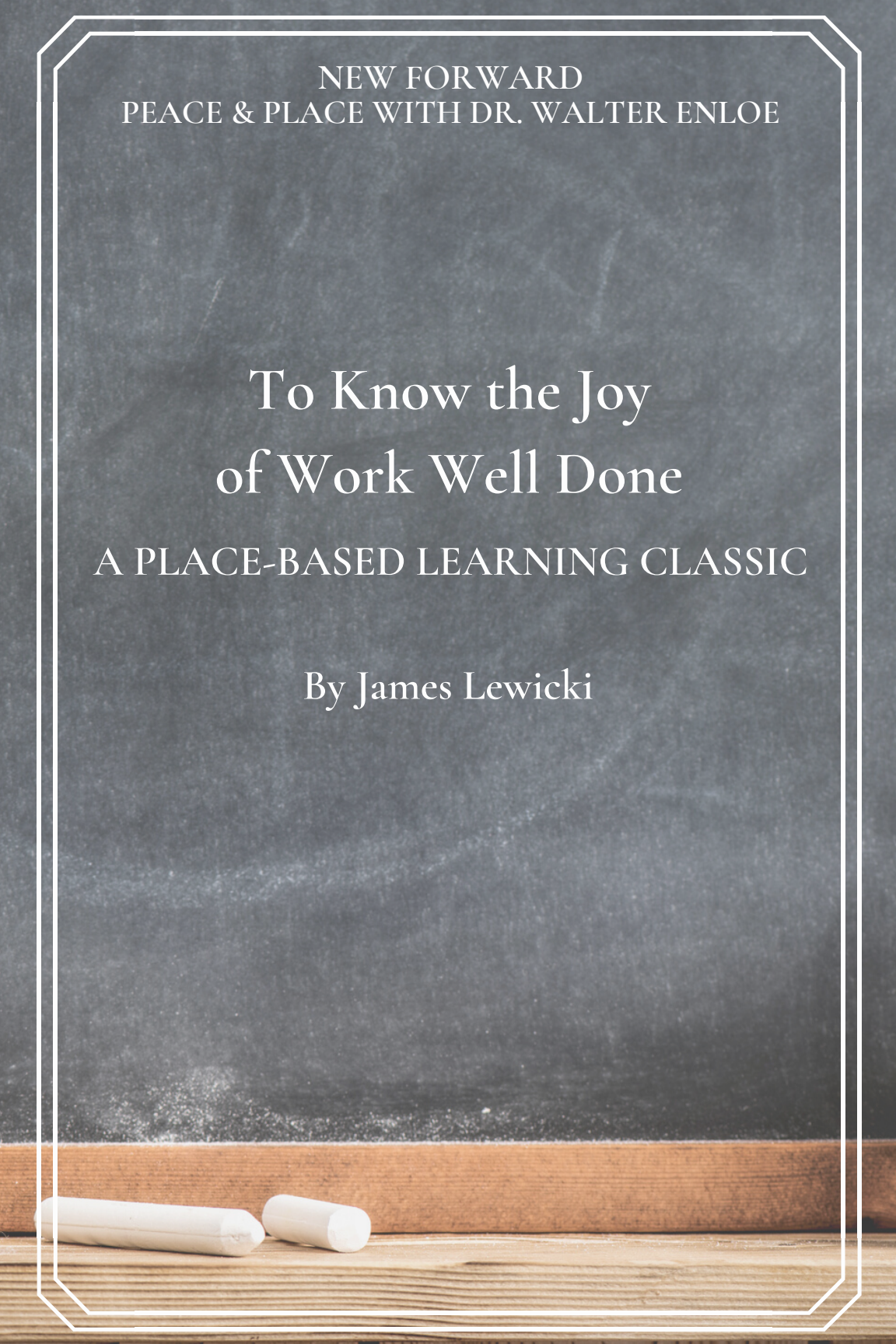
NEW FORWARD
PEACE & PLACE WITH DR. WALTER ENLOE

To Know the Joy of Work Well Done

A PLACE-BASED LEARNING CLASSIC

By James Lewicki



To Know the Joy of Work Well Done

Building Connections and Community with Place-based Learning

By James Lewicki
AA, BA, MS, MEPD

NEW FORWARD
Peace & Place: Hiroshima to the Kickapoo Valley
By James Lewicki & Walter Enloe

Selected Photography José Luis Vílchez

Please contribute to the ongoing work of Joy.

You can go to:

jameslewickieducation.com
Contribute $8.97

- $2.99 to Joy's author, James Lewicki – thanks for honoring my work over the years with great educators and friends of education like yourself!
- $2.99 to my **Place-based Project Fund** which connects students, teachers, and schools with each other to share, collaborate, and implement great place-based projects!
- $2.99 to my **Coaching Fund** for place-based teachers to receive free or low-cost coaching, thereby bringing place-based project learning alive in classrooms and community.
- Any amounts over 8.97 are donated to the Place-based and Coaching funds equally.

Advance Praise

In this wonderful little book, James Lewicki offers a clear account of the great potential inherent in place-based pedagogy. His passionate, even tenacious, commitment to invigorating the intellectual life of his students illuminates the poverty of our current system—one premised on teaching as telling, curriculum as textbook, and assessment as standardized testing.

As we march headlong into ever more complex social and ecological dilemmas, the educational hope of the nation lies with educators like Lewicki who can help teachers in classrooms everywhere shift from the artificial to the real.

Paul Theobald, Woods-Beals Professor of Urban and Rural Education, Buffalo State College

This account of James Lewicki's work as a place-based educator will help us see, in the words of the poet Yeats, that "Education is not the filling of a bucket, but the lighting of a fire. In addition to the generative community concepts Lewicki urges us to consider, his work is full of the voices of students he's taught and learned from -- telling us the story of work well done.

Louis Martinelli, Poet, Playwright, Essayist, Educator

Serendipitously, I had the good fortune to work with James Lewicki as he led a team of educators to establish a charter school in rural Colorado. He instilled an exceptional sense of camaraderie as he gave us ownership to build something extraordinary. He has the genuine ability to identify and bring out the best in teachers and students, fostering inquiry and wonder that delights students when a teacher is given permission to be the designer of their life in the classroom and community.

James enjoys the journey that inspires meaningful work. He has mastered the art of understanding the learning landscape. After reading his book, "*To Know the Joy of Work Well Done: Building Connections and Community with Place-Based Learning*", it's clear that he has an acute ability to make purposeful connections between place, community, art, nature, and academics. He breaks through the boundaries of the four walls of the classroom to spark the magic of student engagement. This can happen when a teacher is given the freedom to teach from their heart. James shares that magic in his stories, experiences, and research. Now with this book, inspired classrooms can bask in the joy of work well done.

His quotation from William Glasser is poignant as he states, "Life in school must be thought of as life itself, not simply preparation for later life. Life in school—for adults as well as for children—must be lived fully." James sees a learning experience under every leaf, encouraging meaningful connections that open the mind to the next encounter fostering lifelong learning in students and teachers alike.

James nurtures the inherent joy and curiosity that exudes from each of us, breaking down the walls of limitations empowering students to find their wings to soar as they navigate the power of place and its limitless possibilities.

Karla Parker Choat, Artist, Explorer, Kindergarten Teacher

❖

Knowing the Joy of Work Well Done is an up-beat testament of joy and struggle, and of joy in struggle. Many teachers wonder how, given all-too-common threats, fears, and outright prohibitions, they might teach well under the ordinary conditions of schooling. Knowing the Joy of Work Well Done shows how we do good work.

Lewicki shows us, when we help connect kids and communities, and when we foster thoughtfulness and wonder in that connection. It will encourage fellow teachers that such connections exist at hand, and at every turn—most surprisingly, perhaps, in our own minds, and already.

Craig Howley, Associate Professor, Ohio University Director of the Appalachian Collaborative Center

James Lewicki's Knowing the Joy of Work Well Done captures the essence of constructivist learning and active pedagogy through his place-based lens. Joy is a powerful collaborative journey of teachers as learners and learners as teachers in community -- based upon mutual respect and reciprocity.

As Lewicki writes, echoing John Dewey, education must build upon the natural impulses of the human being: to communicate, to dialogue and reflect; to construct, build and invent; to investigate, explore, experiment and question; to express creatively and artistically, to awe and wonder. Joy is full of those stories.

Walter Enloe, Professor Emeritus, Hamline University Principal Teacher, Hiroshima International School

James Lewicki's book *To Know the Joy of Work Well Done: Building Connections and Community with Place-Based Learning* should be required reading in every teacher preparation program. It should be required reading for every adult who mentors young people. In example after example, James has captured what it is to teach and to learn and to experience the joy that results from such work. In 1998, having been a teacher for just over 10 years, I read "Only Connect," an article in the American Scholar written by William Cronon (coincidentally, like James, also from Wisconsin and referenced on p. 90). Cronon claimed that liberally educated people are powerful in that:

- *They listen and they hear.*
- *They read and they understand.*
- *They can talk with anyone.*
- *They can write clearly, persuasively, and movingly.*
- *They can solve a variety of puzzles and problems.*
- *They respect rigor not so much for its own sake but as a way of seeking truth.*
- *They practice humility, tolerance, and self-criticism.*
- *They understand how to get things done in the world.*
- *They nurture and empower the people around them.*
- *They follow E.M. Forster's injunction from Howards End: "Only connect. . ."*

Seeing connections and using them to make sense of the world is at the heart of learning and teaching. Cronon's list became my mantra as an educator. Meeting James in 2005 was the turning point for making Cronon's list practical! Turning theory into practice is second nature to James. I was in the process of designing a new small high school from scratch. Having access to his wisdom and experience provided me with the necessary tools to turn my dream into reality.

James is perhaps the finest educator I have ever met! Teaching is instinctive to him, and his passion and pragmatism continue to inspire and instill confidence that real education can be done. Read this book if you want the "why" and the "how" of education that considers the context of individuals and place.

It is no coincidence that Joy is a key guiding principle for the school I founded. The Phoenix High School mantra is: "Joy is essential to learning, and laughter mixes naturally with serious discussion and hard work."

Tracy Money, Ed. LD Teacher, School Developer, Researcher

❖

In this 2022 eBook edition, I have added photography from José Luis Vílchez, a world class photographer, who with my daughter Cora Rose, is traveling throughout the Americas on a converted school bus sharing Art and Music in many rural places in the truest place-based spirit. José was so kind to share his work to give your reading eyes a text break. He has a visual gift to capture people and places around the world.

José is a fine art painter, photographer, and musician from Nicaragua and the USA. He is a graduate of the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, one of most prestigious art schools in the world, and he has traveled to over 70 countries. José co-founded the Lido Art Center in Guangzhou, China where he also conducted portfolio reviews to help students gain acceptance to the world's top art schools. His work has been shown in galleries in the United States, China, India, Nicaragua, and Romania.

Instagram: @jose_luis_vilchez_photography

Acknowledgments

Vito Perrone, Harvard Professor, an exceptional educator, spoke with force about excellence in teaching when he asserted in a 1991 letter to teachers, "The exceptional teachers I know are passionate about learning. They have deep interests in some aspect of learning: history, literature, and science. They are so steeped in this passion that they could manage well if all the textbooks, workbooks, and curriculum guides that fill the schools suddenly disappeared. They see connecting points everywhere."[1]

A history professor shared with me a gem of a book about teaching published in 1922. The introduction had many wonderful statements, one caught my eye. "He [the student] must not, because of any scholastic aristocracy on the part of the teacher, be unable to make his contribution to human needs and to know the joy of work well done."[2]

The above 1922 maxim and Vito's 1991 letter provide my bookends for excellence in place-based learning. The 1922 maxim reminds teachers that to connect with students and "know the joy of work well done." Vito's 1991 letter asserts how teachers of excellence, "see connecting points everywhere." My story springs from a world of friends, colleagues, and students, too many to acknowledge individually, that I recognize as my taproots.

To the score of YMCA campers and camp counselors - you were my genesis for what works in community. Without you, my subsequent work as a teacher would have been much different. With you in mind, I never wavered for what I knew to be true.

To the many students of the North Crawford School District, where I taught for 17 years, thank you for the classrooms alive with inquiry, joy, and laughter. Those memories and moments continue to guide my work.

Whether as teacher or principal -- at North Crawford Schools, Kickapoo River Institute, Academy of Arts and Knowledge, and Pagosa Peak Open School -- each school gave to me the gift of caring professionals. Being part of a school community is the best.

Thank you to for your sharing and great work with students!

Having lived a decade on the road, to the hundreds of teacher colleagues across America, thank you for your collaborations and insights. Your dedicated teaching enables students to know community well. Thanks to those in the Rural Trust that continue to inspire others, especially Julie Barsch and Doris Terry Williams.

Thanks to the EdVision's pioneers Doug and Dee Thomas, Ron Newell, and Walter Enloe along with the many outstanding advisors who excel in project-based learning. Walter, thanks again for the renewed collaboration with Peace and Place – many more to come.

And to a few special colleagues -- shining lights and fun partners over the years -- your energies, enthusiasm, and engaging love of learning inspired my work! Your lessons to me are sprinkled and celebrated in Joy.

Tracy Money, Nicole Luedtke, Steven Rippe, Renee Ullman, Mark Ropella, Kristie Moder, Kelly Camber, Dave Mueller, Steven DeMay, David Debbink, Jennifer Koslowski, Kevin Erickson, Terri Catania, Steve Plum, Laura Dahm, Lisa Welch, Wanda Richardson, Lorna Floyd, Matt Mordecai, Jada Kankel, Mary Lane Peterson, Diane Andrejasich, Kristen Rubenthaler, Anna Hahn, Allison Sloan, Jamie Montoya, Keaton Smith, Phyllis Nakagawa, Caylee Ammot, Shannon Keigan, Connie Logsdon, Valerie Schmitz, Steve Plum, Victoria Rydberg-Nania, Jeff Nania, Paul Tweed, Emily Puetz, Barry Golden, Shane Krukowski, Brian Olson, Julie Tess, Josh Tarrell, Gloria Bissmeyer, April Rosetti, Kelly Bruno, Karla Parker-Choat, Emily Murphy, Sarah Chapple, Linda and Harold Bright, Jan Bontz, Maria Martini, Wil Loesch, Kristin Higgins, and last but never least the illustrious Queen Darlene Machten.

And finally, to **Leita Slayton**, a small town 50-year one-room school public school teacher in the Kickapoo Valley who inspired students -- day in and day out -- for her entire life!

My students enjoyed her many stories, letters, and artifacts when we visited Leita in her log cabin alongside the Kickapoo River.

Thank you - Family

Families, and the love therein, remain like a lighthouse, strong and guiding. Aurian & Ashley, Hana & Daniel, Cora Rose & Luis, Jamie, and Sabrina; your zest for life and compassion for others shows me what courage is all about. Continue to reach your dreams as you make a difference in the world around you! Renee, my life partner for over five decades, your kindness, friendship and love is like our blue Colorado sky. Mahalo nui.

Dedication

Joy is dedicated to my parents, Ray and Donna.

Each understood – deeply – through living with and giving to each of us - how education is the lighting of a fire.

My siblings – John, Tom, and Mary Ann – and I -- hold them in our hearts for sharing a joy of learning lasting a lifetime, and beyond.

"An experiment in place-centered education, I'm going to teach a course on the local watershed: The Black River. You could teach the same kind or course using a seashore, an island, a mountain, or a desert.

I want to immerse students in a natural system. Water engages all of our senses. We drink it. Some people are baptized in it. We swim in it, bathe in it, listen to the sound of it. A river is a biological thing, a geological thing, a social thing, a legal artifact defined by laws and regulations, and it has a history.

A course on a river acts as a good solvent for compartmentalized knowledge."

David Orr

PREFACE

Peace & Place: Global to Local

Stories from Hiroshima
& The Kickapoo Valley

By James Lewicki & Walter Enloe

"The principal goal of education is to create people who are capable of doing new things, not simply repeating what other generations have done. People who are creators, inventors, discoverers.

The second goal of education is to form minds that are critical, can verify, and do not accept everything they are offered. The great danger today is from slogans, collective opinions, ready-made trends of thought.

Jean Piaget

"Space is something you move through. Place is something that owns you and you own it."

Walter Enloe

Walter

I came to Hiroshima in 1980 at age 31 to be teacher-principal at Hiroshima International School, a small, parent organized school for foreign children grades K-8.

I was returning home where my parents had lived since 1963. Typically, the school served 30-40 full time students from ten countries in three multi-age, multi-grade classrooms, self-contained with art and Japanese language/culture integrated into the school day. The school was a blend of American British curriculum, "instruction" was in English, half the students were ESL or bi/tri-lingual whether Japanese or other (e.g. Dutch, French, Danish, Portuguese).

A third of the children were bi-racial, bi-cultural and or bi-lingual. Most students were at the school for at least three years, their parents working for global businesses (e.g., Mazda, Mitsubishi), as university and language schoolteachers, missionaries, the Atomic Bomb Casualty Commission, and the occasional American professional baseball player for the Hiroshima Carp. There was also a cadre of part-time students who met late afternoons: Japanese citizens in English Conversation classes and a group of 15-20 Japanese children who attended Japanese Schools but had lived at least three years in English-speaking countries whose parents wanted them to retain their "English" language skills and "International or American identity."

I taught a self-contained 6-8 class of fifteen students and was school principal before and after school and during lunch. Teaching in a self-contained multi-age, multi-grade, multi-national, multi-language classroom where parents expected an 'above standard' education was a challenge.

Most importantly, to teach in Hiroshima, the city whose self-proclaimed ideal was to become "the International City of Peace and Culture" brought a special obligation. Part of what attracted me back to Hiroshima at the height of the Cold War was the idealistic belief that I might make the

world a better place through my teaching and leadership in an international school that contributed to Hiroshima's vision.

I began the year as a novice principal, though experienced teacher having taught 9 years at the Paideia School in Atlanta. Our Hiroshima school had legal challenges with its landlord; the new building, designed as a two-story warehouse without heating, a sprinkler system or a fire escape, had a collapsed wall from the rainy season the month after I arrived with no insurance for repairs. Ford Motor Co. was beginning to work with MAZDA and was exploring our school for up to twenty additional families.

And then there was the greater issue of teaching and learning. We used a variety of methods: group work, cooperative and peer coaching, thematic and topic study. Over time, I discovered that hands-on collaborative projects, mediated between speaker/thinkers of different languages, both

transcended language and created phenomena termed "Nihongrish" (Japanese English hybrid) or "Portugrish." There were also ample opportunities for individualized study and self-grading (e.g., a table with teacher "answer books" for children to check their math and language arts) as well as a variety of class field trips.

I "made a go of it," as a more experienced British colleague noted (he was building a 39 ft sailboat over the next five years to return to Tanzania). I gave myself that first term an A- for effort and a B for satisfactory performance (on a good day!). But I wasn't satisfied. I knew we had the talent to do more!

In February 1989, I decided with my co-teachers that we would have a school-wide field trip to Peace Park to hear Pope John Paul II speak, visit the various exhibits and monuments, and have a picnic.

A few parents questioned the trip, and a few folks even decided to keep their children home. Nevertheless, we teachers viewed this as a powerful learning experience for our students. As the school leader, I also saw it as a public relations opportunity to introduce our international school to the larger Hiroshima community. How might we contribute to Hiroshima's message for the world: NO MORE HIROSHIMAS?

Additionally, for me it was a deeply personal matter. From the time I had lived there at age fourteen I had struggled -- unconsciously at least -- with my own culpability as an American, living in Hiroshima the strange life of victor, the hegemonic life-style of "movie and rock and roll star."

Hiroshima is a special place as much for its symbol of nuclear apocalypse as it is for hope, renewal, and resurrections. It is a local place, vibrant, alive in the present, struggling to forget the past. Hiroshima is a global place, alive in the present, frightened that few will heed the warning that its hibakusha (a-bomb victims) inculcate and embody.

The essence of the Pope's message, following his greetings in nine languages to the thousands assembled in Peace Park was a clear, simple set of truths.

- War is the work of man.
- War is destruction of human life.
- War is death.
- To remember the past is to commit oneself to the future.
- To remember Hiroshima is to abhor nuclear war.
- To remember Hiroshima is to commit oneself to peace.

Following the ceremony, a group of us went to the Mound of the Unknown, the repository tomb of the ashes of some 70,000 victims, surrounded by an iron fence festooned with thousands of brightly colored paper cranes of peace. We stood there as an entourage of priests and photographers arrived. People were gathering around Cardinal Carsoli, Secretary of State of the Vatican, who had accompanied Pope John Paul II to Hiroshima and Peace Park that day.

We were greeted in Japanese and English; "Hello, how are you today?" inquired Cardinal Carsoli to us. We spoke for a few moments and as he turned to leave, he asked us, "What do you do for peace?" We stood there in silence. It sunk in very much for me those next few weeks.

Over the next months we began answering that question in tentative and inarticulate yet tangible ways. We invited international schools to join us in fundraising to erect a monument in Peace Park honoring the Pope's visit. We established sister school programs with our local elementary school, a K-8 rural school in the mountains east of Hiroshima, and later the City's school for physically challenged youth. We organized service projects through the World Friendship Center for elderly a-bomb victims. We joined with performances and exhibits at the City's weeklong May Day Festival and Peace-Love Festival.

But it was in the month after our encounter with Cardinal Carsoli that I decided to introduce the kids in my class to an organizing idea, first developed by John Dewey and William Kilpatrick, coupled with an activity pedagogy proposed variously by Adolphe Ferriere, Jean Piaget, and Celestin Frienet: project and placed-based learning built on the estuary of the Ota River: Hiroshima (wide Islands) - Past, Present, and Future. We followed Kilpatrick's year-long model of an upper elementary class organizing itself around the topic and place of Ancient Egypt: building pyramids, producing papyrus, mummifying a chicken, writing in hieroglyphics, making bread from thrashing wheat to baking in a clay-made oven.

We were committed deeply to the development of basic, essential skills and concepts, honoring each student in the present for who they were holistically, and what they knew, and taking them as far as we together could accomplish. With that in mind, I decided to approach the topic of Hiroshima: Present, Past and Future through the modalities of learning about, learning for, and most intentionally learning through.

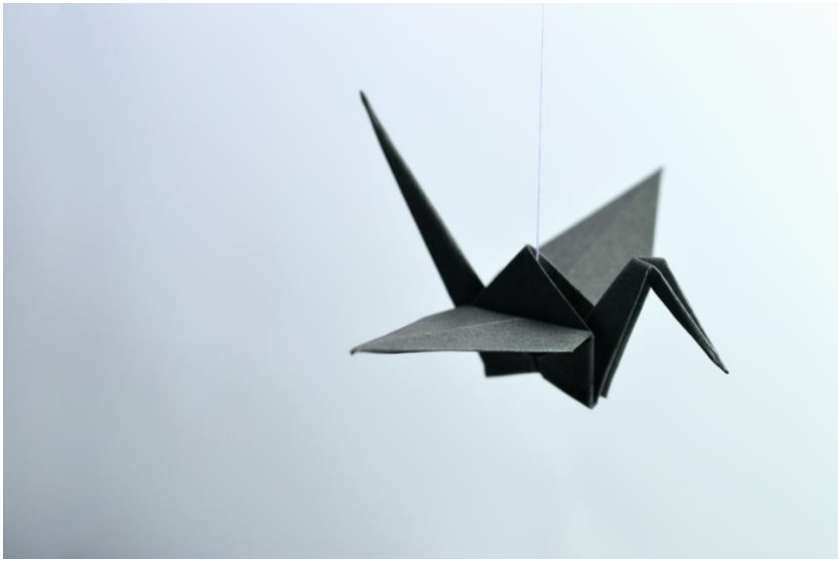
That story is captured in my books Oasis of Peace (1998) and Lessons from Ground Zero (2002). We took a hybrid approach engaging four interrelated outcomes; place-study, Hiroshima themes, thousand cranes, and guiding questions.

1) The place study of Hiroshima through language arts, history, science, mathematics, art and physical education was imbued with variety; e.g., discovered that Hiroshima had invented a local game, Esuki Tennis, badminton size court, foot high net, tennis ball and paddles!

2) We explored Hiroshima themes through mind-mapping and free association and generated a variety of connected topics: agriculture led to rice cultivation present day, while during the Jomon Period; oyster cultivation led to the Yayoi period shell mounds, pearl divers, and the eventual development of Hiroshima as human made islands where the estuary of the Ota River met the Inland Sea. This led to the

building of Hiroshima Castle and the 17th century fiefdom of the Asano Clan.

3) And we planted the germ of a seed that grew in 1985 to become the world renowned Thousand Crane Club.



4) Guiding Questions. We asked guiding questions requiring in-depth research, field trips, letter writing, interviews, and the writing of reports:

- What does Hiroshima mean to the world?
- Who speaks for Hiroshima?
- Why was Hiroshima the first A-bomb city?
- Was the bomb necessary?
- Why were the hibakusha not supported and shunned by so many?
- Why doesn't the Atomic Bomb Casualty Commission treat a-bomb victims?

- Were there any foreign casualties? (Yes, forced Chinese and Korean laborers, three Russian families, a German priest, and at least 8 American British prisoners of war).
- Why so many orphans and what happened to them?
- What was located on our school property and the local playground on August 6, 1945? In 1845?
- How do we find out?

Local peacemakers were interviewed. All were hibakusha (bomb victims). The high school teacher who studied in the United States, Miss Shibama; the Rev. Tanimoto, a graduate of Emory University and leader of the "No More Hiroshimas" Movement; the current Mayor Mr. Akiba, and Miss Matsubara, one of the disfigured "Hiroshima Maidens," and docent of the Peace Museum, all agreed. Letters affirming our work arrived from overseas: from Dr. Helen Caldicott, leader of Physicians for Social Responsibility, and the noted authors and peace activists Norman Cousins, Pearl Buck, and John Hersey.

A letter shared from the Thousand Crane Club caught the spirit, *"Most important, (the club) is a time to work together, to talk about friendship and conflicts, and to discuss and think about a lot of things. We don't have any suggestions other than when we did this (folding 1000 cranes) we learned a lot about each other, we helped each other, and now our class is really close. We folded these cranes for peace and in memory of Sadako, but really, we helped ourselves."*

"Connecting with others
in a place called home
is the foundation
of peace-full-ness."

James

When Walter writes simply of his experience in Hiroshima – I am reminded how PLACE resonates for all. I am reminded how the power of place is a universal principle with a very local reality; all places have stories; all places have histories. And each story is unique to its own place. For Hiroshima, the arc of its history, from its founding in 1598, was traumatized with a tragedy of epic proportions on August 6th, 1945. This event was so "place-critical" that the words from Cardinal Carsoli, "What do you do for Peace?" were akin to a greeting, echoing the power of Hiroshima. It's like standing with others at Wounded Knee and asking a stranger, "What do you do for Justice?" Asking this with one's feet upon the ground at Wounded Knee both honors the place and is real for the person asked.

For most places the story of the past is less dramatic than Hiroshima, yet always meaningful to those who inhabit these places. The stories of home can be profound. This came home to me when I had the opportunity to study the Kickapoo Valley with 15 amazing students for an entire year. Together in our little school bus we came to know our place engaging over 100 days in the community; field trips became field studies.

One morning, in mid-fall, a seemingly innocent question during a silent reading time led us down a path of immense undertaking. It was a classic example of 'generative emergence' that so often occurs in place-based inquiry, almost always from a student's contribution. A student was reading a history of Black Hawk, the Sauk chief who defied U.S. treaties, when she looked up at me, a question having been triggered, and asked, "Did the Kickapoo Indians ever really live in the Kickapoo Valley?"

Her classmates on the eclectic chairs and singular couch in our living room unhooked their literary eyes from their books. I paused, and replied, "I really don't know." The ensuing discussion led us down an inquiry path. What did we

really know about the Kickapoo Indians? No one had ever read of the Kickapoo Indians actually living in the Kickapoo Valley. Nor did we know why the valley was named Kickapoo. With this historical gap in mind, we discussed ways to bridge it. We knew archival research would be critical. How to find a historical document placing the Kickapoo Indians in the Kickapoo River watershed?

Next week, off we went in our little bus to read the original US & Kickapoo Nation treaties at the historical archives located at the University of Wisconsin – Platteville. We read all seven original treaties. Clearly, in all the treaties, the land ceded by the Kickapoo was in Illinois not Wisconsin. The treaties described territory bordered by the Wabash and Vermillion Rivers of Illinois, not the Kickapoo River in Wisconsin. Our query remained unanswered.

A few weeks later in Madison, at the State Historical Archives room, we were reviewing scores of notes, letters, and transcripts of meetings between chiefs recorded by a U.S. Indian Agent from 1790 to 1810 at Prairie du Chien, along the Mississippi River.

Prairie du Chien is a few miles downriver from the Kickapoo River confluence with the Wisconsin River, which empties into the Mississippi River at Prairie du Chien.

While we sorted through these artifacts, you could have heard a pin drop in the stately marble-pillared reading room. Suddenly a student shrieked to fill the hall. Backs straightened. Heads of historians working at their own archive-filled tables quickly turned.

"I found it!" Jenny gasped. We gathered around her table. Eyes looked upon a tattered yellow parchment, an original record of a speech by a Kickapoo Chief given in Prairie du Chien in 1807, a mere twenty miles from the Kickapoo River. Jenny had found the first historical document to place a Kickapoo Indian, let alone a Kickapoo chief, within a day's horse-ride from the Kickapoo River! This didn't fully answer our questions, but it certainly whetted our appetites.

The other question pressing the student's inquiry buttons was how did the valley receive the name Kickapoo? We now understood that it had not been the Kickapoo Nations tribal land, so why name it Kickapoo? And who?

A few weeks later, on a separate research trip back to the Archives, looking into the history of Haney Creek, a tributary of the Kickapoo River, a student was reading the private letters of John Haney from 1842, one of the first white men to enter the pristine valley soon to be named Kickapoo.

In one letter to his father, he mentioned two Native American families living along the banks of the river below his cabin. Could these have been Kickapoo Indians?

This historical association led the students to hypothesize that John Haney, one of the first settlers in the Kickapoo Valley, who had a creek, township, and school named after him, may have originated the name Kickapoo for the river which ran 100 miles from its source near Tomah, Wisconsin, past his log cabin at Haney Creek, to its confluence with the Wisconsin River.

The students knew that John Haney was knowledgeable about Native Americans because they also found that day in the

Archives a hand-made Ho-Chunk Dictionary that Haney had created for the Ho-Chunk Nation just north of the Kickapoo Watershed. He would have known the tribal affiliation of these two families.

It certainly refined our line of questioning. Was John Haney, an early settler, the person who named the Kickapoo Valley?

What a chain of research events unfolded that fall. Place based inquiry, like a compass bearing, led us forward to discover the story of our place we shared – students and teachers alike– the Kickapoo Valley.

Hiroshima and Kickapoo contain universal place-based principles. A key principle being that students OWN the WHY.

My students were looking into origin stories; Walter's students were looking for ways to contribute to the community through Peace interactions. Importantly, the students owned the whys.

- Why am I doing this?
- Why is it important?
- Why will it matter for my place?

Key threads self-organize the work. For my students, the thread was discovery. For Walter's students, the thread was contribution. The activation of each student's ability, whether through discovery or contribution, was the fuel that drove this place-based work.

When a "student's capacity is turned into ability" – to echo Jerome Bruner – then the vibrancy of learning is so strong that the air seems to radiate.

I'll leave it to a place-based student, Nicole, from her unique Colorado community, to express this idea,

"I learned more about myself, my peers, and my community than I could possible imagine. It is incredible to be with so many people with a strong passion working together to make their dreams happen. I learned to trust and respect people for the good that they had. It is an incredible feeling to work with people and make a successful product. I did things that I didn't think I could."

> ***"For me, the most important place on the farm was the cattail marsh at its north end. To get there, you took the farm's interior road, a grass track that ran east to the edge of the maple grove and then north as far as the waterway that drained into the slough from the east. The physical distance was not quite half a mile, but so far as I was concerned it might have been halfway around the world."***
>
> Paul Gruchow (Grass Roots: The Universe of Home)

Chapter 1
Vignettes

The great thing in the world is not so much where we stand, as in what direction we are moving.

Oliver Wendell Holmes

Learning, to me, is where you are taught something, and it stays with you as you move on.

Jenny, 14, Iowa

In the shifting sands of Canyonlands National Park, I led a dozen college students on a survival trip. With several layers of clothes, a wool blanket, poncho, and handfuls of food, ten students and myself, along with two colleagues as leaders, trekked and 'camped' for five days through the remote regions of the park. It was their final exam: hands-on learning.

The first night we didn't sleep. We huddled around a campfire talking, laughing, and occasionally shivering as the evening stars moved overhead. The dark before dawn saw us drift into sleep. Before our hazy dreams had time to take hold, we awoke with the first rays of sun. Shaking off the night, we soon found ourselves hiking along a sandy creek bed.

In the twilight of this desert day, after hiking many miles through meandering canyons and sudden sandstone escarpments, we searched for a campsite. With the sun beginning its desert descent, we spied a small rock shelter up a narrow canyon, just large enough for the twelve of us. We built a fire and rested, sharing our blankets and patched ponchos for a ground cover.

Sunset peeled back to reveal, beyond the reach of the overhang, a universe of twinkling stars. Warmth and flames quickly deepened the red ocher of the rock ceiling above. Lying on our backs, we suddenly noticed handprints, petroglyphs from ancient Anasazi campers. Firelight revealed not only hands, but also animals and designs. For a brief moment we all breathed in awe. A timelessness had captured our hearts. Tired yet warm under the shelter, we gazed at the long-forgotten art, sharing an iconic moment defining our group's experience forever.

A rural community located in Southwestern Wisconsin midway along the one hundred miles of the meandering Kickapoo River. For many years and several generations, Soldiers Grove endured the annual flooding of the Kickapoo River, waters

lapping along the curbs of its downtown businesses. Barlow Brothers hardware, the Pontiac dealership, and movie theater – among others – had had enough.

Bring in the Carter Administration with innovative federal funding around solar development. In 1979, the entire downtown was moved a half-mile away to a plateau with a view of the river rather than being located right alongside it. The new downtown with its strange angled rooftops became America's first complete solar village.

Ten years later, I was teaching 4th grade students a couple blocks from the old downtown area, no hint of buildings anymore, simply large patches of cut grass and a handful of depression era trees extending enormous limbs over this bare space. Walking upon these empty city blocks, my young students observed that the only trees in the 15-acre downtown area were these ancient survivors of the big move. An idea, maybe ambitious for fourth graders, but I as a new teacher, and the students – so full of life – didn't hesitate for a moment. We decided to replant the once thriving downtown area; now a park without any trees less than sixty years old.

After mapping the park, planning with a Wisconsin state forester, and presenting a proposal to the town council, we had the green light! In the next six weeks, these twenty 4th grade students replanted the former downtown with over 20 seven-year-old white ash, burr oak, and soft maple trees. They also planted over 100 small shrubs for borders and wildlife.

That summer, a dry one, you might drive through town and see students carrying buckets of water from the Kickapoo River to their favorite sapling. Planting trees is like rekindling hope, placing a marker in the future. From planning to planting, to sustaining each tree, these kids made a difference in their hometown.

Thirty-two years later, these trees provide shade and color to my student's children, now of the age when their parents planted those trees and shrubs long ago.

❖

Such gathered instances, from wilderness moments to civic engagement, make up my journey of life-long learning and moreover my work as an educator with a teaching pedagogy called **place-based education.**

I write from a lifetime of place-based teaching and learning: whether as teacher, school coach, field study leader, principal, conference facilitator, trainer, or wilderness instructor. Many times, I've been successful and many times I've stumbled, yet each experience inevitably created understanding of what works well, and what does not.

After working as a camp director for the YMCA in the 1980's, I was a classroom teacher for the next 17 years, teaching elementary and middle school, and even developing a high school charter school. I taught all subjects in a self-contained 4th grade classroom, taught Social Studies and English in Middle School, and even interdisciplinary seminars and workshops in the charter.

After years of teaching, I was a school coach for a decade working with amazing educators, who created innovative schools and programs. What a blessing to experience great teaching in over 20 states, where powerful teamwork resulted in generative learning.

Recently, I was principal for two small schools in Colorado: the first a K-5 Arts Academy and the other a brand-new K-8 Place-based School. After all the years of teaching and coaching teachers, I finally joined the ranks of being a school leader. As expected, both experiences were amazingly complex and rewarding at the same time.

As I write this tonight, I am back to coaching schools and faculty during this CoVid era – reaching for the same excellence that I have known in public education for a couple generations.

Joy shares this journey. I continue to learn what works well in schools and in communities. A few truisms ring universal.

Building great connections between students and teachers, and shaping great school culture, requires art as well as science. Heart is as important as mind. In offering what works well, especially its place-based version, I will move from intellect to compassion, theory to practice, objectives to outcomes, vision to reality, and from sixth sense to common sense.

Learning is always full of risk. Treading unknown territories and perceiving fresh patterns are part of this powerful process. Assimilating new knowledge that indeed changes behavior can be scary at times. Nevertheless, each teacher faces these challenges because they realize that what they do in today's schools will multiply many-fold, benefiting tomorrow's world.

Whether you teach in the rolling hills of southern Virginia, the diverse neighborhoods of Chicago, the Northwoods of Wisconsin, the changing suburbs of Denver, or the rural Oregon coast; **To Know the Joy of Work Well Done_**will affirm your important work. I intend to provide stories, examples, resources, and ideas that work for you and your students today, as you both engage the world, together.

Chapter 2
Origins

The significant problems we face cannot be solved at the same level of thinking we were at when we created them.

Albert Einstein

Learning, to me, is making mistakes and learning from them. Learning is how to solve and answer questions and problems.

Israel, 15, Wisconsin

When I was growing up I never thought I would one day be a teacher. I imagined being a forester working in a Colorado National Forest, or playing 1st base for the Chicago Cubs after Billy Williams retired, or sailing into the setting sun of Melville's South Pacific.

Entering my fifth decade as an educator, I cannot imagine anything in the world that I would rather do. How did that happen?

Slowly, as I left adolescence and gained the experience of adulthood, I realized being a teacher wasn't about playing an authoritarian role, commanding the attention of a classroom, or being the fountain of knowledge. As an adult, I discovered that being a teacher was about something I loved to do, learn. I've always loved to read and write, thrived on travel, and enjoyed being in the midst of people.

Upon graduating from college, I worked for seven years with the YMCA, providing vital experiences with youth that shaped my future years as a teacher. I created programs for youth, directed summer camps, and organized family activities year-round. These responsibilities asked the most of my emerging skills -- a wellspring tapped to this day.

Periods of patience, moments of humor, and various episodes of creative initiative all came into play at the "Y". Moreover, the nature of developing programs at the YMCA insisted on the recipients of those programs often being critical planners. It wasn't unusual for a half-dozen teenagers to initiate a community service project or facilitate youth leadership trips.

One particular attribute had a long taproot, which I have used all this time; vital today, as it was back then. **T.K.C.F. The Kids Come First.** It was there on the YMCA bulletin boards, part of the 'Y' lexicon, and present in the valuable relationships between camp counselor and camper. In my early 'Y' work, the TKCF mantra began a deeply rooted emergence, coming into my thoughts during both small and major decisions. I didn't realize it at the time, but TKCF was a wonderful way to stay focused on the honor/integrity continuum of children and youth.

What we now call "voice and choice" became apparent to me

as being critical to successful programs. After years of living a TKCF mantra, I now gather how often counterproductive issues of adults need to be pushed aside. In effect, TKCF demands its own focus regardless of the competing adult issues.

This TKCF disposition transitioned to my role as a teacher. I earned a reputation of being student-centered. This unconditional regard for the hope and dreams of children and youth continues to frame the how and why of my work.

My YMCA work took me many places: from Olympia, Washington; to Newport, Rhode Island; to Wausau, Wisconsin; and even Maui, Hawaii.

The year I worked for the Maui Family YMCA, I returned with my wife Renee and our two young children. Part of my responsibilities included directing a small camp/youth hostel on the Keanae Peninsula situated along the famous Hana Highway. Drive to camp was a couple hours from the downtown YMCA. I would try to get there several times a month.

Jimmy, the Hawaiian caretaker, embodied the TKCF philosophy through his Aloha spirit. Whenever Renee and I arrived with our children, Aurian and Hana, or when I drove out with a vanload of youth for a leadership retreat, Jimmie greeted us like long-lost relatives. Grabbing a long bamboo pole, he would reach up and select two or three ripe papayas, or a bunch of bananas, lowering to each kid's outstretched hands as a gift. Laughing and gesturing, he would show us around the camp, pointing out the change nature had bestowed, or share a humorous tale of recent Keanae news. My children, as well as the youth, loved Jimmy because they knew he was **always there for them**. Jimmy embodied the TKCF idea.

Why has this TKCF endured? I believe its relevance is anchored in listening and observation. When a student knows they matter, whatever follows, matters as well. Essentially, the construct of inclusion intertwined with empowerment. What exists at the heart of this dynamism is mutual reciprocity, a giving and receiving, a back and forth, a symbiotic relationship.

The first step in teaching is listening; and the first step in

working with children and youth is in placing priorities in order. The children and youth come first, afterwards and in rightful proportion, comes the adult world.

The second principle I learned from the YMCA – after years of directing day camps, residential summer camps, and youth leadership programs -- is how consequential compelling relationships are to an individual's learning. Relationships matter. Children, youth, and adults all need and want to be part of something greater than oneself. This need to belong, to be meaningfully connected, provides vital energy to schools, whereas the thwarting of that tendency is often the cause of hurtful alienation and tales of woe.

My work with the "Y" gave me countless opportunities to work with small or large groups of youngsters, often with the task of developing activities and programs. The 'curriculum' of a camp, for instance, frequently came from the campers themselves.

Camps run well when campers take responsibility, along with the counselors and director, to create an outdoor community of peers and young adults caring for each other. Everyone is involved – everyone important.

This lesson was driven home in a unique manner when I directed a wilderness camp in the Colorado Rockies. In between YMCA camps, this was my one and only experience at directing a private camp. I had spent the spring hiring camp counselors from parts of Washington and Colorado. In the meantime, the new owners had promised to have the lodge completed by June. When I showed up early on a crisp Rocky Mountain June morning, "camp" consisted of six tepees as folded layers of unassembled canvas in the dusty loft of the barn.

One delay led to another. We spent a good chunk of the staff training week cutting the poles, peeling them into use for our soon to be camper's home away from home. We erected this tepee camp on a small promontory, populated with Aspen trees, overlooking the ranch and its 25 horses and corral below.

Teenage campers arrived from Salt Lake and Denver and distant states as well. Just as I had been promised a bit more, the

campers expected something a bit more, like breakfast more civilized than oatmeal over a fire.

After a few days, I sensed that we needed a break from the rigors of wilderness living. I decided to drive the bus to the closest town, Steamboat Springs, twenty miles south, and spend the day at the hot springs pool and water slide. I didn't anticipate that my great idea for an innocent pool trip to unwind would turn into an opportunistic mutiny. Without choice, the campers made choices they could control.

Opening the bus doors at the hot springs entrance, several campers took off running down the Steamboat Springs main street looking for the closest phone booth to call home. They were done with this wilderness character-building stuff! The rest of the day is a long story for a campfire. Needless to say, after returning from town, I knew things had to change.

We gathered for an all-camp meeting in the barn. These campers were 13 to 16-years old. I listened to them. It seemed they wanted a new schedule, an alternative way to approach the day, some different activities. I told them to plan the next week of camp. I left them alone. When I came back, they hadn't just redesigned the week; they had done it in a manner where all voices had been heard. In the end, they didn't reinvent the world, rather they rearranged 75 percent of what the camp staff had originally planned. The remaining 25 percent of new ideas, however, made all the difference in the world. They campers had claimed ownership for the successful remainder of the camp session.

I continue to follow that 25 percent threshold. When students are provided the latitude to collaborate with the teacher and help with the design of at least 25 percent of the lesson, unit, or project, then a tipping point ensues that drives 100 percent ownership. These campers from long ago taught me a clear and compelling construct, **students have the ideas, will, and capacity to drive their learning.**

In a science class, if the academic objectives ask for an understanding of energy flow through a habitat, why not the students determine if it is a forest, prairie, or wetlands? In an

English class, if the academic objectives ask for an understanding of adjective and adverb clauses, why not have the students decide if it will be practiced in informative, persuasive, or creative writing? In a social studies class, if the academic objectives ask for oral presentation skills regarding a local or state policy, why not have the class research the community needs to arrive at a list of issues to debate?

Additionally, there are the open-ended student-initiated projects that follow a passion, an interest, or a nagging idea. Why not spend a day on main street, at the local park, or business and find out what connects with each student? The stuff of community is always more interesting than the stuff from pre-cooked learning materials.

ENGAGE, ENGAGE, AND ENGAGE AGAIN!

Busy designing learning for our classrooms, teachers often forget how students can help us construct a good share of the work that we typically construct for them. When this collaborative effort occurs, motivation and follow-through carry a life of its own.

This is especially important in the identification of place-based learning areas in the community. Enlisting students in this exploration process is a frequently mentioned highlight, for students feel a real sense of power in designing a school experience.

When students design and implement at least 25 percent, there is empowerment! Each day students – through their open-mindedness, compassion, and caring – prove to me a simple reality. They show how endless possibilities reside over the far horizon, around the next corner, and up with the sun each new day.

Another kickstart for this belief was when I was a student, then later an instructor, at the National Outdoor Leadership School (NOLS) based in Lander, Wyoming. Many wilderness experiences – whether cross-country ski camping in Yellowstone

during January's deep cold, hiking in the desert escarpments of Canyonlands National Park, or wilderness training and climbing in the Grand Tetons created for me a vivid awareness. Beyond the complexity of cities, suburbs, and small towns, a great natural world exists with its own set of rules. Shifting from wilderness to school, or from wilderness to city life, underscores how learning possibilities are as endless as the many worlds that we inhabit.

Importantly, these NOLS courses were my first significant foray into the power of small group social dynamics. As a cohesive NOLS expedition, we had gathered a powerful team momentum that a solitary person could never hope to equal. Overcoming physical challenges had buoyed our social relationships and capabilities. We define that capacity building as social capital today, back then it was simply the bonding and cohesiveness of small group work.

Leadership was pervasive and a servant of the group's needs. At the time, hiking along the Continental Divide, I was still a half dozen years from entering the classroom as a teacher. Yet, these NOLS foundations informed my teaching practice. Solving problems, learning from mistakes, listening to varied viewpoints, and caring for each other, were all attributes of successful NOLS expeditions. Naturally, each emerged as anchors in my future classrooms.

At age 28, I chose to teach public school rather than continue down a YMCA administrative path that would have assigned me farther and farther away from the campers and youth. It was a good career change. As a teacher, I was able to take the best of my YMCA years and bring it into the nine-month pathway of my classroom. I taught for 17 years. Lots of stories, and great experiences. I was honored as a Wisconsin Teacher of the Year finalist and recognized as Crawford Country Environmental Teacher of the Year.

After teaching, I engaged in consulting schools and educators across America for a decade. Much of that work rests within this small book – especially the voices of students from rural and urban settings in dozens of states. After consulting, I returned to

the primacy of working in just one school. In Colorado, I was the principal for first one, and then another wonderful elementary schools with outstanding faculty. Today, I continue to work with teachers across America.

What have I learned? Working with students in self-contained classrooms, or departmentalized teaching, or being a school principal, I have experienced a variety of instructional landscapes. Allow me a moment to share what I have come to know that works well across this diverse landscape.

Engagement Works

Schools are places that engage democratic principles of inclusiveness and participation to actualize powerful learning. A place of diversity is implicit, yet a place of communication, respect, and accepting differences defines greatness for its members – young and old alike.

Caring Energy Feeds the Work

Changes in schools are incremental, with sparks of innovation occurring in a lesson, unit, or field study. Caring displayed by teachers is awesome. This vital and resilient energy, day-in and day-out, enables pathways of success.

Questions Drive Creative Lessons.

Teachers demonstrate a fundamental drive to create the best learning for those students in front of them. What are the productive ideas that work well? What are the student voices saying to me? Where in the community can we engage our services? What kind of project considerations work for us? What can a new student look forward to? How can a reflective moment reconnect experience each day? How can I answer the call of these challenging times?

Place-based Learning Works

Besides being powerful and purposeful, place-based learning involves the students in the life of the community. This fits. Students are needed; each community has needs to be met; together and in partnership, the school, through place-based projects, can re-invigorate the life of its home community.

Community Matters

Schools are pulling hard during tough times, making the very best learning possible and never keeping eyes off the prize. And, in so doing, reveal what teachers have known for years, that students are full of passion and possess the capacity as learners to make a difference in their neighborhoods, towns, and communities.

Inspire and Aspire

Reach for your dreams. The best way to prepare is to jump in with both feet as a learner. For teaching is certainly a life-long commitment to learning. And when teachers learn along with

students, students become inspired; then each student aspires to tomorrow.

Always Improve by Always Asking

Each National Outdoor Leadership School instructor candidate taught peers outdoor skills like map and compass, rappelling, cooking, or first aid. We received feedback from our colleagues. During my initial teacher training, my supervisor built an analysis of my efforts. When I was a standards reviewer for the American Camping Association, we visited a camp, so we had an opportunity to learn from each other. This emphasis on continual feedback and continuous improvement is vital.

Teaching Taproot

From 1988 until 2005, I taught in a special corner of rural Wisconsin in the North Crawford School district. I held different positions that, in many respects, were worlds apart. My first several years teaching self-contained 4th grade, with all the subjects making up the life of my class; many wonderful memories, a great place to start teaching.

Next, for a handful of years, I taught 5th/6th grade social studies and reading. During this time, I benefited from excellent colleagues as we shared this exciting time of the intermediate school years.

My next stop was teaching English and Language Arts to seventh and eighth grade students. I'll never forget the year of school construction and building a new wing when I taught these students in the emptied-out weight room!

Then, I ventured into the world of a charter schools – albeit the smallest one in the state. With my bus license in hand, two worthy aides, 22 students and a fully integrated place-based curriculum, we spent over 100 days in the field, learning all subjects, and for that matter, all levels of problem-solving and group dynamics as well.

North Crawford was a great place, providing the climate to let teachers and students do what they do best - learn and collaborate

together.

I learned so much. The news is good from that educational Lake Wobegon! Students will teach, students will lead, and students will achieve academically, reducing any high stakes test to a din of irrelevant ashes in its fiery wake. All students have tremendous power awaiting a purposeful endeavor led by a facilitative teacher.

For those 17 years, I was able to teach with a group of distinguished teachers: Russell Gilbert, a Presidential Awardee in Math and Science, who showed me a passion for learning that filled his students with myriad moments of pure joy; Eileen Robel, my neighbor and math teacher excellente, who demonstrated an untiring commitment to the teaching of mathematical understandings to all her students, tirelessly tutoring individual students during lunch and after school to ensure success; Joni Pederson, Wisconsin's 2001 Teacher of the Year; a joy and inspiration to watch as she inspired K-12 students in Art; John Armbruster, a social studies master teacher, one day lecturing his class as Abraham Lincoln -- in full attire; the next week, convening a three-day Civil War reenactment of Gettysburg with campfires, overnight, and local reenactors sharing in the event; Lauri King, a creative science teacher comfortable with energetic seventh graders in Life Science for one class, followed by a handful of Physics students the next period; Marsha Chestelson, a Phy. Ed. Teacher who engaged students in a love of life sports whether ice skating, cross-country skiing, rollerblading, hiking, beach volleyball, mountain biking, or swimming; Karen Brandl, a fellow English teacher, with a magic touch, who transformed one of the hardest classes to teach, Applied Communications, into the most popular and productive class around; and John Lynch, a classroom neighbor and 4th grade partner – his example of teaching reading, the best of the best. Nor should I forget that he threw for more recess touchdown passes than Bart Star and Andy Rogers combined!

Each of these professionals shaped my role as a teacher, and therefore, framed much of my success in place-based teaching.

Though every teacher is compelled to blaze a unique teaching trail, many of my learning landmarks along the way have much in common with my colleagues whom I deeply respect.

I thank them, for any book on teaching and learning, is influenced profoundly by the community of teachers where the author has practiced.

What landmarks have I gathered? First and foremost, an abiding **respect** of each student. Effective teachers simply do not encounter sustained disrespect in their classrooms. Why? Because the caring established by the teacher and the exuberance evident within the learning itself is an antidote to disrespect.

Students, as veterans of years of teaching styles, admire places of genuine learning as opposed to places of rules, regulations, and rote drill or simplistic instruction. Second, student brains are hard-wired for complex learning intertwined with **social interaction** in lessons that have meaning to them.

In my teaching work, I have strived to place students first, as I constructed learning IN the school and OUT in the community. I have arranged To Know the Joy of Work Well Done with student voices. I have also shared my own stories portraying the nuances that work, or in some cases don't.

For decades, I have engaged place-based learning with my students. More recently, I have been fortunate to help others deliver solid place-based learning. Insights accumulated, some shared in this book, provide a window into the intrinsic worth that so many, young and old, teachers and students, parents and administrators, attach to this place-based work.

As Kelley, 14, poetically proclaimed after 100 days of learning in the community, "What you learn makes you who you are. And you never stop. Learning is an eternal flame that catches everyone in a bonfire of brilliance. To learn is to live life."

Another student voice shines alongside Kelly's insight. A singular expression of the power of place-based learning. Sandi captured it well as she wrote the following poem on a field study day, perched on a sandstone outcropping overlooking the quiet spring day along the West Fork of the Kickapoo River, in

southwest Wisconsin. Her poem was simply stunning. Like her flute music that would fill the gym many early mornings, she captured the melody of words in her gaze across the valley.

Have You Ever?
by Sandi

Have you ever stopped to look,
to see what you could see?
Have you ever really wondered,
what maybe could be?
Have you ever sneaked a glance,
at wild birds in the sky?
Have you ever seen a stand of oaks,
and stopped to wonder why?
Have you ever seen a river,
a-winding off afar?
Have you ever walked upon a ridge,
and wondered where you are?
Have you ever counted colors,
as you strolled along the way?
Have you ever witnessed fall,
and its colorful array?
Have you ever stopped to look,
to see what you could see?
Have you ever really wondered,
how it changes you and me?

Chapter 3
What's Place-based Learning?

If a child happens to show that he knows any fact about astronomy, or plants, or birds, or rocks, or history, that interests him and you, hush all the classes and encourage him to tell it so that all may hear. Then you have made your schoolroom like the world.

Ralph Waldo Emerson

I had never known just how fantastic science could be. For me being in the field, mucking around in crystal ponds, spending whole days outdoors and using all my senses to take in the knowledge that textbooks try to pound in with facts, was wonderful. For me there is no better way to introduce students to a subject than by literally making it real to them. Learning took on a whole new dimension for me.

Ximena, 14, Wisconsin

The Harvard Graduate School of Education quoted Lewicki when it discussed the power of place-based learning in its research compilation **Living and Learning in Rural Schools and Communities.**

"Pedagogy of place brings school and community together on a common pathway dedicated to stewardship and life-long learning. It is teaching by using one's landscape, family, and community surroundings as the educational foundation. Significant learning takes place outdoors and in the community. This community expands outward from local landscape and home, to regional realities, to international issues. In coming to know one's place, one comes to know what is fundamental to all places."

"Place-based learning is, at its core, a personal journey, and a relational journey as well. Each student redefines their relationships with the land, with the people, with the community through an increased understanding of home -- driven by purposeful learning."

❖

By sharing student voices, I hope to underscore the taproot of place-based learning, many moments when the fire of learning was alight, and the student community focus bright. As a continuing and consistent part of my life's work, place-based learning has been a worthy partner.

Place-based learning is a term that embraces a philosophical and pedagogical approach to learning, a compelling blueprint for a school, grade level, subject-area department, or self-contained classroom. Place-based learning has deep and interlocking historical roots, permeating education literature from John Dewey to today. [1]In my first few years of teaching, I taught self-contained (all subjects) 4th grade. One event was an important marker in alerting me to the power of place in a student's learning cosmology, a serendipitous event to serve as one of my original touchstones.

Blang, Bling – the school alarms went off. Early morning fire drill this early spring day. Hundreds of shirt-sleeved students milled about snow-free sidewalks, talking in staccatos of enthusiasm, the warmth and sunshine activating awareness of the changing seasons. Each student soaked in gallons of fresh air, aware of the contrast between a winter of 'insideness'. The first warm day in a long Wisconsin winter. We soon went back inside. During my lunchtime, I thought of a journaling experience that might capture the moment.

Later this very same day, I led my 4th graders back outside for this journal activity. The day before, the wind had whipped, the air temperature never breaking 30 degrees. The students stepped outside into a 65-degree calm, blue sky. Huge amounts of water were melting from assorted playground snow piles. Miniature lakes built from snow dams broke free, releasing a flurry of sound as water cascaded downhill.

Our class found the only place to write – a piece of sun-dried sidewalk running parallel to the playground. Each student sat down, took a few sensory moments, and then wrote in his or her journal. Erica, 10, wrote with a strong flourish of pen across paper, and in a few stunning moments handed me the following.

> "Spring certainly has its miracles. What miracles? Baby animals, rushing water. But to me, there is something deeper in spring. I have memories. Memories of my Grandpa playing with me when I was only five. Memories of my family taking trips. That's what I find special in spring.
>
> Everyone finds something different in the rushing water, the returning birds. Not in sight alone, but in thought and in heart. When I look into the partly frozen river, I wonder how many people, old and young, have listened, seen, and wondered as well.
>
> I wonder how long it will be until the partly frozen river will be destroyed by the coming of spring. This is my favorite time of year. Everything is new. Everything is warm and bright, inside and outside. Spring is magic."

My head lifted from her journal, I smiled at her. She smiled back with a knowing look. I can touch the feeling then, today -

surprise, delight, and appreciation.

Isn't it amazing the bottomless capacities of students to connect a piece of writing or drawing or song to her deep thoughts? Again, and again, I have experienced student creations, activated by the places around them, to be profound and potent. Given the time and space and place, young students will readily engage in thoughtful writing like Erica's piece.

❖

jameslewickieducation.com contains tools, lessons, and resources to support your great teaching as you engage your students! Over the years, I have experienced many kinds of place-based learning. Each learning experience echoes the sound of community and school joining forces.

.

Maple Syrup Company

My colleague, Russell Gilbert, and myself worked with our 6th grade students in creating a maple syrup company. They tapped trees, bottled the syrup, made $1,000 in profit, and formed a foundation to return $100 grants back to the community.

Oral History

Each spring, my 4th grade students would visit Leita Slayton, a 50-year veteran small town teacher. Leita was a remarkable woman who lived well into her 90's in the same log cabin her family built when they first arrived in the Kickapoo Valley during the 1850's. My students were inspired to research and narrate each family story of how they came to call the Kickapoo Valley home.

Biotic Restoration Project

The Kickapoo River Institute students conducted monitoring of hydraulic, plant, and wildlife changes in a Department of Natural Resources (DNR) wetlands restoration project on 1,750

acres of new ponds. This project entailed longitudinal field studies working with a DNR soil scientist, hydrologist, and wildlife biologist.

Local History Studies

These same KRI students conducted primary source research to examine the Kickapoo Valley Civil War veterans, pioneer heritage stories, and investigating a student's query "Did the Kickapoo Indians ever live in the Kickapoo Valley?" This effort asked for extensive archival research behind Native American treaties and Upper Mississippi early 19th century history.

Native Plant Propagation

Students learned to propagate native plants from seeds and cuttings. Working with a local farm, students mastered techniques, then partnered with an AmeriCorps watershed project to transplant these plants.

County Beach Handbook

Students created a handbook of area beaches containing information that included scientific and geological measurements, diagrams and facts, historical events, an identification for sea life, recreational information, ocean conservation information, maps, photos, drawings, etc. Working with a local geologist and harbormaster, the students involved various citizens, fishermen, divers, historians, and game wardens that also contributed to the handbook.

Local Economic Development

A high school Future Business Leaders of America class conducted an economic inquiry into the spending patterns of members in their community. Results indicated how much money was being spent outside the county, compromising the local tax base and, ultimately, contributing to the demise of county businesses. Sharing this information over six months while conducting a 'buy local' campaign, students were able to increase

county spending by several million dollars.

Watershed Analysis

The Colorado Department of Wildlife partnered with several high schools to collect, tabulate, and compile necessary data regarding the Yampa River watershed. Student completed a comprehensive river analysis: pH, alkalinity, hardness, dissolved oxygen, metals, total dissolved solids, and water temperatures at different points along the Yampa. These student researchers provided agencies with valuable data, as they applied citizen science at a 'useful' level.

Tide Pools Brochure

Meeting a need in the community for an informative brochure, high school students combined photography and advanced biology to produce a brochure and website of tide pools along the California coast.

Original Historical Research

A group of middle school students discovered new facts about their neighborhood in a community history project related to local architecture. The neighborhood surrounding the school had modest sized lots with a number of houses designed in the cottage or "Craftsman style." Student research revealed the Craftsman movement and the Sears and Roebuck catalog, which sold thousands of "assemble yourself" home kits at the turn of the century. With a copy of the 1900 catalog in hand, they discovered several genuine Sears Roebuck homes, verified their findings by checking deeds and building permits from the town office.

Fine Arts CD

A school produced an original CD title "Winter on the San Juan Ridge" that comprised original songs, artwork, storytelling, and poetry by students about their rural place. The $1500 profit from the sale of 500 CD's helped create a new non-profit venture, Children Reaching Out, offering items in a catalogue, created and

marketed by young people. This visual and performing arts project was achieved with tremendous support from a variety of area photographers, recording studios, authors, and small business people.[10]

Solar Design Projects

Middle school students engaged making solar devices. Experimenting with the power of the sun in small groups, discussing, dreaming, delegating – is a project unto itself.

Food Security Project

A school in Western Colorado engaged its elementary students with a mosaic of food security projects like an instructional garden, production farm, student-run farmer market distribution, universal free snack program, food pantry contributions, and an October full harvest lunch for 200 people cooked and served by the K-5 students.

Coloring Book

Create a coloring book between one class in one state and another class in another state. Sharing amongst students the unique features of the place they call home.

Watch projects as students talk about the learning.

- A Prairie Project in Northern Wisconsin with students in grades 4-8.
- A Community Study Day where students and families spent the day learning in the community about the community with community experts.
- Dozens of Place-based projects from students in grades 6-8 in a community of 800. Learning from the experts in middle school multi-age teams.
- Great projects with a field biologist, building a Gazebo classroom from the forest, and learning our local stories. Local place-based local scavenger hunts!
- Middle school students talk and share about terrific field study and research habitat field projects!
- Literature Project: All School Multi-age Literature Circles for 2 hours daily with grades 6-12.
- High School Interdisciplinary Projects. Great Teachers + Dedicated Students = Joy of Learning!

Place-based Work Builds Community

Placed-based projects bring everyone into the fold. Numerous community people enabled the depth and sophistication of these above projects. An interaction between school and community

builds a momentum upon itself, generating new contacts and avenues of study.

From my vantage point, the unheralded hero of successful place-based learning is the community itself. Using the daily life of the community to draw out lessons is nothing new. John Dewey set the philosophical tone early. Vito Perrone, noted Dean of Harvard Graduate School of Education in the 1990's, described Dewey's approach to education.

"Dewey stressed the need for a "new pedagogy" that calls upon teachers to integrate the content of schooling with the activities of daily life. He understood the prevailing separation between school and life as assuring a limited education for children and young people, emptying the possibilities. In addition, he viewed education at its best as growth in understanding, capacity, self-discovery, control of events, and ability to define the world–in other words, as always leading somewhere**."**[8]

Somewhere was often close to home. Dewey believed education was at its best when students were learning from "the familiar material of ordinary experience."[9]

David Orr, Paul Theobald, and David Sobel are higher education thought leaders about place-based teaching and learning and its contribution to community.

Roots.

David Orr envisions place-based learning as "a patient and disciplined effort to learn, and in some ways, to relearn the arts of inhabitation. These will differ from place to place, reflecting various culture, values, and ecologies. They will, however, share a common sense of rootedness in a particular locality."[2] Orr sees place as purposeful schooling.

As a place-based teacher for 17 years I often asked myself questions that helped shape my lessons.

- How well do our students really understand their home communities?
- How well do they grasp the many unique features of

their local landscape?

- What stories from elders have they heard?
- What stories from elders have they not heard?

Whether a rural area, small town, suburban enclave, or urban neighborhood, there are literally thousands of ideas that place-based learning can embrace to provide students this 'rootedness'.

Possibilities.

Paul Theobald describes how place-based learning can bring subject matter into a forceful means for student understanding. "The school's place allows educators to take what is artificial out of the schooling experience. "[3] Theobald details this by digging into the subject area possibilities of place-based learning, "Students can arrive at a deeper understanding of, say, mathematics, when it is used to chart the trajectories of local disposable income. They arrive at a better understanding of life sciences by doing an audit of local flora and fauna. They understand history as a force in one's life when they chart the historical developments that have left their community in its current condition. They understand the power of aesthetics in one's life when their efforts in art class culminate in a community mural, or when the music class captures the ethos of an era and shares it with other generations."[4]

From kindergarten to twelfth grade, schooling has become largely an inside occupation. We limit children and youth from engagement with the outside world when they are inside for most of the day; moreover, we limit them from the vitality and richness of the community –its elders and experts when these other adult contacts are seldom developed in depth. Students are missing out on the vast potential of community study, habitat study, and developing deep understanding and connections to one's place. Rather than intensive field studies, students are left with the occasional field trip.

Where does the community really fit into the learning at hand? How can the interests and issues of small villages, rural towns, suburban enclaves, or urban centers be brought front and center into each student's academic life? For students, it isn't just their

bodies that seldom get out; tragically, their view becomes too parochial as well. Young people have so much to offer the life of their community.

Nature Immersion.

David Sobel founded the Center for Place-based Education. Its website shows dozens and dozens of place-based projects across the country, where each student experiences the community anew. Sobel implored us to remember that, "Wet sneakers and muddy clothes are prerequisites for understanding the water cycle."

With a flourish David clearly advocated for immersion activities for children and youth so that the connections with each other and the earth would by strong, dynamic, and valued. Sobel shared, "If we want children to flourish, to become truly empowered, then let us allow them to love the earth before we ask them to save it. Perhaps this is what Thoreau had in mind when he said, "The more slowly trees grow at first, the sounder they are at the core, and I think the same is true of human beings".

Community Sensibility.

Place-based learning is not exceptional; rather it is education with the familiar material of the local place. Dovetailing science standards and art standards into a Botany project on local flora expands the range of a student's ordinary schooling experience. I have named this cornerstone principle of place-based learning: COMMUNITY SENSIBILITY, the blending of common sense and community awareness. Teachers embrace this community sensibility by infusing academic objectives with community needs, becoming indistinguishable from each other.

On one memorable field study, we were hiking through a pasture to an upland limestone formation. I recall a student, with a tongue in cheek query, lifting a barbwire strand high enough so that I could duck under it, asking, "Hey, Mr. L. is this when we go from our chemistry class (water monitoring at the wetland) to our English class? (Journaling atop the limestone outcropping awaiting us above).

There is rich learning evident in local history, main street economics, and natural habitats; to pull only three foci from the hat of place-based learning.

I have presented place-based learning to hundreds of educators across America and abroad. I seldom ever receive "barrier talk" about the place-based concept itself. Most teachers readily grasp that local government can be a social studies workshop, watershed hydrology a great field-based science activity, forestry management a math project, and the local newspaper a fulfilling internship.

Revising this work in January of 2021, my teacher colleagues and I are so aware that 2020 is behind us. 2021 is a hopeful year unfolding anew. Now is the time to dream big and engage students with place they call home.

Partnering

Place-based learning is often evident in student-led and student-initiated projects; yet it is more than projects alone. A critical community-partnering dimension added to the mix is also needed. Barbara Cervone, Executive Director of What Kids Can Do, a non-profit advocate who views students as full contributors to society.

I love quote on the WKCD website from Deborah Maier, "There's a radical – and wonderful – new idea here…. that all children could and should be inventors of their own theories, critics of other people's ideas, analyzers of evidence, and makers of their own personal marks on the world."

Barbara stated this partnership idea when she pointed out, "The project work by students always involves a mentor, sometimes also an internship linked to the project. In the case of the Rural Trust, the project work by students also must respond to and fill a community need; PBL [place-based learning], in the words of the Rural Trust, is a strategy through which "schools and communities get better together.[5]

Service.

Place-based learning is also about service, attending to the community. Woodhouse and Knapp describe that place-based

pedagogy emerges from the particular attributes of a place, is inherently multidisciplinary and experiential while often including a participatory action or service.[6] This service aspect is a great way to actually originate a good place-based commitment.

Holding the community and its needs in consideration as students discuss their next academic steps often reveals some great project ideas. Like the 4th grade tree planting idea; often what is missing from a community becomes the gap that students want to bridge. And when they fill this gap successfully there is a wonderful sense of achievement. Cheri, a high school senior from South Dakota, echoed this sentiment when writing at a place-based conference: "We visit the elderly in my community, and I visit my friend whose name is Hilde. She is 80 years old, and she is a widow. She lost her husband and never had any children, and she looks at me as her daughter. Hilde makes me feel needed, she never reflects on the bad, but the good. She has given me a chance to reflect on my future and given me a light I would never have seen before. This is the light of hope, courage, and bravery."

Social Change.

Place-based learning can also be examined through the lens of social change. Interviewed for the What Kids Can Do website, Doris Williams, of the Rural School and Community Trust emphasized how building a partnership between young and old benefits both. She explained, "The adults have history and wisdom of the years, but the young people have their energy! And they are the ones who are in touch with the current situation, and wisdom from the years means nothing if you're not in touch with the current situation. It doesn't mean a whole lot if you don't have the energy to do something with it! That's what young people bring. The civil rights movement would never have been a movement without young people. So, it's important to link young people and adults, and get them respecting each other and respecting what each other has to say and what they think."[7]

From the community's perspective, place-based learning often asks community members to participate as partners in the education of the youth. Each community has numerous people with a wide range of talents and experience who can contribute – applying and enriching the place-based curriculum. People with thoughtful ideas about place proliferate throughout each community. Exciting ideas, what's the first step? Here are some important considerations that involve valuable aspects of place-based learning to fit your school as well as your distinctive teaching style.

Get outside.

Take a group of students outside and begin the process of acclimating. Students need time to get used to a new classroom with a tall ceiling. You can't expect students to stay indoors for 107 days then suddenly go outside without feeling a bit overwhelmed. I recall teaching Math Their Way to first-grade students. The program was rich with many manipulative blocks, reminding me of an assortment

of Legos. We needed several days of free play with these colorful blocks before we could really get down to business.

Likewise, the first trip to the Wisconsin Historical Archives in Madison differed from the third and fourth, and seventh trip. By then, students marched right into the manuscript room, sat down, and examined the historical documents as if they owned the place.

Interdisciplinary.

The real power of place-based learning is varied and interdisciplinary, its unmatched ability to integrate many subject area standards into a unified paradigm. Beth Spieles, with the Center for Rural and Regional Studies at Southwest State University in Marshall, stated the broad scope of placed-based learning in an interview when she stated, "It's not studying the environment as another subject on top of everything else. It's using your local environment – what's outside your door – to study everything within the realm of subjects that you would normally study in the traditional classroom."[11]

As you shift a lesson plans into the community, this attending to new ways of learning will take time. Familiarity is always a key to sustaining achievement. As mentioned, it is important to distinguish a single field trip from field studies. One is a singular event; the latter repeated experiences over time. A good place to start field studies is at one of the many natural areas that each community is proud of. And though you may have hiked or canoed or biked through these natural areas – often your students have not had that opportunity.

I look back at a seminal moment that brought this home to me and became a motivation to create a field-based charter school, one of the first in the country.

One afternoon in class, I shared with my students fun that I had during a weekend hike, with three of my daughters, Hana, Cora, and Jamie, along the limestone bluffs of Wildcat Mountain State Park.

The more I shared with my students about the hike – the hawks flying below us, the blue sky, the warm spring winds – the more those 4th grade faces were overtaken by blank stares. I pushed onward, "You know the State Park up the valley...close to where the Kickapoo River begins?"

The blank looks continued. "C'mon, you've been canoeing from Ontario right below the park, right?" More stares.

Finally catching on, I asked, "How many of you have canoed through Wildcat Mountain State Park?" Seven of 26 students raised their hands. How could three-quarters of my students never experience the upper reaches of the Kickapoo River? A river defining the Kickapoo Valley for 100 meandering miles and flowing by both school and many of my student's homes. The State Park was only 25 miles north of us.

Certainly, a restriction was that many families did not have the means (canoes) nor the time (both parents working) nor the interest (not into hiking) to connect their children with this outdoor opportunity. Another reason is that we, the schools; had not imagined the land or villages as a worthy enough 'classroom'.

We all face a common dilemma in education. The physical building can easily become a 'comfort zone' that teachers are reluctant to move away from. Certainly, there are logistics and safety

issues that should be planned for when conducting field studies, but they do not need to become insurmountable.

Unique Learning Platforms.

A role of schools is to complement what families can't always provide. I taught for years in rural America, and the school in those small towns is often the center of and central to the community. Teachers can best connect students to the land and culture they call home. Place-based teaching embraces many unique learning platforms, whether the Kickapoo River or Main Street. By prioritizing them we can unleash the potential to transport a young person to phenomenal understanding and insight.

Paul Gruchow, noted Minnesota writer, put it best when he wrote in Grass Roots: A Universe of Home: "For me, the most important place on the farm was the cattail marsh at its north end. To get there, you took the farm's interior road, a grass track that ran east to the edge of the maple grove and then north as far as the waterway that drained into the slough from the east. The physical distance was not quite half a mile, but so far as I was concerned it might have been halfway around the world."[12]

Fifteen months after my conversation with my 8th graders, the Kickapoo River Institute Charter School, mentioned earlier, ended its school year with distinctive expedition. A trip of bicycling, hiking, and canoeing from the source of the Kickapoo River to its confluence with the Wisconsin River.

The origin of the expedition was a question that arose one morning. "Where is the source of the Kickapoo River?" a student asked. Several days later we all were in our small bus heading north to find out.

The KRI students and I located the seeping source of the Kickapoo River. That is a story unto itself. Briefly, I pulled our 24-seat school bus into the edge of a cornfield along County A. The tractor drove over to us and the farmer pulled over and asked, "What can I do for you all?"

I answered, "We are looking for the source of the Kickapoo River."

His eyes lit up and he replied, "You've found it! Come with me."

Together, we hiked along an old wagon road cut into the hillside, till we came to a seeping ripple of water that sounded small in the expansive Coulee. We had found it!

We returned several weeks later, geared up for a 5-day expedition. We returned to the bubbling source and hiked until the stream was large enough for our canoes. After canoeing for several hours, we then bicycled miles down the valley as well.

On the fourth day we canoed again, leaving the mouth of the Kickapoo, gliding into the Wisconsin River, mere miles upstream from its confluence with the Mississippi. All of us felt a deep accomplishment, a strong sense of place, having traveled the length of the Kickapoo River, from origin to end.

I understand this trip sounds more like a scouting adventure than school, and, in many ways, it was. These mini-expeditions have a purpose of establishing a cohesive team of students; and moreover, opening each student's eyes to the wonders of home.

I will emphasize, again and again, throughout this book, that once the students are connected to place, then, without hesitation the academic standards can flow into each experience with the learning taking off. One student captured this connection when she wrote:

Dear Kickapoo Valley,

"For the time I have spent in your valleys, among your wooded forests and on your river. I would like to thank you. I value you for your vastness in variety. From the tops of your ridges to the bottom of your streams, your diversity in life is amazing...peacefulness on your waters, enlightenment standing on your hills, joy and refreshment hiking through your forests will always be something that make me what I am today."

Another student moved the place-based anchor feeling further with his thoughts:

"An island in time. Perhaps that is what the Kickapoo Valley is. A home to a diverse number of plants, animals, and people. No matter how far I travel, no matter what corners of the earth I visit, I will always return to the Kickapoo Valley. As time passes and changes occur it will forever be to me a place of small country stores and gravel roads that forever wind through the hills. It will stay in

my heart as a place where I learned to love the land, a place where I learned to love the people of the land, and most of all a place I can call home."

Both students articulated the profound impact schooling becomes when connected to the place called home. When undertaken, curriculum leaves its separate silos of specialization and becomes strongly integrative and anchored anew. Place-based learning will push pedagogical design towards full integration, because studying the community's history, natural habitats, and economic capacity demands a big picture approach.

Gregory Smith writing in Phi Delta Kappan relates that the purpose of place-based education is 'to ground learning in local phenomena and students' lived experience.'[13]

Smith goes on to suggest five thematic patterns evident in place-based education work to 'engage a wide range of students in the demands and opportunities of learning.'[14]

- Cultural studies
- Nature studies
- Real-world problem solving
- Internships & entrepreneurial opportunities
- Induction into community processes

Many of the place-based project vignettes shared earlier fit into one of these categories. Any subject area, when overlaid with community sensibility, becomes a new experience for the student, invigorating a new understanding of home.

At the turn of the century, students were conversant regarding the plants of their home. Today, the technical nature of geology and biology are covered in high school or college science classes, but often their application in the community is narrow and limited. We miss a vital understanding and special relationship to the landscape and flora and fauna of home.

After 100 days throughout the Kickapoo Valley in all sorts of weather, during every season, engaged in many place-based projects my students had a very new awareness and appreciation of our area. The natural landscape spoke volumes to these students. One student looked back several years after her KRI experience and wrote:

"When I moved to the Kickapoo Valley area, I never really set it apart in my mind as someplace special. However, through my year at KRI [the charter school], I began to see it for its uniqueness, for a community, and a beautiful place, unlike any other. I also got a glimpse of the multitudes of small towns that fill it, treasures in themselves."

To connect students with home, we should take greater advantage of the opportunities for integrating curriculum offered by each place's natural systems. David Orr supplies a comprehensive viewpoint in his work, Earth in Mind: On Education, Environment, and the Human Prospect, when he asserts it is time for us to "take our senses seriously throughout education

at all levels and that doing so requires immersion in particular components of the natural world – a river, a lake, a mountain, a farm, a wetland, a forest, a particular animal, a lake, an island – *before* students are introduced to more advanced level of disciplinary knowledge." [15]

Another way to express the relationship of schools and community comes from the work of the Land Institute in Kansas: The Matfield Green Consortium for Place-based Education in Salina. They state that "schools really are the expression of the community." They have a purpose to "bring community members, teachers, and students together to learn about, celebrate, and nurture their home place."

Beyond community, always present for the students, is the fact that nature itself is a powerful force for learning. "A dawn wind stirs on the great marsh..." Thus, Aldo Leopold begins a beautiful marshland elegy to the Sandhill Crane. In a special commemorative edition of the Sand County Almanac, Leopold writes an eloquent piece about nature and understanding. He states: "Our ability to perceive quality in nature begins, as in art, with the pretty. It expands through successive stages of the beautiful to values as yet uncaptured by language. The quality of cranes lies, I think, in this higher gamut, as yet beyond the reach of words."[17]

I am convinced, more than ever, that essential life long-learning skills are wrapped around the field studies, activities, and projects that we encounter in place-based learning. When given a choice, people will learn: first, what they want to learn and second, what they need to learn in order to spend more time on what they want to learn, whether one is ten years old, forty years old, or seventy years old.

Watching students in place-based work is fascinating. Students want to be involved in what they learn, they want to see their many talents exercised, and they want to enjoy the comradeship of others while learning.

We must return students to the roots of place as a perpetual fountain of ideas, situations, issues, and problems to be solved.

Community is the ultimate 'case study'. We can help today's students – and each succeeding generation – take root in their home soil. We cannot continue to remove young people from the geology, botany, astronomy, geography, zoology, hydrology, and ecology of home as if it doesn't make a difference. Besides *understanding* home, they can *serve* it like Doris Williams mentioned earlier.

As Rebecca Jaycox writes, "place-based educators use local particulars to teach universal concepts, engage students in community life, and involve people and resources unique to the home community."[20]

A student from the Kickapoo River Institute, said it succinctly when he declared, "The first thing you otta know is when we go outside, we're not stopped by the snow, when we set off tromping through the wetlands, we're not always with all our friends, we are spread out across a half-mile valley."

The biology of exuberance is in the favor of the younger person, for it is during those early years that a life-long bond to the land is formed, interests activated, and patterns of learning established. When elementary schools 'get it right' then the work of their secondary colleagues is immensely more powerful and precise.

Aristotle asserted, "The fate of empires depends upon the education of youth."

We can redouble opportunities for children and youth to immerse themselves in nature's teachings through place-based learning. We must shift the familiarity and routine of schooling from inside a building – where time is organized in predictable units – to outside, where time is wrapped around the 'routines' of the seasons and landscape. The value attached by students to place cements learning for a lifetime.

Vito Perrone asked me to write what I thought place-based learning was all about. I was honored when some of this language ended up in The Harvard Graduate School of Education's Learning in Place Monograph:

"Pedagogy of place brings school and community together on a common pathway dedicated to stewardship and life-long learning.

It is teaching by using one's landscape, family, and community surroundings as the educational foundation. Significant learning takes place outdoors and in the community. This community expands outward from local landscape and home, to regional realities, to international issues. In coming to know one's place, one comes to know what is fundamental to all places."[21]

Learning in Place goes on to describe in detail the historical roots of place-based education and its shared principles, as well as providing extensive narratives regarding place-based work in Pennsylvania, South Dakota, West Virginia, Tennessee, Maine, California, and Texas. Through its years of working with over 700 schools in 35 states, the Rural School and Community Trust arrived at the following six points they deemed essential in place-based education.

1. The school and community actively collaborate to make the local place a good one in which to learn, work, and live.
2. Students do academic work that draws upon and contributes to the place in which they live. They practice new skills and responsibilities, serving as scholars, workers, and citizens in their community.
3. Schools mirror the democratic values they seek to instill, arranging their resources so that every child is known well and every child's participation, regardless of ability, is needed and wanted.
4. Decision-making about the education of the community's children is shared, informed by expertise both in and outside the school.
5. All participants, including teachers, students, and community members, expect excellent effort from each other and review their joint progress regularly and thoughtfully. Multiple measures and public input enlarge assessments of student performance.
6. The school and community support students, their teachers, and their adult mentors in these new roles.

Place-based learning is, at its core, a personal journey. Each

student redefines their relationships with the land, with the people, with the community through an increased understanding of home driven by new purpose.

Place-based learning is personal.

In my own life, and I would venture, in every other person's as well, nature and people, family and place are all interwoven into an inseparable cloth of a mutual narrative.

My childhood of Michigan vacation memories at White Sands Resort, small town Pontiac 4th of July parades, wandering the cornfield lined streams during rural Illinois summers, and small-town Christmas memories with grandparents contrast strongly with my Chicago area urban/suburban upbringing. Moreover, those youthful bicycle excursions through the streets of Lombard and Elmhurst, a teenage 'bleacher bum' riding the early morning subways to be at Wrigley Field during the historic 1969 season, and fast-pitch 'alley' baseball games against the back walls of the local grocer, contrast distinctly with college-age backpacking trips through Wyoming's Wind River Range and the Grand Teton Mountain lakes, passes, and alpine wildflower meadows.

Whether small town, urban/suburban, or wilderness; each stand timeless in my place-based archive. After a 15-year absence, a recent visit to Carbondale, Colorado, where I received my first of four college degrees, an Associate Degree in Outdoor Education Leadership, underscored the importance of place – and people – in my life. Visiting with my former college teacher Barb Snobble and discovering that her husband, Jack, had recently passed away froze a moment in time.

For 24 months, which still feels like years, Jack had been like a father, as the CMC Professor leading a motley crew of outdoor education students at Colorado Mtn. College. Jack and Barb opened their home for Tuesday evenings of American literature, reading and discussing Annie Dillard or Ralph Waldo Emerson.

Jack also opened his stables to us restless riders and would lead us into the Pinion country, finding 19th century Ute Indian wickiup shelters, meandering canyons, and endless sky. He

taught us to be outdoor leaders, no small honor from a man of the 10th Mountaineering Division of WW II fame.

Jack was a man of many talents. He could also be gruff and to the point, knowing actions mattered. After the war, Jack came home to his mountain valley and ventured up to Aspen, a small idyllic mountain town, and with a few friends turned this skill learned during the war – skiing – into a post-war activity.

Jack was a man of the mountains – and the mountains were in him. Rough, and rough again, like the mountain landscape, Jack enveloped life as the Indian paintbrush showcased the sage along his horse trails amidst the greater Carbondale Valley.

Yet, Jack was a teacher – understanding, nurturing, knowledgeable, and connected to place. Caring and devoted to young people, he was impatient to see that each and every outdoor education student learned from his mountains, valued key lessons about life.

Standing in her kitchen, Barb proudly gestured to a wall-sized oil painting of Jack. And there he was, sitting atop his horse, with deeply bronzed skin framing a fulfilled smile; hat perched, eyes betraying a rapture of love for the surrounding mountain landscape. Man, horse, and landscape are indistinguishable. Jack is Colorado.

I'm sure you can recall a person of place: the sailor rigging the ship, farmer in the field, a street vendor defining a corner, and teacher in the classroom.

In a modern world of fragmenting connections, how will school contribute to the bonding of individuals with place? Or is Jack, and others like him, becoming a passing tribute to a passing time? Can a society wrapped in urban-minded priorities, cyber neighborhoods, and constant mobility actually create stewards of place? Or have we crossed a silent Rubicon with an agenda that now creates stewards of self?

Jack's strong personality matched the strong personality of the mountains. His preparation hadn't been years of schooling but years of service to his country, community, and the landscape of home.

Would Jack be welcome in today's schools as a community elder working with a place-based teacher? I would hope so.

Do our schools support character-development shaped by place, or do we install a system of rules, grades, and 'insideness' that tends to soften the 'edges' of character dimension?

Jack was – to us students – well – Jack. He had his flaws, he had his gifts, but we all knew his love of the mountains, love of learning, and love of us students – because it spilled from every pore of his body and soul.

How can we dissolve the barriers of design, time, intent, and outcomes that come between the school and community? Often preventing students from thriving in partnership? How can we work to remove these barriers so young people can enthusiastically engage their understanding of people and place?

Place-based learning is not exceptional; rather it is educating with the 'familiar material' of the local place by expanding the range of 'ordinary experience.'

A student, Ximena, quoted earlier, is now a teacher herself, working with young students in a rural setting. How can we assure young teachers like her that an educator's community sensibility will be both honored and encouraged? Will barriers to place-based learning be removed, so this new generation of teachers can get to work?

One way is to grasp what is essential about learning. Recently, I heard a keynote entitled, ONLY CONNECT that has grown in meaning over time and has come into play, again and again, the way that only great ideas, like great books, can accomplish.

William Cronon, the Frederick Jackson Turner and Vilas Research Professor of History at the University of Wisconsin asserted in his keynote "Education for human freedom is also education for human community. The two cannot exist without each other." Read the full text here.

Abraham Lincoln is often regarded by historians and the public alike as the greatest President in American History. He was also a great example of place-based learning in action, consequence, and effect. Historians understand that the ability he

brought to focus on his presidential years was a direct consequence of his many years as a dust-eating, hardworking, practicing lawyer doing the circuit in small town and rural Illinois. Each fall and spring, Lincoln would spend weeks on the circuit – engaging new cases, meeting old friends, serving dynamic communities.

Place came to define his character, and in the challenge of the Civil War as President character counted; Better Angels; Gettysburg Address; and his 2nd Inaugural address were seeded on those prairie paths he trod so well in his childhood and as a young man.

To passionately perfect place-based learning; only one solution rings true; students must spend hours upon hours with passionate citizens and elders, in effect, community elders like Jack, in their home place.

If school is truly, as Wayne Jennings, noted Twin Cities educator, proclaims, "a time of life" then each school must examine its place within the community, searching every nook and cranny for every possible learning opportunity that will define this time of life.

Senior citizen lunch. The memories are vivid, years later. For several weeks the Kickapoo River Institute students, every Wednesday, ate lunch with the elders and talked about their common home. One student, kneeling down on her left knee, talking with an elder about making maple syrup, together, each laughing about this shared tradition. Another student learns about life on a 1930's narrow gauge railroad, from a conductor in his late eighties. Several students marveling at the collection of family photographs that another elder had spontaneously brought in, knowing that every Wednesday the students would be coming to lunch.

Like many fine initiatives across American education, this youth/elder time together matures the lifeblood of a school and is well understood by place-based teachers. Cheri knew it like thousands of other students who share learning elders, like my living room conversations with Leita Slayton.

Place-based learning begins with people yet is always firmly rooted in place. We must create cycles of learning about the world, defining missions to serve, creating oral histories to understand better, engaging expeditions of field study to inform, and learn, again and again, until it's time to start anew, and do it all over again – a new ring of growth.

Jack would understand.

❖

One of the best place-based efforts was Julie Tess and the folks from Highland Community Middle School. Amazing community connections. Watch the dozens of community experts and elders connect with the students! In this video, students are interviewed on what place-based means. And finally, here is a video about another fall of amazing projects!

Chapter 4
Generative Learning Communities

It is the function of education to turn capacity into ability.

Jerome Bruner

My work is good. I am very, very proud. I help elderly and help my community research on our land to find out the effects in the past and present. We also predict how the land and people are going to change. I am very, very proud. I can learn as well as have fun. All at the same time.

Elvira, 16, New Mexico

In 1987, while completing my master's degree before these days of the Internet, when research was often my feet scuffling up metal stairways, searching along narrow book filled hallways, I undertook an inquiry into building learning communities. After scanning many journal articles, thesis summaries, and bibliographies, I sent a request to the Educational Resource Information Center (ERIC). I started with the keyword descriptor, COMMUNITY. ERIC awarded me 37,386 potential sites. I clearly needed to narrow down my search. I added SCHOOL to the request, and my total shrunk to 4,893 articles. Still too many.

What about classroom and community building? Since the bulk of instruction is done in the classroom, this was the logical place to focus my efforts. Starting fresh, I requested CLASSROOM and was overwhelmed with 80,923 places to begin my reading! Hoping to get my leads down to a few hundred, I began thinking of other key words I could use in my search request. Certainly, asking for COMMUNITY with CLASSROOM would yield too many, given that my earlier research for COMMUNITY coupled with SCHOOL had provided almost 5,000 articles. I decided it was worth a try to see exactly how many thousands of sources I would receive from this latest request.

When I requested CLASSROOM with COMMUNITY, surprised isn't the right word for my reaction; I was floored. I didn't get thousands of sources. Instead, I obtained the grand total of 46! How could this be? How could there be over 80,000 articles about classroom but only 46 with community in the classroom.

If I have learned *one* thing for sure in education it is the fact that, **"The best school community begins in each classroom."**

Where was the interest? The effort? The awareness? What was this numerical story trying to tell me?

Since my search of the present had revealed so little, maybe yesterday would provide some answers. I began to study one-room schools, and this quickly led me to K-12 education before

WWII. The One or Two Room School, and the 2-year teacher colleges throughout rural America were where local teachers went for training and certification, retained numerous examples where the community and the classroom were indistinguishable. I found archival material documenting teachers' one-room school experiences. Some teachers were authoritarian, controlling everything from the schedule, the curriculum, and even the size of the water bucket. Some were incompetent, transient teachers moving from one failure to another while roaming through the early years of their youth. On the other hand, some extraordinary teachers guided one-room schools. These teachers mastered the potential of a multi-age small learning community, working effortlessly to bring it to fruition.

One summer visiting my in-laws Doris and Leonard Buss in Wichita, Kansas, I learned that an amazing archive of one-room school teachers was at Friend's University, founded by the Quakers who had been historical leaders in early American education. The Quakers had trained generations of young men and woman to be teachers, filling frontier and early settlement schoolhouses.

I came across an astounding journal by Jeremiah Hubbard, who taught for 30 years in the early settlements of Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, and the Western Territories. Jeremiah was highly aware of his unique role to work the one-room school into a learning community. His deep understanding of his students, how they learned best, and what his school community meant to them shone brightly on many journal entries. At the end of each year, he would sit down and write a note to each student highlighting his or her unique qualities, encouraging them forward. These student vignettes revealed a deep understanding and clearly showed that building a learning community had been the apex of his teaching plan.

Learning from Jeremiah, I borrowed his idea and sat down one early May to write my 28 sixth-grade students each their own vignette. Holding the value and worth of each student in my mind, I wrote about each student. After a few days I was done.

A few weeks later, I read them aloud to each of them. We were sitting together on the hillside behind school, the last day of school sunshine surrounding us. Each student was touched, as was I, by his or her responses.

What must it have been like for a one-room teacher to remain with students year in and year out? Imagine, as a classroom teacher, having the power to determine the daily, weekly, even yearly schedule. Rather than fitting your teaching to the schedule, you could fit the schedule to your teaching. This structural flexibility would allow you to adapt the subjects and lessons as the learning unfolds.

This adaptive design allows you to attend to the ongoing inquiry. Questions arise; answers are brought forth, which lead to new questions. Inquiry is powerful when it can be followed. When the daily organization of the students and subsequent schedule are led by the learning. small in size and connected to community. these one-room schools allowed place-based learning to thrive.

❖

One summer, conducting a place-based workshop for a hundred teachers in Nashville, I heard passionate discussion around the barriers to conducting place-based teaching. Year after year specific units of instruction were carried forward confined to structure. They did not feel they had the power and freedom. As I listened to these educators, it was very clear how they saw the value in the place-based learning, yet they kept returning to the structure of the school day as a barrier, and very difficult for a solitary teacher to overcome.

Many of those barriers that I discussed during the 1990's are much less in the 2020's. There is a sliver of hope released in this CoVid era. Need for virtual and home-based instruction has done away with the limitation of seat-based learning. Of course, face

to face is foundational, but relationship-based learning can and will occur in a variety of circumstances.

A strength of place-based learning is how it can occur in all kinds of teaching situations. Certainly, during the KRI experience, I was fortunate to have an entire year of place-based learning with little barriers. However, I have taught years of self-contained classes, block department teaching, and an eight-period day. Each can be designed to work for and respond to the generative curriculum that often occurs with place-based efforts. A consistent use of 'community sensibility' and the 'partnering' approach, with shorter timetables, reaps value. I hope, by sharing a few stories of what has worked in my situations, you will be able to extrapolate elements to fit for you.

The Kickapoo River Institute students learned for over 100 days in the community. With a student body of 22, a small bus, and the flexibility to design our schedule and calendar, we often followed the learning, figuratively and literally. One student remarked, "The work I've done this year for me has been some of my most prized work I have done yet in my life. I'm able to share it with my community and that makes me feel proud. I just wished everyone could see that this way of learning is one of the more productive ways."

One morning, in mid-fall, when we had just finished one learning cycle, a seemingly innocent question during a silent reading time led us down a path of immense undertaking. It was a classic example of 'generative emergence' from a student contribution. A student was reading a history of Black Hawk, the Sauk chief who defied U.S. treaties, when she looked up at me, a question having been triggered, and asked, "Did the Kickapoo Indians ever really live in the Kickapoo Valley?" Her classmates on the chairs and couch in our living room unhooked their literary eyes from their books. I paused, and replied, "I really don't know."

The ensuing discussion led to the next step. What did we really know about the Kickapoo Indians? Very little. No one had ever read of Kickapoo Indians actually living in the Kickapoo

Valley. Nor did anyone know who named the valley or why the valley was named Kickapoo?

With this historical gap in mind, we began that morning to discuss ways to bridge it. We knew archival research would be critical. Essentially, we needed to find a historical document that placed the Kickapoo Indians in the Kickapoo River watershed. First stop, to read the original United States Government & Kickapoo Nation treaties from the late 18th and early 19th centuries.

Off we went in our little bus. Next week at the historical archives of the University of Wisconsin – Platteville we read all seven original treaties. Clearly, in all the treaties, the land ceded by the Kickapoo was in Illinois not Wisconsin. The treaties described territory bordered by the Wabash and Vermillion Rivers of Illinois, not the Kickapoo River of Wisconsin.

Later, in Madison, at the State Historical Archives room, we were reviewing scores of notes, letters, and transcripts of meetings between chiefs recorded by a U.S. Indian Agent from 1790 – 1810 at Prairie du Chien, along the Mississippi River just downriver from where the Kickapoo River flowed into the Wisconsin River soon to empty into the Mississippi River at Prairie du Chien.

While we sorted through these artifacts, you could have heard a pin drop in the stately marble-pillared reading room. Suddenly, a student shrieked. Backs straightened. Heads of historians working at their archive-filled tabled quickly turned. "I found it!" she gasped. We gathered around her table.

Eyes looked upon a tattered yellow parchment, an original record of a speech by a Kickapoo Chief given in Prairie du Chien in 1807, a mere twenty miles from the Kickapoo River watershed.

Our community expert, a professor of history, confirmed this as the first historical document to place a Kickapoo Indian, let alone a Kickapoo chief, within a day's horse-ride from the Kickapoo River. This didn't fully answer our questions, but it certainly whetted our appetites.

The other question pressing the student's inquiry buttons was

how did the valley receive the name Kickapoo? We now understood that it had not been their historical tribal land, so why name it Kickapoo?

A few weeks later, on a separate research trip looking into the history of Haney Creek, a tributary of the Kickapoo River, a student was reading the private letters of John Haney from 1842, one of the first white men to enter the pristine valley soon to be named Kickapoo. In one letter to his father, he mentioned two Native American families living along the banks of the river below his cabin. Could these have been Kickapoo Indians? This historical association led the students to hypothesize that John Haney, who had a creek, township, and school named after him, may have originated the name Kickapoo for the river, which ran 100 miles from its source near Tomah, Wisconsin, past his log cabin at Haney Creek, to its confluence into the Wisconsin River. It certainly refined our line of questioning. Was John Haney, an early settler, the person who named the Kickapoo Valley? What a chain of research events unfolded that spring. Like a one-room school, we were small enough to structure our day to attend to the learning at hand. Inquiry, like a compass bearing, led us forward to new understandings.

Place-based learning experiences are conducted in all sorts of schools, whether on block schedules or eight period days. Many projects bring the community to the school, if not more, than taking the students into the community. Neighborhood schools often walk to sites, and rural schools find themselves within close proximity of great learning sites.

Earth sciences provide valuable metaphors understanding the landscape of a place-based classroom. Geological forces like erosion, glaciers, volcanoes, rivers and the constant elements of wind, rain, freezing, and thawing work, combined with time, transform landscapes.

A literal example; my students conducted an historical analysis of the changing course of the Kickapoo River. Students obtained a hundred-year-old map showing the river's route, and then secured recent aerial photographs. Blending these together on an

overhead projector, we could see places where the river had moved from one side of the valley to the other in just 100 years! The meandering channels and historic ox-bows evident from the air captured this back-and-forth movement when compared with the 1880 land survey maps. Rarely can geologic transformation be appreciated in such an accessible historical timeframe. Geology contains vastly different ranges of time. Its stories are captured in the incremental slowness of erosion over eons, as well as the immediacy of split-second eruptions. Often, the evident geological timetable is thousands of years not hundreds, and then suddenly, cataclysmic events like volcanoes and earthquakes push the geological timeline into minutes rather than centuries.

A figurative example: learning communities are measured in contrasting ranges of time and timeliness. Most learning is incremental, painstakingly slow. Patience and tolerance, diligence and commitment are necessary in this step-by-step means of learning. Often, it's the constant plodding up the

hillside that brings the successful learner to the view of the valley stretched below. Students understand this incrementalism concept.

Once my eighth graders were adapting The Diary of Anne Frank, adding three historically accurate scenes of their own invention. The lab was alive with the chatter of keyboards hammering out stage movements, giving new lines to Margot or having Anne work on new entries in her diary. Day-by-day, page-by-page, they incrementally moved their creative adaptations further, and finished this piece in several weeks with a very satisfying sense of completion. The work had required patience and tolerance. Each step was taken with confidence and ownership as it provided meaning for the student.

Contrasting to this incremental learning are the dramatic experiences, which propel new learning forward in a leap. Ask any NOLS graduate of a 30-day wilderness expedition, for instance, or someone who has returned from a 16-day tour of Europe, and you will see that something big can enter into a person's life, creating new learning landscapes overnight. This jolt to the person unleashes new talents, new paradigm, and new sense of self.

Beside the insight or incremental learning, a third path is when the first two are blended. A math student struggles to resolve a problem then, in an instant, the solution appears like a beam from above. Acts of creativity abound with stories where the musician or the scientist worked hours upon hours in the lab or studio, and then suddenly the insight or the melody needed came "out of the blue." Paul McCartney tells the story of how this happened with Let it Be. Awakening from sleep the song playing in his head, within minutes (a few hours) it was done.

All three ways; incremental, leap forwards, or blends work as incredible learning experiences. The act of learning becomes its own subject matter. The structure, bells, and assignments fall quickly to the wayside, and activities are fueled simply by the need to know! As Deborah, 17, from California, maintained, "I never imagined the joy and pride of planning, setting up, and

caring for projects that made not only myself, but also my school and community proud. The self-satisfaction that I have received this year is enormous."

Besides Earth Sciences teaching us about learning, it can teach us about the teaching. Just as geologists learn to read the topography of desert, canyon, mountain, and valley; teachers, too, must learn to read the student learning landscape. By peeling back surface layers and using all the senses to view the rich historical development beneath, teachers and geologists alike build a future by observing the present and making connections to the past.

Appreciating the incremental nature of learning, the steady drumbeat, and the sudden leap forward is the best way to plan for and respond to the learning at hand. And these forces work to transform the landscape of **ideas, values, tasks, and capacities** evident in every place-based learning community.

For ideas, a generative student capacity is key. What makes this group of students work well? What challenges gather all the student's core interests and propel them successfully forward? Do they love inquiry, desire problem solving, or embrace community involvement?

For values, which ones anchor this group? Maybe thoroughness and listening are hallmarks, possibly building a fair-minded team is a constant goal, or even inviting partnerships with unlikely partners becomes a value all subscribe to, or for that matter - tolerance, hard work, or generosity.

For tasks, the world is a stage. What mission will propel the above ideas and values forward? When you arrive at a project idea that aligns with values, everyone seems to know it. On the other hand, when it doesn't, a team silence, sometimes awkward, that seems to say, "Nope, this isn't it, don't go down this path."

For capacities, how has the group determined who does what? This is so vital! A facilitative teacher needs to ensure that all members receive attention to goals, and can act upon their dreams. Likewise, it is vital to support each weakness. Students will give away their strengths to the group, thereby uplifting students in spirit and supporting them practice.

NOLS

Turning the corner from my teens to early 20's, I found myself working for the National Outdoor Leadership School (NOLS), hiking for 45 days in the Absaroka Range in west central Wyoming. One morning, while I was stirring the coffeepot, a cowboy rode up to our campfire. His many years and creased face couldn't hide the youthful manner in which he gazed at the ridges around us on three sides.

With a wistful glance over his shoulder, he said, "Y'know son, if you boys stay 'round here, 'bout 4 o'clock, stay off those ridges. Gonna be some big thunder hitten those hills."

I turned and inquired how he knew this, given the morning's clear blue sky. He pointed to a solitary wisp of black cloud, racing like a furtive dancer over the western ridgeline.

Where were we at 4 o'clock? Fortunately, not on the ridges.

At that predicted moment, a mighty storm struck where his prophetic finger had pointed hours earlier. From our sheltering rain fly pitched a few thousand feet below the ridge, we could only wonder at the cowboy's gift of prediction. This uncanny weather forecast seemed a gift; today, I recognize it as the same gift teachers develop as they read the learning landscape.

The cowboy's talent was intense outdoor living, combined with a keen observation of the place he called home. He had learned to read the landscape in both overt and subtle ways.

Reading the student learning landscape is also an art. Seeing below the surface of interaction is a precious gift, cultivated by great teachers over time. At any given moment, several layers of meaning occur simultaneously in a learning community. These plentiful subterranean forms inform teaching strategies and climate building.

Place-based learning communities and classrooms demand multiple roles from the teacher. Therein, teachers serve as project facilitators, aware how observation informs, teachers serve as coaches guiding student productivity, and teachers work as instructors, activating the opportunistic lesson or skill-based workshop.

Student realities always offer several layers of meaning. One layer is personal. Melissa, for instance, woke up late, rushed to catch the bus, forgot her assignment, and one thing seemed to lead to another. Dominoes. She's having a difficult time concentrating in class, and it is difficult to draw out her attentiveness from the rush of anxiety she's been coping with all morning. Whereas Jason didn't sleep at home last night. He felt obliged to stay with his sister's boyfriend since he knew his dad would be drinking. It was Tuesday, again. And for some reason unknown to young Jason, his dad's drinking night is always Tuesday.

Though below the surface, these realities are concrete enough for these students. To me, this home turf is like the lay of the land – the curving nature of a valley, the demarcation of a coastline, and the winding realities of a river. We know about these

conditions, can work with them, yet seldom can we fundamentally change them. Though every student appreciates a teacher's noticing and being empathetic with his or her home turf issues, students realize that the teacher's prevalent influence is predominately in that home away from home – the school, specifically the classroom community.

And respect in that classroom community is where each member works hard to see that each member is important. The positional value that each member holds in the classroom system is critical; both for defining individual worth and in defining how that individual relates in the classroom system. **Depending upon each other opens all sorts of benefits beyond academic objectives.**

Like a self-fulfilling prophecy or feedback loop reinvigorating itself in tighter spirals – this collaborative work **powers** learning. Listen to the power of a successful learning community when Abbey, a high school junior from California, shared: "This work means, and has shown this past year, that the 'average' student

and human being can get involved and make a great change and impact. This work means that my community's future is only brighter, and we never look back, except to learn from experience and history. This work is like a match; with one strike we can light many other ways."

Sustaining a working balance between academics and each student's personal capabilities is the key to success in all learning, especially place-based learning. As Dewey confirms, "Every activity engaged in for its own sake reaches beyond itself."[1] In effect, when the students can reach forward, experience the challenge, solve the problems, internalize the skills and understanding – then you have attained a worthy complexity of learning.

What does it feel like to be a student during this rewarding level of learning? What does it feel like to be a teacher using such a place-based pedagogy? Dewey, again, zeroed in on this aspect when he stated, "In such shared activity, the teacher is a learner, and the learner is, without knowing it, a teacher – and upon the whole, the less consequences there is on either side, of either giving or receiving instruction, the better."[2]

We have all touched upon the generative nature of learning, pure and simple. One of the beauties of teaching is when a student fully engaged, and a teacher fully involved, trigger a synergy that takes on a life of its own.

One fall evening a dozen of my high school students were invited to a graduate education class at the University of Wisconsin – LaCrosse. Being students of a new place-based rural charter school, the prospective teachers wanted to query us on how the charter was working. As we sat in a circle, the give and take of questions from the teachers was followed by clear answers from the students; I was struck by the student's total engagement.

At one point, one of my students leaned forward in her chair and asked the graduate students, "So, you've got a sense of what and how we like to learn, what about you guys? What can you each bring to a school?"

Fair question, though explicit, I thought to myself. The

graduate student's answers were as passionate as my student's voices had been in the beginning. The evening became a generative time: each of us – high school and college students alike – walked away knowing the mutual discussion was special.

This knowing something is special, an awareness that a learning community is working well, doesn't always have to have an observable splash. One year, in one of my literature classes each student was reading a novel of their choice silently – intensely – you could hear the proverbial pin drop.

After 12 minutes, I walked to the front of the room and sheepishly mentioned, "Hey, I hate to interrupt such devoted readers…"

Pairs of eyes looked up from The Lord of the Rings, Hatcher, and Harry Potter. "Then don't," interrupted Holly, a knowing smile gracing her polite though effective dismissal. Silence. I knew enough to know she was right. I returned to my desk, opened my book, and for the next thirty minutes each student dove back into their novel. Looking up, on occasion, the reward of seeing each and every student totally engrossed was something special. Like a science lab humming with experimentation; the classroom air was thick with storylines being consumed, even relished.

Remarkably, not one set of eyes wandered to the clock, looking for the end of the class. In fact, after a full 50 minutes of reading, the bell, ringing for lunch, served as the wakeup call that suddenly thrust them, some said, "Cruelly", back into the present.

Of course, the best line was, "Can't we just stay here and read, please!"

Whether a class is full of bustling activity or full of silent activity, when a "student's capacity is turned into ability" – to echo Jerome Bruner – then the vibrancy of learning is so strong that the air seems to radiate. Nicole, experiencing the same powerful place-based learning as Abbey, yet unique to her Colorado community, captured some of the associated qualities when she declared, "I learned more about myself, my peers, and my community than I could possible imagine. It is incredible to be with so many people with a strong passion working together

to make their dreams happen. I learned to trust and respect people for the good that they had. It is an incredible feeling to work with people and make a successful product. I did things that I didn't think I could."

I did things that I didn't think I could. Isn't that what we all feel when a learning community is working, visible to others and clear to ourselves?

Capture the heart of the matter through the effort of writing. Just as reflective writing was good for Jeremiah, the one-room schoolteacher, I have found it useful as well in reading the classroom landscape and reflecting on what works. Keeping a journal is the benchmark of observation and reflection for most field-based professionals. Imagine a field geologist without a well-worn journal. What would the Lewis and Clark expedition have been without their daily recordings, illustrations, and musings? Reflective writing that teachers can – and should – create for themselves is a treasure of lasting value, a vivid oasis of insight and suggestion.

Take a few minutes between classes or at the beginning of

the day to write. Accumulated reflections and aggregates of observation will give a cohesive structure to your teaching efforts. Try it. Place your observation, thoughts, and aspirations in a journal, then look for patterns and connections. Capture the educational flow at that moment. You will gather meaning and depth.

Without these introspective journaling efforts, I would be more likely to spin my canoe endlessly in an eddy, watching the current continue down river without me, rather than navigating with some reflective wisdom.

As an edition to this 2021 edition, I would like to speak briefly to a breathtaking development that grew out of this generative place-based work. I was honored to work with 10 small high schools that implemented a school design myself and faculty at Appleton Career Academy generated one summer. We call it the **Interdisciplinary Learning Collaborative.**

Its story is told in this short video that shows the work unfolding in several of these innovative high schools. Over 261 pages of ILC seminars, workshops, lit circles, and immersions can be accessed at jameslewickieducation.com.

Chapter 5
Respect

Education is not the filling of a bucket but the lighting of a fire.

Yeats

Learning is an eternal flame that catches everyone in a bonfire of brilliance. To learn is to live life.

Kelly, 14, Wisconsin

Imagine teaching the same students five years in a row. When I moved from fourth grade to fifth and sixth grade Social Studies, then to Junior High English, I taught the same students for five years. I learned how time and continuity can establish profound learning connections. Those original fourth graders were students of mine for those consecutive years. We came to know each other very well.

Several years ago, those students graduated from high school. Over the years we had greeted each other many times, passing in the hallway, waving as we drove by each other, or meeting by chance in a store. The mutual respect we shared was palatable. Knowing students over time is the best reward of being a teacher.

Respect is a beautiful word and, by far, the single most important factor in successful teaching and learning. Understanding its fullest dimensions, therefore, is vital to understanding schooling. When respect is acknowledged by the actions of students toward a teacher, and by a teacher toward each student, a learning community is at its strongest. What one person can achieve with purpose and backbone, a group of people, respectful of each other, can achieve many times over.

Respect is the flowering of a productive relationship. Respect is earned, never taken for granted. Maturing from seeds of patience, respect can only be attained after significant work by teachers attending to the students, and by students attending to the place they inhabit.

Morgan, 14, from California, offered a clear explanation when she contended, "It's definitely a good thing when you work with an adult and they treat you like you're not just a kid. It changes the perspective if you're treated like an equal. In lots of instances, kids just feel like what they think maybe doesn't matter."

Respect is a powerful word with a curious origin. From the Latin word, *respicere*, it means, "to look back at." **Rather than an anticipatory group quality, respect is grasped after the work is done.** Once a learning community has connected, solved problems, and made a difference it quickly accumulates a respectful productivity that springs from its common actions. As

the group holds up a mirror to its preceding actions, they see respect reflected back to them.

How does one establish conditions in the classroom so respect flourishes? First, by listening; then by attending to the growth of classroom empathy; and finally, by acknowledging trust conditions require an unconditional, firm commitment. Through the ups and downs inevitable over time, listening, empathy, and trust building, as a synergistic whole do more than anything else to build a climate of respect.

One fall, I had a visit from Erica, who had moved away to Minnesota several years after writing her wonderful 4th grade spring journal piece noted earlier. As we reminisced, she recalled the collection of student vignettes from her sixth-grade year. Each vignette captured my appreciation for each student. As a class collection, I gave each student a copy on the last day of school.

Now a high school senior, Erica told me she looked at her vignette every year with appreciation and respect. Here is Erica's vignette: "Erica, the moment you spoke your first lines as the Queen of Narnia, we all knew you had achieved more than winning the role; you were going to define the character. Such strength and singular expression on stage is a wonderful gift to carry within you. However, you don't stop with being an expressive actress. Erica, you have also developed the joy of writing into a unique voice."

"I read the first scenes of The Lion, The Witch, and The Wardrobe as a gust of fresh air, incorporating your keen sense of storytelling alongside C.S. Lewis's masterpiece." (Erica had adapted the novel into a play.)

"To be a writer who loves to act is a combination of gifts that you will enjoy again and again and again in the unfolding years ahead. Thanks so very much for taking the initiative to work long hours developing your craft. Your writing has taught me volumes.

"Because of your work, I view the possibilities, creations, and progress of middle grade students in a never-ending expansive view. By setting your sights higher, you have lifted my approach to teaching to new heights. Thanks again!"

At the time, writing Erica's vignette was affirming for me. With the benefit of hindsight, I understand why. Back then it just seemed the right thing to do. But Erica's visit made me realize that my trusting and prizing of each student and putting it into writing established a legacy which she read every year. These vignettes cemented a profound memory for her.

Respect spawns such memories. Respect also lasts. It is the remaining signpost of our personal heritage. On the 100th anniversary of Ralph Waldo Emerson's death, William James gave an address in Concord where he stated, "When the days of one's life are ended...what remains of one in memory should usually be so slight a thing. The phantom of an attitude, [like respect] the echo of a certain mode of thought, a few pages of print, some invention, or some victory we gained in a brief critical hour, are all that survive of the best of us."[1]

Each school displays enormous amounts of respect every day. You can see it in the eyes of students and teachers who respect each other. You can see it in the calm after a confrontation. One day, fed up with the antics of a student, I snapped at her. She returned the favor. The matter of right and wrong was in my court, but the matter of caring, the matter of courtesy, resided in both our courts. And we both were accountable to them. Supplanting our pride with a higher purpose, mutual respect, we resolved the dispute.

Respect is not simply positive words. Frustration and disappointment, shared honestly, are as much a part of respect as nurturing and patience. Students want teachers who give respect based on concrete behavior. Respect comes equally from both the firm taskmaster and compassionate coach; the best teachers embody both.

How does place-based learning inculcate respect? Imagine the hard work, problem solving, connections with elders, success in meeting deadlines, and sense of accomplishment evident through presentations. Respect is always evident during place-based learning. Leslie, a senior, who accepted a leadership role amongst a group of Wisconsin youth leaders, really captured the positive

journey for students, "Throughout life importance is connected with power, the ability to personally make a difference. When a student can see where, in the big picture, he/she has made a difference, he/she can sense that a difference has been made."

Having pride in the work at hand is a common component of place-based learning. Deborah, a junior attending a national gathering of place-based learners, built upon Leslie's sense of power with her understanding of a deepened sense of community: "I have learned so much this year, not only about my community, but also about myself and how good it feels and how proud it makes me to have been born and raised in my community."

Devan, a project colleague agreed with her sentiment, "To me being important to the community gives me a lift both mentally and physically. I get the feeling that I am wanted more and more... when people ask me to do things like help build the fire hall, or help set up work and clean up at the annual picnic. I just think that the smaller our community is, the more people need volunteers like my friends and me. I am proud of that."

Teachers earn respect. Students earn respect. Like anything earned, work is involved. Sometimes respect is given freely, at first, in hopes of being returned. However, for it to become a permanent part of a classroom climate respectful choices need to be made each and every day.

At the taproot of learning, respect exponentially nurtures teachers and students. Another student, 16, reasoned, "Respect is in my mind the essential word here. Respect is the thing that allows for the kind of environment needed to get the work done, and thus the learning."

Respect in his eyes is "needed to get the work done." What a profound and true statement. Without the touch of a teacher/student relationship creating mutual respect, curriculum materials can't attain optimal outcomes. Besides optimizing effects, respect addresses gaps. Like rain infiltrating a parched landscape, respect erodes the apathy and alienation evident with some of our students.

Simple choices cause big effects in building respect. Teachers

who cultivate the art of 'small talk' understand how big it really is. Inquiring about an extra-curricular event, noticing a haircut, appreciating a helpful act, or thanking a student for careful work all contribute to the momentum necessary for mutual respect. Students are part of this process as well: commenting on the teacher's new shirt, mentioning a recent encounter in town, and giving a warm hello as they enter the school, or join the circle. Each moment and each choice contained therein can make a difference and, in the aggregate, shape the class respectfulness, which, in turn, expands the possibilities.

Imagine the opposite: a place where opportunistic criticism and sarcasm seem the norm, where anxiously looking over one's shoulders takes the place of respectful expectations. It is impossible to sustain learning in such a climate of disrespect. And though much can be written about dysfunctional learning situations where disrespect IS the norm, suffice it to say, the ONLY way out is through increasing incremental steps of mutual respect. Respect is the antidote to being stuck. Give it away like a gift!

When place-based learning is functioning smoothly, the students, in a mature and intelligent manner, often drive the learning. Teachers find themselves as managers and facilitators, and as needed instructors. Respect allows this to happen.

Regarding discipline, where learning is deep and sustained, discipline is almost never an issue. Incidents of discipline usually imply an absence of respect. I can't hold someone in high regard one minute then turn around the next minute and treat him or her like the enemy. One student, 14, shared, "It seems to me that if you walk up to a person and compliment her and are just really nice, that with some people, it just makes their day, and if you are nice to someone, they are more likely to be nice to you. "

Respect is the ultimate barometer of the golden rule functioning in the classroom.

Looking closer, we can see two levels of respect that teachers work with in school. First, there is dutiful regard, the respect given because of one's position as a teacher. Addressing me as

"Mr. Lewicki" is one small example. Of far greater import is the earned respect that comes only after many interactions. When a student like Erica shares with me her memories of my teaching, she conveys her esteem for my work, and for the degree of respect between us.

Though dutiful regard is important for the first couple weeks each September, earned respect is what builds learning communities that work. An effective classroom must be centered on mutual respect, and the window of opportunity to begin this process is small. Much has been written about the importance of the first day, first week, even first month of school; they are critical times in the development of a learning community. Early success begets later success, and a pattern of respect settles in as the class unfolds.

Besides place-based work, project-based learning, a close ally, earns respect with work well done. Ron Newell has written upon project-based learning from his many years as a teacher at New Country School, where students in grades 7-12 learn comprehensive academics through varied self-selected projects. In his book, **Passion for Learning,** Ron summarized how project learning can be most powerful when it is student directed, "The student role in project-based learning becomes one of carrying out self-directed learning activities rather than carrying out teacher directed activities; defining their own roles, tasks and time management rather than receiving and completing brief, directed tasks; learning how to communicate, show, affect, produce and take responsibility rather than listen, behave, speak only when spoken to."[2]

Extrapolating from Ron's insights we realize how deep respect can manifest in this type of learning community, or other kinds of learning communities where the curriculum is truly generative. Whether Project-based, Integrated Thematic, Expeditionary Learning, Montessori, or Placed-based; I have witnessed Dewey's axiom that all learning is fundamentally a measure of curiosity.

Nicole, a freshman writing about place-based learning from her Nebraska home, spoke from a place of deep conviction after her project, "I learned more about myself, my peers, and my community than I could possible imagine. It is incredible to see so many people with a strong passion working together to make their dreams happen. I learned to trust and respect people for the good that they had. It is an incredible feeling to work with people and make a successful product."

To generate ideas, products, and relationships is the heart of a **generative curriculum.** By this term, I mean a curriculum that is shaped by the dreams and aspirations of the students themselves and expands into unforeseen areas through continuous inquiry and teaming. A generative curriculum requires one thing above all else: **an amount of respect equal to the ideas**. Generative experiences are shaped by the power of curriculum choices that students engage with in the learning itself.

What else does a climate of respect do? It cultivates curiosity, a major ingredient of place-based learning. I have never taught a student who is genuinely curious and, at the same time, a behavior

problem. When students are on fire with curiosity; they simply do not misbehave. And a central trait of being curious is to make connections. John Dewey caught this idea well, "Curiosity is not an accidental possession; it is a necessary consequence of the fact that an experience is a moving, changing thing, involving all kinds of connections with other things. Curiosity is but the tendency to make these conditions perceptible. It is the business of educators to supply an environment so that this reaching out of an experience may be fruitfully rewarded and kept continuously active."[3]

Fruitfully rewarded. How? Learning itself – the kinetic, the feeling, the wonder, the bonding is an internal motivator. Students want to do well and want to learn, at all ages. When they are doing well and when curiosity is taking flight, these are reward enough. However, when curiosity is ignored, hands are never raised then respect is often lacking. I was fortunate to spend five years with the same group of young people, but mutual respect can be attained during a single school year, or for that matter, through short experiences as well.

Respect is the teacher's gift to the student, and reciprocally, the student's gift to the teacher. One summer, I facilitated a Wisconsin retreat for forty high school leaders from a dozen school districts. We discussed youth issues. At a camp setting – besides our many discussions – we also worked, played, and ate together, supporting these youth to gather a level of shared respect.

At the end of this initial retreat, I asked the students to two questions about our time together. Their answers reveal a depth of understanding, which youth possess but are seldom asked about. I asked them what made them feel important as a student? Mike, 16, wrote, "I feel important as a student when my problems are embraced by others who help me work through them. I feel important when I am recognized as an individual with all my personality quirks and uniqueness and accepted for who I am. I am encouraged to form and voice opinions that will be heard and discussed by the group to solve a problem together."

Clearly, encouragement was a decisive part of feeling important. Leslie, 17, another retreat leader, endorsed this point of view wholeheartedly noting, "[. . .] others in groups can encourage and foster growth. The first time someone says, "Wow, great job!" or "That's a great idea." The student may just take the comment with a grain of salt. No big deal. But the more encouragement that is given, the more students will believe it. Suddenly, the realization comes that someone cares. Along with that realization comes the dawning of the idea that they are an integral part of the group."

My second question asked how important the community we had established at the retreat was for them. Justin, 15, asserted, "This community works so well because of the total involvement of all participants. Everyone here is giving their all because they brought with them the same ideals as everyone else. This helped them find some firm ground in every discussion."

Tiffany, 15, acknowledged other critical elements of community when she observed, "This learning community works really well because everyone is listening to each other and recognizing good ideas. We are all working as a team to meet a common goal."

Cory, 16, echoed Tiffany's sentiments when he said, "This learning community works for me because we work in small groups and then we all pull together at the end to kind of glue everything together for the following meeting."

Finally, Lauren, 15, returned to that vital barometer of a successful learning community, "Everyone has a voice and can be heard. There are adults to keep us in line, but in the end, we are making a difference. "The language used by these students is that of a respectful learning place.

Discussed earlier, respect is often easier to recognize looking into the past than in the present tense verbiage. Therefore, teachers must be cognizant of the vocabulary of engagement, connection, vitality, and passion that are indicators of respect in operation, alive in the present.

The key words these students use as they speak in the

immediate moment include listening, voice, glue, pull together, team, encourage, care, recognize, embrace, involvement, making a difference, accept, and solve. Respect, as a vocabulary word employed by the students will usually come later when looking back.

Capturing the language of the moment makes the experience stick! Ask your students what their learning community means to them. Ask them three questions:

- How do you feel important?
- Describe the community?
- What works, and works well?

When the students are done with the writing -- then look for key words. What do you see? What pattern emerges? If you were to place these words on a scale, would it tilt in a positive or negative direction? Student language provides a lexicon to build respectfulness.

Students engaged in place-based learning experience a keen sense of community when the field study, workshop, service, or project is undertaken as a team. Therefore, the vocabulary of a respectful community is always a present to be opened each day.

Chapter 6
Active Listening + Group Work = Empowerment

The view of externally imposed ends has deep roots...too rarely is the individual teacher so free from the dictation of authoritative "mandates" that he can let himself come to close quarters with the pupil's mind and the subject matter...There is also an inclination to propound aims which are so uniform as to neglect the specific powers and requirements of an individual, forgetting that all learning is something which happens to an individual at a given time and place.

John Dewey, Democracy and Education

Talk with us. Try to hear us out. Take us seriously.

Saaneah, 15, Alabama

Triangulation means bringing three lines together to locate a place. For place-based learning the three lines are active listening, group work, and student empowerment.

After a Rural Trust conference in New Mexico, I had some free time before my flight home. I ventured to the Albuquerque Art Museum. Waiting for the doors to open that bright winter Sunday morning, I sat on a granite bench below a towering sculpture. Above me were three long aluminum poles, each fifteen feet in height, ascended skyward. Each was anchored in large blocks of pink granite at my feet. Each pole came close to the other two at their apex, but did not quite touch, forming a triangle of possibilities.

The amazing thing was how each of pole pierced, high above, a single rectangular slab of granite, thereby holding it aloft. The slab must have weighed a ton. Together, these three slender poles could hold this slice of New Mexico Mountain. What possibilities! Admiring the contrast between shiny aluminum poles and rugged pink granite, I seized a sudden insight. **Triangulation supports mass.**

These three poles produced the support for a ton of granite to be held aloft. Without any one of the poles, the structure would collapse. What a wonderful physical reminder that something new, and often greater, is the result of parts working together.

And for this chapter on the power of active listening, group work, and student empowerment, I am reminded by this New Mexico sculpture how these three triangulate, creating conditions for place-based learning to thrive.

Active Listening.

My best counsel to young teachers is to actively listen. An observant teacher will listen to students as they are learning in the classroom, interacting in the hallway, performing at the assembly, or playing in the field.

Ask your students questions:

- If you could change one thing, what would it be?
- What is working and working well for you?
- What makes you feel important at this school?
- Imagine bumping into your aunt in town and she asked, "What is exciting at school?" How would you describe to her what is going on?

Students have a story to tell, listen to it. I've facilitated student workshops at leadership retreats, and statewide along with national conferences. Hundreds of student insights have moved me. Whether I am talking with rural youth in Wisconsin, Kansas, or Florida or urban youth in New Jersey, Milwaukee, or Las Vegas; several threads run strongly throughout these conversations.

Students are immensely grateful when adults listen to them. It is an act that too seldom occurs in their experience of school. Don't misunderstand me. Certainly, they are listened to when they have a question about an academic subject, when they want to plan a dance, or receive help on a paper. Yet, they seldom are asked about their experience of learning itself.

One experience stays with me. It was summer and I was in a big circle with high school students gathered from Wisconsin, Michigan, and Minnesota. Students for the benefit of us educators led this session. And they led off with one question for the adults to answer, "What is your learning style?" For the next hour, 60 people shared the way they learned best. Some explained they were visual learners, having to map out information in their minds. Others described themselves as auditory learners. Most felt they were hands-on learners, learning best by demonstration and practice. With such a wide range of viewpoints, passionately shared, the discussion was certainly intriguing.

At the end of the hour, I realized this group of students embodied a wealth of educational experience. Since most were sophomores or older, they represented collectively almost 400 years of school, from over 20 different school districts in three aforementioned states. I began to wonder about their learning

style experiences. So, I decided to ask them. "How many of you, in your long student careers," I asked, "had a teacher, somewhere along the line, ask you, what you just asked us today, 'What is your learning style?'"

I fully expected to see an assortment of hands in the air. Hadn't they just led a great workshop on the very topic – learning styles? Nothing. One hand finally slowly rose. Incredulous, I pursued, "So, what you have led us through during this workshop, is something you have never experienced yourselves?"

Heads nodded. Next question, clearly rhetorical.

"How many of you would like a teacher at the beginning of the course, or somewhere along the way, to ask that question of you and your classmates?"

Hands shot up, en masse.

My takeaway. Students experience a curious gap. On one hand, the adults articulate a vision of school; on the other, the student experience a reality of school vastly different at times from that vision. How these two worldviews, adults and students, are in alignment is usually a clear barometer of an authentic learning place.

How can one facilitate and create the conditions for this alignment to take place? How can we teach in schools where the learning itself drives back the growth of alienation?

A time-tested antidote is listening and listening well. I have never seen a master teacher who is not a master listener. Beyond words, listen with the observing eye; drinking in the non-verbal cues and social behavior that DEFINE your classroom and student culture.

Listening is the bedrock of understanding. When students are listened to, they know they are important. Knowledge comes alive for them. The first casualty of schooling is, too often, listening.

"Teachers don't care," students often remark.

"How do you mean that?" I ask in return.

"They just don't get it. They never have time to listen."

The other day I had a moment to talk with a troubled teenager.

The anger available at the surface of our conversation, and his constantly challenging everyone, brought him front and center to my attention. I began by inquiring about his viewpoints, soliciting his opinions on the adult authorities he perceived as pitted against him. His lines sounded to me like quotes from Walden and Civil Disobedience. Here was a different drummer pounding out an idealistic worldview. As we talked, his anger subsided and his ability to empathize increased. Only by active listening, asking questions, in effect, summarizing his viewpoints (not mine) did he feel that what he said mattered. This young man's angst soon softened to insight.

A decade later I ran into him at a social event. He was the DJ for the night, quite a good one at that, connecting with the youth. He came over to me and we re-connected as well. Authentic communication lasts.

Again, and again, as I have said earlier, it is the incremental acts, opportunistic moments, that define a community and can often last a lifetime. Only from this disposition of respect, this orientation to discover the brilliance within each student, does listening vibrate with the many hues of productive engagement.

Active listening is productive engagement in itself. As you work with students, go deeper into the realities of the situation, that often translate into action. Teachers open up as student advocates, standing up with them when the system is unjust, and being there for them on a daily basis.

Active Listening is caring, and caring is kinetic, a devotion to action. Be an active listener and a listener who is active! Your teaching will be twice as powerful because the students will know you, as you know them. The path is always mutual. This is why a decade later, the DJ and I could re-connect as if the intervening time stood still.

Sometimes, we forget that students carry their knowledge within. Pay attention to the individuals before us. Teacher education programs build the knowledge to teach math to a nine-year old. Yet, a warning label should be attached to the diploma. This gift of knowledge must be wrapped with the wisdom of your

students. Listen to them! Without listening, content standards and knowledge alone remain hollow. This act of listening leads to shallow understanding.

Cara, 21, a seven-year veteran of place-based education, understood this, "You have to take risks sometimes when you're not sure about the capabilities of the students that'll be in charge, and you definitely have to drop the, 'I'm the adult, I'm in charge' platform and really build a partnership."

Listening skills are fundamental to accomplish this. Treating students fairly does not mean treating them all the same. Imagine a forest. Each tree grows in the forest community. Every tree is connected to all others through the common bonds of soil, water, and sunlight. Yet while one tree towers above, another clings to life along a rocky crust, because each tree has a unique and determining relationship to the soil, water, and sunlight. And so, it is with the teacher-student relationship.

Teachers nurture learning through uncommon acts of listening. Only by listening can a teacher go beyond the basics of soil, water, and sunlight, discovering what growth means to individual students. Dewey's work shines with this disposition, "And it is well to remind us that education as such has no aims. Only persons, parents, and teachers, etc., have aims, not an abstract idea like education. And, consequently, their purposes are indefinitely varied, differing with different children, changing as children grow and with the growth of experience on the part of one who teaches. Even the most valid aims which can be put in words will, as words, do more harm than good unless one recognizes that they are not aims, but rather suggestions to an educator as to how to observe, how to look ahead, and how to choose in liberating and directing the energies of the concrete situation in which they find themselves."[1]

Student Voice

Many times, I have taken a student's draft piece of writing, and with permission, read it dramatically aloud to the class. You can see the color beaming from their faces. The sparkle in the eyes grows intense, because for the first time, the ideas presented on paper are rendered in a confident voice. And the power of their ideas radiates as performance. Afterwards, these students seldom lack motivation when working on a difficult piece of writing.

Help students develop their own voices, not only for their sakes, but for ours as well. School is a social institution where we strive to uphold rights to a fair and equitable standard. Vital work can be undertaken each and every day, for the dreams of youth to mature into full expression. Rachel, 17, involved in a place-based project from Idaho, had this grand perspective: "To me, this work brings hope for America's future because all of the work revolves around kids, and kids are our future leaders. This work first of all shows that kids care about their education and the way they learn; and second of all it shows that we care about the world around us. Almost every project involves bettering our communities and this demonstrates to me that we're doing

everything in our power to create a solid future."

How are students positioned in this democratic experiment? How are their voices nurtured? Sustained? Applied? How can we reconcile the varying answers into a cohesive community? Each school has a bundle of individual roots held in its learning soil, defined by individual participants acting as a collective over time. The individuals in any school community are constantly changing, not just with the addition of new faces but with changes in age and understanding as well. Each student, teacher, and community member bring to the group individuality; each is challenged to contribute, to become part of a greater whole.

In place-based learning youth dialogue is critical to the project's success. A learning organization worth its weight in high-minded visions need inclusion of youth to succeed. Without active youth involvement, there is a definite tendency for adults to "presume and assume" as if walking in fog surrounded by youth but not really seeing them. Adults can get sidetracked on the schooling day-to-day demands when the landmarks and signposts of youth are limited. When youth are genuinely involved, a steady compass bearing guides teachers to stay on course for a fruitful journey.

In my years of working with young people, I have witnessed many consequences of the full involvement of youth, or lack thereof. I characterize four distinct degrees of student involvement ranging from superficial to deep involvement. I call each by its function: window-dressing, informing, guiding, and partnership.

Window-dressing

All too often, students are superficial – part of the mission statement, certainly part of the calling for the adults who work in the organization, but infrequently asked for advice to shape curriculum or school rules. Though loved and cared for by teachers, in regards to policy or procedures, students are often pawns moved around the schooling chessboard. Highly visible to the outside world, these students have little to do with decisions

on the conditions that frame the schools that they inhabit.

Students express their accumulated frustration at not being listened to by adults. They understand how they are placed in positions of participation, with adults wielding veto power. As a result, genuine student-centered issues are driven underground where they suffer all sorts of interesting fates and avenues of development.

Informing

Informing is a more mature stage, characterized by students informing the school about what works and what doesn't. In this stage, the educators are genuine about listening to students and creating infrastructure to see that this listening is brought into play in the school beyond the student council. Students are allowed to join a curriculum committee, athletic council, or school/community interest group. In this participation, students are often asked for their opinion. After giving their side of an issue to a committee, the school board, or a community group, the students are return to the day-to-day life of the school.

However, at this juncture, students are seldom part of comprehensive decision-making, limited to a role of informing not deciding. Student input becomes a process of positive affirmation but not one of guiding.

Guiding

Imagine a school with a decision-making committee of 12 people with four students and eight adults. The numbers alone portray an organization more sophisticated at empowering youth, extending beyond informing to guiding. One of the best ways to assure guiding is to increase the number of students on committees, while simultaneously increasing the number of committees that have a core group of student representatives.

Students need each other. A useful critical mass of student participation in teams will build upon itself, building confidence in the youth to join committees and share from the heart. The precise number that constitutes a critical mass will be unique for

each school. Usually, a full third to one-quarter of students as the percentage of the committee, teamed with adults, will result in strong partnering. Don't fret about a student takeover of the committee; students seem to understand the realities of the adult world in an organization, almost always acting with a restrained yet determined focus.

In this guiding phase the school is clearly committed to developing and sustaining youth leadership. Students emerge as significant leaders in areas like extra-curricular activities, community connections, peer counseling, hallway behavior, service leadership, teacher assistants, and drug and alcohol prevention activities. Despite this admirable level of involvement, a curtain still restrains student participation in several areas at the heart of the school like staffing, budget, curriculum, and discipline. These issues are left for the adults to decide, with student participation scaled back to an informing role.

Partnering

Infrequently found in my years of working with youth, the partnering stage is developed over much time building relationships in the informing and guiding stages, and with much effort. Partnering is achieved when a school culture engages students as full partners acting jointly with adults in the school operation. Partnering sees students informing, guiding, and in this partnering stage undertaking responsible decision making in life of the school. Adults are likewise empowered. Full partnership strengthens both students and adults, establishing a strong center of gravity.

What does this partnering look like? Students are voting members on committees and boards, have an integral hand in curriculum, and shape accountability measure like student-led conferences and showcase events. If a news team came to interview the school's leadership, several students would be interviewed along with the adults.

Partnering is when each role, whether educator or student, is uniquely respected and understood. Cara, quoted earlier,

suggests, "This sort of teaching [place-based] empowers students to take charge of what is being taught to them and apply it to the greater community."

Shared responsibility strengthens the ability for teachers and students to respond to the dynamics of learning. There is plenty of power, decisions, and leadership to go around. To achieve shared responsibility means to get rid of the superficiality of window dressing antics, the artificialness of informing tokenism, and the frustration of guiding without fully leading.

An insight came from Matt, 22, an experienced place-based student from Virginia, as he explained how this concept of partnering builds capacity, "I think that adults need to look at students as being equal partners in their ability to bring ideas to the table. The only thing barring them from being equal partners is the vision and the girth that adults are going to allow them to have. If you look to youth and young people as the providers of new thoughts, as having the ability to look outside the box, then it will enrich the entire community. As I said earlier, I truly believe that we fill the shoes that we're expected to fill. And providing that vision with the large shoes is what I think adults can do."

Relational Quotient

If there is one constant in my years of work with young people, it is small group primacy empowering relational student value, whether in an English class, wilderness expedition, or YMCA program. Successful group work, whether the scale of a team or an entire organization, exhibits what I call a "**relational quotient**" – a **matrix of social efficacy** that is evident in any class, expedition, or school, engages its members into the generative world of exemplary relational qualities taking place.

A relational group, when truly functioning as a team, grows beyond the reasonable range of any one of its members, creating an interdependent sub-culture greater than any one person. Like a furnace needing fuel, a successful small group demands inclusive and effective relational participation to perpetuate itself.

As mentioned prior, I read several journals of one-room schoolteachers. These practitioners knew they needed to create a confident and productive social group for a multi-age school to have the optimal conditions to excel.

A group without every member involved is merely an aggregate. The 'relational quotient' becomes more than the glue holding a group of individuals together, it **defines** the emerging qualities and power of a team working together. For instance, a student project team will arrive at a new idea marked by energy, integrity, and value; a successful athletic team will overcome a season of ups and downs, sustaining its competitive edge; a science research team will unify its inquiry for discovery.

In effect, when the relational quotient is high, those close to its epicenter will learn significantly. This is really not complicated. There aren't hidden secrets to the essential success of student learning communities. Each community is – after all – made up of people. It gets down to members treating one another with the following relational ingredients that matter for the variety of growth in groups: respect, compassion, honesty, justice, service, enthusiasm, purpose, patience, tolerance, knowledge, responsibility, caring, unity, trust, creativity, courtesy, honor, love, loyalty, and kindness.

The words in this list are common, reachable, understandable, and even, to some degree, overused. Too often we look right past them when we contemplate the critical factors creating a successful learning community. Don't be fooled by the ease with which they can slip off the tongues of educators and parents alike. Like a miner hunting for gold, the real thing can be found only after backbreaking work, diligence, and learning from mistakes!

The truth is that we seldom experience these words ourselves in the context of a high performing relational group. American education continues to overemphasize the individual rather than the group. Often stated in vision statements, this deliberate community building is still infrequently attained. Yes, it is changing but we still live with a generational limitation, teachers often teaching, "as they were taught."

If you haven't experienced a true learning community, how are you to establish one? We all know what it means to care; yet how many teachers have truly felt the bond of 25 people caring for each other?

My point is that teachers, dedicated to their work, have to activate the above relational attributes within themselves! One can no more teach without tolerance, knowledge, and determination than one can sail without understanding the winds, rigging, and sails. Aimless movement would be the result.

It is only in the relational growth between individual and environment, between student and student, student and teacher, student and subject, student and school, that the place called school is created.

In the newest generation of teachers, more time needs to be spent attaining these relational experiences of learning communities. Listening and student voice when leveraged with successful small group relational dynamics creates successful schools.

I know this. I have seen it, experienced it, coached it, and taught it -- again and again. Dewey's defining ability to "come to close quarters with the pupil's mind and the subject matter" is, for me, the magic of learning and the reward of teaching.

Ximena, a freshman at the charter school, added to my appreciation of this magic when I read her comments about how she learned through the year-long curriculum of place-based learning: "We definitely learn but it is in a different way. We are not always stuck in a classroom; we are much freer. Our love (of learning) is combined with our work, out joy is combined with our work, and we are learning things that are important to us."

Chapter 7
Telling Your Story

"True education involves growing to appreciate the direct links that exist between actions and consequences – in one's body, in one's social network, in the planetary environment as a whole.[1]

Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi

You can't just let life pass you by. You can't let things you care about just happen without you.

Kelsey, 15, California

In literature, the journey is the mainstay of the heroic cycle. Whether Odysseus, Bilbo, or Dorothy, each hero begins his or her journey from home and travels to unknown lands. Whether fighting the Trojans, slaying Smaug the Dragon, or unmasking the Wizard of Oz, each hero must overcome a series of challenges to achieve his or her goal.

How heroes go about this journey, and with whom, is the essence of the heroic tale. The main character – the hero – will often join forces with a band of colleagues, dwarves, or a wizard, tin man, scarecrow, and lion. Once wrapped in each other's mutual interest, each loyal band solves the many dilemmas that come its way. And, by doing so, they turn the spotlight onto their heroic qualities.

Good learning like a good hero tale encompasses this sense of accomplishment as Tiffany, 15, expressed, "As a learner I feel important when I have overcome something. When I've worked hard and then finally achieved something. It's not the same feeling you get when you haven't worked hard."

When Odysseus trusts his men, or Bilbo solves the riddles posed by Gollum, or Dorothy inspires the human intellect in the Scarecrow, these heroes are modeling to each reader several achievable human characteristics. Achievable, because all heroic attributes are human ones. Leadership, cleverness, and inspiration are only three examples of many qualities that elevate the hero or heroine. The lasting value of heroic tales resides in the human condition, broad as the endless sky. In place-based learning, the wide range of skills and attitude, caring and background knowledge all fuse to present learning in a very broad sense.

Erin, 14, was astute in saying, "I feel we learn to be able to comprehend and communicate with the world around us. Learning is observing, listening, and feeling. There are multiple ways to learn, and different people learn using those ways."

Human characteristics and heroic qualities are the raw materials mined by the storyteller into bright jewels that adorn a reader's intellect. Only by meeting the intellect of the scarecrow,

the compassion of the tin man, and the willful courage of the lion does the reader fully understand Dorothy's capacity as a human being and her actions as a heroine.

Heroes seldom roam in isolation, but, rather, they exist at the center of change, at the center of community, and most importantly at the center of learning. It is only through intensive learning that the hero obtains the heroic qualities that give life to the story. Heroes also make mistakes, many of them. As with ageless adversity, it is how the hero responds to these mistakes that provides the tale. Timeless in truth through the ages, heroic stories propel the reader into a land of wishes, dreams, visions, and the hope of what it means to be human.

"Learning is making mistakes and taking what you believe is important from that mistake [. . .] we are on a road of life. You may pass many people and say nothing and still continue. You can stop and talk to a traveler ask him what lies ahead and you may learn something," confirmed a KRI student, 16, during an end of the year writing reflection.

The learning cycle parallels the heroic journey. Each child travels daily from home to school tossed upon his or her voyage with an assortment of peers. Each grade and each year can best be recalled as a singular journey of its own: in early fall, the energy of new beginnings; by late autumn the steady rhythm of deepening patterns, by mid-winter established connections, then a burst of spring and, before we know it – the end of the year and a summer in which to reflect. The summer, like a settling pond, is time apart, essential for clearing the turbulent waters of raw experience so students and teachers can gather up their reflective identities, critique their roles, and thereby lay another foundation for the next cycle to begin anew in the fall.

Teachers must put heroic qualities front and center in a learning community. Of the many heroic qualities, three are particularly relevant for teachers.

Patience

Patience shares the Latin root, **pati,** meaning to suffer. Characteristic of the will to endure without complaint, patience implies the bearing of a burden, enduring something one does not necessarily want to do, but will for a greater good. Students go to school to develop their individual capacities, yet need to show patience when a learning experience is tilted towards the group, rather than the individual. Furthermore, patience, like listening, is a pillar for successful teaching, always a two-way street. Without it, the other values never have a chance to take hold.

Moderation

From Latin **moderate**, meaning to keep within bounds, a moderator influences behavior within reasonable limits. He or she avoids excesses and extremes and by doing so presides over a meeting of the minds or an expanding discussion. Moderation, coupled with loyalty, is a powerful commitment by individuals to accommodate the group in deliberation instead of focusing on self, what's in it for me. Moderation and loyalty are both group-oriented values that thrive in an arena of trust.

Reliability

To be able to count on someone is a solid value that groups hold out for individuals. Reliability and trust are interwoven into a fine mesh of dependability. It's interesting to note that rely, the basic word form of reliability, comes from the Latin **religare**, meaning to bind together. Reliability is an outcome of many successful learning experiences. Listen to the feedback after a successful team experience. It is always the language of interdependent phrase after another.

- "They showed they cared."
- "My group was helpful."
- "I liked her ideas."
- "We worked past the time given to us."

All are indicators of reliability. When we have this triad (patience, moderation, and reliability) then each student has hope profound.

In contrast, learning in desperate circumstances is the reality for way too many students. I'll never forget an eighth-grade student who captured the nature of hope so well. Rachel, a very quiet student who seldom talked yet was always thoughtful, declared: "Hope means believing and holding on even when things seem pointless. When things look really bad, hope is there. Hope is the key to unlock all the happiness and fortune in the world. Hope is the will to hold on even at the darkest hour in someone's life. If you have hope – you have something pretty special. Hope is a way to think positive and have faith in yourself while giving faith to others. In the long run, we will all need hope in order to live, whether it is a rainy day and you want the clouds to go away, or your back is to the wall and it seems like you have nothing to live for. Just remember, hope is always there."

Bring these qualities into the open – posted visibly on walls, chosen as key language in a quote, or as topics for a morning

meeting – they will come alive. It doesn't take inordinate energy or skill to activate these qualities in a learning community. They are alive in each and every student like a dry desert pothole awaiting the first spring rain. Audra, from Wisconsin, knew this well when she insisted that, "Students feel the passion radiating from their teacher and respond positively. As long as there is passion, there's a light of knowledge."

Of course, many other heroic qualities can easily come front and center in a purposeful learning environment. Here are several more:

Tactfulness

From the Latin **tangere** meaning to touch, tactfulness is an important layer to a mature learning community. Being thoughtful, discreet, considerate, and judicious are all behaviors of tactful students. And these excellent group dispositions are critical to the success of a team. Holding back opinions while active listening; leading by example rather than force of voice; giving space for the meek to speak; selecting the right time to share the right path. Tactfulness capabilities are the **manners** of small group success.

Compassion

From the Latin c**ompassion** meaning sympathy, compassion is an empathetic understanding of the world around us. This ability to engage with others is a hallmark of compassion. In every community there exist amazing elders who stand ready to share their compassionate knowledge with students. The two age groups, elders and youth, benefit from each other's compassion.

Enthusiasm

From the Greek **enthios** meaning possessed by a God, a student imbued with enthusiasm is easy to spot in a vibrant learning community. They command attention, grab interest, living and breathing enthusiasm. This is powerful charisma that brings a zeal and zest to a small learning community. When I talk

with students visiting schools across the country, I always notice a common feature no matter where I am visiting a school, rural or urban, large, or small. The measure of the most successful schools I have visited and coached is evident in the degree of student enthusiasm.

Trustworthiness

Another interesting origin, from the Indo-European base of **true** meaning tree, a student who is firm with integrity, in effect stands tall with deep roots. This heroic quality is the primary anchor of sustaining a learning community. Integrity is everything.

Confidence

From the Latin **confidere** meaning 'intense trust'. Whether a student trusts in their own capabilities or the student trusts in others...confidence is, like respect, the RESULT of almost all the above qualities coming to play in a learning community. Again, talking with students it doesn't take more than a few seconds to ascertain qualities of confidence.

Portfolios

Walking into the grocery store the other day, I noticed the tall stack of boxes, opened on one end in the aisle. One inch, three ring binders, many colors. Price? Less than two dollars. It dawned on me what has happened these last few years in schools. It seems everybody has a portfolio. Portfolios per capita have seen exponential growth lately._That's ok, good reasons for that. Besides bringing up all those fun aspects of scrapbooks, portfolios essentially tell a story. My story, your story. And, in so doing, offer evidence of something. I am a qualified candidate. I am a successful student. The portfolio becomes the student's storyteller. It's best to start in the beginning.

In the fall, it is important to establish a baseline to bring the portfolio into the life of a learning community. What has the student experienced to date? How will last year shape this year?

What issues or ideas need continuation? Which ones are completed and need a next stage of growth? Which one is best left to incubate for further work? Having students begin this early discussion of the past will bring their learning portfolio 'up-to-date'.

And, in the end, a well-done learning portfolio captures exquisite moments, stunning the reader like a student's mid-June reflection after a year with the Kickapoo River Institute when she stated: "Learning is caring and finding truth in something that you can't see. It's listening and watching, viewing and doing. Why someone would not want to learn new things is wrong, you learn them no matter what. What you learn makes you who you are. And you never stop. Learning is an eternal flame that catches everyone in a bonfire of brilliance. To learn is to live life."

A learning portfolio is a history of the life of the learner. They can be profound for students. Each is a work about the work: thinking about thinking, feeling about feeling, inquiring about inquiring – in other words, a means to self-examination. A

learning portfolio tracks self-knowledge, deviating for personal anecdotes, returning quickly to the learning journey. It will go through stages and drafts like any work, becoming a foundation to build the next layer along the student's journey.

A learning portfolio is a thoughtful, public declaration of learning, demonstrating first to the student, then to the world, the student's strength of learning over time. Clear writing surfaces from each student. A student, 13, captured complex understanding with an elegant simplicity, "Learning is trial and failure. You have to have fun while learning or you won't learn much. It's taking stuff that makes no sense and adding stuff to it to make sense."

Learning portfolios work to the advantage of the learner because they provide a harbor, a refuge for thoughts, a place for hindsight to work its wisdom. During the first few weeks every September, I facilitated a reflective linkage from present to past. Examine the previous year's learning cycle. Start with writing, and then allow writing to inspire discussion. These initial fall writings in a student's learning portfolio have the means to draw out the meaningful threads from several years past, identifying strong issues and patterns. By asking a series of questions in a trusting writing environment, each student can broaden his or her meta-cognition, learning about learning.

What worked well for you last year? Recall a lesson, day, or experience that will give detail to this question. What part of learning has been the strongest for you in the last three years? Given your personal magic wand of change, what would you change in your reading class, math class, science class, etc.? What is it about the way you learn these subjects that you would wish to change? Of the ten heroic qualities on the board which three speak to you the strongest? Why? Which three speak to you the least? Why? Of these heroic qualities, which three would you like to work on this year? Why? How?

After students write for a while on these questions, the small group discussion, the giving voice to these important matters matter. Capture the words. By building on the power of the words

and phrases gathered, displaying some visibly, and integrating them into your teaching vocabulary.

Thereafter, these words of self-reflective writing will act as a trigger, a node of nourishment, to prod the writers forward in their ongoing learning portfolio work. This is especially critical for place-based learning work because the places themselves speak clearly and profoundly for each student. When you hike along a trail, or climb to a ridgeline, or interview a veteran, the experiential moments infuse writing with great power.

Trust time. Give a period of reflection between learning cycles. During the year, take time every couple of months. The act of reflective journaling, in effect, becomes a framework of participatory action research that demonstrates how learning is cared for. As Leslie proclaimed, "The first time someone says, "Wow, great job" or "That's a great idea" the student may just take the comment with a grain of salt. No big deal. But the more encouragement that is given, the more students will believe it. Suddenly, the realization comes that someone cares."

A learning portfolio can help student's grown on their own heroic journey. Alex, another Wisconsin leader, gets the last say in this chapter. "The most important part of my life as a student is to see that you can make a difference and that sometimes the adults even seem to listen and maybe even think about what I say."

Chapter 8
Measuring PBL Success

Education must take account of those factors in the process of adjustment that make it possible to meet new and changing needs. It must emphasize intelligence, initiative, originality, and enterprise. It is not so much a fixed adjustment that we want as adjustability...

Irving E. Miller

One thing I always say is that each person is given their own talent and their own gift, and it just takes patience to receive that gift. If there's anything that I learned this year by serving in other places, is that you don't have to get in a high position to be recognized as a leader. Because it starts with you. But you must make that choice, whether to accept the responsibilities of being a leader or not.

Crystal, 16, Arizona

Imagine teaching in a high school without walls. Imagine instructing a small group of freshman and sophomores limited only by the learning resources and people of your community, region and state. Imagine 100 days in the field outside of the school walls, studying the history, ecology, and culture of home; whether historical archive, restored wetland, or senior citizen community center. Imagine working with sixty professionals, experts and community elders over the year, integrating learning into interdisciplinary courses titled Nature and Technology; Energy, Ecosystems, and Economics; and The Kickapoo Valley: A Bio-Regional Map. Finally, imagine giving these students an Iowa Basic Skills Standardized Test to assess if this kind of learning, this 'Pedagogy of Place', made an academic impact.

What might be found from a pre/posttest design?

- Will students score well in science by working closely with biologists for many days with the wetland's restoration project?

- Will students' score well in Social Studies by working closely with historians, conducting research in archives and presenting their findings at a history conference?

- Will students' score well in Math by computing the flow rate, volume and drift of the Kickapoo River?

- Will students score well in Language Arts by the consistent and constant application of oral and written skills in deadline-oriented tasks?

- Will students, when working in the community, demonstrate powerful learning, as measured by a nationally recognized test?

- Does place-based learning hold a unique 'quality of permanence' that is readily accessible during a testing time?

As mentioned earlier, I had the unique experience of establishing, and then teaching in a small charter high school that spent over 100 days learning **in** the community. Twenty 9th and 10th grade students learned together, like a one-room schoolhouse, for over nine months. These students reflected the widest range of skills, abilities, and backgrounds. Some were 'gifted' and some were 'at-risk'; several students even scored at college levels on certain sub-sections of the pre-test; and several scored at elementary levels. Some were 'model' students; some were constantly challenging.

What kind of work took us into the community for 100 days? Here is a small sampling of projects we undertook:

- Researched primary sources of the Civil War veterans from the Kickapoo Valley and reenacted Gettysburg for 3 days.

- Researched a historical question: Did the Kickapoo Indians ever actually live in the Kickapoo Valley? Found groundbreaking historical documents, and built a National History Day project that was 2nd in the State of Wisconsin.

- Built picnic tables and benches for the Soldier Grove and Gays Mills rural communities along Main Streets and Parks.

- Worked with the Department of Natural Resources and a private landowner to monitor biotic and aquatic changes at a 700-acre wetland restoration site.

- Created art pieces reflecting the natural and cultural

heritage of home; wrote poetry perched atop a sun swept limestone outcropping overlooking a pre-historical site.

- Discovered the geological story of the Kickapoo Rivers' changing course through investigation and analysis of 100 years of archival maps and recent aerial photographs.

- Found the source of the Kickapoo River and hiked, canoed, and biked, over 4 days, from the source of 100 miles downstream to the Wisconsin River.

After this eventful year of learning, these 14 freshmen and 6 sophomore students were given the Iowa Test of Educational Development as pre-test in September and a post-test in June.

What did the test results show?

The composite score (all subjects combined) jumped almost three grade levels, increasing from the middle of freshman year (9.6) to the end of senior year (12.5).

The Science section moved from 10.6 grade level equivalent to 13.6. This 13.6 was the highest overall post-test section score. One of its sub-sections; *evaluating and analyzing information* increased from a national ranking of 52% to 74%. In place-based projects that year the students kept field journals, data collection logs, accessed primary sources, and had to evaluate and analyze a variety of scientific information needed to undertake various steps in their projects.

The Social Studies section increased from a 9.3 grade level equivalent to 12.2. Its sub-section on *interpreting information* leapt 29%. Again, all the primary source research we undertook, the constant seeking of answers, the community documents, artifacts, and people tended to shift a student to a highly responsive role where they learned to discriminate, categorize, and evaluate information for what was essential and what wasn't.

The Sources of Information section jumped almost three grade levels from 8.2 to 11.0. In fact, two subsections increased by over 50%; *library sources* (44% increase to 73%) and *government sources* (54%

to 83%). These students had more time in state archives, historical museums, and libraries than most students obtain in all four years of high school.

What is it about place-based learning that influenced these scores? Four defining attributes of place-based pedagogy come to mind.

1. Connections shape Attitudes. CA
2. Anchors define Place AP
3. Primary is the Experience PE
4. Audience determines Accountability AA

Connections shape Attitudes (CA)

Attitudes will shape performance in any endeavor. Though diligent in the taking of the September ITBS pre-test, these students had yet to jell as a learning community. By the June post-test, they were fully connected; hundreds of experiential moments had brought them together as a learning community. They had been together all day, every day, since September, and believed in what they were doing. Therefore, each student was committed to place-based learning working.

Consequently, a post-test became a means to show their worth, voice their value, and affirm their hard work. Having been the district test coordinator for our Wisconsin State Assessment Tests, I understood how the KRI student attitude was a far cry from the typical student attitude toward 'fill in the bubble' testing.

I recall administering the WKCE test on writing development. In receiving the blue covered essay book, a student asked, "Mr. Lewicki, am I receiving a grade on this?"

I replied, "No, but try your best."

With a caring attitude, the KRI students read each question carefully, went back over their answers, and brought into play various test-taking skills that made a major difference in the results. When students are connected; a multiplier increases academic efficacy. Connectivity changes the landscape for most

students.

Anchors of Place (AP)

An indispensable influence is the tremendous variety of community and field-based settings the students had experienced. Each experience became an anchor of memory. When you learn at a museum, hospital, archive, forest, prairie, or riverbank then the vivid nature of the experience itself, works like a mnemonic device. This wealth of experience became a depository for future access, especially during a test.

Primary Experience (PE)

First-hand experiences were critical to the learning. Experience comes from the Latin ***experiri***, meaning to try. To try implies failure, self-evaluation, and analysis of what just happened. For example, a microclimate study along the Kickapoo River was a frequent place for temperature, humidity, plant growth, and data collection. The Iowa tests asked each student to analyze experimental procedures; with confidence they could look back on those experiments, and others to extrapolate answers for the test. In fact, the students scored at a college level on this sub-skill in the science section.

Audience of Accountability (AA)

Place-based learning frequently has students asking questions with answers yet to be discovered while conducting research no one else is doing. This one-in-a-kind work really motivates the students to dig in, find answers, and present to others. Audience is key. The projects draw community as audience, and quality work out of the students. The students know that family, friends, and neighbors will view their work. Furthermore, a community purpose answering local historical questions, monitoring wetlands, or building an often-used park bench results in quality.

We forget sometime the power of learning inherent in a group of teenagers that really care and want to show it. Revolutions are energized and often led by the young, as Doris Williams explained earlier, the engine of the American Civil Rights movement were the youth. What is best is for each teacher to find the place-based glove that fits and wear it well.

Few teachers will ever have the flexibility I was given. I understand my experience was unique. However, in 20 years since that Kickapoo River Institute experience, I have helped over 150

new and innovative schools implement their visions.

What I have seen is that time and time again is that a unified group of educators, partnered with experts and elders, honoring the school's youth, can do amazing work!

One need not spend 100 days, or 50 days in the community to benefit; 15 community-focused days in a school year would be a revolution from a student's point of view. One need not always even be in the community, for the community can enter the school as well.

Aforementioned 'community sensibilities must help design the blueprint. What seems essential for place-based learning is that the design blends real community learning opportunities and issues. Benefits are assured when there is a focused time period with a well-defined community purpose. Tremendous resources, elders and experts, lead to new resources that impact the evolving place-based curriculum.

We do so many things well, each and every day, in classrooms across America. Incredible learning takes place in school. I was given an opportunity few teachers experience, to move the place of learning into the community arena for 100 days. The power of learning when community is the "classroom" is beyond compare. Linking your school with a place called home will pay dividends, planned and unplanned.

Chapter 9
Why PBL Today?

Zorba came upon an old man planting an apricot seedling and asked why he, an old man, was planting a new tree. "I live as though I would never die," was his reply. "And me, I live as though I might die tomorrow," said Zorba, "which one of us is right?

Nikos Kazantzakis

If there is learning taking place you can actually feel it, you can reach out and touch it.

Howard Fuller

You must take risks sometimes.
Cara, 22 Vermont

A generation ago, the 1983 report A Nation at Risk, focused national conversation regarding the state of American education: What was working? What was not, and why? How to fix it, tinkering or overhaul? By 1988, when I shifted careers from directing youth, family, and camp programs at the YMCA and began teaching in public school, waves of change and reform, ushered in by the "at Risk" challenge, were beginning to crash upon the shores of America's school districts. Along with other career changers, as well as my younger colleagues, we joined this newest generation of teachers.

Energized, we had examined A Nation at Risk in our teacher education classes, had discussed the evolving federal and state policies, and saw ourselves as the new wave of innovators to address needs described driven in this seminal report.

I taught for 17 years in the North Crawford School District. The next 11 years, I coached over 150 new schools. The following several years, I was a principle for a K-5 Fine Art Elementary School and then a principal for a brand-new K-8 Project-based Elementary School. Almost four decades have elapsed since 1983.

Reflecting upon this journey, I have seen that relational efforts are the core of what teacher's do, weaving in magic and simple hard work every day of the week for those students that make up their teacher's world. Gaining knowledge is certainly part of the teacher's equation, but equal to that knowledge gained is also the things that students do with that knowledge. And for this long arc, and moreover, to the point of this book, place-based learning remains a most worthy pedagogy for every generation of educators.

By now, I trust you have a sense of place-based learning; can appreciate what it means to young people and grasp how the power place-based learning connects individuals with community. Furthermore, having designed dozens of place-based schools and worked with faculty that excel at this kind of teaching, I would assert, confidently, that place-based learning reflects a 'best practice'. PBL is **deliberative** enough to matter in any learning community, **comprehensive** enough to impact an entire school district, and **inspirational** enough to contribute to a

vision for new schools, or the reboot of a current school.

The demands of every generation are met by relationships amongst young and old, school and community, serving and being served, attending to and being cared for; all being essential experiences of place-based learning.

The demands of today demand we seek out practices that move beyond incremental ways to improve student achievement. We need to upset the applecart of 'business as usual' schooling and support young people to believe. As Howard Fuller, Director of the Institute for the Transformation of Learning at Marquette University, noted to a group of educators in Milwaukee in the fall of 2002, "We are educating this generation not just to work in the 21st century but to create the 21st century!"

The force of place, the anchor of place can be for our students a constant, a comfort, and a community of support as they learn anew.

Opposite forces will come into play during this process. Schooling is evolving and devolving at the same time. Evolving, schooling is consolidating towards tremendous access to knowledge and conversation through the Internet. Imagine my students; they have always known the Internet - its ability to convey information, connect people and thereby build knowledge, which can lead to understanding when anchored correctly. This capability of access to raw information, networking in real time, and virtual libraries on demand challenge us as a society in ways we are only beginning to understand.

On the other hand, schools are transitioning into loosely federated aggregates of students and teachers as life-long learners. Virtual knowledge building and communication has accelerated the melt of the rigid classroom walls.

We have learned one especially big lesson or relearned what wise teachers had been saying for years that **schooling is much more defined by connections and relationships than by structures and schedules.**

Place-based learning reflects the wisdom of these connections and relationships as the final arbitrator of what learning can be. Schools today possess, and are fitfully, at times, possessed by an organizing principle that keeps students inside the school or trapped in a virtual world. Knowledge, too often, remains piecemeal rather than integrated through a place context. There is a blind focus to anchor the power and place of learning within the four walls of school, regardless of how valuable the community might be as a contributor.

Shouldn't our sensibilities be framed and shaped by the community where the school resides? The world around us, local or global, has vital issues that knock at the door of our schoolhouses for response. Students sometimes hear that knock at the school door; other times the community gives up on the school, frustrated that their reach out efforts, are too seldom reciprocated. When the school and community end up at arm's length, they both miss an opportunity to grapple with vital economic, environmental, and engaging local issues of place.

We can hear the knock on the door. Today, we have been given

a gift. We see, most clearly, after spending months on computer screens, and missing our students and our students missing us, how the heart of the matter rests with connections and relationships. Between teacher and student is what makes a school; that knock is louder than ever before.

Given an invigorated collaboration between school and community through place-based learning, we can, as educators answer that knock and make a difference. Students beseech us to pay attention to their needs to make a difference in the lives of others, now. Do they make a difference, today? Seldom. After a generation of reform since A Nation at Risk, each student's importance to his or her community has barely nudged off home plate. In too many cases, they haven't even come up to bat.

A premise of this book is to bring students to the plate. And by doing so, we all benefit. Ernest from Alabama and James from New Mexico, knew this in their respective comments: Ernest stated, "I wish that adults would understand that students do have innovative, mind-boggling ideas, and that students can put those ideas into action. And they can make the world a better place."

Asking to be part of the solution is not much to ask of our schools overwhelmed with talented young people. James adds, "Adults may have had a bad experience and they don't want to touch a subject, whereas youth will be ready to go in and dig it up and see what's there. When you think of community leaders, nobody ever thinks of a kid! Everybody's always thinking of the mayor, or these older guys in suits who make laws."

Again, action steps matter; connect, engage, dig it up, and move forward. The future need not be vague, though we must understand that, as we move forward, real learning is murky. This murkiness often hides the messy, unclear steps to solve a problem: rather than canned, cut and paste, where the teacher knows the end before the project even begins.

Place-based learning, in fact, often has a murky start. Given birth through serious and genuine listening to each other; a student poses an inquiry, the question lingers in the air for a moment, and before we know it, as if magically, the students

triangulate intellect, passion, and interest to secure a bearing to pursue answers.

A team is powerful. Often a focused group of peers grabs an idea, frames a place-based learning purpose, and off they go! The energy is palatable. When this happens a school really becomes a 'time of life. 'As Ernest Boyer noted, each school community is "a purposeful place; a communicative place; a just place; a disciplined place, a caring place; and a celebrative place."[1]

This, in the end, is why I embrace place-based learning: wonder, irreverence, and, of course, it works. Place-based learning, as Seymout Papert noted, will "create communities of common interest on projects that will connect with powerful ideas. "[2]

Youth across the spectrum of American education care about connection with community. How does my community need me? How can I contribute to others through a skill of my own? If not me, who? If not now, when?

What has changed since 1983? Places have changed, society has changed, our homes, the parks, the open spaces, and of course schools. We have done much since A Nation at Risk report, but regarding true community as Boyer describes it, the results are more miss than hit. A school is a community that within itself can embrace a greater community. Not just in newly designed units or in a rearranged formative structure but in how it shapes the greater community, be it the village, town, neighborhood, or even city, which it is inextricably nestled within.

A Nation at Risk turns the real focus on its head - it's not merely the nation that is at risk anymore, rather it is the relevancy that students associate with schooling itself in an age when information is everywhere, but collaborative school efforts are less common than we think.

What do we do with all this knowledge? If the strength of a nation is connected to an involved citizenry, then there is a deep lesson relevant from place-based learning.

Community and academic achievement: place-based learning does both! Purpose defines the individual; gathers others to

achieve and in doing believe. It's deceptively simple and hasn't changed in generations upon generations. Place-based learning emanates from this collaborative vision of teachers, students, and community resonating. Sentiments like Nicque's, a freshman Wisconsin leader, affirm what students like her have experienced numerous times over when she proposes, "There is no elitism in true knowledge, only wonder and irreverence. You can't approach learning in awe; or you'll never be able to truly learn. For any subject to become knowledge, a pupil must touch details, smell them, and feel them."

Chapter 10
Teaching Excellence

Just as a pile of stones is not a house, an accumulation of facts and equations is not knowledge.

Jules Henri Poincare

Adults may have had a bad experience and they don't want to touch a subject, whereas youth will be ready to go in and dig it up and see what's there.

Ernest, 16, Alabama

Vito Perrone, an exceptional educator could speak with force about excellence in teaching. He asserted: "The exceptional teachers I know are passionate about learning. They have deep interests in some aspect of learning: history, literature, and science. They are so steeped in this passion that they could manage well if all the textbooks, workbooks, and curriculum guides that fill the schools suddenly disappeared. They see connecting points everywhere."[1]

A history professor shared a gem of a book about teaching published in 1922. The introduction had many wonderful statements, one that caught my eye and became a touchstone for me around place-based learning: "He [the student] must not, because of any scholastic aristocracy on the part of the teacher, be unable to make his contribution to human needs and to know the joy of work well done."[2]

The above 1922 maxim and Vito Perrone's previous 1991 letter to teachers provide my bookends for excellence in place-based learning. The 1922 maxim, for instance, request teachers to not become such aristocrats of knowledge that students aren't allowed an opportunity to ***"know the joy of work well done."*** Vito's 1991 letter asserts how teachers of excellence, *"see connecting points everywhere."*

Whether contributing through work or making connections; educators agree upon the unfolding of these two principles of place-based learning. The precise language that students often contribute to these powerful experiences is a point of nodded agreement as well.

Teachers begin to say to themselves, "Yes, I can see the importance of that elder being part of the learning."

"Yes, that is a powerful reason, as articulated by that student from Nebraska, to design my units with place-based principles in mind."

"Yes, it would be great to collaborate with my peers and benefit the community."

In effect, an affirmation is the usual response regarding

discussions of place-based learning. Yet there is a contrary reality when it comes to implementing place-based learning in schools. Teachers may agree, but few step forward and implement. In effect, this dilemma leaves us with the following question to be addressed in this chapter: If place-based pedagogy is so powerful, in both academic achievement and social growth, why don't more teachers subscribe to it in their daily teaching?

Though excellent examples can be found across America, those examples remain a disproportionate few when compared to the dominant traditions of direct instruction; a methodology remaining fairly consistent these last several generations: textbook and worksheet driven, teacher locus of control, pencil/paper assignment, the end result too often a student disconnect.

From the student's view of things, school unfolds with ninety percent of each day, inside, within the physical structure built to house the learning at hand. Imagine for a moment the student's reality. Waking up each morning, getting ready for school, maybe wondering what the six or seven teachers have planned for them this particular day. Looking out the window, noticing the weather, making no connection between the school day ahead and the weather overhead, unless it's a rare field trip day. As for community involvement or study, it seldom registers on the student or teacher's radar screens.

This viewpoint can be easily flipped for the teacher as well. Driving to work on the same day as the student is looking out the window of the bus, the teacher, though cognizant of what they are doing, seldom demonstrates empathy, let alone knowledge, of what the student will be doing at school the other eighty-five percent of the day. In effect, the nature of our seven or eight period system is fragmentation, with sparse communication between the silos of being a teacher or being a student. All of this activity is housed in a place removed physically from the community, disconnecting a fundamental purpose for the schooling in the first place. Unless teachers are careful to build engagement to learn in the community, then schools will serve to

disconnect students, which too often, can lead to alienation, rather than integration.

In this chapter, I will examine what I perceive to be the barriers that teachers often construct for themselves regarding this work. Then I will look at the barriers constructed by others, the real issues of transportation, budgets, inflexible administrators, state standards, and testing expectations that often block serious implementation of place-based work.

Veteran teachers, like any professional group, develop certain pathways that, year after year, become their manner and style of teaching. One seldom sees a 3rd grade teacher of ten years shift roles to being a subject area teacher of 8th grade students, though their certification might allow for that. One seldom sees a veteran high school subject area teacher shift to middle school teaching though their certification allows for that. It takes time to develop both the competencies and confidence as a teacher. We all know the emerging qualities of the first-year teacher. Much work, much trial and error, and much anxiety as well. Be that as it may, why would a veteran teacher want to shift from an earned comfort zone all over again?

There are four answers that seem to resonate with teachers as I discuss with them this very dilemma. And, interestingly enough, these four reasons that a teacher would adopt place-based learning are the exact four reasons that a student values place-based learning. So, for the sake of a clear explanation, allow me to start with the student's point of view and work my way around to the teacher's answers.

Imagine a student, a teenager these days, full of exuberance - full of life. As a father of five, my son and four daughters have taught me much. Always up front, their smiles of hope, jumps of joy never far from my experience of life. Then I drive to school and what do I see: a contrast, at times, a professional disappointment. Let me explain.

Certainly many, many young people enjoy and look forward to their schooling experience. And many, many teachers have spent their working lives creating classrooms and extra-curricular

opportunities devoted to the best interests of these students. And many classrooms and athletic or performing venues are highly successful. Yet, these same outstanding teachers would agree that, too often, for each student that is engaged, another student is not, disconnected from the exuberance of learning and participation.

How can this be? As a parent, I empathetically try to put my mind around this conundrum. How can the energy of youth be thwarted to such a degree that significant numbers of disconnected youth occur in most every school? I realize the percentages change with each school. But whatever the actual numbers, they represent many students. Would I accept three of my children being engaged in life, and the other two disconnected? Of course not, my measure of success is 100%. Should we expect school to be any different?

Look closely at your school, how many students are truly involved in the academic life of your school? Certainly, being on the honor roll is a measure of academic success, yet this doesn't always translate into involvement. Involvement, as opposed to participation, requires a sustained initiative and capacity, whereas participation asks for response, following directions, and limited performance.

I have had many conversations with students achieving good grades who recognize the superficiality of their academic work. One spring, during a sixth-grade outdoor education camp, I stayed up late with the senior boy counselors pushing sticks into the dying embers of an evening campfire. It was a reflective moment around the campfire with several of the most academic and athletically talented students our school had produced.

Their campfire reflections made it abundantly clear that they knew how to participate and get the A's for college. They could perform, score well on tests, and, in so doing, satisfy the adults at school as well as those at home. What I found intriguing was how the conversation would move to their involvement level. In this next breath they talked passionately and with conviction about some other activity, non-academic, in their school life. Whether playing on the volleyball team, acting in the play, or even leading the quiz bowl; these memories held their attention and clearly were the stuff of involvement, where the participation in classes was a distant second.

This campfire experience dovetails with another experience years earlier at a teacher's conference. William Glasser engaged, or in more accurate terms, tried to engage a handful of eighth grade students on the stage before several hundred teachers. His solitary question, "What makes you feel important as school?" received a silent response of bewildered eyes searching for an answer. After a couple of very long minutes, Glasser restated the question. Still, no answer. Finally, a student offered, "Is it ok if it

is a sport?"

"Certainly," replied Glasser. Then the floodgates opened. Playing football, volleyball, and the middle school play, organizing dances, cheerleading, on and on. Not a breath of academics. Not even a glimmer of recognition that they, as individual students, may feel important in English, Science, Math, or Social Studies.

It is at this juncture that place-based learning can make a monumental difference in the way that students are involved in school. Not wanting to take anything away from extra-curricula's, it is great that students have such strong feelings of involvement for them. However, we must add to that and include this level of engagement in their academic life as well. Place-based learning, as you have seen expressed in the preceding pages, will decrease the number of students disengaged, even some being alienated from school. Why? Time to return to the teacher's four reasons to use place-based pedagogy aligned with the same four values from the student's perspective.

Place projects purpose. When purpose is experienced, one feels important. If anything has tied together the student's quotes placed throughout this book it is how each student elucidates this essential point. This is no different for teachers as well. Much of the learning quoted underscores the importance felt by the teacher and students as they work together.

What I do makes a difference The assorted skills to complete a place-based project produce clear feedback, for student and teacher alike. This feedback is real and immediate, and often unambiguous. I can do this. I can't do that. I need help here, or I can help someone there. I appreciate others, others appreciate me. This effort or initiative helped my community, my school, and my skills. Like the final score of a game, place-based efforts have real outcomes.

Dynamic learning Answers aren't always known ahead of time. And one piece of learning often leads to another piece of understanding which may frame a new set of inquiry leading to new aspects of the project unplanned for, but which need attending to. There is a fresh sense of originality in place-based learning. And like any real-life endeavor, there is a constant dynamic of matching the challenge of the learning itself with the ability of the group and individuals therein.

I belong to a community of learners The same reason that those middle school students connected with the extra-curricular sense of belonging fits for place-based learning as well. Implicit in community, courage runs rampant and a passion for learning is the hallmark. For teachers, often faced with the social isolation of the classroom, this reason alone is often the most significant benefit that moves them forward out of their comfort zone to implement a place-based pedagogy.

Working with a team of teachers and a dynamic group of students is worth the extra time needed to make the shift from one instructional pedagogy to another. Seeing the difference made in the community and feeling a new sense of power as a teacher cements this change.

What about finding teachers, new or veteran, that have the disposition for place-based education? I think some organizing of issues is helpful in this regard. But before looking at these issues, it would be valuable to examine for a moment the richness found in generations of teachers who have successfully used this approach. Place-based learning and its allied constructivist learning theory don't preclude the fact that thousands of educators historically have been using the best principles of this practice and theory. For whatever the current generation calls it, it is about learning, and where you have solid learning in a milieu of close school/community connections, then you have place-based learning.

There exists a medley of constructivist sentiments written by educators over the years, echoing place-based instructional insights right to this day. Whether 1922 or 2021, I am convinced that place-based learning, a coat of many colors, is as old as teaching. With this heritage, educators have a very accessible archive of successful teaching to guide us in our work. Gathering support is graciously plentiful, resulting in each teacher knowing the 'joy of work well done.'

Every library has books on teaching and education written before WWII. They are a treasure trove of guidance, general and specific, for place-based educators. Written at a time when the barriers between the professionalism of education and the purpose of schooling in the community was more permeable; these books contain numerous examples of projects and programs that engaged students powerfully in their community. Moreover, the details given to some of these lessons, the natural integration of the sciences with the humanities, for instance, is really awe-inspiring.

With most education still in rural communities, and most teachers still in the role of generalist, it was expected, and therefore the training was provided, to teach across the curriculum. It was the norm to find the English teacher two periods later conducting a field walk in the neighboring forest pointing out the spring flora; it was the norm to find the

agriculture teacher partnering with area farmers to bring the students into sustained repair of local machinery, then turn around in the afternoon and be the math teacher who'd make certain connections between the am activity and the pm textbook with those same students. Finally, it was the norm to find the history teacher also the chair of the local historical society. Moreover, besides a diverse teaching portfolio, each teacher's instruction was augmented by a constant flow of elders into the school and, going the other way, students into the community listening to the sharing of stories, building legacy.

The philosophy of constructivism was rampant in these works. "Each quest opens many new lines of thought; interest deepens as the list of discoveries lengthens," wrote the authors of Volume II, Public School Methods published in 1922. This seven-volume work extensively examined the entire K-12 curriculum in both broad philosophical strokes as well as minute, helpful detail. Like a teacher's Sears Roebuck catalog, it would be the one set of books a teacher would use to run a small school.[4]

Furthermore, I found this volume interesting with its capture of the curriculum called Nature Study. Aware of nature as a highly integrative subject matter, the many lessons found literature and song, poetry and prose, alongside science and math. There it was, though almost ninety years old, a rich litany of experience by teachers engaged in teaching objectives wrapped in community rather than worksheets constructed in some commercial cubicle focused, atomized to single subject alone.

Historical place-based lessons do justice to place. Lessons on air, snow, wind, clouds, rain and even one entitled 'studying sunshine' contained many gems polished by the hands of veteran one-room school practitioners. These educators knew that 'through nature sympathy and observation the little children will have foundations for science."[5]

Pages were even full of detailed projects like robin studies, grapevine orchards, how to build a terrarium, and lessons on the common housefly. There was a project-based calendar, tied to the seasons, for each week of the year! Understanding of deep,

comprehensive projects was evident as well. For example, a study of a brook was conceived as a place-study for an entire year.

Alfred North Whitehead writing in his work Aim of Education spoke of the danger of "inert ideas, that is to say, ideas that are merely received into the mind without being utilized or tested or thrown into fresh combinations." In fact, Whitehead went on to declare, "Education with inert ideas is not only useless; it is, above all things, harmful."[6] Knowledge being tested, utilized, and thrown into fresh combinations is another way to define place-based learning.

Continuing my reading on pre-WWII educational writing, I discovered for myself a wonderful document by Sir John Livingston from 1944 entitled: Education for a World Adrift. Written during the summer of 1943, Livingston authored this work to guide the British government as they reorganized the school system to meet a looming post-war demand to extend equality of opportunity to all. He wrote, "The test of a successful education is not the amount of knowledge that a pupil takes away from school, but his appetite to know and his capacity to learn."[7] It is this same appetite and capacity that moves a teacher to engage in place-based learning. And if a person desires to shift from a conventional teaching pedagogy to place-based learning, what fundamental capacities, beyond a specific subject area expertise, may point to a promising teacher? In effect, how to hire a place-based teacher.

Ted Sizer uttered a memorable quote as he was touring high schools. He wrote in Horace's Compromise: The Dilemmas of the American High School, "The people are better than the structure. Therefore, the structure must be at fault."[8] I could not agree more. The teachers that populate our schools are dedicated folks that give many unheralded moments to young people. Some schools have great leadership, some have dismal leadership; nevertheless, the teachers forge ahead, regardless, with a personal vision that speaks for itself.

The teacher/student relationship is the key to place-based learning as in any other pedagogy. This being the case, finding teachers for place-based learning becomes a critical ingredient for reforming the structure that Sizer places the blame upon. What does it take to teach in a place-based school or facilitate a place-based learning community? What does a commitment to place-based learning ask of the teacher, what characteristics are embodied?

William Glasser noted intelligently how, "Life in school must be thought of as life itself, not simply preparation for later life. Life in school -- for adults as well as for children --must be lived fully. And again, in a democracy, school life should embody democratic (rather than say, authoritarian, autocratic, bureaucratic, or feudal) principles."[9] Glasser clearly felt that the way for small learning-teams in schools to succeed was to "redistribute the power to get more productivity."[10] Being open to something new and dynamic is a given mindset for teachers of project-based learning, gaining a student's unique view of learning. What follows are student views of learning after a year of place-based education.

"...learning is asking questions and finding answers. It's discovering things about the world and your past that you never knew. Learning can introduce all kinds of new ideas. It can make you wonder...why? and how? instead of just taking things for granted."

"...learning is gaining knowledge. Learning does not have to take place in school, you can learn from just about everything in life. I think that sometimes the things you decide to learn on your own will stick with you all your life."

Teaching with this kind of student authenticity brings out the greatness in teaching. William Ayers, Chicago educator, believes: "Greatness in teaching also requires getting over the notion that teaching is a set of techniques or disconnected methods. There are lots of people who write adequate lesson plans, keep order and quiet in their classrooms, and deliver competent instruction in algebra or phonics... Outstanding teachers engage youngsters, interact with them, draw energy and direction from them, and find ways to give them a reason to follow along. This is the difficult and serious work of teaching. Greatness in teaching, as in acting or writing, is always in pursuit of the next utterance, the next performance, and the next encounter. It is not--can never be--finished or summed up...Great teaching demands an openness to something new, something unique, and something dynamic. In teaching it must always be, "Here we go again."[10]

Experience, on the one hand, and education on the other hand are not the same things. We are all having experiences all the time, and yet some experiences may be disconnected events leading nowhere, or they may even be uneducative in the sense that they shut down or distort future growth. The challenge for teachers who are building an education based on experience is to create opportunities for students to have the kinds of experience that will enable them to grow and develop into further experiences, and eventually to take control of their own learning. As Ayers continues, "We know we are successful when students are willing to forge their own next steps, when they face the future with some love, some indignation, and a lot of courage.[11]

Place-based learning is vital for youth, it is very much a continuous means of connecting, putting people, resources, and meaningfulness together; therefore, it is imperative to find teachers with an 'action bias' towards this kind of facilitative teaching. Moreover, a quality place-based teacher will analyze the significant learning that takes place in various projects, drawing out the enduring knowledge and diverse skills such as scientific investigation, teamwork, presentation styles, survey data analysis, and writing press releases.

I believe teaching with a place-based pedagogy requires three fundamental capacities beyond specific subject area expertise: Proven aptitude for life-long learning - Unconditional regard for the success of students - Ability to communicate in multiple surroundings with a wide variety of people.

Life-long learning

Life-long learning is found in people who exhibit a high degree of varied subject area interest, combined with the skills to gather information, solve problems, and make connections. Questions to ask a prospective colleague could go like this:

- Explain a situation where you found your initial success as a learner unsuccessful, but with perseverance and work you finally learned what you needed to know?
- Discuss how you go about solving a problem. What are your general steps?
- What learning qualities work for you as a problem solver?
- When you know very little about a particular subject, how do you go about learning more information in a relatively short period of time?
- What are your interests and hobbies?

An unconditional regard for student success

Always being there for the students; putting their needs ahead of competing adult issues; and developing the productive teacher-

student relationship are all indicators of this unconditional regard. Further questions that 'get at' this capacity in prospective teachers could be…

- What kind of influence did teachers have in your life?
- What kind of influence would you like to have in your student's lives?
- How can you best help a student to learn?
- How can you best help a student to be productive rather than merely busy in a place-based setting?
- What is a weakness you would like to strengthen as a teacher?
- Share the last time you raised your voice at a student; what happened?
- Share your last success with a student or young person in a non-school setting; what happened?
- Why do you want to teach at the 'Name of School'?

School improvement always, in the end, points to the quality of relationships as the critical leverage feature. John Maguire, Claremont College president, echoed this sentiment in a 1992 report, declaring, "If the relationships are wrong between teachers and students, for whatever reason, you can restructure until the cows come home, but transformation won't take place."[12]

An ability to communicate effectively in multiple surroundings with a wide variety of people

Thomas Sergiovanni's book, Building Community in Schools, encouraged a fresh way to view schools. "If we view schools as communities rather than organizations, the practices that make sense in schools understood as organizations just don't fit. The bonding together of people in special ways and binding of them to shared values, and ideas are the defining characteristics of schools as communities. "[13] Collaborative and decision-making capacity are essential for this teaching position; moreover, an

ability to facilitate this development in the students is equally critical. Interview questions that 'get at' this capacity in prospective teachers could be:

- What kind of skills would a student display to have effective collaboration skills?
- What are the cornerstones of communication to you?
- What qualities do you demonstrate to make you an effective listener? An effective observer? Please give examples for each.

During a period of dialogue with a prospective place-based teacher elements of constructivist thinking pop up here and there. It will be apparent that the process of education is understood to be more than the accumulation of facts. Meaning for both students and teachers alike is constructed, not prescribed. In a learning community, valuable learning results from both failing and succeeding.

The discussion can begin to move towards the types of place-based ideas that students are excited about. How they might facilitate success; how they would overcome barriers; and how they would share the successes with the community and parents are all excellent questions.

The ability to discern and create connections is the essence of knowing. Moreover, it's vital to recall how the culture of schooling is very powerful. Schools shape people.

How do you move teachers out of existing teacher mode to project-based learning? In an existing school what helps is to break the 'business as usual' and learn as a team with a mini-project. This demonstrates the power, passion, and potential of project-based learning to experienced teachers. And once teachers see something work, there is an 'action bias' to continue that work.

For example, we obtained a $1,000 grant and had an oral history day. We obtained subs for 10 junior high teachers to spend

the day on the project. Each teacher had four or five students and visited WWII veterans in their home for an oral history interview. It was terrific to watch the students, in a small group, interview the veterans. One gentleman, a veteran of the 8th Air Force stationed in England, shared stories in the kitchen and farmhouse where he was raised. At one time he jumped up and began searching in a drawer, as if looking for a screwdriver lost under scraps of paper. He finally pulled out his original flight log from 1944. He went over each mission.

Teachers are enthusiastic, given this opportunity to see students in a very different setting, utilizing oral skills less seen in the traditional settings. I found, for instance, that some of the best interviewers were the 'at-risk' kids.

When doing a new pedagogy, there seems to be a 'believability quotient' for experienced teachers to overcome. The best way to get over this hump is to create a mini-project and do it.

Once this is accomplished then you can begin to shift the conversation around place-based scenarios that might fit the existing school structure; or if you're very lucky, shift the existing school structure to fit the learning and logistical needs of the community needs. Either way a series of short-term highly visible and successful place-based project efforts achieve a momentum that often diminishes the doubters. This will allow for a smoother and equally more productive learning shift.

In many ways, traditional textbook teaching is set up as a teacher having power <u>over</u> the student, in sharp contrast the typical place-based teaching is set up as a teacher sharing power <u>with</u> the student.

Power <u>with</u> breeds growth and potency, in contrast, power <u>over</u>, though more easily managed, leaves both the teacher and especially the student operating within a limited paradigm of power. Borrowing a metaphor from science: The power of a neutron lies in its capacity to be open to the inevitable charge, open to the messages traveling through the larger body. From that inherent capacity arises ever more intricate and appropriate responses. Open systems are examples of how we learn and how

each and every society learns. It is precisely how wisdom and deep understanding unfolds and emerges.

The power of place-based learning springs from its inherent capacity to be open to the learning at hand (charge) and to be open to the feedback of its collective learning community. When students engage and successfully complete something there is an exponential surge of attention, excitement, and interest. From this energetic, emerging capacity, ever more complex questions and integrated endeavors will take place.

I agree with Glasser when he states: "It is this lack of access to power in the academic classes that is so frustrating to students because it comes just at the time when students are beginning to experience the increased need for power which is part of the normal biology of adolescence.[14]

Clearly, the student is engaged in 'power with' during place-based learning, recall the dozens of student quotes in this book as examples of 'power withness'.

Moving from one kind of pedagogy to the other is a dramatic shift for both students and teachers alike. Four distinctive areas can be examined and the knowledge derived brought to bear on making a positive transition: Communication, leadership and initiative, responsibility, and academic. Though overlapping in implementation, it is helpful to address them in the order given. Let's look at each.

Communication during place-based learning: Seldom does a teacher release the thinking of why a certain lesson or unit is undertaken before they teach, whereas, in project-based learning seldom should an idea be undertaken without a thorough vetting of the why and how before the student begins. The vetting is a process with fellow students, teachers, parents, and community resource people to understand the worthiness and academic value of the place-based learning itself. This isn't meant to dampen a student's raw enthusiasm (though if you're not careful it will); it is meant to bring clarity, so success is attained through the triad of hard work, respect, and courtesy.

Leadership/initiative during place-based learning: Sure, you

can jump in, but (like a cold lake in April) you might just lose your breath. It is best to have someone close by to give you a hand up and out and be there for a good laugh now and then.

Generally, developing leadership with the students, and giving away real power as you do this, is a stair step proposition. Design good leadership experiences early, some can be the team building sort that abound in the training manuals, and others will be real, based from the needs and timelines of the learning itself. The key is to manage this leadership flow so no one is overwhelmed with it at first, and in the more mature stages the fair distribution of real power will become self-evident often selected by the learning demands. For example, stair stepping research capability might follow September's daily water temperatures taken in the field, to November's spreadsheet of these fall H_2O variations, to March's experiment with transplanting wetland plants; each stage building upon the successive skills earned within the preceding stage. Stair stepping communication capability might follow a September learning community retreat on active listening skills, to a November interview workshop, to a March oral history project.

The important dimension for the teachers of each student undergoing this place-based learning transition is to meet the challenge evident in the learning. And when the skill isn't enough then develop skill capacity accordingly before the challenge becomes too great.

Responsibility. Too often, this ability to respond has atrophied by the time the child reaches middle school. The students are veterans of responsibility being narrowly defined to the lesson/assignment/test cycle. **Projects, when they happen, are often controlled by the teacher with fairly specific tasks to complete the project.** Moving into student-driven place-based learning should be consciously undertaken. Unfreeze the old ways, step by step. And, as you go at it, understand the four primary layers of responsibility evident in a learning community.

Self-responsibility: being able to follow-through, be on time, and take care of oneself, so the rest of the team can count on you.

Responsibility to others in the team: being part of a team has all sorts of implications for responsible behavior. It is good to occasionally talk about this growth.

Responsibility to the general community: being able to speak clearly and act responsible to people in the community regarding the place-based learning outcomes.

Finally, there is responsibility to the learning at hand; the myriad amount of fine detail and broad-brush strokes that go into any worthwhile learning endeavor.

Academics: An element of place-based learning that contrasts with my teaching experiences in traditional pedagogies is that place-based students often possess a very strong and active bias for learning. Each student can move forward in significant fashion because the focus is there, the motivation is there, and the application is embedded in the 'community as context' itself. Because of this, students reduce the inconsequential moments of schooling and reinvigorate the connected, productive learning times.

Why would a teacher shift from conventional teaching pedagogy to project-based learning?

Several answers can bring light to this dilemma. But prior to this discussion we must keep in mind the audience being addressed regarding shifting from a traditional pedagogy to a place-based pedagogy.

First, accept that a third of each school district's teachers wouldn't, for any reason, even entertain the idea of a different pedagogy. This shouldn't be taken as a negative. Many, many of these teachers care about their students and create positive places for learning; however, for too many reasons to go into here, they have determined that their way is THE way teaching is going to be; changing it would be like changing jobs.

Second, accept that another third is just too preoccupied with life and work, as they know it. They certainly might nod their heads in the affirmative regarding place-based learning at a conference presentation. However, after that nod signifying agreement, they say to themselves,

"Not me, not now."

Therefore, that leaves about a third of the teachers who might be willing to take a closer look at place-based learning and strongly consider bringing its strengths into their teaching. And returning to our question stated a moment ago, why would they really shift? Essentially, for the same reasons that each student loves place-based learning: a dynamic increase of a sense of belonging, sense of power, and sense of accomplishment. Let's take a closer look at these three:

Sense of belonging

To be part of something more than yourself, to be part of a team, to feel the way it can support itself, grow in common understanding, thereby influencing others and making a visible difference. This sense of belonging is critical to the success that students in place-based learning discuss so readily both in this book and elsewhere.

William Glasser devoted much of his writing to the intrinsic reasons' students learn. Many of these reasons that students learn well are no different than the reasons teachers learn so well. He stated, "Why must we stick to the rigid tradition that academic classes must be restricted to individual effort and individual competition, a structure that, by its very nature, limits the chances of almost all students to gain not only the power, but also the fun and belonging they all desire?"[15]

Why not as well for teachers? Imagine our teaching profession of closed doors, one adult and a group of students that are all born within months of each other. There is a glaring reality every teacher knows all too well. In these very busy schools with hundreds of people, hallways of radiant energy, and activities that abound during the school day and after, the classroom teacher can be a very lonely occupation. This isolation in a social community is commonplace.

What can place-based learning do about this? Place-based learning, often team-taught with effective alliances between school adults and adult community partners, accounts for a surge

in each teacher's sense of belonging. For many teachers this belonging is more than equal to the extra time, the stress of a challenge where answers are not always a file cabinet away. Once inexperienced teachers experience a successful place-based learning piece that learning becomes its own best salesperson.

As Dean Lind, a teacher at the aforementioned New Country School in Minnesota, explains, "How far could you get from natural learning than to teach disconnected subjects out of context? Would you teach someone how to build a house by teaching a class on pounding nails, cutting lumber, and putting on the shingles - then later build the house? I believe learning is in a large sense connecting, putting information together. That sure is contrary to the 'pulling apart' that is done in a traditional school."[16]

Sense of power

In Milwaukee, I met with a dozen educators practicing place-based learning. A driving question that several people asked was how to increase the number of teachers willing to work with them. This broadening of the work can best be answered by examining the second reason that I believe that one-third of teachers might take on place-based learning: a sense of power.

Individuals have self-defined limits. A classroom teacher, no matter how dynamic, remains a single entity. Eventually, no matter how creative, each teacher reaches their limits, reaches their edge of capacity. Whereas it should be clear that a team of teachers expands this level of capacity and power, leveraging a whole new array of learning possibilities. Being able to run a local newspaper, change a zoning law, developing a student-run business, conducting original research, or shaping an arts foundation's annual goals, are worthy and significant efforts, complex in nature, that can only be achieved by a group of students and teachers committed to the success of the project and each other. Exponential capacity and power that derives from this strength-based approach is the single biggest draw to place-based learning.

Sense of accomplishment

Teaching is touching the future. And yes, it's wonderful to hear from students the difference I made in their lives when they were in my 4th grade class twenty years ago. It's great to have a high visibility project completed, acknowledged by others, where the student benefit is apparent and immediate. This sense of accomplishment draws many to place-based learning.

We sometimes forget that applied learning is full of accomplishment. As students have reflected throughout this book, accomplishment is a quality as old as learning itself. The other day in the library, I found a reprint of an essay about education written by an anonymous author in 1698. It was entitled, An Essay Concerning Critical and Curious Learning. As you read consider accomplishment as a key thought the writer gave to producing knowledge and, in his view, anchoring learning with application. To me, a distinctive place-based idea.

The Mind of Man takes impressions from external objects; and

these impressions make her reflect upon the Nature of the thing, from whence she receives them, leading us through a long chain and series of thoughts before we can arrive at any conclusions. Now to bring these conclusions to some clearness and perfection, we must often ruminate upon them, we must turn our thoughts into words and expressions; and thus, we shall instruct and inform the very mind that produces them, by putting it still upon a more intense application.[17]

This explanation is a wonderful three-hundred-year-old argument for the constant interplay of experience, reflection, and expression found in learning. Those afore-mentioned third of educators who are willing to work placed-based learning find that it increases their sense of belonging, power, and accomplishment. And when that group of teachers becomes an experienced group the benefits to the district at large radiant outward from their potent work.

But first things first. How does one get the 'buy-in' from veteran teachers to try place-based learning? You can't simply send them off to a conference and they return set to go, right? What is needed is time for these teachers, to experience for themselves, the attributes and effectiveness of place-based learning. A small team of teachers needs a project, community partners, time, and resources to succeed where they will soon be asking students to go.

Why is this above so important? Because the depth of educational reform is inextricably tied to the depth of the reformers themselves. As Michael Fullan explained, "You cannot have students as continuous learners and effective collaborators, without teachers having the same characteristics."[18]

To shift teachers from one set of pedagogical ways to adopt and experiment with another set of pedagogical conditions warrants a thoughtful approach. Packaged curriculum, motivational speakers, and the abundance of commercial material hardly qualify for the depth necessary for this change. **Only significant learning itself can propel a teacher from one set of teaching practices to another set of teaching practices.**

Thomas J. Sergiovanni nailed this point when he declared, "Instead of being dispensers of knowledge, teachers -like physicians, lawyers, architects, and other professionals - must become producers of knowledge. Professionals transmit and dispense, but at root their job is to produce something worth transmitting or dispensing in the first place. Professionals create knowledge in use as the practice."[19]

In short, by creating their own place-based learning first, teachers will create knowledge and believe in place-based learning. Of course, the other way is to just jump in and go for it. This, of course, seems to be the prevalent way that teachers learn place-based pedagogy; trial and error. We can do better, we can give our teachers willing to go an extra mile, an extra mile of support before they hit the ground running.

(This chapter was included in the book, The Coolest School in America, D. Thomas and R. Newell, Scarecrow Press, 1997)

Chapter 11
Nine Place-based Tenets

The action of the mind is like the action of the fire. One billet of wood will hardly burn alone, though dry as sun northwest winds can make it, and though placed in the range of a current of air; ten such billets will burn well together; but a hundred will create a heat fifty times as intense as ten, will make a current of air to fan their own flame, and consume even greenness itself.

Horace Mann, 1848

Put the student in the habitual attitude of finding point of contact and mutual bearings.

John Dewey, 1915

Learning is caring and finding truth in something that you can't see. It's listening and watching, viewing, and doing. Why someone would not want to learn new things is wrong, you learn them no matter what. What you learn makes you who you are. And you never stop. Learning is an eternal flame that catches everyone in a bonfire of brilliance. To learn is to live life.

Kelly, 1998, Wisconsin

In my years of working with place-based learning communities there are nine tenets that play out, again and again. I have been re-taught each of the nine in a variety of schools in a variety of situations for a variety of students. I guess that is why I can say after all this time, "I get it!"

In the trajectory of place-based work, the students I have engaged with are very much live and in charge of their own learning. They project deep aspirations, face complex challenges, and drive significant results. Student voice that permeates this writing echoes real experiences of placed-based learning. These students have faced challenges and, in so doing, developed new skills and capacities, individually and collectively, to meet those challenges in a manner that is truly inspiring.

Tenet is an interesting term. Medieval meaning to "cause to maintain." Something held to be true. Over time I have found 9 aspects, or tenets of Place-based learning. What are those nine tenets?

1. Socially Constructed Learning
2. Community is key
3. Authentic learning is cumulative.
4. Place-based is powerful learning.
5. Value-added defines Place-based learning
6. Personal genius
7. Experience is always contextual.
8. Community Sensibility
9. Take the time to celebrate – enjoy the journey

Socially Constructed Learning

Place-based works is both anchored in and guided by socially constructed learning. In place-based experiences there are a supporting web of critical relationships that drive a powerful connectivity. Each place-based project encompasses social complexity in a manner different than the traditional classroom.

Besides the teacher there are numerous adult elders and experts, volunteers, and parents that become engaged in the project. The

adult social isolation of the classroom is changed in a fundamental way. Students are now partnering with adults, discussing with adults, and presenting with adults. By far, the number one comment I would hear from people as they met students that were engaged in place-based projects was the following, "They are so comfortable working with adults!" Students step back and often reflect how a successful place-based accomplishment requires this social connectivity.

As Carl Glickman noted, "*teaching and learning between students and teachers must demonstrate in actions the relationship between education and democracy - the power of learning for engagement in real issues.*"[1] A clear successful social experience builds personal competence.

Community is key, get out there!

The home community will broaden the social matrix of each student for increased learning. Gradually, other significant adults, besides teachers, come into play in the student's learning life. As each student steps back from this community accomplishment they grasp how to make a difference in the world around them, civically and personally. As Maria, 17, from Texas exclaimed, "You get a sense of pride out of all this volunteering and helping out in the community, and out of being involved. It probably sounds like a lot of work and not much fun, but when it all is over and all the projects are completed, you get a real sense of pride and dignity. And there is fun involved too. It's worth it because you're going to leave a mark somewhere. And I'd rather be remembered for something good, that I was the one that Helped. You could be that person."

Authentic learning is cumulative

Place-based learning is authentic, thereby simultaneously driving both incremental learning and leaps of further learning because the students gain self-confidence through increased skills, activated inquiry, and empowered capacity. This constant cognitive assimilation and accommodation of new insights,

concepts, and understanding is the basis for each student's perception of the authenticity of the place-based learning as a 'teacher' for them. Hindsight often becomes a barometer of this success. When students say, "I have grown so much," they are highlighting this authentic learning. We know this kind of learning-how-to-learn is very empowering. Howard Gardner clarified this authenticity as central to schooling when he asserts, "Recapturing student experience and meaning making as the center of the learning enterprise is crucial to educational reform."[2] Authentic learning equals for the students an experience with purpose - meaningfulness. Life-long inquiry can result as Gardner adds, "On my educational landscape, questions are more important than answers; knowledge and, more important, understanding should evolve from the constant probing of such questions."[3]

Place-based is powerful learning

It isn't just the power of placed-based learning but the fact that its timing for adolescence is, simply put, a lifesaver! To have the very tangible and real success at an elusive time of transitory and uncertain power (adolescence) is a huge, often unmeasured, yet profound benefit. Moreover, this contrasts sharply with the given reality when Glasser suggests, "Why must we stick to the rigid tradition that academic classes must be restricted to individual effort and individual competition, a structure that, by its very nature, limits the chances of almost all students to gain not only the power, but also the fun and belonging they all desire?[4]

Traditional secondary schools understand very well the incredible source of energy that an adolescent student community represents. Successful with many of its students, there are still others, plenty in number, who could transform our communities with their care, their concern, and their courage. As James says, "I wish that adults would understand that students do have innovative, mind-boggling ideas, and that students can put those ideas into action. And they can make the world a better place."

Value-added defines Place-based learning

What does it mean to be student-centered as a school? Many different things, since the two words are often used as a general descriptor. For myself, student-centered in place-based learning, in a nutshell, translates to worth. How will an individual student assess his or her wherewithal to make a difference? Will they be recognized by peers and adults in doing so?

Worth, we all have it, and it is unique to our development and capacities. Moreover, to feel this worth, to see the consequential results of exerting our energies, is one of the most powerful student experiences I have witnessed as a teacher. And, as a teacher, it is

equally powerful as well. Place-based learning scenarios, too numerous to mention, give back to each student through the community interaction a profound meaning. They know they are part of something greater than themselves, and the community exists for the individual. This is the central philosophy of place-based education. And as Robert Rusk writes, "Teachers who assume that they can afford to ignore philosophy pay the penalty of their neglect for their efforts, lacking a coordinating principle, are thereby rendered ineffective."[5] Community interaction is the coordinating principle of place-based learning, and the central outcome is to "turn capacity into ability."[6]

Additionally, full involvement leaves a message of worth that each student will carry with them. This process of learning is a matter of valuing everyone for what they can contribute, and, moreover, the clear message being that all are expected to contribute. Every student, to achieve this involvement, is assured an entry point in the place-based project. There is no better lesson in civic mindedness than this example. This theme of inclusiveness works to design many entry points that depend on various types of skills to include everyone. A project, for instance, needs leaders, writers, researchers, model makers, and followers. Therefore, the value added is a shared phenomenon, not a hoarded commodity as in a competitive, top-down system.

Personal Genius

Each person, exerting him or herself from their own base of experience, is an expert - always assume genius. Honor who the person is and what s/he wants to be. Honor and dignity have profound value in teaching, but seldom get the airplay that more discipline driven words obtain. Like respect, honor and dignity are the result of authentic actions, they simply cannot be conjured from abstract notions. What one does, one is; what one thinks one does, confuses. When students share the post-project insights of honor and dignity from a job well done; this is very, very powerful stuff. It is this power that drives genius, giving it a true voice, and an academic platform to act upon.

Experience is always contextual

Place-based learning is very sophisticated contextual stuff. Take time to back off, listen to each other, track the mistakes, the 'ahas' and learn what you've learned. I'll never forget Megan looking at me after eight straight days in the field and pleading, "Can't we just stay inside, today, and figure out what we've been learning." Suddenly, I realized from her truthful and well-timed comment, that in the excitement of significant field studies, I had lost sight of the reflective period as a valued part of the learning. As I knew from my readings of John Dewey; hands-on learning is mental. Experience for the sake of experience can be confusing, tangling up mental constructs and leading to nowhere. What Megan knew, and what I have returned to again and again, is the value of the reflective period to fathom the learning at hand, as well as the learning about learning. Many of the student quotes you've read came from reflective writing I had undertaken with students in various settings. I have learned the lesson well that the first

contextualization of a place-based project is the students themselves. Their passionate understanding of the learning, of the dynamics to complete the project is priceless.

Community Sensibility

Though I have already talked at length about this vital principle of place-based education, my thoughts keep returning to it as THE indispensable cornerstone. Like a self-organizing entity, activating community sensibility assures all the other above features will come into play. Like an attitude or a disposition, being in touch with how the academic objectives and the community realities mesh, support, interact, blend, and depend upon each other is the central philosophical compass bearing of place-based education. Stay on that bearing, and you will arrive at many profound and rewarding destinations. Plus, you'll have great stories to tell about the journey itself, which, of course, often seems like the most rewarding destination of all.

Take the time to celebrate – enjoy the journey

Enough said. Effort is work, and work fulfills the journey. Along the way celebrate with your students and with your colleagues – both the incremental moments that make up the art of success, and the magical moments along the way that make up the joy of learning.

Chapter 12
Systems and Such

The language of learning can often roll off our tongues with little further examination. The whole is greater than the sum of its parts – we have heard time and time again. Yet, are we fully cognizant of its profound implications for powerful learning? Do we understand, deeply, both the critical indicators and dynamics to make this happen?

To better understand learning systems, I have often referred to the work of one-room schools. Another earlier resource for my guidance in education work has been the work of Andras Angyal who wrote about systems and learning before WWII. He explored the nature of people's participation in systems. He was a pioneer in this early work and influenced many of the post WWII systems work. He explained how each "part is determined by its place position in the whole." This 'place position' in my Cooperative Ecology vernacular is called the niche. Every school is both a habitat system and an aggregate of niches being expressed through a common framework.

Angyal understood a very deep construct central to teachers that both build and then sustain learning communities. **The essence of being a fragment means that the individual learner does not subscribe to the meaning of the whole.** This state of affairs, for a developing youth, can be an enormous barrier to growth. They feel like they are standing outside of the mainstream looking in -- often feeling arbitrary and rather unimportant to the central tendencies of the whole.

When Angyal declared that a part is determined by its place position in the whole he understood that the part – by being embedded in the meaningfulness of the whole, as relatively complete in itself. In mature, healthy, and productive systems: **true parts of a whole are whole themselves**. A niche has a coherency and consistency, or wholeness, which is a system unto itself. The nested Russian dolls are a true affinity to this system

within system reality.

Therefore, educators committed to the greater whole must always attend to the capacity of the individual, not simply as an individual without roots, rather as a CONNECTED individual to the system whole. In effect, a student who has established his or her niche will contribute meaningfully and substantially to the community's growth.

Linking individual dreams within the generative and compelling work of a learning community is the heart of the matter for the place-based educator.

❖

I live along the West Fork of the Kickapoo River in SW Wisconsin; its spring-fed waters move steadily over gravel bottoms where trout live along its reaches. At our place, the river slows down and backs up a bit, obstructed by a wash of large rocks and stones that roared forth from our creek one rainy spring night, merging into the river and partially blocking its path, creating an island.

Looking over the bridge railing, my family and I often drop small pebbles, watching them sinking back and forth until they rest upon the bottom. We observe the beaver, muskrat, eagles, and herons in the early light of morning. Many of us call the river home.

I think of the river tonight as I complete this book. Yes, the writing is done and yet, so like a river, this sharing of teaching and place-based learning will continue. After a restful weekend, I will be back again with my educational colleagues, their students, and exciting new schools. Likewise, after you set this book down, you will be back with your students – engaged in sustaining a school community.

I trust each of us will find continued moments, both rough and polished gems, as we move downstream.

2022 Edition

I live now in the Colorado Rockies along with my wife, Renee, and our adult children that live out West as well, when they aren't traveling the World.

Since writing this book, I continue to support the success of dozens of place-based schools across America. Recently, I became a school leader for two of them.

My continuing experiences only affirm the joy of learning that I have seen expressed in vibrant schools across America. Places where students and faculty, parents and community members, understand deeply, and bring to life everyday -- how the place they call home is the ultimate school of all.

To you, my fellow educators, thank you for the craft and the heart that you bring to your students – they love it!

Epilogue

When I first began teaching in 1988, it seemed I had so much time until the year 2000. With the echo of the Nation at Risk '83 report still in my ears, making grand goals and aspiring visions for the change of the millennium seemed so logical. Now, in 2021, it seems like 1988 was a very long time ago. Myriad curriculum and pedagogical models spouting innovation and change, massive school reform and vast amounts of political posturing and policy initiatives have swept across the educational landscape these last 33 years. Walter reaches back even further with his early teaching years in the 1970's and 80's. Together we have seen some educational initiatives take hold, and we have seen many educational initiatives evaporated to the winds of change.

There continues to be significant work to be addressed and solutions put in place. In this CoVid era, the times are way beyond changing; the times are very, very challenging for educators. Today's educators seek out practice that moves beyond incremental ways to improve student achievement, student growth, and student health. We need to support young people to believe in themselves and in the collaborations and communities they belong to.

Howard Fuller, Director of the Institute for the Transformation of Learning at Marquette University, noted to a group of educators in Milwaukee in the fall of 2002, "We are educating this generation not just to work in the 21st century but to create the 21st century!" Two decades later it is truer today than ever before.

Yes, school is evolving, and soon a post CoVid world will be emerging. The force of place, the anchor of place can be for our students a constant, a comfort, and a community of support as they learn anew. Most importantly place can be a center of engagement, an active peacemaking for our youth.

Walter and I have learned through our decades upon decades of teaching and learning, one especially big lesson: **schooling is so**

much more defined by connections and relationships and resilience than by structures and schedules and even curriculum.

Place-based learning reflects the wisdom of these connections and relationships as the final arbitrator of what deep learning, and we would ask you to consider, what peacemaking can be.

Schools today possess, and are fitfully, at times, possessed by structures, schedules, and curriculum where an organizing principle of peacemaking in places that matter can be freeing for growth, and liberal in its educational outcomes.

What **we believe** is shared in 500 words below. On the other hand, how a place and peace pedagogy actually play out is ultimately complex. The art and science of teaching a place-based, peacemaking pedagogy can produce volumes of theory, practice, stories, and outcomes. Yet, the north star, the clear compass bearings, the tail on the kite of doing this work is very brief.

We thank you for the love and dedication and drive you bring to your students each day.

James / Walter 2022

We Believe…

- We believe each community is a teaching and learning laboratory. One obviously asks whether an educational institution can adequately perform its function of teaching if it doesn't involve itself in the community. Schools reside in

places. The missed opportunities of discovering how these places shape the people that attend these schools is tantamount to ignoring the forest for the trees. Place matters. Place defines. Place engages. Place connects. Place inspires.

- We believe that community connections and the power of place can drive the total educational program. Place is an excellent pedagogical organizer – the umbrella under which all subject areas fit. The world is so much bigger than a single subject slice of that world.
- We believe that the world, as a place of study, is interdisciplinary. Place will unify seemingly disparate silos of knowledge into an articulate and often artistic mosaic.
- We believe place infused with peace-based learning will benefit the human part of the humanity that children and youth yearn for.
- We believe that place infused with peace-based learning is relational and can be personally powerful. As such, it should always secure and enhance an individual's sense of belonging, be meaningful to self; and most critically connect others to each other in service of a greater good.
- We believe that by combining the needs and the talents of each school's human community with the place mosaic, both the school and the community will be better served.
- We believe that a place and peace pedagogy will foster constructive societal development through the inherent collaborative leadership and learning energies to get things done.
- We believe that the heart of a generative place & peace-based pedagogy is the act of immersing a group of students in the community. Needs once revealed to these students become real needs to be met and will be cared for.
- We believe that a place and peace pedagogy is service learning to the core. Service is only accomplished with real knowledge and real solutions that matter to others more than they matter to those that accomplish them.

- We believe that when each educator anchors her or his work into the foundation of and disposition towards service, then you will distinctly understand the power of place and peace-based learning. "What do you do for Peace?" Cardinal Carosli asked.
- Who are the peacemakers in our lives?
- How can we support our students to care and be cared for in a community that supporting this mutual reciprocity of carefulness?
- When will we start?
- Peace is a taproot of Place, for no place is secure for long, until and unless, it engages peaceful practices. The five practical constructs of Peace and Place are the following:

    - Inclusive Communication
    - Constructive and Creative Energies
    - Authentic Expression
    - Power sharing
    - REACH out ability

- Connecting to 9 peacemaking tenets that integrate place:
    - Get started
    - Direct Action
    - Storytelling
    - Witness
    - Projects
    - Service
    - Celebrations
    - Memorialize
    - Sustain

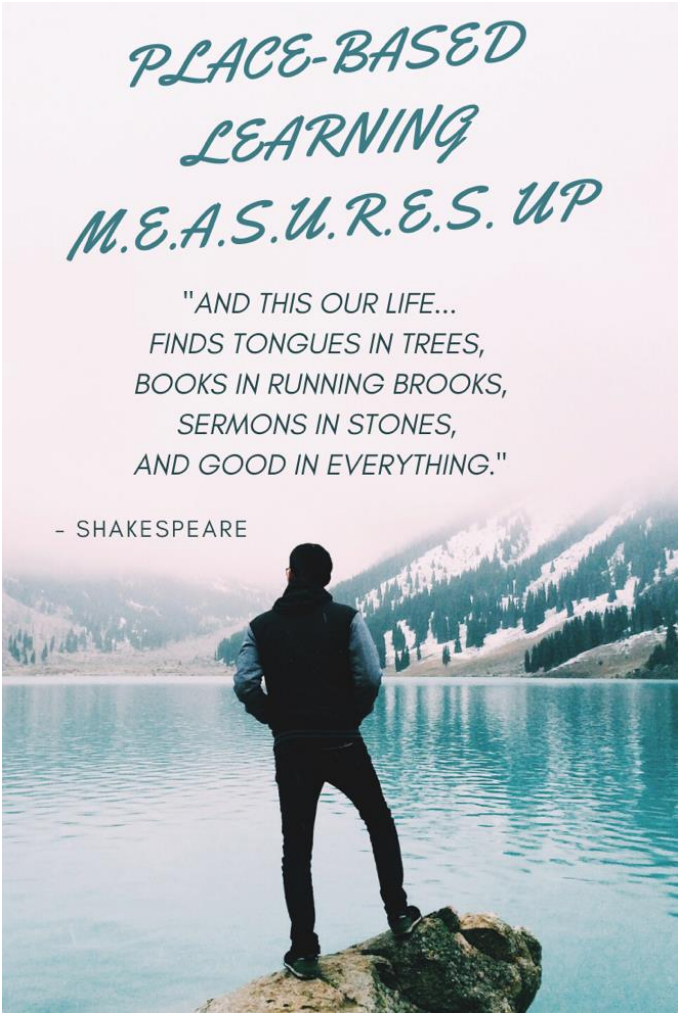
About the Author

James Lewicki is recognized as a national expert in place-based and project-based learning, as well as creating multi-age, 'co-authored' learning communities. Since 2005, James has worked closely with over 100 schools - from small to large, rural to urban, and elementary to high school - across 20 states. Many of these schools are recognized among America's top schools.

James recently was a school principal, after having taught for 17 years as a K-12 public school teacher. He was a Wisconsin Teacher of the Year finalist, receiving a prestigious Kohl Fellowship for outstanding innovative teaching, and was Crawford County Conservation Teacher of the Year. Before education, James was a YMCA Camp Director for 8 years and wilderness instructor for the National Outdoor Leadership School (NOLS).

Lewicki has an M.E.P.D. in Education from the University of Wisconsin- LaCrosse, an M.S. in Outdoor Education Administration from George Williams College, a B.S. in Social Sciences from The Evergreen State College, and an A.A. in Outdoor Recreation Leadership from Colorado Mountain College. James, and his wife, Renee, live in Colorado after raising five children in Wisconsin, who are now pursuing their dreams across America and the World.

COOP ECOLOGY free download at jameslewickieducation.com.



Place-Based Learning MEASURES Up: Tips on Local Learning

Successful educational projects that focus on the community share key characteristics.

by James Lewicki

Published in Edutopia, February 2, 2007

Sarah connected with the ranch kitchen, Brian and Julia loved the farm machinery, Tiffany found the family photography captivating, and Tim wanted to understand the geometry visible in the complex wooden beam structure of an 1860s barn. When I took a group of Nevada middle school students to a fourth-generation ranch, the experience reminded me about the power of place-based education.

Place-based education stands apart from project-based learning in that the community is often the project context of first choice. This feature enables students to pursue, with a passion, a project linked to their locality.

The forebears of the family that owns and operates this working ranch built the homestead in the Silver State's Carson Valley during the 1880s. The original settlers planted an apple tree for each of their ten children; today, five apples trees of enormous girth still thrive along the edges of the family home.

During the last several years, I have worked with dozens of elementary, middle, and high schools that value place-based learning enough to shift curriculum priorities to seeing that students, as well as studying about the community in the classroom, learn in the field with community elders and experts. Privileged to see what works across the country, I have coached students and teachers to create productive place-based projects. Over time, I have seen again and again how a handful of characteristics always frame good work.

In trying to distill these essential features into a mnemonic device, I came up with eight characteristics. The first letters of each word form the acronym MEASURES. (Considering that a worthy placed-based project measures academic achievement and personal success, this is a highly appropriate term.) Where I see great place-based work, I find these characteristics active and alive; where I see the place-

based vision embraced, but the reality struggling, it is always because two, three, or maybe more of the characteristics are lacking. Here are the elements of the **MEASURES** that are key to ongoing success in place-based learning:

Measurable lifelong-learning skills embedded in the portfolio of place-based projects.

- follow an interest with a passion
- be able to precisely observe, record, and analyze data
- be a tenacious learner
- demonstrate effective collaborative skills
- recognize and utilize dynamic systems
- develop an intellectual balance of skepticism and openness
- use the power of intuition along with the discipline of deduction
- be able to cooperate through a shared dilemma
- draw conclusions independent of authority
- tolerate ambiguity
- select problem-solving strategies appropriate to a complex task

All these -- and more -- frame skills used throughout life. As some of the important lifelong-learning outcomes that expand a student's capacity, these skills activate a school's mission, thereby actualizing such sweeping societal expectations as sustaining democratic citizenship -- in effect, producing learners for life.

Effort is obvious and public.

Mark Twain had it right when he said, "Few things are harder to put up with than the annoyance of a good example." When good learning is made public, it ripples academic engagement and social effects throughout the school, neighborhood, and community. When I walk into a school

engaged with place-based projects, the learning is obvious to me. Why? In no time at all, I learn substantial amounts about the natural, cultural, and historical heritage of the community. Visible in the classes, along the hallways, and on wall murals, and laced in the conversation of learning, it's all there, informing the learning at hand.

Imagine a small school of 150 students engaged in various place-based projects; as you walk on the campus, the evidence is everywhere. As you head toward the front door of the school, you see student-designed and student-constructed park benches framing a memorial garden created with guidance from a master gardener; as you step inside the school building, you learn from an array of framed photographs and biographies the stories of a remarkable group of elders and experts who work every year with the students on place-based projects.

Moving past the school secretary's area, you witness the excitement of students talking as they leave the campus to work at the local food pantry, while a group of older students eagerly heads to a primary-grade classroom to take the younger children to the local historical society museum. Out the back door, you view a student-run greenhouse on the left and an authentic sod house and tepee on the right: one for understanding the native plants of the land, the other for understanding the relationship of people to place. These are but a few of the many, many ways students make place-based projects obvious and public.

Aligned with clear academic standards.

As with any powerful learning, questions rapidly increase when students immerse themselves in a genuine place of learning. Open inquiry is active learning, and clear academic standards can keep a student focused. Each of the ranch projects had an angle, a focus that led activities and functioned as the organizer for the student.

Sarah's ranch-kitchen project closely examined the economics of pioneer families -- how home-produced food largely gave way to groceries obtained from all over the world. Brian and Julia's study of farm machinery investigated the dynamics of changing technology, analyzing how and why increasingly sophisticated devices have affected farm labor. Tiffany's focus on family pictures captured the evolution of photography, generation by generation, and Tim's barn-design unit required him to learn both architectural basics and the nature of native trees used to construct such a durable building.

Each project used the Nevada state educational standards in economics, science, and mathematics to frame the study of aspects of ranch life. Most importantly, the students guided themselves, shifting the standards from being something elusive and directed only by the teacher to being tools for their own use.

When this transference of ownership moves from teacher to student, significant measurable results occur. Years ago, when the proficiency of my students was evaluated with the Iowa Tests of Educational Development, they measured an increase of three grade levels.

Vito Perrone, director of teacher education at the Harvard Graduate School of Education, examined efforts of place-based learning in schools supported by the Annenberg Rural Challenge. In his report, the many audiences that received these students' projects became the single greatest indicator of high-quality student work. Other publications in which the story of successful project-based learning in the community has been told can be accessed at the Rural School and Community Trust and EdVisions.

Student opportunity for initiative is endless.

Pioneering education expert John Dewey wrote, "Practice precedes the possibility of observation and

formulation; the results of practice must accumulate before mind has anything to observe." This is exactly what a good place-based experience does for the student: It works to accumulate experience in a fashion that comes back around to the learning itself, thereby building layers of identification, classification, and analysis -- in effect, multisensory hooks that academic concepts are hung on.

Often, place-based projects exist in a scale of small groups, entire classrooms, and even whole schools, but the capability of individually driven projects, such as those described above, are frequently the most powerful and productive. And when these occur, student voice, student choice, and the development of student capacity increase.

Understood by parents and the community.

Constantly bridging the gaps between school, home, and community is an active ingredient of a worthy place-based project. Parents, besides wanting to know what is learned, will often contribute to the learning itself. Moreover, the scope of the place-based project always begins with the query "How can I contribute to my community?" Often, therefore, what is being measured, what is being accomplished, comes as a contributing form of knowledge given back to the community. Bringing parents aboard and integrating the life of the community into place-based projects is a clear reminder that it's about all of us.

Reflection time for establishment of meaning is built-in; preparatory project understanding is critical.

Hands-on learning is only as powerful as the meaningfulness derived from all that activity. To be able to step back and ask, "What worked?" and "What didn't work?" can make all the difference. Natural scientists' journals, pilots' logbooks, and letters among colleagues have always provided deeper understanding of the activities undertaken,

and this is so in a valuable school project as well. This depth of study allows reflective time as a variable to work its magic on learning.

Beside this great need for reflection, on the other end there is an even greater need for preparatory fieldwork around place-based projects. Understanding energy flow through a habitat is helpful in restoring a wetland as a project, and comprehending the basic workings of government makes petitioning county commissioners for a renewed park more detailed. Simply taking students into the field, or merely engaging them in projects, beyond getting them excited, is much too wasteful if students don't work beforehand to establish some smarts about the project's essential knowledge.

Evidence is clear, credible, and compelling, leading to future endeavors.

How can you prove to me that you know something? Show me, demonstrate, explain so that I can learn, and -- above all -- convince me that what you accomplished with that place-based project moved you forward in your understanding of the world. Finally, a completed project, in the end, will bring up more questions than it answers. Thus, a link to a new project emerges from this evidence of learning.

Over and over again, I have witnessed one successful project being a catalyst for either several others or one of increasing complexity. For example, a student completes a project -- an inventory of mammals in a forest tract, an oral interview of a war veteran, building a storage shed for a community organization, or conducting a survey of the spending habits of rural Wisconsin teenagers -- and then believes he or she is done.

Just about when this happens, however, something more complex and practical springs from the student's first

effort: The mammal-inventory project evolves into reestablishing a habitat for a particular species, the oral-interview unit becomes a living history of people who served in the Korean War, the storage-shed activity develops into a fundraising effort for the local food pantry, and the spending-survey exercise leads to a youth-marketing initiative along Main Street businesses.

Sustainable learning beyond the expectations of adults, for learning's sake itself.

This is an ideal, but the world is full of people with hobbies, interests, and passions that take no more leadership to get them going than opening the door themselves and walking out. A school can be a place that immerses students, engages students, and allows them to initiate and lead themselves in a growing understanding of place.

Small schools create places of human scale where this type of place-based learning emerges from the close relationships established. I have learned much from my colleagues at organizations such as the Rural School and Community Trust, who support place-based efforts in schools across America, and EdVisions, in Henderson, Minnesota, who support students in small high schools nationwide who personalize their education through one-hundred-hour projects rather than a predetermined set of courses. Both sites link to others around the country moving this work forward.

As my students at the Nevada ranch examined Native American baskets lining the shelves upstairs, gazed at the intricate designs on the nineteenth-century family pottery, listened to family stories of tragedy and success, or ducked under the barn owl swooping overhead, they understood the value of this ranch as a school.

What about your hometown or local area? Given a special place in the community -- a ranch, a wetland, an

isolated postage stamp of native prairie, a turn-of-the-century library, or a vintage Craftsman home -- place-based students can bridge too-often-theoretical academics with places that matter to them.

Special people are often found in special places. In rural communities, teachers are important, yet close at hand are additional adults, such as experts and community elders, who are also valuable resources. Together, these adults have an immediate relevance for activating place-based projects. And let's not forget the capacity of students themselves to bring their expertise to these endeavors.

In the end, for students to act as aspiring scholars, historians, poets, inventors, and scientists, they need to complete projects that focus on the richness of our rural and urban places and the people who inhabit them.

One student of mine, years ago, captured this aspiration. Sandi wrote a poem on a field study day, perched on a sandstone outcropping overlooking the quiet spring day along the West Fork of the Kickapoo River, in southwest Wisconsin.

Have You Ever . . . ?

Have you ever stopped to look
to see what you could see?
Have you ever really wondered,
what maybe could be?
Have you ever sneaked a glance,
at wild birds in the sky?
Have you ever seen a stand of oaks
and stopped to wonder why?
Have you ever seen a river,
a-winding off afar?
Have you ever walked upon a ridge,
and wondered where you are?
Have you ever counted colors,
as you strolled along the way?
Have you ever witnessed fall,
and its colorful array?
Have you ever stopped to look,
to see what you could see?
Have you ever really wondered,
how it changes you and me?

Footnotes

[1] Vito Perrone, A Letter to Teachers: Reflections on Schooling & the Art of Teaching, San Francisco, Josey-Bass, 1991)

[2] Public School Methods, Vol. II Chicago, School Methods Publishing Co., 1922), 4.

[1] Toni Haas, Paul Nachtigal. Place Value: An Educator's Guide to Good Literature on Rural Lifeway, Environments, and Purposes of Education. (Charleston, WV: ERIC Clearinghouse on Rural Education and Small Schools, 1998) (ED 420 461)

[10] www.ruraledu.org (Place-based projects are summarized by topic area. 2003)

[8] Vito Perrone, "Why Do We Need A Pedagogy of Understanding?" in Martha Stone Wiske, Ed. Teaching For Understanding: Linking Research with Practice. (San Francisco: Josey-Bass, 1998), 19.

[9] John Dewey, Democracy and Education. (New York: The Free Press, 1916),

[2] David Orr. Earth in Mind: On Education, Environment, and the Human Prospect. (Washington, DC: Island Press,), 170.

[3] Paul Theobald. Teaching the Commons: Place, Pride, and the Renewal of Community. (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1997), 173.

[4] Paul Theobald. 'Preparing teachers for our nation's rural schools' (Basic Education Online <www.c-b-e.org/be/isso201/aotoc.htm> January 2002 Vol. 46 NO. 5), 138.

[5] Barbara Cervone, Executive Director, What Kids Can Do <www.whatkidscando.org>, EdVisions Forum discussion. Posting #21

of 150 <www.edvisions.coop> (29 January 2003).

[6] Janice Woodhouse, Clifford Knapp. Place-Based Curriculum and Instruction: Outdoor and Environmental Education Approaches. 2002, ERIC Digest: ED448012

[7] Barbara Cervone, What Kids Can Do on-line feature, <www.whatkidscando.org/featurestories/doriswilliams.html>

[11] Beth Spieles, environmental information officer, Center for Rural and Regional Studies, Southwest Minnesota State University, on-line interview at <www.crrs.net/story47.htm>

[12] Paul Gruchow. Grass Roots: A Universe of Home

[13] Gregory Smith. Place-Based Education: Learning to Be Where We Are" (Phi Delta Kappan, April 2002), 586.

[14] Smith, 590.

[15] David Orr. Earth in Mind: On Education, Environment, and the Human Prospect. (Washington, DC: Island Press,), 96.

[17] Aldo Leopold. Sand County Almanac,

[20] Rebecca Jaycox. (2001) Rural Home Schooling and Place-Based Education. Charleston, WV: ERIC Digest: EDO-RC-01-9

[21] The Harvard Graduate School of Education published the monograph, Learning in Place (2000

Chapter 3 Learning Community

[1] John Dewey, Democracy and Education. (New York: The Free Press, 1915), 209.

[2] John Dewey, Democracy and Education. (New York: The Free

Press, 1915), 160.

Chapter 4 Respect

[1] William James gave an address in Concord

[2] Ron Newell, Passion for Learning. (Scarecrow Press, 2003),

[3] John Dewey, Democracy and Education. (New York: The Free Press, 1915), 158.

Chapter 5 Listening, Student Voice, Reflection

[1] John Dewey, Democracy and Education. (New York: The Free Press, 1915), 107.

Chapter 8 Why Place-based Learning works for Today

[1] Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, The Evolving Self. (New York: Harper Collins, 1993)

[1] Ernest Boyer

[2] Seymout Papert

Chapter 9 Teaching Excellence through place-based projects:

[1] Vito Perrone, A Letter to Teachers: Reflections on Schooling & the Art of Teaching, San Francisco, Josey-Bass, 1991)

[2] Public School Methods, Vol. II Chicago, School Methods Publishing Co., 1922), 4.

[4] Public School Methods, Vol. II Chicago, School Methods Publishing Co., 1922), 2.

[5] Public School Methods, Vol. II Chicago, School Methods Publishing Co., 1922), 4.

[6] Alfred North Whitehead, The Aims of Education. (New York,

1964), 115.

[7] Sir John Livingston from 1944 entitled: Education for a World Adrift (London: Macmillan, 1944), 28.

[8] Ted Sizer. Horace's Compromise: The Dilemmas of the American High School, Houghton Mifflin, 1984.

[9] William Glasser. Control Theory in the Classroom. (NewYork: Harper & Row, 1986), 63.

[10] W. Glasser. Control Theory in the Classroom. (New York: Harper & Row, 1986), 84.

[10] William Ayers. To Teach: the journey of a teacher. (Columbia University: Teachers College Press, 1993), 129.

[11] William Ayers. To Teach: the journey of a teacher. (Columbia University: Teachers College Press, 1993), 137.

[12] John Maguire, Report to The Institute for Education and Transformation. (Claremont Graduate School, 1992), as quoted in Andrea Martin. EdVisions Forum discussion. Posting #106 of 150 <www.edvisions.coop> (6 February, 2003).

[13] Thomas Sergiovanni. Building Community in Schools. (Jossey-Bass, 1999), 13.

[14] W. Glasser. Control Theory in the Classroom. (New York: Harper & Row, 1986), 84.

[15] W. Glasser. Control Theory in the Classroom. (New York: Harper & Row, 1986), 84

[16] Dean Lind. EdVisions Forum discussion. Posting #42 of 150 <www.edvisions.coop> (29 January 2003).

[17] Anonymous. An Essay Concerning Critical and Curious Learning, (London, 1698) Publication #113, Introduction by Curt A. Zimonsky. (William Andrews Clark Memorial Library, UCLA, 1965)

[18] Michael Fullan. Change Forces: Probing the Depth of Educational Reform, (London: Falmer Press, 1993), 46.

[19] Thomas Sergiovanni, Building Community in Schools. (San Francisco, Jossey-Bass, 1999), 4.

Chapter 10 Seven Personal Discoveries about Place-based Education

[1] Carl Glickman. Reviewing America's Schools: A Guide for School-based Action. (San Francisco, Josey-Bass, 1993), XII.

[3] Howard Gardner. The Disciplined Mind. (NY: Simon & Schuster, 1999), 24.

[4] William Glasser. Control Theory in the Classroom. (NewYork: Harper & Row, 1986), 84.

[5] Robert R. Rusk. The Philosophical Basis of Education. (London: University of London Press, 1929), 20.

[6] Robert R. Rusk. The Philosophical Basis of Education. (London: University of London Press, 1929), 63.

Bibliography

Ayers, William. To Teach: the journey of a teacher. Columbia University: Teachers College Press, 1993

Bartsch, Julie, Community Lessons: Promising Curriculum Practices http://www.doemass.org/csl/comlesson.pdf

Bruner, Jerome. The Process of Education. Cambridge: Harvard Press, 1960.

Catton, William R. Jr. Overshoot: The Ecological Basis of Revolutionary Change. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1982.

Csikszentmihalyi, Mihaly. The Evolving Self. New York: Harper Collins, 1993.

Dewey, John. Democracy and Education. New York: The Free Press, 1916.

Emerson, Ralph Waldo. On Education

Enloe, Walter. Touching Ground Zero. St. Paul, Minnesota: Tertium Quid Press, 2016

Glickman, Carl. Reviewing America's Schools: A Guide for School-based Action. San Francisco, Josey-Bass, 1993.

Glasser, William. Control Theory in the Classroom. New York: Harper & Row, 1986.

Haas, Toni, Nachtigal, Paul. Place Value: An educator's guide to good literature on rural lifeways, environments, and purposes of education. Charleston, WV: ERIC Clearinghouse on Rural Education and Small Schools. (ED 420 461), 1998.

Jaycox, Rebecca. Rural Home Schooling and Place-Based Education. Charleston, WV: (EDO-RC-01-9), 2001.

Knapp, Clifford. Just Beyond the Classroom: Community Adventures for Interdisciplinary Learning. Charleston, WV: ERIC Clearinghouse on Rural Education and Small Schools. (ED 388 485), 1996.

Lewicki, James. Cooperative Ecology and Place: Development of a Pedagogy of Place Curriculum, self-published booklet, 1997.

Lewicki, James. 100 Days of Learning in Place: How a Small School Mastered State Standards through Place-Based Learning, Washington D.C.: Rural School and Community Trust, (ruraledu.org), 2000.

Livingston, Sir John. Education for a World Adrift London: Macmillan, 1944.

Mann, Horace. Report for 1848, 259.

Orr, David. Earth in Mind: On Education, Environment, and the Human Prospect. Washington, DC: Island Press, 1994.

Perrone, Vito. "Why Do We Need A Pedagogy of Understanding?" in Martha Stone Wiske, Ed. Teaching For Understanding: Linking Research with Practice. San Francisco: Josey-Bass, 1998.

Public School Methods, Vol. II Chicago, School Methods Publishing Co., 1922.

Sergiovanni, Thomas. Building Community in Schools. San Francisco, Jossey-Bass,1999.

Smith, G.A. "Place-Based Education: Learning to Be Where We Are" Phi Delta Kappan, April 2002 584-594. www.pdkintl.org/kappan/ktoc0204.htm

Sobel, David. Stories in the Land: A Place-based Environmental Education Anthology. Great Barrington, MA: The Orion Society, 1998.

Sobel, D. (2004). Place-based Education: Connecting Classrooms & Communities. Orion Society. Nature Literacy Series, No. 4.

Sobel, D. (1998). Mapmaking with Children. Portsmouth, Heinemann.

Theobald, Paul. Communities as Curricula. Forum for Applied Research and Public Policy, 15(1), Spring, 2000, 106-111.

Theobald, Paul. Teaching the Commons: Place, Pride, and the Renewal of Community. Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1997.

Theobald, P. 'Preparing Teachers for our Nation's Rural Schools' Basic Education Online www.c-b-e.org/be/iss0201/a0toc.htm January 2002 Vol. 46 NO. 5

Theobald, P., & Nachtigal, P. 'Culture, Community, and the Promise of Rural Education' *in Phi Delta Kappan*, 77(2), 1995, 132-135

Thomas, D., Enloe, W., Newell, R. The Coolest School in America, Scarecrow Press, 2007