secondary teacher. . . I was learning along with my students" (p. 76). This

integration also leads to rich professional development. Though it may not look like a

hired instructional coach or multiple colleagues with whom to collaborate, teachers will

grow professionally by learning from the variety of rich knowledge and experience that

resides within their immediate community, modeling for students the beauty found in

dedicating oneself to being a lifelong learner.

Disarming Negative Rural Stereotypes. Modeling such a pursuit greatly benefits

those observers found amidst a rural society. Though not present among all members of

rural areas, a looming battle educators must fight concerns the negative stereotypes rural

parents and students develop about gaining an education. Because industry has driven

and sustained rural productivity for many years, long-time citizens doubt the necessity of

a modern education, placing more emphasis on trade and labor knowledge. This

emphasis can have a demonizing effect on the traditional classroom approach to

educating today's youth, mentally segregating students' experiences in school.

Donehower, Hogg, and Schell (2007) state, "Literacy has traditionally been used as a

wedge to separate rural from urban and suburban, symbolizing rural people's perceived

otherness from the rest of America" (p. 155). As people latch onto negative educational

stereotypes, this wedge is driven deeper, forming a vast chasm of ignorant perceptions

that must be delicately handled. The authors continue, "Until we recalibrate our

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understanding of rural literacies, it will be difficult to see beyond the public rhetorics of red state versus blue state, rural versus urban that separate us." The place-conscious approach to education is an effective method for re-calibration.

Building a Culture of Sustainability. In order to strengthen positive public perceptions of education, school districts must focus on heightening a sense of sustainability through selected methods of conquering standards. Because place-conscious curriculum builds upon the foundation of a local community's value system, the school system plays an active role in cultivating a culture of abstract sustainability. When pondering the ways in which a small community can be sustained, often rural citizens will look to the ways their families achieve economic security. Therefore, protecting small business and agricultural practices rise to the top as concrete examples of sustaining the community. However, place-conscious education seeks to empower students to become active and productive citizens of their place, protecting tradition and bolstering local innovation. Those who might have previously viewed a formal education as unnecessary will soon witness that a child's instruction is not offered with the guidance for migration out of the local town, but with the goal of sustaining the local community that has the ability to offer unique and valuable educational stimuli. Sharon Bishop (2004) argues that the individualized instruction found in a place-conscious approach is "one of its beauties: It is specific to the local, or place, that produces it" (p. 64). By utilizing the local place as educational stimuli, local value systems are upheld and supported rather than degraded. Sadly, through the lens of a traditional approach to instruction, many rural parents and citizens feel like the school's goal is quite the opposite. Instead of celebrating the success and potential of locality, school systems are

perceived to be force-feeding students with the ideology that true success and potential

lie somewhere outside of the county lines. Paul Gruchow (1995), in his essay "What We

Teach Rural Children", explores this problem and the potential and detrimental effects it

has on rural students:

> We raise our most capable rural children from the beginning to expect that as
> soon as possible they will leave and that if they are at all successful, they will
> never return. We impose upon them, in effect, a kind of homelessness. The work
> of reviving rural communities will begin when we can imagine a rural future that
> makes a place for at least some of our best and brightest children, when they are
> welcome to be at home among us. Only then will we be serious about any future
> at all (p. 99).

Not only does the place-conscious approach welcome students to be "at home" among

their local community, it enables them to become functional and productive participants

in their communities. Eventually, this stifles the bitterness that has often taken root in the

minds of rural citizens, replacing it with an energized joy and appreciation for the

educational process. Schools do not exist to degrade the lifestyles of their surrounding

communities; instead, schools now learn from and better community function, not from a

prideful stance, but from a perspective of shared responsibility and esteemed reverence.

This level of respect and integration only strengthens the community from which place-

conscious curriculum derives its sustenance, and a strengthened community can offer

lasting impact for generations to come.

The Rural-Specific Benefits of Place-Conscious Curriculum

     Restoring "Mutual Obligation." The place-conscious approach to education in a

rural school district binds a community together in its outcomes just as much as its

pursuits, creating a shared responsibility that improves productivity and understanding

for years to come. After graduating from the protective and nurturing confines of the

public school experience, students will embark upon a life-long journey in which each

individual steers his or her own course. Along the way, each student will encounter

people of different backgrounds and beliefs. Rather than jumping toward immediate

assumptions and pre-determined judgments, these prior pupils will recount their

schooling experiences and be able to communicate and collaborate effectively with all

walks of life, recognizing that each human being is similar at the core. Possessing this

beautiful capability will empower productive work-places, stimulate intellectual

environments, and cultivate new avenues of problem-solving and collaboration.

Stereotypically, though, these are not the outcomes many educational leaders expect to

come from a rural locale. In the article "Culture, Community, and the Promise of Rural

Education," Paul Theobald and Paul Nachtigal (1995) discuss the eroded sense of

community in the modern age and explores potential solutions, rooted in the educational

system. They identify the growing rate of crime and drug use that haunt citizens through

local headlines. Linking these symptoms to "the deterioration of any sense of

community," Theobald and Nachtigal (1995) question the role of and approach to

education in society. They state, "Arriving at some kind of community consensus

regarding these questions is increasingly difficult, for society has lost its center. There is

no common project, common good, or 'common unity' of the sort that once promoted a

sense of mutual obligation, social responsibility, and belonging" (p. 5). Place-conscious

instruction seeks to re-center a local community by promoting "mutual obligation" for

shouldering the fabulous burden of instructing and educating today's youth. The

educational approach cultivates a sense of shared "social responsibility" as students grow

in recognizing the similarities among all of humanity, which awakens the mind to realize

blame resides in the hands of all. As these benefits are scaffolded through a common

project, a sense of belonging arises, empowering students for greatness. Though these

outcomes are phenomenal, the advantages of rural place-conscious education do not

simply include the power of creating community.

Empowering Tenacity for Educational Greatness. Rural areas also possess the

potential to achieve educational greatness. Though the obstacles are numerous, the

character of tenacity found in rural places stands too boldly to be held back. Offering a

uniquely rich background of educational stimulus, rural areas would be foolish to ignore

the wealth of curriculum potential residing in their own backyards. Leslie A. Whitener

and David A. McGranahan (2003) recognize both the opportunity and challenges found

amidst a rural community:

> [Rural areas are] a collage of people and places--a diverse mix of races, ethnic groups, terrain, climate, amenities, businesses, and institutions. No one industry dominates the rural landscape, no single pattern of population decline or growth exits for all rural areas, and no statement about improvements and gaps in well-being applies to all rural people. Some rural areas have shared in the economic progress of the Nation, while others have not. The opportunities and challenges facing rural America are as varied as rural America itself (p. 14).

If the characteristics of a specific rural place differ vastly from other rural areas,

educators should capitalize from the uniqueness of place.

The Problem with Place-Conscious Curriculum

Transfer Proves Difficult. Clearly, scholars and educators support the concepts,

infrastructure, and outcomes of place-conscious curriculum pursuits, but the process of

dictating how the endeavor plays out for other schools proves to be very difficult.

Because place-conscious curriculum relies on the local community as the primary curricula stimulus, it becomes challenging to publish ideas and examples that can be directly adopted by other school districts across the world. Books, like *Rural Voices*, *Writing Suburban Citizenship*, *Into the Field*, and *Writing Our Communities,* compile examples of how the place-conscious approach successfully played out in classrooms and often offer room for adaptation to suit each reader's individual locale; however, the richness of all that place-driven choices has to offer feels lost, for the examples do not always match the current needs and roles a community poses.

Knowing place-conscious curriculum was the best method for success in my own classroom, I read through countless blogs and books containing curations of place-conscious ideas. As I read about the successes teachers experienced after conducting the lessons and units they described, I often hit dead ends because the needs of my community did not match the communities teachers wrote about in their personal classroom narratives. Because the needs of a community are as diverse as the communities themselves, one can assume I am not the only teacher encountering this frustration. If, by chance, the published examples do match the needs of a different locale, teachers may still find that implementing the same process sometimes leaves them with different end results. Though the teacher strives to cultivate a sense of place, he/she has essentially adopted a one-size-fits-all approach, which is counterintuitive for place-conscious norms. This leaves a lot of grey area for teachers, which can be both intimidating and frustrating for those who are new to this type of instruction.

The key to successful place-conscious implementation resides within the individualized communities, forcing teachers to engage in their immediate surroundings

as well as scholarly text about the approach itself. This is often an odd and broadened type of collaboration, with which many educators are unfamiliar. The individual teachers must explore and engage their communities in extensive regards, but researchers must highlight, understand, and publish transferable elements of place-conscious pedagogy so that teachers can adapt successful lesson and unit structures to suit the needs and opportunities they begin to recognize within their place. Though resources like the National Writing Project's book *Writing Our Communities: Local Learning and Public Culture* take notable steps in the right direction by offering in-depth descriptions of success stories, including obstacles that may arise when adapted and honest teacher reflections, teachers, like myself, still finds themselves lacking in component-driven resources for teachers.

Summary. Utilizing place-conscious instruction could, in fact, be the savior for many rural districts' educational performance, while enhancing already superior curriculum in other high-performing districts. At the very least, movement towards a place-conscious approach can serve as a starting point for improvement in all rural schools. The ability to foster community pride while increasing educational rigor marks place-conscious education as an unprecedented approach to curriculum instruction in the modern age. The charming unity found among small towns in decades past continues to die amid the isolated, technology-insulated modern era. Students no longer receive community guidance in communication and collaboration through day-to-day interactions. As workplaces and colleges increase their demand for such skills, it becomes more and more imperative that students leave high school demonstrating mastery. Molly Alexander Darden (2013) articulates a summarized solution to this new

demand, "In order to make the quantum leap to excellence, of course, [educators] must continue teaching reading, writing and arithmetic, but that's no longer enough. [Schools] must commit to making the quantum leap of absorbing the traditional studies while adding a 21st-century curriculum and global attitude." Place-conscious curriculum approaches offer schools an effective method for traditional absorption with 21st-century, global additions. As students work hand-in-hand with the community to produce meaningful content, they will undoubtedly be shaping their mastery of collaboration, communication, critical thinking, and creativity. The rigor of coursework raises as the required standards are achieved, while the method of achievement forces students to engage in a process larger than paper and pencil; they are welcomed into engagement with the one thing with which all humans are familiar yet very few claim to understand: the world. The complexities of existing within a global society will perplex humanity for the rest of life's timeline. Preparing students to be skillful contributors and problem-solvers amidst said complexities becomes the modern teacher's duty. A place-conscious approach presents itself as the best tool for teachers to use in such a noble pursuit, especially in a rural landscape. In preparing students for a global pace, a rural district must teach its students through what it knows best: the local place. We must have buy-in with the local to help kids know the value of the global. It is our responsibility to unpack the elements of local place to engage our students in a global race. In order to achieve this, though, educators must understand and implement the key elements that make place-conscious pedagogy a success.

METHODOLOGY

Within my personal classroom, I saw the merit of place-conscious instruction, and I implemented many lessons centered around my school's community. I witnessed students become more engaged and willing to take risks, simply because they felt comfortable with the familiar scaffolding of community. We read local texts, did social experiments as writing prompts, interviewed community leaders, and utilized influential people as the focus of course-wide projects. However, as I sought to replicate examples I had researched, I often came up empty handed with regards to the promised benefits.

In the past, I controlled the curricular goals and outcomes by using the community as portions of lessons, hoping to build comfort and intrigue among students. Never, though, did I allow the community to become active stakeholders in the curriculum itself. In order to do this, I had first to allow the community members who were with me in class every day to offer their own expertise. And one day, they did. They suggested we create an online literary magazine. As we ventured through this process, experienced huge success, and then watched it fail the following year, I realized what was missing in the research. I didn't need more examples of place-conscious lessons; I needed to know *why* those lessons were presenting the documented benefits, while others were not. The creation of a literary magazine was not my solution; it was the vehicle to discovering the solution. This chapter will explore the methodology of this experience. By focusing on a classroom with enduring efforts to implement place-conscious curriculum, one can more fully analyze the foundational elements necessary for these approaches to work. Because I have worked within a rural school district for the duration of my career, while

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witnessing place-conscious curriculum fail and succeed, utilizing an action research design best suits the collection and analysis of data.

Research Design

Action research and my personal presence in the classroom were imperative to uncovering the study's findings. My vested interest in place-conscious pedagogy and seeing it fail, though I implemented all of the "right" things, empowered me to notice holes within research: the foundational elements (other than stimulus from locale) of place-conscious pedagogy that make it successful.

I conducted a qualitative action research study to describe and analyze the impact of place-conscious instruction upon a rural high school English classroom and its local community. I engaged in active problem solving to increase student contributions to the local community, documenting the process for potential collaboration and transferability to other educators in rural districts. This study followed 64 high school seniors enrolled in four sections of a senior-level writing course that I taught and the community members with whom students collaborated. I harvested data from observations, student and community members' reflective writings, and anonymous questionnaires.

Site of the Study

This study took place in a rural community in southwest Missouri. According to the 2012 Missouri Census Bureau, the median income for said community was nearly $10,000 below the state median, with 21% of the city's population at poverty level. Though the city's population reaches a little over 10,000, a large portion of the

community commutes from rural areas outside of the city limits due to farming and agricultural appeal. Lacking ethnic diversity, the town's population is nearly 93% caucasian. Due to poverty, many school-aged children are only exposed to diverse people groups through the town's university, which attracts some international students. Sadly, the university does not work closely to integrate with the city dynamics, and it functions as a seemingly independent entity.

Participants

For the sake of the study, I sought a purposive sample. Because the original research questions sought to identify the impact of place-conscious curriculum in a rural school district, the participants met the criteria of attending a rural school and engaging in a place-conscious classroom experience. That criteria also determined the number of participants, to a degree. To maximize the effectiveness of the study, students' experience needed to function as collaborators in the investigation, making a purposive sample necessary.

The primary participants in this study were students within all four sections of my senior-level writing course, English IV (86 students total). In the participating high school, seniors have two choices for acquiring their final English credit: Dual Credit Composition or English IV. Due to the nature of the two choices, the participants were more than likely be primarily average or low-achieving students. A small subgroup of students had IEP's or received special services, but their participation in the study did not require accommodations in foresight. The overall composition of English IV was predominantly Caucasian and male.

This demographic posed unique needs. Because they were usually lower-achieving students, I frequently had to combat apathy and pre-defeated self-perceptions concerning English--especially writing. In order to overcome these obstacles, I sought different teaching styles and curriculum approaches that would build relevance and relationship into our standards. Upon discovering place-conscious curriculum, I started embedding lessons into our yearly curriculum. Because I created the course, I possessed a lot of flexibility within my building to craft the course in different directions each year, making it the perfect focus for this study.

Consent to participate in the study was obtained from the building principal, and parents were notified of their students' potential participation in the study. Because students are 18 or older, each student was given an assent form allowing permission for their contributions to be referenced or utilized in writings or presentations made about the study's outcomes (Appendix A). Due to the nature of the study, students were required to participate in the course requirements, and the study required them to do no extra work; therefore, assent forms only allowed release of student contributions. Application to the Human Participants Review Board at Missouri State University was made; however, there was very little risk in participation with this study, as its goal is to advance and improve educational practices in rural schools, so the IRB ruled the project to be exempt (Appendix B). Understanding, though, that some risk may be perceived due to rural stereotypes, students who opted to participate in the study are represented with pseudonyms.

Data Collection Procedures

Due to the nature of this specific action research endeavor, the majority of collected data are observational and experiential as students and community members collaborate to solve real-world problems. The Assent to Participate Form also declares that the investigator may pull relevant artifacts or data from reflection assignments, student's personal contract contributions, interviews and/or questionnaires. The investigator documented individual student contributions daily to better ensure validity in the narration of implementation and outcomes. GoogleForms compiled daily reflections for each student, which asked broad questions probing students to process their productivity, engagement, questions, and concerns. Using a Likert scale, GoogleForms was also used for an anonymous questionnaire at the conclusion of the unit to collect data about students' perceptions of place-conscious curriculum versus more traditional approaches to classroom instruction. Reflective interviews were conducted in written form for both students and community participants at the conclusion of the unit. Questions were geared toward perceptions of a community-centered classroom approach and ideas about advancement toward a classroom of this nature. Data were analyzed naturally as the study progressed, for the nature of the study demanded alterations during its course using problem solving strategies for better instruction.

Data Analysis

Data were collected observationally and experientially throughout the study, and analysis commenced early on in the study's development in order to guide decision

making and refine data collection. The collected data were compared to uncover

emerging and clearly-defined themes and patterns. The investigator sought feedback

from participants to ensure the themes and observations credibly match the participants'

experiences.

IMPLEMENTATION IN A RURAL ENGLISH CLASSROOM: CREATING A LITERARY MAGAZINE

The Back-Story

  The Obstacle of Apathy. I teach a senior-level writing course in a rural-Missouri school district. The majority of my students consider themselves to be weak writers, so I strive to build in as much support and intrigue as possible. I had originally structured the course as a year-long, place-conscious project, during which each student picks a person of interest from our community. We spend the year writing in different genres, all tying to the people of intrigue in one way or another. By the end of the year, students have compiled a portfolio of writing, from which they select their best pieces and honor their people of interest by publishing the selections in a class book and hosting a community-wide reception with student-made displays about our town's "greatest." Though the project held the interest of students in the past, this particular cohort group grew weary very quickly, losing momentum and desire to write about one person for an entire school year. Apathy was on the rise, and they were the first to admit such. I struggled to know how to drive their writing instruction when care about the selected vehicle was at an all-time low. I started to receive frequent repetitions of the age-old student question, "When am I going to use this?" causing me to grasp at straws attempting to answer their earnest inquiries.

  Because of my familiarity with the benefits of place-conscious pedagogy, I grew disheartened to see my classes demonstrating the exact opposite traits. Apathy

skyrocketed, collaboration sunk, and the community feeling I so desired to my students to experience seemed to be awash.

Sparked Interest. After speaking with an educator from a surrounding district, I took a day off from regular instruction and told my students to put on their imaginary hats. "Pretend we run a literary magazine, and you all are the publishers." I said. I passed out anonymous poetry to kids in groups, asking them to discuss what should be published and what should be tossed, the catch being that the vote must be unanimous. I milled around the room as students engaged in dialogue about poetry using all that we had been learning without even realizing it. Their discussions were rich with academic vocabulary and their analysis and reasoning were sound. After the groups concluded, we met back as a large group to debrief about the process.

I told them that my intent with the lesson was two-fold: 1) I wanted them to grow in confidence that what they learn within my class was applicable in a variety of roles and settings, 2) I wanted them to consider ways in which we could broaden the scope of our instruction to better include different roles and settings. They listened intently, appreciating my desire to include them in these decisions. Then a couple of boys raised their hands and asked, "Why don't we make a literary magazine?" The room erupted in excited murmurs and smiles, and after a long brainstorming discussion of vision and potential obstacles, I left them with the promise that I would do everything within my power to see their dream realized.

The Process

Planning. In order to make this endeavor possible and productive, I knew lots of pre-

planning and front-loading was essential (more than with typical units and lessons). I found myself struggling, for this was the first time I was not the expert in the room; I had never made a literary magazine, so I had to start where students would start: I consumed examples, dissecting every detail. As I documented my search, I began to note that students could model and expand my learning process, but I had to ensure that the product they created was theirs, not mine. I pulled my personal reins a bit, requiring students to navigate and critique examples, for I did not want to solidify my own ideas about what this product should look like; instead, I needed to create a classroom infrastructure that would support students in their own inquiry and creation.

To understand the types of support and guidance needed, I still had to be able to imagine what they might conceive. I taught four sections of the course, and each class had a unique personality and insight to bring to the table. This type of individuality was great for brainstorming, but I could already see how their ideas would eventually compete with and combat one another. I needed a means to grasp their vision for the project, but I also needed to foster their process if they were going to unify to create a cohesive product.

Using GoogleClassroom as our medium for collaboration, I took my students to step one of the problem-solving process: we had to pinpoint what we were trying to solve. This felt like an odd step for them (and me), for we were in the unique situation of already knowing our solution. However, in order to know if our endeavors demonstrated success at the end of the process, we had to adopt purpose and a means for measures by knowing the root of our pursuits. After a day of dialoguing about the learning goals for the course, the typical classroom experience within this course and other English courses,

the perceptions of community, and the tendencies of students, the four classes had created

the following list of twelve problems they felt a literary magazine could play a role in

solving or improving:

1. Students at [our high school] do not write for audiences other than teachers.

2. Students at [our high school] do not get many opportunities to apply learning to real-world situations.

3. Some students in [this course] have a fear of being criticized/judged for their writing.

4. Some students in [this course] struggle with knowing how to integrate other people's ideas/writing into their own.

5. Some students in [this course] frequently struggle with procrastination and apathy.

6. Most students in [this course] struggle to know how to give/don't feel comfortable with giving honest, productive feedback; therefore, they do not receive honest, productive feedback for their own writing.

7. Students in [this course] are not given opportunities to express originality and passion via genre selection.

8. Accountability and deadlines are lacking, which causes most students [in this course] to lose interest and prevents the production of their best work.

9. Skilled writers at [our high school] rarely get true appreciation for their written craft.

10. Teachers struggle to locate authentic audience in a meaningful way.

11. People in the community have few glimpses of what truly happens in [our high school] classrooms.

12. [High school] students rarely get the opportunity to share acquired knowledge with younger grades.

After solidifying a set list of problems to tackle, we worked together to create a

mission statement for our product, hoping to ensure a common focus and goal for all

involved. Investigating various resources about how to draft a mission statement,

students collaborated to answer essential questions and combined their separate answers

to communicate one unified thought. I was pleasantly surprised while observing their

processing, for they utilized the skills acquired throughout the course to articulate and

wordsmith their paragraph statement. The piece of writing held merit, and they wanted it

to sound good. By the next class period, we all had a mission:

> We provide [our town] with an online forum to showcase [its] written work to a
>
> literary community by using the skills of [this course's] students to collect,
>
> review, and make editorial decisions, enabling learning and expression of the
>
> thoughts, ideas, and creative works of writers within [our] community.

Though we had unified purpose, I still had a few burdening questions resting upon my

shoulders: how will each student play a unique role, and how will I assess their assuredly

vast contributions?

After speaking with my school's instructional coaches, I decided to, once again,

place the burden of accountability upon students. I wanted this unit to challenge them,

mirroring the processes and responsibilities of life outside of high school; therefore, I had

to relinquish typical teacher control. I drafted a fill-in the blank personal contract

(Appendix C) and required each student to fill in the blanks with high quality

descriptions, receive clearance from me by acquiring my signature, and locate another

adult who would sign the contract for the purpose of accountability. The contract

required students to specify their precise contribution to the project as a whole, typically

selecting from a list of necessary roles we had brainstormed as a class. I designed the

contract to ensure that students are 1) working toward the unified goal by combatting our

specified problems 2) aware of their personal learning strengths and weaknesses 3)

proactive in preventing setbacks by planning ahead and

4) honoring the course standards (Appendix C).

Because each student's contribution was so individualized, I asked them to create

their plan in such a way to meet at least one writing standard, the collaboration standard,

and at least one other standard of their choosing. This empowered students to find real-

world writing purposes that fit their personal needs. This also helped them see the merit

in what teachers assign. Seeing standards and becoming acquainted with their purpose

helped foster a sense of responsibility for learning. Many students chose to write

reflections along the way, some chose to engage in consistent email correspondence,

some drafted presentations, while others assumed the roles of writers, drafting pieces for

submission to the magazine. All students, though, would honor the written requirement,

demonstrating course-content. Once students completed all portions of their contract and

received my approval, I added their names to a master list of roles, allowing them to plan

necessary collaboration strategies with other students.

Executing. After laying the necessary groundwork with collaborative planning,

students spent eight class periods working through their individual plans. Though each

student outlined eight days of potential work, many plans quickly changed as new needs

arose, perceptions altered, or true pacing was realized. Running like a well-oiled

machine was key to our success, mandating that each student fulfill his or her chosen role

to the best of his or her ability.

The variety in role selection excited me and invigorated our learning environment.

During any given class, students might be found tackling any of the following: web

design, graphic design, community partnerships, archiving, editing, writing, survey creation, advertising, promoting, researching, and more. Though timid at first, students boldly and assertively collaborated with one another by the end of the unit, inventing ways in which they could maximize time through effective communication across class sections. For the most part, the classroom became a unified environment for learning and risk taking. Student Eric Bastian, Promoter, commented on the changes in our classroom functionality, ". . . we formed task groups of kids working together, and task groups had to communicate too. It was very interconnected and cool to watch." As a teacher, I was pleased to be a part of the process, rather than dictating its outcomes.

My role transformed and evolved day-by-day, as I was now the classroom's lead learner. Rarely did I ever need to step into a managerial role, for most class sections had a designated student using personal skillsets to make sure everyone worked toward the common good. This change was exciting for me, as I imagine it would be for any teacher. I became a cheerleader in their successes, a curious ear for their new discoveries, and an extra perspective and brain for their problem solving. A member of the editing task group Adelaide Radley advises teachers

> to not put limitations on where students want the direction of the project to go. For example, if [our teacher] would have set all the guidelines and criteria for the website, students wouldn't have been so eager to give ideas and help to make it something we could be proud of. But since we were really given creative liberties on this project, we really got to make it what we wanted it to be.

Though these alterations in my classroom approach did not transition seamlessly, I thrived in my newfound role by the end of the unit, and students typically responded with

similar gratitude for allowing the process to not simply be student-centered, but student-driven.

Collaborating. Though collaboration amongst students and across class sections proved necessary for any ounce of success with our endeavor, extending collaboration outside the four walls of our learning environment was necessary for accountability, expertise, and the benefits of place-conscious instruction. We maximized the wide range of skills, interests, and abilities from our class participants, but because we were all rookies in magazine creation, we had to seek additional support.

Knowing my students didn't have all of the necessary connections and resources, I facilitated communication between them and a couple serving our community and surrounding areas as expert consultants in entrepreneurial endeavors. From the start of our project, I met regularly with them, offering updates on our progress and projection, discussing how to improve our output. This connection proved critical to the completion of our project, for the experts offered valuable outside perspective, diligent in providing blunt feedback and advice. Their investment in our product, even in spite of their inability to meet during school hours, motivated and prodded students' thinking and engagement. Students responded readily and eagerly to the accountability of community members, voicing that they felt the project held significant weight as more and more people from the community were willing to invest time and efforts to support production.

This type of increased motivation and intrigue skyrocketed when a local graphic designer decided to hop onboard. I initially sought her expertise as a potential guest speaker, but she decided to go above and beyond by compiling resources and tutorials about web-design for students to peruse, consistently offering feedback about the design

elements of their creations, and collaborating with students on the branding team to make

their logo designs professional and user-friendly. Students were quick to listen to her

advice and sought to engage in communication with her respectfully and professionally, a

natural response to the relational element that caused the stakes of our classroom

happenings to raise. Though I initiated contact with the experts, students felt the need

and benefit of building community partnerships as well, seeking to make valuable and

purposeful connections with those typically unassociated with our high school. Students

on the promotional teams split up to conquer different areas of interest and need in our

community. Though students pursued many areas, two specific undertakings showed

great reward for our class-wide pursuits: a local university and the local newspaper.

On day one, a small group of students brainstormed ways to initiate contact with

potential writers in our community, hoping to draw submissions from a wider base than

our district's students. After chatting, they decided to target a local university,

specifically tackling the College of Arts and Letters. Explaining the project and mission,

the team began sending emails to professors and securing contacts. They spent two class

periods on the campus after creating an iPad presentation, promoting the magazine to

university students. Their goal was simple: raise awareness. The professors were eager

to support the cause, and within a week we were receiving submissions from university

students in creative writing courses. This connection was invaluable, for students often

voiced a sense of disconnect between the community at large and the university. Due to

this lack of integration, many misconceived perceptions had developed over time in the

minds of students. Breaking this invisible barrier by tackling the campus as a potential

resource empowered high school students and ignited potential for further development

of partnerships in the future. Our community support did not stop there, though.

Student Eric Bastian sought to raise awareness about our magazine by seeking

those who already had the means to reach wider audiences. Drafting a carefully-worded

business proposal, he contacted local radio programmers, television stations, and our

town newspaper about the possibility for partnering with advertisement. Within a day's

time, he received an excited response from a local reporter desiring to not only advertise

our magazine, but to write a cover story about the class's process. She came to our

school, interviewed Bastian, and asked him to write a featured piece about the magazine

from his personal perspective. This type of support offered a positive spotlight for our

class-wide pursuits and academic achievement by showcasing student work that

demonstrated purpose and thought.

Unveiling. After six weeks of hard work, students had successfully collaborated

to create a prestigious product to present to the community. To successfully combat

some of the problems specified at the start of the endeavor, community recognition and

utilization of the product was crucial. In order to make this a practical possibility, one

team of students utilized its six weeks of class time to design and implement a launch

party to both celebrate success and showcase the product to the community.

This team of boys forced itself to explore all of the logistics of party planning and

executed a class-act event. The event's goals were two-fold: 1) involve the community in

writing and/or writing appreciation and 2) unveil and explain the magazine and student

contributions. To accomplish these goals, the students hosted a two-phase event. Phase

one was an hour-long, come-and-go, interactive portion with snacks, writing activity

stations, live poetry from adults in the community, and a looped Prezi presentation that

showcased each individual student's contribution to the magazine project as a whole.

Phase Two moved all attendees into the high school auditorium for a "launch ceremony."

The party-planning team organized a formal presentation that included a video

presentation, student readers, guest speakers, the official unveiling of the website, and a

question and answer session.

Observations

     Combatting Apathy. From the initial spark that ignited when students started the

inquiry process regarding magazine creation, I knew this pursuit would be powerful in

combatting their lack of engagement, for they had never exhibited such excitement

concerning a prior academic task. Something magical transpired as we traversed the

unknown realms of this project, and it seemed to be linked to relevance.

     When students identified apathy as one of their driving problems to solve, I could

not be more surprised. I had assumed they were blinded to their intensifying

disengagement, but they expressed honesty and openness during our class dialogue. By

assuming they were not witnessing their own struggle, I avoided the rich opportunity to

empower them to learn the life-long skill of overcoming by creating personalized plans to

suit their differentiated interests and skills. Outliers still arose during the process of

creation, distracted or disengaged with the process, but many wrote in final reflections

thoughts of regret, identifying specific causes for disengagement and identifying ways in

which they wish they had fought their struggle. For these extreme cases, this type of

reflective thought can still be classified as a success, for the relevance of the task created

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a sense of longing and the community investment cultivated a sense of accountability, which initiated personal growth for individual students.

Sure, there were still moments of collective disinterest, but the entrepreneurial experts helped me recognize that this is a normal phenomenon that occurs when people engage in the execution of an idea, which helped me offer more assertive understanding to my students. The experts referred to the phenomenon as the "entrepreneurial slump" that typically separates the "businessmen from the business boys" and showed me how simply helping students to recognize the normalcy and predictability of such a time can be the first step in combatting it to continue productivity. Typically when people develop an idea and start the process of seeing it to fruition, an impressive fuel of dedication and excitement drives their motivation. However, after approximately two weeks of dedicated work, the excitement of the task starts to wane and the existing tasks seem more daunting than doable. The expert dubbed this phase the "slump", and it had potential to be our sinking sand. But after a quick class discussion starting with relaying what I had been told, students nodded in agreement and felt fired up to not let their new-found lull rob them of their original intent. In the end, students were able to reflect upon all that they had overcome, and leave the school year with a sense of pride, knowing they had grown as individuals, both personally and academically.

Academic Gains. Like explored in the literature, students seemed to grasp a deeper understanding of course concepts and goals when relevance scaffolded the content. The majority of students readily engaged in more rigorous academic tasks that demanded critical thinking, for those tasks became necessary for the production of our magazine. Students sought experts, tutorial videos, and exemplars without prompting

from a teacher, simply because problem-solving became an integral part of class performance. Students also began to see the real-world application of writing concepts learned throughout the year, demonstrating growth with written communication throughout the duration of the unit.

The impact of having a real-world audience caused many students to revisit class instruction with precision, attempting to revise writings to become polished and publishable. The idea of "publish-ready" morphed in students' minds as they sent emails to professionals, drafted rejection and acceptance letters, wrote website content, and attempted to collaborate with other classmates using only written communication. The fear of miscommunicating or appearing to be less-educated drove them to think through their word choice and structure, skills we had tried to develop all year.

Though I strive to make my class as place-conscious as possible, I still ran into situations of struggle with authenticating audience. To combat this, I attempted to make a proposal assignment, with which students work through the problem-solving process and write to companies proposing a solution to the problem at hand. Though some students connected with the assignment, many viewed it as a nice attempt at creating audience, but felt frustrated by the forced nature of the process, resulting in apathy and very little transfer. However, when placed in unique real-world situations that demanded written communication to accomplish various goals, students often sought me for "a quick refresher" of the proposal unit because the knowledge now presented a necessary purpose.

Before Eric Bastian landed his first writing job with the local paper, he sent a formal proposal to a vast number of potential advertising partners. Hoping to persuade

local media outlets to advertise for our magazine launch free of charge, Bastian wanted to draft a well-worded and concise proposal. Acting as a soundboard for his planning stages, I could clearly see him working through written choices based on audience and purpose. Knowing businesses do not typically advertise for free, he sought to appeal to emotions through community connections by assuring readers that by partnering with this cause, they would be impacting the future of our community. Though Bastian was always a skilled writer, his craft showed improvement with the critical thinking involved in making these types of executive choices. Sadly, students do not often get this type of mental stimulation, for they are handed canned and pre-determined writing scenarios with one audience member: the teacher. This unique aspect of academic rigor helped promote growth in areas outside of the course's content. Students showed great gains in collaboration and communication, for the nature of our real-world task demanded such behaviors.

A clear theme evolved from responses students provided on a post-study reflection: the real-world elements of this unit provided better preparation for life after high school. Senior Pamela Ginnings, Class Manager, stated, "This unit impacted skills that are not English specific by introducing me to the real world. It gave me my own personal responsibility that could negatively effect [sic] the class if not taken seriously. It also taught me how to get along with people I don't really know, or even just people I had previously thought I didn't like." The sentiment of enriched and positive "group work" experiences seemed to span across the student reflections. "We learned to not just work in our small groups, but [with] our entire class as a whole," said Anna Fox, University Promoter, "We collaborated with everyone that could help with our specific

jobs to make [the magazine] the best that it could be." This type of meaningful and purposeful collaborative learning developed academic skills that teachers invest countless time trying to cultivate through attempted simulations of the real world. Once students saw relevant need arise for their variety of skillsets, they naturally began to collaborate in a meaningful manner.

Role Maximization. Due to the nature of place-conscious endeavors, collaboration organically extends outside the confines of the classroom walls, benefitting the personal and professional goals of teachers, students, and community members. The complexities of place-conscious pedagogy maximize each individual role within the larger whole, enriching the collective experience.

As a professional educator in a small town, I often reach out to employees in other districts and faculty from surrounding universities to extend my collaborative circle. However, I found that I had boxed myself into an educational sphere, which caused me to see my students only through the lens of academia. The magazine creation forced me to collaborate with non-educators, and I found myself gaining new insight about my students' tendencies and capabilities along with ways to better equip them for the tasks at hand.

Working with the entrepreneurial consultants birthed a lot of new perspective. When we hit the two-week mark, known to these experts as the "entrepreneurial slump," I found myself growing discouraged with the unannounced rise in apathy. Within academic circles, this type of collective disinterest is chalked up to senioritis, a term the consultants never used. Instead, they quickly helped me identify it as a natural phenomenon for any creative process, something they often see occur with their

professional adult clientele. This helped me combat my own discouragement and target the problem more accurately and precisely.

The consultants also helped me recognize the greatness of our accomplished feat. Frequently offering sentiment about how we had bit off more than we could chew, the experts urged us to consider the great impact of learning from failure. My students and I had a very realistic view concerning the complex difficulty that defined our journey, knowing that the outcome of failure was a prominent option. Therefore, when we succeeded, the victory tasted even sweeter. Though offered with the best intentions, the world of public schooling often feeds the lie that students can do anything and everything. The business world, though, seems well-versed with failure as a possible outcome for which we should prepare. Gaining this realistic approach helped students recognize the true effort and determination it would take to launch their magazine dream, pushing them to excel and allowing them to bask fully in their success, for they knew the true weight of it. Capitalizing on every available person's talent and time proved essential for the website creation and design team.

Soon in the process, it was evident that creative collaboration would be a difficult mountain to climb for students. Each class period's team of designers developed its own vision, and began stepping on the toes of every other team by altering an already completed task or starting an element that was not crucial for the website's functional completion. As the consultants grew more vocal about our potential failure, the designers grew more frustrated with their lack of visible progress. Their need for collaboration and clarity of communication across classroom boundaries pushed them to develop a physical website map for each class period to follow (an idea the consultants urged students to

consider). On a large piece of paper, a team mapped out all of the links and website essentials. Then, when each class period began, the design team would consult the map to see what steps previous teams had completed and what the next logical step would be.

Financial Aid. As the web designers and launch party planners progressed with their work, it became evident that financial support would be necessary for programming upgrades and party supplies. I proposed the problem to each class, viewing this as another opportunity for cultivating student ownership, critical thinking, and problem solving. A small group of students threw out the suggestion of a local business owner for whom they worked. They knew this man well and were familiar with his desire to help the local school system. These students worked on a pitch to deliver to their boss during their next shift and came back to school with a positive report for the rest of the students: the man and his business would sponsor our website and party under two conditions 1) he would need to preview the website before agreeing to continue and 2) we would provide him with free advertising on our web layout and at our launch party.

Students were thrilled by the potential backing of a notable business in our town, and this partnership further connected the relationship and relevance aspects of place-conscious curriculum. Students naturally rose to the new level of accountability now that the quality of their work hinged upon sponsorship by a man and company whom the majority of students admired. Senior Rachel Wilhelm, Web-Site Content Writer, commented on this unique element of interwoven accountability, "Once we started advertising about [the magazine], that's when I got serious because if we didn't get it done or do our part, then we would be letting down a whole town." Party Planner Levi Grainger also felt the impact of his contribution. He stated, "My motivation was

impacted greatly by the real-world situation because my town, school, and personal name was attached to this product. I wanted it to be the best." This new turn in our website's development sped up the web-design team's deadlines, allowing the potential sponsor adequate time to view the product. After doing so, he did not hesitate to provide the financial backing needed, for he wanted his name associated with our quality creation.

This type of exchange serves as one example of the potential partnerships that can arise from place-conscious curriculum when students are provided springboards for community contributions. By creating a product that offered a new service to our community, business were provided with potential partnerships for discounted advertising opportunities. In rural communities, this type of financial partnership offers circular benefit for parties involved: the school uses its academic production to invest in the community which encourages the community to pour back into the school.

Stereotypes Disarmed. Utilizing a place-conscious approach thrust students into real-world situations, which caused many facades of high school life to diminish. Students had grown used to seeing one another in typical school-settings, which tend to breed cliché stereotypes. This only intensified for some students who had been in the district for all thirteen years of their academic experience. Past failures, passions, and friends continue to dictate others' perceptions as students prepare for graduation. Stripping away the stereotypical context of school freed students to also strip away some of their stereotypical classifications.

In particular, one student, Sean Gibbons, found specific liberation when he was bold enough to request a role as a writer for the magazine. This young man was a star athlete with an intimidating muscular presence, and many students, assuming he made his

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choice in jest, were confused by his role selection. However, students were unaware that

Gibbons had a private passion for poetry. He worked tirelessly to write poetry

submissions for the magazine, and a committee of students selected one of his

anonymous pieces for publication. He beamed with pride and came to me privately to

ask if his full name could be attached to the poem once it appeared on the website.

Once students discovered the true identity of this poet, they were shocked and impressed

by how they had misjudged the class jock. The group of boys planning the launch party

approached Gibbons to see if he would read some of his poetry aloud at their formal

ceremony. Gibbons agreed. His family and friends cheered him on as he proudly read

his pieces over a loudspeaker in the auditorium. Another teacher at the school who had

worked with Gibbons in the past commented, "If nothing else, this moment should make

all of the hard work for this magazine worth it." Students benefited from the life lessons

that accompany the process of disarming stereotypes, but they were not the only group to

experience such a shift in thinking.

It is not uncommon for secondary educators to hear negative comments about the

teenagers with whom they work. One can safely assume that due to the confines of

typical structure, members of the community do not possess many opportunities to see

the full and unique potential of modern teens. By creating an environment that built

bridges over those confines, portions of our community were able to peer into the

creative contributions of our local teens. Once Mr. Bastian's piece was featured in the

local newspaper, the collective teenage stereotype shattered. Community members were

no longer hearing second-hand reports of what potential our kids possessed; instead, they

were reading about it first-hand. Not only could they gain confidence from *what* Bastian

spoke of, they could also gain confidence from *how* he spoke, which showcased him as a representative for academic and communication skills.

Cultivating Sustainability. Our specific community presents a unique quality, making us unlike many rural towns: we house a private university within our city limits. Despite the great opportunity to advance educational goals and achieve professional success amid locality, our students still possess a collective perception that their pursuits are lesser if they choose to attend this local university as opposed to attending a school elsewhere. However, by joining forces with professors and college students, to advertise our magazine, high school students were able to broaden their perceptions and assumptions about the university, seeing that it does not mimic their other educational experiences within the town, but provides the specialized experience they are seeking in a university. Once the advertising took off, students soon realized that a poetry course required collegiate students to submit finalized pieces for publication. This empowered a potentially lasting partnership that tears down the walls between high school and college. These connections also encouraged students who felt they were not qualified for the university-setting, as they recognized their product and insight as a valuable asset to the university's academic goals and requirements.

Future Plans. At the year's conclusion, students created a plan for the following English IV students to run and manage the site. Their long-range goals included more collaborating with the other buildings to facilitate writing mentorships with younger grades and more connectivity and purposeful collaboration with the university. Prior to the launch date, students had obtained zero submissions from adults in the community. They had hoped future classes could purpose after establishing a sustainable flow of

entries from local writers, making the literary magazine a notable part of our town's

culture. But when the next group of students came into my classroom the following year,

all of our well-laid plans crumbled, and the literary magazine remains untouched.

Uncovering the Key Components

After celebrating the success of such a massive undertaking, I felt ashamed when

I could not stimulate the same level of engagement and excitement with the next cohort.

I had witnessed the benefits of place-conscious education, and I was actively trying to

repeat the formula. Sadly, I kept coming out with the wrong answer. Students were,

once again, apathetic, questioning the purpose of our classroom pursuits. Then I realized:

I was using the wrong formula. Place-conscious curriculum, in and of itself, is not the

cure for the challenges that rural educators face. There are key components that make

successful place-conscious pursuits soar. Without these components, the curriculum is

no different than a globalized, one-size-fits-all approach.

Seeking to understand what differed, I spent time combing through the narrative

of the successful experience and compared it to the failure the following year. As I

looked back at student reflections and the detailed process of the magazine's creation, I

realized that the problems students identified at the start of the unit were in sync with my

conundrum. Maybe, I thought, those problems revealed the key to why the creation of

the literary magazine succeeded, while the managing of it failed. Maybe because

students drove the instruction, they had more buy in. These questions kept pushing me to

dissect the process and student reactions. After further analysis of the success and

failures of my own endeavors with place-conscious practices, the following elements for

success emerge: When analyzing the success and failure of this literary magazine, the

following elements for successful place-conscious practices emerge:

1. *Students must use standards/content knowledge to solve a pertinent problem.*
   Often, students ask teachers, "When am I going to use this?" Teachers should utilize this common question to drive their curriculum construction. Crafting coursework to demonstrate how and when content-specific skills come into practice will deepen student engagement.

2. *Teachers must cultivate student autonomy/leadership balanced with collaborative teamwork toward a unified goal.*
   Learning to collaborate within a team is crucial for success in the world. However, teachers must guide students to realize their personal strengths and potential within those collaborative attempts. Otherwise, students fall prey to the practice of looking to one student as the leader and allowing him/her to take complete control of group dynamics. In successful place-conscious instruction, the teacher becomes a guide for cooperative, democratic group dynamics that foster student voice from all participants.

3. *Teachers must learn alongside students and actively guide them through the process of tackling complex problems.*
   Teachers cannot be the keepers of knowledge. Part of learning involves learning how to learn. If we desire to coach students in becoming engaged citizens, we must let them view our problem-solving and learning in real time. They have to witness the murkiness of learning and learn how to tackle problems effectively. If teachers foster environments in their classrooms where students are only seeing the polished end product of a teacher's efforts, learning how to learn will rarely be accomplished.

4. *Accountability must be tied to relationship, not a grade.*
   In life outside of school, we are rarely assessed with an arbitrary letter. Because of this, grades are often not the motivator teachers hope for with all kids. To experience true motivational accountability and establish the human connection that leads to many of the benefits teachers are searching for within place-conscious curriculum, teachers must find ways to make relationships tethered to the learning tasks in the classroom. Students must experience the motivational burden of knowing their performance impacts another person, not just their personal grade in a course.

5. *Learning becomes a responsibility, not just an objective.*
   Learning is always a teacher's goal. By reorienting students toward a pertinent problem at hand, learning becomes a responsibility toward solving said problem. If learning is the *only* objective, students will tend to be more apathetic. Learning must be an active endeavor, not just an end goal.

6. *The local community invests in learning.*
   Place-conscious curriculum will always depend upon the local place. However, if the participants of the local community actively engage in the process, students are more likely to engage as well. Teachers must find educational stakeholders in the community who will commit to investing in learning. This can transpire in a variety of ways, so teachers must seek out people with roles that suit the unique needs of their classroom at the time. Not only does this showcase that the community *is* in favor of literacy, it also provides students with glimpses into the happenings of their local place.

7. *Students have authentic audience for academic pursuits.*
   One way the community can invest in the active learning occurring in schools exists within the opportunity of serving as authentic audience for students. Too often, students work only for a teacher. Teachers must find authentic experiences for students to demonstrate standards. If students are writing, how can they have readers outside of the school? If students are investigating historical events, how can they demonstrate what they've learned to local experts?

8. *Community members and stakeholders are invited to see learning in its active/organic states.*
   For the cyclical nature of place-conscious benefits to continue, the community must see students and teachers within all stages of learning. This cultivates the act of revision. Students and educators will revise ideas, plans, writings, etc. as they hear feedback from experts in the community or as they feel the pressure of those outside of the school seeing even the messier parts of learning. The act of revising will result in deeper learning and engagement.

These components are not confined to place-conscious pedagogy, but it makes sense that teachers see the massive benefits when they put the time into crafting their classrooms around place-conscious goals. The typical design of place-conscious curriculum may aid teachers in more easily encompassing these key components, in comparison to textbook-driven, scripted curriculum. However, it is not the phrase "place-conscious" that makes the lessons successful; success hinges upon these elements. This is why I found my lessons centered upon influential people in our community so lackluster and why the literary magazine did not continue in a blaze of glory the

following school year. Within those attempts, students were not empowered to solve a problem pertinent to them; instead, they were given an assignment. Students were not unified around a central goal; they were seeking individual pursuits separate from one another, though their products were strikingly similar. I was not learning alongside them; instead, I was the keeper of knowledge and expectations. Though I attempted to tie their accountability to relationship, in all actuality, there was little buy-in because the relationships were forced, inorganic, and necessary for the grade. Learning remained an objective because a unified goal would not crumble if learning ceased to exist. All of these factors restricted the input of our community, causing them to remain at bay.

The unique needs of a rural school like my own can be met with place-conscious approaches, yes. However, place-conscious curriculum choices remain obsolete when they are not built upon these foundational concepts. For schools to harness the benefits, cultivating organic learning experiences and empowering students to become contributors in a global society, they must seek to stiff-arm the one-size-fits-all mindset and allow learning opportunities to emerge from making these components the aim.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A. Assent to Participate in Research Activity

Assessing the Impact of Place Conscious Curriculum in a Rural Community

1. I am asking you to take part in a research study because I am striving to understand the impact of utilizing place conscious practices in the English classroom within rural communities. The information gathered will help me write a thesis and will aid in my work toward obtaining my Master's degree.
2. **You will not be required to do any extra work to participate in this study.** As a part of your regular work in this class, you will be asked to complete work and surveys that will provide information about your perspectives on various assignments.
3. I will be writing papers, and possibly giving presentations, about the findings from our classroom project. Any time I use any information from our project or Bolivar High, I will use made up names, unless you state that you want your real name utilized in the research. People who read these papers may still guess who you are, although this is unlikely.
4. There are no risks associated with participation.
5. By participating in this research, you are helping your teacher, as well as others, improve teaching by offering examples and testimonials of how to integrate better practices into English classrooms.
6. You are welcome to talk this over with your parents before you decide whether to participate.
7. If you do not want to be in this study, you don't have to participate. **You are still responsible for completing all of the course work, but it will not be used in the study if you decide not to participate.** Remember, being in this study is up to you, and no one will be upset if you do not want to participate or if you change your mind and want to stop.
8. You can ask any questions you have about the study. If you have question at any time, you are welcome to ask me!
9. Signing your name means you are 18 or older and agree to be in the study, which means your reflective essay, personal contract contribution, and survey input can be utilized in my writings/assessments. You will be given a copy of this form after you have signed it.

❏ I would like my real name utilized in the writing. Please do not create a pseudonym for me.

_____   _____
Participant's Signature   Participant's Printed Name

_____   _____
Participant's Age   Date

_____   __Amber M. Dlugosh_____   ___May 6, 2015_____
Investigator's Signature   Investigator's Printed Name   Date

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Appendix B. Human Subjects IRB Exemption

To: Catherine English
English
901 S National Ave Springfield MO 65897-0027

From: MSU IRB

Date: 6/11/2015

RE: Notice of IRB Exemption
Exemption Category: 1.Educational setting
Study #: 15-0483

Study Title: Place Conscious Curriculum in a Rural School

This submission has been reviewed by the Missouri State University IRB and was determined to be exempt from further review according to the regulatory category cited above under 45 CFR 46.101(b).

Investigator's Responsibilities:

If your study protocol changes in such a way that exempt status would no longer apply, you should contact the above IRB before making the changes.

CC:
Amber Dlugosh, English

Appendix C. Personal Contract

Because we are many parts working to create a cohesive product, we must be very organized in how we approach the process. Clearly articulating personal contributions, goals, and timelines is essential if we want to produce an English IV literary magazine by the end of this school year. Please carefully and thoughtfully complete your personal contract, with attention to the product as a whole. This will be a binding document, and you will be expected to uphold your outlined contribution.

English IV Literary Magazine Project
To contribute to the creation and publication of an English IV online literary magazine, I, _(your name)_____, will _____. My personal skillsets make me a reliable and beneficial person to serve in this authentic role because I _____. I believe my contribution is necessary to the project as a whole because _____. I believe my contribution will help in solving the following problem(s) from the course-wide brainstorm: _____.

Because English IV is a writing course, I will honor the course guidelines by integrating a written element into my contribution by _____. I believe my contribution and writing component align with specific course standards, and I will be assessed on the following (check all that apply):
- ❏ Recognize and effectively utilize techniques for clearly communicating content
- ❏ Produce writing that suits authentic purpose and audience
- ❏ Collaborate with peers efficiently, responsibly, and respectfully to produce a unified product
- ❏ Make executive decisions based upon research and utilization of the problem-solving process
- ❏ Engage classmates in the revision process by offering feedback and dialogue about a variety of contributions.

I understand that I will only have <u>eight</u> 82-minute class periods to complete my contribution, so my daily goals/tasks are as follows:
Day 1:
Day 2:
Day 3:
Day 4:
Day 5:
Day 6 (FLEX DAY):
Day 7:
Day 8:
I acknowledge that my contribution is necessary for the completion of the magazine. The proposed timeline is my minimal contribution, and I will be flexible and willing to work outside of class time to complete my goals and help my classmates achieve their goals.
In order to complete my goals, I need _____.

Because I am human, I possess weaknesses that will try to prevent me from completing my daily goals and overall contribution. My three biggest weaknesses are as follows: 1)_____ 2)_____ 3)_____. In order to overcome these weakness and promote productivity
I will….
    1.
    2.
    3.

Knowing that this is a large-group project, I will work with the course-wide goals and preferences of the majority in mind. In order to honor the majority and gain feedback from peers about my contribution, I will _____.

My peers, teacher, and parents should recognize I have completed quality work when I _____. If I reach this end goal before the eight days have completed, I will _____ to ensure I am filling class time and consistently contributing to the project.

_____   _____
Student Signature   Date

_____   _____
Teacher Signature   Date

_____   _____
Parent/Guardian/Mentor Signature   Date