

A Shared History Writing in the High School, College, and University, 1856–1886

Amy J. Lueck

“In this elegantly written and meticulously constructed study, Lueck provides historians and nonhistorians alike with a rich and engaging history that makes clear the importance of knowing our educational pasts in order to improve and make accessible all our educational futures.”—**Kelly Ritter**, author of *Reframing the Subject: Postwar Instructional Film and Class-Conscious Literacies*

Writing the high school into the history of
rhetoric and composition

In the nineteenth century, advanced educational opportunities were not clearly demarcated and defined. Author Amy J. Lueck demonstrates that public high schools, in addition to colleges and universities, were vital settings for advanced rhetoric and writing instruction. Lueck shows how the history of high schools in Louisville, Kentucky, connects with, contradicts, and complicates the accepted history of writing instruction and underscores the significance of high schools to rhetoric and composition history and the reform efforts in higher education today.

Lueck explores Civil War- and Reconstruction-era challenges to the University of Louisville and nearby local high schools, their curricular transformations, and their fate in regard to national education reform efforts. These institutions reflect many of the educational trends and developments of the day: college and university building, the emergence of English education as the dominant curriculum for higher learning, student-centered pedagogies and educational theories, the development and transformation of normal schools, the introduction of manual education and its mutation into vocational education, and the extension of advanced education to female, African American, and working-class students.

Lueck demonstrates a complex genealogy of interconnections among high schools, colleges, and universities that demands we rethink our categories and standards of assessment and our field's history. A shift in our historical narrative would promote a move away from an emphasis on the preparation, transition, and movement of student writers from high school to college or university and instead allow a greater focus on the fostering of rich rhetorical practices and pedagogies at all educational levels.

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Writing Research, Pedagogy, and Policy

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Preface

Acknowledgments

Introduction: Higher Schools, Higher Learning, and Our Histories

Part One. Establishing the First “Higher Schools” in Louisville

1. The Idea(l) of the High School

Establishes the political status of the high schools through attention to the slippery nomenclature that surrounded them. This discussion traces similarities and differences in the ways the male and female high schools were each justified and positioned by school leaders and the community in the years leading up to their establishment.

2. A Polished, Practical, or Profound Education: Collegiate Curricula in the First Ten Years

Fleshes out the high schools' curricula and pedagogies, attending again to differences and similarities between these first two high schools and contemporaneous colleges. This chapter illustrates overlap through an examination of assigned textbooks and some student writing.

3. Practical Rhetoric and Progressive Pedagogies in the High Schools

A closer examination of the pedagogical traditions of the schools shows that the high school was also importantly distinct from the college as a pedagogical context. The high schools' political position as part of the common school tradition produced valuable alternative pedagogies for “college writing” in the early years of their operations. Thus, the discussion shifts to pedagogy.

Interchapter: The Civil War Years

Explains the effects of the Civil War on Louisville and its high schools.

Part Two. Higher Learning in Transformation

4. The “Absurd Effort”: The University Idea and the Changing High School

Introduces the curricular transformations to male and female schools following the war, particularly the fragmentation of the general education curriculum. Here, the author introduces challenges leveraged to the status of the high schools, arguing that the critiques of the schools emerged (unexpectedly, perhaps) as a result of the high schools' ambiguous relationship not to the college but to the emerging model of the research university.

5. “Just on the Border of the Intellectual World”: Central Colored High School

History of the Central Colored High School, which was established after the transformation of the other Louisville high schools was well underway, though the teachers there similarly drew on the institutional ambiguity of “higher” learning in their efforts to train rhetorically savvy citizens and teachers through the end of the century.

6. Inventing the High School, Inventing Composition

Shifts focus to the final decades of the century and the fate of the schools in relation to national reform efforts. Using the experiences and educational writings of a former student-turned-educational-reformer as an index, the chapter outlines the challenges posed to the status of high schools through national and local articulation efforts, focusing on the implications for writing instruction.

Conclusion: Blurring the Boundaries

Implications for both historians and teachers of writing today, arguing specifically that the history of overlap encourages us to deemphasize the supposed distinction between high schools and colleges and to interrogate what political interests those distinctions have served.

Notes

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