Power of Place-based Pedagogy:
Theory and Practice of Place-Based Education

by

Julia Kleederman
Class of 2009

A thesis submitted to the faculty of Wesleyan University in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Bachelor of Arts with Departmental Honors in the American Studies Program

Middletown, Connecticut April, 2009
Contents:

Acknowledgments .................................................................................................................. ii
Introduction .............................................................................................................................. 1
Student Reflection #1 ........................................................................................................ 7
Historical Review: History of “Place” .................................................................................. 8
Student Reflection #2 ......................................................................................................... 43
Case Studies .......................................................................................................................... 54
Student Reflection #3 ......................................................................................................... 79
Adventures in Curriculum Design ....................................................................................... 80
Student Reflection #4 ......................................................................................................... 105
How Kids Change ............................................................................................................... 106
Student Reflection #5 ......................................................................................................... 119
Conclusion: How I Changed ............................................................................................... 121
Appendix I: IDS Quantitative Study ................................................................................... 133
Appendix II: IDS Student Survey ....................................................................................... 139
Appendix III: IDS History Seminar Course Materials ....................................................... 143
Acknowledgments

In the spring of last year, I met with Professor Renee Romano to seek out her advice regarding my options for fulfilling senior year requirements. We discussed my goals for my upcoming and final year at Wesleyan. As I had just returned from a semester at College of the Atlantic, in Bar Harbor, Maine, I expressed my interest in education studies and the connections between schools and society. On a more personal level, I articulated my valuing of experiential learning and directly connecting academic content with the world outside the classroom.

Professor Romano told me to consider the option of writing a thesis as an immense opportunity. She advised that I develop my “dream” project. Throughout the process of design and implementation of this research on place-based education, I have returned to Professor Romano’s proposed vision. At every step of this process, I have never doubted that this was what I wanted to do and have appreciated her positive words of advice.

Another vital contact throughout this thesis project has been my advisor, Professor William Stowe. Having previously taken a course taught by Professor Stowe, I felt confident that renewing our relationship and embarking on this project with him would be a positive experience. However, the depth of Professor Stowe’s interest, commitment, and guidance throughout my research has far exceeded my expectations. His patience and direction have helped me to develop as a writer and have allowed me to have greater trust in my own perspective and voice. As the structure of this thesis is unusual, and its methods and content multidisciplinary, I have particularly appreciated his role as a steady support and a constant advocate.
I also want to thank my family and friends who were willing sounding boards for my work as I developed my ideas for this project. Further, they have tolerated my impromptu, guided tours of Middletown and consistently offered encouragement, support, and respect for my own, unique process.

Lastly, this project would not have been possible without the opportunity to work at the Independent Day School in Middlefield, CT. The entire IDS community of teachers, administrators, and students eagerly welcomed me to their school. In particular, I must thank 8th grade teachers, Liz Warner and Kate Knopp, who have been influential and supportive mentors. I am also grateful to all the students who have participated in this project and have permitted me to include their observations and insights in my research. I want to especially thank the 8th grade students, Lee, Gus, Leah, Rider, and Ameya for allowing me to include their reflection papers in this thesis. As this academic year comes to an end, I feel very fortunate to be joining the IDS community as part of their faculty. Beginning in the fall of 2009, I will become a teacher at IDS, continuing to develop this 8th grade, place-based curriculum, connecting IDS with the Middletown community.

This thesis, my “dream” project, marks the culmination of my undergraduate education and the beginning of another chapter of my life as an educator.
**Introduction**

This research project investigates the relationship between place and education, and the connections that are made between people and the places they inhabit. Place is a concept that has been articulated over time as a fundamental aspect of human experience. Edward Casey theorizes on how place informs our lives. In expressing an essential connection between places and human existence he claims,

> To be at all- to exist in any way- is to be somewhere, and to be somewhere is to be in some kind of place. Place is as requisite as the air we breath, the ground on which we stand, the bodies we have. We are surrounded by places. We walk over and through them. We live in places, relate to others in them, die in them. Nothing we do is unplaced. How could it be otherwise? How could we fail to recognize this primal fact?[^1]

Casey’s philosophy on the importance of place supports the notion that we experience place perceptually, sociologically, ideologically, politically and ecologically.[^2] This multifaceted experience of place is influenced by the ways in which we relate to the natural, constructed, and social places that we inhabit.

Acknowledging the multidimensional concept of place, this thesis theoretically and experientially investigates the way in which pedagogy is connected to place. The term place-based education is founded in the historically deep-seated connection between schools, place, and community. This senior thesis explores the utility of place-based education, its historical roots, techniques, and pedagogy to improve academic skills, to facilitate student engagement in local place, and to develop awareness of community resources and partners. My research documents the ways in which educators can empower students as placemakers, to engage in the
political, economic, and social dimensions of their communities as active, engaged citizens, through recognizing the centrality of place in education.

The term place-based education describes an educational philosophy and curriculum model that focuses on the local social, economic, and ecological resources of a community. Place-based educator Delia Clark summarizes place-based learning design as

an educational approach that focuses on all aspects of the local environment, including local culture, history, socio-political issues and the natural and built environment as the integrating context for learning. It includes a clear focus on learning through civic engagement and participation in service projects of obvious relevance to the local school and community.5

Given this definition, my project is in itself a practice in place-based principles, as it includes a literature review, analysis of on-going place-based learning case studies, as well as documentation of my participation in a new place-based curriculum at the Independent Day School (IDS) in Middlefield, Connecticut. My independent research and my role at IDS are mutually informative. My project strives to bring theory and practice together, offering both a description and substantiation of these principles and practices and an actual trial of these educational theories.

The methodology used in my research remains consistent with the Place-based Education Evaluation Collaborative (PEEC) protocol. The PEEC group consists of seven place-based programs that work collectively to systematically document the effects of this type of educational program.4 The members of this group remain leaders in the place-based educational community, as they strive to implement, document, and evaluate the potential utility and effectiveness of these programs. In following these guidelines, my research includes a scholarly literature review,
implementation of a program design at IDS, qualitative and quantitative data
collection and analysis, as well as reflection on these experiences. Included in the
appendices of this thesis are student assignments, course materials, including a lesson,
which I designed and implemented, as well as quantitative data analysis.

Place-based learning has been articulated and rearticulated at regular periods
throughout American history. One of the often-cited visionaries of place-based
learning is John Dewey, who notes in his *Experience and Education*.

A primary responsibility of educators is that they not only be aware of the
general principle of the shaping of actual experience by environing conditions,
but that they also recognize in the concrete what surroundings are conducive
to having experiences that lead to growth... Above all, they should know how
to utilize the surroundings, physical and social that exist so as to extract from
them all that they have to contribute to building up experiences that are worth
while... the teacher should become intimately acquainted with the conditions
of the local community, physical, historical, economic, occupational, etc., in
order to utilize them as educational resources. ⁵

Dewey articulates the necessity of connecting learning with the political, ecological,
social, and ideological dimensions of place, topics that many place-based educators
decades later expound upon as well. Dewey explains the importance of centering
curricula within the local place. He describes the essential goals of place-based
learning, as building relationships between student, teacher, and community that are
mutually dependent and beneficial. Place-based education theory positions the child
as a resource to the community and vice versa. ⁶

Dewey’s language and conceptual framework directly relates to current place-
based educational theory. Director of Antioch University New England’s Center for
Place-based Education, David Sobel claims, “In some ways, in fact, place-based
learning can be understood as environmental education gone completely local, wholly
integrated with the learning standards and existing curricula of neighborhood schools
and expanded beyond the natural environment to include the cultural, social, and
economic conditions of place.” Nearly a century after Dewey, David Sobel defines
the type of curriculum design and school-wide vision that outlines the complex
relationships involved in studying place and the educational theory which is often
identified as place-based education.

In the first chapter, I investigate the historical roots of place-based education
in the United States. In Sobel’s definition of place-based education, he participates in
a tradition of connecting local place, learning, and community. In order to assess and
initiate myself into this tradition as well, I first seek to understand and explore these
patterns and their implications. In this pursuit, I link place-based educational
philosophy to the articulations of place that have been established over nearly three
hundred years of writing on the North American continent. The works examined
include writings by John Winthrop, John Cotton, Thomas Jefferson, Horace Mann,
John Dewey, Aldo Leopold, and more recently, David Sobel. In order to responsibly
follow in this tradition, I examine the underpinnings and history of these concepts.

In moving from this exploration of the central connection between place and
education over time, I evaluate three on-going place-based case studies to
demonstrate the nuanced effects of these programs and their successes with regards to
academic achievement, community development, and social connection. These place-
based programs, which range in geographic location and curriculum content, inform
my project, as they provide accepted methods of curriculum development, program
design and implementation, data collection, and implications for further study. As I
note in this chapter, these case studies serve as role models for inspiration, not as formulas intended for exact replication.

My investigation into the characteristics and effects of place-based education is also informed by my extensive working relationship at the Independent Day School (IDS). Beginning in September 2008, I have spent three days a week at the school as a teaching intern in the eighth grade local history seminar. My interactions and experiences with the teachers and students have provided me with a context to apply the theoretical concepts for my research. Through my relationship at IDS, I have sought to determine how this particular local history curriculum succeeds at enhancing academic skills, including those required for researching historical documents, developing students’ awareness of where they live, and fostering interactions with community partners. I describe the planning and implementation process of this place-based program at IDS and evaluate this project’s efficacy over the course of nearly two-thirds of the academic year. Included are my own contributions to its design and implementation and my assessment of its many successes, as well as suggestions for future program development.

While the components of this thesis project may seem distinct, they are actually interconnected and mutually influential. The development of relationships at IDS, Wesleyan University, and the Middletown community is an important characteristic of this project and one that is consistent with place-based learning principles. The composite of my research and my belief in the power of this educational approach shaped my 2 hour lesson at IDS on learning how to read photography as historical text. My lesson was an integral piece of the IDS seminar
and embodies place-based methods and philosophy. The students’ reactions to this lesson are evident through their self-reflection papers, a required assignment that followed my lecture. The student reflections are not only testimony to the success of my particular lesson, but also to the benefits of a place-based curriculum. These student reflections are woven throughout this thesis in order to emphasize how this research is a product of a community-based learning approach, where the students, teachers, and community members, as well as myself, have been inspired to appreciate our place, to recognize our interdependence, and to learn from each other.

Notes

3 Delia Clark, Principles and Promising Practices of Place-Based Learning Handbook (Center for Place-based Learning and Community Engagement, 2007), 9.
6 Clark, Principles and Promising Practices of Place-Based Learning Handbook, 9.
7 David Sobel, Place-Based Education (Great Barrington, MA: Orion Society, 2004), 60.
Student Reflection #1
Lee

This history course has shown me that history is studied so that our ideas might be influenced and our views enlightened and broadened. This history course has changed my outlook on the learning, teaching, and the interpretation of history. This method of learning takes away the textbooks, which have inherent biases as the authors could not possibly have seen and experienced the event in all achievable ways. I discover and see the history for myself, in the buildings and in the photographs. By shaping my own interpretations I am able to analyze my approach to the future, for that is what the study of history is for; to show what has happened in the past so that going forward is not walking in a fog.

I used to believe that history was the study of past events. Now, I have seen that history changes over time, and is continuously created as we weave our way through life. You are as likely to see history happen when you get up as you are to see the sunrise every morning. History can be seen in many different shapes, whether it is the modification of how someone looks at immigrants, the chronology of the Crusades, or the development of the Great Library of Alexandria.

By looking at primary sources such as photos, buildings, binders, and City Directories myself, I interpret history based on my current knowledge and document it in a way that makes sense to me. Therefore, I shape my own ideas influenced by my own biases, now backed by my analyses of the history that I have dug up.

I have never studied U.S. History using an entire town as a lens, nor have I gone out and become a real historian. This method is much more meaningful to me than the standard way: sitting down and being lectured as I take notes. It is interesting to actually see how things change using materials that I myself have gathered from the Historical Society or pieced together using information found while digging through old photos or binders.

I have learned that photographs have their own stories, and that what is not shown is just as important as what is. A photographer can change the frame, cutting parts of the picture out, not documenting a part of history. Just one photograph can give the history of something or change how we view history and the questions that we ask. In one picture that I looked at, there was an empty railroad, void of all personnel and train cars. It made me ask to myself, where is the train? Why are there not any people?

Instead of feeding us the views, research, and biases of someone, the methodology of this course has let us run free and wander. We had to find our own path and traverse it. We may get a nudging or two toward a brighter path, but we have been taught the skills necessary to find, read, and make our own conclusions about history, past, present and future.
**Historical Review: Stories of Place**

To properly examine the genealogy of place-based education within the United States, it is necessary to consider the historic importance of place as it relates to the social, political, and geographic schemas of American life. The purpose of place-based education centers learning and schools within the local community, local circumstances, and landscape. The texts explored in this historical review indicate the reoccurring articulation of place, in its different dimensions, and how place is relevant to education. These works reveal stories about the relationship between schooling and the political, ecological, and social dimensions of place. Neil Postman writes, “What kind of public [do schools] create?… The right answer depends on two things, and two things alone: the existence of shared narratives and the capacity of such narratives to provide an inspired reason for schooling.”\(^1\) This implicit connection between local place, its inhabitants, and learning, informs the stories, the rhetoric, and the expectations for the educational developments explored in this review and place-based education theory today.

**Place and Destiny in Early Settlement: the Great Migration to New England**

The early writings that accompanied the significant movement of English people in the early 1600’s to the “New World,” indicate a multi-dimensional characterization of the relationship between settlers and their new home. In the works of John Cotton, Robert Cushman, and John Winthrop, a story begins to emerge about the relationship between people and land. To use Postman’s terminology, this reflects a “shared narrative” relating to a physical and geographic articulation of place. In
Place and Belonging in America, David Jacobson explains that “an identity and politics were rooted in the Land. [This relationship] also shows how we came to the point where, when we said ‘America’ or ‘England,’ and so on, we could unconsciously treat community, polity, and physical place as one, unproblematic unitary and seamless entity.” These authors distinguish a social, political, civil, and geographical connection to local land.

The writings of these early settlers are efforts to justify their recent movement to North America, a relocation supposedly determined by God and evident through the productivity of their new homeland. In Cotton’s “God’s Promise for his Plantations,” religious imagery melds with the connection with the North American land. He writes,

Observation II: A people of God’s Plantation shall enjoy their owne place with safety and peace. This is manifest in the Text: I will plant them and what follows from thence? They shall dwell in their own place: But how? Peaceable, They shall not be moved any more. Then they shall dwell safely, there they shall live in peace.

Cotton assures that God has identified this land for these English settlers. Although they have left their native soil, this new land will prove to be the place of rightful belonging. Thus ideas of place, home, connection, and religion are paramount.

Explaining the importance of being “rooted” in one’s home, Cotton affirms the English right to land in North America through a physical and spiritual connection to place.

As Cotton’s work substantiates, imagery of land and planting provides assurance for the migration out from England. Geography relates not only to religious imagery, but also to ideas of social bonds amongst those English who recently arrived
in North America. Robert Cushman writes in 1622, “Though there may be reasons to persuade a man to live in this or that land… now as natural, civil, and religious bands tie man: so must they be bound; and as good reasons for things serene and heavenly appear, so they must be led.” Cushman’s perspective develops the idea that a person must not only be compelled to lead his own life in a respectable way, but that he must make decisions in his life so that he can “do most good to others: for, as one saith, ‘he whose living is but for himself, it is time he were dead.” This articulates an implied moral bond between the new inhabitants who had recently arrived on American soil. For Cushman, the transition to North America represents more than an individual decision. This “transplanting” relates to an improvement for mankind as well. Following Cushman’s argument, physical movement to America reconciles and completes one’s experience in a place, geographically, spiritually, and ethically.6

Consistent with Cushman’s and Cotton’s ideas, a moral and civic connection to the land of North America appears in Winthrop’s “A Modell of Christian Charity,” a lecture dated in 1630, likely first heard on the Arabella during his crossing to North America. Winthrop writes,

Wee are a company professing ourselves fellow members of Christ, in which respect onely though wee were absent from each other many miles, and had our imployments as farre distant, yet wee ought to account ourselves knit together by this bond of love… It is by a mutuall consent, through a speciall overvaluing providence and a more than an ordinary approbation of the Churches of Christ, to seeke out a place of cohabitation and Consorteshipp under a due forme of Government both ciuill and ecclesiasticall.”

Here, Winthrop articulates a common religious and moral community. Although these Puritans may have once been separated by significant geographic distance in Europe, in their new home, geographic proximity and similarities in civic and moral values
contributed to their compatibility. The expectations embedded within Winthrop’s work underscore the implicit connection between home, land, civic responsibility, social participation, and religious duties.

In these documents relating to the Puritan migration in the early 1600’s, Cotton, Cushman, and Winthrop characterize their multi-faceted, complex relationship to place, a connection which continues today. In The Power of Community-Centered Education, current place-based educator, Michael Umphrey, stresses the importance of stories about land and people, allowing for the individual to connect with historical material and to understand present situations. He writes, “We form our identity and our character through dialogic processes with our narrative environment. In practice, our identity is inseparable from our life story.”

Employing Umphrey’s explanation, the stories created by and for Americans that explain their belonging and connection to land inform educational pedagogy related to local place. The works of Cotton, Cushman, and Winthrop place the English migration to America into a socio-historical context that reconciles past, present, and future. These authors confirm Umphrey’s explanation of identity formation as their writings describe the meanings of place and the “dialogic processes with our narrative environment.”

David Sobel explains that place-based learning involves asking students “to respond creatively to stories of their home ground... They become part of the community, rather than a passive observer of it.” Sobel argues that to create integrated, lasting educational experiences there must be an active, conscious recognition of the connection between place, history, and the individual. With a
similar emphasis of connecting place through stories, John Cotton writes in 1624, “Look into all the Stories; whether divine or human, and you shall never find God ever rooted out a People that had the Ordinances planted amongst them, and themselves planted into the Ordinances. Never did God infer such Plants to be plucked up. On all their glory shall be a defense.”1 The consistency of Sobel’s philosophy with these early authors who emphasized the moral and social ties with the land, demonstrates the enduring nature of this conceptual framework. The identification of stories as a way to define a community and reveal a shared set of values indicates a common vocabulary that “encodes the moral sensitivities of the language community.”12 This shared language, which reflects a set of established cultural values, has become an integral part of educational theory and practice. An awareness of this set of values and use of language, specifically in educational and instructional models over time, remains critical to understanding and evaluating their utility and efficacy.

**Place and Sketches of a Young Republic**

The early Republic of the United States provides several examples of how writings about North American land connect notions of identity, social bonds, and community. Over a century following Cotton, Winthrop, and Cushman, Thomas Jefferson, J. Hector St. John de Crevecoeur, and Thomas Paine include strong associations with place within their writings as well. Jacobson writes that

Nineteenth-century America is still with us, though the conversation about people and place has taken new turns. For the pre-Civil War Republic, locating “place” and identity was, quite likely, *the* debate. They inherited from the Puritans a firm belief in the inextricable relationship of the people to
clearly demarcated places; the question was where to make those boundaries and, by extension, who were, in fact, the “people.”\textsuperscript{13}

The works of Jefferson, Crevecoeur, and Paine develop connections with the land that have had far-reaching and multilayered influences. Specifically, they reveal common stories and imagery that relate to the language apparent in place-based learning theory and literature today.

Physical geography and descriptions of landscape center the writers in the early Republic whose work helped to define the newly forged nation. In \textit{Notes on the State of Virginia}, Jefferson includes many descriptions of the location, natural resources, and characteristics of the physical landscape. Jefferson’s physical, geographic description of Virginia, including latitudes and longitudes, importantly connects the location with its history. He writes,

\begin{quote}
Virginia is bounded on the East by the Atlantic; on the north by a line of Latitude, crossing to Eastern Shore through Watkins’s Point, being 37, 57’… These limits result from, 1. The ancient characters from the crown of England. 2. The grant of Maryland to the lord Baltimore, and the subsequent determinations of the British court as to the extent of that grant. 3. The grant of Pennsylvania to William Penn… 4. The grant of Caroline… The cession made by Virginia to Congress of all the lands to which they had title on the North side of the Ohio.\textsuperscript{12}
\end{quote}

Jefferson distinguishes Virginia not only as a physical place, in “rational terms, delineating its precise latitudes and its geographic border,” but further as a story of how Virginia came to be.\textsuperscript{15}

The iconic role of the American farmer emerges during the 1700’s as another defining example of American culture. J. Hector St. John de Crevecoeur employs the imagery of the farmer and his multi-dimensional relationship with place in his work, \textit{Letters from an American Farmer}. He articulates the properties of America using
rhetoric associated with place and describes the independent farmer as an image of
distinction between America and Europe. He notes, “Whenever I go abroad, it is
always involuntary… The instant I enter my own land, the bright idea of property, of
exclusive right, of independence, exalt my mind… on it is founded our rank, our
freedom, our power as citizens, our importance as inhabitants of such a district.”

According to Crevecoeur, the American relationship with land is central to the nation.
Through the use of both the literal and figurative implications of soil and cultivation,
Crevecoeur articulates the qualities and qualifications of identity formation in
America.

Thomas Paine also employs imagery of the farmer and uses agrarian life as a
focal point for American citizenship and civil obligation. He writes,

Every individual, high or low, is interested in the fruits of the earth; men,
women, and children, of all ages and degrees, will turn out to assist the
farmer, rather than a harvest should not be got in; and they will not act thus by
any other property… When the vallies laugh and sing, it is not the farmer
only, but all creation that rejoices. It is a prosperity that excludes all envy; and
this cannot be said of any thing else.

For Paine, land and soil connect people, creating a social and civil community,
centered on place. This type of cooperative citizenship harkens to the civil bonds that
Winthrop calls for on the journey across the Atlantic. Winthrop declares in 1630,
“Wee ought to account ourselves knitt together by this bond of love.” Paine and
Crevecoeur similarly articulate this “bond” as they explain similar connections
between people and land. Reminiscent of Puritan writers before him, Crevecoeur
writes, “What is man when no longer connected with society… He cannot live in
solitude, he must belong to some community bound by some ties, however
imperfect… The weakness of each [man] is strengthened by the force of the whole.”
These characterizations of land and the physical landscape confirm communal and social life.

From this natural cohesiveness between citizens and land, structures of political governances are also established and explained. As Jacobson writes, “[I]t was largely presumed that in a federal framework republicanism worked best on the “local” level as even the Constitution of 1789 would create a union but not, at first, a singular nation.” Paine’s writings link “neighborly” social bonds between people and governmental structures. He writes that an effective government is founded by “[t]he mutual dependence and reciprocal interest which man has upon man, and all the parts of civilized community upon each other... The landholder, the farmer, the manufacturer, the merchant, the tradesman, and every occupation, prospers by the aid which each receives from the other, and from the whole.” Paine articulates an attachment between “landholder, farmer, and manufacturer” derived from the resources of the land. In turn, the connection between the American people and their shared place establishes and maintains a “civilized community.” Articulations of this union frequently appear in these works and are presented as a natural association in an American ideological framework.

A reading of Paine, Jefferson, and Crevecoeur provides a deeper understanding of the ideas regarding local place and the foundational expectations between the individual and community. As Paine writes, “What Archimedes said of the mechanical powers, may be applied to Reason and Liberty: “Had we” said he, “a place to stand upon, we might raise the world.” This association of the deep connection to geography and place is a relationship that fuses “not only ideas of land,
people, and politics but also of nature, science, and nationalism.\textsuperscript{24} Shared imagery and stories regarding land evoke physical and tangible imagery of people, or “a people,” “standing” in their rightful place, “planted” and “rooted” in their rightful home. The writings of Jefferson, Creveceur, and Paine situate the language used in the theories and educational pedagogies of place and community-based learning, as they are derived from a larger tradition in American history and trends in political and social development within the United States.

**Place and Education: Defining Territory and Building Schools**

In these writings dating from the newly independent United States, notions of community and civic obligation support the relationship between local place and schools. In *Notes on the State of Virginia*, Jefferson outlines a plan for the establishment of educational systems. He writes, “This bill proposes to lay off every country into small districts of five or six miles square, called hundred, and in each of them to establish a school for teaching reading, writing, and arithmetic.”\textsuperscript{25} Jefferson declares that in the establishment of a town land must be set aside for a school, connecting a characteristic “localness” with the development of the United States and the American educational system. As Jefferson drafted the Land Ordinance of 1785, and later the Northwest Ordinance of 1787, geography and mapping are connected to the educational system. The Ordinance states, “There shall be reserved the lot No. 16, of every township, for the maintenance of public schools within the said township...”\textsuperscript{26} This piece of legislation symbolizes the direct association between land and physical boundaries with schools.
Jefferson’s work demonstrates the interplay between the processes of defining boundaries, creating local communities, and providing educational opportunities. The evidence for this geographic and moral association is readily apparent as land was set “aside for public schools derived from the republican desire to inculcate civic virtue in the residents, a proactive concept of citizenship.”27 This articulation of place serves as another example of the shared stories that relate to communities, place, and education. Reflected in Jefferson’s writing, Umphrey describes this on-going story where “one teacher in one community who takes students into a community as hunter-gatherers, as explorers with questions, as friends and neighbors, as participants with a mission, sets the forces of an educational renaissance. Such work is a gift taking the form of an invitation. It starts a story.”28 Jefferson’s writings participate within a local and national dialectic, advocating the development of the United States through local, community growth and definition, particularly through education.

**Common Schools: Place and Moral Community**

The development of public education in the 1800’s, referred to as the common school movement, represents another critical component of the history of education in the United States. The common school mission and texts promote the development of national academic standards and uniformity of lessons and materials. However, beginning in the 1830’s, the success and integration of the common school values were dependent on the local community and schools. The initial establishment and long-term viability of the common schools, which seek to promote a systemized education, are reliant on the students, teachers, parents, and places in which the
schools are established. Thus, there is a mutually reinforcing relationship between this systemized type of education and the local community. Additionally, the common school movement promotes a civic and moral connection between American citizens and education at both a local and national level. As Robert Putnam notes, “[Public education] creates a public. And in creating the right kind of public, the schools contribute to strengthening the spiritual basis of the American Creed. This is how Jefferson understood it, how Horace Mann understood it, how John Dewey understood it.”

The common school movement marks an important development in place-based learning, where the parameters of morality, community, standardized education, and citizenship are discussed and debated. The rationale behind the common school model helps to define the relationship between communities and schools. Barbara Finkelstein, in her essay on the evolution of the common school movement and in specifically urban locations, points to the importance of including the concept of community in explaining the history of education within the United States. She continues to explain the way in which both formal and informal associations and groups have identified schools as a place for finding social meaning and bonding. She writes,

There is, it seems to me, a hidden logic... [a] psycho-logic of multiple attempts to structure, organize, and preserve a coherent reality for the young and the very young in a world of expanding possibilities, diverse world views, and threats to communal solidarity. Understood in this way, the historical study of community and urban educational history becomes nothing more or less than the history of people acquiring identity, as men and women, workers and citizens, as cultural creators, and as political actors, understood in this way, the history of education provided opportunities to explore the transformation of community.”
The perspective provided by this period in educational history, which defines and redefines the moral geography of a community, has lasting implications and centers this investigation.

Preceding the common school movement’s efforts to make schooling more systematic and universal, the educational landscape within the United States remained largely decentralized. The “hodge-podge” of schools, including many religious-affiliated institutions, relied on supplemental tuition and lacked common texts. The variations in school choice “reflected differences of class, religion, ethnicity, race, sex, and regional tastes and needs. They not only reflected these differences, but also perpetuated them, often deliberately.”31 Still, nearly one-third of five-to-nineteen year olds were attending some kind of school by the 1830s.32

School systems varied greatly due to geographical differences, population densities, and level of industrial development.3 In turn, the various curricula across the United States differed widely as well. The multitude of factors that shaped schools made it difficult to create a unified educational system in the early 1800’s. This wide variation in school profiles underscores the motivation for educational transformation and innovation. Specifically in rural areas, the community, family, and school were intrinsically linked, as many people were involved in the education of youth. The character of available schooling in a local community demonstrated the more immediate circumstances of the place.

By the mid-1800’s, the disparate array of educational opportunities and institutions throughout the country emerged as an issue of national importance. The call to develop a more standardized system of education, such as the common school
model, during this period arose from several powerful developments. As Viteritti writes,

By the 1840’s things had changed dramatically. The states of the Northeast were undergoing an industrial revolution. The number of cities in the region with a population of more than 10,000 increased from three in 18—to forty-two by 1850. Textile production shot up. Canals and then railroad crisscrossed the area and the nation. Immigration swelled, bringing large numbers of Roman Catholics to a predominantly Protestant nation. The pace of change and the urgency of new social problems fostered the development of new institutions.33

Uniform standards for schooling emerged as one potential solution to this period of great social, political and economic change. By 1850, anxiety regarding social and economic change due to industrialization, urbanization, isolation of certain rural communities, and immigration was prevalent. Schooling became a potentially useful, curative vehicle for promoting social participation and citizenship.

With the social issues of the time identified, many school reformers articulated and acted upon their proposals for educational change. Education reformer and visionary, Horace Mann, emerged as one critical advocate for the development of a new educational system by the mid-1800s. Mann’s principle arguments and support of educational reform reflect the value system and circumstances of his time. He envisioned a free school “financed by local and state government, controlled by lay boards of education, mixing all social groups under one roof, and offering education of such quality that no parent would desire private schooling.”34 Although his vision may have been far-reaching in its claims and potential, he chose to characterize the movement as a continuation of an ongoing narrative of educational progress. Mann writes of the connection between social change and education,
The Common School is the greatest discovery ever made by man... Other social organizations are curative and remedial; this is a preventative and an antidote... Let the Common School be expanded to its capabilities, let it be worked with the efficiency of which it is susceptible, and nine tenths of the crimes in the penal code would become obsolete; the long catalogue of human ills would be abridged.55

The rationale for the common school relies on the assumption of a social bond amongst all United States citizens. In this article, Mann expresses that the common school would act as a “preventative” system to ensure the future of America through infusing a moral and civic education within every generation of Americans. As Tyack and Hansot suggest, these collective standards are paramount for Mann, as they shaped the expectations of “schooling as a common and public good that became an enduring legacy of that millennial faith.”36

One essential element in Mann’s view of common schooling was the common text, exemplified by the McGuffey readers. This set of collected texts, which focuses on lessons in reading instruction, also assert moral, social, and economic values. In the Fifth Eclectic Reader, Lesson XCIII states, “Religion is a social concern; for it operates powerfully on society, contributing in various ways to its stability and prosperity, religion is not merely a private affair; the community is deeply interested in it diffusion; for it is the best support of the virtues and principles, on which the social order rests...”37 The McGuffey readers certainly have religious underpinnings. These readers are often cited as problematic in their promotion of Protestant religion and moral superiority, particularly as these common schools were supposed to be appropriate for all students.38 As Tyack and Hansot explain, “The argument ran thus: “to survive, the republic must be composed of moral citizens. Morality is rooted in religion. Religion is based upon the Bible. The public school is the chief instrument
for forming moral citizens. Therefore pupils must read the Bible in school.”

This prevalent logic maintained that religious lessons and texts were intended for moral instruction. The common school thus embodies a value-infused education of civics and community at both local and national levels. Further, the popularity of the McGuffey readers, having sold in total over 122 million copies, demonstrates their resonating power with the American population. The success of the common school is testimony to the apparent desire for a curriculum to reinforce and implement common values, which “created, organized, and maintained communal solidarity and intergenerational continuity for some groups, while it placed strains on the capacities of others to forge social bonds, evoke loyalty, compel allegiance, and exact commitment from their children.”

The McGuffey readers demonstrate that the common school mission was not only to instruct in the critical skills of reading and writing, but perhaps more importantly to ensure the initiation of a unified, moral curriculum, infused with the image of a community, “a society at large.”

An important background for this movement was the increasing industrialization and urbanization within the United States at this time. Mann’s work acknowledges this trend and develops his theories as a way of adapting to these changes. As Tyack writes, “Beyond the question of morality, however, Mann also argues that educated workers were more productive, and that schooling could add to the value of Massachusetts’s growing industrial output.” Mann promoted a schooling system that sought to lessen the disparity between the rich and poor and a more amicable citizenship through a uniform and systemized educational school system. Although the common school movement involved developing local school
systems, it centered itself with regards to a national conversation. Mann’s work continues with a legacy initiated from early settlers where “education was widely recognized as a legitimate and important function of governmental authority. … holding that citizenship entailed responsibility and knowledge, dictated that schooling be made universally available, at least for those groups deemed eligible to be citizens.”43 Although the structure and the emphasis on the relationship between the local environs and schooling have changed over time, the ongoing debate over these issues remains remarkably constant.

The development of the common school system reflects the dialogic nature of schooling practices and theories. Jacobson explains that an ideology related to place connects Americans together. He writes, “where community is thought to be local and neighborly, and democracy is civic participation in townships, villages, and local churches. When the reality fails to support this picture, this moral geography, something’s is wrong with America- it is in civic and moral decline.”44 This continued value of place, community, and education applies to the debate and anxiety over societal changes in the 1800’s and the appropriate role of the school in addressing these changes. Horace Mann’s theories and the McGuffey Reader provide insight into the 19th century educational debate, which focused on the potential for moral capital to be fostered within schools. Mann’s work identifies vital connections amongst moral values, citizenship, belonging, and education, revealing the challenges of integrating these key factors in an educational model that is appropriate for children of diverse cultural, religious, and economic backgrounds. A profound contribution of the common school movement is its articulation of the moral
dimensions of education and its definition of a free educational school system as a universal necessity.

Studies in Nature: Place-based Education and the Local Environment

While Horace Mann began his campaign for the common school to educate the “masses,” and the debate regarding the relationship between school and society became more prevalent, popularity of the study of botany was also emerging. Beginning in the 1820’s and with the establishment of the American Nature Study Society in 1908, a new educational movement was advocating for a first hand appreciation of nature. This movement emphasizes a renewed connection between physical land, geography, and education. The nature-study movement serves as an important educational keystone whose pedagogy reflects the belief that “students and teachers should have regular and direct contact with the plants, animals, and natural features of their local environments.”

This study of natural history and botany focuses on “observation, love of the Creator, and analytical thinking- rather than in scientific knowledge itself… [as the movement was] more interested in pedagogy and morality than in science.” By the 1880’s, the nature-study movement had developed an educational philosophy that “stressed nature appreciation for grade schoolers… and scientific thought and method in secondary and postsecondary education… including more of the physiology, morphology, and development of places and plant communities.” The key advocates of the nature-study movement included Anna Botsford Comstock, Liberty Hyde Bailey, and Wilbur Jackman. Botsford’s Handbook of Nature Study, first printed in
In his *Nature Study for the Common School*, Jackman suggests that a school curriculum ought to include observation and interaction with the natural world. His text stresses the need for developing a child’s senses and the necessity of “personal investigations” in the natural world. While Jackman wrote extensively on the theory and benefit of introducing science through nature in the common schools, his techniques emphasize the importance of the local and the value of hands-on learning. He thus implies that each school will apply these theories in unique ways.

Commenting on the importance of the immediate surroundings as related to education, Jackman writes, “The life, health, and happiness of the individual is dependent upon his knowledge of the things about him, and upon the understanding that he has of their relationship to each other and to himself.” Jackman describes the necessity of daily interactions with the outside, natural world as a means to develop a complete educational curriculum. His logic follows that if “pupils are taught the truth about the laws of nature and about common things that, at least, they may not hereafter become the prey of the unscrupulous.” Jackman promotes the nature-study movement as an important and missing aspect of the common school education movement. In addition, his ideas support the need for human connection to land and nature, which continues to be an ongoing part of the national dialogue.

Jackman’s work enriches the enduring conversation regarding place, the environment, and education, not only through his theories, but also in the specific curricula and lesson plans that he published. As a common school teacher in Illinois,
Jackman describes specific lessons regarding nature, which are organized according to seasons. He emphasizes the value in having a child located within his local environment. For a “Geography lesson” Jackman suggests,

The pupils should be... able to hold the different directions in and without conscious effort. With this work, map-making properly begins. If one pupil says that in going home he travels three blocks east and two north, let him show how the path looks on the blackboard. Let him locate his home and the schoolhouse with respect to each other. This will necessitate the teaching of direction as applied to maps.53

Mapmaking and the stress on the “immediate surroundings,” are techniques that place-based educators in the 21st century have specifically come to utilize as well.

The nature-study movement gained momentum at the turn of the century, as many people felt their children “nature-deprived” due to the increased urbanization and agricultural crises at the time. The pedagogical techniques that Jackman describes both engage with Mann’s common school and the use of the local to enhance the child’s experience. Place-based educators have called upon the Jackman’s theory and rhetoric in substantiating their cause, as Jackman urges teachers to “[arrange] a course of study and [select] suitable material... from nature.”54 With this, he evokes a characteristic of place-based education, which advocates for lessons that are “specific to particular locales, [and where] generic curricular models are inappropriate.”55 The nature-study movement emphasizes a permeability between schools and the local environment and firmly addresses the importance of using local phenomena to direct the curriculum.
John Dewey: Proposals and Practices to Define Place-Based Education

The basic principles of place-based education are particularly apparent in John Dewey’s progressive education philosophy, which also emerged at the end of the 19th century, overlapping with the other educational movements previously discussed. For more than 100 years, John Dewey’s work has informed the development of many educational theories and has been linked to place-based education models. Recently, there has been a characterization of American civil and political participation as “an increasingly hollowed-out body politic, in which fewer and fewer citizens participate locally in face-to-face political activity and where the substance of democratic decisions” has been reduced significantly.56 This description has striking parallels to Dewey’s assessment of the politics during his time. Further, Dewey not only presented detailed educational theories, but also put them into practice in his Chicago Lab School, utilizing a particular “hands-on” methodology that place-based educators have claimed as well, locating Dewey as a central authority.

In examining the educational scene at the end of the 19th century, John Dewey was concerned about the trend toward systemization and quantitative assessments that were becoming prevalent in schools across the United States. Horace Mann and John Dewey both vocalized similar apprehension regarding the effectiveness of schools within society and the proper education of the future, voting populous. Although Mann and Dewey developed different theories and solutions, they both identified the school as a place to model the values and practices of a healthy community. Both men advocated policies that intended to prepare students to participate optimally in their communities. In Education and Social Change, John
Rury notes, "Dewey’s understanding of the school’s role in society went far beyond Mann’s ideas. For Dewey, the concept of democracy… was a way of life… [It] embraces a range of ideas, such as tolerance, fair play, critical discussion of social issues, and respect for the rights of others. Ultimately, it was nothing less than the highest form of collective intelligence." Rury explains that Dewey’s work responded to Mann and continued his dialogue. Both men were working within the context of a fast-changing, industrial society, yet where “Horace Mann had invoked an industrial metaphor in declaring the school a “balance wheel” of society, Dewey saw it as a refuge from the ravages of the factory and commercial life, a place for children to learn essential values of democracy and principles of reasoning.”

Although Mann and Dewey had different solutions to the changing demographics, politics, and economics of the time, both these educators identify the school as a place to address social change, creating a direct relationship between school and the world beyond the classroom.

Dewey’s writing stresses the integration and institutionalization of democratic principles within the educational system. His ideas regarding democracy form one of his primary solutions to the fast changing social structures within the United States during his time. Dewey describes the importance of incorporating democratic principles within a local context, yet with national implications. He defines that “democracy is more than a form of government; it is primarily a mode of associated living, of conjoint communicated experience. The extension in space of the number of individuals who participate in an interest so that each has to refer his own action to that of others, and to consider the action of others to give point and direction to his
own... Dewey’s *Democracy and Education* is aptly subtitled “an introduction to the philosophy of education.” This subtitle reflects the central role Dewey places on democratic values, as he explains that a democracy is more than a form of government; it is primarily a mode of associated living, of conjoined communicated experience. The extension in space of the number of individuals who participate in an interest so that each has to refer his own actions to that of others, and to consider the actions of others... 

Thus, Dewey’s definition of democracy includes the social connection between citizens, allowing for decision-making and interactions to be morally bound and mutual beneficial.

Place-based education theory is based upon democratic principles, particularly Dewey’s accompanying theory, situating the school and curriculum within the local environs. As Dewey notes, “fraternity, liberty, and equality isolated from communal life are hopeless abstractions. Democracy must begin at home, and its home is the neighborly community.” Place-based theory celebrates this definition of “home,” as it builds curriculum around local circumstances and works to invigorate community interaction and local problem solving. According to Dewey and place-based educators, schools must engage with the local and integrate democratic values.

Dewey also presents more specific techniques to apply the more abstract features of his theories. In her own historical review of place-based education, Amy Demarest describes Dewey’s belief that learning can and should occur in and outside the classroom, thereby including the local community, the physical, historical, economic, and occupational landscape of the local area as an integral part of lesson plans. This tenet relates to using “place as text,” a popular mantra amongst place-
based educators. Further, in emphasizing the use of the local within a curriculum, Dewey articulates the importance of instruction and subject matter to be what is “seen and felt and loved” by the learner. Dewey writes that the utilization of “life-terms,” real-world objects and examples in the classroom, is an important pedagogical tool to ensure long-lasting understanding of material.\textsuperscript{63} In designing place-based models, this concept has endured as a central component of curriculum planning and development. Dewey urges that educational material should be presented within a dynamic and changing system beyond the classroom. Following, the learner should understand that the world is not stagnant and should be prepared to adapt to change. In creating this type of school, which responsively interacts with the local and national community, Dewey demonstrates how schools are part of a democratic system whose components are interconnected. As Dewey writes in his \textit{Democracy and Education} “[This]

philosophy seeks and points the way that would make education the great

instrumentality, helping children and youths to grow into citizenship in a government

intended to be of, by, and for all.”\textsuperscript{64} Dewey articulates an educational philosophy that allows for flexibility, adaptability, and a significant autonomy for teachers, specifically through the incorporation of local resources, including institutions and people in the community. Additionally, these primary aspects of John Dewey’s work are frequently referenced and often used as substantiating evidence in support of place-based education.

Dewey remains as a legendary place-based educator due to both his theoretical belief that school curricula should be “as real and vital to the child as that which he carries on in the home, in the neighborhood, or in the playground,” as well
as his own application of these ideals at the Chicago Lab School.\textsuperscript{64} Dewey’s own experience in developing the Chicago Lab School influenced his writings and allowed him to include tangible and specific recommendations to support his philosophical ideas. As Rury writes,

Dewey was not a radical reformer; he did not advocate doing away with traditional subjects altogether, and letting children follow every whim and fancy. Instead, he felt that school matter should be taught differently, using world experience in critical lessons…. Students at the Lab School learned about the past by visiting museums and historical sites, they toured factories to learn about the economy, and they conducted biological experiments in park and nature preserves.\textsuperscript{56}

The combination of specific curriculum guidelines, pedagogical principles that strive to create responsible and responsive schooling practices, and their significance within the context of the larger social and political landscape are collectively what make Dewey’s work relevant and foundational in describing place-based education theory.

Place-based education exists as rooted in the idea of “learning by doing,” a value that Dewey’s writing and the establishment of the Lab School exemplifies. The value of “learning by doing” continues to be of lasting importance as it applies to the circumstances of Dewey’s era, as well as the social, political, and educational trends that have developed since his time. Dewey’s career outlines how to do this, not just in theory, but by “real-life” example as well.

John Dewey’s work has provided the foundation for many educational reform movements. His ideas continue to inspire debate regarding the salient ingredients for effective education programs. As educator, Franklin Parker, asks, “What should high schools, and by implication elementary schools, teach? And how should schools be organized and courses taught? Behind curriculum differences was a political
dilemma… How can schools best meet both student needs and nation needs? These questions have been posed repeatedly and continue to have relevance far beyond Dewey’s time.

**Environmental Education: Going Back to the Land**

In addition to providing the groundwork for progressive education and experiential education in the first half of the 20th century, John Dewey’s language and philosophy have also been associated with the emergence of the environmental education movement of the 1960’s and 1970’s. Dewey’s metaphors and theory relate to a vision of the natural and manmade environment as “interdependent systems that constitute a habitat.” In connecting Dewey’s work with aspects of the environmental movement, a shared value system becomes apparent. Dewey and later environmental movement theorists emphasize direct participation with nature, the importance of the “local” experience, activism, and community involvement. In his *Experience and Education*, Dewey writes, “Experience [outside the school] has its geographical aspect, its artistic and its literary, its scientific and its historical sides. All studies arise from aspects of the one earth and the one life lived upon it.” Dewey’s imagery of the earth, with finite and delicate resources, and his rhetorical language are appropriately associated with the later environmental education movement.

The environmental education movement, often cited as fully emerging in the 1960’s, presents similar ideas and metaphors as Dewey and others before him. Aldo Leopold’s 1949, *A Sand Country Almanac*, and Rachel Carson’s 1962, *Silent Spring*, are two centering pieces of the movement that continue to have a significant legacy.
From a conservationist perspective, Leopold urges a connection with place and land. He writes, “When we see land as a community to which we belong, we may begin to use it with love and respect.” In *A Sand County Almanac*, Leopold describes a moral interconnection amongst the “circuit of soil, plants, and animals.” He continues, “All ethics so far evolved rest upon a single premise; that the individual is a member of a community of interdependent parts.” For Leopold, this interdependency, previously articulated in the natural, political and moral realm, works to promote concern for the destruction and decline of environmental quality and strives to correct for this. Rachel Carson who “jolted the entire world into consciousness of pesticides that were poisoning people and wildlife,” has been credited with bringing environmental issues to a wider audience. Her work is particularly relevant to place-based education, as she identifies a moral and spatial community, between and amongst people and nature. As Carson writes, “It is not half so important to know as to feel when introducing a young child to the to the natural world.” Both Carson and Leopold, along with many others, address the importance of childhood and education as a critical time to develop this “land ethic,” a centering and valuing of the natural within communities.

A basic definition of environmental education appeared in 1969 by William B. Stapp, and several of his students, in the *Journal of Environmental Education*. This definition describes environmental education as aiming at “producing a citizenry that is knowledgeable concerning the biophysical environment and its associated problems, aware of how to help solve these problems, and motivated to work toward their solution.” Beginning with the United Nations' Conference on the Human
Environment in Stockholm in 1972, a series of international conversations and initiatives identified the political and pedagogical implications of the environmental education movement. In 1977, the Tbilisi Declaration provided a restatement of the previous intergovernmental meetings and additional dimensions to the definition of environmental education. The Tbilisi Declaration first stated the scope of the document itself, as including “the framework, principles, and guidelines for environmental education at all levels—local, national, regional, and international—and for all age groups both inside and outside the formal school system.” This basic premise connects with the educational ideologies of Jefferson, Mann, and Dewey, as they all view the school as an important vehicle to engage with society at large.

There has been ongoing reassessment, redefinition, and amendments to the environmental education movement, both in response to criticism and in hopes of refining their model. The social movement of environmentalism in the 1960’s and 1970’s generated an immediacy and importance regarding ecological issues, sustainability, and conservation. These ideas also led to the series of international and national policy initiatives for environmental education, affirming its importance as an educational model. Thus, these social and political events in the 1960’s and 1970’s provided an opportunity for a range of pedagogical movements, including place-based education, to both respond to and expand upon the basic tenets of this environmental movement.

In examining David Sobel’s definition of place-based education as “environmental education gone completely local,” and David Orr’s claim that, “All education is environmental,” the influence of the environmental movement on place-
based education becomes quite clear.\textsuperscript{77} In the literature and educational theory that self-identities as place-based, there is often a valuing of direct experience with nature and an agenda to foster ecological sustainability and stewardship. Sobel writes in \textit{Beyond Ecophobia} “In our zest for making [children] aware of and responsible for the world’s problems, we cut our children off from their roots... Lacking direct experience with nature, children begin to associate it with fear and apocalypse. Not joy and wonder.”\textsuperscript{78} Sobel’s educational approach includes developmentally appropriate lessons about environmental problems and the importance of play within nature.

The values evident in Dewey’s work and in many environmental education models must be viewed critically as they reflect specific circumstances of their time, yet influence present theory and language as well. The emphasis on experience and nature demonstrates a cultural specificity, which can result in an exclusion of other philosophies and approaches. In Bowers’ critique of Dewey and environmental education leaders of the 1960’s and 1970’s, he explains how embedded within these ideas is a very specific “language/cultural community.” Bowers notes, “For example, the relationship between a cultural group’s root metaphors and how the resulting process of analogic thinking is encoded in our use of such iconic metaphors as “individualism,” “freedom,” technology,” “community” was unfortunately not understood by Dewey.”\textsuperscript{79} The environmental movement can be viewed as a response to ecological change through a similar set of values, a specific language or story, which both utilizes imagery from the past and facilitates the formation of a certain community profile in the present. In recent work regarding place-based theory, a
critical, theoretical component to the environmental focus has become popular. This represents the desire of many place-based theorists to demonstrate how "social justice issues, like political empowerment through education, can be achieved in more ecologically responsible ways." This effort to bridge critical theory and environmental education serves as an example of the ways in which place-based educators are working to extend beyond the limitations of their specific "language/cultural community" for a broader, more comprehensive application of their theories.

The periods of educational history that have been highlighted in this review compositely indicate a set of cultural assumptions regarding people who are educated in the United States and their place within that relationship. As long as this perspective is acknowledged as operative, the philosophical theories of Dewey, Leopold, and others can offer significant contributions to the development of effective educational models, as well as facilitate inquiries that extend to new pedagogical territory.

**Perspective on the Historical Roots of Place-Based Education**

The guiding purpose of this historical review has been to trace the importance of place, community, and education from early conception of the North American colonies to the present day. Through the examples of this review, I have explored the ways in which the stories of place have been articulated in the past and continue to have an enduring influence on American culture and education. My purpose has been to participate in what Gruenewald calls for as "a rich and badly needed conversation
about the relationship between the places we call schools and the places where we live our lives.81 He argues, and I concur, that there must be a recognition and understanding of the ways in which the interactions of school, place, and community have important implications with regards to learning and education.

In the review of the early settlement in New England, the political and ideological dimensions are readily apparent in the ways in which the prominent authors articulate their rightful claim to land, a defined place, in religious, moral, and political terms. Continuing, Crevecoeur, Jefferson, and Paine engage the environment and the senses, to describe and inscribe new structures of power. Further, they develop imagery of moral and social bonds between people in their local place as they work to define the United States. In this way, these first two examples demonstrate how place in the early history of the United States is, “not only a reflection of society, it is society.”82

Proceeding to Mann's work, the common school movement examines dramatic shifts in the physical, political and economic dimensions of places. The educational model of the common school utilizes the shared space of school with the purpose of creating a like-minded population, ready for a new, industrialized age. This example demonstrates most clearly the “ideological dimension of place” in the way in which the school “always inscribed with politics and ideologies, simultaneously reflects and reproduces social relationships of power and domination.”83 The common school educational pedagogy promotes uniformity in learning and texts, and works to naturalize and incorporate new citizens, although excluding many whose lessons of protestant morals and citizenship are completely
foreign and inappropriate. The common school movement’s intended purpose in retrospect is clear, yet in examining documents of the time, this model indicates how “schooling concealed the production of space from view and obscured the role of citizens in the potentially democratic process of place making.” In response to Mann, Dewey identifies the importance and complexity of place, recognizing that educators and students must be informed of the underlying processes in which they are engaged. As Gruenewald writes, and Dewey’s work supports, if teachers and students “are to understand culture in the places where they live, they must explore the interdependent economic, political, ideological, and ecological relationships between places near and far.”

Many self-identified environmental educators take up values and language associated with place-based education. Since the beginning of the environmental education movement, there have been other related educational movements that have participated in this on-going dialogue about place and education along with Jefferson, Mann, Dewey, Jackman, and others. In explaining the generation of the term place-based education, Demarest notes that place-based education is “often used synonymously with terms such as environmental education, community-based learning, environment as an integrating concept (EIC), sustainability education, community education, bio-regional education, pedagogy of place, service learning, indigenous education, and democratic education.” This process of naming seems to be more a matter of semantics than substance, offering variations of theories and concepts, which actually share common values, themes, and modes of assessment.

Quoting place-based educator Berniski, Demarest includes in her place-based
literature review, “[When you are drowning in a river of information, the last thing you need to know is the temperature of the water. What you need is a rock to stand on.”]^{87} I not only concur with the statement that education needs to be rooted in place, moving away from the disconnected and abstract, but I also relate this quote to my own mission. In understanding the histories and on-going stories that relate to the concept of place and education, I use the term place-based education as my rock, in the sea of names, theories, and practices that have emerged from the many educational movements throughout the history of the United States.

Notes

5 Ibid., 498.
9 Ibid., 11.
11 Cotton, *God’s Promise to His Plantations*, 402.
13 Jacobson, *Place and Belonging in America*, 60.
20 Jacobson, *Place and Belonging in America*, 65.
22 Ibid., 173.
23 Ibid.
24 Jacobson, *Place and Belonging in America*, 95.
27 Jacobson, *Place and Belonging in America*, 93.
32 Ibid., 29.
40 Ibid., 5
42 Ibid.
44 Jacobson, *Place and Belonging in America*, 93.
46 Ibid.
Ibid., 52.
50 Ibid., 3.
51 Ibid., 65
52 Ibid.
53 Ibid.
54 Ibid.
55 Ibid.
57 John L. Rury, Education and Social Change, 144.
58 Ibid., 151.
60 Ibid.
63 Ibid., 8.
66 Ibid.
68 C.A. Bowers, Education, Cultural Myths, and the Ecological Crisis, 108.
72 C.A. Bowers, Education, Cultural Myths, and the Ecological Crisis, 96.
73 Rachel Carson in Robert Louv, Last Child In the Woods (Chapel Hill: Algonquin Books, 2005), 279.
75 Ibid.
78 David Sobel, Beyond Ecophobia (Great Barrington, MA: Orion Society, 1996), 133.
79 C.A. Bowers, Education, Cultural Myths, and the Ecological Crisis, 89.
80 Ibid., 88.
82 Ibid., 628.
83 Ibid.
84 Ibid., 629.
85 Ibid., 645.
86 Amy Demarest, “Shared purpose: how teachers engage the local environment and community to design meaningful and democratic curriculum,” 16.
87 Ibid., 18.
Student Reflection #2

Rider

The skills I have learned so far this year have changed the way I will go about writing a history paper, researching it, and presenting it. I have learned how to create a research question, and how to find the answer to that question, whether it’s through city directories or going through probate records. The course has taught me how I can read a building and how a town is built. The course has altered the way I think about history. It showed me that everything isn’t as simple as googling it, but that it takes work and time to find the answer you’re after. Because of this class, when I drive down the street in my town, I am able to answer why the town is built this way or that, why the buildings look as they do. I have learned how I can relate things happening in my own town, to the entire nation in terms of how the town is planned or why the town is built this way or that.

Also, the lesson on photography has provided me with yet another tool to read history with. With a photograph I learned I can find context, and when paired with text, can learn even more about the time it was taken, what the picture is or, and can then relate it to my research question to see if it is relevant. My views on the seminar course has changed over the year, at first hating the tedious work and vague direction, but later realized that that’s what history research is, tedious, often boring work, but every once in a while you find something that can make it all worth it, whether it is the name of the original owner of a house, or the persons first apprenticeship.

At the beginning of the seminar I asked myself “Why do I need to learn how to do this? Why can’t we have a regular text book course?” By this time I no longer ask that, because I know why, it’s because now we know how to find history, where to look for it, and how to get around obstacles. These things could not have been taught in a traditional textbook course.
Case Studies

How can the relationship between place, community, and education be harnessed to engage students in the learning process? Can the integration of the local environment within curricula help students become more active participants in both their education and in their communities outside of the classroom? In order to determine the effectiveness of teaching principles founded on the connection between place and education, “real-life” examples of place-based pedagogy substantiate the important relationship between place and education. Each of the following curricular models seeks to foster engagement with local material and to empower students in the recognition of their own position within their community. These case studies critically inform my own experience at the Independent Day School. The specifics of each case study demonstrate techniques in action and exemplify different, useful approaches that work to define the field of place-based education today. Overall, I have chosen to examine these models as they each seek to facilitate engagement with community, historical knowledge, and learning, using methods that I hope to employ in my classroom for this project.

Case Study #1: The Foxfire Community Design

The Foxfire Fund Inc. curriculum model incorporates a useful set of values and techniques, particularly as its philosophy is centered on local place and cultural heritage. Under the leadership of its founder, Eliot Wigginton, the Foxfire program began as one teacher’s attempt to create a more engaged, active learning environment in his classroom and the extended community. Still located in Rabun Country,
Georgia, Foxfire has become a multi-dimensional, non-profit educational organization, which publishes educational texts and a student-run magazine, and sponsors professional development conferences. Even with Foxfire’s growth and notoriety, the Foxfire program still represents a “learner-centered, community-based educational approach [which] is advocated through both a regional demonstration site grounded in Southern Appalachian culture that gave rise to Foxfire, and a national program of teacher training and support that promotes a sense of place and appreciation of local people, community, and culture as essential educational tools.”

From this explanation, it is clear that the Foxfire program has retained its original experiential and creative philosophy. Additionally, Wigginton's program outlines practical methods to engage with the local community. Wigginton firmly believes in the mutually beneficial relationship between local culture and school curricula.

Eliot Wigginton initiated the Foxfire program in 1966 during his first year of teaching high school English. Wigginton reports that his students’ lack of engagement with material left him desperate for a new curriculum model and learning environment. The design of the Foxfire program began when Wigginton asked his students what they wanted to learn about. This initial discussion led to the development of a curriculum with a focus on a student-generated magazine involving interviews with elderly residents in the area. As the Foxfire pamphlet explains,

At a time when the “hillbilly” stereotype was a target of ridicule, those first articles about the people of Southern Appalachia gave a whole new light to the determination, faith, and joy of living that this vanishing mountain culture should be remembered for. Those early articles about local elders and their way of life struck a chord with the community and the public at large, and the fledgling magazine began to grow.
The project gained momentum as the students interviewed local residents and their published magazine became recognized as meaningful and necessary to the community.

Since its initiation, there are eleven primary principles upon which the Foxfire model centers both its curriculum in Rabun County, as well as its teacher training and local history museum work. These guiding values serve as a reminder of Wigginton's initial project. The core principles are as follows:

1. The work teachers and learners do together is infused from the beginning with learner choice, design, and revision.
2. The academic integrity of the work teachers and learners do together is clear.
3. The role of teacher is that of facilitator and collaborator.
4. The work is characterized by active learning.
5. Peer teaching, small group work, and teamwork are all consistent features of classroom activities.
6. There is an audience beyond the teacher for learner work.
7. New activities spiral gracefully out of the old, incorporating lessons learned from past experiences, building on skills and understandings that can bow be amplified.
8. Reflection is an essential activity that takes place at key points throughout the work.
9. Connections between the classroom world, the surrounding communities, and the world beyond the community are clear.
10. Imagination and creativity are encouraged in the completion of learning activities.
11. The work teachers and learners do together included rigorous ongoing assessment and evaluation.

Wigginton, who acknowledges that his curriculum design and teaching practices are reminiscent of John Dewey, carefully advises that this program is a “way of thinking rather than a way of doing.” Wigginton, as a place-based educator and advocate, articulates that the Foxfire model is supported by an educational worldview that extends beyond the activity of creating a local magazine. There is a clear value-system apparent in Wigginton’s program that promotes the use of local people, history, and community under a particular pedagogical framework. An understanding
and belief in this ‘way of thinking’ will help in the development of effective place-based curricula.

The Foxfire program defines the important relationship between the student and teacher. The first three core principles clarify that the curriculum should include choice for a student, where the instructor allows for student “design and revision” of the curriculum. As the Foxfire program includes people and material culture, the “text” is dynamic and thus, the curriculum must be flexible. Wigginton explains, “The teacher needs to take advantage of the moments when there is readiness. The teacher has to watch for opportunities and create opportunities when the kids don’t ask.” Wigginton implies that although subject matter and sequence are curricular variables, a teacher must be constantly in tune with students and adapt the curriculum accordingly. The teacher as “facilitator and collaborator” provides students with incrementally less structure as students themselves develop an understanding of what they must engage with and question. Foxfire’s explanation of the student-teacher relationship hinges upon the pedagogical belief that a student must be an active participant in the learning process. The teacher’s responsibility is to achieve underlying lessons, by providing a framework for students to ask the essential questions themselves. Wigginton argues that this process makes schooling and schoolwork meaningful and authentic for all involved.

The Foxfire framework employs the local, as it is conducive to pursuing the sought after student–teacher working relationship that includes mutual cooperation and conversation. In using a project-based, local history curriculum, which incorporates the student’s individual learning style with ample room for student
choice, the subject matter is intended to be interesting to the learner. Wigginton clearly identifies the teacher-student partnership when he claims, “The process, as I see it, is putting kids in a situation where, in doing something real, the opportunity to do academic skills arises on a regular basis and the teacher knowing the academic agenda well enough that he or she sees nothing but opportunity for accomplishing it as kids do their work.” The teacher, therefore, does not have to convince students of the importance and meaning of the subject matter.

Though the pedagogical principles of Foxfire can be applied to many different contexts and disciplines, Wigginton’s aim, as an English teacher was to “breathe life into the language arts curriculum and create a more appropriate motivational construct for having kids acquire skills. While the product is a means to this end, the process produces more than a magazine or a concert.” The Foxfire magazine, which continues today and has been compiled into many volumes, contains interviews with local residents. The students are involved in every aspect of the magazine project. Each article’s format includes an introduction written by the student describing their impression of their assigned community member and the salient theme of their article. Subsequently, the student presents the interview in narrative form from a first person perspective. In reviewing the articles, an impressive level of understanding and compassion between these students and elderly citizens is conveyed through the text. In writing the articles, the students must determine what makes the interviewee a unique individual, what they have contributed to the community, and what is particularly interesting and distinct about their story.

The example of Casi Best, a student in Rabun County, and her article on
Sammy Green, demonstrates the merits of cultural journalism. In her interview introduction, Best explains, “It’s people like Sammy Green that I admire for their strength and faith. These people have a strong impact on my life as an individual. Showing me that no matter what your personal trials are, it is more of a blessing to give, rather than to receive.”

Best’s article from the perspective of Sammy Green is quite poignant, as she articulates the spirit and perspective of a 76-year-old man, describing his childhood adventures and his vision of how circumstances have changed over time. At the end of this article, there is an unusual addendum. Best writes that when she had finished her interview with Green, he revealed that because he had no remaining family and little resources, he was concerned that he would not have a proper burial. Best explains, “We (students) have decided to try to raise the money to bury Sammy. We have taken this on as a class project and have gotten other classes at our school involved in our effort to help Sammy.”

Because of this assignment and its portrait of Sammy Green’s situation, other community members donated a headstone and burial plot. The learning involved with cultural journalism and the creation of the Foxfire magazine allows students to carry out historical research, explore historic pictures, look through archives, conduct oral histories, and develop writing skills. Furthermore, in the use of the local, personal meaning can result from the projects, and students’ vision of their present position in their community can change in profound ways.

The specific requirements for student learning in this type of program include both individual assignments and group work. The magazine project and oral history projects “demonstrate that nonindividually centered approaches to moral education,
creativity, and intelligence are essential aspects” to Foxfire and other types of place-based education.\textsuperscript{10} The Foxfire students are perpetually asked to inquire what and who sustains their community. In contrast, Wigginton’s design facilitates the identification of communities that must find commonalities amongst themselves, recognizing a partnership and group connection. In exploring the specificities of local place, students also become more conscious about the similarities and diversity between and amongst different geographic places. Collectively and individually, the students make the history of their community an integral part of their own lives, determining what “viable aspects of the community of memory will they be able to pass on to the next generation.”\textsuperscript{11} Wigginton believes that the embedded student-to-student relationship helps to promote a cooperative classroom community as well. This mutual accountability and reliance also enhances the expectations for quality of work.

As identified in the eleven core principles, the Foxfire program addresses the specifics of the teacher-student relationship, the role and expectations of the students, as well as the connection between school assignments, lessons, and the local community. Although the Foxfire program’s magazine articles and community issues relate to typically rural, agricultural history and current events, the intergenerational dialogue and celebration of community transcends the specificities of the location. Wigginton explains, “Students form the relationship in a way that allows the older members of the community to tell their stories or to share their special craft with dignity and a sense that they have useful knowledge, they are not being put into a position where they feel they must apologize for being out of date and thus an
anachronism in the modern world. The face-to-face dialogue and interaction requires a high level of respect and reflection for all involved. For students, their role in the interview process gives them a purpose and clearly positions them within their community, as important stakeholders. For the elderly, their stories are not only acknowledged, but also celebrated. For teachers, this process and product oriented curriculum allows for the development of academic skills, as well as student engagement.

Many place-based educators and theorists have offered critiques of the Foxfire Fund Inc. since its conception. While the Foxfire program can be praised for its clear goals in community engagement and effective model, there are also cultural assumptions and unacknowledged components of the program. Certainly, there is a value system imparted to students through this program. That is to say, it is critical to explain that the social realities in Rabun County, Georgia are not universal. This type of place-based education, if carried out well, initiates a dialogue about being careful consumers of knowledge, conscious inhabitants of place, and aware participants in our own education. As this model is a “way of thinking rather than a way of doing,” it offers a particular methodology to better understand the present, engage students in the development of basic intellectual habits, and to better define a community of individuals who can be connected to one another. Although the Foxfire model does assume values of preserving a certain type of folk culture, its mission is to place learning within the community and to provide methods and tools for teachers and students to do so regardless of the demographic or geographic location.

It is important for instructors in any program to have a comprehensive
understanding of the cultural values of their respective communities. Wigginton attempts to clarify the intended purposes of his program as he writes, “I’m not as drawn to magazines as to the ways teachers are wrestling with more complicated experiential philosophy.” This explains that in understanding the most basic principles of the Foxfire program, the offshoots of this model can be adapted to fit other settings, rural and urban, politically stable and unstable, culturally homogenous or diverse. The Foxfire program structure has inspired other educators to incorporate its principles. For example, in one school in Alaska, students studied the smoked fish industry, started their own business, and have traveled to Japan. In an Oregon school, students have developed a trail network on an adjacent nature reserve. Teachers, or collaborators as Wigginton would see them, have used their own neighborhoods to integrate lessons of ecology and environmental studies. In both these examples, the projects were student initiated and involved the local resources available to the community.

Wigginton and the Foxfire program articulate critical place-based education principles, which have led to a lasting, successful place-based program. In my own project, I want students to understand their position within their community, how they can contribute to their community, and that their schoolwork can be an extension of their life outside of school. Beyond the magazine component of the Foxfire program, the mission and expectations of the teacher, student, and community stakeholder offer an important model in terms of the importance of flexibility, experience, and conversation. The Foxfire Program cites Rabun Country resident, Aunt Addie Norton, as she espouses a quite wise idiom,
I tell you one thing, if you learn it by yourself, if you have to get down and dig for it, it never leaves you. It stays there as long as you live, because you had to dig it out of the mud before you learned what it was.16

In exploring this particular model, as well as in acknowledging its cultural assumptions, it is my aim to implement some of the essential lessons from the Foxfire program, and to do as Aunt Addie Norton instructs, to test out these theories as I develop my own teaching practices.

Case Study #2: Program CO-SEED

The Community-Based School Environmental Education program, referred to as CO-SEED, demonstrates useful techniques and methodologies related to place-based education theory. CO-SEED is a placed-based education model developed by some of the most prolific and active educators and theorists in the present place-based education movement today, such as David Sobel and Delia Clark. Further, the effects of this program implemented in different schools reveal the myriad of variables and obstacles that educators confront when place-based theoretical principles are put into practice. The CO-SEED model, which operates through the Antioch New England Institute, a consulting and community outreach department of Antioch University New England, helps individual schools adopt the program over a course of three years. An analysis of the various elements of this model provides insight into Sobel’s and other educators’ visions regarding the utility and effectiveness of place-based education. Additionally, the CO-SEED program supports the choices I have made in the development of my thesis project.
The program began in an early version in Atrim, NH in 1997. David Sobel writes that the CO-SEED program originated from an attempt at creating a partnership between the Great Brook Middle School, in Antrim, NH, Antioch University New England, and a local nature preserve, which needed help with the creation of a trail guide. As a teacher at Antioch graduate school and an Atrim resident, Sobel explains,

For [my] Environmental Interpretation course… I structured the course around a real problem… I wanted the students to use local stories to decipher the unique cultural and natural history of this edge-of-town farm that stretched from Main Street down to the floodplain forest along the Contoocook River. The final product would have a real audience of community members rather than just me as their professor. And so, we began to interview community elders who could tell us how this place had shaped their lives.17

This initial description of community, cooperative learning, and joint problem solving is a critical thread in the CO-SEED program. Over the course of three years, a curriculum was developed centering on the mutually reciprocal relationship amongst the environmental education center, Great Brook Middle School, Antioch graduate students, and the nature preserve. The success of this partnership has led to the development of other partnerships in different rural and urban settings on the east coast. Although the CO-SEED program began as a single programmatic effort in Atrim, NH, the primary goals in community education and environmental improvement, with multiple levels of support and investment, still remain even as the model has grown and developed.

From its initiation, the CO-SEED model has had a defined structure and protocol, while maintaining a focus on creating a school-wide curriculum that is unique and appropriate to each school site’s specific location. Sobel explains,
Though each of the sites has its own unique characteristics... The core principles for how to move forward with our brand of school reform, community development and environmental resource protection are consistent across sites as well.” The three guidelines of “academic achievement, social capital, and environmental quality,” shape the structure of this program. The CO-SEED consultants from Antioch select partner schools based on the preexistence of strong school administration support where there is a collective group of teachers who are invested in the venture and committed to generate a dialogue between the community and the school. The developers of the CO-SEED program provide extensive guidelines for school-wide initiatives, as this program provides financial resources and outside experts to create successful place-centered schools.

There are five primary steps that have been designed to ensure positive relationships among the students, teachers, and other participants in a CO-SEED project. In the partnership between Antioch and the school system, Antioch helps schools obtain funding for projects and provides great organizational support. First, a group of leaders comprised of teachers and administrators, community members, a facilitator from Antioch New England, and other organizations form a "SEED" team. The purpose of this team is to maintain the mission and long-term energy for the project. The next step involves a “community vision to action forum,” which provides a space for a conversation about the “collaboration between schools and their communities, to enhance communication between town committees, community activists and curriculum design at the schools, and to prioritize and launch action steps.” This conversation brings people face-to-face, establishing for all the
stakeholders the fundamental principles on which the CO-SEED curriculum will be implemented. A third component of the CO-SEED model is the introduction of a “local community learning center representative,” often from a non-profit, environmental, or historical organization. This representative spends a minimum of two days a week in the school, as an additional assistant to the teacher, contributing to the development and implementation of curricula. The participation of this community member offers support for teachers, particularly when new material and planning is increased. As the Antioch University New England is a primary facilitator of this project, they offer additional experience and a working relationship with the public school as well. Lastly, the CO-SEED program provides professional development opportunities for teachers. This aspect of the program has created a supportive network of teachers who can rely on one another for opinions and advice. The methodology and components of the place-based education model work towards the creation of an academic program that focuses on the collective strengths and vision of people in a community, as well as local issues that need to be addressed.

The CO-SEED model presents useful lessons in implementing place-based curricula. An important concept is that pedagogical changes and transformations in school culture often occur slowly. The introduction of both outside, part-time educators and graduate students addresses the need for added support during a time of curricula development and transition. The CO-SEED consultants aid schools in their allocation of small grants for specific projects that individual schools adopt. Thus, time and money, which are rare commodities in schools today, are made available through this program. The CO-SEED model explains that financial and professional
support and organized dialogues between different stakeholders in a community can help in the conceptualization and eventual success of a place-based, project-based curricula. 

While the CO-SEED model embodies important underlying values of community participation and place-based schooling, it also represents the effort of leading educators to tackle, in practice, what many feel are gaps in the place-based education movement to this point, particularly in regards to standards-based assessment. Exemplifying this effort is the Place-based Education Evaluation Collaborative (PEEC) who describe themselves as a group of five programs and one foundation that work together to improve their programs through individual and cross-program evaluation, to identify, develop, and disseminate evaluation techniques, tools, and approaches that can be applied to other place-based education providers; and contribute to the research base underlying the field of place-based education and school change.²³

The programs included in this collaboration are CO-SFED, the Forest for Every Classroom, The Litzinger Road Ecology Center, the Sustainable Schools Project, A Trail to Every Classroom, and the New Hampshire Charitable Foundation. PEEC strives to systematically and comparatively document changes in schools over time due to place-based education programs. They acknowledge the need for quantitative and qualitative program assessment, personal testimony, and results that are based on longevity. Sobel describes the CO-SEED mission as “using the local community and environment as a starting point to teach concepts in language arts, mathematics, social studies, science and other subjects across the curriculum” in order to enhance student achievement and engagement.²⁴ The CO-SEED model seeks to address standards-based achievement, in addition to the “depth” versus breadth” vision of place-based
education. This is a critical dimension to the CO-SEED model, as it seeks to demonstrate that place-based learning initiatives are not essentially incompatible with standardized test-centered schools, but instead can be mutually beneficial as the CO-SEED program aims to improve test scores and as the state-mandated tests offer guidance in the development of the place-based school curricula.

CO-SEED also attempts to address the assumption that place-based education is only appropriate to certain, often rural, locations. The Beebe Environmental Health and Science School in Malden, Massachusetts is one example which the CO-SEED leaders reference as testimony to the applicability of CO-SEED principles to both urban and rural settings. Before forging the CO-SEED-Beebe partnership, the magnet theme coordinator, Robin Jorgenson, explained in the application to become a CO-SEED school. “We’re an environmental magnet school in name, but not in practice, and we’d like [CO-SEED] to help us with the practice.”

Malden’s demographic and urban landscape is emphasized in the literature produced by PEEC and CO-SEED. The Beebe example represents a break from the stereotypical notion that place-based education programs are only viable in pristine, rural conditions or as rooted in rural folklore, such as the Foxfire Program. During the community forum night, as part of the CO-SEED protocol, the mayor of Malden, Richard Howard, elaborated upon the notable benefits of this program, particularly through linking business and sustainable practices with schools. The CO-SEED model emphasizes that urban areas are not limited in the potential for local environmental education projects or for student achievement or engagement in this area. Since 2000, the PEEC results and MCAS scores indicate that the students at the Beebe magnet school have outpaced the state.
scores in math and science. Thus, the Beebe school substantiates both the underlying pedagogy and the specific methods that are used in the CO-SEED system, with the goal of supporting schools and their communities, enhancing “the synergy between active learning, and smart growth... building bridges between school improvements, community vitality, and environmental quality.”

The Beebe School’s partnership with CO-SEED has provided the school with financial and pedagogical assistance to enhance student engagement and learning through “real-life” experiences and subject matter. The Beebe mission statement explains,

Through the use of challenging curriculum and exemplary teaching practices, the mission of the Beebe School is to create a community of environmentally aware learners and future citizens who have respect for themselves and for the environment and community in which they live. The accomplishment of our mission demands close cooperation among the Beebe community, businesses, governmental agencies and institutions of higher learning.

The mission statement prioritizes teacher quality and student learning. With these values in the forefront, the use of the local environment becomes a method to achieve the underlying pedagogical goals. Since 2000, the Beebe school has developed partnerships with Zoo New England, Antioch, YMCA Earth Service Corps, and the city of Malden, amongst many other institutions and agencies. Each year the school adopts a different school-wide focus, while still maintaining the projects of the previous year’s program, such as a butterfly garden and a recycling program. In the partnership with Zoo New England, students have studied animal behavior and subsequently designed enrichment toys for the animals. One year, the Beebe school’s focus was “Malden: Our History, Our Environment, Our Health.” As the students learned about the ecology and characteristics of a nearby pond, park, and brownfields
redevelopment location, they also created informational pamphlets and field guides, explaining the important scientific characteristics and social history related to these local sites. The students also conducted a community survey and data analysis of the current use of the park by school families. Across grades and subjects, teachers used this as a unifying theme for the school and the curricula. From this description of the Beebe school program, “the diversity of partners, neighborhoods, cultural communities, as well as the nearness-at-hand of resources,” and effective implementation of theoretical principles, make Beebe school a successful place-based learning program site.  

In 2000, working with the city of Malden, the Beebe school created a year-long curriculum related to recycling. As the Beebe school includes grades kindergarten through grade eight, students participated in different ways and at different levels. In working with the CO-SFFD staff and Beebe teacher Robin Jorgensen, classes organized and orchestrated a school-wide, recycling system, which cut the school waste in half. In the spring, the students held a recycling fair for all community members. This culminating fair demonstrated the utility of this curriculum. As one eighth-grader wrote, “We actually get to do something that people other than our parents will see. It doesn’t just go to our parents and then to the fridge…we are the role models.”

The Beebe school students have impacted their school and community in a tangible way, while simultaneously improving their test scores. In addition to the successful projects and positive changes in student behavior observed at the Beebe school since the CO-SEED model was initiated in 1999, the Beebe students have
outscored the school district in math and science. Since the beginning of the CO-SEED model, there has been school wide improvement in math, physical science, life science, and technology/engineering categories of the MCAS. Particularly in grade eight, Beebe students outperformed both the Malden district and the state, connecting the effectiveness of the CO-SEED model for older students. Student performance at the Beebe School has been carefully documented as a result of CO-SEED’s conscious efforts to develop relationships with schools that exist in a range of geographic and population areas. The CO-SEED leaders have prioritized the documentation of quantitative data collection and standards-based program assessments. Previous to the CO-SEED program, the Beebe School’s test scores were at or below both state and district levels for all subjects, indicating a significant improvement, particularly in the math and science categories on the MCAS. This positive change provides evidence that state-dictated performance standards are not incompatible with place-based learning initiatives and projects. In fact, the Beebe School-CO-SEED model demonstrates that standardized tests help to focus the place-based curriculum and concurrently, the curriculum helps integrate state-mandated capabilities and increase test achievement.

The PEEC report on the Bradford, Vermont elementary school, found that by the third year of CO-SEED’s work with the school, the desired school change and overall positive feeling towards the program were not as apparent as they were at the Beebe School. Bradford seemed to be “teetering on the edge, but [had] not yet fully crossed a “tipping point” toward the long term sustainability of place-based education.” Although the CO-SEED funding lasts for three years, often resulting in
a self-sufficient program by the third year, the Bradford school struggled to fully make CO-SEED a seamless, integral part of the school’s identity. One potential reason for this is that the preexisting school culture was deeply incongruous with CO-SEED ideas. Perhaps, the place-based education theories espoused were inconsistent with the preexisting educational philosophies at the school.

The Bradford example shows that at each site, people, interpersonal power dynamics, educational philosophies, and previous educational experiences are slippery aspects that influence school change. As Peec consultant Michael Duffin observes, “Bradford struggled with its identity and purpose, and has suffered many transitions of membership and leadership.” Duffin continues to quote a school board member as stating, “I’m an advocate for place-based education, but it has its place. We can’t have a full curriculum based on place-based education. We just can’t.”

This comment reveals a deep misunderstanding of the full-school, interdisciplinary, experiential learning model outlined through the CO-SEED principles. The idea that a full curriculum focused on local place is an impossibility underscores the board member’s misunderstandings related to CO-SEED’s mission and place-based education. The values of a program like CO-SEED, despite its adaptable features, contain certain underlying assumptions regarding the importance of education to a community, the appropriate funding necessary to make schools work, and the “learning by doing” philosophy. Further, all stakeholders must identify with and understand these connections and this educational belief system. The lesson gleaned from the Bradford example is that in creating school change around place-based education, an overall consensus regarding the terms and values of these changes is
necessary and critical for school-wide success.

David Sobel acknowledges CO-SEED’s participation in the conversations regarding community and education that has existed for centuries. He situates CO-SEED in a historical context, as he rhetorically questions,

So are we really doing anything all that different? Basically, I think we’re talking the essential truths of Progressive education and melding them with the new insights and understanding... [It is about] a pedagogical orientation that reconnects children with the natural world and their local communities. As we come to understand the interplay between the quality of education, the economic life of the community, and the integrity of the environment.37

Sobel locates the goals of CO-SEED as part of an ongoing tradition and vocabulary. Although Sobel and others readily recognize this, it is important that in the implementation of these principles, the various stakeholders acknowledge the historical underpinnings of these curricular choices for optimal program development and ultimate success.

Place-based education’s emphasis on community partnerships indicates the importance of developing relationships where many people from different positions and vantage points are invested in student engagement and participation. Within this framework, there are multiple layers of interactions between teachers, students, administrators, environmental educators, and other community partners, higher educational institutions, and non-profits, all of who rely on each other. As place-based theorist Fontaine writes, “My vision for the next five years is to see education outside of the walls of the school and to see the walls of the school transformed. I want to see kids do something important for themselves, for the community and the environment.”38 These connections amongst the school, community, local place, and local environment are all important variables that are often overlooked, hard to
convey, or misunderstood.

A final component and representative dimension of the CO-SEED model, one that I particularly identify with, is the inclusion of an Antioch graduate student intern at these various school sites. The entire CO-SEED model began as a way for Sobel to engage his own graduate students, future educators, in “real-life” work. He explains the benefits of including an internship program concurrently with regular classes as,

It closes the gap in the scientific method- students can hypothesize and design investigations in graduate courses, conduct the research in their internship classroom, then examine the results and redesign the experiment in the courses. This cycle mitigates against ivory-towerism and fulfills Thoreau’s suggestions that it’s important both to see castles in the air and to build foundations underneath them.  

This call to bridge the “gap in the scientific method,” applies not only for students striving towards professional education degrees, but to the younger students at the CO-SEED schools, the current CO-SEED teachers, as well as to Sobel and the CO-SEED consultants themselves. The CO-SEED model is founded on the historical connection between community and school and is sensitive to the current needs of the extended local community. As CO-SEED also focuses on long-term program sustainability and development, it allows for ongoing evaluation and adaptation. The CO-SEED model values the pedagogical technique of exploring and developing educational theories and testing and observing those theories in practice.

Case Study #3: Learning with Public Purpose

The Learning with Public Purpose (LPP) curriculum exists to help schools develop rural community-school partnerships and strong academic programs. Funded through the Corporation for National and Community Service and Rural School and
Community Trust, the LPP curriculum has been officially implemented and adopted by eight schools in rural communities across the country, including Maine, Louisiana, Kentucky, and Vermont. This curriculum provides basic structures, materials, and guidelines for how to support mutually beneficial and meaningful community-school relationships. As Johnson describes, “Learning with a Public Purpose... implies outcomes. Using knowledge and skills to serve the community.” This mission helps “rural schools and communities get better together,” incorporating a methodology that focuses on problem solving and understanding processes for community change through student-identified, community projects. The LPP model informs this study in its approach to the practical planning and implementation of place-based learning, its pedagogical framework, as well as the complex and dramatic effects of this work.

The Basics

As an “answer to simultaneously improving rural schools and communities,” the LPP program works extensively to train teachers in the facilitation of place-based learning, with a focus on addressing problems in the community and identifying the resources available to address them. The LPP program guides and nurtures teachers’ own ideas about the potential opportunities for community-based learning, which the teachers then develop in their own classrooms. The Rural Trust Foundation, through the LPP program, provides several different forms of professional development opportunities, including local and regional meetings, as well as summer institutes, which draw from a broader geographical area. The summer institutes are held at both regional and national levels, allowing for different schools to share ideas and learn
from each other. Additionally, individual schools attend with multiple representatives, including students and community members who join in the training sessions as well. This structure creates a national network of like-minded educators and students from diverse backgrounds who learn from each other. The importance of teacher education reflects a LPP goal to “develop teacher and community fellows who collaborate to design and implement learning experiences that are academically rigorous and address important community issues.”

In addition to creating a community of place-based educators and schools, LPP provides organizational tools to develop curricula. In the LPP planning guide, several salient features are revealed, which indicate the underlying focus of LPP, further substantiating how place-based learning is defined. The planning guide requires the educator or team of educators to document their specific project objective, including the number and type of students, teachers, and community members that are expected to engage in this project. The LPP projects must enhance or serve the local place in some tangible way. The importance of community service and involvement of multiple stakeholders are also vital components of the LPP program. In order for the project to be approved for funding through the Rural Trust, the teacher must not only describe in detail the logistics of the project, but also identify the explicit plan of community development and improvement.

Additionally, the LPP planning guide requires a teacher to plan a curriculum which supports a student’s learning by building upon lessons and expectations, “envisioning the role of teachers and others in supporting the learner’s development and providing support structures to get to that next stage or level.” Through the LPP
model, a teacher must articulate how the community-school project will address student learning and engagement. As the students incrementally develop and meet the expectations of these projects, the teachers’ facilitation and instruction becomes less direct, as “finally the learner is able to complete the task or master the concepts independently.” Thus, through LPP’s focus on place and an underlying pedagogy that is student-learning centered, teachers create effective and sound curricula.

The specifics of the LPP program, as indicated through the planning guide, show the expectations and guidelines from a teacher’s perspective. These projects are by nature interdisciplinary, often requiring a team of teachers, facilitators, and community organizations to participate. Above all else, the LPP program provides a helpful structure for teachers to initiate programs, requiring goal-oriented curriculum development and program accountability to students and the community. The LPP guidelines and the Rural Trust mission for the program establish a mindfulness regarding curriculum development, the relationship between the school and community, and a commitment to helping schools and communities work together. Ultimately, the LPP program encourages questions and regular feedback from students, teachers, and the community for ongoing evaluation and improvement. Thus, a LPP project becomes a synthesis of student and teacher conversations and engagement, an exploration of how change happens within a community, and a group effort as to how to best carry out this vision.

**Learning with a Public Purpose Enacted**

Since 2003, in rural Jackman, ME, the Forest Hills Consolidated School district
has developed effective curricula as a result of the financial and organizational structure provided by the Learning with Public Purpose program. The Jackman district has struggled with economic and population decline over the past twenty years. In regards to the educational system, from 1981 to 2001, only eight percent of Forest Hills High School students went on to pursue higher education and returned to the area upon graduation. This generational retention issue, initiated queries as to how to use the school structure and curriculum to inspire student connection with Jackman, “helping to ensure a viable, productive community for the future.”

In 2006, through the Rural Trust, the middle school received a $2,400.00 to create a local history curriculum using the LPP model.

In following the LPP guidelines, the teachers articulated their mission as, “How can we assist Middle School students to understand the history of our town, and help create a permanent record of it for future generations?” This guiding question led to the initiation of a relationship between the middle school and the Jackman-Moose River Historical Society. After learning about local history, as well as instruction regarding audio-visual technology, the student work generated a collection of graphic and film recordings of interviews, regarding important locations and events in Jackman history. Students researched the history of local buildings, cemeteries, specific artifacts, and residents. The results of this research are preserved in approximately 30 audio and graphic DVD’s and CD’s.

The opening exhibition day of the local history projects at the museum attracted the largest number of visitors than any other day in the museum’s history. Following the LPP guide, supplementary lessons and assignments were coordinated with the community-based project to
further academic growth and learning. The success of this project shows potential promise in addressing the retention of young people in the area, as students see the value of their place and become invested in its present and future well-being. The program also enabled students, teachers, and the community to appreciate “Jackman's expansive historical and natural resources” by actively involving everyone in the discovery of their community.  

Another rural school, which participates in the LPP program, is Bogalusa High School in Louisiana. As in Jackman, the first LPP project was a local history project and involved the history of “school pride” at Bogalusa High School, specifically the history of the school’s football team. The teachers focused on the school’s football team history in order to develop historical inquiries. The students interviewed Bogalusa high school graduates, former players, and coaches. The project assignments included oral history interviews, the development of a local history timeline, a biographical booklet on certain community members, and a final open house at the school for all those who had participated in the project. The history of racially segregated schooling and subsequent integration of schools is central to Bogalusa history. The goal of this curriculum was to investigate “school pride,” and the school’s history in relationship to the effects of the Brown v. Board of Education case on the educational system in Bogalusa and the United States more generally. As students interviewed elderly Bogalusa residents and their ideas about their own high school experiences, particularly as it related to the game of football. The students, with teachers as guides, learned first-hand the history of their community and how it was connected to the Bogalusa high school, as well as national events and trends over
The Louisiana public school standards are far more extensive and rigid than those in Maine, where local culture is part of state curricular expectations. As Margaret Maclean of the Rural Trust explains that the Louisiana public schools that are involved in LPP will often teach to the yearly administered state test, but following it, will use local place as part of the curriculum.\textsuperscript{51} This reveals the challenges of integrating place-based learning curricula along with other demands of the school year. However, as LPP facilitates a dialogue amongst schools in different geographic locations, providing a network of support and available suggestions, perceived limitations and challenges are often solved. Overall, the LPP program offers assistance and provides structure and techniques for creating place-based projects, such as in Bogalusa.

Connections Between Places

In 2005, Hurricane Katrina significantly damaged the Bogalusa community in Louisiana. Given its rural location and low population, disaster response was slow and sparse. In regards to the Bogalusa schools, buildings and school materials were destroyed. The attention to this area was quite minimal considering the impact Katrina had on this community. However, one community did understand and address the needs of the Bogalusa community as a result of previous connections, despite their geographic distance. This community was Jackman, Maine. The response of the Jackman schools to the Bogalusa destruction provides an example of the LPP program in action, as well as the compounded benefits of this relationship.
In 2003, several representatives from the Bogalusa school had attended the LPP summer institutes in Maine, where they had met and worked with the Jackman team. The members of the Jackman community leadership team, an integral part of the LPP program, saw a logical and natural opportunity to offer help to another rural community through the school curriculum. Comprised of students, teachers, and community members, this leadership team realized they could utilize their own community’s natural resources and ship a load of lumber to Bogalusa for the purposes of rebuilding. As Julie Bartsh of the Rural Community Trust writes of this effort, “[This response to the Katrina hurricane] wasn’t just Jackman being nice and sending lumber. It’s about a partnership between these communities.” It is apparent that the groundwork had already been laid for this project: community learning with a purpose. For the Jackman community, this project was an extension of their previous work. The raising of money for the lumber was a community-wide rallying point and educational endeavor. Additionally, students described the multifaceted dimensions of this lumber project in a documentary film.

Since the initial shipment of lumber to Bogalusa, the relationship between these schools from these two geographically distant places has developed in significant ways. Following the shipment of 40,000 dollars worth of lumber, students and teachers have made visits to each other’s schools. While in Bogalusa, Jackman students visited civil rights memorials, discussed the implications of integration of schools, and saw first hand the damaging effects of the Katrina. While in Maine, the Bogalusa students attended a college fair and reviewed the history of Maine’s economy. One student from Bogalusa has explained that his attendance at the college
fair during his visit to Maine inspired him to apply to Brown University, although he
had never before considered applying to college.54 The LPP program has provided a
structure to engage both Bogalusa and Jackman students in conversations about each
other’s communities. As the Rural Trust further explains,

The students [use] these dialogues to voice their hopes for the future and
identify specific projects the two schools will collaborate on in the rebuilding of
Bogalusa. Teachers [exchange] curricular lessons around history, culture, race
relations, and other academic topics. Community members [discuss] strategies
for addressing issues facing their communities including economic decline,
race, and poverty.55

Having recognized the value and importance of their own place through the
development of school curricula, an application to a larger framework became a
natural progression. In regards to local circumstances, issues, and histories, Louisiana
and Maine are quite different. Yet, students from these communities were able to
bond in effective and meaningful ways and to exemplify how connections between
place, school, and community can have academic rewards and serve a greater purpose
as well.

Perspective

The Bogalusa-Jackman partnership demonstrates a systemic utilization of place
for schooling and the potential benefits that can follow. There are several critical
aspects of their relationship, which provide guidance and insight into the effects of
place-based learning. In addition to the curricula developed in the Bogalusa and
Jackman schools and learning about their respective communities, there is also an
articulation of certain important dimensions of place. A comparison between these
two schools delineates similarities and differences in how schools and communities
are organized. Thus, this program allows schools not only to foster vital connections
within their immediate community, but also to form relationships with other
communities as well. It is often challenging to determine if students and communities
do in fact change from place-based learning initiatives. The relationship that has
formed between Bogalusa and Jackman from the “seeds” of the LPP model has
enhanced student and community engagement and social capital, lending credence to
this educational model. As Johnson explains, “When student learning contributes to
the larger public purpose of the community, young people develop the habits of
citizenship and service while also deepening their understanding of knowledge in
core subjects. The community reaps the benefits of what young people can
accomplish when they are engaged.”56 The Jackman-Bogalusa exemplifies the
potential benefits of place-based learning in the achievement of a purposeful and
meaningful education.

Case Studies Reviewed

In evaluating the utility of place-based education theory and practice, it is
necessary to look specifically at the intent and methods of programs that have
implemented these principles in school settings. A review of these examples serves as
testimony to the effectiveness and value of this educational approach. I have chosen
these case studies as they highlight different dimensions of place-based education and
underscore several key components. The Foxfire Inc. Program, the CO-SEED model,
and the Learning with Public Purpose program, all emphasize the need for
institutional support, teacher networks, and financial aid, as well as that place-based
learning is at its best when it is a valued and embedded part of school culture. The success of programs such as these requires adjustment, thoughtfulness, and time to take root. A comparison of the three models shows that place-based learning can incorporate many disciplines in a variety of community settings. The CO-SEED example documents the standardized achievement gains as a result of the place-based projects, while the Foxfire program highlights the use of cultural history as a method of curriculum renewal and student engagement. The Learning with Public Purpose program demonstrates how using a place-based educational framework can bridge and heal communities in ways that had previously been thought inconceivable.

In building my own place-based curriculum, these examples present evidence of place-based theory in motion. The programs provide credibility to place-based education theory. Thus, as I have explored the historical roots of place and schooling, I have also seen how this educational philosophy has been applied in real contexts.

Next, I shall embark on the third dimension of this investigation, to test my own interpretation of place-based learning principles in my own place, Middletown, Connecticut.

Notes

2. Ibid.
9 Ibid.
11 Ibid., 188.
17 David Sobel, *Place-Based Education: Connecting Classrooms and Communities* (Great Barrington: Orion Society, 2004), 45.
18 Ibid., 70
19 Ibid., 38.
20 Ibid., 57.
22 David Sobel, *Place-Based Education: Connecting Classrooms and Communities*, 53.
24 David Sobel, *Place-Based Education: Connecting Classrooms and Communities*, 56.
26 David Sobel, *Place-Based Education: Connecting Classrooms and Communities*, 49.
Robin Jorgenson in David Sobel, *Place-Based Education: Connecting Classrooms and Communities*, 49.


Ibid.

David Sobel, *Place-Based Education: Connecting Classrooms and Communities*, 76.

Ibid., 77.


David Sobel, *Place-Based Education: Connecting Classrooms and Communities*, 78.

Robin Jorgenson in David Sobel, *Place-Based Education: Connecting Classrooms and Communities*, 59.


Matt Dubel and David Sobel, “Place-Based Teacher Education,” in *Place-Based Education in the Global Age*, ed. David Gruenewald and Gregory Smith (New York: Lawrence Erlbaum Assoc., 2008), 317.

Carla Fontaine in David Sobel, *Place-Based Education: Connecting Classrooms and Communities*, 53.

Matt Dubel and David Sobel, “Place-Based Teacher Education,” in *Place Based Education in the Global Age*, 316.


Mary MacLean, phone interview by Julia Kleederman, December 2, 2008.

46 Ibid.
49 Ibid.
51 Mary MacLean, phone interview by Julia Kleiderman, December 2, 2008.
Student Reflection #3

Gus

I really enjoyed the lesson on reading photography. I really feel like I can look at a photograph and see more than if I just flipped through it. A picture isn’t just a quick capture of an image; it’s also an open door into another subject of history, stories, life, and people. During the lesson I had the quote from Let Us Now Praise Famous Men in my head. Agee writes, “The photographs are illustrative, they and the text are coequal, mutually independent, and fully collaborative.” This quote speaks to the language of the pictures and the text. Without the text, you wouldn’t get titles or dates that give essential information about the picture. And without the picture, the text reads by itself without the other to help show the true meaning. In all, I feel that I can look beyond the flat surface of an image and instead search for clues and details that help add to a hidden story or history. If you look deeply into a photograph you learn more than just the black and white idea, you see things that are captured in that moment of history, and you have a small experience of the story told.

In researching sense, I feel that I like coming across old pieces of history that aren’t in books. I love looking at old maps and seeing the carefully drawn lines of old streets and houses. Finding a catalogue or letter is exciting because the contents are so unpredictable. Best of all, I adore coming across pictures. The other day I came across an old Wilcox Crittenden merchandise catalogue. I opened the front page and it had about 8 pictures of the mills. I took them all in one at a time not really knowing what to take out of them. Thanks to the “Reading Photography” lesson, I’m not afraid to look back at those pictures and to investigate and digest their contents.

To answer the question, “Has my perspective changed on learning about history and on the importance of local history?” I would say yes. After classes like the one yesterday about photography I feel like I have a much more up close and personal take on how to discover and read history. I know that I can take lessons on photography, books, how to read a modern street, and architecture to use in almost every historical situation. Locally, I look at Middletown completely different. Instead of “that building we drive by everyday” it’s the, “Wilcox Crittenden Forging Department that burned down in 1907!” I drive by the mill neighborhood and imagine what it was like 100 years ago. My image of Middletown has changed drastically in the past 6 months.

In all, I was completely fascinated by the lesson. I now can use my new knowledge about images and text to help with my research on the Mill Neighborhood. It helps to know that an image has a history and a story besides just a simple documentation. Learning, reading, looking, discovering, and exploring photographs is a skill that I want to get better at, and I am thrilled that I can look into a picture and get information as well as the web or a book.

Thank you.
Adventures in Curriculum Design

The genealogy of place-based education and the examples of place-based curricula that have been examined in the previous chapters are presented as a foundational framework, rather than a rigid structure or exact recipe for curriculum design. Instead, the models encourage the development of place-based ideas, as they are unique products of different educator perspectives and the circumstances of particular school locations, demographics, and local communities. These examples have been sources of inspiration in the development of a curriculum related to Middletown, Connecticut at the Independent Day School (IDS). With the place-based education historical roots, theory, and case studies in mind, the second half of my research relates to the place-based history seminar at IDS.

In valuing the relationship between experience and academic study, this research aims to bring theory and practice together. The importance of the in-practicum component of my thesis is substantiated through the works of John Dewey and David Sobel, the CO-SEED model, as well as my own educational background. The Antioch New England Graduate School’s required internship program has provided the most detailed model for my design. The school’s program is influenced by the work of Dewey, Montessori, Steiner, Piaget and others. David Sobel and Matt Dubel verify the importance for graduate students, studying to be place-based educators, to have experience working in the “field.” Dubel and Sobel write,

This commingling of internships and courses means that course assignments often get carried out in classrooms and classroom issues can get worked on in courses... students can hypothesize and design investigations in graduate courses, conduct the research in their internship classroom, then examine the results and redesign the experiment in courses.
This describes the usefulness of learning in-context, particularly for educators who value place-based education for their own students. At Antioch New England, expectations for graduate students include concurrent research, program implementation, on-site interaction, and curriculum review. These are components of a protocol that I have adopted in my independent investigation of place-based education.

In using Antioch New England’s graduate program as a guide, in order to document and carry out the second dimension of this project, my methods follow the Place-Based Education Evaluation Collaborative (PEEC) protocol for curriculum analysis. PEEC is a collection of place-based learning projects and programs, and includes the CO-SEED program. My use of their established guidelines, which are recognized by many place-based educators, allows for my project to be placed in comparison and dialogue with others. According to the PEEC program protocol, in order to conduct a valid study, there is a set of essential requirements for a comprehensive program evaluation. These components include a review of scholarly literature, qualitative and quantitative research, organizational consulting, and suggestions for program development.\(^5\) Given my unique relationship with IDS and my undergraduate status, I have had to modify these guidelines, but I have included in my research a literature review, qualitative and quantitative data and analysis, as well as suggestions for future program development. I have also included important IDS seminar documents in Appendix III. Lastly, I have had the opportunity to evaluate and make recommendations regarding this curriculum based upon my research.
In developing my methodology in compliance with PEEC standards, I identified three general evaluation criteria for qualitative and quantitative data collection and analysis. These three guiding points encapsulate my own goals as a place-based educator. They are selected as a result of both my general research and my personal assessment of significant place-based program features. The first criterion that I have chosen involves investigating the academic skills that are fostered through this place-based curriculum. This is an important, yet more traditional evaluative area. While a curriculum may be socially conscious, engaging in regards to community partnerships and service learning, academic performance also matters. Essentially, do students demonstrate improvements in writing skills, research expertise, or critical thinking through this curriculum?

The second dimension that I sought to investigate is this curriculum’s ability to foster a “sense of place” for students and teachers. This is not a trivial connection to articulate, as Gruenewald explains,

Place-consciousness depends on what teachers and students are actually expected and empowered to do. Rather than focus narrowly on student and school achievement, a place-conscious framework of accountability must begin to assess the places in which we (and others) live in relation to the kind of education that we provide and the pedagogical impact of places in and outside school.4

From my research and my interactions with the teachers at IDS, I have documented how this local history curriculum develops students’ awareness of where they live, their ability to engage with historical documents, and interact with community partners.

The final component that I used to evaluate this curriculum involves the issues of community building and civic participation. This dimension highlights the
importance of learning experiences that contribute to a local community’s vitality and quality, as the school, students, and teachers develop a role in the community through the curriculum construct. The cultivation of strong community partnerships for addressing identified needs within a community is one of the most important criteria for place-based education, as it can be a catalyst for an important and public conversation about education and the importance of learning in our society. During my time at IDS, these three criteria were considered in my observations, data collection, program implementation, and final analysis of this curriculum.

Through this practice in the application of place-based curriculum design, as a student and future educator, I have determined the most salient features of a place-based education program. The opportunity I have had in developing this local history, place-based 8th grade course and observing its effectiveness has challenged me to define and refine my ideas. My three evaluative criteria of civic engagement, knowledge of place, and the improvement of academic skills serve to demonstrate that place-based learning can be academically rigorous, while also providing a meaningful context to learning. These three criteria of assessment articulate that academic achievement and connection to place do not have to be mutually exclusive. In documenting this place-based curriculum, I strive to evaluate its efficacy, authenticity, community orientation, and its relevance to the larger educational and social landscape.

**Teachers, Place and Curriculum Construct**

In pursuing a study of place-based education, it is critical to examine and
understand the teachers’ perspective regarding the benefits and challenges of place-based teaching practices. In conjunction with my review of historical and current examples of place-based learning, it has been invaluable for me to interact first-hand with teachers who are working to center their classroom in their local environment, community, and history. I accomplished this by establishing a working relationship with the Independent Day School (IDS) in Middlefield, Connecticut. My time observing and working alongside teachers follows a place-based model. The logic behind my year-long relationship with this school is consistent with the guideline “See one, do one, teach one... there’s no better way to learn something than to have to teach others how to do it...” My time at the IDS has allowed me to observe and immerse myself in place-based practices, as well as to engage with teachers in discovering how to use their community in new and effective ways.

My intention in forming a working relationship with IDS was two fold. First, my goal was to actively participate in the planning, development, and decision making of this curriculum, enabling me to synthesize research and to fundamentally understand one place-based education case study in real-time. Second, my aim was to document this school’s initiation of place-based learning principles in their eighth grade classroom. I sought to learn from their methodology, the challenges they face, and the effects that place-based learning has on the educational practices at this school. Thus, my position with these educators who are initiating their own work with the local in their curriculum, was both to analyze the effects of this curriculum, as well as to put into action some of the techniques, values, and curricular activities that I have studied while conducting my independent research. How have these educators
engaged with place? How have their goals met with reality? What is it like to teach using local history and resources as the subject and “texts” of a course? My role as both observer and instructor provides me with a double lens, allowing me to both objectively examine the content and value of this curriculum, as well as to feel first hand what it is like to execute such a program.

Laying the Ground Work in Middlefield, CT

Founded in 1961 and located in Middlefield, IDS is a small, private school with an enrollment of nearly 200 students ranging from early childhood through 8th grade. The primary motivation for its conception was due to a demand for a private schooling option that was paralleled to the abundant secondary and university-level schooling options in the area. The Independent Day School currently has 28 full-time and 9 part-time faculty members. Students commute from the surrounding towns, including Middletown, Durham, and West Hartford. The geographic distances that student travel is relevant to the place-based curriculum as some students are unfamiliar with the city of Middletown, which is the focus of this course. Upon entering the IDS campus, a warm, nurturing atmosphere is apparent in both the elementary and middle school buildings, which are located in close proximity to each other. It becomes clear throughout the day that teachers are aware of each student as an individual and communication with parents occurs regularly. The size of the school, its mission, and focus on individualized education make it particularly conducive to a place-based curriculum model.

In the spring of 2008, I met with Liz Warner, the 8th grade history teacher at IDS. I had received her name through a Wesleyan professor whose daughter had
attended the Independent Day School. His daughter had Liz as a teacher and he felt she would be an excellent resource. My expectations for the meeting were fairly modest, as I had spent weeks meeting with Wesleyan professors, elementary school teachers, and other community members who were unable to offer concrete guidance as to how to best actualize this vision. In her response to an inquiring email of mine she wrote, “Yes!! We can certainly make this work. I will be around this afternoon working in the yard until about 6 p.m.” When we spoke at her house, which is a few blocks away from the Wesleyan Campus, I revealed my vision for my thesis project as an inquiry into the theory and practicalities of place-based education, particularly through the use of local history. When I presented her with my proposal, she immediately agreed and reassured me that my project could easily be integrated into their ongoing plans for an eighth grade history seminar. With little notion of how important our potential relationship would be to the overall credibility and depth of my project, we met several times over the spring and our preliminary discussions indicated a promising connection. Although our spring meetings lacked detail regarding both the structure of the seminar and my proposed role at the school, I had indeed found a school that was both initiating a new place-based curriculum and that welcomed me to participate with them.

Over the summer, the plans for the eighth grade seminar became more solidified and although I was not present for the meetings, Liz Warner sent me all meeting notes and updates on the planning process. From their summer sessions, the basic structure of the seminar was established. There were to be four teachers, two English teachers and two history teachers, collaborating in the planning and
instruction of this 22 student, 8th grade course. In addition to sending me meeting notes, Liz Warner also wrote to me asking for suggested place-based pedagogy. As I had attended a professional development workshop at Shelburne Farms in Vermont that summer on place-based principles and practices, I eagerly sent her recommended reading and planning guidelines. In the meeting notes, I was regularly mentioned as a potential resource for teachers and from the onset felt included in the planning endeavors. Liz introduced me to the other staff as a student intern who would serve as both observer and volunteer to assist in the implementation of the course, which accurately represented my goals as well.

The four teachers, including Liz Warner and John Barrengos, the relatively new IDS headmaster, attended the summer sessions. In a June 4th email, Liz explained to me, “The committee working on this course met again yesterday and brainstormed a curriculum for the eighth grade with three other teachers. Serendipitously, the head of school was imagining a place-based curriculum experiment for next year, as well.”7 Serendipitous indeed. As I later came to learn, John Barrengos and his wife, Kate Knopp, one of the teachers also included in this team, had been on the staff at CITYterm for many years, as well as other innovative educational programs. Thus, the planning team already had two highly skilled and practiced place-based educators. The CITYterm program is an “interdisciplinary and experience-based, semester-long, residential program … that brings together students from across the country to study the arts, politics, literature, architecture, ecology and history of New York City… according to CITYterm’s mission statement, to “engage fully in learning and thinking for themselves, about themselves and about who and
what is beyond themselves. It was apparent in the IDS meeting notes and in the administrative push towards this seminar that the value of place and schooling was already an ingrained value for many of the participants.

The backgrounds and teaching philosophy of the other three teachers, Liz Warner, Stephen Parnes, and Martha Ficke, also played an important part in the project. Liz Warner, herself, has been teaching for more than 25 years and regularly teaches sixth, seventh, and eighth grade history, as well as English. She is also the author of *A Pictorial History of Middletown*, a highly accessible and valued resource about the history of Middletown. She is a life long resident of Middletown, an expert on Middletown history, and regularly gives lectures related to the history of the area. Stephen Parnes, the other history teacher, teaches seventh and eighth grade history and is the administrative head of the middle school. Martha Ficke, a middle school English teacher is also in charge of the learning center for academic support. The combined skills of Kate Knopp’s experience with using place as a centering point for a curriculum, Liz Warner’s unparalleled knowledge of Middletown history, Stephen Parnes’ guidance related to the logistical constraints of integrating the school with outside time, and Martha Ficke’s knowledge of the academic developmental levels of the 8th graders, gave this teaching collective a depth and breadth of expertise for the planning and instruction of a course related to Middletown, Connecticut.

During my first meeting with the group of IDS teachers on August 28th, I introduced my project to the team and expressed my desire to be able to observe and participate in the classroom, as well as the planning sessions. It was determined for the fall that I would attend Friday afternoon group planning sessions and participate.
during history classes on Tuesdays and Thursdays. The Thursday periods were blocked off for field trips and Tuesdays were designated for in-class history lessons. On that August morning, only a week before the school year was to start, Liz presented a brief outline of her vision for the structure of the year. As the academic calendar at IDS is divided into trimesters, Liz defined a different focus of inquiry for each trimester.

For the first trimester, the entire class was to focus on the various businesses, organizations, and institutions that are central to Middletown history and whose history has documentation and resources that are readily accessible to students. The students were divided into three sub-groups and each individual student was assigned a particular person who either established or led one of these significant organizations. The students began the year with a trip to the town green. Their course materials included a city map and Liz Warner’s *A Pictorial History of Middletown*. In investigating these notable Middletown residents, the students were also guided through relevant history lessons, ranging from industrialization and the mill systems to the development of department stores and manufacturing. The students were required to conduct independent research on their assigned individual, as well as work with other group members to identify connecting threads amongst their prominent Middletown figures.

This group work culminated in presentations which the librarians, members of the historical societies, and people who had been interviewed for the various projects were all invited to attend. The goals of both the individual projects, as well as the group presentations, were to familiarize the students with how to conduct local
history research, guide them in discovering the features of Middletown’s geography and landscape, and assist them in learning how to interpret the information gathered from their research. The assignment for the group presentation explained,

Show your audience what you have learned about life in Middletown through your team’s historical lens. Each of you has developed some expertise. Share your knowledge with one another, make connections and draw some conclusion about life in Middletown. What have you learned about how people organize themselves, about how people’s occupation shapes the way they live, and how an individual can help shape a town. What have the people you have studied contributed to what Middletown has become?

The student presentations revealed their significant effort and knowledge as they presented their particular facets of Middletown history, as well as the obstacles they met in sorting through historical material and subsequently making accurate conclusions from their investigations.

The weekly planning sessions allowed for the teachers to keep regular tabs on each student’s work as well as continuing with the planning of the project. The teachers expressed a collective sentiment that the first term was an introduction to this seminar, in many ways a trial in determining the guidance and variety of assignments that students need to be successful participants in this place-based program. As the first term came to a close and the planning began for the next semester, the team of faculty, as well as myself, were poised to continue to refine the place-based curriculum and to continue to foster the skills and experiences whose seeds had been sown in the first term. While the first term was effective in many ways, it also resulted in a realistic perspective about the challenges that are inherent in this type of educational program. Although there was an initial vision, and an understanding of the required research and overall student experience, the term schedule and
curriculum was subject to change and revision.

The first term’s planning and coursework initiated the team of teachers, the 22 students, and me into the realities of place-based learning in Middletown. As Amy Demarest explains, “Place-based education’s lack of a clear definition, the multitude of ways that it is understood and practiced, and the extent to which it is undergoing a redefinition is problematic for teachers and schools systems that might want to adopt or deepen their use of the local environment.”9 Demarest’s insight substantiates that the initial stages of this eighth grade seminar, with its ongoing adaptations and changes, is not unusual for a new place-based curriculum. Although each of the teachers has committed to the course and all make valuable contributions, their individual goals and perspectives for the course are varied. Further, the course documents and calendar were organized as the year progressed. This first term has been acknowledged by the faculty as “a trial.” Notes and amendments in the structure and content for the first term have been dually noted for next year. As Gruenewald and Smith observe, “By its very nature, place-based education is not something that can be packaged and then disseminated. It depends on the creative interaction between learners and the possibilities and requirements of specific places.”10 This encouraging statement affirms that this year, and especially the first term, must be considered a trial in curriculum development, demonstrating a process of interactive and mutual learning amongst students and teachers, where the teacher is also an engaged learner.

**Neighborhood Investigations**

In progressing to the second term, the IDS teachers and I began to plan for the
second portion of the year. In a November 15th meeting, we discussed the challenges that the students had thus far encountered in their research and outlined specific approaches that would help to facilitate their success for the next term. Key areas that were identified included providing students with a wider variety of topics, expanding upon methods to guide students through their research, particularly with regards to varied learning styles, and continued exploration and expansion of available resources in Middletown.

My role in the planning sessions for the second term became far more central. I found myself a more integral part of the project due to my research related to the place-based case studies, my observations and experiences at IDS over the course of the fall, and my developing relationship with the IDS teachers and the director of the Middlesex County Historical Society. During our November 15th meeting, I made a presentation to the team of teachers, suggesting my ideas for the next term. In addition to facilitating a discussion regarding the potential focal points that the second term could encompass, I proposed the thematic lens of several neighborhoods in Middletown, particularly through the use of historic photographs in order to show how buildings, streets, and cities change over time. Although my proposal was well-received, it was also critically examined. At the time, the initial idea seemed to refresh the teachers and reenergize the group, as we embarked on a second round of intensive planning, drafting and revising of documents for the purpose of creating a thoughtful, engaging, and academically appropriate curriculum.
Capturing the “Heart” of the Neighborhood

The structure of the neighborhood study began to take shape and its most critical components became defined. At the beginning of the second term, it was explained to students that over the course of the term they would work in groups of five and six to explore and learn how to “read” a neighborhood in Middletown. After several revisions, the teachers presented the basic project description. This unit’s description, presented to the students, is as follows:

The challenge is to learn how to see history in the text of a building, the streets and the people, and in the relationships between and among the various elements of your neighborhood. In order to do this you’ll need to learn a little about architecture, a little about a city’s infrastructure, and a little about how a neighborhood supports a group of people and how those people shape the physical space they inhabit. Neighborhoods, the ones we can currently see and the ones that existed behind or beneath the ones we see, have a story to tell us; we need to listen for it, see it and construct that story. Keep in mind that in learning about the stories of these places, you are also learning about present day local politics and city planning. Ultimately we want to be able to see how and why these physical spaces change over time.

This term’s focus includes requirements for both individual and group work, as the students are divided into four different neighborhoods, including the mill neighborhood of Wilcox Crittenden, a riverfront and railroad neighborhood centered around the Connecticut river and DeKoven Drive, a residential neighborhood located around Home and Lawn Avenue near Wesleyan University, and the Broad Street Neighborhood that includes the Russell Memorial Public Library, the Red Cross building, and a senior housing complex, which was originally the first public high school in Connecticut. The curriculum includes lessons on architecture that are relevant to their neighborhood, visits to the neighborhoods, local history research on
the buildings and institutions that compromise their neighborhoods, interviews with people who are connected to the buildings and institutions of these areas, as well as research and lessons on the historic influences of American history that are associated with these neighborhoods. The basic intent of this course was to continue with the place-based learning that was initiated during the first semester.

**Surveying the Land**

This second term began with a series of lectures and preliminary explorations of the four designated neighborhoods. Liz Warner prepared an initial set of lessons, which included basic topics, expectations, and academic skills that would be addressed over the course of this term. The first class included a presentation with photos of each of the neighborhoods, as they exist today, as well as photos indicating their dramatic transformations over time. A handout was disseminated to the students describing the four neighborhoods and the historical themes in American history that applied most significantly to each area. Each student was assigned to one of four teams based on student preference. They were instructed to pay careful attention to the provided information on each neighborhood, as they would later have to select which neighborhood and pertinent American history theme they would like to explore and study. For example, the student team assigned to the mill Neighborhood of Wilcox-Crittenden, which includes Mill Street, South Main Street, Hunting Hill, and Warwick Street, were also required to investigate topics ranging from the rise in industrial manufacturing in New England in the late 19th century, power dynamics of
immigration and factory work, as well as the present-day politics of adaptive reuse of buildings.

The introductory lectures and explanations of the project were accompanied by a reading of James Trefil’s *A Scientist in the City* which describes how cities develop as part of an interconnected ecosystem. An initial field trip and a subsequent quiz required students to study and integrate material discussed in lectures and contained in the reading. Over the next two weeks, Liz Warner and Stephen Parmes taught several classes related to basic architectural principles and styles. During each class, slide presentations included background information on general architectural concepts and examples of classic, well-known structures, as well as illustrations of recognizable Middletown buildings.

In the first three weeks of the term, each course assignment and handout explicitly stated the academic skill set intended to be addressed. After Liz Warner’s first lecture, each student met with a teacher to set goals for themselves as individual learners for this term. Four areas of achievement-based student performance were outlined. These included students’ effectiveness in using research skills with varied sources, their investment and initiative in their approach to learning, their ability to work collaboratively as a team member, and their capacity to think critically and analyze historical material. The skills rubric and four primary areas of student achievement reflect the importance of consistency in measuring student performance that is characteristic of this curriculum.

The introductory weeks were intended to provide students with a basic toolkit with which to later analyze their assigned neighborhood. The lessons on architecture
and the relevant historical periods were conducted in conjunction with walking tours down Main Street in Middletown. The walking tour of Middletown was intended to supplement the classroom-based architecture lessons. As Liz Warner spoke about windows and glass in the early 1700’s, we all looked though the thick glass windows of the three recently relocated colonial houses on the south end of Main Street. As we spoke of the geographic positioning of Main Street, we saw the ever-important view of the waterfront from the center of downtown Main Street. Trefil writes in *A Scientist in the City*, “… the city functions as a system that can be studied and understood, just like any other natural system. And once we have this kind of understanding, we will be between being able to say where the city is headed and what its future holds.” In many ways, the intent and beginning lessons for this course explore just how and why the city of Middletown, as a complex “system,” looks as it does, the implications of these observations, and our place within it.

In evaluating the first portion of the term, the dimension of civic participation and how our study might influence the community is a piece of the curriculum that remains underdeveloped. The inclusion of interactions with other community members and addressing how this neighborhood study is relevant beyond itself is not yet an integral part of the academic skills rubric or beginning assignments. The curriculum and instruction does not include any explicit relationship between community vitality or service and student learning. The lack of this community interaction is in part due to the significant amount of time to plan and communicate with potential partners. Community engagement is clearly a missing dimension in these initial weeks, yet perhaps in the years to come, the curriculum will evolve to
include a more service-oriented piece, which might further the curriculum’s goal to
demonstrate how we can be more involved in our own communities.

Touring the Neighborhoods

Following the initial set of architectural lectures and readings on city
infrastructure, each student chose one of the four neighborhoods they were most
interested in studying. As Thursdays were devoted to field trips to Middletown,
students were divided between the Russell Library and the Middlesex Historical
Society where they were able to initiate their research by looking through
photographs, microfilms, and city directories. The next Thursday, the entire eighth
grade, the four teachers, and myself, ventured out on a driving tour of these four
neighborhoods, stopping at each location. The goal of this type of experiential
learning was to explore and be careful observers of these places, for the purpose of
integrating the lessons of architecture, the photographs presented in class, the
preliminary historic research, as well as the historical knowledge acquired from the
last term.

Before departing on our caravan tour of the Middletown neighborhoods,
students were told that these field trips were to be thought of as graded assignments.
Kate Knopp explained that while these trips seemed to be less structured than school
time, student participation and application of material would be assessed. These field
trips were considered an important part of the curriculum for developing critical
thinking, engaged approach to learning, team collaboration, and research skills. The
frequent visits to the historical society and library, the tour of neighborhoods, and
other more impromptu visits to Middletown, are essential features of this curriculum. As Kate Knopp describes, “One aim is to have students realize that they are in charge and command of their own learning. Through this Middletown exploration, there is a cultivation of responsibility, a lesson in how to immerse yourself in what you need to do.” These field trips, particularly the tour of the neighborhoods, support the educational philosophy that learning can occur outside of the school walls. Further, these experiences can reinforce and expand upon academic skills addressed in other assignments and in the more traditional classroom.

The neighborhood tour was intended to have students and teachers feel, see, and experience the neighborhoods, eliciting questions and encouraging inquiry. What are the conditions of the buildings? How do these buildings relate to each other? How do the historic photos match what we see today? As time was spent touring the neighborhood, the subject matter became more relevant and real life details helped to foster a richer sense of where we live. This curriculum endeavors to explain the processes that shape the places that we see and inhabit.

**Investigating the Neighborhoods**

While continuing to discuss city infrastructure and basic principles of architecture, students kept regularly updated annotated bibliographies to document their on-going research of their neighborhoods. The intent of this on-going assignment was to help students develop good research habits and to provide consistent and personal feedback. Students were assessed on the quantity, variety, and relevance of their sources, requiring both internet-based and local history materials.
The regular feedback for students was an effective way for teachers to maintain a pulse on student progress and engagement. The annotated bibliography component of this curriculum was intended to allow students to work as independent learners and investigators, while also being supported by multiple teachers as guides along the way.

**Mapping Middletown**

One of the highlights of this term was when Catherine Johnson, a city planner and Middletown resident, gave a lecture at IDS. Ms. Johnson came prepared with a variety of different maps and historic photos, which she pasted all of over the classroom. She began her lecture by declaring, “I like to think of neighborhoods as the cells of the built world.” She defined a neighborhood as being officially a mile in diameter, a reasonable walking distance from end to end. She excitedly explained the opportunities for community interaction that such planning can create. Then, she shifted to exploring what the students knew about Middletown. She asked them for specific dates regarding Middletown history, including the date of the Wilcox-Crittenden mill fire and the date of the town’s establishment. Students knew the dates and she was clearly taken aback by their level of preparation and their knowledge of infrastructure and town development. Her lecture also included a series of historic photos. She asked the students to identify and explain how certain areas in Middletown changed over time. Johnson explained the issues with the new buildings in terms of economics and suburban sprawl. Towards the end of the two-hour presentation, Johnson asked the students “Did you know that Middletown was at one
time referred to as the Paris of Connecticut?” Ms. Johnson expressed her love for her home, but acknowledged that Middletown is no longer the Paris of Connecticut. Despite this, she articulated how through careful and informed choices, Middletown could regain some of its original stature. She told the students that she sees the remains of proverbial Paris that Middletown once was, through its history, its architecture, and its communities. Yet, she explained that in her opinion, city planning decisions have reduced not only the aesthetics of the town, but also the economic viability and potential for vibrant, readily accessible social communities. She supported the students’ efforts stating, “Do you realize this is why what you are learning is so important? I will tell you, people will continue to do the same things because they don’t know the stories.” Johnson’s comment regarding the importance of stories confirmed the curricular choices and course themes in a powerful way.

**Middletown and America**

Another important feature of this term is the American History paper. In the stated objective for this two-page assignment, students were asked to identify certain events and subjects in American history, which are relevant and inform the study of the neighborhoods. The initial handout asks, “What themes in America helped create and shape the neighborhood? What parts of American history do I need to learn about in order to understand the life of the neighborhood and its residents? How is the history of my neighborhood connected to the national story?” Students began this assignment by meeting in teams with a teacher. They generated a list of topics that would be essential to accurately evaluating the local material. Then, each student
chose one of these topics. In the case of the Broad Street neighborhood, topics such as the history of the Red Cross, public libraries, public education, and the development of insurance companies were all areas to be studied. After teachers reviewed initial research and drafts, students read aloud their papers to their neighborhood team members, in order for everyone to learn about this history, as well as give constructive feedback about clarity of language and writing.

This assignment served to further refine research and inquiry skills, as well as group collaboration. It required students to identify and pursue a topic identified as important by each respective neighborhood group. It also necessitated that students use at least three sources and accurately cite all information. Research, paper structure, language, and organization are all technical aspects that are evaluated in this assignment. Two teachers graded each paper and detailed comments were given through a feedback sheet that carefully outlines the assignment expectations and the student’s effort at meeting the requirements. Two grades were given, one based on the process and one on product. The distinction between process and product is important as the assignment laid out a careful process that each student was required to take and emphasized the importance of progression and development, as well as a finished product. This history assignment was intended for students to gain a perspective on history beyond Middletown with the knowledge that they would soon return to the local landscape.

**Revealing the Neighborhood**

The final project for this term, a group-generated, “stand-alone exhibit” aims
to bring together the variety of components of this project and to articulate the ideas and themes that relate to the neighborhoods studied. The assignment sheet emphasizes that this moveable exhibit must include, “accurate historic information, how change occurs over time in the neighborhood, connections to broader American history themes, communication about the “essence” of the neighborhood.” For the presentation of this project, it is emphasized that this exhibit should draw the reviewer in, using visuals such as photos, maps, and newspaper articles. In addition to this moveable exhibit, the students are to create a walking tour of their neighborhood, to include the important and interesting sites within their place, as well as a reflection paper regarding the process of this term.

The design of this final component of a moveable exhibit is intended to directly address and cohesively tie together the skills and concepts incorporated in the assignments and experiences of the term. The moveable exhibit requires students not only to share and collaborate on research, a basic academic skill, but also to create a final product that will be dynamic and capture the “heart” of the neighborhood. The exhibits have the potential to be viewed by many different community members, and thus, there is a public dimension of this project as well. Although the exhibits have yet to be constructed, the intent of this final project is to help students further solidify academic skills, historical knowledge, and connection to community, concepts that they have been working with over the course of the year.

This neighborhood study attempts to take up the challenge that Lucy Lippard proposes when she states, “A provocative community exercise would be to ask people what existing sites, buildings, or artifacts they would like to see saved...” The focus
on architecture and neighborhoods, the text reviewed on city infrastructure, and the
lecture from the town planner, are all ways to approach Lippard’s exercise. Through
the assignments and activities, both group-orientated and individual, this seminar
focuses on the exploration of these neighborhoods in order to cultivate an
academically-sound, locally-based, and community-oriented curriculum. However,
the dimensions of student achievement, local knowledge, and community vitality are
difficult to simultaneously address during the first year of a new curriculum. While
this chapter’s purpose is to define specific components of this curriculum, in order to
comprehensively assess its efficacy, a closer examination of how the curricular
choices transpired and connected with student learning is also necessary.

Notes

1 Matt Dubel and David Sobel, “Place-Based Teacher Education,” in *Place-Based
Education in the Global Age*, ed. David Gruenewald and Gregory Smith (New York:
Lawrence Erlbaum Assoc., 2007), 326.
2 Ibid.
3 “Homepage,” Place-based Education Evaluative Collaborative Online (September
4 David Gruenewald, “Foundations of Place: A Multidisciplinary Framework for
5 Matt Dubel and David Sobel, “Place-Based Teacher Education” in *Place-Based
Education in the Global Age*, 332.
8 Elana Smith, “Using New York City as a Learning and Teach Experience,” *The
9 Amy Demarest, “Shared purpose: how teachers engage the local environment and
community to design meaningful and democratic curriculum,” (PhD diss., Burlington:
University of Vermont), 24.
Place-Conscious Education,” 643.
Student Reflection #4
Leah

This week Julia taught a lesson on photography. People always say that photography is an art form and I never disagreed with that, but before Julia’s lesson I was never able to see how much thought and decision-making goes into creating a photograph and how powerful a photograph can be. I have never really looked at a photograph the way that Julia showed us. I never really looked at all the aspects and details or realized how the angle, the framing, the amount of people, and the setting come together to tell a story through the picture.

Everything about a photograph must lend itself to telling the story of the person, place, or thing in that photo, and just like a good reader, a good reader of photography can put together all the details to form a story from just a single frame. I realized how much there is to notice in a photo because of what Julia showed us. Julia is an excellent reader of photography, but even people who are not as skilled in that area can make meaning from a photograph. Even if you do not know what you are looking for, without putting any conscience effort into it, one can make meaning from a photo. A photo is really like a universal art form because it can be powerful to anybody.

In this course we have also talked about lenses. At the start of this course we talked about using the words commercial, institutional, industrial, and residential as lenses. We have used that a lot as we look at our neighborhoods. We also talk about using time as a lens or trying to see the layers of time in a building. We are supposed to try to “put on a different pair of glasses” for each different lens. A camera is a “different pair of glasses” with which to look at the scene. Looking through a camera might show us things that otherwise we would not have noticed. It can also alter or omit things that we would have otherwise see. For instance, we looked at a series of photos known as “The Migrant Mother.” In the most famous of these photos you see the mother with two children facing away from the camera. This photo is a different lens with which to look at her story. Through this photo we could not guess that she has seven children, we could not see her suitcase, showing that she is moving around a lot. It also takes her and her children out of context, so you do not know that she is living in a lean-to tent, there is nothing around her, and how poor she really is. The lens of the camera alters her story and leaves the observer knowing different things than if they were looking directly at this mother with their own eyes. The camera is a different lens than the eyes, but each photo is also a different lens than another photo. Each picture is a different interpretation of the story. In each photo we learned something different about, “The Migrant Mother.” In each photo we see different aspects of her life. It is almost like each photo is a chapter of a book. By itself it can tell a story but all together the photos make a complete book because they each have different information to give.

I learned a lot this week and specifically from Julia’s lesson. A photograph is a wonderful piece of art that tells a story. Like snowflakes, no one photograph is exactly the same as another. No one photograph tells the same story as another. Each is its own unique expression of art and each is its own unique pair of glasses.
How Students Change

This chapter explores the results of this place-based curriculum over the course of its first five months through discussing student work and their responses to the various activities of this term. My aim is to describe the academic skills acquired and developed over the semester and the changes in students’ perspective on place and community participation.

A review of selected student work and significant moments relating to student reaction and engagement is a particularly useful evaluation tool. My qualitative data includes student and teacher comments, student work, and classroom observation documented throughout my time at IDS. In order to examine “how students change,” I use one detailed assignment, the American history assignment, and two classroom-based experiences, the town planner’s lecture and my own lecture on how to use photography in historical research, as representatives of my qualitative data and evaluation of this place-based curriculum. These examples provide important information about students’ reactions and performance in the three categories of academic achievement, place-awareness, and civic participation. The quantitative data used in this project serve to supplement and support the qualitative evidence (refer to Appendix I). My aim is to describe the shining moments that have occurred in this course, as well as the general knowledge and recurring ideas that have been consistent themes throughout the term. In addition, my evaluation of this curriculum provides insights for future program planning.
Finding Our Place in History

The American history research paper was the first large assignment of the term, requiring students to synthesize aspects of this curriculum, most specifically in connecting local issues within the context of national history. The goals for academic skills were addressed through a group brainstorming session and subsequent proposal, an individual research summary, and a presentation of the research to fellow group members. On the first day that the assignment was explained to the students, they divided into their neighborhood groups with one teacher present in each group, and began to explore the range of relevant and important topics to be researched.

On that day, I sat at a table with Liz Warner and the students who had been assigned the task of researching the Pike’s Ravine neighborhood. Initially, the students did not know where to begin. Liz facilitated the discussion by asking them to recall what they knew about their neighborhood. One student, Tommy, began, “Well, we know that it is close to Wesleyan and the neighborhood as it is today has been affected by the growth of higher education in the United States.” Liz Warner supported Tommy’s suggestion that a study of higher education in the United States would be an appropriate topic to research. Soon other students began to identify themes that make this neighborhood unique.

Due to their preliminary knowledge of their neighborhoods, students were able to make informed suggestions as to what trends or issues in American history might be valuable to further their neighborhood investigation. This was a group-oriented exercise, which focused on communication, cooperation, and effective group planning. As the class period progressed, the ideas generated by the students
demonstrated their clear understanding of the purpose of the assignment. The subjects identified by the students not only revealed unique qualities of their neighborhood that would provide a greater appreciation of this area, but also reflected what each student was interested in independently investigating in their own individual learning style. The topics ranged from employment trends, internal migration, and the housing market in the United States during the late 1800’s and early 1900’s. As the students worked on their research there was focus and purpose to their work.

Over a two-week period, the students researched and composed a two-page summary report. A number of students took the initiative to produce several drafts of this written piece. I had the opportunity to read and offer editing suggestions for several students’ papers. In reading Gus’s paper, his intention to uncover not only the general importance of his topic, but also its relevance to his neighborhood study was readily apparent. In the conclusion to his paper on the topic of power dynamics of factory management and ownership during the second half of the 1800’s, he writes, “The realities of company towns and the paternalistic leadership in factories are critical points of consideration when studying a mill or factory community. Providing shelter, protection, and a social community, factory owners had power over company employees... In exploring these conditions, the experiences of living in a company town are better understood.” My conversations with this student reveal his desire to effectively communicate the nuanced and important content of his research through his writing. Through the process of writing this paper, students endeavored to develop writing and research skills, as well as to continue the dialogue about the importance of place, specifically the relationship between national and local history.
On the day that the paper was due, the neighborhood groups reconvened in order to share their work. As I sat around the table, this time with the Broad Street neighborhood group, each student read their paper aloud, while the other group members listened and took notes. In the end, students were asked to succinctly summarize what each of their peers had researched, as well as to ask any clarifying questions. In a presentation of the history of the Red Cross, one student, Dionna, included general Red Cross information and significant new developments, statistics from the Middletown branch’s participation during World War II, and its responsibilities and role today. She not only called upon a variety of sources in her research, but also revealed a genuine interest and confidence in her work as she read her paper aloud to her peers. Her Red Cross paper and presentation exemplify the way in which intellectual growth, group learning, and communication were developed through this assignment. Further, this student’s decision to include examples of Middletown’s Red Cross branch, demonstrates her recognition of the importance of connecting local place and the national landscape.

With the teachers present as facilitators, students worked effectively in groups, communicated about assignments, provided feedback to each other, and connected their research to significant themes and concepts. Students seemed to understand that this was an opportunity to inform themselves about major influences on their local neighborhood, gaining a more accurate understanding of this place. Further, each student knew that they were accountable to their group for researching their subject. Though the American history research paper and presentation do not explicitly address the third evaluative criteria of civic engagement, the students’ work
and responses reveal the development of written and oral skills, as well as an expanded awareness of the role of history and place that was intended for this assignment.

**Discussing Changes in the Cityscape**

The town planner, Catherine Johnson, provided a second valuable component of this curriculum. During Ms. Johnson’s lecture, the level of student interaction and participation were indicative of this lecture’s overall success. Early on in the class period, the students’ familiarity with the specific details of town infrastructure impressed Ms. Johnson. Upon being asked if they knew five primary building zones, the students, as a group, confidently listed the differences between residential, commercial, industrial, recreational, and institutional zones. Liz looked over at me in wide-eyed surprise at their facility in recollecting the information that she had taught them a few weeks before. In continuing, Ms. Johnson asked the students why Middletown’s geographic position was critical to the city’s development. One student raised his hand and assuredly stated, “Middletown is on the river. The waterfront, particularly in the 1600’s and 1700’s, was like the highway of today.” The “river as a highway” is a phrase that this student coined himself and demonstrates his thoughtfulness about the issues of transportation and city development. The student dialogue with Ms. Johnson not only reflects the students’ extensive knowledge about this material, but also their ability to convey information in interesting and original ways.
During the question and answer period, the two components of place-awareness and community participation and partnerships were certainly addressed. Nasr, a student who was working on investigating the Pike’s place neighborhood, asked Ms. Johnson if she had any maps of the area, as he was currently searching for some. She commented that despite her efforts, she had been unable to locate any historic maps of that specific area. Then, Nasr proceeded to show her the only map that he had been able to find, a photocopy of a map that predated the development of the now-residential neighborhood. Ms. Johnson exclaimed, “Where did you find this? I have searched for something like this for years! Can I make a copy of this before I leave?” This was one of the project’s special moments, revealing the gains of this curriculum. Nasr explained his process of locating it, and from the smile on his face, the satisfaction he felt in his discovery was quite apparent. The classroom interactions and dialogue inspired by the students’ research, as it related to Ms. Johnson’s lecture, helped to substantiate the curricular choices that had been made up to that point in the semester.

Not only was the level of student awareness about Middletown tangible, but also the role of the student as a contributor to the community became apparent as well during Johnson’s visit. While the students’ participation during this lecture demonstrated both their academic skills and place-awareness, actual civic engagement, as measured by meaningful exchanges and interactions with community members outside of school bounds, was also addressed through this lecture. Although this dimension is an underdeveloped aspect of this curriculum in total, the afternoon with a town planner provided an important glimpse into the possibilities for
expansion in the area of civic engagement for future lesson planning and program development.

**Learning to Read a Photo**

Another valuable classroom experience and assignment included in this curriculum, revealing student growth and engagement, was the lesson that I developed on learning how to use photography as an historical document. I designed a set of readings, a lecture, an interactive activity, and a writing assignment, as the result of my meetings with teachers and observing students throughout the semester. As the students continued to research their neighborhoods at the Middletown Community Historical Society and the Russell library, historic photos had become an abundant source of information. Yet, in order for the students to use photos as “text,” a lesson was needed to discuss the nuances of our relationship to photos and the role photography has played in history. I created a reading packet that included an excerpt from Susan Sontag’s *On Photography*, Walker Evans and James Agee’s *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men*, and Alan Trachtenberg’s *Reading American Photographs*. For homework, the students were asked to select one quote from the reading and to write two to three sentences about the quote. Although they were informed of the general topic and purpose of the lecture and the focus on photography, they were not completely sure about how this lesson would unfold or how they would be engaging with the material during the class. In guiding this class period, my aim was not only to provide students with a new and important perspective on photography, but also to gauge their collective approach to learning through their participation in this activity.
As the lesson proceeded, the students demonstrated a clear desire to discuss and intellectually involve themselves in the subject matter. The first portion of the two hour lesson included a brief explanation about the Farm Security Administration’s use of photography exemplified through the works of Walker Evans and Dorothea Lange. In presenting several works of these two photographers, as a class we noted the details of each image and tried to deduce from our observations the choices that were made by each photographer. Without being asked, students used their selected quotations to substantiate their comments regarding their analysis of the photos, which included *Migrant Mother, 1936* by Dorothea Lange and *Bud Fields and His Family, 1936* by Walker Evans. As we reviewed Evan’s work, we discussed the highly constructed nature of this photo, despite its seemingly “real” and intimate experience. One student related the Evans photo to what he felt Sontag writes about in her work, specifically regarding the unseen choices that photographers make which aren’t immediately apparent. I asked him to read a quote that supported his claims. He read, “Photographs furnish evidence. Something we hear about, but doubt, seems proven when we’re shown a photograph of it.”

This conversation and the students’ apparent desire to deal with theoretical and abstract issues, made me realize I was teaching to a dynamic, engaged, and thoughtful community of students.

The students not only displayed an authentic interest in the readings and this conversation regarding photography, but also demonstrated their extensive familiarity and understanding of Middletown. In order to transition the lesson from the famous photos of Dorothea Lange and Walker Evans to their community, I presented the students with a set of three Works Progress Administration photos that depicted road
construction on Main Street in Middletown. In commenting on the details of the third photo, a student said, “Well, I mean, this could be anywhere. It’s a busy street, a lot of activity. It could even be Middletown.” With a bit of prodding, I was able to persuade her to conjecture that this photo was, in fact, Middletown. Next, in pairs, students chose an unidentified historic photo of Middletown. Following a worksheet that I created for this project, students looked at the details of the photo in order to hypothesize about its date and location. These photos are comparable to the photos that the students could have certainly encountered during their own research. After completing the worksheet, as a class, the students shared their photo and their best attempt at identifying it. All but one group were able to pinpoint the location and date of the photograph within a ten-year period. From the students’ success with this challenge, individually and as a collective group, they demonstrated how this curriculum has enabled them to develop a toolset for learning about their place of Middletown. In addition, these educational experiences have fostered the analytical skills required for differentiating between specific times, locations, and places from the past and present.

In concluding my lesson, I projected several Middletown photos alongside selected Evans and Lange photos without immediately offering an explanation to the students. They were asked to describe the details of the photos, making connections between famous photographic examples of the American landscape and photos depicting the Middletown surroundings. The students’ ability to make these connections is apparent in Tommy’s written reflection about this lecture. He comments, “I think that I am going to make many photocopies of the [photograph
analysis handout] so that whenever I have a picture that is confusing at first, I can study it with Julia’s questions in mind... The course continues to teach me about the evolution of Middletown to what it is today and I think it is amazing that I have found all of the information that I did almost all without a computer.” The students’ responses during this lecture indicate their acquisition of technical skills for analyzing photos and an enthusiasm for critical inquiry.

More theoretically, the student reflections illustrate that they appreciate the many dimensions of place, even in Lange’s work, where she endeavors to expose a specific location and set of issues, as well as make it of national importance. Towards the end of the lecture, one student asked to read the quotation that he had selected for homework from Susan Sontag’s book. He read, “Photographs really are experience captured, and the camera is the ideal arm of consciousness in its acquisitive mood... The camera may distort, but there is always a presumption that something exists, or did exist, which is like what’s in the picture.”2 The effectiveness and value of this “experience” of a place-based photography lesson was apparent in the student reflections, their accuracy in identifying historic photos, and their desire to involve themselves in conceptual discussions

Concluding on How Students Change

I began my photography lecture with a quotation from Lucy Lippard who writes, “One reason to know our own history is so that we are not defined by others, so that we can resist other people’s images of our pasts, and consequently, our futures.”3 My intention in using this quote was to strongly emphasize to these
students that they are individuals who are connected to a larger network of people and places beyond the school walls. I wanted to explain that this material is relevant and useful. I have based my evaluation of the IDS seminar on the criteria of academic achievement, place-awareness, and civic participation. Ideally, a place-based curriculum addresses these three axes simultaneously and fluidly.

In order to determine the efficacy of the place-based curriculum implemented at IDS over the course of the fall and winter terms, I used both qualitative and quantitative measures. After my lesson on photography, I assigned a reflection paper in order to gauge qualitatively some of the effects of this course. Students knew they would be graded on this assignment and had several days to complete their reflection papers. The statistical analysis of quantitative information is included in Appendix I. The quantitative data includes a comparison of pre- and post- surveys. These surveys are comprised of questions used to assess other place-based programs under the PEEC group. Students were required to answer questions on a scale of 1 to 4. The questions relate to the primary evaluative criteria of academic achievement, place-awareness, and civic participation. This student survey is included in Appendix II. Students completed the pre-seminar survey in the fall and the post-survey at the end of the winter term. My intent in disseminating this survey was to remain consistent with surveys administered at the CO-SEED program, and others, and to compare student responses before and after their experiences in the seminar.

While the self-reflection papers demonstrate positive feedback about the program with regards to academic skills acquired, knowledge about their Middletown community, and engagement with material in personal and individual ways for each
student, the survey results do not show any significant changes in the areas measured. There may be several explanations for the lack of consistency in the qualitative and quantitative measures used. Unlike the surveys, students were graded on their reflection papers and had time to consider and give thought to this assignment. While there may be some student motivation to please the teachers and give them positive feedback, in reading these papers, it appears there is a genuine quality to the student reflections overall. The results of the surveys may both point to limitations in the survey itself, as well as program areas that may be improved upon in the future. I observed that students completed surveys quickly and may not have been as thoughtful about responses as they were in their self-reflection papers. Modifications in program assessment might include anonymous self-reflection papers and careful review of survey questions for clarity and user ease. In the future, students might also be encouraged to take their time completing the surveys. As a new place-based program, both the qualitative and quantitative assessment tools used together are effective tools to determine curricular success and programmatic areas that need to be refined for the future.

While this seminar’s first attempt at place-based education has yet to fully incorporate a civic engagement component, there is substantial evidence to support the success of this year, an academically rigorous and meaningful curriculum that pairs historical inquiry and local place in a powerful relationship with one another. Although the value of community participation has been articulated as important, the activities and assignments have not substantially achieved this goal. From my observations of the teacher planning meetings and the conception of this second term
project, I believe that this missing dimension highlights a common split between a
traditional school setting and community partnerships and service learning. The lack
of this community interaction is also due to the significant amount of time required to
plan and communicate with potential partners. While the groundwork has been laid in
the educational framework of this seminar and in the contacts already initiated in the
community, the connection of student work to the community is an area for
improvement and future expansion.

Through an analysis of student work and involvement in the lessons of this
second term, the overall benefits of this seminar substantiate the strengths of a place-
based education model that have been discussed theoretically in my research. Gus’s
comments on the course, encapsulate the ways in which the goals of place-based
learning have been achieved. He describes his experience of the seminar, “Locally, I
look at Middletown completely differently. Instead of “that-building-we-drive-by-
everyday” it’s the “Wilcox Crittenden Forging Department that burned down in 1907!” I drive by the mill neighborhood and imagine what it was like 100 years ago.
My image of Middletown has changed drastically in the past 6 months.” From Gus’s
and other students’ reflections, the preliminary accomplishments of this curriculum
are exemplary.

Notes

1 Susan Sontag, On Photography (New York: Macmillan, 2001), 5
2 Ibid.
Student Reflection #5
Ameya

The lecture on the role of photography in investigating history I found engaging; not the ‘engaging’ that a good student uses to describe a boring lesson to a teacher, because that’s what the teacher wants to hear, but actually engaging. It stood out among the other history activities as more engaging because when examining the photos, the facts themselves were obvious. Thus, we did not have to focus and spend the time learning about the facts, but instead focus on interpretation. Interpretation is interesting; searching for a fact or writing down a mathematical equation only takes a hand to write, flip through book pages, or, more recently, click the ‘search’ bar on Google. Interpretation, on the other hand, takes thinking, using the facts to produce higher-order thinking.

The photography lecture was a rare moment of instantaneous interpretation in the history class, with fact and research less emphasized. It was all there already, in the photo, which is why it stood out as being more interesting.

Our second trimester project is relatively versatile. As said frequently by the teachers, “We don’t know ahead of time what information’s out there,” meaning we have more freedom in our research, etc. This freedom can be used to do, what I have learned, is the main way to make history at all interesting; interpretation.

As with art, once set facts are established (in the case of art, “this painting contains a boy and a dog, with a blue sky”, and for history “the Wilcox, Crittenden Mill burnt down in 1907”), historical driving forces, whims, reactions, and more, are open to interpretation, and require thought. While researching is a process introduced in the third grade, historical interpretation is the material that fills lecture halls and history books: meaning, to me, it is more appealing, just as national history is more appealing than local history.

My goal in this project, the following project, and further ones, would be, then, to readily establish all the facts, the concrete things: date, location, people involved, events, everything. This is not my favorite part about history, but this would be a necessary evil so that once the concrete was over with the “fun part” could begin: thinking about events in history. Some may be able to integrate the pleasure of thinking into research; I, so far, have not been able to. Instead, I have, from this lecture on photography and my pleasure in interpreting photographs, discovered a goal to power me through research, dull days, rewarding days, etc., and be able to use my mind.

So, I thank Mrs. Kleederman and her lecture on photography: if not for the prospect of interpreting history, to be truthful, I would be quite bored. Instead, I have found a pleasure that can help me link some of my favorite subjects, such as English, to history, and extract more from it than I would have otherwise.
Conclusion: How I Changed

I stood in front of the 22 IDS students and four teachers on February 26th. lecture notes in hand and PowerPoint slides loaded onto the computer. I was ready to teach my first lesson. Though I had spent enough time at IDS to make people wonder if in fact I was on the payroll, I had yet to engage with the teachers and students with the particular mission of independently teaching a class. I had been surveying this landscape for a long time, but had never traveled through it with this intent.

When all the students had settled into their seats and we were ready to begin, I asked for a volunteer. A willing collection of students raised their hands. I selected Aaron to read the quote on my first slide, which was projected onto the board in the 8th grade history seminar room. He read a quote from Krapfel, “The study of photographs can help us read a story for ourselves. If we don’t learn how to read the world, then we will be dependent on others to tell us the stories, and we will live our lives according to those stories. Learning to read the stories for ourselves allows us to choose our own course.” While my focus for this lesson was to analyze photography, I also intended to promote an overall sense of purpose for the students’ ongoing research, as well as to continue my investigation of the efficacy of this place-based seminar. In this lesson, we reviewed photographs taken by Dorothea Lange and Walker Evans, as well as photographs of Middletown, using a student-centered approach, where each student was investigator and member of a shared process.

Current 8th grader, Mneya, best summarizes the success of this lesson, particularly as it relates to Krapfel’s writing on the importance of interpreting primary source material for oneself. In her reflections on the lesson, she writes, “The lecture on the
role of photography in investigating history I found engaging; not the ‘engaging’ that a good student uses to describe a boring lesson to a teacher… but actually engaging… using the facts to produce higher-order thinking.”

The clear success of this lesson was deeply informed by my own methodology and experiences at IDS over the course of this year. From my research on the historical roots of place-based learning, my time observing the students at IDS, my participation in the planning and implementation of this course, and specifically this lesson on photography, I have changed as a student, as an instructor, and as an inhabitant of this place, Middletown, Connecticut. The photography lesson was the product of the my work in total, both in the classroom and in Middletown with the seminar group, my independent research on successful place-based education programs, my historical review of stories regarding place and education, as well as thought provoking conversations with my academic advisor, William Stowe. Upon initiating this study, I had only a vague idea how dramatically the various components of this thesis would become interdependent and mutually informative. The result of this process was epitomized by my personal investment in the preparation of this lesson and my comfort in the classroom on that February afternoon. I felt engaged with the students and empowered about teaching others. I attribute the success of my experience at IDS, and particularly my day of teaching independently, to my role both as student and teacher, as well as to the meaningful connections I developed to my community during this place-based project.

My work as a traditional undergraduate student at Wesleyan has enabled me to acquire the skills to review and analyze the literature on place-based education
theory. As I stood in front of the class, I knew from my own educational experiences the significance of Krapfel's claim, "If you don't learn how to read the world, then you will be dependent on others to tell you the stories, and you will live your life according to their stories. But learning to read the stories for yourself will allow you to choose your own course." Krapfel's emphasis on stories has historical implications as the relationship between stories, history, and the land are deeply embedded in place-based literature. I have discovered how foundational texts such as John Winthrop's "A Modell of Christian Charity," Thomas Jefferson's Notes on the State of Virginia, and Dewey's Democracy and Education, connect to more recent work related to place-based education. These writings articulate an important series of questions including, "Where am I? What is the nature of this place? What sustains this community?"

My goal in the historical review was not only to draw parallels between the vocabulary and imagery that is often used by place-based educators today and throughout the development of educational theories over time in the United States, but also, to paraphrase Krapfel's words, to read the stories for myself and choose my own course. Beyond identifying the connection between schooling and local place, I have been exploring techniques for harnessing and articulating this relationship to create lasting, responsible, and inspirational educational experiences. In my investigations, I see the possibilities for this relationship between place and education to produce not one homogeneous story of citizenship, community, and schooling, but instead to create important connections that provide historical insights and foster valuable relationships amongst students, teachers, and their extended communities. In
understanding this framework for education, there is the potential for celebrating
unique diversity in places, while also recognizing a value system that can be used for
community engagement and meaningful educational experiences. My research
exposed me to educational models that have succeeded in fostering academic skills,
while also engaging in community interaction and generating social change. The
recognition and utilization of place may not be the only answer to educational reform
or community growth, but in light of my research on place-based theory, case studies,
and my work at IDS, it posits a hopeful option for the future of our schools and
communities.

While my historical review provided an important foundation for my work at
IDS, it was made more significant through my actual experiences with the students
and teachers. As a student, I know that the reality of the “schoolhouse” is often
different than what one learns about educational policy or theory. The opportunity to
develop a connection with IDS provided me with a context for my theoretical
knowledge, as I had actual people and a place to apply what I had researched. Place-
based educator Robert Knapp writes, “Contextual learning becomes the vehicle for
creating meaningful curriculum and instruction…. We enter the experiential learning
cycle together at the point of action and then proceed through the stages of reflection,
conceptualization, skill development, value formations, application, and then return to
further action informed by acquired knowledge.” The process that Knapp outlines is
one that I have benefited from as a student, and as the eighth grade student reflection
pieces indicate, one that the 8th grade students have benefited from as well. As I stood
in front of the class on Feb 26th, I was informed through my reading and research
related to place, my interactive experiences with these students, professional support from the teachers, as well as a great respect for the connection amongst all these various components.

The structure of my project, as being simultaneously text-based, experiential, and reflective has allowed me to become engaged in a place-based curriculum for myself. In learning about place-based education and being involved in this new curriculum at IDS, I have also generated a place-based learning experience as a college senior. I not only put my theoretical knowledge into the context of a real school, but also was also able to take on the multiple roles of active, engaged learner and active, engaged teacher. My classroom experience at IDS was informed by my Wesleyan coursework and research, research at the Middlesex County Historical Society, the buildings and streets of Middletown, one-on-one interactions with other community members about this project, and through the invaluable support of my advisor. In this way, I understand that, in quoting Knapp again,

Teaching means extending the classroom beyond the four walls of the classroom and the two covers of books. It means immersing students in direct experiences with people and places in order to learn in the context of realistic community situations. My classrooms become the natural and built environments surrounding the indoor classroom of the university.

In the process of determining, experientially, qualitatively, and quantitatively how the eighth grade students changed in regards to their academic skills, their awareness of their place, and their community participation, my own relationship to my place and my own intellectual and technical academic skills were challenged and developed.
A significant dimension of this learning has been in developing an appreciation for the unpredictable nature of working within these various contexts. As a student, my texts and my material were in no way static. As I set out at the beginning of the fall, my plans for establishing a relationship at IDS were far different from how the work transpired. It was often challenging to apply the theory and language that I had learned through my research directly to the classroom. In a busy classroom and school year, I slowly learned that feasibility of a project or curriculum is essential. Though the theory and case studies that I reviewed were important, when I was at the faculty meeting sessions, I began to understand that the more immediate questions and issues are usually the only ones that get significantly addressed. While ideal scenarios were often played out, pressing issues included how to assess the students, how to incorporate all the important lessons and assignment given the snow days, vacations, and play rehearsals, and how to designate library time as efficiently as possible given all the other pressures of the school day. The importance of realistic feasibility and unpredictability of the “schoolhouse” are critical factors to consider for a student, teacher, and anyone interested in curriculum development. From the student reflection pieces and the survey results, it does not appear that the limitations of this school system have prevented IDS in achieving many of its goals.

I understand deeply the importance of an interdependent and community-based education. I will never travel down Middletown’s Main Street without thinking of Liz Warner’s stories about the history of the buildings, Catherine Johnson’s plan for change, or eighth grader K.C.’s identification of Main Street through the WPA photographs during my own lesson. Although before this year, I intellectually
understood the value of researching case studies, such as the Foxfire Program, I now
more fully realize the power and significance of one of the Foxfire interviewee’s,
Aunt Addie Norton, perspective that I noted earlier on in this work. She states, “I tell
you one thing, if you learn it by yourself, if you have to get down and dig for it, it
never leaves you. It stays there as long as you live, because you had to dig it out of
the mud before you learned what it was.”6 This study demonstrates the value in place-
based education for students, teachers, and the community. I have adopted Aunt
Addie Norton’s philosophy as I sought to engage and find the stories of this place for
myself, stories that will never leave me. Yet, through this process, I was in no way
alone. Through this process, I have found my place.

Notes

1 Paul Krapfel in Amy Demarest, “Shared purpose: how teachers engage the local
environment and community to design meaningful and democratic curriculum” (PhD
diss., University of Vermont, 2008), 62.
2 Ibid.
3 Laurie Lane-Zucker, foreword to Place-Based Education, by David Sobel (Great
Barrington: Orion Society, 2004), iii.
4 Clifford E. Knapp, “Place-Based Curricular and Pedagogical Models,” in Place-
Based Education in the Global Age, ed. David Gruenewald and Gregory A. Smith
(New York: Lawrence Erlbaum Assoc., 2008), 12.
5 Ibid., 9.
6 Aunt Addie Norton in Glenn Whitman, Dialogue with the Past (New York:
Rowman Altamira, 2004), 15.
Works Cited


Works Consulted


APPENDIX I: Quantitative Study, Data, and Analysis

IDS Quantitative Study Rationale and Methods

The purpose of implementing the Independent Day School (IDS) student survey is to evaluate their place-based education program. The survey and subsequent analysis serve to supplement the qualitative data compiled over the course of the 2008-2009 academic year.

In September of 2008 and February of 2009, a student survey was administered to the 22 IDS 8th grade students as a homework assignment. The September 2008 and February 2009 surveys are identical documents. It was explained to the students on both occasions that this survey serves to gauge how the class perceived central concepts of the course and to document the changes in ideas that might occur over the course of the year. All 22 students returned the September 2008 survey and 20 students returned the February 2009 survey. The survey is included in Appendix II.

Survey Design

The questions of the administered survey are taken with permission from the Place-based Education Evaluation Collaborative Cross-Program Survey, developed by M. Duffin, A. Powers, and the program staff of the Place-based Education Evaluation Collaborative (PEEC). The questions included in this survey correspond to indices and modules that address overarching curriculum goals. The PEEC program has applied this survey model to several well-documented place-based programs including Community Mapping Program © (CMP), CO-SEED, Sustainable Schools Project (SSP), and Forest For Every Classroom (FFEC), which are all
partners of PEEC. The PEEC survey is designed as an evaluation tool for a wide-range of place-based programs, as one of PEEC’s primary aims is to develop methods for cross-program comparison.

The IDS student survey contains a selection of the PEEC modules and sub-categories, referred to as indices. The module labeled “C” corresponds to the programmatic goal of student civic engagement and community learning and is used to determine whether this goal is achieved in the classroom. The “L” module relates to how students perceive their teachers’ use of local resources, places, and people in the curriculum. The module “N” serves to assess student’s own attachment to place and their perception of their role within their community. The “H” module addresses the curricular goal of community and civic participation and how students value their interactions with local institutions. Module “W” seeks to gauge how students feel their learning improves their school community and module “Y” determines to gauge how students feel their learning affects their community outside of school. The survey includes specific questions, which relate to each of these broader categories and asks the student to choose from five potential response categories relating to either agreement or frequency.

**IDS Statistical Analysis**

Following the February 2009 survey, the September 2008 and February 2009 survey data were compiled. Averages of student responses to the various modules were calculated, and statistical tests were conducted in order to determine student change from September to February (see Table 2). Next, a two-tail, paired t-test was
performed and the p-values and standard deviation numbers were gathered, all in order to determine statistically significant change in student attitudes from September to February (see Table 3).

**TABLE 2. Module Mean Survey Values**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Module</th>
<th>Mean Survey Values</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>September 2008</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>W</td>
<td>3.13158</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Y</td>
<td>3.07895</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>2.42105</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H</td>
<td>3.34211</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L</td>
<td>2.66316</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>2.72105</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**TABLE 3. Module Statistical Data Comparison September 2008 and February 2009**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Mean Change from September 2008 and February 2009</th>
<th>T Test Value</th>
<th>DF</th>
<th>P Value</th>
<th>Standard Deviation September 2008</th>
<th>Standard Deviation February 2009</th>
<th>Significance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>W</td>
<td>0.07895</td>
<td>0.7118</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>0.48571</td>
<td>0.62008</td>
<td>0.69354</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Y</td>
<td>0.18421</td>
<td>0.33056</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>0.74479</td>
<td>0.94668</td>
<td>0.63176</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>-0.19298</td>
<td>0.00414</td>
<td>170</td>
<td>0.9967</td>
<td>0.99612</td>
<td>0.95826</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H</td>
<td>-0.07895</td>
<td>0.74239</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>0.46743</td>
<td>0.78267</td>
<td>0.71431</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L</td>
<td>0.26847</td>
<td>0.02438</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>0.9806</td>
<td>0.9374</td>
<td>0.96097</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>-0.07895</td>
<td>0.50221</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>0.6167</td>
<td>1.07613</td>
<td>1.04338</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Discussion of Quantitative Study**

From the statistical data presented above, no statistically significant changes can be reported from September 2008 to February 2009. The null hypothesis is confirmed, as there was no significant change in the averages of the September and
February survey responses. A comparison of the standard deviation numbers between September and February indicate no significant change for any of the modules, as they indicate similar distribution of responses. The large p-values for all modules also indicate no statistically significant change, as a result is deemed significant at $p < .05$. All values in this study are above $p > .4$.

Graph 1 depicts the average responses per module for both September 2008 (labeled “Before”) and February 2009 (labeled “After”). This graph demonstrates student responses to the six modules, as well as compares the average responses between months. The response averages for each module indicate insignificant variation between the two months.
Summary of IDS Quantitative Data

The quantitative data indicates no significant changes in the students’ perceptions related to the goals of the curriculum, including the use of local resources, sense of civic-engagement, awareness of place, use of local community partnerships, and school and community improvement. Further, the quantitative measures of student change and curricular efficacy do not correspond with the qualitative data, including the student reflection pieces, observations of student engagement with activities and tasks, and individual and group student conversations. Possible hypotheses to explain the discrepancies between qualitative and quantitative measures and observations are listed below:

A) Place-based education may be more accurately characterized through qualitative assessments.
B) The IDS survey may need further revision to accurately measure changes that
develop over the course of a year.
C) A multiple-choice survey may reflect inaccuracies due to students’ misunderstanding of questions or failure to complete with care.
D) The qualitative, graded self-reflection assignment may also be biased due to students’ motivation to get a good grade or please the teacher.
E) The analysis strategies may be conceptually or methodologically limited.
F) Some combination of the above or other competing hypotheses.

The insignificant changes resulting from statistical analysis may or may not be an accurate representation of student learning, change, and growth in the areas measured. However, the results of this study indicate a need for further refinement in both program assessment and development. Overall, this study exemplifies the importance of including qualitative and quantitative data together in an educational study and continuing to explore better methods of measuring and documenting change.
APPENDIX II: IDS Student Survey

IDS Place-Based Learning Student Survey

This survey is about your ideas about your neighborhood. By neighborhood, we mean everything in the area around your school and where you live, including people, parks, nature and the built environment (i.e. buildings, streets). There are no right or wrong answers! Please answer every question. Thank You!

Your individual responses will be seen only by the evaluation team, and your name will NOT be used in any report, publication, or discussion without your prior permission.

Your Name ___________________ Today’s Date __________

Grade _______ Are you Male or Female

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How much do you disagree or agree?</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Tend to Disagree</th>
<th>Tend to Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Not sure or N/A</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>W.2 Our school is environmentally healthy and a good place to learn.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Y.4 Our neighborhood is environmentally healthy and is a good place to live.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C.1 I feel like I am part of a neighborhood.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C.2 I pay attention to news events that affect the neighborhood.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C.3 I know a lot of people in my neighborhood, and they know me.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C.4 On my own time, I often study or read extra about the topics we’re working on at school.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C.6 Learning about the history of the community is something everyone should do.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C.7 Learning about the history of the community is important to me.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C.13 In the last two months I have done</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How much do you disagree or agree? For each sentence, circle only the one number that best matches your answer. Please do not leave any blanks.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>---------------</td>
<td>---------------</td>
<td>---------------</td>
<td>---------------</td>
<td>---------------</td>
<td>---------------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>something with my classmates to take care of my neighborhood or community.</strong></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>C.14 In the last two months I have done something on my own time to take care of my neighborhood or community.</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>C.15 I enjoy learning about my community.</strong></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>H.2 I am comfortable talking to the adults in my neighborhood.</strong></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### How often do these things happen?

For items L1-N8, please circle only the number that best matches how often you do or see the things described.

Please do not leave any blanks.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Two days per year or less</th>
<th>Three to six days per year</th>
<th>About one day a month</th>
<th>One day a week or more</th>
<th>Not sure or N/A</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>L.1</td>
<td>The school building and grounds (places outside of the classrooms) are used as places for learning.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L.2</td>
<td>Parents and/or other community members work directly with students on school-related projects.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L.3</td>
<td>As part of school, our classroom works on real-world problems in our neighborhood, school buildings and/or school yard.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L.4</td>
<td>Our classroom assignments and homework are about nearby nature and/or the neighborhood where we live.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L.5</td>
<td>In my school we learn about local people, culture and history.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N.4</td>
<td>I think to myself that I am glad to live in this neighborhood.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N.6</td>
<td>I stop and think about how things that I do are going to affect nature, my neighborhood, the people and the history of this place around me.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N.7</td>
<td>I spend almost the whole day inside buildings, cars or buses.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N.8</td>
<td>I share my opinions about what should be done to preserve the history of the neighborhood where I live.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N.9</td>
<td>I feel good about what this neighborhood will be like in the future when I am grown up.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For question C.10, circle the one answer that best matches the way you feel.

C.10 This is how I feel about school:
a. I do not enjoy school and what I'm learning is not important to me.
b. Sometimes I learn useful things in school, but usually what I learn is not that important.
c. I learn something important on most days. I can usually see how most of what I learn at school will be useful in my life.
d. Almost everything I learn is important and useful. I enjoy learning at school every day.
e. I'm not sure

X.6 My school is good at academics (literacy, math, science, social studies). 1 2 3 4 0
C10-X10 of this survey taken with permission from the PEEC Cross-Program
Surveys (2004), developed by M. Duffin, A. Powers and program staff of the Place-based Education Evaluation Collaborative (PEEC),

Please answer the following questions as best you can. If you cannot think of three things for each question, just write as many as you can think of.

H3) What are three places near where you live or around school that are the most important to you?
1.
2.
3.

H4) What are three places in your community that you hope will still be around when you are grown up?
1.
2.
3.

H5) If you wanted to change something in your neighborhood, who could you talk to about making a change or improvement? (Who makes decisions about improving or changing your neighborhood?)
1.
2.
3.

The End. Thank you for completing this survey and giving your best effort.
APPENDIX III: Course Documents

IDS 8th Grade History Seminar
Neighborhood Study 2009

What is the purpose of this project?

Over the next 6 weeks you and your team will explore and “read” a neighborhood in Middletown. The challenge is to learn how to see history in the text of a building, the streets, the people, and in the relationships between and among the various elements of your neighborhood. In order to do this you’ll need to learn a little about architecture, a little about a city’s infrastructure, and a little about how a neighborhood supports a group of people and how those people shape the physical space they inhabit. Neighborhoods, the ones we can currently see and the ones that existed behind or beneath the ones we see, have a story to tell us; we need to listen for it, see it and construct that story. Ultimately we want to be able to see how and why those physical spaces change over time?

What kinds of questions will my team be asking about my neighborhood?

The goal is to capture the “heart” of the neighborhood, to create a rich picture of the neighborhood, its historical and present-day composition. Of course, you and your team cannot learn everything about the area, but you can focus on the aspects that interest you most and draw you in. Research will begin with assignments that ask you to write your own investigative questions—historical questions specific to your neighborhood. As you get familiar with your neighborhood, you can begin to use the questions below to move along your exploration. These categories can serve as guidelines to help you shape your work.

1. Individual buildings: What materials is it made of? What is the building’s style of architecture? Who built it? What style roof does it have? What exterior features make it unique? Who built it? Who owned it? Is it residential, commercial, or institutional? How was it used?

2. The neighborhood: What is the relationship between and among buildings? Are they close or far away from each other? How much light gets in between buildings? Are they similar in style or use? What are the boundaries of the neighborhood? What makes a neighborhood a neighborhood? Do the streets define it? Are there natural physical boundaries (e.g., the river)? What services were there in the past or are now provided for the people who live here?

3. People: Who are the people who live and work in this space? Who are the folks who hold its stories? Who are the people who are/were willing to fight for it? If it has been altered, how has it changed or been adopted or reused? Is there evidence of a particular ethnic group or economic group having lived here?

4. Historic Influences: What themes in the story of America helped create and shape the neighborhood? What parts of American history do I need to
learn about in order to understand the life of the neighborhood and its residents? How is the history of my neighborhood connected to national history?

What are the components of the project?
We’ll give you rubrics at each step of the process to help you understand what, exactly, you need to do to perform well at each stage of the project. While you are learning about your neighborhood, we’ll be supporting your work with structured lessons in class. The design of this unit is intended to give you the tools that you will need to “read” a neighborhood so that you can astutely and accurately analyze the primary source information that you gather.

- You will have 4 or 5 classes on the basics of architecture and its historical contexts. Those lectures and quizzes will help you to read your buildings and your neighborhood. You will learn how to look at buildings as text.
- You will have 4 or 5 classes on the infrastructure of city streets. What lives beneath the streets? (How do the roads get planned and built? What lies under the roads? Who plans for water and sewage and garbage removal? How does all that get built?)
- You will meet with and interview a city planner from Middletown.
- Your team will divide the work of writing a summary of research done on events and/or themes in American history that are relevant to your neighborhood’s story.
- You will carry out research on aspects of Middletown related to your neighborhood and its buildings, people and history, which will be driven by your particular interests and discoveries. You will be writing a proposal for your individual research and focus to be approved by the seminar team.
- You will keep a “working annotated bibliography” that continually documents new sources and reviews the usefulness of each source as you investigate your neighborhood.
- You will design a presentation of your findings and share with the public the story of your neighborhood and the value of your research.
- You will design a traveling exhibit that tells the history of your neighborhood with maps, photographs, drawings and short pieces of text.

What are the skills we are practicing during this project?
Consult the set of skills you have from the first term to review what we are emphasizing in this seminar. Can you identify particular skills on which to focus? Which ones do you need to work on the most?

The skills are organized into 6 sets. Each small assignment will focus on a particular set (Reading, Critical Thinking, Writing, Research, Collaborative Work). Within each set you, with the help of your team leader, should focus on one or two skills to practice through this project.
### Reading:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Skill</th>
<th>Not Yet</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Most of the Time</th>
<th>All of the Time</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Identifies and remembers main ideas</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Watches for important details and images in texts</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sees patterns in details</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sees relationship between details and main ideas</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identifies the structure of written text</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Follows the literal <strong>and</strong> figurative meanings</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Writing:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Skill</th>
<th>Not Yet</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Most of the Time</th>
<th>All of the Time</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Uses writing to record observations</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uses writing to explore important questions</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writes in an authentic voice</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uses “purpose” and “audience” to create structure</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writes effective openings and closings</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uses detail and examples to illustrate ideas effectively</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Develops an idea from Paragraph to Paragraph</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seeks and uses feedback in the writing process</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is attentive to grammar and mechanics in polished work</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Critical Thinking:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Not Yet</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Most of the Time</th>
<th>All of the Time</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Figures out the essential purpose(s) of texts</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identifies point of view</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identifies possible bias or prejudice</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identifies premise(s) or assumptions</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guesses about implications or consequences</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Draws conclusions from details and ideas</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Can locate multiple points of view</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Research: Attitudes of Inquiry and Technical Skills**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Not Yet</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Most of the Time</th>
<th>All of the Time</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Questions actively and effectively</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identifies major issues to investigate</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gathers information resourcefully</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Measures usefulness and accuracy of sources</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Practices technical library skills (*see separate skills sheet)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Approach to Learning:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Not Yet</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Most of the Time</th>
<th>All of the Time</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Invests fully: puts in maximum effort</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Demonstrates a sense of discovery</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Takes initiative</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Keeps track of daily learning</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Set goals (4-6 weeks) and works to achieve them</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Takes risks willingly and actively</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Not Yet</td>
<td>Sometimes</td>
<td>MOST OF THE TIME</td>
<td>ALL OF THE TIME</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------------------</td>
<td>---------</td>
<td>-----------</td>
<td>------------------</td>
<td>-----------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Listens attentively</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Demonstrates awareness of group’s needs and its work</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helps to create an inclusive environment for all</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is aware of her/his individual talent/skill within the group</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Balances individual interests with group needs</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Takes responsibility for and can lead the group’s progress</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Can reflect accurately on his/her own role in the group process</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Objective: Part of your work with your neighborhood is to explore and consider how it fits into the larger patterns of American History. This assignment will help you collect and organize information about American history and share your findings with your group. This work, done well, will help you ask stronger questions about how Middletown, CT reflects Middletown, America.

Write a Proposal. Due: Thursday, January 28

As a group, write a proposal for your group’s research. To get started think about the questions you want answered about what was going on in America during the time periods your neighborhood was active. What specific topics do you need to investigate? What years are you curious about? Refer to your list of American themes on your original neighborhood handout Work with your faculty leader on this.

Your group will submit one proposal (typed, Times New Roman, 12 pt., double-spaced, margins). It should be clear from the proposal who will research which topics and why your group thinks those topics are relevant to your neighborhood. Each member of the group will receive the same grade for this proposal.

Write a Summary. Final version due: Wednesday February 3

Each person will submit a 2-page (see homework requirements) summary. Each student will receive his or her own grade for this research paper. Your job is to summarize your topic in American history. Use three sources. Submit a list of sources with your paper. A U.S. History textbook is a smart place to start. Your writing should be clear, direct, completely your own words; it should be full of detail. We will work through the writing process (brainstorm, draft, revise, edit, polish) in English class. You will read your summary aloud to your group before turning it into your faculty leader.
*James Agee and Walker Evans, *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men* (Selected Material)

- *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men* (1939) is the effort of a journalist, James Agee, and a photographer, Walker Evans, to accurately document the lives of three tenant farmer families in rural Alabama in 1936. This work is written in the midst of the Great Depression and Roosevelt's New Deal.

- This preface is Agee's explanation of the role of photography in his text. Text and photos are presented separately in this work, a controversial choice at the time. In your opinion, how is photography used to document history, persuade viewers, and also be a form of artistic expression?

- Please look carefully at the included Walker Evans photos as well. Try not to flip through them quickly. Take a minute and digest them.

*Susan Sontag, On Photography* (Selected Material)

- Identify where Sontag includes important statements about how we use photography. How do you use photos? What is the role of the camera in your life?

*Alan Trachtenberg, Reading American Photographs* (Selected Material)

- This is Trachtenberg’s concluding statement about American photography. Please try and relate his ideas to the other texts reviewed.

- “Photographs transcribe, not "reality", but the world as it was seen and recorded...in the picture we see the world from the angle of the camera's partial vision, from the position it had at the moment of the release of the shutter.”

****Mission: After carefully reading this material, choose one or more quotations from the reading packet and write 2-3 sentences as to why this passage is important or useful to think about.****
IDS Photograph Analysis/Comparison Worksheet 2009

Student Name:                          Date:
Town and State:                       Photograph # _____

1. **Basic Description**: Describe all inscriptions or written markers evident on photo.

2. **Date of photograph**: If no date is indicated, are there other clues that might indicate the time period? What technology is evident? What tools, modes of transportation, communication, or power are visible? Please note time of year as well.

3. **Location**: Can you identify the exact location—street, river, bridge, property, house name or number?

4. **Identifying Factors**: Explain how you decide from the photographic image where the picture was taken.

5. **Imagine** and then describe the sights, sounds, and other sensory details the photographer might have experienced as the shutter clicked on this image.

6. What have you been wondering about as you look at these photographs? Make a list of questions that come to mind.
IDS Post-Lecture Writing Reflection Assignment 2009

“One reason to know our own history is so that we are not defined by others, so that we can resist other people’s images of our pasts, and consequently, our futures.”


**Introduction:** Photography is one valuable medium through which to read historic change. It is also a medium that allows us to connect to history. In analyzing a photo, we can understand the ways in which histories and historical places are subject to reinterpretation, rebuilding, and reconstruction. Therefore, the material construction of buildings and photographs often parallel the processes of history.

Further, understanding a photo provides opportunities in understanding local stories, people, and events. As we look through historical photos of places that we know today, we are also learning about our own position in that story.

**Your Mission:** Please reflect on this lesson on photography, as well as the ideas and research methods that you have been using throughout this year. Has your perspective changed on learning about history? On the importance of local history? On your biases in interpreting history? What has this course made you think about in terms of the relationship of what we call the past and what we call the present, on what we call our “community” and your own position within it?

****Use this as an opportunity to reflect on the types of questions and the perspective that you have been asked to use for this seminar. This should be a one to two page typed (Times New Roman, 12 point) reflection piece.
IDS Photograph Assessment Rubric 2009

1= not there  2= minimal effort  3= satisfactory  4= above average  5= exceptional

Quality of work demonstrates:

_____ Accurate and careful completion of information
   Comments:

_____ Thorough identification of details within the images
   Comments:

_____ Extensive examination of change over time
   Comments:

_____ Careful investigation to determine facts, dates, location and change
   Comments:

_____ Thoughtful and original formulation of ideas to draw conclusions
   Comments:

____ Total
Performance demonstrates:

_____ Follows Appropriate Instructions
   Comments:

_____ Demonstrates knowledge of primary source materials
   Comments:

_____ Preparation and planning
   Comments:

_____ Total
Behavior demonstrates:

_____ Initiative, interest and enthusiasm
   Comments:

_____ Cooperation within a group
   Comments:

_____ Respect and concern for others
   Comments:

_____ Appropriate use of class time
American History Paper
IDS Term Two Final Project Assignment 2009

Compiling and Presenting your Neighborhood Study

Presentation of Material.

A stand-alone exhibit
Your group will need to convey information about your neighborhood’s history through an exhibit that can “stand alone” and teach others without you having to be there to interpret it. You will have a chance to present your work and talk about it publicly, but your exhibit should be designed to be self-explanatory.

The exhibit must convey the group’s understanding of

Accurate historical information
Change over time in the Neighborhood
Connections to broader American history themes
Communication about the “essence” of the neighborhood

The group should consider using all of the following to create a visual understanding of the neighborhood’s past and present and its link to American history.

Maps
Historic photos of buildings and/or people
Modern photos of buildings and/or people
Research on particular parts of the neighborhood
Advertisements in newspapers or City Directories...

Walking tour created and conducted by the group
Each group will design a walking tour of the neighborhood and conduct the tour for other students. Design of the tour and a written script will be a part of this assessment. Public speaking and handling questions from the group will also be assessed.

Reflection on your Process.

2-page process paper by each individual. After the presentations and walking tours, each student will write a reflection of their work. In it, students will consider what they have learned about research, about asking questions to conduct an inquiry, about the roles they chose while working collaboratively.