



RURAL VOICES

PLACE-CONSCIOUS
EDUCATION *and the*
TEACHING OF WRITING

edited by Robert E. Brooke

The Practitioner Inquiry Series

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Rural Voices

PLACE-CONSCIOUS EDUCATION
AND THE TEACHING OF WRITING

Edited by Robert E. Brooke



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This book is dedicated to the memory of Carol MacDaniels—
colleague, leader, friend



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Preface

This is a book for writing teachers, written by other writing teachers. This book also celebrates local knowledge—the engagement of teachers and students with their immediate communities, their region, and the local issues that frame their daily lives. We believe that all of us—elementary students, teenagers, and adults—grow when writing allows us to engage with our lived worlds. Writing ought to be a means of becoming a more active participant in our experience, a means of understanding, influencing, even shaping the communities in which we live. In short, we believe energized writing is, at core, place-conscious. To write well—to *want* to write well—writers of any age must feel “located” in a particular community and must feel that their writing contributes.

We wrote this book between 1999 and 2002, years when the national trend in education was toward standardization, toward national curricula that is teacher-proof and student-proof, toward an increasingly “placeless” form of education. While we understand the necessity for public accountability buried in demands for national standards and value-added educational outcomes, we don’t believe placeless education is the answer. In this book we will try to show how real accountability develops when students and teachers engage with the local and regional communities who sponsor them. Real accountability emerges when education teaches how to live well, actively, and fully in a given place. In the chapters that follow, the 10 members of the Nebraska Writing Project’s Rural Voices, Country Schools team invite readers into their classrooms and communities to explore the rich writing and active citizenship that emerges when writing teachers embrace place-consciousness as a principle.

The classroom stories and research in this book were gathered between 1997 and 2000 as part of the National Writing Project’s 3-year Rural Voices, Country Schools program. Because the immediate purpose of that program was to capture, in teacher research, what’s good about rural teaching, almost all of the classroom examples in this book come from rural schools. We are highly aware of the advantages of teaching in rural communities,

especially the greater autonomy we have as teachers. When (as was the case for several team members) you are, by yourself, the entire English department in the building, the administrators believe without a doubt that you are the expert for that subject area. At the same time, we believe the principles of place-conscious education apply in a much wider range of educational environments. When teachers and students jointly connect writing education to their immediate community, to the regional issues that shape that community, and perhaps spiraling out to the community's place in the national and international world, then writing education becomes motivated, active, creative, and effective. While our book is certainly most relevant to other rural teachers, we hope that suburban and urban teachers will find ideas worth considering here too.

Given our focus on the communities that surround writers, we are especially aware of the many people who have supported us in the writing of this book. We would like to acknowledge some of them here. At the most local level, our immediate families have served as amazingly supportive communities, putting up with long absences, trips to regional and national conferences, and much listening as we talked through our ideas. Equally supportive have been our school communities, from administrators who have sponsored our participation in this work (especially Norm Yoder and Ron Pauls at Heartland Community Schools, and Brad Buller and Ed Johnson at Syracuse-Avoca-Dunbar, administrators who each hosted three Rural Institutes at their schools) to teachers with whom we have collaborated. Several of us meet regularly with teacher writing groups, whose discussion has helped our book develop. We'd especially like to acknowledge the members of Carol MacDaniels's weekly writing group (Linda Beckstead, Kate Brooke, and Joan Ratliff), who gave invaluable help to shaping her chapter following her death. We acknowledge the help of our students, many of whom are represented in these chapters, and many more who responded to drafts in progress in numerous writing workshop sessions. The book has also benefited from professional editorial guidance by Carol Collins and Michael Greer at Teachers College Press.

Our work has also emerged in the context of several place-conscious projects in Nebraska and nationally. School at the Center, especially Paul Olson, Jim Walter, and Jerry Hoffman, provided both initial funding, the direct impetus for our Rural Institutes, and an intellectual community. The Nebraska Humanities Council, especially Mollie Fischer and Pete Beeson, have supported our Rural Institutes for the past 4 years. Barbara Poore, of the Rural and Community Trust, has remained a constant support. Dr. Robert Manley offered help with oral heritage to generations of students at Heartland Community Schools. Finally, we owe thanks and gratitude to our Rural Voices, Country Schools colleagues from the Na-

tional Writing Project, especially national administrators Elyse Eidmann-Aadahl (who traveled to Nebraska early on to explore how our site might work with the National program) and Laura Paradise (who has continued to work with the team following the end of the Rural Voices, Country Schools grant). We acknowledge as well all our friends and team members from the other Rural Voices, Country Schools sites. The theme of this book—that teachers are local educational experts, well able to design effective local curricula—is centered in the National Writing Project’s commitment to teacher efficacy. We are proud to have the National Writing Project join with Teachers College Press in publishing this volume.



Place-Conscious Education, Rural Schools, and the Nebraska Writing Project's Rural Voices, Country Schools Team

Robert E. Brooke

Migratoriness has its dangers. . . . I know about this. I was born on wheels, among just such a family. I know the excitement of newness and possibility, but I also know the dissatisfaction and hunger that result from placelessness. Some towns that we lived in were never real to me. They were only the raw material of places, as I was the raw material of a person. Neither place nor I had a chance of being anything unless we could live together for a while.

—Wallace Stegner, *The Sense of Place*

I came to Nebraska the product of a migratory culture and a migratory education system. It's taken me over 15 years to understand even a little about place-conscious living and place-conscious education, even though the need for such understanding was right there in front of me, from the very first summer.

A PERSONAL STORY, WITH A MORAL

When I arrived in Lincoln in the summer of 1984 to begin teaching writing at the University of Nebraska, I came burdened by almost a decade of academic migration. In that decade I received the college training Paul

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Gruchow (1995) describes as a course of study in “How to Migrate”—a course of study that separates learning and writing from their connections to one’s place of origin, and substitutes instead an immersion in abstract ideas and skills and national marketability. My years in higher education were typical. I’d gone away to college, as had all the “best” students in my Denver high school. Then, for graduate school, I went away again, to Minnesota because they gave me a good scholarship. After some years there, I tested the job waters, applying for positions across the country, interviewing at several universities, listening to my advisor’s maxim that “academics can’t choose where they work.” I took the offer from the University of Nebraska because it was the “best” then offered, measured by the size of the graduate program, the teaching load, and the possibility of research grants. Although I could not have articulated it fully at that time, I had clearly become an academic transient. I imagined a career that would involve several more such moves, as my academic stock rose and fell based on research and teaching skills I’d been trained to think of as universally valuable. Though a part of me missed the Rocky Mountains, and though I had unexamined reasons for wanting to stay in the western United States if I could, I had come to assume that such feelings were secondary.

I arrived in Nebraska, I’d argue, as a particular academic incarnation of what Wallace Stegner calls the displaced American:

Adventurous, restless, seeking, asocial or antisocial, the displaced American persists by the millions long after the frontier has vanished. He exists to some extent in all of us, the inevitable by-product of our history: the New World Transient. . . . As a species, he is nonterritorial, he lacks a stamping ground. Acquainted with many places, he is rooted in none. Culturally he is a discarder or transplanter, not a builder or conserver. He even seems to like his rootlessness, though to the placed person he shows the symptoms of a nutritional deficiency, as if he suffered from some obscure scurvy or pellagra of the soul. (1992, pp. 199–200)

In the introduction to *Where the Bluebird Sings to the Lemonade Springs* (1992), Stegner explains he is thinking in this description primarily of men of his father’s generation in the first to middle decades of this century (a fact that helps explain his choice of gendered pronouns). He had in mind the speculators and farmers and gold-rushers who flooded the western United States in the last hundred years, couldn’t find a living in any single place, and consequently migrated among several. Stegner describes, with some personal anger, how this migratory living often brings with it harsh exploitation of natural and cultural resources—if you don’t plan to live someplace more than a decade, it doesn’t matter in what condition you leave it. He

claims this way of thinking has been inherited by many in our contemporary generations. I would further assert that our mainstream educational system presently tends to teach such ways of thinking, and that young men and women of many backgrounds find themselves enculturated on graduation, as I did, to the values of the American transient.

I know I arrived in Nebraska prepared to inculcate future generations with such thinking. I brought, for instance, course plans for first-year composition that would require students to focus on the construction of reasoned arguments that would hold up in any humanities department in any university in our country. These plans looked toward their future professional migration and looked away from any recognition of where they had been.

But my first summer in Nebraska offered me a telling image of an alternative way of imagining writing, place, and academic work. For me, coming to Nebraska was partly a return. While Denver is in sight of the Rocky Mountains, its ecosystem is really High Plains. As a child, my father's oil work took him (and us) through eastern Colorado, eastern Wyoming, and western Nebraska. So I was familiar with the landscape. Nevertheless, a couple my wife and I met was sure we needed to see what the state was really like. They had just sold a ranch in the Sandhills. She was now studying studio arts (as was my wife, Kate), while he was studying fiction writing. They packed us in their pickup and drove us out for an overnight on the old ranch near Sargent, a spot almost dead center in Nebraska.

I remember that afternoon. We walked the fence of our friends' land, skirted the muddy road that's impassible in spring, identified the musk thistle that must be cut and burned lest it overrun the pastures. We watched the sun bake the one deep place on the creek, where the water has formed a hollow. We felt the sun and porous earth and constant plains wind.

I remember too that evening. We attended a meeting of a local horse breeders' group at a ranch house about an hour away. Someone had written minutes to guide discussion. Someone else had written a resolution for the group to send to the state legislature, to request formal recognition for the horse breed. Our friend read aloud a poem he'd written about the fading of a local town. After the business was done, a neighbor sang ranchers' songs to a guitar, songs she'd written herself. Once we'd driven back and Kate and I finally retired, we found a collection of local folklore, Roger Welsh's *Shingling the Fog and Other Plains Lies* (1972), which our friends had left on the bedside table.

I couldn't put it in words at that time, but what this day offered was a wholly different way of imagining the work of learning and writing. Within this particular landscape, dominated by grass and livestock and prairie

wind, we met a particular people, already formed with strong civic practices and reasoned writing. The day was full of writing, emerging as if naturally from the concerns of land and people: community organization and political action, poetry and song, local heritage and humor.

I remember being excited by the day, thinking what powerful examples I'd seen of writing in action, wondering if I could use some of these examples in my classes the coming fall. I think now that what gave this day such power is the way all this writing was linked directly to local place: to the expression and preservation of local history and landscape; to the hard thinking necessary to confront social problems as large as the farm economy or political realities as tangled as state regulations for horse breeding; to the hunger for art and words and music that render the character of the plains and its people.

That summer of 1984 I returned to Lincoln, struck by these images but not yet sure what they meant. I taught the course I planned and was a bit unhappy when many of my students didn't seem to grasp the relevance of the assignments I'd created. Many of them wanted to write about their grandparents, or the excitement of sorority rush, or the differences they noticed between the "big city" of Lincoln and the rural communities from which they'd come. Though they tried to write as I directed, they seemed either resentful or confused by my demands that they make their work "significant," "academically relevant," something any educated person in the country would find engaging. To these students, my demand for contextless academic relevance seemed to strip away their perception of what was *actually* relevant. What was actually relevant was local, rooted in their families and towns and current experience; what I was asking for demanded something else, stripped of local conditions in the quest of the academic marketability of argumentation.

Part of my personal journey, between then and now, has been to come to understand the moral of my introduction to Nebraska. While I still understand the reality of our migratory economy and migratory educational system—and in many ways still inhabit both myself—I can also see an alternative: place-conscious living and place-conscious education. The moral is this: Learning and writing and citizenship are richer when they are tied to and flow from local culture. Local communities, regions, and histories are the places where we shape our individual lives, and their economic and political and aesthetic issues are every bit as complex as the same issues on national and international scale. Save for the few of us who become senators and CEOs and *National Geographic* reporters, it is at the local level where we are most able to act, and at the local level where we are most able to affect and improve community. If education in general, and writing education in particular, is to become more relevant, to become a real force for

improving the societies in which we live, then it must become more closely linked to the local, to the spheres of action and influence which most of us experience.

I believe I was offered a glimpse of place-conscious living and writing that first summer in Nebraska. In my work over the past 15 years with the Nebraska Writing Project, teachers from across the state and region have helped me move from glimpse to articulation. When I was given the chance, through the National Writing Project's Rural Voices, Country Schools program and its collaboration with Nebraska's local School at the Center, to work directly with rural teachers on place-conscious writing instruction, I welcomed the opportunity. I hoped I'd learn from these teachers how to enact a pedagogy of place, a teaching practice that might lead to a richer kind of citizenship. After 3 years of working with the eight teachers whose wisdom has shaped this book, I can see how place-conscious writing instruction can inform the development of classrooms, young learners, and communities in the Great Plains of Nebraska. And I can imagine how place-conscious writing instruction might be implemented in any local community, rural or urban, to increase the relevance of learning and the active citizenship of learners.

PLACE-CONSCIOUS WRITING EDUCATION: THE IDEA

A human community, if it is to last long, must exert a sort of centripetal force, holding local soil and local memory in place.

—Wendell Berry, *The Work of Local Culture*

The term *place-conscious education* comes from Paul Theobald (1997), especially from his two practical chapters "Place-Conscious Elementary Classrooms" and "Place-Conscious Secondary Classrooms." But the idea, as he points out, has a rich intellectual heritage, stretching back to the ancient Greeks and forward to a contemporary host of critics of culture and agriculture (Berry, 1987; Critchfield, 1991; Gruchow, 1995; Jackson, 1987) as well as educational reformers (Dewey, 1938/1997; Goodlad, 1994; Fullan, 1993; Olson, 1995). (Our research team was first introduced to the idea by Paul Olson, one of the originators of the School at the Center program in Nebraska, who has argued for 4 decades that schooling can be a centering force in the revitalizing of rural communities.)

For Theobald (1997), place-conscious education is schooling that focuses on the "intradependence" of human life. *Intradependence* is a word he coined to contrast with the traditional American *independence* of rugged individualism and the contemporary exploration of *interdependence*

between peoples. For Theobald, *intradependence* captures both human interdependence and our necessary relations to the natural world. "Intradependence means to exist by virtue of necessary relations *within a place*" (p. 7; his italics). Place-conscious education, thus, is schooling that focuses on the necessary relations—cultural, natural, agricultural—that shape a given place and its human communities. By centering education in local civic issues, history, biology, economics, literature, and so forth, learners will be guided to imagine the world as intradependent, filled with a variety of locally intradependent places, and to develop a richer sense of citizenship and civic action. He writes:

Beginning at the elementary level, students must be socialized into the practice and habit of researching and deliberating answers that vex their communities *at the moment*. Schools can become places that live and work in the present, with no more attention paid to the past or future than the amount necessary to add substance and depth to students' increasingly complex understandings about the world and the place of their community within it. (p. 134; his italics)

In other words, Theobald wants an education that immerses learners into the life of human communities *while they are still in school*, thereby teaching the practice of civic involvement, which he sees as fundamental for a democracy like ours. To accomplish this, teachers and students must start with the local communities where they can participate—school, town, church, family, neighborhood—and make ever-widening connections as they help inform the students' developing civic engagement.

Theobald admits that this idea will sound strange to people raised in our migratory, market-driven educational system. "There are those," he writes, "who will say that an intellectual embrace of the immediate locality cannot be sustained for long, that students will inevitably have to go back to studying decontextualized 'stuff,' stuff they 'need to know' or 'have to have' for some future date with destiny (or with the Educational Testing Service, although there are those who claim that this is one and the same)" (p. 137). Theobald's answer to those who worry about students missing "decontextualized stuff" comes in two parts. The first is principled, drawing on a tradition of learning theory that asserts "curriculum is not synonymous with information," but is better thought of as the ideas and practices the learner retains and can use. "Unless acquired information is used by students to construct understanding about the world as it currently exists for them, the time spent in acquisition will have been wasted" (p. 138).

The second part is practical. Theobald asserts that the "stuff" of education can always be connected to local place, once we collectively begin imagining ways to do so. For instance, take the example of the many rural

communities in the Midwest currently wrestling with issues of school consolidation. On the one hand, these communities are embroiled in public discussion over property taxes and costs per student. On the other, these communities worry about the loss of schools and the corresponding loss of community vitality. Wouldn't students in these places be interested to know that the U. S. Constitution developed in response to just such a crisis over rural communities? Theobald explains that the 1787 Philadelphia conference that produced the Constitution was precipitated by the Shays Rebellion, during which some 1,200 New England farmers, mostly American Revolution veterans, went to war against an army funded mainly by Massachusetts merchants. The farmers lost the war. Consequently the Constitution largely represents the government desired by the merchant victors. Could today's rural students benefit from a comparison of contemporary arguments for and against rural school consolidation with the arguments of those framing the U.S. Constitution for and against a centralized, nonlocal government? Theobald believes the "stuff" of traditional education can come alive for students if approached through such connections as these. "The school's place," he writes,

allows educators to take what is artificial out of the schooling experience. For example, questions can be framed to connect remote events with today's time and place: What circumstances led to the American Revolution? Do any of these continue to trouble the residents in our rural county? Which ones? How can we find out? Did the American Revolution create new dilemmas? Do any of these continue to trouble the residents of our county? With skillful pedagogical guidance, the school's place allows children to develop the intellectual flexibility needed to see history as a force in their lives rather than as an exercise in the acquisition of names and dates. All of the traditional "subjects" can reap the same intellectual rewards through a focus on place. (p. 138)

In Theobald's vision, therefore, place-conscious education begins with the issues and questions that vex local communities, and engages wider inquiry into history, political science, biology, and literature, as such inquiry helps make more intelligible those local questions. Place-conscious education isn't in any way a parochial education, narrowed by the always-limited horizons of any culture on earth. Instead, it begins with students' real civic efficacy in their local place and extends outward into inquiry and citizenship in wider communities. As students learn the natural science, social science, and humanities necessary for informed engagement in their local place, they learn at the same time how they are members of widening communities. They are citizens of their region and are thus shaped by its connection to continental and world ecology. They are products of their local

history and its connection to regional, national, and international history. They are guided by their community's aesthetics and its connection to ethnic, national, and international literature, art, music, and ideas.

Think of Henderson, Nebraska, population 999, where Sharon Bishop of our research team lives and works. Think of the wealth of information a growing child needs to know to fully locate herself in that community. Geological, biological, agricultural, and environmental knowledge emerges when one considers the hotly contested water rights for the Platte River and Ogallala aquifer. (Local farmers, the semidistant cities of Denver and Omaha, and conservationists advocating for the migratory bird populations all want that water.) History—American and European, political, economic, and religious—is necessary to understand the community's largely Mennonite heritage of emigrants from central Europe, their choice to settle here as a group during the peak of American western expansion, and the way in which ethnic and religious heritage continues to shape the community's participation in the state, region, and nation. Literature, art, and music might be explored for their representations of the Great Plains, from panegyrics to the pioneer spirit like Willa Cather's *O Pioneers!* (1913/1992) and Antonin Dvořák's *New World Symphony* to critiques of western expansionism and rural policy like Wallace Stegner's *The Big Rock Candy Mountain* (1938/1991) or John Steinbeck's *The Grapes of Wrath* (1939/2002), to contemporary portraits and stereotypes of midwestern America in movies from *A Thousand Acres* to *Children of the Corn*.

Or consider Macy, a community located on the Omaha Indian Reservation about 25 miles south of Sioux City, where Carol MacDaniels worked in 2000 to develop a cadre of native teachers. To locate oneself in this community, a student would also need to absorb much of the history and current politics surrounding Native American sovereignty, oral versus written history, and economics. Such a location would necessarily start with the oral traditions of the immediate community, but might be supplemented by written accounts. For history, memoirs like Luther Standing Bear's *My People the Sioux* (1975), Mary Brave Bird's *Lakota Woman* (1990), or Joel Starita's *The Dull Knives of Pine Ridge* (1995/2002) might correspond with local study of family heritage. For politics, treatises like Peter Matthiessen's long-banned account of the American Indian Movement, *Indian Country* (1984/1992), might complement current issues. For economics, analyses like Vine Deloria and David Wilkins's *Tribes, Treaties, and Constitutional Tribulations* (1999) might enrich community engagement with issues such as the state's contested ban on casino ownership. Certainly such study might necessarily start with full consideration of whether written knowledge in any form is part of European domination or a potential tool for self-determination, as Scott Lyons (2000) explores in "Rhetorical Sovereignty:

What Do American Indians Want from Writing?" In Macy, or in Henderson, as in any other place on earth, it is easily possible to center a full and demanding education—covering all the traditional subject areas—in deep inquiry and engagement with local place.

For teachers of writing, perhaps more than for teachers of other content areas, the idea of place-conscious education may not seem as strange as Theobald suggests. For at least 3 decades writing teachers have been exploring how to use student writers' own experience as the impetus for good writing. Following the rediscovery of writing processes in the late 1960s (many composition scholars now date this rediscovery from the Dartmouth conference in 1966) and continuing throughout the 1970s, writing teachers began encouraging student writers to locate their work in an exploration of their own interests and knowledge. Student writers were asked to find their own topics for writing from their lives and imaginations, to observe themselves and other writers for practical methods to overcome writing problems, and to reflect on what might make their own "voice" most come alive on the page. At the college level (cf. Elbow, 1973), secondary level (cf. Kirby & Liner, 1988; Macrorie, 1970), and elementary level (cf. Calkins, 1983), teachers centered their study of writing processes in students' own experiences. In addition, since the early 1980s' "social turn" in the study of composition, writing teachers have focused on the ways writing is used differently in different contexts, and the idea of "discourse communities," which influence writing and reading, has become widespread. In college, this has led to the "writing across the curriculum" movement (cf. Bazerman & Russell, 1994), which focuses on the ways disciplines and professions constitute different discourse communities, and to critical pedagogy adaptations of Paulo Freire's community-based literacy programs (cf. Freire, 1987; Shor, 1996). At the secondary level, many literacy scholars are studying ways ethnic and urban communities affect teenagers' writing (cf. DeStigter, 1998; Fu, 1995). At the elementary level, an impressive array of approaches to community literacy exists, from family literacy studies (cf. Taylor, 1998) and studies of preschool and school-age children's literacies (cf. Heath, 1983) to community inquiry teaching methods (cf. Glover, 1997; Short, 1996). Because of such research and teaching, many writing teachers are accustomed to thinking of ways to connect writing to the communities surrounding their classrooms and students.

Vito Perrone (1991) summarizes the basic premises of such an approach to writing:

Teachers who are encouraging active writing programs make clear that serious writing takes thought and time. It is not unsituated, far removed from personal experience or interest, unconnected to an individual's way of in-

terpreting the world. They recognize that in settings where the ongoing school experience of the students is rich, where teachers read a great deal to children, giving emphasis to authorship and personal style, where books are plentiful, where active learning is promoted, where the world is permitted to intrude, to blow through the classroom, children have much more to talk and write about. In this sense, writing is not something apart; it has a context and that context is important to understanding the writing that is actually produced. (p. 73)

In writing teachers' notions of process and discourse community, writing is seen as meaningful when it is situated.

What Theobald's idea of place-conscious education adds to this approach to the teaching of writing is a way of conceptualizing the world "that blows through the classroom." Place-conscious education asks us to think of context as something more than the personal background and interests that each individual brings to writing (though this is certainly true, as the success of process pedagogy attests). Place-conscious education also asks us to think of context as something more than sociopolitical realities as defined by race, class, and gender (though this also is certainly true, as the success of critical pedagogy attests). Place-conscious education asks us to think of the intradependence of individual, classroom, community, region, history, ecology—of the rich way local place creates and necessitates the meaning of individual and civic life.

In their pamphlet *Place Value*, Toni Haas and Paul Nachtigal (1998) have tried to unpack this notion of intradependence by suggesting a set of five issues that place-conscious education must address. Their focus is on place-conscious education in rural communities, but the issues probably apply to any community. The issues they identify are ecology, government, livelihood, spirituality, and community values. For Haas and Nachtigal, exploring these five issues are necessary if teachers are to help students develop the skills and understanding to "live well" in a given place. "Living well," they assert, means understanding and participating in the web of natural and cultural relationships that define a community, and is a very different goal from the migratory educational goal of individual profit and marketplace success.

Haas and Nachtigal suggest educators might try to instill five "senses" in students by the time they graduate:

1. *A sense of place, or of living well ecologically.* Part of living well involves developing a sustainable relationship with the natural world in which one's community is located. Understanding the biology of one's region, how that biology connects to local industry and agriculture, and the consequent biological issues that impact one's community is thus a fun-

damental aspect of the ability to live well. In her chapter, Sharon Bishop describes a biology/English unit she devised to address this aspect of place. For a student at her school to develop a sense of ecological place would involve understanding the characteristics of natural prairie and agricultural prairie, of Nebraska's place as a major migratory route (for both humans and other species), of the importance of water (aquifers and rivers) to the history of the west, and of the problems this knowledge poses for future land use.

2. *A sense of civic involvement, or living well politically.* A second part of living well involves an understanding of government, broadly defined as the range of institutional ways communities make decisions that affect their members. Students should both know about these institutions and have practice participating in them. In addition to learning about our nation's three-branch system of government, for example, students in rural communities might engage in actual civic action on issues they face. Amy Hottovy's chapter, describing school and community activism in Rising City in response to threatened consolidation, is a poignant example of the need and difficulty of such education.
3. *A sense of worth, or living well economically.* The phrase "making a living" captures this sense of living well. To participate fully in a community, individuals need a livelihood. Students should know about the options for livelihood available to them in their region, about the skills, knowledge, and experience necessary to sustain those livelihoods, and about the place of such work in the regional, national, and international economies. For many students in the rural Great Plains, their family's livelihood is through family farms, but the stark reality is that farming is an occupation under siege in midwestern America and cannot sustain most of these young people. If they are to make a living, they will need training and experience that helps them understand other options, especially entrepreneurship. They will need to understand how businesses are formed and sustained, how to identify skills and resources they can offer personally, and how to locate markets they can tap. In their chapters, Robyn Dalton of Cedar Bluffs High School and Judy Schafer of Wayne High School describe career development units and community entrepreneur units that might help students develop such understanding. Otherwise, upon graduation students will have no real choice but to join the stream of able youth migrating toward America's cities.
4. *A sense of connection, or living well spiritually.* A fourth aspect of living well involves discerning connections to one's place on earth, that is, understanding and articulating the meaning of living one's life in a given place. Haas and Nachtigal unabashedly call this aspect spirituality. For them, spirituality is primarily a person's way of understanding the con-

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