

Introduction

How This Book Started

The stories, observations and arguments you will read here owe their inspiration to an early morning walk with Wayne Peck at a 1998 American Educational Research Association Conference in San Diego. Wayne had chosen to use his M.Div. from Harvard to pastor a small, interracial, progressive church in Pittsburgh's urban Northside as well as wrap up his PhD in rhetoric at Carnegie Mellon. At this point, I was engaged with equal enthusiasm in how to turn the research, my colleague in psychology Dick (John. R.) Hayes and I had named "cognitive rhetoric," into "teachable" heuristics—strategies that our "expert" writers were showing us but our "novices" didn't seem to know. I had made a start with a textbook on problem-solving strategies for writing.

However, in that cool early morning air in San Diego, Wayne Peck made a remark that opened up a whole new path in my life. As he said, "You know, for all your CMU students are learning, they will succeed anyway, with or without greater skill in writing. But for the black and white inner-city teenagers in my neighborhood, being able to communicate in more public ways might make all the difference."

Somehow, despite growing up in Kansas and small-town Iowa, I knew he was right. And somehow, by that fall, we had invented the Community Literacy Center, joined forces with Ms. Joyce Baskins (a recognized African American advocate and "mother of the neighborhood" in Pittsburgh's Northside), and created a college course in literacy that combined reading in theory, research and social action in order to mentor a group of urban teenage writers. And we all learned a lot. Each semester a Community Literacy Center project took on an issue those teenagers were facing, from risk and respect, to stress, to gangs, to finding jobs, to police, which they explored in their own publishable newsletter and then dramatized and presented in a public Community Conversation to engage the audience in discussing the issues these teenagers knew so well.

This story is a good example of what is now being called "co-creation." In a review of Aimée Knight's argument for this practice in her *Community is the Way*, Christopher Castillo sketches three guiding principles for community based partnerships: 1) focus on communities' strengths and assets, 2) prioritize co-creation of knowledge with partners, and 3) work towards change in the process of community work (153). This is how we also described it at the time:

The design and staffing of the CLC reflects its intercultural agenda which invites people to cross boundaries of race, age, class, and gender. Along with the present authors, Joyce Baskins brings 20 years of community activism to her advocacy for African-American youth. Donald Tucker brings experience as a

jazz musician and construction foreman to engaging inner-city youth in designing community development videos, Elenore Long, a post-doctoral fellow . . . brings her research on literacy and social action, . . . and Kevin McCartan brings know-how in grassroots community development and construction to CLC projects (Peck, Flower, and Higgins 221).

One of the distinctive features of this program was that although our teenage writers may not have been models of “success” at doing school, here they were taking literate action, writing about real, often unspoken challenges they faced in their neighborhoods. When they walked into the Center to talk and write, they were the undisputed “experts.” And the mentors from my class, who were identified as “Supporters,” were just that. What we “taught” were strategies drawn from our research for problem-solving and decision-making, not simply for planning and revising but what for turned out to be our three most powerful strategies for inquiry: getting at the “Story-Behind-The-Story,” digging out “Rival Interpretations,” and exploring “Options and Outcomes.” Each writer’s Supporter then encouraged, challenged and helped Writers think through how to turn their insights into an effective text. That is, how to make teachers, administrators, even police officers who came to the Community Conversations or read their newsletters see their world a little differently. (A measure of success I always treasured was the angry high school English teacher who came up to me at a Conversation, to accuse us of making her newly confident student “think he could write.” Apparently, we had different standards.

As director of Pittsburgh’s Community House, Wayne Peck brought a historical perspective to this work. Founded in 1916 at the height of the settlement house movement, with its classrooms, kitchens, offices, gym, and swimming pool, Community House was designed to be a “place of connection,” to create a “light house of education” for urban neighborhoods” (Peck et al. 201). For him, “the CLC seeks to reinvent the settlement house vision of community and university interaction, but this time with attention centered on collaborative problem solving and the appreciation of multiple kinds of expertise” (203). His account of Mark captures this kind of engagement.

A bright and resourceful teenager, who like many African-American males, finds little that interests him in school and is frequently suspended. . . . A fifteen-year-old at a crossroads. . . . In a recent CLC project, for example, Mark and ten other teens used writing to investigate the reasons for the increase in school suspension in the public schools. To present this “policy paper” Mark and his peers organized a “community conversation” with the mayor, the media, the school board president, principals, and community residents, in which Mark performed a rap written from a teen’s perspective and his peers interpreted it for the audience. As the culmination of their eight-week project, the

teens also presented a newsletter, “Whassup with Suspension,” which has since become required reading for teachers and students in Mark’s high school. (199-200)

Over the next 20 years this start-up drew in undergrad and graduate students. As non-profits do it morphed into new projects and research in new cities led by folks like Elenore Long and Lorraine Higgins. Many of these are referenced in the discussion, but the cases here will draw on my own experience. My own learning curve, later as a director of the university’s Center for Community Outreach but more importantly as an ordinary college professor, led to new courses and different projects with nursing aides, welfare recipients, and “at-risk” freshmen, on problems emerging in organizations, colleges, universities, unions, and high schools. In search of outcomes of engaged education, this book will draw on various kinds of data from this series of projects at the CLC and Carnegie Mellon University.

One of these projects, Decision Makers, was designed with an innovative high school program for juniors and seniors with a learning disability. Coming to the Carnegie Mellon campus computer lab, these “Scholars” created a personal *Journey Book* about their own good, bad, and future decisions, while their Supporters, in my course on Literacy: Educational Theory and Community Practice, helped draw out their Scholar’s own insight and expertise. A Decision Makers computer program we designed embedded their now easily publishable writing within an online guide with prompts and questions based on the same strategies developed at the CLC. As an added bonus, it allowed us to collect an on-going body of pre/post data on the changes in their “Reflective Decision Making” discussed in Chapter 3.

A second set of projects created a series of Community Think Tanks, visited in Chapters 2, 3, and 5. Students in my seminar on Leadership, Dialogue and Change organized their Community Think Tank around a campus or community issue. Collecting alternative, and often competing, representations of the problem and of options and outcomes from a variety of stakeholders, they then created a Briefing Book sent to all participants. The booklet prepared them for the problem-solving dialogues in a series of Round Table discussions, the results of which the students documented, and published online (www.cmu.edu/thinktank, accessed 4 April 2024). (See Chapter 2, Figure 2.1)

So these chapters grew out of my experience over 25 years with the folks in the CLC, Decision Makers, and the Community Think Tanks. It was these people with whom I was privileged to work who provide the substance and the insights of this book. And it was thinking back over those events, stories, and data we had collected, that I was struck with the significance of *what they were doing* with what they learned. And this became my motivation to go back and ask, *what were the outcomes for them?* Doing so revealed not only distinctive examples of *transfer*, but remarkable instances of *transformation* in which former college students and community writers rewrote and adapted that experience into significantly personal outcomes. Yet at the same time it was striking how little our standard

methods of assessment look beyond the college classroom (and sometime internships). In particular, how little we know about the life *outcomes* for the students who took part in *community engaged education*.

A Particular Model of Engagement

This story has its own niche in the robust culture and history of community engagement. Its model of engagement can start with faculty who, like myself may have multiple relations to community engagement, but who have also had the opportunity to teach college courses with high expectations for intellectual engagement with theory and research (in my case in rhetoric, inquiry, social justice, and public deliberation) with students who are equally eager to become Supporters, dealing with challenging problems, in relationships across difference in which the community “Partner” is the knowledge expert. That’s a long sentence but those interconnections are what make this such a fertile ground for learning. Here the college student must deal with many of the issues raised in the historical path from service to educational engagement—issues that involve collaborative relationships, reciprocity, positionality, on the one hand, and various forms of action for social justice, on the other—always in the context of a unique and unpredictable setting where success is never guaranteed.

To be more explicit, this book will explore a particular form of *community engaged education*. As an *educational* practice for college students, it creates a dialogue in which academic research and theory is not only studied but then embedded and tested in a *community experience* raising the challenge of dealing with difference. In this context of intercultural *engagement* students draw on a conceptual framework, sketched above, designed to support rhetorical praxis through action and reflection. With the goal of developing *working knowledge* based on inquiry and metacognitive understanding, the educational *outcome* for these students lies in whether and how this knowledge is adapted and *applied* in their lives beyond the classroom and college.

Working out of this paradigm for community engaged education, my goals are

- To explore our potential to make an even stronger case for engaged education (given what has been called a “crisis in the humanities”) by documenting its outcomes.
- To expand our understanding of transfer beyond the classroom to reveal the even more powerful acts of knowledge transformation we are seeing.
- And, finally to consider new methods for tracking, assessing and giving public presence to the outcomes of engaged education.

What Can This Book Offer?

Privileged for over 25 years with this sort of educational engagement, I found I had amassed a collection of varied revealing accounts of outcomes students have

seen for themselves. Unlike attitude surveys, they were chiefly designed not only to improve my own classes, but as a concluding assignment that would draw my students into the reflective inquiry that can transform learning. Each chapter will then describe:

- A particular kind of outcome, illustrated with a case study from these documents,
- And a non-experimental, teacher-based method we can use with our students to track their transfer and transformations, and to document those outcomes,
- Ending with a brief account of what we observed in our particular contexts using that method.

The final chapter describes some heuristics for introducing a framework for reflection, knowing that reflection on one's own practice will open the door to personal agency and deeper learning. It then reviews some ways students can carry out this inquiry themselves. In the same spirit in which each chapter makes a distinction between a method and what we ourselves observed, I want to emphasize how these methods can be adapted to the wide range of situations and goals different teachers will have.

Table 1. Outcomes, Tools, and Lenses

Key Outcomes	Tools and Lenses for Tracking	Chapter
A Case for Engaged Education	Activity Analysis as a Social, Cultural, Cognitive Lens	Chapter 1
Creating Personal Outcomes	Critical Incident Interviews and Activity Analysis	Chapter 2
Building Public Facing Outcomes	Circulation, Conflict, and Framing as Conceptual Lenses, A Statistical + an Interpretive Lens	Chapter 3
Interrogating Hidden Frames as a Path to Change	Frame and Metacognitive Analysis, Grounded Theory Building,	Chapter 4
Putting Transformation to Work	Reflection and Metacognition as Paths to Working Theories and Action	Chapter 5
Teaching for Transformation	Adaptive Leadership, Activity Analysis, and Grounded-Theory Building	Chapter 6

Putting this Work in Context

The title of this book, *Outcomes of Engaged Education*, needs a bit of an explanation. From a historical perspective, those terms can call to mind the broad change in academic culture that has united both the institutional outreach and the curriculum of colleges and universities with different communities and their

needs. Looking back, there was obviously the long tradition of volunteerism and community service that spawned “service-learning” more generally. But it wasn’t until the 1980s that it became the subject of research and assessment in education and educational psychology. In Alan S. Waterman’s detailed though dated review, these “experiential learning” and “community-service learning programs” were only lightly connected to a curriculum and were assessed in terms of simple results (increased school attendance or grades) and holistic measures of attitudes. In 1985 “public service” gained status and visibility when the four presidents of Brown, Stanford, Georgetown, and the Education Commission of the States co-founded the non-profit Campus Compact to showcase the good work their students were doing. (By 2000 it had 700 member campuses.) In 1984 Ernest Boyer’s influential Carnegie Reports (written as President of the Carnegie Foundation) began proposing a new paradigm of scholarship that would integrate, communicate, and apply knowledge through professional service.

But the sea change relevant here came when the practice of “service” was rewritten into “community collaboration” or “engaged education” in the academic field of writing, rhetoric, and communication studies. In 1989, Pittsburgh’s Community House and Carnegie Mellon founded the Community Literacy Center. (As far as we knew, this was the first use of the particular term “community literacy.”) The year 2000 saw the first issue of *Reflections*, in which its opening review of the previous ten years, announced both the enormous popularity of service learning and the confusion over what actually was (Adler-Kassner 28).

In the same year, Tom Deans’ ground-breaking study, *Writing Partnerships: Service-Learning in Composition*, defined the purview of this new academic field as writing for community, writing about community, and writing with community. In the same year, the Conference on College Composition and Communication named a new special session for it. Later in the fall of 2021 the first issue of the *Community Literacy Journal* appeared. The lead article in that first issue was on the CLC. It was also the focus of Dean’s chapter on “writing with” (two of his three recommended sources also came from the CLC). Back in 1998 the WAC Clearinghouse had opened its doors as an online, open-access publishing collaborative with contributions from more than 200 scholars from six continents. Although WAC is a standard bearer for writing in multiple disciplines and technology, it now offers access to 4,240 resources on service learning, 3,230 on community literacy, and 2,120 on community engagement. Obviously, there will be overlap in these lists, but again they signal the growing breadth of interest in community related scholarship.

This new academic community began to call its work by various names, from community literacy and collaboration to self-publishing, to public pedagogy, to civic, social, and educational engagement among others. It had moved from university-initiated outreach, to local, individual initiatives with nonprofits, from collaboratively designed projects and programs to expanding networks of groups. Moreover, if we look at the first issues of those new journals, from their beginning

the context, sites, scope and concerns of this movement ranged from writing in the context of the first-year college experience, public housing, and community-based technological literacy programs, to analyzing labor market connections, designing writing centers, and sustaining woman-centered programs. Now, 25 years later, we are entering an even more heightened level of political engagement and critique, focused on racism and discrimination, and calls to act for social justice.

From the beginning, the scope of the new model of community engagement was remarkably broad, followed over the last 25 years by a continued expansion of its public visibility, funding and academic significance. In WAC, the clearinghouse for writing across the disciplines, community-linked research turns up across its sites, from professional writing to nursing to technical communication. As Ann Blakeslee and her colleagues note in “A Story of a Writing-Based Resource—and a Call to Engage” even “technical communication has made tremendous strides in enacting a social justice agenda . . . [which is] accountable to our communities and their members” (42). By the time of Eli Goldblatt, Steve Parks, and David Jolliffe’s landmark 2008 *Imagining Community Literacy Symposium*, we were being called to increasingly public action by models of social activism and community publishing such as Steve Parks and Eli Goldblatt’s *New City Writing* and Steve Parks *New City Community Press* and David Coogan’s 2006 work for social change through community action and later prison writing. Now in a quick look through our journals and conferences, community engagement is even more emphatically focused on social justice.

However, as we will discuss in Chapter 1, our understanding of educational outcomes and the practice of assessing them is still somewhat murky. Although it goes beyond the measurement of community members’ competency in reading and writing that dominated early outreach programs, the assessment of their college mentors is largely dependent on broad holistic evaluation and attitude assessments. For example, a recent study using multiple sophisticated research methods, is giving us an expanded view of the broad outcomes of community-based engagement for college students. They conclude it “has been connected to increases in civic attitudes and civic mindedness; civic and community engagement, including increased value of engaging with the community” which includes feeling both the value of engagement and its social responsibility and obligation (Chittum et al. 16). However, they point out, although the research has expanded, “higher education still has much to learn about the efficacy of community-based experiences” (16).

We have work to do.