

Teacher Conceptions, Curriculum Ideologies, and Adaptations to Linear Change in River School  
District<sup>1</sup>: Implications for Gifted and Talented

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### Abstract

Curriculum ideologies are educational theories applied in everyday pedagogical practice. In this study, to better meet the learning needs of their students, four middle school teachers used a variety of ideologies as a professional *toolbox*. When confronted with school district standardization, these teachers adapted; however, as predicted by earlier studies, adjustments required the loss of previously successful curriculum. As predicted by Feldhusen (1994), these losses impacted teachers of high level students (honors and gifted and talented (GT)) the most. In this district, two such teachers opposed standardization; nevertheless, even with resistance, they lost ideological-based curriculum choices. What are teachers of high-level students to do? Any standardization program will threaten and/or change eclectic ideological praxes. With such a dichotomy, a split is revealed between teacher beliefs and practices. In this study, an honors teacher could not bear the split and decided to stop teaching rather than give up her curricular eclecticism.

*Key Terms:* linear change, standardization, curriculum ideology, scientific management, eclecticism, adaptation, New Taylorism

For the last 18 years, the River School District (RSD) (pseudonym), centrally located in a large metropolitan area, has attempted to integrate scientifically based educational curriculum efficiency. Bolstered by State law, RSD policies, and the new State teaching and leadership standards of 2012; educational change with curriculum and testing, based on advanced educational research and technological science, has been slowly incorporated into the educational system.<sup>2</sup> These changes are referred to in this study as *linear change* as they resemble a throw-back to the days of scientific management first proposed in the early twentieth century by Frederick Taylor, when the function of leadership was viewed as the increasing of efficiencies through standardization to strengthen productivity (Au, 2011). Today, a century later, efforts at scientific management seem to be guiding the schools. As a result, to improve test score accountability, several linear changes have taken place in the State's public schools, including the schools in RSD.

#### **Curriculum Theory, Ideologies, and Eclecticism**

Problems arise when school systems adopt linear change due to unawareness surrounding the complexity of curriculum theory (Au, 2011; Eisner, 1992, 2003; Kliebard, 1992, 2004). Linear change embodies a curriculum theoretical philosophy favoring maximization of educational outputs with societal inputs (taxes, resources, etc.) (Kliebard, 1992). Assumptions are also made concerning empirically controlled teaching and learning impacting such outcomes (Kliebard, 1992). Moreover, empirical control over what is taught and learned furthermore presumes that all students value the curriculum equally (Howard, 2006; Kliebard, 1992; Kumashiro, 2000; Robinson, 2008). This is a major assumption and error when students come to the classroom from different educational, ethnic, and cultural backgrounds (Howard, 2006; Kumshiro, 2000; Robinson, 2008; VanTassel-Baska, 2010). The reality is that students will

relate differently to the official RSD curriculum (Howard, 2006; Robinson, 2008). According to Kliebard (1992), curriculum theory represents “collective social goals, social reconstruction, and moral commitment” (p. 170). If students do not share the social values or educational contexts reflected in the linear-based curriculum theory, linear change will not work without adjustments to the curriculum theory (Howard, 2006; Kliebard, 1992; Robinson, 2008; VanTassel-Baska, 2010). Adjustment does not mean excusal from societal educational demands (Howard, 2006; Kliebard, 1992; VanTassel-Baska, 2010). It means adjusting the curriculum theory to respond to the unique learning needs, values, and contexts of each student (Eisner, 2003; Howard, 2006; Kliebard, 1992; Robinson, 2008; VanTassel-Baska, 2010).

When adjusting curriculum theory, according to Kliebard (1992), it “may take the form of a list of the ‘tricks of the trade,’ a series of steps for ‘how to do it’” (p. 171). Indeed, a more inclusive curriculum theory allows not only access to the official curriculum but adjustment to student uniqueness. Paraphrasing curriculum educational theorist Ernest Nagel (1969), Kliebard (1992) states,

It is this last and most vague of Nagel’s senses of theory that we may find most appropriate to a consideration of the central problem of curriculum. Since the central question of curriculum are normative ones, in the sense that they involve choices among competing value options, the question of empirical verification comes into play only in a peripheral sense. What is critically important is conceptual clarification. (p. 175)

Although holding empirical educational evidence as peripheral, Nagel supports the recognition of the differing values students bring to class and the critical need to make curriculum theory clear (Kliebard, 1992). Moreover, educators need to “unpack the nature of the problems under consideration” (p. 175). Since the curriculum problem of linear change reflects the lack of

student value options as well as the need to educate all citizens to a standard, curriculum theory becomes an educational *toolbox* containing the “tricks of the trade” (Kliebard, 1992, p. 171) for educators to utilize to address both standards and student uniqueness (Eisner, 1992, 2003; Howard, 2006; Kliebard, 2004; Kumashiro, 2000; Robinson, 2008).

Within the metaphorical toolbox, curriculum theory encompasses the theoretic ideas or ideologies that educators utilize to address the unique needs of individual students. In essence, ideologies are *working theories* representing different processes of teaching and learning. Thus, representing differing courses of educational action, researchers have uncovered thirteen ideologies teachers employ in their practice. These are linear ideology, rational humanism, developmental ideology, holism, laissez-faire, meliorism, critical theory, religious orthodoxy, progressivism, vocational ideology, home-project, re-conceptualism, and cognitive pluralism (Eisner, 1992, 2003; Kliebard, 1992, 2004; Miller, 2011). Such ideological choices suggest educators as eclectic in addressing the unique needs and values of students (Feldhusen, 1994; McNally & Blake, 2012). Of particular concern in this study are the needs and values of GT students.

### **Research Questions**

Attempts at linear change in RSD have raised issues concerning the influence it has on professional teacher ideologies and adaptations relative to curriculum, and, in particular, pedagogical implications for GT learners. As curriculum theory is applied in GT classrooms through the use of ideologies, changes to curriculum efficiency for purposes of accountability may increase effectiveness of learning with general populations; nevertheless, the implications of these changes for gifted populations should also be explored. The purpose of this study is to investigate the tension professional teachers feel between their ideological practices and the

demands of linear change initiated in RSD. The following are the research questions for this study:

1. Which educational ideologies are teachers using in RSD?
2. How have teachers adapted to the evolving linear change implemented in RSD?
3. What are the implications of linear change with respect to early adolescent GT students?

### **Historical Background**

In an effort to advance education, RSD attempted to improve efficiency using scientifically proven research to implement standardized change. As a consequence of the political sensitivity of this study, an anonymous participant-observer with over twenty years of experience teaching in RSD provided documented evidence of the linear change efforts (Yin, 2014). The major areas of change included: increased use of computer technology to improve educational efficiency, enhanced accountability through testing, standardized content for each subject area, and improved administrative oversight of teacher classroom performance.

First, the efficient use of computer technology, both in respect to student data entry and curriculum presentation, was expected of each educator. With these changes, educators gained the ability to input assignment and test data into a central computer system allowing parents to have continual and reliable access. In addition, with available computer internet access, the math and science curricula were transferred completely online. These actions freed students from having to carry around both textbooks. RSD educators were also directed to develop and maintain curriculum subject web-pages and use an internet discipline program to record issues for school administrator intervention (see Figure 1).

insert Figure 1 around here

Second, standardized testing to enhance teacher and student accountability was attempted in RSD, with some educators claiming that it has added extra sacrifices, who, in response, have had to forgo intellectually stimulating curricula. Two curriculum costs were preparation and instruction time. These teachers needed more preparation time to learn how to conduct the computerized testing program (see Figure 1). As they trained to implement the new program, instruction days were also cut to accommodate the testing schedule. They have maintained that the English, math, science, and social studies departments have lost up to nine instruction days to testing. Allegations were furthermore made that testing has limited ideological choices resulting in curriculum losses for both honors and GT classes.

Third, corresponding to the accountability measures, RSD attempted to mandate standardized subject area core curriculum maps that added increased pressure for some teachers to teach to the required curriculum map. Moreover, each curriculum map fostered utilization of specific methods and strategies for teachers to effectively teach to the content objectives (see Figure 1). Again, some teachers complained that such adaptations limited teacher choices, in turn, sacrificing previously successful ideological pedagogy – much of it involving student intellectual growth.

Last, to sustain and improve teacher performance, administrators were required to do mandatory formative observations twice per year along with a summative evaluation every five years for professional contract teachers (see Figure 1). Previously, an ongoing conversation among teachers was the fact that some teachers could go an entire 30-year career without one administrative visit to their classroom. Such expansion of administrative supervision to ensure application of new curriculum standards produced increased stress for professional teachers to change ideologically successful curricula.

The changes implemented in RSD bring to mind what Au (2011) called the “New Taylorism” (p. 25) or the reintroduction of “fundamental logics guiding scientific management” (p. 25) in which education is “increasingly standardized by high-stakes testing and scripted curriculum” (p. 25). However, the difference in RSD is that curriculum specialists and committees of educators created the curricula; nevertheless, all core curriculums still remain somewhat scripted to help guide teachers. In other words, teachers do have some flexibility. Even here, however, some teachers felt a certain level of restriction in their instructional ideological choices.

Another similarity is that administrative direction ensures teachers conform to Taylor’s “concepts of scientific management in factory production to systems of educational management and planning” (Au, 2011, p. 26). Thus, school administrators collect data and make adjustments, safeguarding utilization of scientific methods, guaranteeing the elimination of waste, and providing curriculum efficiency for students to meet standards (Au, 2011; Bobbit, 1913). With such adjustment processes, RSD attempts at scientific management fall under a scientific or linear curriculum program ideology. Moreover, promoting educational efficiency with management of the four linear changes helps safeguard improvement in student test performance; however, these same changes also have the potential to estrange teachers from their own curriculum creativity and ideological underpinnings, which have proven successful with students in the past (Au, 2011; Eisner, 1992, 2003; Kliebard, 1992, 2004; Miller, 2011).

With such attempts at linear change, an inherent antagonism is created between administrators and teachers when teachers practice differing curriculum ideologies. As ideologically eclectic, teachers may practice a combination of different curriculum ideologies all at once (Eisner, 1992; Kliebard, 2004; Miller, 2011). This defines the effective and often hard to



measure artistry of teaching professionals—using everything they know to teach to the unique values and needs of individual students. For this reason, it remains important for administrators and teachers to understand ideological diversity in order to adapt both management and teacher educational practices in order to minimize negative impacts on his or her professional effectiveness. As far as GT students are concerned, linear accountability systems result in three types of pressure:

- 1) Teachers and students feel a tremendous amount of pressure associated with high-stakes testing;
- 2) The pressure felt by teachers results in drill and practice type of curriculum and instruction;
- 3) The pressure felt by high-stakes testing is greater in disadvantaged schools and results in more drill and practice instruction; and gifted and talented students feel pressure to perform well to bring up all scores oftentimes resulting in disengagement from the learning process. (Moon, Brighton, Jarvis, & Hall, 2007, p. v).

### Curriculum Ideologies

#### Linear

As illustrated in RSD, the linear ideology represents standardization that entails “education to be as efficient as possible” (Miller, 2011, p. 34; see also Au, 2011; Bobbit, 1912; Tyler, 1949). Under standardization, schools must “perform like a well-oiled machine” (Miller, 2011, p. 34). More examples of linear influences include; “scope and sequence charts, bell schedules, grade level designs, and Bloom’s Taxonomy” (p. 34).

#### Rational Humanism

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The rational humanism curriculum ideology represents European enlightenment philosophy based on reason, scientific method, and rational thought. With scientific reason as a foundation, humanists focus on five traditional curricular areas of “grammar, literature and art, mathematics, geography, and history” (Kliebard, 2004, p. 15; see also Eisner, 1992). This ideology is reflected in GT education through the Integrated Curriculum Model suggested by VanTassel-Baska and Little (2011) with its emphasis on advanced content-specific to traditional rational humanism curricula.

### **Developmental**

Teachers may practice the developmental ideology. This ideology reflects the growing needs of students in respect to scientifically proven age-appropriate differentiated curriculum. In other words, this ideology represents the natural development of children, with many of the early developmental theorists comparing the developmental needs of children to earth’s historical epochs (Kliebard, 2004).

### **Holism**

The holistic ideology relates to child-centered student curricular interests. With the holistic ideology, educational power is shared as objectives remain negotiated between teacher, student, and the environment (Miller, 2011). According to Miller (2011), student emotion and creativity promote learning activity as “interest drives the learning experience” (p. 34) as students share curriculum determination with their teacher (see also Eisner, 1990). For holistic negotiation to take place, a positive nurturing relationship between teacher and student remains vital (Miller, 2011).

### **Laissez-Faire**

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According to Miller (2011), the laissez-faire ideology seeks to “maximize individual freedom without precipitating chaos” (p. 35). Laissez-Faire allows student curiosity to explore “no official curriculum” (p. 35). Students need to be free “from being violated by evaluation, coercion, and power paradigms that impede learning” (p. 35; see also Gray & Chanoff, 1984). In GT education these ideals are expressed in curriculum conceptions such as the Schoolwide Enrichment Model (Reis & Renzulli, 2009).

### **Meliorism**

The meliorism ideology denotes a pedagogical focus on the development of critical thinking in respect to recognizing social injustice and solving societal problems (Eisner, 1992; Kliebard, 2004). With the meliorism ideology, teachers and students converge to solve authentic problems that improve peoples’ lives (Eisner, 1992; Kliebard, 2004).

### **Critical Theory**

Critical theory promotes student critical thinking and provides opportunities to give voice to oppressed groups in face of societal hegemony (Eisner, 1992; Miller, 2011). While meliorism signifies the solving of problems, critical theory strives to change a dysfunctional society (Eisner, 1992). This perspective has largely been ignored in GT education, but, indeed, has been used as a critique of the field both externally (Margolin, 1996) and internally (Howley, Howley, & Pendarvis, 1995).

### **Religious Orthodoxy**

Teachers who practice the religious orthodoxy ideology avoid teaching critical thinking (Eisner, 1992). **Critical thinking encourages the undermining of parental authority and student/family religious beliefs (Eisner, 2003; see also Stitzlein, 2014).** An analysis of this type of thinking is presented by Otto (2012), who explores the difficulties of critical thinking based on

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science as it influences American government policy, especially related to education, and Stitzlein (2014), who analyzes the role of parental conscience on the curriculum. Both point to a public resistance from the ultraconservative political base to critical thinking—a frequent pillar of GT education programs.

### **Progressivism**

While the religious orthodoxy ideology focuses on religion as a cultural artifact, the concept of culture is also central to the progressive ideology; nevertheless, the progressive ideology reflects more on the experience of student learning to develop academic excellence. Fundamentally, educators who practice the progressive conventions rely on the culture of society to build the academic intelligence of students through practical real-life experiences. According to progressive theorists such as John Dewey, education is rooted in “human experience and intelligence” (Eisner, 1992, p. 67) adapting and transforming the environment in which children live. The biological intelligence of children, plus their culture, including the experiences they acquire within their cultural milieu, helps them grow intellectually. Within GT education, elements of the Schoolwide Enrichment Model (Reis & Renzulli, 2009), the Parallel Curriculum Model (Tomlinson et al., 2002), and Problem-Based Learning (Gallagher, 2009) address this ideology.

### **Vocational**

The vocational ideology differentiates curriculum for students who have shown they struggle with high-level curricula (Kliebard, 2004). Progressives like Dewey dislike the vocational ideology as it denies full intellectual development in favor of job training. Of course, vocational education remains socially efficient in regards to the removal of educational waste. Waste is eliminated as vocational track students do not need to take classes unneeded for their

pre-determined career (Kleibard, 2004). Because of historical alliance with non-college track students, vocational education has not often been associated with GT education in the United States, though such a link is not unheard of (Gentry, Hu, Peters, & Rizza, 2008). Connections between the two have been more prevalent in Europe (Räty, Komulainen, & Hirva, 2012; Stamm & Niederhauser, 2008).

### **Home-Project**

A close ideological match to the progressive ideology remains the home-project ideology (Kliebard, 2004). According to Kliebard (2004), Dewey did not support the replacement of subjects with home-projects; nonetheless, this ideology does reflect Dewey's view of science education as experiences with "ordinary useful applications" (Dewey, 1916, p. 5) of scientific principles. The strength of this ideology is the link to normal life as students learn applicable skills through home-projects. Particularly with the advent of on-line education, GT students have access to learning at least partially based on this ideology through case-based, project-based, or problem-based learning (Gallagher, 2009; Herzog, 2007; Missett, Reed, Scot, Callahan, & Slade, 2010).

### **Reconceptualism**

Teachers may practice the reconceptualism ideology (Eisner, 1992, 2003). According to Eisner (2003), seeking to prepare students for a realistic world, the reconceptualism ideology represents how educators think about curriculum. Curriculum itself is an experiment regarding individual student empowerment and intellectual growth. Essentially, this ideology helps teachers nurture student needs in overcoming indifference in a complex world (Eisner, 2003). Efforts to focus GT educational programs on the social and emotional needs of students reflect this ideology (Hébert, 2011).

### **Cognitive Pluralism**

Last, educators may adhere to the ideology of cognitive pluralism (Eisner, 2003). Many teachers have discovered, either through formal training or on their own, that students can display understanding of curriculum with many learning styles and intelligences. According to Howard Gardner's multiple intelligences theory, a theory popularly associated with GT education, students can display their knowledge of the curriculum in many ways, usually in combination (Gardner, 1983; Hebert, 2011). These intelligences are verbal, logical-mathematical, visual, interpersonal, intrapersonal, musical, and bodily-kinesthetic (Eisner, 2003; Gardner, 1983). Gardner would later add the naturalist intelligence. Of course, multiple intelligences reveal student intellectual abilities beyond the measures of standardized tests (Gardner, 1983; Hebert, 2011).

Given this panoply of ideological orientations from which teachers can draw, this study speaks to the ideological choices made by teachers and the degree to which mandated curriculum reforms impact those choices. The implications of teacher choices and adaptations have on GT learners are also discussed.

### **Research Methods**

For this research, an embedded multiple case study design was used (Yin, 2014). The larger case was a suburban school district in a Rocky Mountain state - RSD. RSD was chosen because of both its leadership in linear change and the highly publicized issues educators were having with such change. At the time of this study, RSD served approximately 67,000 students in grades K-12. The district also operated 16 junior high schools. The embedded participant cases were teachers drawn from a natural educational environment - the same RSD junior high school.

Sample

Interview participants were purposefully selected due to the need for highly experienced teachers with vast knowledge of RSD, educational theory, and diverse educational practices. A snowball technique beginning with the most experienced teacher in the school was used. Interviews were later conducted with the recommended teachers until data saturation was reached. This resulted in interviews with four professional teachers. The educational experience of these teachers in RSD ranged from 15 to 40 years with an average of 28.75 years in RSD. All but one, with 15 years of experience, had personally experienced every change described in the historical background section; however, she still faced the ongoing impacts of linear adjustments in RSD (see Figure 1).

#### Instruments

The investigation involved a teacher ideology survey, questionnaire, and semi-structured interviews with four RSD teachers to identify their curricular ideologies and adaptations to curriculum changes. The survey, questionnaire, and interviews allowed for triangulation and the determination of how ideologically defined teachers adapted their educational options to the evolving scientific management implementation in RSD.

**Ideology questionnaire.** After obtaining informed consent, each teacher took an ideology questionnaire. Constructed by Miller (2011) and published by *Phi Delta Kappan*, the questionnaire, "Curriculum Theory and Practice: What's Your Style?" was used. Although its validity was unknown, its original purpose was to give teachers an opportunity to understand their own ideological leanings for professional self-reflection (Miller, 2011). Our purpose for using it was as an elicitation technique to help educators think about their own ideological positions - providing a foundation for discussion and further data gathering. To help pinpoint specific ideologies, the survey required teachers to respond to 20 questions with four possible

answers. Answer choices represented linear, holistic, laissez-faire, and critical theory ideologies (see Table 1).

insert Table 1 around here

Interview protocol. Semi-structured interviews were conducted using an interview protocol developed by the first author. Under the guidance of an expert in curriculum theory, interview questions were created (see Appendix). Participants were later given the interview questionnaire in the form of essay questions. In addition to ideologies represented in the Miller (2011) questionnaire, the questions elicited responses regarding the utilization of curriculum ideologies to verify the placement of the teacher into ideological categories. After essay completion, the interviewer conducted unrecorded interviews with each teacher that lasted no more than an hour. Because of the highly sensitive nature of the conversations to be held, which could be seen as critical of district leadership and practice, the interviews were not recorded. Using the interview questionnaire and note-taking, the interviewer asked how each teacher adapted his or her educational ideologies to the changes explained in the introduction and literature review. Triangulation between the Miller questionnaire, the interview questionnaire, and the semi-structured interview notes was performed to ensure trustworthiness. Member checking was also utilized to ensure accuracy of the data and researcher interpretations.

### **Interview Procedures**

All interviews were conducted by the first author—a doctoral student in curriculum and instruction. Interviews were scheduled at a time convenient to the participating teachers. Because of the sensitivity of the context, teachers were able to choose when and where to have his or her interview.



The procedure for interviewing the teachers followed a four-step flow. First the teacher agreed to participate in the research and received the Letter of Information approved by the Institutional Review Board. Second, the teacher completed the Miller (2011) questionnaire. Third, the teacher completed the interview essay questionnaire. After an analysis of both questionnaire results, interviews were performed at a scheduled time. During each interview, the teacher was asked questions to confirm those results or to establish an ideology not in the questionnaire that better reflected the teacher's orientations. Last, the teacher and interviewer explored the teacher's responses to the curricular changes that had occurred in recent years in RSD. Following the interview, a transcript was prepared. It was checked for accuracy and further implications in a face-to-face member-check meeting with the original interviewer.

#### Transcript Analysis

Teacher essay questions and interview follow-up notes were combined on the data transcript and coded to determine teacher ideological practices. According to Saldana (2013) qualitative research guidelines, data were coded in four ways. First, attribute coding was used to detail human characteristics of study participants. Second, emotion coding was used to detail human response. Third, values coding was used to identify participant ideological educational values. Last, versus coding was used to identify teacher ideological conflict with RSD linear change. Concerning values coding for ideological evidence, as a qualitative study, a nominal one point was awarded for each datum of evidence on the coding transcript. If the ideology revealed strength on the Miller (2011) questionnaire, it was also given a point. If the ideology received only a one point total, it was interpreted as weak evidence (see Table 2). If two or more points were assigned, evidence was considered substantial (see Table 2). Of course, zero points meant

no evidence (see Table 2). Moreover, after initial coding, ideological adaptations to linear change were detailed for both weak and strong evidence of ideological practices.

insert Table 2 around here

After coding, pattern-matching was utilized in transcript analysis to juxtapose ideologies and adaptations to linear change (Yin, 2014). Teachers positioned themselves by ranking the personal importance - from best to worst - each curriculum change in respect to their own ideologies and adaptations. This established the uniqueness of each case study. Each teacher's adaptations to the specific linear change were also considered in the order of the teacher's ranking rather than chronological order. This organization permitted a comparison and contrast of the linear change on established ideologies, rather than a mere review of a historical timeline. Specific ideological adaptations to linear change are detailed in Table 2. When analyzing all interview data, patterns of similarities and differences of adaptations to curricular change were also found among teachers. Of course, any generalizations were limited to the specific teachers involved in the investigation as well as the situations they have referenced.

### **Results**

In reporting the results of this study, the (Miller, 2011) ideological survey served as an elicitation technique to determine ideological orientations. According to the survey, three of the four teachers preferred the holistic ideology, though for one teacher the difference was just one point (see Table 1). The linear ideology ranked second in these same three cases. For the fourth teacher, the positioning of the linear and holistic ideologies was just the reverse (see Table 1). Overall, all four teachers were strong in both linear and holistic ideologies (see Table 1). Also, none of the teachers were particularly favorable toward critical theory. Their overall attitude toward the laissez-faire curriculum ideology was even lower. In addition to the Miller survey

data, the combined and coded essay and interview transcripts were utilized to determine further participant ideological proclivities.

After coding, the information provided support for the findings from the Miller survey; nonetheless, also indicated teacher usage of eight more ideologies, as well as specific impact adaptations<sup>3</sup> (see Table 2). Given this data, it seems fair to say that all teachers held an eclectic philosophy, drawing from a variety of perspectives to justify various practices. The association between the eclectic ideologies and the linear changes experienced by teachers in RSD are presented in the material that follows. All information in quotations is drawn directly from individual teacher questionnaire or interview coded transcripts.

### **Mr. Stephen McDonald**

Mr. Stephen McDonald (all teachers are denoted as pseudonyms) was a RSD junior high Spanish teacher for 40 years experiencing many of curriculum changes throughout his career. Having very little patience with frivolous educational approaches, McDonald was traditional with classroom curriculum; nevertheless, over the years, he added ideological approaches he believed were healthy for students. Reflecting his eclecticism, according to the Miller survey (see Table 1), McDonald was strong in both the linear ideology and holism, with interview evidence indicating that he also practiced the progressivism, cognitive pluralism, meliorism, and home-project ideologies as well (see Table 2).

According to Mr. McDonald, the best curriculum changes included many of the changes presented in the time line (see Figure 1). This was unsurprising given his holistic-linear ideological orientation. District standardized objectives, increased use and efficiency of curricular technology, and augmented teacher supervision, all reflected linear progress and

accountability favored by McDonald. He believed the proper utilization of all linear advancements were important for improving education now and in the future.

In respect to the holism, progressivism, and home-project ideologies evident in McDonald's educational practice, these ideological approaches added teacher-student negotiation, real-world experiences, and home-project development to his linear curriculum foundations (see Table 2). An interesting aspect was his combining of holistic (e.g., student negotiation and choice) computer technology-based classroom projects with progressive real-life applications. For example, recognizing that computer technology *is* real-life, his students negotiated computer PowerPoint® projects that they worked on both in class and at home.

According to McDonald, teacher adaptations to linear change have been successful. RSD workshops, computer tutorials, on-site technology help, and administrative guidance were provided for teachers to learn and implement each reform. The only drawback was that some teachers had to use their own time and money for additional training. As an example, requiring each teacher to have a curriculum webpage and an internet instructional platform obliged many teachers to seek after-hours training—with no compensation—to make-up for any technology skill deficiencies. Even McDonald signed-up for extra training in order to understand how to work with the new internet program.

The curricular change most problematic, according to McDonald, was student standardized test accountability. He explained that increased testing had a negative impact in several ways. First, reflecting information he received from other teachers, some test items were questionable in respect to not representing the actual curriculum. Second, too much class instruction time had been taken away in order to test students. *Last, since Spanish was not tested at that point in time, his own personal issue with testing remained the difficulty in scheduling*

non-test classroom technology activities. Scheduling problems included not having enough computer labs in the school to administer both the computerized tests as well as normal school technology activity. Moreover, teachers either did not have enough time or too much time to administer tests within a given class period.

The concerns with computer lab time and scheduling impacted McDonald's ability to work with students individually on technology based projects. Nevertheless, his classroom holistic and progressive projects slowly became home-projects when school lab time became scarce due to increased standardized testing (see Table 2).

### **Mrs. Annette Anderson**

Annette Anderson, a RSD English and social studies GT teacher with 32 years of experience, is a well-respected educator always open to new ideas to help students learn. As an esteemed teacher, her ideological eclecticism was reflected in her use of a variety of ideologies as district changes took place. Like McDonald, when she took the Miller survey, she scored high with holism, also having a healthy respect for the linear ideology (see Table 1). Her interview data also revealed meliorism, progressivism, re-conceptualism, rational humanism, developmental, and cognitive pluralism to go along with her holistic and linear foundational ideologies (see Table 2).

As a linear educator, she experienced many curricular changes during her 32 year tenure. She was pleased with technological change in respect to student records, data collection/storage, and the teacher web pages. In her opinion, these changes allowed for better communication and collaboration with all parent and district stakeholders. She called these changes and benefits "wonderful." Furthermore, in her view, the RSD standardized objectives and increasing

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Thanks, I fixed it.

administrative supervision were also needed for teacher direction and formative improvement, especially for younger provisional teachers.

The main issue, as with McDonald, was standardized testing organization, specifically, taking away too much classroom instruction time to do the testing. Anderson stated, “Six days were lost to [Acumen], the RSD quarterly benchmark test for English, math, and science.”

Adding the three days for the English Department to administer the Scholastic Reading Inventory, a total of nine instruction days were lost to testing. She stated the obvious, “We lost too much time for testing.”

The consequence of so much testing resulted in having to adapt her curriculum practices. She had to cut holistic, developmental, re-conceptualist, progressive, critical thinking, and cognitively diverse activities from her curriculum. For example, her *Hound of the Baskervilles* English curriculum unit had to be completely dropped from her program to accommodate increased testing. This unit involved reading skills, cooperative learning, critical thinking, and a holistic/re-conceptualist creative project. How does Anderson maintain her eclectic practices if she loses the curriculum to do so? Dropping this unit was one example of pressure to change from ideologically consonant educational practices to a standardized testing focus (see Table 2). Furthermore, she warns other teachers to be careful to “evaluate what you’re sacrificing,” and, as a teacher of GT students, believes abandoning critical thinking and creative projects impair the development of GT students.

The last issue of concern for Anderson was the new writing assessment technology program called MyAccess™ for student writing. This program gives instant feedback so students can immediately learn from their writing errors. Anderson viewed this as “counterproductive to effective writing instruction.” The MyAccess™ program “makes it easy but lacks in helping kids

think it through.” If new technology does not allow GT students to use thinking skills, what use is it?

**Ms. Karen Patrick**

For the past 30 years, Karen Patrick was an outstanding regular and honors educator at RSD. She was recognized as one of the best science teachers in her State, having received in 2003, along with nine other teachers, the Excel Outstanding Educator Award given annually by the RSD Education Foundation. She also won the Golden Apple Award in 2012, given by the State Parent Teacher Association. Much of Ms. Patrick's success had to do with her ideologically-based curriculum pedagogy. As an eclectic educator, she practiced an interesting mix of curriculum ideologies. When she took the Miller ideology survey, she scored very high with holism, suggesting the importance of forming healthy relationships and negotiating curriculum with students (see Table 1). She also scored highly in respect to the linear ideology, showing a professional regard for linear traditions. Along with her holistic and linear foundations, her interview information also revealed an emphasis toward rational humanism, progressivism, development, cognitive pluralism, and re-conceptualism ideologies (see Table 2).

Having a strong bias for the holistic ideology, she believed the linear tradition to have its limitations. She viewed the current standardized survey approach to science curriculum and technological changes as threatening to proper education. From her perspective, adaptation to earlier technological changes, like community access to data (e.g., data collection, webpages, Canvas<sup>TM</sup>, and discipline program), were necessary; however, the increased reliance and continual usage of uniform district curriculum maps and technologically delivered curriculum were dangerous to the necessary relationship building, negotiation, and efficacy students need as reflected in her holism, cognitive pluralism and re-conceptualism (see Table 2).

According to Patrick, without nurturing relationship building and efficacy between a teacher and each student, any linear reforms remain counterproductive. She stated, “It is wrong” and “is not in the best interest of students.” She also stated, “Our focus on data is not what is best for the students,” and we have “too much technology fluff and not enough substance.” Her frustration with curriculum change resulted in her decision to leave education. She refused to adapt to any more linear change. The best curriculum changes she has faced were the “ones I made myself to meet the needs of my unique students” revealing again her holism, cognitive pluralism, and re-conceptualism (see Table 2).

Patrick, furthermore, did not like the new junior high standardized science curriculum maps. The problem was science integration, meaning science contained a mixture of subjects and objectives. She stated, reflecting her rational humanism and development ideologies, “Trying to switch from chemistry to biology to physics to geology makes no sense for 12-14 year olds.” She also stated, “It is confusing to them; they need to learn one science at a time and integrate it when their brain is more developed.”

Reflecting again her humanistic, developmental, and progressive ideological leanings (as well as her other ideological leanings), her pedagogical processes required students to take one scientific subject at a time in a sequential order and go more in-depth. Within her in-depth processes, she nurtured student learning using holism and re-conceptualism with creativity, scientific experiments (humanism), and realistic classroom projects and activities (progressivism). Within this in-depth framework, her students learned to the appropriate standardized test benchmarks. According to Patrick, the integrated curriculum just “skims the surface.” Moreover, the curriculum map “is more focused on teachers covering subject-matter for standardized test preparation.”



The second problem Patrick had with new linear reform concerned technologically delivered curriculum. For the next school year, the new internet integrated science program replaced the use of science textbooks. Using the district integrated curriculum map as a guide, science teachers needed to deliver the entire curriculum via technology, including internet websites and computerized smart boards. Smart boards are computerized interactive white boards set-up for class presentations using specific technology that allows the board to react to human touch for informational input instead of a computer mouse.

Other than having used the despised district curriculum map, Patrick viewed such technological curriculum delivery as a tool that “should not become more important than learning the science.” She also stated, from previous experiences with technology, “Students do not remember the information from a computer website as well as from a textbook. Websites are more entertaining, but more entertaining does not necessarily mean more learning.”

Patrick was also concerned with textbook availability. She had one question. If students do not have textbooks or computer internet access, how can they do their science homework and study for tests (or catch-up) if or when they get behind? Patrick stated, “Not all of our students have access to computers to access their textbook and research sites. This creates an even wider gap between socioeconomic groups in our society. *All students regardless of family income have the right to an equal education*” (emphasis by respondent). In an effort to make education linear, advanced, and technologically available, RSD may have overlooked issues of equity or equal educational opportunity.

**Mrs. Louise Garrett**

Mrs. Louise Garrett has been a RSD Spanish teacher for 13 years (20 years total in education). She is a no nonsense classroom teacher who is eclectic regarding new ideas to help

her students learn. She has implemented several curriculum ideologies in her teaching practice. Similar to McDonald, Anderson, and Patrick, Garrett's results from the Miller ideology questionnaire revealed a strong score supporting the linear ideology (see Table 1). The difference between Garrett and the others was her lower holistic score. Nonetheless, her interview evidence did reveal holistic, as well as progressive, meliorism, developmental, cognitive pluralism, humanist, and vocational ideologies (see Table 2).

Unsurprisingly, agreeing mostly with McDonald, she supported most of the linear changes that had taken place in RSD the past few years. Garrett liked the increased use of technology and educational supervision. She also had little problem with standardized objectives. The increased data collection (grades and discipline data), teacher web pages, Canvas<sup>TM</sup>, and the like, were all useful and important for parents and educators. She furthermore liked the potential for new technological curriculum delivery systems; nonetheless, like Patrick, Ms. Garrett gave a warning concerning its proper use. She stated that it remains "a good tool if it is used correctly." Moreover, technology should never "replace textbooks," as texts "are needed for reference." As with both McDonald and Anderson, the increased administrative supervision was also supported and encouraged for proper educator development. With respect to standardized objectives, she liked them as a roadmap for practical education and, despite some concerns with linear change, acknowledged herself as a constructivist educator (i.e., an educator who constructs curriculum in response to the reality and needs of individual students), willing to adapt but having one major ideological complaint concerning the standardized objectives.

In spite of her claim as a constructivist educator, she appreciated the standardized objectives as a guide; however, representing her developmental ideology, she recognized age-related issues with the early adolescent age-group. She stated, "Curriculum maps don't match

developmental levels.” The Spanish language curriculum maps contained “dating scenarios,” including “cyber-bullying, date rape, and how to create a web-page or blog.” Garrett called this “developmentally inappropriate” for 12 to 14 year olds and fears, especially as a constructivist educator, that the standardized curriculum maps will become “too rigid” or unchangeable in the future.

By definition, constructivist educators create curriculum each year in relation to the reality of their individual students. For constructivist educators like Garrett, curriculum ideologies direct an array of methods, strategies, and techniques, representing teacher instructional practices, as well as choosing the necessary measures for both linear change and student needs—a quintessentially eclectic approach. As such, the standardized curriculum maps provide an institutional guide to follow. How Garrett directly reconciled her issues with the curriculum map to her eclectic approach remains unknown. Nevertheless, according to the evidence, it is clear that as a result of Garrett’s eclecticism, she only felt pressure to accept and adapt to linear change when she discovered problems with the development level of RSD’s Spanish subject curriculum map.

### **Discussion**

In summary, the four teachers interviewed were eclectic with respect to curriculum ideology and adaptation. Teachers are often accused of being atheoretical in their approach to teaching (Cochran-Smith, 2004; Darling-Hammond, 2006). This research indicates that, rather, teachers draw from multiple ideological perspectives to defend their educational practices. Some could argue that theory and ideology are not synonymous. We hold the view that, at least, an ideological perspective represents a working theory. Stereotypically, teachers are believed to focus on practice rather than theory; ideology, as working theory, bridges the theory/practice

dichotomy. Eclecticism refers to “blending the hunches of the experienced practitioner within different discourses, drawing on a range of theoretical and philosophical perspectives, rather than prematurely impose any single view” (McNally & Blake, 2012, p. 209). Thus, while eclecticism is not associated with any particular learning theory or ideological orientation, it does not mean that such theories or orientations do not influence instructional decision-making. Teachers with an eclectic approach see theories and their associated methods more as a toolbox rather than dogma from which to draw the teaching approach needed for the present teaching issue and situation (Honebein & Sink, 2012). With their eclectic use of curriculum ideologies, the four teachers confronted linear change according to their own well-developed and professional teaching routines, displaying devotion to their own practices with each teacher revealing a different level of acceptance and/or resistance to each linear change.

Within this ideological orientation and recalling that the minimum experience of the teachers interviewed was 15 years in RSD, the teachers largely agreed as to which linear changes had been most helpful during his or her career. According to all four teachers, the best linear change involved efficient student data technology (e.g., grades, Canvas<sup>TM</sup>, web-pages). These teachers liked the *needed* technological changes that made student data more efficient and available. Educational technology research supports the finding of a needs-based teacher orientation of educational technology. Christensen (2002) found that “needs-based technology integration education fosters positive attitudes toward information technology” (p. 426). Indeed, adequate “ongoing, on-site, technology integration education,” (p. 430) like what was provided by RSD, reduces anxiety and impacts positive teacher attitudes toward usage of computer technology in the classroom.

Educational advantages for teachers to needs-based technology were many. The organization of electronic gradebooks would permit teachers to see at-a-glance which students need remediation or additional challenge on specific learning outcomes. In addition, parent online access to student performance data would facilitate parent-teacher communication. The teachers in this study, who taught in tested subjects, noted such advantages. The two Spanish teachers did not yet have some of these advantages but spoke, with some envy (McDonald) and some apprehension (Garrett), about these potential advantages and are looking forward to the implementation of benchmark testing in the coming years.

The teachers in this study also appreciated the benefits of more administrative supervision, especially for younger inexperienced teachers. They didn't necessarily see the utility of such supervision for themselves, but felt that it would facilitate the mentoring of new teachers. It is through this supervision, however, that these experienced teachers felt the pressure to teach in ways that they saw as inconsistent with their ideological orientations, thus narrowing the range of instructional approaches used (Moon et al., 2007). Research by Galton and MacBeath (2008) also suggests that such intensifications in administrative supervision and control over teacher curriculum and performance increase teacher stress and burnout, while also finding that "coping with high stress levels was possible, provided teachers felt that they retained a high degree of autonomy in deciding what and how to teach" (p. 2).

On the other hand, the most challenging linear changes involved technology-based curriculum delivery and increases in standardized testing. Three of the four teachers disliked or were cautious concerning both technologically delivered curriculum and increases in standardized testing. Three of the teachers urged outright refusal and/or caution concerning technology as a curriculum delivery system. Anderson, Patrick, and Garrett urged appropriate

use of technology as an instrument to deliver curriculum with only Patrick completely refusing. It is possible that much of this resistance could be unsatisfactory or lack of needs-based technology curriculum integration training (Christensen, 2002). However, much of Patrick's refusal had to do with a respected high-level educator not needing or wanting the stress of changing curriculum delivery. Patrick's main focus of resistance concerned the threat technology posed toward proper ideologically based teacher-student relationships. Obviously, one educator, Mr. McDonald, welcomed technological linear change.

Three of the four teachers had major issues with the increases in standardized testing and the resulting curriculum adjustments, with two of these educators being directly influenced, as their curriculum would be tested (English and science). Mr. McDonald, teaching an untested curriculum, was inconvenienced due to the schools computer lab scheduling interfering with other beneficial curriculum uses. All three had to either change their ideologically eclectic curriculum or drop curriculum activities or units successful in the past, signaling negative ideological impacts. In support of this finding, research by Winkler (2002) presented a dichotomy between veteran teachers and less experienced teachers in respect to increased standardized testing. Winkler found that veteran teachers, like those presented in this study, tend to view increases in standardized testing as losses to student curriculum learning, while on the other hand, beginning teachers tend to view such standardization in terms of student gains (Winkler, 2002).

A major finding of this study concerns the differences in eclectic ideological impacts between regular education and advanced education teachers. As advanced education teachers, both Anderson and Patrick clearly had to adapt more in response to linear changes (see Table 2).

The implications of such adaptations to linear change on advanced learners will be the next area of discussion.

### **Implications for Gifted and Talented Education**

Long advocated by Feldhusen (1994), an eclectic approach to theory and practice in GT education has been viewed as more responsive to the needs of individual students. A more eclectic approach is also promoted by Cohen, Ambrose, and Powell (2000), who caution that “tacit entrapment within the conceptual framework of one world view can cause scholars and practitioners to misunderstand or devalue the work of others” (p. 332). VanTassell-Baska and Brown (2007), on the other hand, argue that eclecticism may not be the best approach. They suggest, rather, “careful and deep implementation over time of selective models that work” (p. 353). In this study, the teachers who felt most impacted by the linear changes toward a standardized model of education were the teachers most likely to be working with GT: Annette Anderson, teacher of GT students; and Karen Patrick, teacher of honors students (see Table 2). Both teachers experienced higher impact adaptations, suggesting more curriculum issues concerning linear change and the needs of advanced students. The evidence also indicates that both Anderson and Patrick experienced more pressure to change their ideological eclecticism due to the evolving linear focus at RSD; however, no evidence gathered disclosed either teacher degrading their curriculum to a complete drill and practice adaptation. Nonetheless, the evidence does show that both teachers lost curriculum pedagogy geared to the needs of GT and honors advanced students, as predicted by Moon et al. (2007). Even VanTassell-Baska and Brown (2007) admit to this shift toward a single ideology as being problematic.

This raises the question that, in the world of practice, when the curricular shift is toward more standardized curriculum, with its emphasis on testable outcomes, are gifted children served

better by an eclectic approach, in which teachers wedge in what they can of gifted pedagogy, drawing on a wide range of potential models for the gifted; or should they battle for implementation of an evidence-based model that may be in opposition to the more standardized approach to teaching and learning being imposed through administrative direction? Both approaches can lead to surreptitious implementation, in which teachers believe they are acting in the gifted students' best interests but essentially hide what they are doing. This would potentially lead teachers and, when the practice is discovered, administrators to question the integrity of the teacher, regardless of any test results that may show no harm was done or that students benefitted. Both approaches create the possibility for teacher-administrator conflict concerning teaching beliefs, practices, and outcomes. An administrator who holds strongly to a standardized accountability view of schooling may not be convinced even by the evidence presented by a well-researched curriculum model.

This leaves teachers in a difficult position of how to match their beliefs with what they are told to do by their educational leaders. This study raises the possibility that teachers of advanced and gifted students may be even more vulnerable to frustration. The general education teachers in this study seemed more accepting of the changes or, at least, of the inevitability of their domination in educational practice (see Table 2). The teachers of advanced and gifted students experienced more conflict with these changes (see Table 2). This is consistent with the finding by Hong, Greene, and Hartzell (2011) that teachers in gifted programs are more likely to structure the classroom environment and use instructional materials in ways that foster student learning than teachers in general education classrooms, who, on the other hand, are more likely to focus on students' test performance.



Is the best approach, then, ideological singleness and purity in belief and practice, ideological eclecticism, as exhibited by the teachers in this multiple case study, or an ideological split between belief and practice? The answers to these questions have particular relevance for the preparation and evaluation of teachers of students with gifts and talents. For example, the *National Standards for Teacher Preparation in Gifted and Talented Education* (NAGC/CEC, 2013) take an arguably strong developmental approach. Why was this approach considered dominant over holism, meliorism, critical theory, or progressivism? Is the developmental ideological approach, then, to be the focus of teacher preparation programs in gifted education, even though policy makers in many school districts, in the face of high-stakes testing, propound a linear approach that is forced upon all students regardless of its developmental appropriateness? Having graduated from a program based on the national standards, are teachers of the gifted to be evaluated according to their application of these standards in the classroom or according to performance of their students on a standardized test? Does an eclectic approach soften the tension between seemingly conflicting perspectives? What is the wisest course for teachers of the gifted to take in an educational world in which their career advancement, personal integrity, and teaching performance hinge, at least in part, on their perspectives and the degree to which these influence their practice?

In this study, one teacher of advanced students, even with an eclectic approach (but one that focused on student learning rather than test performance), could no longer bear the split and left the teaching profession. Ideological singleness and purity would seem only to exacerbate the issue. Are the only options left to teachers, especially teachers of the gifted, forced conversion to autocratic ideologies, a compartmentalized separation of ideology and practice, or

Jennifer Robins 5/13/16 2:40 PM

**Comment [8]:** There are lots of questions here. Is that OK?

Allen, William T 5/13/16 1:47 PM

**Comment [9]:** Yes, we wanted questions here in order to point out issue with non-eclectic approaches.

unemployment? As exclaimed in the probably apocryphal story about Shoeless Joe Jackson, “Say it ain’t so!”

### **Limitations**

As a qualitative multiple case study, generalizations are restricted to the natural context of the study. Generalizations should be made only to the teachers in his or her classroom, as impacted by district and state directives. As an exploratory and interpretive study, understandings are also limited to the judgement of the investigators who were involved in the study. Further limitations include both the use of the Miller (2011) survey and the investigator created essay and interview questions. It is recognized that both instruments lack proven psychometric validity regarding teacher ideologies; however, considering the current seriousness of linear imposition on GT education in RSD, utilization of such instruments was necessary for a basic qualitative understanding of the problem.

### **Conclusion**

It is hoped that this study provides a basic qualitative understanding of the tension between professional teacher ideological practices and linear impositions on GT education. It is also hoped that this study will aid in a mutual understanding that school systems need both eclectic teacher practices and standardized accountability for GT student success. Upsetting the balance of this dichotomy, due to politically driven linear change that is representative of dogmatic will or ignorance, has the potential of hurting GT student educational development now and in the future.

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## Footnotes

<sup>1</sup> The names of the school district and all teacher participants are pseudonyms.

<sup>2</sup> References are made throughout this article to specific laws and policies on which the changes described were based. In order to protect the confidentiality promised to the school district through the Institutional Review Board process, specific citations to these laws and policies are not provided in text nor in the reference list.

<sup>3</sup> There are actually nine additional ideological orientations; however, no evidence from the interviews indicated that the religious orthodoxy ideology was held by any of the participating teachers.



Table 1

*Teacher Ideology Scores from the Donna Miller Ideology Survey*

Teacher	Linear <sup>a</sup>	Holistic <sup>b</sup>	Laissez-Faire	Critical Theory	Total
Steven McDonald	8	9	2	1	20
Annette Anderson	6	11	0	3	20
Karen Patrick	7	13	0	3	23
Louise Garrett	8	6	2	4	20

*Note.* K. Patrick's total is 23 because she circled two answers on three of the survey questions.

<sup>a</sup>The linear ideological orientation, with all four teacher participants, was consistently high.

<sup>b</sup>The holistic ideological orientation was the highest score with the first three teacher participants.

**Location on page 15.**

Table 2

*Ideological Impact Adaptations of Four Teachers Due to Linear Change*

Ideology	S. McDonald	A. Anderson <sup>a</sup>	K. Patrick <sup>b</sup>	L. Garrett
Linear	+	+	+	+
Rational Humanism	o	-	±	+
Developmental	o	±	±	±
Holistic	±	±	±	+
Laissez-Faire	-	o	o	-
Meliorist	+	±	o	+
Critical Theory	-	-	-	-
Religious Orthodoxy <sup>c</sup>	o	o	o	o
Progressive	±	±	±	+
Vocational	o	o	o	+
Home Project	±	o	o	o
Reconceptual	o	±	±	+
Cognitive Pluralism	+	±	±	+

*Note.* + = strong evidence for ideological orientation; - = weak evidence for ideological orientation; o = no evidence for ideological orientation; ± = ideological curriculum orientation altered by linear change.

<sup>a</sup>Teacher of gifted and talented classes.

<sup>b</sup>Teacher of honors classes.

<sup>c</sup>There is no evidence of the religious orthodoxy orientation. This is probably due to the fact that RSD is in an area of the United States where educator religious expression in classrooms is illegal.

**Location on page 19**

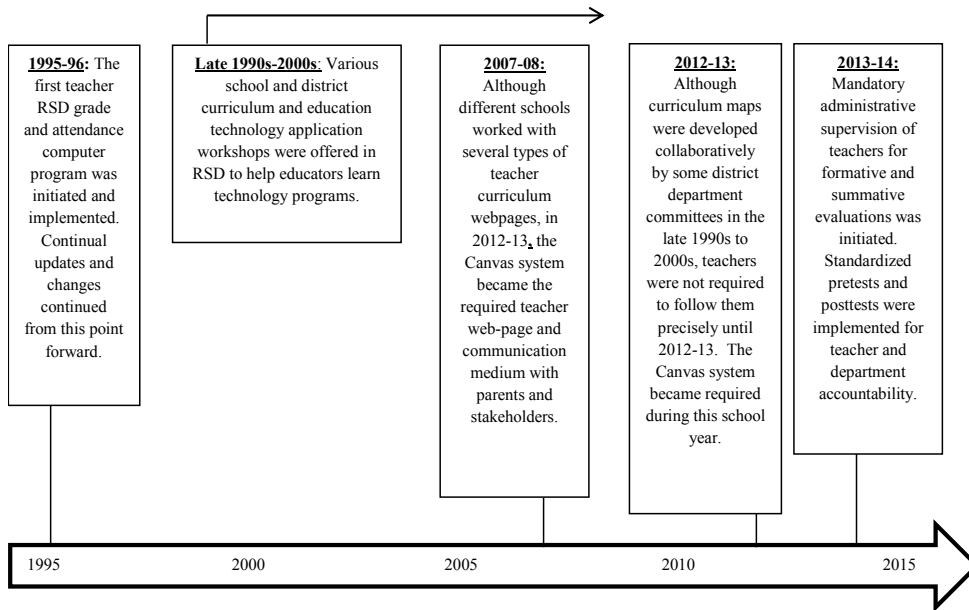


Figure 1. River School District timeline showing 18 years of linear change.

Location on page 7.

*Appendix*

**Teacher Ideologies Essay/Interview Questions**

How long have you been an educator?

How has education changed since you were first hired as an educator/teacher?

In your opinion what is the role of education in our society?

What is the role of teachers? Should a teacher be free to choose curriculum?

What is the role of parents? How should parents be involved in curricular decisions?

What is the role of students? How should students be involved in curricular decisions?

How many curriculum changes have you seen in your career?

Whose interest should the curriculum serve?

What is worth knowing? Should this be related to the social conditions of our society?

Can you tell me the exact curriculum changes you have experienced as an educator? This can be curriculum content, delivery, or method/strategy?

Can you tell me about how curriculum changes occurred? Did you have any input on the particular change? Was it a top down process?

Do you believe any curriculum changes were needed to help train students for the future?

Why?

Do you believe any curriculum changes were actually worthless in respect to education?

Why?

What do you believe were the best curriculum changes since you became a teacher?

What do you believe were the worst curriculum changes since you became a teacher?

How can future educators be sure that any change in curriculum benefits teachers and/or students?

If you had your way, what would be the best thing that policy makers could do to ensure each student had the best education possible?

In your opinion, what is the best way to educate students?

In your career, what curriculum change had the best impact on student learning?

What do you think concerning the further use of technology as a curriculum delivery system?

Will technology help or hinder the educational development of children? Is it needed? Why or why not?

What interesting quotes do you have to add to the interview?

