CURRICULUM POLICY, CONTROVERSY, AND CHANGE: MINNESOTA'S PROFILE OF LEARNING, 1993-2003

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ABSTRACT

This historical case study of Minnesota's Profile of Learning examines how and why the policy was created, implemented, and finally repealed. The Profile of Learning, Minnesota's first attempt at a statewide standards-based curriculum policy, was developed beginning in 1993, officially adopted in 1998, and repealed in 2003. Intended to stimulate change through statewide high expectations for students and associated improvements in curriculum and instruction, it instead became controversial and contested.

The study uses a conceptual framework that addresses the social and political context for the policy, the policy actors and their beliefs about the purpose of schooling and the knowledge that should be contained in the curriculum, and the policy levers of curriculum, instruction, and teacher learning. Through the use of primary and secondary source documents and interviews, a chronology of significant events in the life of the Profile was constructed. The story was then examined to determine probable causes for the policy's failure. These included shifts in the state and national political contexts, varied policy stances on the part of policy actors and stakeholders, interest group activity from a group strongly opposed to the policy, conflicting beliefs about purpose and knowledge, and the use of ineffective policy levers.

The case study suggests the need for improved attention to the policymaking process, particularly at the transition points between the policy ideas and formulation and subsequently between policy formulation and implementation. The lack of clear policy goals, appropriate policy instruments, and attention to feasibility contributed to

later difficulties with the policy, as did the failure to use evaluative information to make adjustments during the implementation process. In addition, stronger collaboration between policymakers and practitioners is needed for the development of effective curriculum policy.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES AND FIGURES

TABLES

FIGURES

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The United States has a long history of efforts to reform public schools. Americans believe that changes in schooling will lead to desired changes in society.[1] One important way in which changes in schooling can be made is through changes in curriculum; however, curriculum has historically been contested ground and remains so through the present time.[2] Widespread reform efforts over the past two decades have focused on the use of curriculum standards as a policy lever to stimulate systemic reform; the standards are the hub around which instruction, assessment of expected outcomes, and professional developed are designed.[3] Like previous curriculum policies, standards are not neutral, but arise from political, social, and cultural systems.[4] They are shaped not only by the time in which they are constructed, but also by the policies that have preceded them.

Standards are statements that describe what students should know and be able to do; they necessarily emphasize particular aspects of knowledge to a greater or lesser degree. As standards policies are created and implemented, stakeholders consciously or unconsciously engage with beliefs about what knowledge should be privileged.

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[1] David Tyack and Larry Cuban, *Tinkering toward Utopia: A Century of Public School Reform* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1995).

[2] Herbert M. Kliebard, *The Struggle for the American Curriculum, 1893-1958*, 2nd ed. (New York: Routledge, 1995).

[3] Michael Fullan, *Change Forces with a Vengeance* (New York: RoutledgeFalmer, 2003).

[4] Ronald H. Heck, *Studying Educational and Social Policy: Theoretical Concepts and Research Methods* (Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 2004); Kliebard, *The Struggle for the American Curriculum, 1893-1958*.

Stakeholders' perspectives related to knowledge included in the standards are often tied to their beliefs about the purpose of schooling. For example, stakeholders who believe that schooling should promote social justice will expect curriculum standards to include the viewpoints of minority groups, while stakeholders who believe that schooling should transmit the dominant cultural norms will expect curriculum standards to emphasize the achievements of the majority culture. The development and implementation of standards policy is thus a process likely to be characterized by conflict.

The process of developing a policy can be conceptualized as comprising six stages: (a) issue definition, (b) agenda setting, (c) policy formulation, (d) policy adoption, (e) implementation, and (f) evaluation.[5] Issue definition occurs when a condition is viewed as a problem that can be addressed through policy action. Agenda setting occurs when the problem is brought to the attention of the policy-making body. Policy formulation requires the selection of appropriate policy instruments and the expression of the policy in appropriate written form. Policy adoption is the official adoption of the policy by the appropriate policymaking group. Implementation occurs when the policy is put into action. The final step, evaluation, seeks to determine whether the policy has achieved its intended outcome.

A stage model is useful in conceptualizing the policy process, but can also be limiting as the actual policy process often does not unfold in a linear manner. A policy

[5] Frances C. Fowler, *Policy Studies for Educational Leaders: An Introduction.*, 2nd ed. (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Merrill PrenticeHall, 2004).

may move both forward and backward through the process.[6] Different stages in the policy process provide different perspectives on the policy. For example, what seemed compelling in policy formulation can become fraught with problems in implementation. Political forces wax and wane over time, changing the support for the policy. New knowledge is created and may or may not support the current policy.

Policymakers depend on practitioners to implement the policies they design while educational practitioners rely on policymakers to "frame action and offer resources."[7] Educational policymakers attempt to improve student achievement by creating a "gap" between current conditions and desired levels of achievement, determining possible causes for the unacceptably low levels of achievement and the resources needed to address the problem. The task of implementation centers on practitioners taking the necessary actions to bridge that gap.[8] Policy formulation and implementation are thus intertwined, making the process of educational change "typically messier" than a stage model suggests.[9]

Research related to standards has tended to focus on a "snapshot" of the standards at a given time or on a particular stage in the policy process; however, this perspective is limited because stages do not occur in isolation. Policymaking is a recursive and complex process. A more complete understanding of standards as educational policy can be gained from a study of the "life" of a set of standards, from its

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[6] Ibid.

[7] David K. Cohen, Susan L. Moffitt, and Simona Goldin, "Policy and Practice," in *The State of Education Policy Research*, ed. Susan H. Fuhrman, David K. Cohen, and Fritz Mosher (Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 2007), 66.

[8] Ibid., 69.

[9] Daniel Duke, *The Challenges of Educational Change* (New York: Pearson Allyn and Bacon, 2004).

development through its implementation and finally, to its revision, replacement, or establishment as a generally accepted way of doing things. A longer view of standards policies can help inform future efforts to create or revise such policies by examining the entire policy process.[10]

The case of the Minnesota Profile of Learning provides the opportunity for such a study. The Profile was created beginning in 1993, officially adopted in 1998, and repealed in 2003. This study is designed to answer the following research questions: How and why was the Profile of Learning created, implemented, and repealed? What assertions were made about the purpose of schooling and what assumptions about the purpose of schooling are implied? What assertions were made about curriculum knowledge and what assumptions are implied?

Contributions to the Field

This study attempts to bring together multiple perspectives in four ways. First, the research approach draws on both educational policy and curriculum studies, situating curriculum as educational policy. The study thus examines the interaction between curriculum content and policy processes, considering this interaction in a particular historical context. Results of the study can inform policymakers of the particular characteristics and demands of creating and implementing curriculum policy. In addition, the results can provide curriculum specialists and theorists with a better understanding of the complexity of curriculum as policy.

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[10] Heck, *Studying Educational and Social Policy*.

Second, the study provides the opportunity to describe the perspectives of multiple stakeholders and policy actors. The time frame of a full life of the policy over a decade allows investigation of changes in stakeholder opinions and involvement in the policy over time. This perspective is needed to understand fully the complexity of stakeholder involvement in curriculum policy. An unexpected outcome of the study was the observation of the widely varied expectations for curriculum policy held by different stakeholder groups. Insight into these expectations could lead to more effective policies.

Third, the use of historical case study methodology and the development of a narrative telling the story of the policy serve to situate the reader in the context experienced by the policy actors and stakeholders. The reader thus experiences the richness, complexity, and chaos of the policy's story. Like the policy actors, readers may find the story line unpredictable, the changes in leadership confusing, the assertions of some stakeholders unwarranted, and the story as a whole overwhelming. This experience is important to understanding the policy's story from the perspective of the policy actors involved.

Finally, the study addresses the interaction between policy and practice. Policymakers and practitioners are dependent on each other for the generation and implementation of curriculum policy. Research into policies aimed at changing practice has tended to view problems and processes either from the view of either those who create the policies or those who put them into practice,[11] yet the impact of a policy depends on both these groups of policy actors. By addressing the complete policy process, this study brings these two worlds together.

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[11] Cohen, Moffitt, and Goldin, "Policy and Practice."

Definitions and Delimitations

Several key terms will be used throughout this paper. *Curriculum* is the content knowledge and related processes that students are expected to acquire as a result of formal schooling.[12] This study focuses on the intended curriculum, that is, the curriculum that is intended to be taught; curriculum policy comprises this form of curriculum. It is recognized that the implemented curriculum (what is actually taught) and the received curriculum (what students learn) cannot be assumed to duplicate the intended curriculum; however, this study is limited to the examination of the intended curriculum as contained in curriculum policy. It does not examine the enactment of the curriculum in the classroom.

Educational policy is defined as the decisions made and actions taken by people in positions of authority in order to systematize procedures related to the education of students.[13] These people may be elected officials, as in the case of legislators or local school boards. They may be officials who position is obtained through political appointment; in Minnesota, this would include the commissioner of education. They may also be people in administrative positions in local districts, including principals. Educational policy is made at the federal, state, local, and building levels and addresses a wide range of topics, from funding allocations to behavior on the school bus.

This study focuses on curriculum policy. It follows from the above definitions that *curriculum policy* is decisions made and actions taken by people in positions of

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[12] This definition draws from Walker's discussion of curriculum, Decker Walke and Joan A. Walker, *Fundmentals of Curriculum: Passions and Professionalism,*2nd ed., Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum, 2003.

[13] This definition draws from the Fowler's discussion of policy, Fowler, *Policy Studies*, 8-9.

authority in order to systematize the teaching of the content knowledge and related processes that students are expected to acquire as a result of formal schooling. Standards are a specific type of curriculum policy. As previously noted, *standards* are statements of what students should know and be able to do. As such, they comprise both knowledge and processes. Standards formalize curriculum into student-focused outcome statements.

Performance standards delineate the specific achievement needed to meet the curriculum standards. The common definition of performance standards is that they tell "how good is good enough." Student performance may be evaluated through the use of a range of assessments, including standardized tests, portfolios, and performance assessments. *Performance assessments* are assessment tasks that require the student to demonstrate his or her learning through the solving of a problem, completion of a project or other product including a written or artistic work, or demonstration of a skill or ability such as public speaking, music or dance performance, or use of technology. Performance assessment often involves the application of knowledge.

This study is limited to the Profile of Learning during the years 1993-2003. The year 1993 was selected as the first year for study because that was the first time the term "profile of learning" was used in legislation. The period under study concludes in 2003 with the repeal of the policy.

My focus is on the Profile as a curriculum policy. From the sources available, I selected those that would enable me to tell the story of the Profile as a policy and strive to determine probable causes for the events that occurred in the policy process.

Limitations

The study has several limitations. Three of these relate to sources. First, a limited number of unpublished document sources were available, particularly from the period during which the policy was being developed. Although published sources are appropriate for this case study, unpublished sources can provide important perspectives and information that may otherwise be unrepresented. Second, of the published sources, newspaper articles were the most numerous. My construction of the historical narrative relies more heavily on this source than on others, and thus may incorporate biases present in these artifacts. Third, the number of interviews is small. Many of the key policy actors could not be located. Some people with whom I requested interviews declined. In addition, the interviews that were conducted could reflect biased viewpoints, faulty memories, or intentional efforts to mislead.

A study of this nature sacrifices depth for breadth. In seeking to tell the story of the policy across the span of a decade, I have described many events and people, but have not included extensive details. A more detailed analysis of specific events, individual policy actors, or stakeholder groups could provide additional insight into the story of the policy and the reasons for what occurred at a particular time.

The case study attempts to explain possible causes for the events that transpired. Although the suggested explanations are based on analysis of the sources and the sequence of events, they are limited by the quality and interpretation of the data. There may be equally plausible alternative explanations that did not emerge from this study.

My personal experiences with the Profile of Learning may have influenced my analysis of the events. During the years of the Profile's existence, I worked as a district curriculum specialist in reading; in this position I had significant responsibility for working with the Profile in my district. I was involved in dissemination of the standards, development of assessments, and creation of professional development; I was also involved in the district's attempts to buffer itself from the Profile's requirements. During this time I served on a number of state-level committees related to the Profile, primarily addressing assessment and accountability. I was later involved in Profile work as a consultant and graduate student. In these capacities I worked on the creation of an instructional framework (which was never used), revision of the standards for reading, creation of benchmarks to align with those standards, and an attempt to create a set of compromise standards for reading that would replace those in the Profile. My own children were also public school students during the years from 1993-2003. While I have not drawn on my personal experiences for the study, my perspectives may be biased because of them.

Finally, my approach to this study differs from the purpose and methods that might be chosen by a trained historian. I use the historical case study to approach the case of the Profile of Learning primarily though a policy lens.

Overview of Chapters

In order to provide clarity for the reader, this dissertation departs from the traditional five-chapter format. Chapter Two describes the methodology used in the case study. Chapter Three begins with a brief description of the history of curriculum policy

and school reform efforts in the United States. Within this history I discern two themes that are central to the conflict related to curriculum policy: the purpose of schooling and the knowledge that should be embodied in the curriculum. Working from these two themes, I then develop a conceptual framework for the case study, situating curriculum policy in a context in which multiple stakeholders create and interpret policy through the lens of their own beliefs about purpose and knowledge. This section is followed by a brief review of literature related to educational policy and school reform. Chapter Two concludes by describing changes in curriculum policy in Minnesota during the twenty year period preceding the formulation of the Profile of Learning.

Chapters Four through Eight focus on the first part of the primary research question: *how* the Profile of Learning was created, implemented, and repealed. These chapters comprise a narrative that tells the story of the Profile of Learning as an educational policy over the ten years of its existence, from 1993 until 2003. The organization is primarily chronological, but each chapter is organized into subsections comprising events that are related in terms of people, organizations, actions, or ideas. The story focuses on key policy actors and stakeholder groups, their actions, and the relationship between those actions and their beliefs about purpose and knowledge. It also describes policy systems and instruments that were part of the Profile. In addition to addressing the research question of how the Profile of Learning was created, implemented, and repealed, these chapters also describe the assertions and assumptions made about the purpose of schooling and the knowledge that should be included in the curriculum.

In Chapter Nine, I address the second part of the primary research question: *why* the Profile of Learning was created, implemented, and repealed. Returning to the conceptual framework that guided the study, I discuss how the national and state contexts, the policy actors and their beliefs, and the policy levers impacted the policy processes, decisions, and controversies related to the Profile of Learning. In Chapter Ten, I discuss the implications of this case study for future educational policymaking. The afterword provides a brief description of Minnesota's current (2008) curriculum policy and associated present-day issues

CHAPTER TWO

METHODOLOGY

Historical case study is as the most appropriate methodology to answer the question of how and why the Profile of Learning was created, implemented, and repealed. Case studies provide the opportunity to investigate "how" and "why" questions in situations in which the researcher cannot control events; historical case studies focus on past rather than contemporary events.[1] The historical perspective is also important to our present thinking about curriculum policy because policy actors' understandings of educational policy are shaped, either consciously or unconsciously, by a sense of the past.[2] Historical studies add to knowledge about curriculum policy by developing explanations of past events and can "seek to inform present discussions of policy problems by building theory about how past policy practices have evolved."[3] A better understanding of the ways in which context and conflicting ideas impact standards policies can allow policymakers to design more effective policies.

This study is designed as an explanatory case study that seeks to determine probable causes for events that occurred.[4] Although systemic change centered on standards has been a relatively long-lasting reform both nationally and in Minnesota, the Profile of Learning was in existence for only ten years. It began in 1993 as an

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[1] Heck, *Studying Educational and Social Policy*, Robert K. Yin, *Case Study Research: Design and Methods* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2003).

[2] David Tyack, "Public School Reform: Policy Talk and Institutional Practice," *American Journal of Education* 100, no. 1 (1991).

[3] Heck, *Studying Educational and Social Policy*, 236.

[4] Ibid; Yin, *Case Study Research: Design and Methods*.

adaptation of outcomes based education, was officially adopted in 1998, and was repealed in 2003. This short time period allows a focused examination of a complex set of influences on a set of standards. Analysis of the policy provides the opportunity to study the interactions of policymakers, interest groups, practitioners, and other interested stakeholders and their influence on the Profile of Learning.

Sources and Data Analysis

Documents were the main data source for this study. Both published and unpublished documents were used; not surprisingly, a greater number of published documents were available. Although published documents are usually considered less valuable sources than those that are unpublished,[5] they are important and appropriate for this study because much of the controversy about the Profile of Learning occurred in the public arena.

Published Sources

Newspaper articles from the entire decade were used; they were a particularly productive source from 1998 onward. The two major Twin Cities daily newspapers, the *Minneapolis Star Tribune* and the *St. Paul Pioneer Press,* ran hundreds of articles related to the Profile from that year through 2003. Articles from both newspapers were used; use of both sources provided a means of checking the content. If both papers reported the same information it was considered more likely to be accurate. In the case

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[5] Gary McCulloch, *Documentary Research in Education, History, and the Social Sciences* (New York: RoutledgeFalmer, 2004); Gary McCulloch and William Richardson, *Historical Research in Educational Settings* (Philadelphia: Open University Press, 2000). Unpublished sources offer greater insight into background processes and thinking.

of conflicting reports (which happened rarely), additional information was sought from other sources appropriate to the particular topic. Journals from the Minnesota House and Senate and other legislative records were used to confirm the accuracy of newspaper reports on legislative action.

Several types of documents from the Minnesota Legislature were consulted. Many were available online; others were obtained at the legislative library. The session laws provided a record of legislation enacted. The legislature's website has a feature that shows the steps that any bill introduced in 1993 or later went through and includes the text of the bill. As noted above, the official journals of the House and Senate were used primarily to verify newspaper accounts of legislative action. Reports by the House research department were helpful in constructing the chronology of events. The State of the State speeches of Governors Carlson, Ventura, and Pawlenty were used when relevant to the case.

A number of documents produced by the Minnesota Department of Education (MDE) and the Minnesota Department of Children, Families, and Learning (CFL)[6] were located in archives at the Minnesota Historical Society and the Minnesota Department of Education. These include reports by various commissioners, scoring criteria used for Profile assessments, implementation policies and procedures, and a training manual for professional development related to the Profile. A report describing the research base for the policy was also available. These documents provided insight both into events that occurred and into the thinking of those who created them. In addition, the entire set of high school performance assessments for the Profile was located in the MDE

[6] These two names were used for the state department of education during the period under study.

archives. Additional performance assessments were obtained from the personal files of policy actors.

In addition to documents produced by MDE, a number of reports prepared for them were located. These included the reports of two ad hoc committees created specifically to address issues that had arisen around the standards, the Graduation Standards Advisory Panel in 1998 and the Academic Panel to the Commissioner in 2001. Other reports included a 1994 evaluation of the pilot sites done by a team from the North Central Regional Education Laboratory and a report describing public response to a set of proposed revised standards in 2002. These reports captured perspectives of multiple stakeholder groups.

Outside reports evaluating the Profile were also used. These included two reports by Achieve, Inc. and the Council of Basic Education that had been requested by the commissioner and legislature. The American Federation of Teachers published yearly reports evaluating standards in all states. *Education Week* also evaluated standards in some of its *Quality Counts* reports. These reports were helpful in discerning the national and state contexts in relation to standards development.

Several editorials and columns in Minnesota newspapers were focused on the Profile of Learning and were useful in understanding stakeholder perspectives. The publications of a range of interest groups were also used for this purpose. Some position statements were available from the state's teachers unions. The Center of the American Experiment also published several anti-Profile articles in their journal. The archive section of the website of the Maple River Education Coalition (now EdWatch), a political action group started in opposition to the Profile, contained numerous

documents from the time of the Profile that were useful in understanding the group's views. The archives at Minnesota Public Radio (MPR) contained some radio shows on which policy actors appeared as guests; providing insight into their views. The MPR archives also contained some news stories related to the Profile.

One published research article related to the Profile, written by two University of Minnesota professors, was found. Two unpublished doctoral doctoral dissertations that addressed aspects of the Profile were also located. One was a useful source for examining stakeholder perspectives.

Unpublished Sources

In addition to the published documents, a limited number of unpublished documents was located. These included a few meeting agendas, handwritten notes made on other documents, internal memos, and emails obtained from the archives at MDE. Several draft documents from my personal archives were also used. Unfortunately, some anticipated sources of unpublished documents produced few documents. The minutes from the Minnesota Board of Education meetings during the time of the Profile could not be located. Early drafts of the Profile and records of the process of developing the policy have not survived. The MDE archives contained almost no personal correspondence related to the Profile.

The documents served as both primary and secondary source material to answer the research questions. To examine *how* the policy was developed, implemented, and repealed, primary source documents included the laws and rules of the State of Minnesota, journals of the Senate and House, reports to the Minnesota legislature, the

legislative record, and the training materials and reports from MDE, along with the unpublished documents that were available. Secondary sources included news articles, legislative research reports, and reports of outside groups. To examine *why* the story of the policy unfolded as it did, all of the documents related directly to the Profile of Learning served as primary sources and many were secondary sources. As primary sources, they reflect the views of the particular policy actors and stakeholders who created them. As secondary sources, they provide insights into the views of other policy actors and stakeholders. The documents were used in the same way to answer the questions related to assertions made and assumptions implied in relation to the purpose of schooling and knowledge related to reading.

Interviews

Four interviews were also conducted. Early in the research process, Mary Lillesve, a former manager at MDE/CFL, provided an overview of the story of the Profile from the perspective of an insider in that agency. Beverly Lillquist, who served as the standards technician for Minneapolis Public Schools (then the state's largest district), described that district's experiences with the Profile. These interviews provided some opportunity to triangulate data,[7] but were not as useful for this purpose as I had hoped. The interviewees remembered some events, but were generally unable to match them with dates or to re-create the sequence of events that occurred. Both these interviewees offered inside perspectives for their respective organizations, making the interview data of some use in triangulation related to the thinking of these

[7] Michael Q. Patton, *Qualitative Research and Evaluation Methods* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2002).

stakeholder groups. The data were also limited in this regard, however, because the interviews tended to reflect the perspectives of individuals rather than being representative of groups. One additional interview with an MDE employee who preferred to remain anonymous was conducted later in the research process. This interview was conducted primarily for purposes of triangulation.

Document sources proved inadequate for developing an understanding of the perspectives of the business community. An interview was done with Bill Blazar, Senior Vice President of the Minnesota Chamber of Commerce, for this purpose. Blazar was a member of the 1998 Graduation Standards Advisory Panel and has represented the business community on numerous education committees. This interview was helpful in filling in gaps in the data.

As previously mentioned, several people contacted for interviews declined. The reasons given included not enough time to be interviewed or insufficient memory of the Profile and the events surrounding it. The difficulty in remembering the Profile may be evidence of policy churn, in which one policy is quickly replaced by another.[8] In this case, the emphasis over the last five years on the implementation of No Child Left Behind may have eclipsed memories of the Profile.

The interview format included the use of an interview guide in order to gain the widest range of information while also addressing topics and concepts important to the study.[9] The analysis of the interview content considered the relationship of the

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[8] Frederick M. Hess, *Spinning Wheels: The Politics of Urban School Reform* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 1999).

[9] Patton, *Qualitative Research and Evaluation Methods*.

informant to the Profile of Learning as well as that person's current position. Content analysis of the interviews focused on the key concepts and ideas related to this case as well as being open to other information related to the research questions. Table 1 summarizes the data sources used for the study.

Table 1

Data Sources for Research Questions

Source	How?	Why?	Assertions and assumptions
News articles from the time period	Secondary	Primary/ Secondary	Primary/ Secondary
Laws and rules of Minnesota	Primary	Primary	Primary
House and Senate Journals	Primary		
House research reports	Secondary	Secondary	Secondary
Reports from MDE/CFL	Primary	Primary	Primary
Performance assessments	Primary	Primary	Primary
Outside reports	Secondary	Primary	Primary
Editorials and columns	Secondary	Primary/ Secondary	Primary/ Secondary
Interest group publications and websites	Secondary	Primary/ Secondary	Primary/ Secondary
Minnesota Public Radio archives	Secondary	Primary/ Secondary	Primary/ Secondary
Research article	Secondary	Secondary	Secondary
Unpublished dissertation	Secondary	Primary/ Secondary	Primary/ Secondary
Unpublished documents	Primary	Primary/ Secondary	Primary/ Secondary
Interviews	Primary	Primary	Primary

Analysis of Documents

Each document was considered in terms of the meaning of the text, its authorship, the context in which it was produced, its intended audience, its influence, and the interests that may have prompted its development.[10] Determining the meaning of the text "involves close textual analysis of the source to understand its argument and its general nature as an account, and the extent to which it is internally consistent."[11] Analysis of the document text included attention to the key ideas, concepts, and phrases related to this case, particularly those related to beliefs about the purpose of schooling and knowledge related to curriculum.[12] These themes served as sensitizing concepts;[13] I was also open to other themes that emerged.

Analysis related to the author includes determining who wrote the work and how the text relates to other documents by the same author.[14] Some documents, such as newspaper articles and published articles, had an identifiable author. Multiple documents by the same author generally revealed patterns in that person's thinking. For many of the other documents, such as reports and training manuals, authorship was impossible to determine.

The context in which documents were written includes the broad social, political, and educational context of the time as well as the specific context in which the document was produced. The usual work of the author or organization associated with

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[10] McCulloch and Richardson, *Historical Research in Educational Settings*.

[11] Ibid., 91.

[12] Heck, *Studying Educational and Social Policy*.

[13] Patton, *Qualitative Research and Evaluation Methods*.

[14] McCulloch and Richardson, *Historical Research in Educational Settings*.

the document (for example, the Center of the American Experiment) was considered when examining interests that may have prompted its development. Intended audience was also considered, including an internet audience or email list.

Analysis of historical documents is based on the researcher's close and careful reading. The researcher's background and knowledge related to the topic under study are important to a thoughtful, comprehensive analysis. I have extensive experience in K-12 education, including five years as the Minneapolis Public Schools elementary reading and language arts curriculum specialist and multiple experiences as a member of various task forces and committees at the Minnesota Department of Children, Families, and Learning (CFL) and its earlier and later counterpart, the Minnesota Department of Education (MDE). I also have knowledge of educational organizations, policies and politics as well as reading research, curriculum, and policy. This experience and knowledge provides a strong foundation for the reading and analysis required for this study.

My personal involvement in K-12 education for most of the life of the Profile of Learning provides both advantages and disadvantages. Participation in an event can enhance the researcher's ability to judge evidence.[15] Having some "insider" experience also increased access to private sources and interviews. The same experiences can make it difficult to distance oneself from the politics of the event, however.[16] I have "insider" status in K-12 public education as a teacher and district curriculum specialist, as a

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[15] Martha Howell and Walter Prevenier, *From Reliable Sources: An Introduction to Historical Methods* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2001).

[16] Ibid.

member of numerous CFL ad hoc committees, and at the University of Minnesota. I was also involved in writing a revision of the Profile and a set of benchmarks for reading. In contrast, I am an "outsider" in relation to conservative interest groups, think tanks, the Minnesota legislature, and the Minnesota Department of Education. I strove to be clear about my participation in events related to the Profile of Learning and my possible biases and worked to be as objective as possible. I did not include my own memories of events or opinions. I did draw on my personal document archives.

The analysis of sources was used for two purposes: first, to create a chronology of the development, implementation, and the replacement of the Profile of Learning and second, to suggest probable causes for what occurred.[17] Comparison of sources followed the decision-making rules outlined by Howell and Prevenier, in which the authority of the source is of most importance. In general, experts or eyewitnesses to events are assumed to have greater authority than those more removed, unless there is reason to believe that the eyewitness reports are biased or misleading. Agreement between two independent sources strengthens the credibility of both.

In establishing explanations for what occurred, it must be recognized that it is not possible to determine with certainty the intentions of the various stakeholders and policy actors.[18] It is possible to make connections between the statements or actions of these individuals or groups and later events that occurred; these connections allow insight into why events unfolded as they did. It is also possible to discern patterns over time that provide insight into shifts in ideas or changes in the power of various

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[17] Ibid.

[18] Ibid.

stakeholder groups. The search for causes of the events related to the Profile was focused by the conceptual framework guiding the study, including attention to context, stakeholder groups, beliefs about purpose and knowledge, and the use of policy levers.

CHAPTER THREE

CHANGE IN CURRICULUM POLICY

A historical perspective suggests that curriculum policy is not an objective statement by experts. It is instead a representation of the knowledge valued by society, particularly the politically powerful, at the time at which it was written as well as a reflection of the dominant view of the purpose of schooling in a particular era.[1] Because curriculum policy is often conceptualized in terms of the past, the present, and the desired future, the historical context is particularly relevant to understanding its development and implementation.[2]

This chapter comprises four sections. The first is a description of changes in curriculum policy in the United States from 1890 through 1994 with attention to recurring themes in the changes that took place during that time. The second draws upon this historical perspective to develop a conceptual framework for the historical case study of the Profile of Learning. The third section reviews literature relevant to standards as educational policy. The final section describes curriculum policy in Minnesota during the twenty-year period preceding the development of the Profile of Learning, providing the historical background and context for the case study.

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[1] Herbert M. Kliebard, "Constructing a History of the American Curriculum," in *Handbook of Research on Curriculum: A Project of the American Educational Research Association*, ed. P.W. Jackson (New York: Macmillan, 1992).

[2] Heck, *Studying Educational and Social Policy*.

Curriculum Policy 1890 -1994

The history of curriculum policy is characterized by tensions around the purpose of schooling and the conceptualization of knowledge. A range of interest groups, including higher education, school boards, parents, businesspeople, and community members have at one time or another interacted in struggles to control the curriculum.[3] Broadly stated, views of the purpose of schooling vacillate between training the mind, in which education is viewed as intrinsically valuable, and preparing for work, in which education is viewed as extrinsically valuable. There is also a related disagreement as to whether curriculum should be defined narrowly (i.e., as traditional academic subjects), broadly (including such topics as life skills, home economics, vocational education, and character development), or in some other way (e.g., integrated across subject areas).

The knowledge included in curriculum may be determined locally, at a state level, or at a national level. Controversy arises over content as well as process knowledge. The inclusion of evolution in the curriculum is a well-known example of controversy related to content. Disagreement over process knowledge arises, for example, in relation to critical reading. Conflict about knowledge also extends into different beliefs about who possesses the expertise for determining the knowledge to be included in curriculum and curriculum policy. At various times, this expertise has been associated with superintendents, publishing companies and their consultants,

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[3] Michael W. Kirst and D.F. Walker, "An Analysis of Curriculum Policy-Making," *Review of Educaitonal Research* 41, no. 5 (1971); J.E. McDaniel, C.H. Sims, and C.G. Miskel, "The National Reading Policy Arena: Policy Actors and Perceived Influence," *Educational Policy* 15, no. 1 (2001).

policymakers, university researchers, the lay public, other interest groups, teachers, and students.[4]

Curriculum at the Center

Kliebard identifies the 1890s as the time when a change in the social role of the school pushed curriculum to the center of schooling. Prior to that time, American schools were locally situated and the teacher was the most central aspect of schooling. Four forces or loosely organized interest groups are described by Kliebard: (a) humanists, (b) developmentalists, (c) social efficiency educators, and (d) social meliorists.[5]

The humanists continued a long-standing tradition that conceptualized the work of schools as preparing future citizens through the study of classic subjects focused on knowledge of Western civilization and including grammar, literature and art, mathematics, geography, and history. The developmentalists strove to build curriculum around the natural or normal development of the child; in recognition of the variation in children's development and abilities, they advocated for students' educational experiences to be matched to their perceived potential. The social efficiency educators were interested in efficiency in all aspects of schooling in order to create productive workers and good citizens and believed that, because students would be preparing for a range of occupations, differentiation in the curriculum was desirable. The social meliorists looked to schooling as an avenue to social justice, the means by which the

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[4] William A. Firestone, "Educational Policy as an Ecology of Games," *Educational Researcher* 18, no. 7 (1989); Kirst and Walker, "An Analysis of Curriculum Policy-Making"; McDaniel, Sims, and Miskel, "The National Reading Policy Arena."

[5] Kliebard, *The Struggle for the American Curriculum, 1893-1958*.

poor could elevate their status and society could ameliorate social ills; the curriculum would be designed to provide students with a vision of a new social order.[6]

Different beliefs about the purpose of schooling thus resulted in widely varied views about the knowledge that should make up the curriculum. The influence of the four groups on curriculum policy waxed and waned during the period that Kliebard studied (1890-1958). A single group never completely assumed dominance, but neither was any group completely eliminated from the struggle.[7]

Emphasis on Efficiency

Control of educational policy in the first part of the twentieth century was dominated by a group of policy elites known as administrative progressives.[8] This group included professional educators from a range of contexts, including state and federal government, colleges and universities, professional organizations, city school districts, and foundations. Consistent with the bureaucratic theory of the time, they were united by their belief that educational policy should be set by experts, based on educational science, and implemented from the top down. Like Kliebard's social efficiency educators, this group sought efficiency through the standardization of facilities, licensing, and management procedures. They also viewed education as the primary means for changing society and advocated differentiated curricula to address the range of student abilities and prepare students for varied futures.[9] The concurrent

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[6] Ibid.

[7] Ibid.

[8] Tyack and Cuban, *Tinkering toward Utopia*.

[9] Ibid.

development of psychological testing and its identification of student abilities provided support for their work.[10]

This group of administrative progressives is noteworthy for several reasons. First, their control over policies related to schooling is unrivaled prior to the end of the twentieth century. This coalition that brought together superintendents, professors, policy makers, interest groups, and foundations proved to be powerful. The administrative professionals clearly situated expertise related to curriculum in an elite group of educational professionals. Second, by making educational issues the purview of experts in the field, they succeeded in making schooling largely apolitical. Finally, they successfully communicated to the American public that the story of their efforts to reform schooling was a story of progress.[11] This mobilization of bias[12] served to maintain their power as well as to secure widespread support for American schooling as an institution.

Attention to Academics

By the early 1950s the notion of "social adjustment" or "life adjustment" education, which viewed the purpose of schooling as preparation for the problems of daily living, was widespread in the nation's schools.[13] This model came under attack beginning in the 1950s because of its lack of emphasis on traditional academic subjects.

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[10] Michael Engel, *The Struggle for Control of Public Education: Market Ideology Vs. Democratic Values* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2000).

[11] Tyack and Cuban, *Tinkering toward Utopia*.

[12] Fowler, *Policy Studies*. Fowler describes mobilization of bias as the use of implicit power through such mechanisms as organizational structure, procedures, rules of the game, and social usages (p.50).

[13] New York State Education Department, "Federal-State Education Policy Chronology 1944-2002," http://www.sifepp.nysed.gov/edpolicy/research/research.shtml.

During this decade, a new group of reformers arose, calling for increased academic expectations in schools. Their position was strengthened when the Educational Testing Service established testing for college admission that emphasized academic learning.[14] With the Soviet launch of Sputnik in 1957, calls for reform took on increased strength as both the government and the public expressed a desire for higher achievement, particularly in science and mathematics.[15]

In 1958, the United States Congress passed the National Defense Education Act (NDEA), an act that was significant not only for its content but also because it marked the federal government's entry into comprehensive education legislation.[16] The NDEA was focused on improving education in order to strengthen the American position in the Cold War. Funding for improvement of science, mathematics, and foreign language education in K-12 settings was included, along with inducements such as loans and fellowships for advanced study. Although the policy increased the federal government's role in determining the knowledge that should inform curriculum and curriculum policy, NDEA clearly prohibited the federal government from control over curriculum.[17]

NDEA promoted both increased academic achievement and differentiated instruction. A major focus of the act was identifying gifted and talented students and encouraging them to pursue courses of study deemed helpful to national needs. Funding

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[14] Ibid.

[15] Tyack and Cuban, *Tinkering toward Utopia*.

[16] U.S. Department of Education, "The Federal Role in Education," http://www.ed.gov/about/overview/fed/role.html.

[17] A.S. Flemming, "The Philosophy and Objectives of the National Defense Education Act," *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 327 (1960); Kirst and Walker, "An Analysis of Curriculum Policy-Making"; U.S. Department of Education, "The Federal Role in Education."

to increase the number of guidance counselors was included for this purpose. Funding for vocational education was also expanded to provide the technicians for the workforce that was expected to be needed as a result of advances in science. Efficiency was a key aspect of the legislation.[18] The purpose of schooling was broadened to include the strengthening the country's military power.

Schooling for Social Justice

The 1960s and early 1970s were characterized by social turmoil on multiple fronts as groups historically denied equal participation in society strove to change their situation. Schools were challenged to become more inclusive and more egalitarian as groups previously excluded from conversations about curriculum policy now demanded a place at the table, questioning the notion that this work was best left to experts. The Civil Rights Act of 1964 linked federal funding to non-discriminatory practices and supported desegregation.[19] The long-standing view of educational history as a story of continuous progress began to be questioned by educational historians.[20]

The role of the federal government in schooling increased when President Lyndon Johnson made improvement in education a key component of his initiative to create a "Great Society" in the United States. The Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) of 1965 was part of this effort. This legislation was significant in its broadening of federal involvement in K-12 public education. Title I of ESEA was designed to provide additional funds for the education of "culturally deprived"

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[18] Flemming, "The National Defense Education Act."

[19] New York State Education Department, "Federal-State Education Policy Chronology 1944-2002."

[20] Kliebard, "Constructing a History of the American Curriculum."

children—those children living in poverty.[21] At this point ESEA was focused primarily on funding, rather than on curriculum, as most policymakers believed that "schoolmen knew what to do with the added resources, and that they would thereby establish effective compensatory programs for poor children."[22] An evaluation component was built in to ensure that funding was used as intended.[23] Schools were required to use standardized tests to show student learning and to link objectives and outcomes.[24] Reminiscent of the ideas of Kliebard's social meliorists, this policy viewed the purpose of schooling as changing rather than replicating society.

During this period, curriculum began to change to include the history and viewpoints of ethnic, racial, and cultural minority groups as well as those of women and people with disabilities. Title III of ESEA provided funds for "innovative projects" such as open classrooms, team teaching, and alternative schools that took new approaches to curriculum and instruction.[25] A policy elite no longer made decisions about schooling.[26] Many voices were heard, but no single perspective dominated curriculum policy. This period was noteworthy for its questioning of the previously dominant beliefs about the purpose of schooling, the knowledge contained in the curriculum, and the recognition of

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[21] New York State Education Department, "Federal-State Education Policy Chronology 1944-2002"; U.S. Department of Education, "The Federal Role in Education"; Maris A. Vinovskis, "Do Federal Compensatory Education Programs Really Work? A Brief Historical Analysis of Title I and Head Start," *American Journal of Education* 107, no. 3 (1999).

[22] Milbrey W. McLaughlin, *Evaluation and Reform: The Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965/Title I* (Cambridge, MA: Ballinger, 1975), 1.

[23] Ibid, Vinovskis, "Federal Compensatory Education Programs."

[24] Jody L. Fitzpatrick, James R. Sanders, and Blaine R. Worthen, *Program Evaluation: Alternative Approaches and Practical Guidelines* (New York: Pearson, 2004).

[25] New York State Education Department, "Federal-State Education Policy Chronology 1944-2002."

[26] Tyack and Cuban, *Tinkering toward Utopia*.

expertise. By the mid 1970s, however, this era of experimentation began to wind down as the basic education movement gathered force.[27]

A Nation at Risk

The publication of *A Nation at Risk*[28] (1983) is generally considered to be the triggering event for a series of waves of school reform that carried into the next century.[29] The report was prepared by a commission appointed by Secretary of Education Terrence Bell and given the charge of evaluating America's public and private schools, colleges and universities. It begins with the following statement about the purpose of education:

> All, regardless of race or class or economic status, are entitled to a fair chance and to the tools for developing their individual powers of mind and spirit to the utmost. This promise means that all children by virtue of their own efforts, competently guided, can hope to attain the mature and informed judgment needed to secure gainful employment, and to manage their own lives, thereby serving not only their own interests but also the progress of society itself.

While this statement recognizes the potential of schools to improve society, its emphasis is on schooling as preparation for employment and individual gain.

Despite its focus on preparation for work, the report suggested neither the types of curriculum differentiation that the social efficiency educators had suggested a half century earlier nor the support for vocational education that was a part of the National

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[27] New York State Education Department, "Federal-State Education Policy Chronology 1944-2002."

[28] National Commission on Excellence in Education, "A Nation at Risk: The Imperative for Educational Reform," (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1983).

[29] Sheila Valencia and Karen Wixson, "Policy-Oriented Research on Literacy Standards and Assessment," in *Handbook of Reading Research*, ed. M.L. Kamil, et al. (Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum, 2000); M.A. Vinovskis, "An Analysis of the Concept and Uses of Systemic Educational Reform," *American Educational Research Journal* 33, no. 1 (1996); Karen Wixson and P.David Pearson, "Policy and Assessment Strategies to Support Literacy Instruction for a New Century," *Peabody Journal of Education* 73, no. 3/4 (1998).

Defense Education Act in 1958. Instead, *A Nation at Risk* recommended essentially the same curriculum for all high school students, including the "Five New Basics" of English, mathematics, science, social studies, and computer science, with increased years of study in each. Some differentiation was evident in the recommendation that college-bound students also study a foreign language. *A Nation at Risk* also recommended that "schools, colleges, and universities adopt more rigorous and measurable standards, and higher expectations, for academic performance."[30] The report thus called for a significant change in thinking about curriculum.

A series of reform efforts rapidly followed. These are sometimes characterized as successive waves of reform, although they did not actually occur sequentially.[31] The first wave of reform focused on top-down strategies such as raising requirements for high school graduation, developing or expanding assessment programs, and raising standards for teachers. Researchers differ in their opinions about the degree to which these reforms were successful, but there is evidence that policies were put in place with little attention to the systems needed for implementation.[32] Expanding assessment programs, for example, has little benefit to students unless curriculum is also expanded in such a way that the curriculum and assessment are aligned. Similarly, implementation of new or more challenging curriculum is dependent not only on strengthening the preparation of new teachers, but also providing quality professional development to practicing teachers.

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[30] National Commission on Excellence in Education, "A Nation at Risk."

[31] Vinovskis, "An Analysis of the Concept and Uses of Systemic Educational Reform."

[32] Valencia and Wixson, "Policy-Oriented Research on Literacy Standards and Assessment"; Wixson and Pearson, "Policy and Assessment Strategies to Support Literacy Instruction for a New Century."

The second wave of reform focused around whole-school reform and included higher expectations for students, new teaching practices, and changes in organization and management in schools. The importance of teacher attitudes and the functioning of the school as an organization had been noted; as a result this wave focused more on bottom-up strategies for reform. It is important to note, however, that this was "bottom-up" reform that typically originated from forces external to the school. Some schools were successful in implementing whole-school reform, but they often remained isolated cases rather than serving as catalysts for other schools to take on such reform efforts.[33] Ultimately the first two waves of reform failed to produce the changes they sought, including changes in curriculum.[34]

Academic Standards and Systemic Reform

The third wave of reform focused on systemic reform and sought greater involvement of state and federal policymakers. Systemic reform centered on high academic standards for all students. Policies related to testing of students, preparation of teachers, and professional development for teachers would then be aligned to these standards. Schools and districts would be responsible for developing the instruction that would lead to student achievement of the standards. This third wave of reform thus focused on creating coherent sets of policies and making connections across the school, district, and state levels. Systemic reform also envisioned some restructuring of school governance in order to provide schools with greater resources and flexibility along with

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[33] Wixson and Pearson, "Policy and Assessment Strategies to Support Literacy Instruction for a New Century."

[34] Valencia and Wixson, "Policy-Oriented Research on Literacy Standards and Assessment."

greater responsibility for outcomes.[35] Policy or levers associated with systemic reform include content standards and associated curricula, assessments, and requirements for teacher learning for both new and inservice teachers.[36]

Curriculum policy in systemic reform is created in the form of standards. The call for curriculum standards in multiple areas of the curriculum in the United States is generally considered to have begun in 1989, when President George H.W. Bush invited the governors of all fifty states, including then-Governor Bill Clinton, to an Education Summit.[37] The group agreed on six broad goals to be reached by the year 2000. One of these involved raising the achievement of all students to at least grade level—a somewhat vague standard, but the beginning of a standard nonetheless.[38] Soon thereafter Congress created the bipartisan National Council on Education Standards, which released a report in early 1992 calling for national content standards and a national assessment system. The Department of Education then provided funding for the development of voluntary national standards in a range of subjects, including science, history, the arts, civics, geography, foreign languages, and English language arts. Mathematics standards, already developed by the National Council of Mathematics, had been widely influential in mathematics curriculum despite the lack of any connection with policy; it was hoped that the additional sets of standards would prove equally so.

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[35] Vinovskis, "An Analysis of the Concept and Uses of Systemic Educational Reform"; Wixson and Pearson, "Policy and Assessment Strategies to Support Literacy Instruction for a New Century."

[36] Fullan, *Change Forces with a Vengeance*.

[37] Vinovskis, "An Analysis of the Concept and Uses of Systemic Educational Reform."

[38] M.A. Vinovskis, "The Road to Charlottesville: The 1989 Education Summit," (Washington, D.C.: National Education Goals Panel, 1999).

Awards were also made to states for the development of state content standards and curriculum frameworks.[39]

At the same time that standards were being developed, new thinking in the field of assessment was moving assessment policy in new directions. Some experts suggested using a system of assessments rather than a single objective test to evaluate student learning, including "extended tasks or projects" on which students would demonstrate their achievement.[40] The use of performance-based assessments was the "vision" that was "guiding many of the [then] current efforts to transform assessment," although criteria for creating valid assessments were not yet fully developed.[41] The notion of performance assessments was conceptualized to include portfolios, on-demand tasks, projects, exhibitions, and teachers' structured observations.[42]

When Bill Clinton became President in 1993, he continued the work begun by the group of governors at the Education Summit, making Goals 2000 the centerpiece of his education policy. The "Goals 2000: Educate America Act" of 1994 created the National Education Standards and Improvement Council, whose task would be to "certify national and state content and performance standards, opportunity-to-learn standards, and state assessments."[43] It also revised and added to the original goals set by

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[39] Wixson and Pearson, "Policy and Assessment Strategies to Support Literacy Instruction for a New Century."

[40] John R. Frederiksen and Allan Collins, "A Systems Approach to Educational Testing," *Educational Researcher* 18, no. 9 (1989): 31.

[41] Robert L. Linn, Eva L. Baker, and Stephen Dunbar, "Complex, Performance-Based Assessment: Expectations and Validation Criteria," *American Educational Research Journal* 20, no. 8 (1991): 15.

[42] Nidhi Khattri and Michael Kane, "Assessment Reform: A Work in Progress," *Phi Delta Kappan* 77 (1995).

[43] Mid-continent Research for Education and Learning, "History of the Standards," http://www.mcrel.org/standards-benchmarks/docs/history.asp.

the Education Summit. Goal three, the most closely related to the standards movement, stated that American students would "leave grades 4, 8, and 12 having demonstrated competency in challenging subject matter including English, mathematics, science, history, and geography."[44]

The focus on increased student achievement along with general dissatisfaction with changes in ESEA during the Reagan and G. H. W. Bush administrations led to important changes in the 1994 reauthorization, known as the Improving America's Schools Act (IASA). The IASA required states to establish content standards for at least mathematics and reading/language arts along with assessment systems aligned with those standards. States were also required to establish criteria for adequate yearly progress based on their assessment system.[45] The IASA was the first time that federal policy had required accountability measures for schools.

The attempt to create national standards failed when the process became mired in political and ideological controversy. Although many of the national professional organizations did complete sets of standards, and some have continued to revise them through the present day, the level of acceptance and use has varied and they have never become policy. National assessments were never created. Forty-nine states created their own standards, however, and standards, along with high-stakes testing for

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[44] U.S. Department of Education, "The National Education Goals," http://www.ed.gov/pubs/goals/summary/goals.html.

[45] National School Board Association, "Exploring New Directions: Title I in the Year 2000," http://www.nsba.org/bookreports/title1/parti.htm.

accountability, have continued to dominate curriculum policy through the early twenty-first century.[46]

Conceptual Framework

The present study is focused on Minnesota's first set of state standards and associated systemic reform. Fullan suggests a model for systemic reform (Figure 1) in which the three policy levers of curriculum, assessment, and teacher learning are surrounded by moral purpose and knowledge, which he considers to be the centering concepts that give meaning to the work of reform and provide order amidst the chaos of change. For Fullan, the moral purpose is reducing the achievement gap and knowledge is the infusion of new ideas from both teachers and external experts.[47]

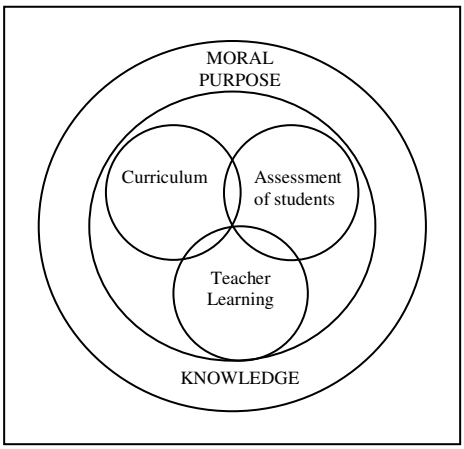

Figure 1. Model from Fullan (2003).

Curriculum is the central policy lever. Fullan defines curriculum broadly as "conceptual frameworks, instruction, [and] materials."[48] Two additional policy levers

[46] Iowa, the one state that did not create state standards during the 1990s, did so in 2007.

[47] Fullan, *Change Forces with a Vengeance*.

[48] Ibid., 68.

are developed to align with the curriculum. The first, assessment of students, goes beyond high stakes testing to include performance assessments and other authentic measures of student achievement. The second, teacher learning, includes varied professional development aligned with the curriculum and the assessments used. Policy coherence is an important aspect of the use of these policy levers. Clear and consistent conceptualizations of purpose and knowledge help to provide this coherence.

A historical perspective on school reform confirms the importance of purpose and knowledge in curriculum policy, but suggests that Fullan's definitions are not well enough developed. While reducing the achievement gap is a moral purpose for many, there is not evidence that there is consensus around this being the moral purpose of schooling writ large. As previously described, disagreement over the purpose of schooling has characterized school reform efforts for at least the past century. Conceptualizations of knowledge and expertise have also historically been controversial and continue to be so today. Neither curriculum policy nor the process by which it is developed is rational, linear, or coherent. Instead, it is the result of "an interplay of forces, some rational and calculated, and a great deal that is instinctive or symbolic and ritualistic."[49] I propose in Figure 2 an extension of Fullan's model that maintains the three policy levers, but reconceptualizes the rings surrounding these.

[49] Kliebard, "Constructing a History of the American Curriculum," 153.

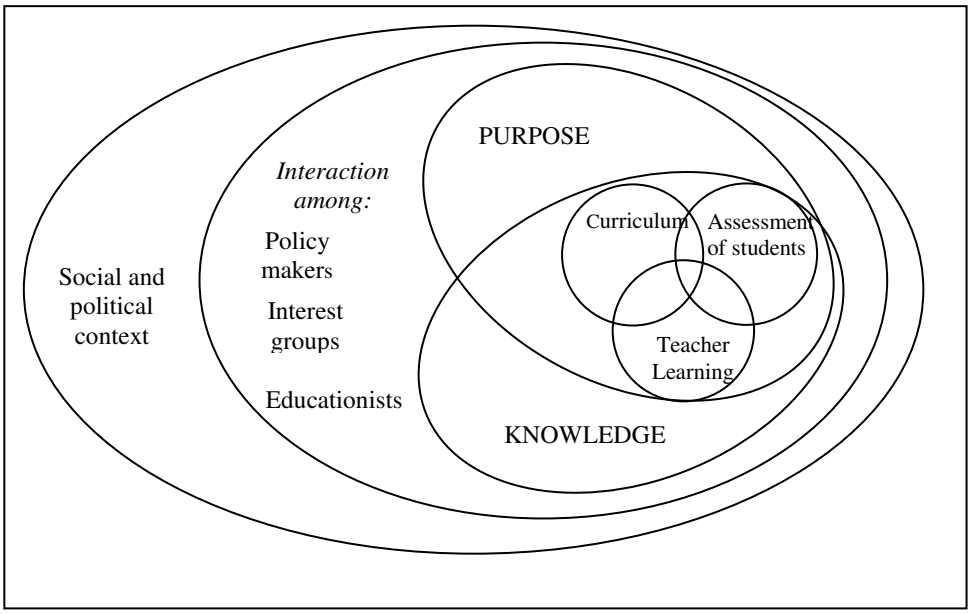

Figure 2. Conceptual framework for study.

This extended framework shows purpose and knowledge as systems that overlap; the policy levers are situated in the common area. Purpose and knowledge are defined for a particular curriculum policy through interactions among interest groups, policymakers, and educationists, shown in the next ring. Interest groups are broadly defined to include professional organizations, think tanks, business groups, parent groups, faith-based groups, publishing companies, political action groups, journalists, or other stakeholders. These groups have played an increasingly active role in educational politics and policymaking in the last half century.[50] Policymakers are those with authority to create policy; this group includes both legislators and employees of the department of education when considering policies made at the state level. Educationists include university researchers or other educational theorists and

[50] Hanne B. Mawhinney and Catherine A. Lugg, "Introduction: Interest Groups in United States Education," *Educational Policy* 15, no. 1 (2000); McDaniel, Sims, and Miskel, "The National Reading Policy Arena."

professionals and practitioners at all levels. Beliefs about purpose and knowledge that undergird curriculum policy are determined through interactions among these groups.

The interactions of these groups are affected by the political and social environment in which they take place, represented by the outer ring of the diagram. The political environment includes the political culture in which the policy is situated, the arenas in which the policy issues are being discussed, and the importance of the particular policy on the political agenda.[51] The social environment includes the underlying values held by the cultural system in which the policy is situated, the relative status of various groups within society, and any relevant social change movements.

The framework attempts to capture the complexity of the development and implementation of curriculum policy when viewed over time by providing for a closer examination of the way that beliefs about the purpose of schooling and the knowledge that should inform curriculum emerge from the interactions of a range of stakeholder groups. It incorporates factors that have previously been shown to be important to policy research, including the social and political environment and conflicts related to the views of stakeholders,[52] but moves away from a conceptualization of policymaking as a linear process. Instead, it views the development and implementation of curriculum policy in the context of multiple systems that interact over time in complex ways to define purpose and knowledge related to schooling and curriculum.

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[51] Fowler, *Policy Studies*, John W. Kingdon, "Agenda Setting," in *Public Policy: The Essential Readings*, ed. S.Z. Theodoulou and M.A. Cahn (Upper Saddle River, NJ: PrenticeHall, 1995); Tim L. Mazzoni, "Analyzing State School Policymaking: An Arena Model," *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis* 13, no. 2 (1991).

[52] Heck, *Studying Educational and Social Policy*.

Standards as Educational Policy

Two aspects of the policy process—formulation and implementation—are of particular importance to standards as educational policy. During policy formulation, the written language to express the policy is created. The process may involve the creation of a statute, rule, or both, and usually involves multiple drafts.[53] Policy formulators must develop and select from alternatives, consider the use of various policy instruments, and predict costs. Because policies are created in response to issues, policy formulation involves controversy.[54]

Implementation is the process of putting the policy into action after it is officially adopted. In the case of educational policy, the implementing agents are typically practitioners. Intermediaries, such as central office administrators, may also have implementation responsibilities.[55] Implementation is neither an automatic nor necessarily a rational process; many education policies are incorrectly or partially implemented or not implemented at all.

Policy Formulation

Policy formulation requires establishing the policy's intended goal or outcome and then selecting the appropriate policy instruments to reach that goal. McDonnell and Elmore describe four types of policy instruments, which they define as the "mechanisms that translate substantive policy goals (e.g., improved student

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[53] Fowler, *Policy Studies*.

[54] Ibid.

[55] Ibid.

achievement, high quality entering teachers) into concrete actions."[56] Mandates, intended to produce compliance, consist primarily of rules governing behavior. Inducements are transfers of money that are intended to produce something of value in the short term. Capacity-building relies on the transfer of money in order to develop future benefits such as enhanced competence; capacity building policies are appropriate for long-term returns. Systems-changing is the transfer of authority from one agency or individual to another in order to change a public delivery system. McDonnell and Elmore describe six types of resources and constraints that determined the choice of policy instrument: (a) institutional context, (b) governmental capacity, (c) fiscal resources, (d) political support or opposition, (e) information, and (f) past policy choices.[57]

In a later article, McDonnell observed that assessment policy, which was widely used in education, was particularly complex and did not fit well into any of the four types of instruments previously described. She concluded that assessment policy was best described as hortatory, a policy instrument that depends on people's willingness to act on information that is provided to them.[58] Hortatory policy thus relies primarily on persuasion and, as a result, needs to be "joined with other policy instruments to produce sustained effects."[59]

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[56] Lorraine M. McDonnell and Richard F. Elmore, "Getting the Job Done: Alternative Policy Instruments," *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis* 9, no. 2 (1987): 134.

[57] Ibid.: 146.

[58] Lorraine M. McDonnell, "Assessment Policy as Persuasion and Regulation," *American Journal of Education* 102 (1994).

[59] Ibid.: 399.

One of the many important tasks in developing a policy is mapping out the steps that will need to occur as the policy action moves from the policymakers to the implementing agents. Forward mapping, which begins with the policymaker's intent and proceeds through a series of steps to arrive at the expectations for the implementing agents, is often used in this process.[60] Elmore found this strategy problematic because it assumes that policymakers control implementation in a hierarchical manner and thus developed the concept of backward mapping.[61] In contrast to forward mapping, backward mapping begins at the "last possible stage" of implementation and then "backs up through the structure of implementing agencies," seeking to describe their ability to affect the desired behavior and the resources they would need to do so.[62] The process thus takes into account the context in which the policy will be implemented. The process of backward mapping is particularly appropriate for standards policy because the implementation contexts vary widely.

Kirst described curriculum policy-making as "essentially a political as well as a technical process" because of decisions about what knowledge should be given priority in the standards.[63] He described nine dilemmas that curriculum policy formulators would face; these related to inclusion in the formulation process, consensus within a particular discipline, attention to subspecialties within a discipline, level of specificity,

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[60] Carl V. Patton and David S. Sawicki, *Basic Methods of Policy Analysis and Planning* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1993).

[61] Richard F. Elmore, "Backward Mapping: Implementation Research and Policy Decisions," *Political Science Quarterly* 94, no. 4 (1979-1980).

[62] Ibid.: 604.

[63] Michael W. Kirst, "The Politics of Nationalizing Curricular Content," *American Journal of Education* 102, no. 4 (1994): 388.

public involvement, structure of the standards, and timelines. Kirst was describing national curriculum development, but also predicted significant conflict at the state and local level in the process of formulating standards.

Subsequent development of standards policies suggests that Kirst was correct. Differences in beliefs about the knowledge that should be privileged in standards were evident in an analysis of primary-grade reading standards from across the country. Wixson and Dutro, using criteria created by the Council of Chief State School Officers in collaboration with nine other organizations, found considerable variation from state to state. In some states, reading was a separate area; in others, it was integrated into language arts. Some states provided benchmarks at each grade, while others provided standards in grade level ranges, with a range in the level of specificity in both cases. Many of the documents did not portray a clear path of learning across grade levels. In some, content inappropriate for the grade level was included; in others, content important for the grade level was omitted. The researchers noted the need to apply research-based criteria to the evaluation of reading standards.[64]

Research into the process of formulating state standards policy is limited. One team of researchers, using an opportunity that arose when they were working as consultants to a standards-writing group in Missouri, produced a detailed case study of the process of writing that state's standards for all curriculum areas.[65] They identified four conflicts that characterized the process: (a) whether the standards should be

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[64] Karen Wixson and E. Dutro, "Standards for Primary-Grade Reading: An Analysis of State Frameworks," *The Elementary School Journal* 100, no. 2 (1999).

[65] Margaret Placier, Michael Walker, and Bill Foster, "Writing the "Show-Me" Standards: Teacher Professionalism and Political Control in the U.S. State Curriculum Policy," *Curriculum Inquiry* 32, no. 3 (2002).

disciplinary or interdisciplinary, (b) whether they should be written for a professional or a public audience, (c) whether they should include terms expressing values or use neutral language, and (d) whether they should be written to support or suppress local interpretation. The views of the teachers on the standards-writing team differed significantly from the politicians, business leaders, and public involved. In the end, the researchers found the standards to be "characterized by a dichotomized view of content and process; bland, seemingly value-neutral language; and lack of specificity," a condition they believe resulted from the conflicts previously mentioned.[66]

Implementation

The success of any policy is dependent on its implementing agents. In a retrospective look at the Rand Change Agent study, McLaughlin identified three findings that still held true, noting that "it is exceedingly difficult for policy to change practice."[67] First, "implementation dominates outcome" through local choices about whether and how to put the policy into practice.[68] Second, the "policy cannot mandate what matters"; local capacity and motivation are critical to implementation but beyond the control of policymakers.[69] Third, there is considerable variability in local practices.

Schools are typically the target of multiple initiatives geared toward improvement of some type. Their response to these demands can be conceptualized as falling somewhere on a continuum between bridging (welcoming the reform) and

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[66] Ibid.: 281.

[67] Milbrey W. McLaughlin, "The Rand Change Agent Study Revisited: Macro Perspectives and Micro Realities," *Educational Researcher* 19, no. 9 (1990): 12.

[68] Ibid.

[69] Ibid.

buffering (protecting the organization).[70] Honig and Hatch propose a range of five strategies that schools use to respond to external demands, ranging from full bridging to full buffering. First, schools may embrace the external environment and pull it into the school environment. Second, they may shape terms of compliance by working to alter the external demands being made. Third, they may respond by adding peripheral structures, complying with external demands without significantly impacting the internal work of the school. Fourth, they may symbolically adopt the external demands, using language but not action of compliance. Finally, they may suspend ties to the environment and completely buffer themselves from the external demands and associated resources. The authors suggest that schools choose among these strategies as a way of crafting coherence, allowing them to focus on goals without becoming overwhelmed by pressures from the external environment. Historically, reforms that were implemented through the addition of peripheral structures but had little impact on the core processes of the school—Honig and Hatch's middle level of response—have been more likely to last.[71]

The concept of buffering or shielding from external demands is important to understanding attempts at school reform that originate outside the schools themselves, particularly top-down models or mandates such as standards policies. It is reasonable to assume that demands from outside will result in some stress upon the work of the school. Although reformers presumably operate with the intent to improve schools,

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[70] Meredith Honig and Thomas C. Hatch, "Crafting Coherence: How Schools Strategically Manage Multiple, External Demands," *Educational Researcher* 33, no. 8 (2004).

[71] Tyack, "Public School Reform."

those people working within the schools may or may not agree with the new initiatives. People within the organization will also be cognizant of barriers to implementation that have escaped the attention of the reformers. Schools will choose their responses based on their perception of the "fit" of the external demand with the work of their organization. The multiple ways in which schools may respond to external demands may help to explain the limited effect of most school reforms of the twentieth century.

School culture is complex, consisting of multiple subcultures involving both the adults and the students within a school. If external pressures to change the school are not congruent with the school culture, the internal culture or subcultures may work to undermine external attempts to change school practices or school structures. Firestone and Louis note that cultures that develop during unsettled times tend to be ideological in nature and adhere to highly organized systems of belief and rituals. Unsettled times include times of external pressure; ironically, this suggests that pressure for school reform may affect the school culture in a way that will make it more difficult for external forces to have impact.[72] Perhaps for this reason, internally proposed and implemented reforms that improve the professional status of teachers and principals have historically been more successful than externally initiated ones. Reforms that require teachers to make fundamental changes in their teaching have had only limited and sporadic success.[73]

As proposals for systemic reform were developed, researchers tried to predict their effects. Looking toward issues that might arise in implementation, Cohen and

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[72] William A. Firestone and Karen Seashore Louis, "Schools as Cultures," in *Handbook of Research on Educational Administration*, ed. J. Murphy and K. Seashore Louis (San Francisco: Jossey Bass, 1999).

[73] Tyack, "Public School Reform."

Spillane wondered what would happen when the "grand visions of change collide[d] with limited capacities," predicting that an already cluttered and inconsistent American education system was likely to become more so.[74] They described weak capacity for change in the areas of politics, instructional practice (including curricula and assessment), and school operations and organization and observed that not only teachers, but also parents and political leaders, would need to be reeducated in order for standards-based reform to be effective.

Sensemaking

One key finding from standards implementation research relates to sensemaking, a process in which new ideas are understood through both the re-framing of past events and the consideration of future actions.[75] In general, people tend to preserve existing mental frameworks, interpreting new policies as supporting their current beliefs and focusing more on surface than deep features of change.[76] Several researchers discovered that central office personnel, principals, and teachers made sense of policies in varied ways. Their interpretations were affected by their beliefs and identities; their professional specializations, networks, and alliances; and the multiple and overlapping contexts in which they worked.[77]

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[74] David K. Cohen and James P. Spillane, "Policy and Practice: The Relations between Government and Instruction," *Review of Research in Education* 18 (1992): 40.

[75] Karl E. Weick, *Sensemaking in Organizations* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 1995).

[76] J.P. Spillane, *Standards Deviation: How Schools Misunderstand Education Policy* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004).

[77] C. Coburn, "Collective Sensemaking About Reading: How Teachers Mediate Reading Policy in Their Professional Communities," *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis* 25, no. 2 (2001); J.P. Spillane, "State Policy and the Non-Monolithic Nature of the Local School District: Organizational and Professional Considerations," *American Educational Research Journal* 35, no. 1 (1998); James P.

Spillane found that organizational factors were also important in standards implementation and that horizontal and vertical fragmentation within the district affected interpretation of policy. The understanding of a particular set of standards varied among schools and often was not in agreement with the interpretation of the district office.[78] Nevertheless, district administrators' actions appear to impact the sense-making process and the subsequent actions that teachers take in response to a policy.[79]

Spillane, Reiser, and Reimer propose a cognitive framework for characterizing the sense-making of actors involved in policy implementation.[80] Their framework conceptualizes the sense-making of implementing agents as resulting from the interaction of three factors: first, the actor's individual knowledge, beliefs and experiences; second, the context in which the actor makes sense of the policy; and third, the policy itself.

Individuals' sense-making arises out of their knowledge, beliefs, and experiences, which "serve as a lens influencing what the individual notices in the environment and how the stimuli that are noticed are processed, encoded, organized, and subsequently interpreted."[81] Because individuals view policy messages through

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Spillane et al., "Managing in the Middle: School Leaders and the Enactment of Accountability Policy," *Educational Policy* 16, no. 5 (2002).

[78] Spillane, "State Policy and the Non-Monolithic Nature of the Local School District."

[79] Karen Seashore Louis, Karen Febey, and Roger Schroeder, "State-Mandated Accountability in High Schools: Teachers' Interpretation of a New Era," *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis* 27, no. 2 (2005); James P. Spillane, Brian J. Reiser, and Todd Reimer, "Policy Implementation and Cognition: Reframing and Refocusing Implementation Research," *Review of Educational Research* 72, no. 3 (2002).

[80] Spillane, Reiser, and Reimer, "Policy Implementation and Cognition."

[81] Ibid.: 394.

these lenses, there will be varied interpretations of the same message. As individuals incorporate new policy messages into their existing schema, the new may be misunderstood as the familiar. In addition, because concrete features of new ideas are most salient, individuals tend to focus on these, potentially missing the deeper substance of the policy message.[82]

Values and emotions also play a significant role in sense-making. Policies aimed at reforming schooling are often value-laden, reflecting particular beliefs about the purpose of schooling and the knowledge that should be privileged in the curriculum.[83] As they seek to make sense of the policies, individuals are biased toward interpretations that are consistent with their own values and beliefs. Their response to policies is also influenced by their need to maintain a positive self-image. A policy calling for dramatic changes in classroom practices implies that the practices already in use have serious deficiencies. A practitioner who accepts that perspective would thus have to accept having been an agent of these deficient practices; consequently, the individual might be more likely to focus on practices related to the new initiative that seem similar to practices already in place.[84]

The sense-making of individual implementing agents is important but does not occur in isolation; each individual engages with the policy "in a complex web of organizational structures, professional affiliations, social networks, and traditions."[85] Sense-making thus occurs in and is affected by a variety of social contexts that include

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[82] Ibid.

[83] Ibid.: 401.

[84] Ibid.

[85] Ibid.: 404.

both formal structures and informal networks. As with individual sense-making, social sense-making is influenced by values and emotions and by the historical contexts of the organizations or networks.[86]

The policy itself, including the official policy language as well as its representation in other verbal or written media, also influences sense-making. Policies demanding substantive change will require "more complex cognitive transformations" than those focused on superficial change.[87] Various representations of policy, including legislative language, standards documents, informational materials such as pamphlets, and information contained in presentations, will vary in their effectiveness in enabling implementers' sense-making. In addition, because external representations are interpretations of aspects of a policy, tension may exist between the general principles of the policy and the particular external representations. The support systems in which implementing agents work with policy representations are also critical to sense-making in relation to the policy.[88]

Sensemaking is useful in explaining the historical lack of success in educational reform policies. Because implementing agents make sense of policies in different ways, policy implementation will vary among implementing agents. Because they tend to focus on what seems most familiar, minimal change is likely to occur.

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[86] Ibid.

[87] Ibid.: 415.

[88] Ibid.

Educational Policy in Minnesota, 1972-1992

Educational policy making is best understood within the larger political culture of a state. Elazar describes Minnesota's political culture in the 1970s as moralistic, a culture in which people consider politics to be focused on the public good.[89] They look to government to initiate new programs as needed, favor widespread citizen participation and debate over issues and ideas, and expect "clean" government.[90] In his 1993 examination of the changing politics of education policymaking in Minnesota, Mazzoni found that this description still fit. He noted that the state was known for its progressive legacy, including grass-roots participation and policy innovations along with a strong commitment to supporting public education and a strong tradition of local control. At the same time, Mazzoni found that Minnesota's state education policy system had become more pluralistic, more politicized, and more bureaucratic during the period 1971-1991. It was more pluralistic because of the wide range of advocacy groups involved in the policy process, more politicized as a result of elected officeholders using K-12 proposals to further their own careers, and more bureaucratic because the legislative staff grew in both numbers and influence. The political system was also responsive to economic cycles, with large surpluses leading to new initiatives and large shortfalls leading to the insulation of decision-making processes. National influences on

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[89] T. L. Mazzoni, "The Changing Politics of State Education Policy Making: A 20-Year Minnesota Perspective," *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis* 15, no. 4 (1993). Mazzoni cites Daniel Elazar, *American Federalism: A View from the States* (NewYork: Crowell, 1972).

[90] Fowler, *Policy Studies*, 97.

state policy were increasing, largely due to the perception that education reform would keep the United States (and Minnesota) competitive in a global economy.[91]

Interest in accountability in Minnesota increased after the 1971 "Minnesota Miracle" when the state increased its share of funding for K-12 education from 43 percent to 65 percent.[92] The Minnesota Department of Education began to develop lists of learner outcomes as early as 1972, although in keeping with the tradition of local control, their use was optional. Accountability was addressed through the Planning, Evaluating and Reporting process (PER), which was enacted into law in 1976 by the Minnesota Legislature. This process was designed as a "grassroots, 'local control' approach to accountability and competency testing" that allowed each district to select its own method of evaluating its students.[93] Despite these efforts, there were concerns about the inconsistencies in coursework and grading across the state as well as the notion that students' graduation was dependent primarily on "seat time" rather than any demonstrated accomplishment. High school graduation requirements in Minnesota, known as the graduation rule, were based on the traditional plan of Carnegie units, with four credits of English, three credits of social studies, one credit of math, one credit of science, and eleven credits of electives required in four years of high school.[94]

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[91] Mazzoni, "The Changing Politics."

[92] Tom Melcher, "Minnesota School Finance History 1849-2005," http://education.state.mn.us/mdeprod/groups/Finance/documents/Publication/004107.pdf. The law, which was intended to reduce disparities in school funding, shifted the primary source of education funding from property taxes to state taxes.

[93] "Graduation Standards Advisory Panel Recommendations: Report to the Governor and C.F.L. Commissioner," (Minnesota Department of Children, Families, and Learning, December 1998), 20.

[94] Lisa Larson, "Proposals to Amend the High School Graduation Rule " (Minnesota House of Representatives Research Department, 1992).

The Perpich Administration

Attention to outcomes increased with the election of Democratic-Farmer-Laborer (DFL) Governor Rudy Perpich in 1983. He and his education commissioner, Ruth Randall, strongly advocated for a statewide system oriented toward student outcomes rather than the traditional input model. In 1985 Randall created a strategic plan for education in Minnesota that emphasized the importance of educational outcomes and accountability in its list of goals, proposing that "[l]earner goals for public education will be established and used as a basis for planning and delivering instruction" and that "[a]ccountability systems will be developed that will measure students and school performance."[95] The need for specific learner outcomes was reflected in the "coordinated model for educational improvement" put forth by the Minnesota Department of Education (MDE).[96] The Minnesota Business Partnership supported the identification of key competencies in core areas and advocated that state tests be administered to determine student achievement.[97]

The work of identifying learner outcomes was driven by beliefs about the purpose of education, which was conceptualized broadly to include the development of attitudes and values along with academic learning. Commissioner Randall's plan included a mission statement explicitly stating that the purpose of public education was

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[95] Ruth E. Randall, "A Strategic Plan/Vision for Public Education in Minnesota (Draft)," (Minnesota Department of Education public records and reports, Minnesota State Historical Society State Archives, 1985).

[96] Minnesota Department of Education, "A Coordinated Model for Educational Improvement " (Minnesota Department of Education public records and reports, Minnesota State Historical Society State Archives, 1985).

[97] "Graduation Standards Advisory Panel Recommendations: Report to the Governor and C.F.L. Commissioner," 20.

"to help individuals acquire knowledge, skills, and positive attitudes toward self and others that will enable them to solve problems, think creatively, continue learning, and develop maximum potential for leading productive, fulfilling lives in a complex and changing society."[98] A similar view is reflected in the State Board of Education's 1989 report outlining future directions for Minnesota's school systems, which emphasized the whole learner and viewed schooling as extending well beyond academics. The philosophy statement in this report includes the belief that school systems "must implement programs that stress the intellectual development of each learner in concert with the spiritual, social, and physical development of the learner."[99] The board also paid considerable attention to the development of such characteristics as creativity, honesty, compassion, and acceptance of others, with relatively little attention given to academics. The importance of values in the board's conceptualization of education is demonstrated by the inclusion of lists of values for learners, educators, and the education system.

The board's "Directions for the Future" report also included a list of general learner goals. In contrast to their philosophy statement, in this list academics were placed near the top, with specific mention of reading, writing, listening, speaking, numerical literacy, technology, viewing and observing, self-expression, and the ability to use historical knowledge to understand contemporary issues. After academics, the list of learner goals continued with items such as "value, understand, and accept human interdependence," "address human problems through group effort," and "lead a healthy,

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[98]Randall, "A Strategic Plan/Vision for Public Education in Minnesota (Draft)."

[99] "Directions for the Future," (Adopted by the Minnesota State Board of Education and Commissioner of Education Ruth E. Randall, 1989).

fulfilling life."[100] The varying emphasis given to academics suggests that the board was not clear on its priorities in terms of the goals and outcomes of schooling.

Academics headed the list of components of the Board's action items related to defining and developing an "outcome based education system" during the 1989-1990 school year. This system was expected to include "learner outcomes documents in all subject areas" along with "graduation outcomes for students." Accountability was to be provided through "assessment of outcome achievement" and "reporting of outcome achievement by districts to the public and the state."[101] The list of components again extends beyond academics into the values and personal fulfillment of the learners, reflecting a broad conceptualization of the purpose of education.

The goals of education during this era may have been influenced by trends at the national level. The 1991 Secretary's Commission on Achieving Necessary Skills (SCANS) was created to provide advice to Republican Secretary of Labor Lynn Martin regarding the level of skills needed to enter employment. The group interviewed a range of people in the world of work, including owners, managers, union officials, and employees in the public and private sectors.[102] Their report concluded that American high school students needed to develop a set of competencies and foundation skills in order to compete in an economy characterized by increasing globalization and advanced technology. The competencies focused on the application of knowledge and skills and included the ability to allocate resources effectively, use interpersonal skills in a range

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[100] Ibid.

[101] Ibid.

[102] Secretary's Commission on Achieving Necessary Skills, "What Work Requires of Schools: A Scans Report for America 2000," (U.S. Department of Labor, 1991), i.

of settings, acquire and use information, understand a variety of systems, and select and use appropriate technology. The foundation skills included basic skills in literacy and mathematics, thinking skills such as solving problems and thinking creatively, and personal qualities such as self-esteem and self-management.[103] The report noted that the results of the commission's work were consistent with President George H. W. Bush's America 2000 legislation which built on the goals identified by the National Goals Panel. The SCANS report viewed the purpose of schooling as the development of a range of interpersonal and intellectual abilities. Academic achievement received limited attention with only reading and mathematics specifically mentioned. These disciplines were viewed primarily as tools for achieving the other, broader SCANS goals.

Outcome Based Education

In 1990, the Minnesota State Board of Education moved toward a significant change in the state's graduation requirements when it "directed the Department to develop a recommendation for a graduation requirement based on achievement of a set of selected learner outcomes rather than successful completion of a set of courses."[104] The Minnesota Department of Education envisioned a system of outcome based education (OBE), which they defined as "education programs designed and implemented in a manner that assures alignment of three basic elements: Learner

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[103] Ibid., iii.

[104] Minnesota Department of Education Division of Instructional Effectiveness, "A Minnesota Vision for OBE: Outcome Based Education," (February 1990), 27.

Outcomes, Assessment and Feedback Process, and Instructional Process."[105] Outcome based education was seen as a logical extension of the Planning, Evaluation, and Reporting (PER) process was already in place, but OBE was distinguished by greater emphasis on outcomes as the foundational element in the system. The plan was for these outcomes to be specified by the state while curriculum and instruction would remain under local control. OBE was a significant change from the traditional input-focused requirements.

The department's vision document listed both "elements critical to successful district implementation" and barriers to the success of OBE, suggesting that even in this early planning stage they were aware of the magnitude of the change they were proposing.[106] The needed elements included support from a wide range of stakeholders as well as plans for involving them in the change process, long-term commitment of resources, and systems for developing, managing, and evaluating all aspects of the change to OBE. The barriers recognized that OBE might be a tough sell as many people would see no need to change what seemed to be a good educational system. The report also noted the difficulty of pacing the change so it was fast enough to satisfy those calling for immediate change but slow enough to be done well. Lack of adequate resources was seen as a potential barrier.

In 1990, the State Board of Education also established a Graduation Standards Committee comprising members from Minnesota education, business, and citizens'

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[105] Ibid., 6.

[106] Ibid., 3-4.

groups.[107] By May 1991, the Board was ready to give preliminary approval to a proposal that would replace the traditional Carnegie unit requirements for graduation with an OBE approach.

The plan for outcome-based education in Minnesota reflected the broad conceptualization of the purpose of education espoused by the State Board and the Commissioner and adopted by the Minnesota legislature. An MDE booklet intended to explain OBE to the public quotes the 1991 mission statement for education adopted by the Minnesota legislature:

> The mission of public education in Minnesota, a system for lifelong learning, is to ensure individual academic achievement, an informed citizenry, and a highly productive work force. This system focuses on the learner, promotes and values diversity, provides participatory decision-making, ensures accountability, models democratic principles, creates and sustains a climate for change, provides personalized learning environments, encourages learners to reach their maximum potential, and integrates and coordinates human services for learners.[108]

The mission statement suggests that Minnesota schools were trying to accomplish multiple goals. Students who graduated would not only demonstrate academic achievement but also be informed citizens and productive workers. At the same time that it outlined this broad scope for public education, however, the mission statement recognized that attainment of these purposes would vary among individual students. The phrase “personalized learning environments” suggests that public education was expected to respond to individual needs and abilities, while the phrase “encourages

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[107] "Graduation Standards Advisory Panel Recommendations: Report to the Governor and CFL Commissioner," 2.

[108] Minnesota Department of Education, "Success for Every Learner," (Minnesota Department of Education published records and reports, Minnesota Historical Society State Archives, 1992), 10.

learners to reach their maximum potential" indicates the belief that educational outcomes will vary among individuals.

The OBE proposal was consistent with the educational mission statement adopted by the legislature. The broad purposes of education were reflected in its list of seven outcomes and sixty-three competencies that students would be required to demonstrate in order to receive a high school diploma. Recognition of individual differences was addressed by the requirement that an individual plan was to be developed for each student. Expected variation in student achievement was addressed through the creation of three performance levels: adept, advanced, or exemplary.[109] Once the OBE proposal was complete, public input was sought through a series of twenty-three public hearings and twenty public meetings held throughout the state in 1991.[110]

Criticism of OBE was rapidly forthcoming from both the public and the legislature. People felt that local control of curriculum was threatened by the proposal. In addition, particular instructional methods were viewed as being too closely aligned with the OBE method, further reducing local control of schools. The three performance levels were considered to be a way of tracking students. Several concerns were raised in relation to implementation, including an unrealistically short timeline, insufficient funding, and procedures that were anticipated to be too costly and time consuming.

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[109] Larson, "Proposals to Amend the High School Graduation Rule ", 3.

[110] "Graduation Standards Advisory Panel Recommendations: Report to the Governor and C.F.L. Commissioner," 2.

There was also concern about the way in which the graduation requirements would interface with requirements for admission to institutions of higher education.[111]

The outcomes-based approach to graduation requirements differed in significant ways from the traditional approach to earning a diploma. Outcomes-based education was based on the premise that all students could achieve if they were given enough time and opportunity to learn. Time thus became a variable and achievement became a constant, unlike traditional models of schooling in which time was constant for all students but achievement was expected to vary. Theoretically, in the new paradigm, a student could graduate from high school after 9th grade if he or she had achieved all the outcomes—or a student could remain in high school for five or more years if it took that long to demonstrate achievement. There is no evidence that either the state or the schools had considered the structures that would need to be in place for such a policy to be implemented.

The outcomes-based approach assumed that all students would meet whatever outcomes were expected—a dramatic contrast to the range of achievement levels expected in a traditional approach. As a result, questions arose around the issue of evaluating student work. If students continued to work toward particular goals until all achieved the same outcomes, the traditional A-F grading system became meaningless—no one would fail.[112] Critics of OBE felt that a grading system in which everyone got essentially the same grade would also be meaningless, particularly if students were

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[111] Larson, "Proposals to Amend the High School Graduation Rule ".

[112] In OBE, students re-took exams or re-submitted work until they reached a criterion score, typically the equivalent of a B. Although some students achieved the equivalent of an A, the approach eliminated the traditional “sorting” of students according to academic achievement.

allowed to re-take tests until they achieved the required score. There was also concern about how institutions of higher education would view the new grading system. Independent District 196 interviewed admissions officers from a range of colleges and universities and found that while none said they would discriminate against students from OBE schools, many expressed concern over a grading system of A-B-incomplete and a process that allowed students to re-take tests multiple times.[113]

Results-oriented Graduation Standards

The legislature confirmed its commitment to local control in the 1992 session, stating that "the legislature recognizes the need to give communities more local control over education so they can better fulfill the public school system's mission."[114] At the same time, the legislature continued to move forward on the results-oriented graduation rule, requiring the state board to "use its rule-making authority…to adopt a statewide, results-oriented graduation rule to be implemented starting with students beginning high school in 1996."[115] Such a rule was not to conflict with local control because the board was prohibited by law from prescribing "the delivery system, form of instruction, or a single statewide form of assessment that local sites must use."[116]

The extensive criticism of the OBE proposal prompted the Minnesota Board of Education to undertake a significant revision of its plan, rewriting at least three quarters of the draft rule. The revised graduation rule made public in the fall of 1992 was called

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[113] Debra O'Connor, "Colleges Are Hesitant About OBE," *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, October 29. 1993.

[114] *Laws of Minnesota*, (Chapter 499, Article 7, Section 32, 1992).

[115] Ibid.

[116] Ibid.

"Results-Oriented Graduation Standards," dropping any reference to OBE.[117] The seven competencies were reduced to five but retained a focus on the "real world" and included constructive thinking, the ability to learn on one's own, good communication, contributing to one's community, and working as part of a team. The sixty-three skills were to be replaced by "a list of required knowledge and skills" still to be developed.[118] The three levels of achievement were condensed to two—"state" and "exemplary"—and the requirement for individual learning plans was dropped.[119] Districts would be allowed to determine their own instruction and assessments, upholding the tradition of local control. This was the first of many drafts that would later become the Profile of Learning.

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[117] Nancy Livingston, "New Graduation Goals Proposed," *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, October 30, 1992.

[118] Mary Jane Smetanka, "New Graduation Rules Rejiggered after Reservations Were Heard," *Minneapolis Star-Tribune*, October 30 1992.

[119] Livingston, "New Graduation Goals Proposed."

CHAPTER FOUR

DEVELOPMENT OF THE PROFILE OF LEARNING

1993 – 1995

By 1993, the Minnesota legislature had directed the State Board of Education to develop the results-oriented graduation rule and the board had assigned the task to the Minnesota Department of Education. During the years from 1993 to 1995, the department produced several drafts of the graduation rule, attempting to clarify both the outcomes that would be expected and the way they would be assessed. Pilot sites played an important role in the work, particularly in the portion of the rule that would be known as the Profile of Learning. Throughout this time, Governor Arne Carlson took an active interest in the work on the graduation rule, both as a supporter and as a critic.

Governor Carlson

Governor Arne Carlson devoted his entire 1993 State of the State address to Minnesota's children and youth, focusing on three main initiatives. First, he wanted to create a new department of Children and Education Services that would incorporate and align the work previously done by a number of separate agencies and departments, including the Minnesota Department of Education. Second, he highlighted the work on graduation standards:

> We have talked about standards in education long enough. It is time to take action. To set standards. To set them high, and to measure the results.
>
> Having serious, measurable standards will assure us that no child will slide through high school without basic skills. These new benchmarks ultimately will

> bring a more individualized approach to teaching and learning, because once these standards are in place, the state is going to step back and simply send the money and resources educators need to help students achieve this level of competency.
>
> No more micro-management. No more state regulations about how many hours of French or geography a child needs. We will stop piling on our teachers every social goal that should be delivered by families, churches, and other institutions.
>
> We will ask the Department of Children and Education Services to determine and assess educational standards so that by about the 10th grade, our students will have mastered a rigorous set of academic skills.[1]

The governor's interest in promoting standards is clear in this message despite the equivocation between "basic skills" and "a rigorous set of academic skills." He conceptualized the standards as a systems-change policy that would transfer authority to schools and districts. His message reflected his confidence that schools, teachers, and students would meet high standards given adequate resources, implying a belief that an effective infrastructure was already in place.

By indicating that the state would "stop piling on teachers every social goal" the governor expressed his expectation that the standards would address primarily academic rather than social goals, which he believed "should be delivered" by families and other institutions. This conceptualization of the purpose of education differs from the work previously done on education outcomes in Minnesota, in which social competencies had been a part of the standards from the beginning.

The governor's third initiative was to create better career preparation for students age 16 to 20, with a focus on creating apprenticeships for "the 80 percent of

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[1] Arne H. Carlson, "State of the State Address," (1993), 8.

Minnesotans" who never complete a four-year college degree.[2] This initiative suggests that, although the governor was advocating high standards for all students, he was not expecting a significant change in the number of students who went on to complete a college education. This initiative was intended to be complementary to the work on standards; it may have served to link the ideas of standards and school-to-work in the minds of the public.

Throughout 1993 the governor took an increasingly visible role in the work on the graduation rule. By summer he had become impatient with the slow pace of change and in August requested the resignation of Gene Mammenga, the education commissioner whom he had appointed in 1991. Mammenga's dismissal took place after two MDE employees with key roles in developing the graduation rules had resigned due to frustration with the inability to move the initiative forward. Governor Carlson replaced Mammenga with Linda Powell, who had previously supervised the outcome-based-education plan in the Robbinsdale area schools, a metro-area suburban district. She told local reporters that she planned to remove any MDE employees who resisted the new initiatives. In speaking of Powell's appointment, Governor Carlson emphasized that "the train is leaving the station" and that education department personnel needed to be "on the train or look for another job,"[3] implying that he viewed the creation of standards as a relatively straightforward process that should proceed at a rapid pace.

The Minnesota Department of Education presented a revised draft of the graduation rule to the State Board of Education in September 1993. The five

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[2] Ibid., 9.

[3] James Walsh and Dane Smith, "Two Ousted from State Jobs," *Minneapolis Star Tribune*, August 14, 1993.

competencies from the previous draft were retained but were called "comprehensive outcomes"[4]; content standards and task management skills were added. While some of the content standards addressed traditional curriculum in math, reading, and social studies, others were less traditional, for example "understanding the integration of physical, emotional, and social wellness" and "understanding the diversity and meaning of artistic expression."[5] Governor Carlson expressed his displeasure with these "soft goals" in a meeting with the State Board of Education and told them to stick to "hard, definable goals."[6] The governor was again moving away from the broader goals identified in the early work on education outcomes and focusing on more traditional, academic outcomes of schooling. He was also insistent that the graduation standards had to "pass the barbershop test" by using language that the average citizen could understand, explaining that "[i]f it's understandable there [the barbershop], it's understandable anywhere."[7]

Governor Carlson identified two additional areas for the board to address: first, the concern that the outcome-based approach would limit the achievement of gifted and talented students; and second, the use of a grading system in which students could not fail rather than the traditional A-F system.[8] As he had previously been a supporter of OBE, the governor appeared to signal a change in thinking. Critics of OBE were

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[4] The five outcomes retained from the previous draft were constructive thinking, the ability to learn on one's own, good communication, contributing to one's community, and working as part of a team

[5] *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, "Editorial ", September 27, 1993.

[6] Nancy Livingston, "Carlson Challenges OBE Goals," *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, September 14, 1993.

[7] Ibid.

[8] In the OBE approach, students re-took exams or re-submitted work until they achieved a grade of A or B. Failing grades were not given.

pleased that their voices had finally been heard, but many OBE supporters expressed surprise at what they viewed as a weakening of support for the work that had been done.[9] Despite the effort by the legislature and Board of Education to replace the term "outcome-based education" with "results-oriented graduation rule," Governor Carlson continued to equate the two.

The Profile of Learning

The authorship of the outcomes included in the graduation rule is unclear. Some early drafts appear to have been written by people at MDE. Public input was solicited at a series of town meetings across the state. At some point, teams of teachers were assembled to write content standards, working under the direction of Iris McGinnis and Michael Tillmann.[10] Officials at the department emphasized the involvement of teachers, but the degree to which teacher voices actually impacted the standards is unclear, as some teachers reported that teacher input was not being used.[11] McGinnis and Tillmann had definite views on the standards that were highly influential on the work.[12] The curriculum specialists at MDE had little involvement with the process at this stage.[13]

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[9] Debra O'Connor and Linda Owen, "Carlson Stirs up OBE Debate," *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, September 15, 1993.

[10] Mary Lillesve, interview by author, July 20, 2007, St. Paul, MN.

[11] Thomas J. Koch, "When "All Together" Isn't: The Story of One School District's Experience Implementing the State of Minnesota's Profile of Learning" (University of St. Thomas, 2002), 61.

[12] Ibid., Mary Lillesve, interview by author, July 20, 2007, St. Paul, MN.

[13] Mary Lillesve, interview by author, July 20, 2007, St. Paul, MN.

The draft of the graduation rule included in the pilot sites training manual in 1993 comprised six comprehensive and thirteen content outcomes. The six comprehensive outcomes were: (a) thinks purposefully, (b) communicates effectively, (c) directs own learning, (d) works productively with others, (e) acts responsibly as a citizen, and (f) makes lifework decisions.[14] These outcomes were similar to those in previous drafts and consistent with the mission statement adopted by the legislature. Of the thirteen content outcomes, eight addressed academic disciplines such as English, mathematics, science and social studies, one addressed the inquiry process, and one addressed technology. The remaining three required the student to understand "stewardship for the environment," "the integration of physical, emotional, and spiritual wellness," and "the effective management of resources in a household, business, community, and government."[15] Each of the content outcome statements except language arts included examples of concepts and processes that could be included in the outcome. For example, content outcome five stated that a student "understands the physical world, earth, and space"; one of the possible concepts and processes for this outcome was "the nature of matter, force and motion, light, waves, and energy."[16] The language arts outcome required a student to understand and express "thoughts and feelings in English and another language" and noted that this included reading, writing, listening, speaking, and critical viewing.[17] The emphasis in the content outcomes was

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[14] Minnesota Department of Education, "Minnesota Graduation Rule: Performance Assessment Training Manual," (October 1993), 13-14.

[15] Ibid., 5-12.

[16] Ibid., 10.

[17] Ibid., 9.

on broad, global understanding of processes and relationships rather than detailed content knowledge.

A Plan for Assessment

In addition to creating drafts of outcomes and standards, the board and MDE continued to work on a plan for assessment. In fall of 1993 they discussed a "comprehensive assessment model" that outlined six achievement levels for each outcome, including both content and comprehensive outcomes.[18] Assessments were to be done through a set of assessment "packages" and state-validated performance assessments, which were intended to be "authentic" and "constructivist."[19] The state planned to validate performance assessments and have a collection available for teachers to use, a process designed to recognize the importance of local control and remain in compliance with the rule prohibiting a single statewide assessment. In addition, the state intended to "establish a system of monitoring" to ensure that scoring was consistent throughout the state.[20] The levels of achievement were reduced in a revised plan a few months later, but the performance assessments remained and later became one of the most controversial aspects of the policy.

The plan for assessment contains no evidence of consideration of the infrastructure that would be needed to support such a complex system of assessment. No other state had attempted such a system; as a result there were no models to draw

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[18] Minnesota State Board of Education and Minnesota Department of Education, "Minnesota's Comprehensive Assessment Model (Draft for Discussion)," (1993).

[19] Ibid.

[20] Ibid.

upon or experiences from which to learn. Assessment experts recognized that performance assessments were one of the new trends in assessment but also warned of the difficulty of creating assessments that were reliable.[21] The fact that the assessments would be created by teachers rather than assessment experts provided additional challenges. Perhaps for these reasons, the department entered into a one-year contract with the Midcontinent Regional Educational Laboratory (MCREL) to provide initial training for the teachers who would be developing assessments and also to evaluate the assessments that were developed.[22] While this action suggests awareness of the need for expert support, the limited term of the contract implies that the policy designers viewed the task of creating the assessments as a short-term project to be completed rather than a system that would require continued support and refinement.

Setting the Standards: Basic Standards and the Profile of Learning

A critical issue in developing a results-oriented graduation rule was determining how challenging the standards should be. A standard that was achievable by most students was seen as "dumbing down" the curriculum and failing to challenge the brighter students. In contrast, setting high standards was viewed as likely to result in significant numbers of students failing to achieve them and thus being denied a diploma. This tension was eventually resolved in the December 1993 draft of the graduation rule by setting two sets of standards, one described as essential or basic standards and the other as high standards, which were to be known as the Profile of

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[21] Debra O'Connor, "Education Plan Enters Critical Phase," *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, November 29, 1993.
[22] Ibid.

Learning.[23] All students would be expected to meet basic standards in reading, writing math, science, government processes, health, and geography. Students would demonstrate proficiency in these areas by passing locally selected standardized tests that had been approved by the state Commissioner of Education. The basic standards were intended to serve as a "safety net" to ensure that all students had essential knowledge.[24]

A wider range of achievement would be acceptable on the Profile standards, which extended beyond the basic areas. Proficiency on these standards would be demonstrated through performance assessments.[25] This system was intended to avoid setting standards "only for the most capable students" or, alternatively, having standards that would be "compromised for those who have difficulty"; instead, the final record for a given student was intended to show the "strengths and weaknesses of that student" by displaying his or her achievements on a range of standards, thus creating a profile that could be used by employers or tertiary institutions to evaluate candidate capabilities.[26] The setting of two levels of standards gained the support of the legislature in 1994, when the statement that the "content of the graduation rule must differentiate between minimum competencies and rigorous standards" became part of the law.[27]

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[23] Nancy Livingston and Debra O'Connor, "It's Back to Basics for Grads," *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, December 12, 1993.

[24] Debra O'Connor, "High, Clear Standards Urged for Earning State Diplomas," *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, February 2, 1994.

[25] Nancy Livingston, "Board Endorses Simpler Rules for Graduation," *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, December 14, 1993.

[26] Minnesota Department of Education, "Proposed Graduation Rule Implementation Process Proposal (Draft)," (January 14, 1994), 3.

[27] "Laws of Minnesota," (Chapter 647, Article 7, Section 1, 1994).

The setting of two levels of standards also had the support of Iris McGinnis, who was hired in the fall of 1993 by the Minnesota Department of Education to head up the work on the standards project. She felt that it was unrealistic to expect every student to achieve high standards in every area. McGinnis, previously the director of assessment for the Anoka-Hennepin district, a large suburban district in the north metro area, had in the past been a "vocal critic of the graduation rule's early drafts" but was to play a key role in the development of the rule over the next two years.[28]

During the spring of 1994, a draft of the graduation rule including both the basic standards and the Profile of Learning was presented at twelve "town meetings" around the state. The meetings did not draw large crowds; attendance at most ranged between twenty-five and one hundred people. Feedback from attendees showed that those in favor of both the basic requirements and the Profile of Learning outnumbered those opposed. Support for the basic requirements was stronger than support for the Profile.[29] A February 1994 poll done by the *St. Paul Pioneer Press* and Twin Cities television station KARE found similar results, with respondents emphasizing the need for graduates to be competent in reading, mathematics and science.[30] Not everyone was pleased with the graduation rule, however. Conservative groups objected to the "imposition of 'values' that were hostile to their religious faith" and a wider range of

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[28] Livingston and O'Connor, "It's Back to Basics."

[29] Michael Tillmann, "Memo: Attendance at 1994 Town Meetings," (1994).

[30] Debra O'Connor, "School Standards Favored," *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, February 24, 1994.

citizens found the standards "vague, incomprehensible or immeasurable."[31] Feedback was used to revise the document once again.

The May 1994 draft of the graduation rule retained the seven basic standards content areas from previous drafts.[32] The Profile of Learning portion contained fifteen "elements" that focused on the application of skills and knowledge. These elements did not use the names of traditional academic disciplines although many were focused on academics. For example, element one was: "Comprehending, interpreting, and evaluating information received through reading, listening, and viewing." That element contained several standards, including standard 1.3.1: "Uses reasoning strategies to interpret and evaluate complex information."[33] The substandards for each standard were categorized into two types: declarative (what students should know) and procedural (what students should be able to do). In comparison to earlier drafts, this draft of the standards, while still emphasizing overarching concepts and processes, provided more detail in the standards and substandards and set requirements rather than listing options.

Assessments were to be chosen or developed by each school, with the caveat that they had to be "performance assessments which certify student engagement and rate student achievement against a high standard."[34] An elaborate system of earning points for meeting different standards and thus accumulating sufficient points for graduation was included in the May 1994 draft. Although revisions were later made to

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[31] Dane Smith, "Bill Sends a Critical Message on New State Graduation Rule," *Minneapolis Star Tribune*, March 11, 1994.

[32] The seven areas were reading, math, writing, science, geography, government, and physical health and safety.

[33] Minnesota Department of Education, "Proposed Graduation Rule Draft," (1994).

[34] Ibid.

the document, the the May 1994 draft of the Profile standards was nearly identical to the standards that would later be used statewide for the Profile's implementation.

Work at the Pilot Sites

During the 1993 session, the Minnesota legislature had appropriated ten million dollars over two years to MDE for "accelerated development" of the graduation rule.[35] This money was to be used to fund pilot sites, continue development of curriculum frameworks, develop performance standards and statewide assessment efforts, and broaden public understanding about the intended changes to the graduation rule. Districts applied to be pilot sites through a competitive process; those selected were provided with funding for training and staff development. Twelve pilot sites, representing a range of size and geographic location and comprising twenty-one districts, were selected in the first round in June 1993.[36]

The work to be done at the pilot sites was critical to the development of the standards and assessments. The department's implementation plan stated that the goal of the "combined efforts of the pilot sites" was "to develop a statewide system of uniform standards, transferable assessments, and useful reporting of student

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[35] "Laws of Minnesota," (Chapter 224, Article 7, Section 27, 1993).

[36] Nancy Livingston, "21 Districts Will Test New Graduation Standards," St. Paul Pioneer Press, June 8, 1993; Lisa Larson, "The State's High School Graduation Rule," (Minnesota House of Representatives Research Department, 1996). The sites were Annandale public schools, Brainerd public schools, Freshwater education district, Minnesota Center for Student Performance, Moorhead public schools, Robbinsdale area public schools, Anoka-Hennepin public schools, Dover-Eyota public schools, Minnesota Center for Arts Education, Minnesota River Valley education district, Richfield public schools, and St. Cloud Community Schools. Minneapolis Public School district was later added. In some cases, several smaller districts in greater Minnesota were combined into a single pilot site.

achievement."[37] According to Mary Lillesve, a manager at the department at the time, the pilot process for the graduation standards occurred somewhat differently from the typical use of a pilot in education. In a typical pilot, a site is given a set of procedures or materials and asked to try them and evaluate their effectiveness. In the case of the Minnesota graduation rule, "the pilot sites really became the inventors…when they signed on, they really didn't know what they signed on for."[38] Iris McGinnis was known to describe the process as "building the airplane while we're flying it."[39] When work at the pilot sites began, the graduation rule—including all the outcomes or standards—was still in draft stage and undergoing frequent revision and no assessments had been developed.

The pilot sites were intended to engage with a variety of tasks. According to MDE's implementation plan, the sites were to develop methods to deal with increased requirements, reconsider resource allocation and teaching methods, try out new structures for curriculum, and "implement all segments of the Rule, not just those for which they have been asked to write assessments."[40] Each pilot site was assigned specific content areas for which teachers were to develop "packages" of assessments. These packages were defined as "sets of assessments which, when taken together, represent the scope of an outcome."[41] Although early planning related to the graduation

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[37] Minnesota Department of Education, "Proposed Graduation Rule Implementation Process Proposal (Draft)," (1994), 1.

[38] Mary Lillesve, interview by author, St. Paul, MN, July 20, 2007.

[39] Beverly Lillquist, interview by author, Minneapolis, MN, September 20, 2007.

[40] Minnesota Department of Education, "Proposed Implementation Process," 1.

[41] Ibid., 5.

rule had included the use of multiple forms of assessment, "somehow that [had] evolved into a system of performance packages only."[42]

Officials at MDE created a two-day training focused on performance assessments for teachers at pilot sites. The training manual described performance assessment as "authentic," "constructivist," "embedded in the normal flow of classroom practice," "developmental," and "focused."[43] Training included three models for developing performance tasks. The first, based on work from Mid-Continent Regional Education Lab (MCREL), emphasized the assessment of reasoning. The second, a model developed by Iris McGinnis, focused on creating simulated real-world tasks. The third model emphasized the products of the performance tasks.[44] The ninety-one-page manual included written information, guides, and examples for each model as well as generic rubrics for content and comprehensive outcomes, a basic template for writing up a performance task, a glossary, a rubric specific to complex reasoning, and two sample tasks.[45] The task of creating a performance assessment was linked to a mid-1993 version of the standards, which was included in the manual.

The connection between the three models and the Profile of Learning standards was not made explicit in the training manual. For example, the MCREL model was designed to assess fifteen "complex reasoning processes"[46] but these processes were not

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[42] Mary Lillesve, interview by author, July 20, 2007, St. Paul, MN.

[43] Minnesota Department of Education, "Performance Assessment Training Manual," 7.

[44] Ibid., 15. The Minnesota Department of Education archive copy contains handwritten notes indicating the sources for each section. The third section is noted as "Wiggins, Sizer, etc.." The first two models also credit sources in the appropriate sections of the document.

[45] Ibid.

[46] Ibid.

mentioned in either the comprehensive or content outcomes which the tasks were intended to assess. There was no information about how to choose among or combine the three models; neither was there a list of references or additional reading. As a result, the training manual appears to be more of a menu of possibilities than a clear framework for creating performance assessments. This approach to training may have occurred because performance assessment in academic disciplines was a relatively new endeavor, because there was lack of agreement on a single model or framework, or because of a belief that teachers should have flexibility in the process.

The January 1994 draft of MDE's implementation plan called for the performance packages to be developed in April and May of that year, reviewed in June and July, and then piloted during the 1994-95 school year. There were also plans for a "computerized record-keeping system" to be completed during that year.[47] Unfortunately, however, turmoil and internal politics at MDE in 1994 negatively impacted training for the teachers at these sites.[48] An additional complication was that the version of the standards included in the training manual differed significantly from the May 1994 version that was the foundation for the standards later used statewide; as a result, assessments developed prior to May 1994 would not have been aligned to the standards that were eventually used.

In spring 1994, a team of evaluators from the North Central Regional Educational Laboratory (NCREL) conducted an evaluation of the work at the pilot sites,

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[47] Minnesota Department of Education, "Proposed Implementation Process," 26.

[48] Mary Lillesve, interview by author, St. Paul, MN, July 20, 2007.

using data from interviews with teachers, administrators, and board members.[49] They found that the primary work at the sites had been focused on assessment, particularly the development of the performance assessments. A number of the districts had been involved in similar work prior to becoming pilot sites. These prior experiences had "proved to be important building blocks for those sites making strides in developing assessments,"[50] suggesting that the Profile-specific training alone might not have been sufficient for the task. Some respondents reported positive feelings about the work being done, but many others expressed concern with the number of changes they had seen during the year, making comments such as "[m]ajor changes at the state level at this point have created chaos,"[51] "[w]hy should I jump on the bandwagon if things are just going to change again?"[52] and "[w]hat I've seen is there has sort of been a flavor-of-the-month routine."[53]

Despite the unsettled nature of the process, during this period there seemed to be interest in being involved with the work that was being done on the graduation rule. Mary Lillesve worked with a group of schools in the west metro area that had applied to be pilot sites but were not selected. When she asked them what MDE could do to support them, their reply was to "get us information about what's happening." She did as they requested, entering into an informal agreement in which "[she] would bring

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[49] Deborah Winking, Mark Hawkes, and Diane Morehouse, "Piloting the Minnesota Graduation Rule: A First Look," (NCREL Evaluation Studies, 1994).

[50] Ibid., 1-3 and 1-4.

[51] Ibid., E-4. The comment is from a Dover-Eyota principal.

[52] Ibid., F-6. The comment is from an educator in the Freshwater Education District.

[53] Ibid., H-8. The comment is from a Moorhead teacher.

them information and they would understand the meaning of the word 'draft'." She recalls that "everybody wanted to be on board—because there was money."[54]

The leadership in Minneapolis and St. Paul was less certain about embracing the standards initiative, although Minneapolis was added to the original group as the thirteenth pilot site and St. Paul became the fourteenth a year later. Recognizing the importance of securing the cooperation of the state's two largest districts, MDE created a part-time liaison position for each during the summer of 1994. The Minneapolis position was filled by a longtime teacher in the district who was also an acquaintance of Commissioner Linda Powell. The St. Paul position, however, remained unfilled.[55]

District leadership in Minneapolis was split on the best response to the graduation standards. Beverly Lillquist, graduate standards coordinator for the district, recalls that OBE "had left a bad taste everywhere" and the new graduation standards "sounded too much like another state sell." She remembers that Minneapolis Superintendent Peter Hutchinson "never thought this was going to play out" but Carol Johnson, director of Teacher and Instructional Services, thought the district should "get in on it."[56] As a result of this difference in opinion among district leaders, the district's participation during the pilot years was limited to doing the minimum required to obtain the additional funding. It is reasonable to assume that other districts may have had similar responses.

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[54] Mary Lillesve, interview by author, St. Paul, MN, July 20, 2007.

[55] Beverly Lillquist, interview by author, Minneapolis, MN, September 19, 2007.

[56] Beverly Lillquist, interview by author, Minneapolis, MN, September 19, 2007.

Delays and Concerns

The 1994 legislative session brought a proposal to delay the implementation of the graduation standards. In the end, however, the legislature decided to stay with the original timeline of implementation, which called for full implementation beginning with students who would enter ninth grade during the 1996-97 school year—the class of 2000.[57] The 1994 MDE implementation plan draft, in contrast, called only for pilot sites to implement the "first phase" of the Profile in the 1996-97 school year.[58] The discrepancy between these two timelines suggests that the legislature was unaware that the department did not have a strategy to match the legislators' timeline. This seems to be a pattern that endured; Mary Lillesve recalls that "the department was always behind the timelines."[59]

Some legislators were not satisfied with the progress on the development of the graduation rule. In March, a bill "eliminating the authority of the state board of education to establish a final graduation rule" was introduced in the House by two Republican and two Democratic representatives. [60] The *Minneapolis Star Tribune* reported that Representative Dennis Ozment (R-Rosemount), one of the bill's authors, was frustrated by the lack of responsiveness on the part of the board to demands for "understandable and specific academic standards."[61] Although this bill received little

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[57] "Graduation Standards Advisory Panel Recommendations: Report to the Governor and C.F.L. Commissioner," 22.

[58] Minnesota Department of Education, "Proposed Implementation Process," 5.

[59] Mary Lillesve, interview by author, July 20, 2007, St. Paul, MN.

[60] State of Minnesota Journal of the House, Thursday, March 3, 1994. The bill's authors were Republicans Ozment and Koppendrayer and Democrats Pelowski and Tomassoni.

[61] Smith, "Bills Sends Critical Message."

support and the education bureaucracy remained intact, the legislature demanded more accountability by enacting a law requiring the State Board of Education to report to them each year by January 15 about its progress in developing and implementing the graduation requirements.[62]

Concern about the workings of the education bureaucracy continued during the following summer. On Sunday, June 26, 1994, the *St. Paul Pioneer Press* ran a front-page story detailing criticism of the Minnesota Department of Education by superintendents as well as its own employees. They cited problems that resulted from frequent turnover in commissioners (four in five years), two major reorganizations, the loss of half of the middle managers, a twenty percent budget cut, and the increasingly active role of the legislature in matters of educational policy. School officials in districts around the state complained that they were no longer getting the support they expected from the department, while department employees spoke of low morale in a workplace they found demoralizing. Evidence for the dysfunction was found in the graduation standards: after eight years (including the attempts at OBE), ten million dollars, and "a half-dozen revisions that many teachers and legislators considered too filled with jargon," the final draft of the standards had yet to be written.[63]

Work at MDE

Iris McGinnis provided a report of progress on the graduation rule to the Minnesota House Education Committee on January 24, 1995. She emphasized primarily

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[62] "Laws of Minnesota."

[63] Nancy Livingston and Linda Owen, "Education Agency Ailing: Minnesota Department Doesn't Provide Leadership, Critics Say," *St. Paul Pioneer Press,* June 26, 1994.

the basic standards part of the rule and assured the committee that the department was on track to implement testing in the seven "basic" areas of reading, math, writing, science, geography, government, and physical health and safety for students who would enter high school in the 1996-97 school year. The department expected that students who entered high school in 1998 would also be held responsible for achievement on the Profile of Learning, which fourteen pilot sites were currently involved in developing.[64] McGinnis then reported to the Senate Education Funding Division on February 2, 1995, this time focusing more on the Profile. She said that sixty graduation standards had been developed and that students would need to meet twenty-three of these Profile standards in order to graduate from high school, in addition to demonstrating competency on the seven basic standards. McGinnis expected this new system to shift the educational focus to application of knowledge.[65]

The department contracted with the Denver firm of Augenblick, Van De Water, and Myers to produce a study of the expected costs of implementation of the graduation rule through spring 1998. Their preliminary report was delivered in March 1995 and noted the difficulty of producing such an estimate when the rule-making process was not complete. The authors also expressed some concern about their ability to make predictions with any accuracy because no previous models for this type of reform existed. Using the information available, the firm estimated that the cost would be $28.4 million in 1996-97 and another $36.1 million in 1997-98. They observed that some of the cost could be offset by funding already committed (e.g., for staff development).

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[64] "Session Weekly," Vol. 12 No. 4, Minnesota House of Representatives, January 27, 1995.

[65] "Week in Review," Minnesota Senate, January 23-February 3, 1995.

With this funding factored in, the additional cost was estimated to be $6 million in 1996-97 and $12 million in 1997-98.[66] It should be noted, however, that while this additional funding had been committed by the legislature, there is no evidence that schools or districts perceived it as being earmarked for implementation of the graduation rule.

In mid-February 1995 the Department of Education was publicly criticized for the amount of money spent on consulting contracts. Barbara Goodwin, a lobbyist for the Minnesota Association of Professional Employees, accused the department of hiring "a half-dozen" consultants, including the son of the lieutenant governor, to work on the graduation standards at salaries nearly double those of the educational specialists already on the department staff. Commissioner Powell was singled out for the hiring of "a 'therapist' to help employees stressed out over department reorganization efforts" despite the existence of a state-funded Employee Assistance Program available to workers.[67] The allegations were denied by John Mercer, deputy commissioner of the Department of Education. He noted that the house and senate education committees had "urged the department to use classroom teachers to help develop the new standards" and that the department had done so, resulting in the reimbursement of those teachers' salaries to their districts.[68] Mercer also stated that specialists on the MDE staff "would

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[66] John Augenblick and John Myers, "Projected Costs to School Districts in Minnesota Associated with Implementing Phase I of the Graduation Rule in 1995-96, 1996-97, and 1997-98 (Preliminary Report)," (Denver, CO: Augenblick, Van De Water and Myers, March 31,1995).

[67] Gary Dawson, "State Spending Millions on Consulting Contracts," *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, February 17, 1995.

[68] _____, "Education Official Denies Charges Pricey Outside Consultants Hired," *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, March 3, 1995.

not volunteer to work on the graduation standards project,"[69] implying that the additional contracts were necessary to get the work done.

Legislation from the 1995 session also reflects concern about the efficiency with which MDE was being operated. The mission statement for public education was expanded to include the need to better manage departmental resources. The commissioner was expected to do such things as "prevent the waste of unnecessary spending of public money," "use innovative fiscal and human resource practices to manage the state's resources and operate the department as efficiently as possible," and "use technology where appropriate to increase agency productivity."[70]

The Graduation Rule in the Media

In July 1995, the *St. Paul Pioneer Press* ran an article attempting to explain the content of the graduation rule. Despite the somewhat ominous headline "New School Standards Loom," the article was relatively neutral.[71] By this time, the standards had been organized into ten learning areas; the reporter listed each of these in a sidebar. They included academic areas such as area one, "understand what they read, hear and see," which would require students to "[c]omprehend, interpret, and evaluate information received in English through reading, listening, and viewing," and area six, "understand the world through science," in which students would "[u]nderstand and apply scientific concepts in natural and human-made environments." Other learning

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[69] Ibid.

[70] "Laws of Minnesota," (Chapter 248, Article 11, Section 9, 1995).

[71] Debra O'Connor, "New School Standards Loom: Graduation Rule Requires Specific Skills, Knowledge," *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, July 9, 1995.

areas were more process-oriented; for example, area eight, "make informed decisions," would require students to "[a]pply informed decision-making processes to promote personal growth and the well-being of society."[72] The reporter commented that although this area did not "sound much like school," the "details…appear to be quite familiar, dealing mostly with physical fitness, nutrition, and making career choices."[73]

The article noted that "studying the sample report card" designed to accompany the rule "was a daunting assignment" but that MDE officials believed that the rule would result in significant improvement in the state's education system. Several controversies surrounding the graduation rule were also noted. One was the perceived vagueness of the requirements in general. Another was the question of whether it was appropriate for schools to assess the "make informed choices" standard. There was also concern that graduation rates, particularly for minority students, would drop under the new rule.[74]

The *Star Tribune* attempted to explain the graduation standards to its readers in December 1995. The article described two parts to the graduation rule, the basic skills tests and the Profile of Learning or high standards, but focused primarily on the Profile, which they described as requiring "that students show that they understand and can use what they've learned in 10 broad areas."[75] Using the area of writing and speaking, the article then gave an example of a goal, a standard related to that goal, and a

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[72] Ibid.

[73] Ibid.

[74] Ibid.

[75] Mary Jane Smetanka, "Graduation Standards Will Be Divided into Two Parts," *Minneapolis Star Tribune*, December 11, 1995.

performance package that could be used to demonstrate achievement of that standard. A related article on the same day described the planning process required of teachers, which included first determining "what kids should be able to do," next determining how "the kids will prove that," and finally determining the teaching needed for students to achieve that goal.[76] The Profile was described as a triangle that widened from ten academic goals at the top to the required standards and then to "a foundation of hundreds of assessment packages" at the bottom.[77] While this image may have been useful in attempting to explain the connection between the standards and the assessments, it may also have created confusion by positioning the performance packages—the most controversial and least understood part of the rule—as the "foundation" of the Profile.

Challenges in Moving Forward

During the 1995 special session, the legislature amended the law related to the graduation rule to state that "the requirements for high school graduation in Minnesota" must include "both basic requirements and the required profile of learning."[78] They also specified that the graduation standards would encompass "a broad range of academic experience and accomplishment necessary to achieve the goal of preparing students to function effectively as purposeful thinkers, effective communicators, self-directed

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[76] Mary Jane Smetanka, "Minnesota Developing "World-Class" Graduation Standards," *Minneapolis Star Tribune*, December 11 1995.

[77] Ibid.

[78] "Laws of Minnesota " (Chapter 3, Article 7, Section 1, Subdivision 7.c, 1995 Special Session).

learners, productive group participants, and responsible citizens."[79] These goals, which had previously been included as comprehensive outcomes of the graduation rule, were now in statute. The legislature had defined the desired outcomes of education broadly, recognizing academic "accomplishment" but including competencies needed for employment and civic participation as well. This law suggests that the legislature remained committed to the work on the graduation rule despite the previously noted concerns about efficiency and effectiveness in relation to the work being done on it. The remainder of the year brought a number of unforeseen challenges, however.

Basic Standards Pilot Testing

Pilot testing of the basic standards reading and mathematics tests was done in April 1995. During the following summer, in a controversial move, Iris McGinnis decided to release the results of these tests, which were designed to assess the minimum competency or "basic" part of the standards. On the reading test, 69 percent of the high school juniors and seniors in the pilot group achieved a passing score. On the math test, 62 percent of the eighth graders in the pilot group passed. The results made front-page news in St. Paul[80] and were also featured on the front of the metro section of the Minneapolis paper.[81] Scores for urban students were lower than the state as a whole,

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[79] Ibid.

[80] Debra O'Connor, "One-Third of State Pupils Tested Fail Reading Exam," *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, August 11, 1995.

[81] Mary Jane Smetanka, "30% of High School Students Fail Pilot Reading Skills Test," *Minneapolis Star Tribune*, August 11, 1995.

and minority students fared worse than white students. This gap in scores was attributed to "factors such as poverty" by McGinnis.[82]

This rate of failure on the basic standards pilot tests was unexpected. The previous summer, when the planned testing was announced, the *St. Paul Pioneer Press* reported that most students were "expected to breeze through them."[83] A St. Cloud administrator had predicted that "a minimum competency exam will be of little concern because 99 percent of students will pass with ease."[84] The unexpectedly high failure rate caught the eye of policymakers as well as the media. Making front page news, Governor Carlson told a meeting of school superintendents and other administrators that there was no excuse for the high rate of failure on the pilot tests.[85]

These tests, which were to be required for graduation, were intended to ensure that students had basic competencies, while the more innovative part of the graduation rule, the Profile of Learning, was intended to challenge students by setting high standards. The results of the pilot tests, however, demonstrated that meeting basic expectations was a challenge for a significant portion of the state's high school students. It appeared that the current system was not enabling students to reach this basic level of competency; as a result it was reasonable to assume that the system would not facilitate achievement of the higher levels that would be required by the Profile of Learning. It no longer seemed self-evident that stronger accountability measures would result in

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[82] Ibid.

[83] Debra O'Connor, "Graduation Standards Measure Minimum Ability," *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, July 6, 1994.

[84] Winking, Hawkes, and Morehouse, "Piloting the Minnesota Graduation Rule," M-8.

[85] Dane Smith, "Carlson Pushes Education Plan: There's "No Excuse" For Recent Test Scores, Officials Told," *Minneapolis Star Tribune*, August 17, 1995.

improved instruction. It is also likely that the pilot test results challenged the long-standing belief in the quality of the state's education system that many Minnesotans held.

The Education Bureaucracy

In September 1995, Governor Carlson's wish for a department that would combine all state services related to children, including education, became reality with the creation of the Department of Children, Families, and Learning (CFL). The Department of Education would be folded into the new department, ceasing to exist as a separate entity on October 1 of that year.[86] In late June, at the same time that this major reorganization of state government services for children was announced, Commissioner Linda Powell submitted her resignation, a move that reportedly "caught educators by surprise."[87] Powell stated that she could not support the "introduction of vouchers" and that she had "concerns about the directions the new agency for children, families, and learning will take."[88] Linda Kohl, director of the state planning department, was tapped to lead the new department, with the expectation that a permanent commissioner would be named in the fall.

While the Governor was pleased with the new department, the presidents of the state's two teachers' unions expressed concern about the restructuring of the department and the personnel changes. They felt that the reorganization of children's services into a

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[86] Mary Jane Smetanka, "Education Layoffs Rile Legislators," *Minneapolis Star Tribune*, September 13, 1995.

[87] Patricia Lopez Baden, "Education Faces Shift in Philosophy; Commissioner Resigns as Department Folds into New Children/Families Agency," *Minneapolis Star Tribune*, June 28, 1995.

[88] Ibid.

single, large department would lessen the focus on education and they were dismayed that the governor had begun advocating for improving education through the use of vouchers to allow students to use public funds to attend private schools. In addition, they viewed Powell as knowledgeable about education, while Kohl's background as a newspaper reporter and bureaucrat was seen as insufficient for leading educational initiatives.[89] The unions had never been strong supporters of the graduation standards[90] and these events appeared to further weaken their support.

As MDE moved toward inclusion in the new Department of Children, Families, and Learning, the firing of seven curriculum and assessment experts was brought to the attention of legislators.[91] A meeting of the House K-12 Education Finance Committee on Tuesday, September 12, 1995, was devoted largely to questioning three MDE officials about the layoffs.[92] The officials claimed that the employees were no longer needed due to changes made in the 1993 session laws in relation to curriculum, instruction, and assessment. Legislators, however, noted that with the new tests still in development, such positions appeared to be necessary. Barbara Goodwin, legislative affairs director of the union representing the laid-off employees, alleged that they had been targeted because they opposed aspects of the graduation rule. After the meeting, Representative Alice Johnson (DFL-Spring Lake Park), chair of the House K-12

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[89] "Educational Vouchers," *Resources on Minnesota Issues* (2007), http://www.leg.state.mn.us/lrl/issues/voucher.asp.

[90] Mary Lillesve, interview by author, July 20, 2007, St. Paul, MN.

[91] Smetanka, "Layoffs Rile Legislators."

[92] The officials were acting Education Commissioner Ann Schluter, appointed CFL Commissioner Linda Kohl, and Acting Assistant Education Commissioner Mary Pfeifer.

Finance Committee, told a reporter that she believed that MDE officials had lied to her and that they had things to cover up.[93]

At the same time that the Department of Education was facing these issues, the State Board of Education was facing challenges of its own. In August 1995, after losing re-election as the board's president, Georgina Stephens resigned from the board. Stephens, a strong supporter of desegregation, accused the group of being racist and dysfunctional and recommended that it be reconstituted.[94] The conflicts within the board, which revolved primarily around issues related to metrowide desegregation, resulted in greater than usual attention to the board and its activities. Senator Larry Pogemiller (DFL-Minneapolis), co-chair of the Senate Education Committee, promised to investigate the situation during the 1996 legislative session.[95] The story made front-page news in Minneapolis.[96]

The State Board of Education occupied an interesting position as a policy-making body. The board comprised nine members, all appointed by the governor, representing geographical areas of the state and meeting only two days a month. It had rule-making authority, which was intended to move the arena for debate about the details of educational policy out of the larger and more public arena of the legislature. The legislature had the power to stop the board's rules from taking effect, but if this

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[93] Gary Dawson, "State Employees Say Disagreement with Standards Is Costing Them Jobs," *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, September 13, 1995.

[94] Debra O'Connor, "Racial Questions Put State Education Board in Spotlight; Grad Rules, Desegregation on Agenda," *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, August 29 1995.

[95] Rob Hotakainen, "Resignation Clouds Fate of State Board," *Minneapolis Star Tribune*, September 10, 1995.

[96] O'Connor, "Racial Questions."

option was not exercised, the board's rules would stand. The board, however, controlled no money and was dependent on funding from the legislature for any initiatives. It also had no research staff, relying instead on the Department of Education for that function. The board was thus often positioned in the middle between the legislature and the department. As the legislature became increasingly active in the creation of educational policy related to outcomes, the board's position became more difficult.

Delays in the Plan

In September 1995, MDE officials asked the State Board of Education for permission to "delay indefinitely" work on the remaining five minimum competency tests—the same tests that, eight months earlier, Iris McGinnis had assured the legislature would be ready for students who would begin high school in 1996.[97] The department claimed that a lack of staff had inhibited progress, although they had just laid off seven curriculum and assessment experts.[98] The board, however, was not willing to grant the request. Citing the importance of their relationship with the legislature as well as the importance of not appearing to be "backing down," the board directed the department to proceed with the implementation of the testing as scheduled.[99] McGinnis agreed to comply with the directive, although she expressed concern that a significant number of students might be denied diplomas because schools

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[97] The five areas were writing, science, geography, government, and physical health and safety. The reading and math tests had been developed and piloted.

[98] Mary Jane Smetanka, "Work on Graduation Rule Fails to Deliver," *Minneapolis Star Tribune*, September 24, 1995.

[99] Writing and science were to be implemented in 1997-98; the remaining areas would be implemented the following year.

had not made the changes necessary to help them meet the new requirements.[100] There is no evidence that basic standards for the areas to be tested had been written.

In November, the board reversed its decision after its first meeting with newly appointed Commissioner Bruce Johnson. He assured the board that neither he nor Governor Carlson wanted to change the standards, but said that the state needed to have some way of making sure that teaching and curriculum had changed to ensure that students were learning the necessary skills before holding those students responsible for passing tests. The board responded by asking the department to create incentives for schools and districts to show improvement based on test results from groups of students, but left the revision of the testing program to the department.[101]

The lack of progress in developing minimum competency tests led to questions about the work on the graduation rule as a whole, particularly the assessment components.[102] A substantial amount of time and money—at least $20 million over the previous two years—had been devoted to the graduation standards project, but only two of the seven minimum competency tests and 16 of the 240 promised performance assessments had been developed by the fall of 1995. Many of the recently fired MDE employees were particularly critical of Iris McGinnis. In contrast to MDE's tradition of their own specialists developing assessments, McGinnis had emphasized the involvement of teachers. Yet, by her admission, the vast majority of the performance

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[100] Mary Jane Smetanka, "Reading, 'Rithmetic, and Integration," *Minneapolis Star Tribune*, October 10, 1995.

[101] _____, "Skills Test Debate Turns to Teaching," *Minneapolis Star Tribune*, November 14, 1995.

[102] Smetanka, "Work Fails to Deliver."

assessments the teachers developed were not acceptable.[103] Beverly Lillquist remembers that McGinnis liked the idea of work on the graduation rule "evolving," but that "nobody had the time to do the co-constructing that she was looking for because they didn't have the background in it."[104] In response to criticism about the lack of minimum competency tests, McGinnis chose to emphasize that the Profile of Learning was the more demanding part of the graduation rule.[105]

In late November, McGinnis submitted her resignation, effective December 2, after two years of directing the graduation standards project. Her letter said that "whatever contribution" she could make had been completed, and that "[w]hile the Governor and Commissioner state they support the graduation standards, their definition of what that means is very different from the project we have been working on."[106] McGinnis was known as a person who had definite ideas about how things should be done; she may have decided to leave when it became clear that the work was not proceeding as she desired.[107]

Commissioner Bruce Johnson publicly expressed surprise at the resignation, saying that he did not know "what Iris had a problem with."[108] Johnson and Governor Carlson said that work on the standards would continue as planned, but Representative Alice Johnson expressed concern about the change. She was quoted in the *Pioneer*

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[103] Ibid.

[104] Beverly Lillquist, interview by author, Minneapolis, MN, September 19, 2007.

[105] Smetanka, "Work Fails to Deliver."

[106] Mary Jane Smetanka, "Blaming Rifts, Head of Project on Graduation Standards Quits," *Star Tribune*, November 29 1995.

[107] Mary Lillesve, interview by author, St. Paul, MN, July 20, 2007.

[108] Debra O'Connor, "Graduation Rule Creator Resigns Post," *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, November 29, 1995.

Press as saying "I hope it doesn't mean we're going to drop this one and go ahead to the next reform of the month"[109], voicing skepticism that may have been shared by others about the graduation standards project. The *Minneapolis Star Tribune* reminded its readers once again that McGinnis had been criticized for a project that had produced only two basic skills tests after "several years of work and the expenditure of millions of dollars."[110]

Graduation Standards under Scrutiny

In the weeks following the McGinnis's resignation, the graduation standards came under increased scrutiny. At a senate hearing, Senator Pogemiller asked members of the State Board of Education to describe what the standards would look like when they were finished. Board members were unable to provide a precise answer, noting that test development had been a problem and the board was not in agreement about how to proceed. Pogemiller, despite his frustration with the lack of an answer to his question, noted the importance of sticking to the implementation schedule for the Profile of Learning and remained confident that there would be time to work out the difficulties despite the "ups and downs" of the process.[111]

Ten days later, representatives from SciMathMN, a nonprofit education and business coalition focused on mathematics and science education, met with state board members to discuss results from two independent evaluation reports they had

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[109] Ibid.

[110] Smetanka, "Blaming Rifts."

[111] Mary Jane Smetanka, "Graduation Standards Dogged by Troubles," *Minneapolis Star Tribune*, December 3, 1995.

commissioned. The reports expressed concern with the low levels of achievement required by the Profile of Learning in mathematics and science, the development of assessment tasks by teachers without sufficient training, the use of basic skills tests, and the process of creating test specifications before the required learning had been specified. SciMathMN advocated for more rigorous expectations than those proposed.[112]

Criticism of the assessments related to the Profile was widespread. James Popham, a nationally known assessment expert, observed that the large number of performance assessments created a system that would be impossibly complex. Further, teachers lacked sufficient training for the work of developing such assessments. Mark Davison, professor of educational psychology at the University of Minnesota, stated that performance assessments were particularly difficult to construct and that it might be impossible to create standards that could be scored fairly statewide. Bill McMillan, the former director of Minnesota state assessment programs and one of the MDE employees who had been laid off, cautioned that the assessment materials would not stand up in court because of the way they had been developed.[113]

Officials sought to assure the public that the graduation standards project was not in jeopardy. There were now twenty-three pilot sites for the Profile. Mary Pfeiffer, acting project director in the wake of McGinnis's resignation, claimed that while it was hard to get good press, there was "no paralysis" and that "all activities creating the

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[112] Debra O'Connor, "Reports Critical of Grad Rule Proposal," *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, December 13, 1995.

[113] Smetanka, "Work Fails to Deliver."

results-oriented graduation rule are on track and on time."[114] Michael Tillman, who had worked on the standards project for two years before returning to the classroom, was quickly named the new director for the graduation standards project.[115] Deputy Commissioner Bob Wedl said that the process was complex but would not be slowed down. The department planned to announce schedules for the final phase of implementation within thirty days. State Board of Education members also stated that they were not "backing away" from or "watering down" the graduation standards project.[116] Nevertheless, as 1995 drew to a close, "the graduation standards [had] become for many people an expensive enigma."[117]

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[114] Rob Hotakainen, "State Insists Graduation Project on Track," *Minneapolis Star Tribune*, December 12 1995.

[115] "Grad Rule Director Named," *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, December 16, 1995.

[116] Hotakainen, "State Insists Project on Track."

[117] Smetanka, "Standards Dogged by Troubles."

CHAPTER FIVE

REVISION AND ADOPTION

1996-1998

Following the turmoil in the department caused by the resignation of Iris McGinnis and the revelation of work undone, new plans were needed. The commissioner moved forward accordingly, with a revised plan for standards and implementation. Assessment assumed increased importance, with increasing support for statewide testing. During the period from January 1996 to May 1998, the Profile emerged from the murky piloting process, edged into the public consciousness, moved through the rule-making process, and was finally officially adopted.

A Revised Plan

In January 1996, Commissioner Bruce Johnson outlined a revised plan for the graduation rule that decreased the number of basic skills tests to three: reading, mathematics, and writing.[1] Students entering ninth grade in 1996 (the class of 2000) would be required to pass the reading and math tests; the class of 2001 and beyond would have to pass writing as well. The four other basic skills that had been in the plan were permanently dropped. The rationale given was that the other four areas—science, government, geography, and physical health and safety—were not "basic skills in the

[1] Mary Jane Smetanka, "Reading, 'Riting, 'Rithmetic: State Wants to Pare Skills Tests Back to Basics," *Minneapolis Star Tribune*, January 5, 1996, ii.

way that reading, writing, and math are."[2] According to Michael Tillman, director of the graduation rule project, the four tests being dropped dealt more with knowledge than basic skills and the time commitment needed for testing in these areas was detracting from the focus on the high standards.[3] It seems likely that work on the remaining four tests had not actually begun, as it would probably have been allowed to continue if contracts with test developers had already been negotiated. Content in these areas was expected to be addressed in the Profile of Learning, which emphasized application of knowledge and was to remain in place as the high standards portion of the graduation rule. The state planned to provide the basic skills tests in reading, mathematics, and writing, but would also allow districts to evaluate student competency through the use of other standardized tests, maintaining Minnesota's tradition of local control.[4]

At this time, the only state requirement for graduation was passing the three basic skills tests.[5] The previous graduation rule requiring successful completion of a number of courses in specific academic areas had been phased out, although most districts retained graduation requirements requiring the completion of a set of courses. Ironically, the initiative aimed at raising statewide standards for high school graduation had instead set them at a basic level, albeit temporarily.

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[2] Ibid.

[3] George W. Pinney, "State Drops Four Subjects from Graduation Test," *Minneapolis Star Tribune*, February 14, 1996.

[4] Debra O'Connor, "Latest Grad Rule Hinges on 3 R's," *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, January 5, 1996.

[5] Mary Jane Smetanka, "State Board of Education Grills Commissioner on Graduation Rule," *Minneapolis Star Tribune*, January 9, 1996.

The January 1996 implementation plan called for the Profile to be phased in starting with a single learning area (inquiry) in 1997 and ending with standards in all ten learning areas being in effect by 2001.[6] The Profile would require the use of performance assessments; however, criteria for different levels of achievement remained unclear, as did the role the Profile would play in graduation requirements. The State Board of Education had many questions for Commissioner Bruce Johnson about how the Profile of Learning would work in practice. Johnson was able to offer possible scenarios but made no promises.[7]

In March 1996, a revised implementation plan was presented to, and approved by, the state board of education. The plan for the basic skills testing remained the same as that presented in January: reading and math tests in place for the class of 2000 with the addition of the writing test for the class of 2001 and beyond. The phase-in of the Profile of Learning, however, had been extended through 2005. Michael Tillmann explained that the longer time was needed to make sure that schools were offering students the learning opportunities needed to meet the high standards. For each learning area, the revised schedule designated a time period in which schools would be required to offer the necessary learning experiences and also identified the first graduating class that would "have to show competence" on the standard to receive a diploma.[8] For example, inquiry standards would be implemented first, between 1996 and 1998, and

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[6] O'Connor, "Grad Rule Hinges on 3 R's"; Larson, "State's Graduation Rule."

[7] Smetanka, "Board Grills Commissioner."

[8] Debra O'Connor, "Grads Will Have to Pass Reading, Math Tests," *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, March 12, 1996.

required for the class of 2002.[9] The plan for a slower phase-in with timelines for both instruction and assessment indicates that officials at CFL were rethinking their original assumption that if the state provided standards describing what students should know and be able to do, teachers "could fill in the details below that."[10] Instead, they found it necessary to schedule required changes in instruction.

Reaction to the slower phase-in was mixed. One board member abstained from voting. Senator Pogemiller expressed disappointment that the Board and CFL had not adhered to the previously agreed-upon timeline in completing their tasks. Representative Alice Johnson, however, believed that the board and CFL should take the time necessary to do a good job.[11]

Testing

The Basic Standards Tests

In April 1996, the first basic standards tests in math and reading were administered statewide to eighth graders with relatively little fanfare.[12] Michael Tillman described the test as "just the beginning" and expressed hope that "everyone at eighth grade gets these basics."[13] Although CFL officials argued against releasing district-level

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[9] Ibid, Mary Jane Smetanka, "Graduation Standards to Be Phased in More Slowly," *Minneapolis Star Tribune*, March 12, 1996.

[10] Mary Lillesve, interview by author, July 20, 2007, St. Paul, MN.

[11] Smetanka, "Graduation Standards Phased In."

[12] Although districts were permitted to use an alternative test, virtually all districts chose to use the state test.

[13] Maureen Smith, "Students Get Their First Shot at New State Skills Test," *Minneapolis Star Tribune*, April 19, 1996.

results, they eventually did so after the governor's office engaged in "much internal maneuvering and intervention" in support of district-level reporting.[14] When the scores were released, the basic standards tests were front page news in both Minneapolis and St. Paul.[15] Test results showed a higher failure rate than anticipated as well as a wide discrepancy between the scores of urban and suburban students. In Minneapolis and St. Paul, fewer than half of the students passed the tests, while many suburban districts and districts in greater Minnesota had passing rates of 80 percent or higher. In general, passing rates were highly correlated with socioeconomic status. Statewide, 63 percent of the test takers passed reading and 76 percent passed math.[16]

A lower pass rate on the reading than the math test occurred in nearly every district in the state and put reading skills in the spotlight. Although most students taking the test were eighth graders and would have several more chances to try to pass, the test was reported to focus on skills that eighth graders should have, setting the expectation that the passing rate should be quite high. The reading test consisted of five newspaper articles of the type generally found in a variety section of the newspaper (e.g., human interest or general interest stories). Students answered ten questions about each article. Four of the sets of questions counted towards the student's score; the fifth set comprised field test items under consideration for future tests. Cathy Wagner, a graduation

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[14] Mary Jane Smetanka and Rob Hotakainen, "Minnesota's New Graduation Test: Thousand Fail Math, Reading," *Minneapolis Star Tribune*, May 29, 1996.

[15] Duchesne Paul Drew and Maureen Smith, "Skills-Test Results Unveiled," *Minneapolis Star Tribune*, May 24, 1996; Debra O'Connor and Thomas J. Collins, "Basic Skills Test Scores Fall Short," *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, May 24, 1996.

[16] Debra O'Connor and Linda Owen, "Pass or Fail? New Bottom Line for State's 8th-Graders," *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, May 29, 1996.

standards specialist at CFL, described the use of newspaper articles as appropriate because reading these texts to obtain information was "directly transferable to a work skill."[17] A different opinion was expressed by University of Minnesota professor Jay Samuels, who noted the mismatch between the reading on the test and the reading typically done in classrooms.[18] The difference in opinion reflects underlying beliefs about the purpose of schooling.

The state's two urban superintendents, Peter Hutchinson of Minneapolis and Curman Gaines of St. Paul, responded by describing both the challenges faced by their districts and the initiatives they had in place to raise achievement, including the development of district curriculum content standards in Minneapolis. Governor Arne Carlson called the test results "nothing short of a crisis;"[19] CFL's Michael Tillman described them as disturbing.[20] Apparently washing his hands of the issue, Commissioner Bruce Johnson noted that "what happens now is up to districts."[21] Taking a more matter-of-fact viewpoint, St. Paul assistant superintendent Cy Yusten observed that "[s]ome of those students are in danger of not ever being able to pass that test."[22]

Potential unintended consequences of the basic standards testing policy, including the possibility that thousands of high school students could be denied

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[17] Maureen Smith, "Reading into Test Results, Schools Rethink Literacy," *Minneapolis Star Tribune*, July 21, 1996.

[18] Ibid.

[19] O'Connor and Collins, "Basic Skills Test Scores Fall Short."

[20] Drew and Smith, "Skills-Test Results Unveiled."

[21] Smetanka and Hotakainen, "Minnesota's New Graduation Test."

[22] Smith, "Reading into Test Results."

diplomas, were apparently something that had not been considered in the years of work on the graduation rule. The assumption of many of the policymakers and education officials appears to have been that the new graduation rule would make a good system better rather than expose deficiencies in the existing system. When the results of the basic standards tests suggested otherwise, state level officials had little to offer in terms of solutions or support. The governor's rhetoric changed from wanting to "simply send…money and resources" to the public schools[23]; he now promoted improving educational achievement through the use of tax credits (vouchers) that could be used to send students to private schools.[24] CFL officials, hoping to keep the focus of their work on the high standards of the Profile, responded to the failure rate by encouraging districts to find ways to help those students who had not passed the test and suggesting they not use indicators such as poverty "as an excuse."[25] Policymakers seemed unwilling to confront data that contradicted their assumptions and were uninterested in finding policy solutions to the newly identified problem.

In September 1996, the results of the field trial of the basic standards writing test were released. The passing rate of 72 percent was similar to that on the math and reading tests.[26] This undesirably low passing rate and the need to increase it put both the cost of the basic standards work and the slow progress on the graduation standards back

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[23] Carlson, "State of the State Address."

[24] Drew and Smith, "Skills-Test Results Unveiled."

[25] Debra O'Connor and Linda Owen, "Pass or Fail? New Bottom Line for State's 8th-Graders," *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, May 29, 1996.

[26] Debra O'Connor, "28% of Freshmen Test Poorly in Writing," *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, September 25, 1996.

into front page news. The two-year implementation of the basic standards tests was projected to cost $52.3 million in addition to the $30 to $40 million already spent on developing graduation standards. Senator Pogemiller expressed frustration at the very slow rate of progress being made despite the large sums of money spent.[27]

The results of the basic standards tests in 1997 were again disappointing. The percentage of students passing both math and reading decreased, largely because the passing score was raised from 70 percent to 75 percent. As in 1996, Minneapolis and St. Paul had lower passing rates than the state as a whole, despite significant efforts at remediation. Governor Carlson again described the situation as critical, using such phrases as "[t]he red flag is waving" and "alarm bells are sounding all over the place" and continued to use the results to promote his idea of vouchers.[28] The commissioner recommended that the passing score be held at 75 percent indefinitely, rather than going to 80 percent the following year as planned. After this recommendation was reviewed by assessment specialists from school districts, CFL, and the University of Minnesota, it was approved by the board. It was hoped that such a move would help to shift the focus from basic skills to the higher-order skills embodied in the Profile of Learning.[29]

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[27] Maureen Smith, "New Graduation Standards - Results Disappointing on Sample Writing Test," *Minneapolis Star Tribune*, September 25, 1996.

[28] Rob Hotakainen and Maureen Smith, "How Students Fared," *Minneapolis Star Tribune*, March 20, 1997.

[29] Mary Jane Smetanka, "Basic-Skills Passing Score Stays at 75, for Now," *Minneapolis Star-Tribune*, April 15, 1997. The recommendation was made by Robert Wedl, who had replaced Bruce Johnson as commissioner in November 1996.

Statewide Testing

In 1996, Minnesota statutes still forbade the use of a mandated statewide test for accountability purposes. Governor Carlson strongly disagreed with this position, believing that an "apples to apples" comparison was the only way to have true accountability as well as the only way for parents and citizens to be able to compare schools. He and many of the Republican legislators were not pleased with the range of options that the current rules gave districts for testing basic skills. They wanted a single, statewide test that would allow comparisons between schools.[30] Democrats disagreed. They were wary of a single test because of the potential for the results to be used negatively—for example, to focus criticism on the two urban districts that served a disproportionate number of the state's students of color and students living in poverty.[31]

Accountability and achievement testing were on the minds of the legislature and the governor as the 1997 legislative session began, with support for a single statewide test growing among legislators.[32] The editors at the *Star Tribune*, writing in the fall of 1996, had already encouraged the use of state-wide tests in order to make the graduation standards meaningful and "ensure uniform academic compliance."[33] Additional support for the idea came from the Minnesota Education Accountability Plan created by a group

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[30] Rob Hotakainen, "Carlson Makes Pitch for Standardized Tests," *Minneapolis Star Tribune*, February 14, 1996.

[31] Ibid.

[32] Mary Jane Smetanka, "1997 Legislative Preview," *Minneapolis Star Tribune*, January 5, 1997.

[33] *Minneapolis Star Tribune*, "Editorial," October 16, 1996.

of University of Minnesota faculty, which recommended the use of statewide testing.[34] During the 1997 session, the legislature repealed the prohibition against statewide testing, requiring instead that "[e]ach school year, all school districts shall give a uniform statewide test to students at specified grades to provide information on the status, needs and performance of Minnesota students."[35] These tests would include not only the basic standards tests already in use, but also a new set of tests known as the Minnesota Comprehensive Assessments (MCAs), which would assess achievement on aspects of the Profile of Learning. With this change, Minnesota's long tradition of relying solely on local control had ended in relation to assessment.

The Department of Children, Families, and Learning

The work of developing the graduation rule and directing the work at the pilot sites continued at the department throughout 1996 and 1997. Minutes from the Graduation Standards Executive Committee meetings indicate that in November, 1996, they discussed a range of topics including the development of Standards of Distinction for high achieving students, the reduction of the inquiry standards from three to two, and the addition of a career investigation or planning requirement. They also considered a recommendation from the pilot sites that task management skills not be "combined with the achievement score as part of a 'formula' that moves a student toward

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[34] Debra O'Connor, "What the New System Might Look Like," *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, February 16, 1997.

[35] *Laws of Minnesota*, (Chapter 1, Sec. 2, Subdivision 1a, 1997).

graduation."[36] This recommendation was later amended to require only that a record of task management skills be kept. The notion of standards of distinction or an honors level of achievement was eliminated by the time the department distributed its guide for establishing policies and procedures related to the Profile in April 1998.[37]

In January 1997, the group turned its attention to the performance packages. They confirmed the intention that "model packages will be developed for every standards (sic)."[38] Exemplars of work rated three or four on the four-point rubric were to be published. The plan was for a "team of national experts in performance assessment" to determine what student work met the standards, and then for content teachers to review the experts' recommendations.[39] The group also discussed a process for approval of local assessment packages.

The discussions at these meetings indicate that the Profile of Learning was far from being finalized. There was still not agreement on the standards, the levels of achievement, or the way in which task management skills would be addressed. Many details of the work with performance assessment remained to be resolved, including the development of the infrastructure that would be needed to provide model assessments, establish performance standards, and identify and disseminate exemplars.
Yet these meetings took place halfway through the school year in which the inquiry standard was being implemented.

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[36] "Minutes, Graduation Standards Executive Committee Meeting," (November 22, 1996).

[37] Office of Teaching and Learning, "Policies and Procedures for the Profile of Learning," (Minnesota Department of Children, Families, and Learning, 1998).

[38] "Minutes, Graduation Standards Executive Committee Meeting," (January 10, 1997).

[39] Ibid.

The directors at the various pilot sites were important actors in the development and implementation of the Profile of Learning. Meetings of the pilot site directors during the 1996-97 school year focused on two aspects of implementation, "embedding" the standards and working with the performance packages.[40] Embedding the standards was a lengthy process in which schools or districts identified the courses, classes, and grade levels in which standards and substandards would be addressed and evaluated. Embedding the standards did not require change in the structures of schooling—students would be assigned to classes in the traditional way—but was expected to require changes in the curriculum and assessment in the various courses in which the standards were embedded.

The assessment system presented challenges in relation to embedding the standards and assessments. Students were to be evaluated against the standard, but because of the organization into grade level bands, the standards described achievement only at grades three, five, eight, and high school. An assessment placed at grade six, for example, would require that the work be evaluated against an eighth grade standard, most likely resulting in fewer students meeting the standard. Placing all the assessments at the top grade level in each band, however, would result in those years (grades three, five, and eight) containing an overwhelming number of assessments. In high school, the interdisciplinary focus of the standards and packages made placement in traditional courses difficult.

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[40] "Minutes of the Pilot Site Directors Meeting," (Minnesota Department of Children, Families, and Learning, February 27, 1997); "Minutes of the Pilot Site Directors Meeting," (Minnesota Department of Children, Families, and Learning, March 18, 1997); "Minutes of the Pilot Site Directors Meeting," (Minnesota Department of Children, Families, and Learning, October 24, 1996).

Work on the performance packages centered on collecting samples of student work from performance packages, particularly those related to the inquiry standard being piloted that year. A meeting for reviewing the work was planned for June 1997. Meeting minutes indicate that a number of questions and concerns related to the feasibility, validity, and reliability of the performance assessments were raised.[41] However, the CFL officials at the March 1997 meeting were pleased to announce that Robert Marzano of MCREL, a nationally recognized expert in performance assessment, thought that the standards "were on the right track and the state [was] definitely headed in the right direction."[42]

Rating Schools

In July 1996, at the request of Governor Carlson, the Department of Children, Families, and Learning released a state report card evaluating the state's public schools as a whole on twelve indicators of educational quality.[43] The report card reflected many of the educational issues that were being discussed in the legislature at the time, including the length of the school year, school start times, funding for technology in schools, the dropout rate, and the low scores on the basic skills test. Commissioner Johnson characterized Minnesota schools, long considered to be among the top in the

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[41] "Pilot Site Directors," March 1997.

[42] Ibid., 2.

[43] Rob Hotakainen and Duchesne Paul Drew, "Grading the Schools," *Minneapolis Star Tribune*, July 25, 1996. The twelve indicators and associated grades were eighth grade reading and math, C; fourth grade reading, C; school schedules, C; school-year length, D; college entrance exams, A; dropout rate, D; school-to-work efforts, I; education funding, B; funding flexibility, C; student-teacher ratio, B; technology, C; and standards implementation, B-.

nation, as "just above average" and the state as having "lost its edge."[44] The department gave the state a grade of B minus on standards implementation.

The report card was immediately questioned and compared with reports from other organizations that indicated that the state was doing much better than CFL's report card suggested. A group of organizations including the teachers' unions and the principals' professional organizations called for the establishment of an Office of Educational Accountability that would operate separately from CFL. Burnsville Superintendent Jim Rickabaugh, a spokesperson for one group, said that there was a feeling that Commissioner Johnson was "manipulating student achievement information" and that education in Minnesota was being used to serve a political agenda.[45] *Star Tribune* columnist Doug Grow questioned Commissioner Johnson about the way the study was conducted but received few answers.[46]

The rating of the public schools and the controversy surrounding the way it was done negatively impacted the relationship between the Department of Children, Families, and Learning and the local districts. Minnesota is a state with a few large districts and hundreds of small ones; many of the smaller districts, with limited central office staff, had relied for years on the Department of Education for support in matters pertaining to school improvement in general and curriculum, instruction, and assessment in particular. The changes in personnel and focus that resulted from the

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[44] Ibid.

[45] Thomas J. Collins, "Minnesota Educators Fire Back," *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, August 16, 1996.

[46] Doug Grow, "That Mischievous Kid in the Back of the Room," *Minneapolis Star Tribune*, August 16, 1996.

work on the graduation rule had strained these relationships; the school ratings damaged them further. As the department geared up for statewide implementation of the Profile of Learning, its relationship with those responsible for that implementation had been seriously compromised.

The negative rating of the schools was counterbalanced by other reports that found Minnesota's education system to be doing well. The *St. Paul Pioneer Press* reported that the state had the second highest high school graduation rate in the country.[47] A report on teacher quality from the National Commission on Teaching and America's Future found that Minnesota had more "indicators of attention to teaching quality" than any other state.[48] The Minnesota High School Follow-up Study, based on a survey of 1994 high school graduates and their employers, reported that over 90 percent of the respondents were satisfied with the education the students had received in the public schools.[49] Minnesota's Department of Trade and Economic Development published a glossy magazine, including a letter from the governor, in which they stated that "Companies looking for a well-educated, well-prepared work force can find one in Minnesota."[50]

The apparent contradiction inherent in Governor Carlson's touting of Minnesota's education system to potential businesspeople alongside his constant

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[47] Collins, "Minnesota Educators Fire Back."

[48] National Commission on Teaching and America's Future, "What Matters Most: Teaching for America's Future," (1996).

[49] Debra O'Connor, "Follow-Up: '94 Grads Fare Well in Workplace," *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, September 19 1996.

[50] Rob Hotakainen, "Unions Accuse Carlson of Double Talk," *Minneapolis Star Tribune*, September 19, 1996.

barrage of criticism to the state's citizens was noted by both the state's teachers unions and the legislators.[51] Judy Schaubach, president of the Minnesota Education Association, stated that schools and teachers had been "unfairly maligned by critics" who used "incomplete, overly negative data to advance their own political agendas."[52] Representative Alice Johnson called a special meeting of the House K-12 Education Committee with Commissioner Bruce Johnson to discuss the conflicting reports, which she said "raise[d] cynicism in the public."[53] She also wanted the commissioner to explain the data sources for the report that his department had issued during the summer. Johnson complained of the "hostile tone and very personal nature of recent attacks."[54]

At the request of the legislature, a group of University of Minnesota faculty, led by the dean of the College of Education and Human Development, Robert Bruinicks, developed an accountability plan that could be used for the purpose of evaluating schools.[55] The plan, entitled the Minnesota Education Accountability Report, was released in February 1997.[56] It called for two types of statewide testing, the basic skills test already in existence plus a national test given at grades three, five, and eleven. In addition to the tests, schools would be evaluated on the use of 48 indicators, including

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[51] Duluth News-Tribune, "Two Unions Accuse Carlson of Double Talk on Education," September 20, 1996, Hotakainen, "Unions Accuse Carlson."

[52] Hotakainen, "Unions Accuse Carlson."

[53] Debra O'Connor, "Is State's Education 'Glass' Half Empty, Half Full?," *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, September 20, 1996.

[54] Hotakainen, "Unions Accuse Carlson."

[55] Debra O'Connor, "Quality 'Report Card' Proposed for Schools," *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, January 10, 1997.

[56] O'Connor, "New System."

student demographic factors, adequacy of school facilities, attendance, parent involvement, readiness for kindergarten, and the number of students whose native language was not English.[57] The concept of an accountability system that contextualized achievement within social and demographic factors met with the approval of the teachers unions and the Minnesota School Boards Association. The plan, as written, was never put into action, but the testing at grades three, five, and eleven was incorporated into the graduation rule. Although not used at the time, several other indicators were included in the reporting that was required five years later by the federal No Child Left Behind policy.

A Change in Commissioner

In November 1996, Governor Carlson appointed Robert Wedl as Commissioner of Education when Bruce Johnson abruptly resigned after only a year in the position. Wedl, a longtime educator with years of experience in the Department, was viewed as a "competent warhorse," in contrast to Johnson, who had been an attorney before leading CFL.[58] Wedl had had significant involvement in developing Governor Carlson's education agenda, including the use of statewide tests as well as well as the use of vouchers. He made it clear that he supported "change, accountability, and choice in education" and intended no change in course on education initiatives.[59]

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[57] Ibid.

[58] Jack Coffman, Debra O'Connor, and Theresa Monsour, "Carlson Cabinet Starts Doing the Lame-Duck Shuffle," *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, October 12, 1996.

[59] Norman Draper, "Bob Wedl: Advocate of Change Has Long Resume in Education," *Minneapolis Star Tribune*, October 16, 1996.

Johnson's time at CFL was characterized by conflict and controversy. While the opinions of legislators in regard to Johnson's performance were mixed, those of the teachers' unions were negative, as were those of much of the educational community. Leaders from the unions and the Minnesota School Boards Association expressed hope that the change in commissioner would "depoliticize the commissioner's office."[60] The president of the Minnesota Education Association considered the fact that Wedl's first appearance after his appointment was for a group of teachers to be an encouraging sign of his support for the work that teachers did.[61] In contrast, the change in leadership was of concern to Representative Alice Johnson, who suggested that the department suffered from "turmoil and no leadership."[62] She also indicated that Wedl's support for vouchers was problematic as that was "not the education reform that our state needs."[63]

The Profile of Learning

In December 1996, the state board of education directed the department to share its work on the Profile of Learning with schools across the state even though the policy had not yet been officially adopted. In speaking to the board, Michael Tillman, director of the project, indicated that schools were anxious to have information about the new graduation standards. Tillman also indicated that development of the Profile was well

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[60] Rob Hotakainen and Mary Jane Smetanka, "Controversial Education Commissioner Steps Down," *Minneapolis Star Tribune*, October 12, 1996.

[61] Draper, "Bob Wedl."

[62] Hotakainen and Smetanka, "Commissioner Steps Down."

[63] Draper, "Bob Wedl."

ahead of schedule.[64] Officials at the department decided to use the network already established for the Minnesota Educational Effectiveness Program to disseminate information about the Profile. The advantage of using this network was that it already included "people that live[d] in every district, ha[d] relationships built, [and] ha[d] a level of trust" with educators.[65]

The Profile was organized into ten broad areas of learning. Most corresponded to traditional areas of the curriculum; a few were focused on processes that cut across disciplines. The ten areas were:

(1) read, view, and listen to complex information in the English language

(2) write and speak effectively in the English language

(3) use and interpret the arts

(4) solve problems by applying mathematics

(5) conduct research and communicate findings

(6) understand and apply scientific concepts

(7) understand interactions between people and cultures

(8) use information to make decisions

(9) manage resources for a household, community, or government

(10) communicate in another language.

The 62 content standards of the Profile were organized within the framework of the elements or learning areas, with each area containing between one and three

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[64] Duchesne Paul Drew, "Schools Get Glimpse of Standards to Come," *Minneapolis Star Tribune*, December 10, 1996.

[65] Mary Lillesve, interview by author, July 20, 2007, St. Paul, MN.

standards. The learning areas were consistent across all grade levels, but different standards were written for primary, intermediate, middle, and high school levels. High school students were required to work toward at least one standard in each element (with the exception of learning another language, which was optional); two standards were required in science and resource management. To graduate from high school, students had to complete 18 required standards and 6 electives. The specific required standards were to be determined by the local district, but had to include literature, U.S. history, an art other than literature, multicultural perspectives, career investigation and planning, and technology use.[66] The graduation rule still conceptualized the purpose of education broadly and attempted to balance local control with statewide requirements.

The implementation schedule required pilot sites to implement element five during the 1996-1998 school years. This element addressed inquiry through published sources, scientific methods, and data gathering. The next group to be implemented, during 1997-2000, comprised elements four, six, seven, eight and nine, which included all the remaining areas except for language arts, fine arts, and the optional additional language. The final phase, scheduled for implementation during 1998-2002, included elements one, two, three, and ten. Districts were required only to implement the high school level standards, but were encouraged to implement those at the primary, intermediate, and middle levels as well.[67]

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[66] Larson, "State's Graduation Rule."

[67] Ibid.

The sequence of implementation gave precedence to standards requiring the greatest changes in practice. Inquiry was first because it was representative of the ideas underpinning the Profile: it was interdisciplinary, involved higher order thinking, and lent itself to constructivist teaching methods and performance assessment. In retrospect, this choice seems ill-advised. The concept of inquiry required a significant shift in understanding for many practitioners; it seemed that "nobody really knew what that inquiry piece was."[68] In addition, the basic standards tests results had focused attention on foundational learning in reading and mathematics, not inquiry.

The law required that student performance on the Profile be measured "using performance-based assessments compiled over time that integrate higher academic standards, higher order thinking skills, and application of knowledge from a variety of content areas."[69] In addition, the law required that "alternative approaches to assessment" be evaluated by the board in consultation with "the department, recognized psychometric experts in assessment, and other interested and knowledgeable educators, using the most current version of professional standards for education testing."[70] As implementation began at the pilot sites, questions arose about the way in which these requirements would be enacted, especially in regard to the needs of special education students and English language learners. While there was general agreement that the Profile would improve the learning experiences of these students, there were some concerns about the suitability of the performance packages and the way

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[68] Beverly Lillquist, interview by author, September 20, 2007, Minneapolis, MN.

[69] "Laws of Minnesota," (Chapter 412, Article 7, Section 1, 1996).

[70] Ibid.

accommodations and modifications could or would be made to these assessments, particularly in regard to scoring.[71]

By January 1997, department officials believed that the Profile was ready to be presented to the legislature. The recommended implementation schedule had been slowed down so that the class of 2002 would be the first group to graduate under some of the new requirements: it would not be until 2005 that the full complement of standards would be required for graduation. High school coursework was expected to change over time in response to the new standards, becoming "narrower but deeper," according to Michael Tillman.[72] The Profile's emphasis on active learning and performance assessment remained strong, with students needing to earn a score of 1 (minimal pass) to 4 (the top score) on their work in at least 24 categories in order to graduate. Student scores would be placed on a graph that would be included in a transcript, offering employers and college admissions officers the opportunity to view a student's "profile" of achievement and making areas of strength and weakness clear. All students would eventually be expected to engage in working toward 24 standards, but scores within a group of students on a given standard were expected to vary. Similarly, an individual student's scores were expected to vary from standard to standard. It was not expected that every student would score at a high level on every standard; Tillman

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[71] Rick Spicuzza et al., "Input from the Field on the Participation of Students with Limited English Proficiency and Students with Disabilities in Meeting the High Standards of Minnesota's Profile of Learning," (National Center on Educational Outcomes, 1996).

[72] Debra O'Connor, "Graduation Rule to Revolutionize Every Classroom," *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, January 1, 1997.

was clear that "most of us wouldn't achieve the high standard in everything."[73] A record would also be kept of students' task management skills.

Rating the Standards

In August 1996, the American Federation of Teachers (AFT) gave Minnesota's standards a low rating in their *Making Standards Matter* report. The report stated that the "attempt at integrating the disciplines makes the standards harder to read and the subject matter harder to decipher" and that "[n]one of the subjects in the *Profile* are (sic) detailed and comprehensive enough to meet our 'common core' criterion."[74] The AFT's "common core criterion," one of several criteria used to rate the standards of all 50 states, required grade level benchmarks that included enough detail to provide the basis for 60 to 80 percent of the curriculum, demanded specificity rather than choice, emphasized content knowledge over application, and required a list of specific courses to be completed in high school.[75] Clearly the AFT's view of quality standards reflected a very different philosophy from that underlying Minnesota's Profile of Learning, which emphasized "a very high, broad, process and concept level" in describing "what kids should know and be able to do."[76] The report may have added to the growing rift between teachers, particularly those affiliated with AFT, and the department.

The Profile received another unsatisfactory evaluation in the 1997 edition of *Making Standards Matter,* which again indicated that none of the standards in the four

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[73] Ibid.

[74] American Federation of Teachers, "Making Standards Matter: An Annual Fifty-State Report on Efforts to Raise Academic Standards," (Washington, D.C.: American Federation of Teachers, 1996), 63.

[75] Ibid., 3-4.

[76] Mary Lillesve, interview by author, July 20, 2007, St. Paul, MN.

core subjects of English, math, science, and social studies was "strong enough to lead to a common core of learning and to support real change in the schools."[77] The report remained critical of the interdisciplinary nature of Minnesota's standards, the lack of emphasis on content, and the state's "complicated" assessment system.[78] The new plan for statewide testing was noted as a positive direction, but the report expressed concern about a test aligned to weak standards.

In 1997, AFT provided the opportunity for states to respond to the *Making Standards Matter* report. The Minnesota response from the Department of Children, Families, and Learning described "differences of perspective" in "basic assumptions about the criteria by which the Federation evaluates standards."[79] The CFL response outlines the state's belief in the value of the interdisciplinary organization of the standards, noting that Minnesota's "more constructivist approach" considered the complex demonstrations of knowledge demanded in the performance packages to be more than "simply sub-skill demonstration."[80] The AFT, in contrast, was looking for a core curriculum outlining the discrete facts and skills that students should know. According to the AFT report's primary author, Matt Gandal, the Profile focused far more on what students should be able to do than on what they should know, and this

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[77] American Federation of Teachers, "Making Standards Matter: An Annual Fifty-State Report on Efforts to Raise Academic Standards," (Washington, D.C.: American Federation of Teachers, 1997), 14.

[78] Ibid., 63.

[79] Ibid., 129.

[80] Ibid.

was cause for concern.[81] Gandal's description, although somewhat oversimplified, was accurate—in fact, it described the intent of the Profile of Learning standards, which differed significantly from the intent that AFT deemed desirable.

While not undertaking a formal evaluation, Minnesota newspapers continued to run stories about the standards of the Profile from time to time, noting both positive and negative aspects. The *Duluth News-Tribune* noted that the new graduation standards were based on the idea that preparing students for "an exploding Information Age" would require that they have "the skills to find, analyze and understand the information they need to make decisions" rather than mastery of a core body of knowledge.[82] The Duluth paper also reported on the positive impact that standards-based teaching had had on student engagement during the summer school session.[83] The *St. Paul Pioneer Press* described the standards as "a decade's distillation of what Minnesota thinks its students ought to know to face the world as high school graduates" based on "common-sense suggestions from national academic organizations, business people, legislators, parents and educators."[84] Both papers described the novelty and complexity of the standards as a challenge and noted that, while some educators embraced them enthusiastically, others had different reactions. Some teachers reported that implementing the standards would require no change in what they were doing; others believed that the needed

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[81] Mary Jane Smetanka, "State's School Standards Weak, Union Says," *Minneapolis Star-Tribune*, July 30, 1997.

[82] Tom Wilkowske, "Many Consider State Graduation Standards a Work in Progress," *Duluth News-Tribune*, August 10, 1997.

[83] Tom Wilkowske and Mary Thompson, "Grad Standards Pass Student Test," *Duluth News-Tribune*, August 10, 1997.

[84] Debra O'Connor, "Schools Getting a Head Start on New Standards," *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, August 20, 1997.

changes would be overwhelming. There was also concern that the standards were being "pushed on" teachers.[85]

Teachers Unions

The 1996 fall education conference was the third done jointly by the two rival teachers unions, the Minnesota Education Association and the Minnesota Federation of Teachers. Helping students pass the basic standards tests was one of the "hottest topics" at the conference.[86] Basic skills were not the only thing on teachers' minds, however. Their keynote speaker was William Glasser, creator of the quality schools movement, which emphasized choice theory and the establishment of a supportive, caring school environment. Conference sessions also addressed gang awareness, technology, discipline and classroom management, grant management, and strategies for living on a beginning teacher's salary.[87] This list of topics suggests that teachers were dealing with age-old problems such as discipline along with an array of changes both inside and outside the classroom.

A year later, at the state teachers' convention in October 1997, concern about the knowledge and skills needed for implementation of the Profile of Learning had become increasingly important in the minds of the state's teachers. One-third of the workshops were focused on the graduation standards in an attempt to fill gaps in professional development. Teachers continued to raise questions about the feasibility of

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[85] Ibid.

[86] Maureen Smith, "Basic Skills Tests Sure to Be Hot Topic at Annual State Teachers' Convention," *Minneapolis Star-Tribune*, October 16, 1996.

[87] Ibid.

implementing the standards, citing concerns about the clarity of the standards themselves as well as whether needed time and resources would be provided. The Department of Children, Families, and Learning had also noted the problem of inadequate professional development; in a survey of principals they had found that 45 percent had no training on the standards planned for their teachers.[88]

The State Board of Education

The Profile of Learning conceptualized graduation requirements broadly, as evidenced by a standard that required students to create a work in one area of the arts and one that required participation in physical education. Expressing concern that a high school diploma could be withheld if a student failed to demonstrate achievement of these standards, the state board of education voted on September 30, 1997, to remove these two requirements. They quickly rescinded their decision, however, on October 9, following an outcry from the arts community.[89] Kathleen Maloney, executive director of the Minnesota Alliance for Arts in Education, gathered a group of 25 key arts supporters within 24 hours. These people then contacted others, resulting in over 100 calls to the Board within a week's time.[90] Health and fitness educators similarly advocated for the physical education standard, noting data showing poor fitness levels

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[88] Anne O'Connor, "Graduation Standards Hot Topic at Teachers Unions' Convention," *Minneapolis Star-Tribune*, October 16, 1997.

[89] Theresa Monsour, "Board of Education Keeps Arts, Phy Ed Requirements," *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, October 22, 1997.

[90] Norman Draper, "Dropping Arts from Graduation Standards Has Advocates Irate," *Minneapolis Star-Tribune*, October 9, 1997.

among youth.[91] This sequence of events illustrated one of the consequences of taking a broad perspective on curriculum requirements rather than focusing on the traditional "core" areas of English, mathematics, social studies, and science. Specialists and advocates from disciplines such as the arts, which had traditionally been considered of lesser importance than the core areas, were adamant that their areas continue to be included in the Profile. These stakeholders were also organized in such a way that they could quickly mobilize to ensure that this would happen.

Graduation standards were not the only item on the board's agenda during 1997. A significant amount of their time was directed toward the creation of an education diversity rule designed to strengthen a previous rule requiring curriculum to be multicultural, gender-fair, and disability aware. The new rule was intended to address gaps in achievement by requiring districts to analyze student statistics by race, gender, native language, and family income and to train teachers to incorporate perspectives of different cultures, genders, and income levels.[92] Public controversy erupted over the proposed rule following a scathing review by conservative columnist Katherine Kersten, who stated that the diversity rule would end "our children's awareness of 'We, the People'" and alleging that "tyranny" had come to Minnesota.[93] Security guards were posted at the board of education meetings after over 350 calls, including some that were

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[91] Kathleen Kennedy Manzo, "Minnesota Paints Arts Requirement Back into the Picture," *Education Week*, November 5, 1997.

[92] Maureen Smith, "State Board OKs "Diversity Rule"," *Minneapolis Star-Tribune*, September 16, 1997.

[93] Katherine Kersten, "State School Board's Dubious Diversity Rules," *Minneapolis Star Tribune*, October 15, 1997.

threatening, were received in regard to the proposed diversity policy.[94] Dale Jensen, executive director of the Minnesota Association of School Administrators, stated that he had "probably gotten more calls about this issue than any in recent years."[95] Despite this level of phone activity, attendance was low at information meetings for the diversity rule that were held around the state.[96] The Board eventually voted to revise the rule.[97]

While the work on the diversity rule was not directly related to the work on the graduation rule, the events and controversy surrounding it foreshadowed what was to come in relation to the Profile. Despite little interest in learning more about the rule at public meetings, negative opinion in the media and the response of conservatives to the proposed policy had a powerful effect. The controversy over the diversity rule may also have drawn attention to diversity-related aspects of the Profile in the public mind.

Following the conflict over the proposed diversity rule, two Republican senators introduced legislation to eliminate the State Board of Education. Senator Gen Olson (R-Minnetrista) expressed dissatisfaction with the board's rule-making, stating that "policies of this significance" should have legislative approval.[98] Rule-making for K-12

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[94] Norman Draper, "School Diversity Plan Stirs Fervent Response," *Minneapolis Star Tribune*, October 22, 1997.

[95] Associated Press, "State-Proposed "Diversity Rule" For Education Creates Concerns," *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, October 27, 1997.

[96] Norman Draper, "Diversity Rule for Schools Stirs Debate," *Minneapolis Star Tribune*, October 26, 1997.

97 Debra OConnor, "Two Lawmakers Want to End Education Board," St. Paul Pioneer Press, December 17, 1997.

98 Ibid.

education was the board's primary function.[99] The board was unable to write rules without authority from the legislature, but once rules were written they did not need legislative approval. Rather than change this process, the senators proposed eliminating the board entirely. In April 1998, the legislature voted to abolish the State Board of Education effective December 31, 1999. Implementation of this action would make Minnesota the first state in the United States without a state school board.[100]

The Profile in the Public Eye

In October 1996, the Minnesota Business Partnership released a poll of 330 Minnesota employers indicating that they were not satisfied with the skill level of their applicants and employees, particularly in the areas of reading, writing, and math.[101] Almost 80 percent stated that they had trouble finding enough applicants for their positions.[102] Stories circulated through the business community about job applicants who lacked the ability to use a ruler or read the orders or manuals needed to perform their job duties.[103] Duane Benson, executive director of the Business Partnership, noted that in addition to the basic academic skills, workers would also need such behavioral

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[99] Prior to the tenure of Governor Rudy Perpich, an important function of the board was the selection of the Commissioner of Education. That responsibility was shifted to the governor, resulting in both the commissioner and the board members being directly appointed by the governor.

[100] Ann Bradley, "Sweeping K-12 Bill in Minn. Would Abolish State Board," *Education Week*, April 15 1998.

[101] Jill Hodges, "Survey Says High School Graduates Not Ready for Work," *Minneapolis Star Tribune*, October 11, 1996.

[102] Unemployment rates during 1994-1996 ranged from 3.5 to 4.6 percent (Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development, "Minnesota Unemployment Statistics," http://www.deed.state.mn.us/lmi/tools/laus/Detail.aspx?geog=2701000000&adjust=1.)

[103] Bill Blazar, interview by author, July 22, 2008, Minneapolis, MN.

skills as working in teams.[104] The business community was still looking for more from the public schools and continuing to emphasize that schooling should prepare students for the workplace.

Star Tribune columnist Katherine Kersten turned her attention to the Profile of Learning in March 1998. Through repeated use of quotation marks around key Profile terms (including "learning areas," "performance-based assessments," and "content standards") and the creation of improbable scenarios related to performance packages, Kersten drove home her point that "there is reason to believe that—in the name of 'reform' and work readiness—the Profile of Learning will entrench the most pernicious fads plaguing education today."[105] Although this column did not prompt the immediate public response that had followed her earlier column on the diversity rule, it suggests that the Profile was looming larger in the public eye. Further evidence of this shift to the public arena is found in Norman Draper's *Star Tribune* article of March 8, 1998, in which he stated that "[f]or years, the state's Profile of Learning project brought positive reactions, if there were any reactions at all" but that both public and legislative support for the project was weakening.[106] Critics expressed concern that the standards were too vague, included too much nonacademic material, would limit the achievement of gifted

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[104] Hodges, "Grads Not Ready for Work."

[105] Katherine Kersten, "Profile of Learning for High Schools Is Severely Flawed," *Minneapolis Star-Tribune*, March 4, 1998.

[106] Norman Draper, "Learning Plan Is Taking on New Profile," *Minneapolis Star-Tribune*, March 8, 1998.

students, would be too expensive to implement, lacked a clear implementation plan, and would result in a record-keeping nightmare.[107]

The Profile behind the Scenes

By spring of 1997 there were signs that the system that CFL was developing was not working as intended. In May, an internal email from Michael Tillmann to a group at CFL discussed problems that were occurring because implementers were overly focused on concrete manifestations of the policy. Tillmann was concerned that "too many folk…want to know what it looks and sounds like when they're doing 'Grad. Rule' so they can look and sound that way and say 'Now I am reformed!'"[108] He bemoaned the fact that people were asking "[w]hat are we supposed to DO?" when, to his mind, "the more appropriate question" was "[w]hat are we supposed to BE?"[109] His email outlined "difficult questions" that needed to be answered in order to keep "integrity in this reform."[110] These questions focused on teachers' understanding of the standards, instructional design, choices that needed to be made "as they deliver[ed] standards," authenticity, self-assessment and self-reflection resulting in monitoring and adjusting to student needs, and the "essentially INDIVIDUAL (rather than course, class, mass, etc.) nature of learning.[111] Tillmann's email implies that these understandings are the essence of the reform that the Profile of Learning was intended to create. It is also evidence that

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[107] Theresa Monsour, "As Moment Looms, Debate over New Standards Heats Up," *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, March 6, 1998.

[108] Michael Tillmann, May 31, 1997.

[109] Ibid.

[110] Ibid.

[111] Ibid.

the policy had not been effective in communicating these intentions and that officials at MDE were aware of this situation.

Developing Local Policies and Procedures

Although the Profile was a state-wide graduation rule, the law prohibited prescribing the "delivery system" used for the rule and required that "any state action regarding the rule must evidence consideration of school district autonomy."[112] In keeping with this law, the proposed graduation rule required each district to develop its own policies related to implementing the rule and submit its "District Profile of Learning Standards Implementation Manual" to the State Board of Education by June 30, 1998.[113] The implementation report was required to include policies for broad-based local participation, ensurance of the preparatory standards, ensurance of the high school standards, assessment of standard achievement, staff development for standards, credit for learning (i.e., systems for students to receive credits for standards met outside of regular school classes), student and parent advising, recordkeeping and reporting, and an appeal process.[114]

The Office of Teaching and Learning at CFL prepared a guide for districts to use in "development of local policies and procedures," with an initial draft available in August 1997 and an updated document available in April 1998.[115] For each required

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[112] "Minnesota Session Laws " (Chapter 1, Section 1, 1997).

[113] Office of Teaching and Learning, "Toward Implementation Policies and Procedures for the Profile of Learning," (Minnesota Department of Children, Families, and Learning, 1997), ii. The document cites proposed Minnesota Administrative Rule 3501.0420.

[114] Ibid., iv.

[115] Ibid; Office of Teaching and Learning, "Policies and Procedures for the Profile of Learning."

section of the implementation manual, the guide described its purpose and provided a checklist that districts could use to evaluate their own policy. Sample policies were also included; presumably local boards could adopt the language of these policies rather than creating their own. Some sections noted additional tasks that would need to be completed; for example, the 1997 section on the preparatory standards stated that this section "will require completed K-8 curriculum frameworks or plans to complete them very soon,"[116] while the 1998 version indicates that this section "will require a completed description of the district's placement of preparatory standards in their curriculum."[117]

A few sections, such as those addressing staff development and appeals, suggested that districts could use policies or processes already in place. Most, however, required new policies or procedures. For example, the implementation manual required districts to establish "processes and procedures for local adoption of packages" and encouraged districts to enhance the "capacity of teachers to identify required level of rigor" through "training and collegial collaboration."[118] The guide did not mention support from the state such as sample packages or exemplars. The major responsibility for implementation of the profile was clearly being given to the local districts. This system is evidence of the inefficiency that resulted from trying to maintain local control while establishing a statewide system.

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[116] Office of Teaching and Learning, "Toward Implementation Policies," 3.

[117] Office of Teaching and Learning, "Policies and Procedures for the Profile of Learning," 6.

[118] Ibid., 10.

The Rule-Making Process

The rule-making process for the Profile of Learning began with the required publication of a request for comments on the possible rule in the state register;[119] the request for comments was also sent to all school districts and education organizations in the state, legislators on education committees, groups representing various minorities, and selected newspapers in the state. In response, the department received 33 letters and 101 phone comments; of these, 48 were requests for information and 23 related to the basic standards tests rather than the Profile. Of the remaining comments, the most frequently stated were suggestions to delay implementation and to provide more teacher training and funding for this purpose. Comments also addressed the amount of time that standards-based teaching took, the number of standards required, and issues related to record keeping.[120] Overall, given the size of the state and the nature of the Profile requirements, the number of comments was small. A memo summarizing the results from the requests for comments was sent from CFL officials to the state board and the commissioner in April 1997.[121]

A year later, in March 1998, the report of the Administrative Law Judge (ALJ) was completed. The purpose of the review by the judge was to determine "whether the need for and reasonableness of the proposed rule has been establish by the Board by an

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[119] Paul M. Marinac, "Rulemaking in Minnesota: A Guide," Office of the Revisor of Statutes, St. Paul, MN.

[120] Irma McIntosh Coleman, Michael Tillmann, and Mary Lynne McAlonie, "Graduation Standards Rulemaking: Comments Received in Response to Request for Comments for the Planned Adoption of Rules Relating to the Profile of Learning Requirements for the Graduation Standards," (Minnesota Department of Children, Families, and Learning, April 8, 1997).

[121] Ibid.

affirmative presentation of facts."[122] The ALJ recommended that the proposed rules be adopted, with two changes. The first addressed the implementation schedule, with the recommendation that a transition period be established to "ameliorate the disruption in the education process that results from introducing new teaching standards."[123] The report noted that a lack of teacher training, the changing nature of the standards themselves, the lack of rubrics and exemplars, the incomplete embedding of the standards in some districts, inadequate response to requests for assistance, lack of funding, and details of the handling of record-keeping and transfer students were all factors that contributed to the lack of a "rational basis for full implementation of the Profile of Learning for the Class of 2002 in the fall of 1998."[124] The second change concerned students enrolled in Advanced Placement (AP) or International Baccalaureate (IB) courses, stating that "the application of the 21 and 3 standards requirement to high achieving students is unreasonable." The judge suggested that the Board modify the rule in such a way that students who completed an appropriate number of AP or IB courses would be eligible for graduation.[125]

The ALJ noted that there was substantial concern about the number of standards required for graduation (21 required and 3 elective). Noting that his authority was limited to determining whether the agency had shown its proposal was reasonable,

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[122] George A. Beck, "Report of the Administrative Law Judge in the Matter of Rules of the State Board of Education Relating to Graduation Standards Profile of Learning, Minn. Rule Parts 3501.0300 to 3501.0469," (State of Minnesota Office of Administrative Hearings for the Minnesota Board of Education, 1998), Findings of Fact No. 15.

[123] Ibid., Findings of Fact No. 40.

[124] Ibid.

[125] Ibid., Findings of Fact No. 67.

rather than whether it was optimal, the ALJ determined that the proposal for the required number of standards was, in fact, reasonable. He nevertheless went on to suggest that reducing the number of required standards would be advisable and recommended that the Board "carefully review the public comments to determine if a modification is appropriate." [126] In April 1998, the Board of Education approved changes related to the implementation schedule and the exemption of AP and IB students, but retained the 21 required and 3 elective standard rule for graduation.[127]

In April 1998, the Minnesota Legislature approved an education bill that allocated $70 million dollars for staff development related to the Profile of Learning.[128] Several changes were made in the laws related to the graduation standards. Options for implementation of the Profile through a waiver process were written into law. School districts could implement the entire Profile during the 1998-99 school year or submit a waiver requesting the option to phase in implementation either according to a plan outlined by the state or though a locally developed plan. All districts were to notify the Commissioner of their choice by July 1, 1998.[129]

Concern about record-keeping related to the Profile was addressed by directing the Commissioner to "develop and disseminate to school districts a uniform method for reporting student performance on the profile of learning."[130] The legislature also

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[126] Ibid., Findings of Fact Nos. 53-54.

[127] Norman Draper, "Decision Will Let Top Students Bypass Some Profile of Learning Grad Requirements," *Minneapolis Star Tribune*, April 9, 1998.

[128] Bradley, "K-12 Bill."

[129] *Laws of Minnesota*, (Chapter 398, Section 9, Subdivision 1, 1998).

[130] *Laws of Minnesota*, (Chapter 398, Section 6, Subdivision 7c, 1998).

directed the Commissioner to establish an advisory committee of "11 members with representatives from education organizations, business, higher education, parents, and organizations representing communities of color" to advise the governor and commissioner on graduation rule implementation.[131]

On May 11, 1998, the Minnesota State Board of Education voted unanimously to approve the Profile of Learning. After years of discussion and development, Minnesota finally had a results-oriented graduation rule. Implementation was to begin in all Minnesota school districts in the fall of 1998.[132]

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[131] *Laws of Minnesota*, (Chapter 398, Section 9, Subdivision 1, 1998).

[132] Paul Tosto, "Board OKs Graduation Rules," *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, May 12, 1998.

CHAPTER SIX

STATEWIDE IMPLEMENTATION

1998 – 1999

By summer 1998, the Profile of Learning seemed, in many ways, to be on steady ground. It had been reviewed by the Administrative Law Judge, approved by the state board of education, and approved by the state legislature. Seventy million dollars had been allocated for professional development for teachers. The Minnesota Comprehensive Assessments had been administered statewide in the spring of 1998. All 347 school districts in Minnesota had accepted the $14 per pupil incentive to embed standards and implement the Profile beginning in the fall of 1998. Two districts that had previously resisted the Profile—Maple River and Robbinsdale—reported that they were ready to accept it.[1]

Despite these indications of progress, the Profile did not move smoothly from adoption to implementation; instead it became increasingly controversial during this time. A board member in Maple River resigned and organized a group of parents to fight the Profile. The Graduation Standards Advisory Panel submitted a report noting significant problems with the policy and making recommendations for change. The new governor and commissioner supported the policy, but the Minnesota House voted to repeal the Profile less than year after it had been adopted. The state board, originally

[1] Norman Draper, "School Districts Say They Are Ready for the Profile," *Minneapolis Star Tribune*, August 1, 1998.

charged with development of the graduation rule, was scheduled to go out of existence at the end of 1999, adding to the uncertainty about the future of the policy.

The Minnesota Comprehensive Assessments

In June 1998, after most schools were out for summer, the results of the first Minnesota Comprehensive Assessments were released. The MCAs were taken by all third and fifth graders in the state and were intended to evaluate achievement on the elementary preparatory standards that were part of the Profile of Learning, thus testing high rather than basic standards. Both third and fifth graders took tests in reading and mathematics; fifth graders also took a writing test. Scores on these criterion-referenced tests were divided into four levels ranging from below basic to advanced. No passing score was set and there were no consequences for individual students based on the score achieved.

Between 32 and 38 percent of the tested students scored in the top two levels (proficient and advanced) in reading and mathematics; 42 percent achieved those levels in writing. As with the basic standards tests, scores across the state were highly correlated with family income.[2] Whether the results were good or bad seemed open to interpretation. On June 12, the *Star Tribune*'s front page article was headlined "New Tests, New Optimism" while the *Pioneer Press* took a darker view on its front page with a headline stating that "Test Shows Most Kids Unprepared."[3] Perhaps because of

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[2] Paul Tosto, "Test Shows Most Kids Unprepared," *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, June 12, 1998.

[3] Norman Draper and Anne O'Connor, "New Tests, New Optimism," *Minneapolis Star Tribune*, June 12, 1998; Tosto, "Test Shows Most Kids Unprepared."

their timing, or perhaps because of the lack of a clear passing score, the test results received little public comment from policymakers or other stakeholders.

Additional information about the achievement of Minnesota's elementary students was available in June, when the fourth grade scores from the Third International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) were released. Minnesota participated in the TIMSS in a way that allowed comparison between students in Minnesota and students in participating countries. Scores in science were particularly impressive, with only one country scoring higher than Minnesota. In mathematics, Minnesota scored at essentially the same level as the United States, which was above the international average.[4] The TIMMS scores portrayed stronger student achievement than the MCAs.

Objections to the Profile

While official responses to the Profile appeared positive following the legislative session, resistance was building in the larger public arena. Maple River school board member Renee Doyle had resigned her position during the summer in order to work to oppose the Profile and other educational initiatives that she believed interfered with local control. That same year, along with a "handful of parents dedicated to preserving educational freedom for their children," she founded the Maple River

[4] Norman Draper, "Minnesota Fourth-Graders Sit near the Top of the World in Science," *Minneapolis Star Tribune*, June 1, 1998. Minnesota participated as a country, allowing its scores to be reported separately from the United States as whole.

Education Coalition (MREdCo).[5] The organization quickly expanded from the small group of local parents to include people from around Minnesota and later the nation.[6] The group would play an important role in the political battles related to the Profile.

Doyle's resignation letter, posted on the Maple River Coalition website, listed many concerns with the Profile, although not all of these reflected an accurate understanding of the policy. She disliked the assessment system of performance packages and especially objected to the values underlying many of the standards, noting that words such as "diversity" and "multiculturalism" were prominent but words such as "equality" and "morality" were never used.[7] Doyle alleged that "not one board member in the state of Minnesota voted for this."[8] She also claimed that the Profile would place all public school children on a "career track" and that "their career choice will be directed by the state."[9] Finally, she called upon all concerned citizens to attend a statewide Freedom of Education rally "on the capital (sic) steps" on October 11.[10]

A group calling themselves Minnesotans for Quality Education had already organized an attempt aimed at eliminating the Profile of Learning. On March 2, 1998, representatives from this southeastern Minnesota group delivered a petition to that

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[5] "Edwatch in Action," http://www.edwatch.org/2001acts.htm. The Maple River Education Coalition changed its name to EdWatch in 2003.

[6] "Edwatch's Founding and Continuing Impact," http://www.edwatch.org/ab_founding.html.

[7] Renee Doyle, "Taxpayers Need to Get Educated on the Profile of Learning," (1998), http://edwatch.org/rresignation.html.

[8] Ibid.

[9] Ibid.

[10] Ibid.

effect, with 400 signatures, to the State Capitol.[11] Like Renee Doyle and the Maple River Coalition, the Minnesotans for Quality Education were concerned about the state's intrusion on issues that they believed should be under local control. Commissioner Wedl responded to them by noting that the Profile described outcomes, not curriculum, which was still left to the local districts.[12]

The October 1998 protest, sponsored by a number of generally conservative organizations,[13] went on as planned. Estimates put the crowd between 1000 [14] and 3500.[15] The protesters heard speeches, waved American flags, and sang patriotic songs. One participant told a reporter that the Profile standards "just don't make sense" and another said the requirements were "too light."[16] There was also concern that the requirements were "touchy-feely," addressing "feelings, attitudes, and processes" more than academics.[17] Some feared that the standards might be applied to home-schooled or privately-educated students.[18] Local control remained an overriding issue.

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[11] Debra O'Connor, "Group Protests Education Rule," *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, March 3, 1998.

[12] Ibid.

[13] These included the Minnesota Educators Against the Profile, Minnesota Family Council, Duluth Area Educational Freedom Alliance, Catholic Defense League, Maple River Education Coalition, Minnesota Christian Coalition, Minnesota Association of Christian Home Educators, and Minnesota Republican Party Education Task Force, according to the Oct. 12 article by Thomas Collins in the St. Paul *Pioneer Press*.

[14] Thomas J. Collins, "Protestors Decry New Graduation Standards," *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, October 12, 1998.

[15] Rob Hotakainen, "A Multiple-Choice Review of Education," *Minneapolis Star Tribune*, October 12, 1998.

[16] Collins, "Protestors Decry."

[17] Hotakainen, "Multiple Choice Review."

[18] Collins, "Protestors Decry."

The Graduation Standards Advisory Panel

The Graduation Standards Advisory Panel, the task force required by the legislature and appointed by the commissioner "to advise the governor and commissioner on the implementation of the Graduation Rule," met four times in the fall of 1998.[19] The panel, chaired by Duane Benson of the Minnesota Business Partnership, comprised eleven members, four of whom came from the business community. This was an unusually high percentage of non-educators for a committee focused on educational issues.[20] They heard presentations from a range of individuals in addition to receiving written background material related to the Profile. The panel identified five primary issues to be addressed: (a) paperwork and recordkeeping, (b) the number of learning areas and required standards, (c) the focus on instructional processes versus academic results, (d) consistency of scoring student achievement, and (e) clarity and rigor.[21] In its report, the panel made recommendations for each of these issues.

To address problems of recordkeeping and paperwork, the panel unanimously suggested that "references to the requirement of performance packages" be eliminated as the packages had "resulted in increased paperwork and confusion and appear to be the major source of concern."[22] Panel member Bill Blazar remembers that "a lot of this was fueled by how much people hated the performance packages…just hearing about

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[19] Graduation Standards Advisory Panel, "Report to the Governor and CFL Commissioner," (Roseville, MN: Minnesota Department of Children, Families, and Learning, 1998), 2.

[20] Bill Blazar, interview by author, July 22, 2008, Minneapolis, MN. Blazar is Senior Vice President of the Minnesota Chamber of Commerce and served on the panel in that capacity.

[21] Graduation Standards Advisory Panel, "Report."

[22] Ibid., 4.

them, you thought they were a dumb idea."[23] The panel took a more favorable view of statewide testing, recommending that the tests in third, fifth, and eighth grade be retained and a new eleventh grade test, "which provides international comparisons of student achievement," be added.[24] The eleventh grade test and the notion of international comparison were particularly appealing to the business community.[25]

The next recommendation was to reduce the number of learning areas from ten to "perhaps five" representing the "core areas" which were defined as "reading, writing, math, science, and people and cultures/social studies."[26] Standards in other areas would be left to local districts. To address the tension between processes and results, the panel recommended on a split vote that students be required to complete "locally approved" performance assessments in "at least 10 standards, with at least one from each required Learning Area at any grade level."[27] This recommendation appears to conflict with the earlier recommendation to eliminate the performance packages. It may have been a compromise intended to separate performance assessment from the performance packages; the report states that the intention was to eliminate any notion of state-designed assessments.

The panel recommended that consistent and uniform data on student achievement be available from statewide testing. They felt that their new proposed eleventh grade test, which would allow for national and international comparisons,

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[23] Bill Blazar, interview by author, July 22, 2008, Minneapolis, MN.

[24] Graduation Standards Advisory Panel, "Report," 4.

[25] Bill Blazar, interview by author, July 22, 2008, Minneapolis, MN.

[26] Graduation Standards Advisory Panel, "Report," 4.

[27] Ibid., 5.

would also serve to ensure that the standards were sufficiently rigorous. They recommended that a minimum score required for high school graduation be set on the eleventh grade test.[28] Testing would thus serve as the primary method for evaluating whether students had met standards.

The panel went beyond its five identified issues in its last recommendation, which was that the "[c]ommissioner should appoint a group to examine and make recommendations concerning the potentially significant number of students who may fail to meet expectations and who may choose not to continue with their education."[29] The panel's work pre-dated the time when the first group of students who failed the basic skills tests would be denied diplomas, but they were aware that this issue was on the horizon. While the vote for this recommendation was unanimous, the panel members may have had different concerns in mind. According to Bill Blazar, the educators were worried that students who did not meet standards in a timely way would simply drop out, while the business community was more concerned that standards would be lowered or the system would be modified to ensure that virtually all students could graduate.[30]

Commissioner Bob Wedl was not pleased with the recommendations of the panel he had assembled, considering them to constitute a dramatic lowering of expectations for students. He also felt that creating a high-stakes eleventh grade test would create legal problems. Wedl planned to encourage the legislature not to act on the

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[28] Ibid., 6.

[29] Ibid.

[30] Bill Blazar, interview by author, July 22, 2008, Minneapolis, MN.

panel's recommendations.[31] His ability to influence decisions was uncertain, however, as he would be leaving his post on January 4 for a position in Minneapolis Public Schools, with a new governor and commissioner in place for the upcoming legislative session.[32]

A New Governor and Commissioner

The Profile of Learning emerged as an issue in the gubernatorial election held in 1998. With the economy and state budget in good shape and crime rates under control, educational issues were prominent.[33] At a citizen's forum[34] designed to generate questions for candidates to answer about topics identified as important to the election, participants raised a number of concerns about the Profile. They questioned the cost involved and the funding or lack thereof, the research or models used in the development of the Profile, the problems with implementation and record-keeping, and the plans for what would happen if it didn't work out as intended.[35] The Republican nominee, Norm Coleman, was in favor of abolishing the Profile. The DFL nominee, Hubert "Skip" Humphrey, supported it, although he suggested that schools and teachers would need more time and more money for successful implementation. Independent

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[31] Paul Tosto, "Wedl Opposes Proposed Profile Cuts," *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, December 31, 1998.

[32] Kim Schneider, "State Education Commissioner to Leave Post," *Minneapolis Star Tribune*, December 12, 1998.

[33] Mary Thompson, "Education Hot Topic in Race for Governor," *Duluth News-Tribune*, October 20, 1998.

[34]The forum was sponsored by the *Star Tribune,* KTCA (Twin Cities Public Television), Minnesota Public Radio, and the Minnesota Journalism Center.

[35] Norman Draper, "Citizens Are Skeptical About Graduation Rule," *Minneapolis Star Tribune*, March 23, 1998.

Party nominee Jesse Ventura was somewhat skeptical.[36] Admitting that education was his "biggest shortcoming," Ventura said he planned to "turn education over to Mae" if he were elected.[37] "Mae" was Mae Schunk, a longtime St. Paul public school teacher whom Ventura had selected as his running mate. Schunk supported the Profile of Learning.[38]

Jesse Ventura won the election and was inaugurated as Minnesota's governor on January 4, 1999. The following week, he made an "unconventional" choice for Commissioner of Education, selecting Christine Jax for the position.[39] Jax, who had previously operated a preschool as well as a school specifically for homeless children, left a position as a professor at St. Mary's University to take the position at CFL. Within a month, she stated in an interview that her "top immediate priority" was that she wanted "the Profile thing to be fixed."[40] She did not support the recommendation of the advisory panel to scale the Profile back to five core areas, but approved of the idea of slowing down the implementation process, particularly in terms of reporting, feeling that this adjustment would allow the Profile to succeed. She observed that many of the problems with the Profile seemed to be "problems of misunderstanding."[41]

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[36] Thompson, "Education Hot Topic."

[37] Robert Whereatt, "St. Paul Teacher Joins Ventura Ticket," *Minneapolis Star Tribune*, July 1, 1998.

[38] Ibid.

[39] Anthony Lonetree, "Ventura Makes Surprise Pick for Education Commissioner," *Minneapolis Star Tribune*, January 14, 1999.

[40] Debra O'Connor, "Keeping a High Profile," *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, February 14, 1999.

[41] Ibid.

The 1999 Legislative Session

In preparation for the 1999 legislative session, Alice Seagren and Robert Ness, two Republican members of the House K-12 Finance division, visited 30 districts around the state in the fall of 1998. They found that teachers supported the basic ideas underlying the Profile but found the implementation process overwhelming. Seagren suggested that a slower pace of implementation, an efficient record-keeping system, and balancing "active, hands-on" learning with "more traditional forms of study" were needed for the Profile to succeed.[42] Interviews conducted by the *Star Tribune* found similar results: teachers were "committed to its basic concept" but frustrated by problems with implementation, record-keeping, the additional time needed for planning, and the lack of resources.[43]

Previewing the 1999 legislative session, *St. Paul Pioneer Press* reporter Debra O'Connor identified several educational issues likely to be on the agenda.[44] Governor Ventura's top priority, lowering class size in grades K-3, was popular among parents and teachers. Funding issues, including an increase in the general education formula and determining equity among districts, were expected to demand attention from legislators, as were strategies for dealing with an anticipated teacher shortage. The most controversial item was expected to be the Profile of Learning.[45] The Democrats still had

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[42] Norman Draper, "Teachers Feeling Stress of New Grad Rule, Legislators Tell Advisory Group," *Minneapolis Star Tribune*, October 23, 1998.

[43] Norman Draper, "Profile Isn't Winning a Lot of Fans," *Minneapolis Star Tribune*, December 27, 1998.

[44] Debra O'Connor, "As Legislative Session Opens, Education Is Priority No. 1," *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, January 5, 1999.

[45] Ibid.

a margin of 18 in the Senate,[46] but the balance in the House had shifted, with Republicans in the majority by a margin of 8.[47]

A Vote to Repeal

The House Education Policy Committee wasted no time in addressing the Profile, hearing testimony from both critics and supporters on January 26.[48] On February 9, the committee voted in favor of a bill authored by Representative Tony Kielkucki (R-Lester Prairie) that would eliminate the Profile of Learning and replace it with "more traditional coursework" that would be determined by standards set at the local level.[49] On February 11, the House passed the bill with a vote of 92-35.[50] The bill retained statewide standards for "foundational skills in the three core curricular areas of reading, writing, and mathematics" but made it the responsibility of districts to adopt "rigorous academic standards" in the areas of communication skills, mathematics, science, social studies, health and physical education, and computer science.[51] The bill also replaced the Minnesota Comprehensive Assessments with "norm-referenced standardized achievement tests" in third, fifth, eighth, and eleventh grades.

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[46] Minnesota Legislative Reference Library, "Party Control of the Minnesota Senate, 1951-."

[47] Minnesota Legislative Reference Library, "Party Control of the Minnesota House of Representatives, 1951-."

[48] Anthony Lonetree, "Middle Ground Elusive in Education Debate," *Minneapolis Star Tribune*, January 27, 1999.

[49] Anthony Lonetree, "Panel Votes to Replace Grad Profile," *Minneapolis Star Tribune*, February 10, 1999.

[50] Minnesota House of Representatives, "Journal of the House, Eighty-First Session, 16th Day," (1999).

[51] Minnesota House of Representatives, "H.F.15," (1999).

The quick action by the House did not reflect the views of all the Profile's critics, however. The Minnesota Chamber of Commerce, the Minnesota Association of Realtors, and the Minnesota Business Partnership urged the legislators to follow the recommendations of the Standards Advisory Panel, noting that the idea of statewide standards had "strong support."[52] The teachers' union, Education Minnesota, recommended that lawmakers "fix the Profile of Learning or get rid of it,"[53] but favored keeping the ten learning areas and reworking the content standards as well as eliminating much of the paperwork. A survey of their membership had found that nearly two-thirds disapproved of the Profile.[54] Some special interest groups, such as the Minnesota Alliance for Arts in Education, preferred that the legislature stay with the Profile and "fix" the things that were problematic.[55] New Commissioner Christine Jax also felt that the Profile needed to be changed rather than eliminated.[56] She believed that the $14 per pupil incentive to proceed with full implementation rather than a phase-in had caused many districts to take on too much too soon. She also noted that implementation was hindered by a great deal of misunderstanding about the Profile.[57]

The Senate Children, Families, and Learning Committee took a different approach to the Profile, retaining the content but shifting more responsibility for implementation to local districts. In their plan, districts would be required to offer

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[52] Paul Tosto, "House Kills Profile," *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, February 12, 1999.

[53] Ibid.

[54] Lonetree, "Panel Votes."

[55] Tosto, "House Kills Profile".

[56] Anthony Lonetree, "House Votes to Unseat Grad Profile," *Minneapolis Star Tribune*, February 12, 1999.

[57] O'Connor, "Keeping a High Profile."

opportunities for students to meet all 48 standards, but could set their own requirements for graduation and determine their own methods of assessment. All ten learning areas were retained, although some of the names were changed. Students in ninth grade in 1998-99 would be exempted from meeting the Profile.[58] On April 21, the Senate voted 41 to 25 in favor of this plan after rejecting the House proposal.[59]

In early May, Governor Ventura spoke with reporters about the Profile and his support of it. The governor noted that the results of recent *Star Tribune*/KMSP-TV poll indicated that most Minnesotans did not understand the Profile. He also suggested that throwing the Profile out after long years of development but only six months of implementation did not make sense. He felt that "[p]eople latch onto these catch phrases like 'dumbing down'" and that a "vocal minority" was pushing for drastic changes in the Profile.[60] Ventura stopped short of saying the Profile did not need any changes, stating that paperwork for teachers needed to be lessened and that districts might need more time for implementation. Lieutenant Governor Schunk and Commissioner Jax were considering a process for phasing in the number of standards that students would need to meet.[61]

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[58] Paul Tosto, "Senate Schools Panel Backs "Flexible" Profile," *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, April 21, 1999.

[59] Anthony Lonetree, "Senate Vote Keeps Alive the Profile of Learning," *Minneapolis Star Tribune*, April 22, 1999.

[60] Norman Draper, "Ventura Defends Profile of Learning," *Minneapolis Star Tribune*, May 4, 1999.

[61] Ibid.

Conference Committee

A conference committee of five senators and five representatives met on May 5, 1999 to attempt to arrive at a compromise position on the Profile. According to the report in the *St. Paul Pioneer Press,*

> The first few hours…were spent trying to define the Profile's components: What is a statewide standard? What is a "learning area"? How much flexibility do teachers have under current law? The questions offer a glimpse of the complexity and frustration that led both houses to try and change or kill the Profile only months after it was put into effect…[62]

It is interesting to note that these key legislators felt that they did not understand or agree upon basic terminology related to the standards.

The conference began cordially but by the next morning the House members had walked out of the meeting, with both sides accusing the other of making the Profile a political issue.[63] House members were also angered when Senator Pogemiller threatened to delay action on the education finance bill until the Profile issues had been resolved. The finance committee met later in the day on Thursday, but House members did not commit to returning to the conference committee.[64]

By Friday, May 7, the Senate members of the conference committee had drafted a new plan that would keep the Profile and mandate a minimum number of standards that students would need to meet in order to graduate. Requirements would be phased in, so that students in ninth grade in 1999-2000 would need to meet 17 standards in

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[62] Paul Tosto, "Lawmakers Talk Profile Ins and Outs," *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, May 6, 1999.

[63] Paul Tosto, "Prospects Fading for Compromise on Profile," *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, May 7, 1999.

[64] Anthony Lonetree, "Profile of Learning Bill in Limbo after House Conferees Walk Out," *Minneapolis Star Tribune*, May 7, 1999.

order to graduate, ninth graders in 2000-2001 would meet 20, and those in ninth grade in 2001-2002 would be required to meet 24 standards. The new plan was identical to that being promoted by Lt. Governor Mae Schunk and Commissioner Christine Jax and kept the statewide expectation for achievement that Governor Ventura had been promoting.[65]

Pogemiller accused the House Republicans of being influenced by anti-Profile conservatives. He also reacted against Governor Ventura's earlier characterization of the original Senate plan as "typically spineless legislation."[66] As negotiations lagged, Profile opponents such as Renee Doyle increased pressure not to compromise. The Maple River Education Coalition released a poll showing that Minnesotans "favored replacing the Profile with core academic requirements."[67] In the last hours of the session, the Senate made yet another offer, this one exempting current ninth graders from the Profile, reducing the number of learning areas from ten to seven, and allowing the commissioner to issue waivers, but the full committee never met to consider it.[68]

Governor Ventura refused to call a special session of the legislature, time ran out, and the end result was that no changes were made to the Profile or the legislation related to graduation standards during the 1999 legislative session.[69] Although they took no action on the Profile, the legislature did attend to other educational issues, approving

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[65] Norman Draper, "Senate Offers Possible Compromise on Profile of Learning," *Minneapolis Star Tribune*, May 8, 1999.

[66] Ibid.

[67] Paul Tosto, "Profile Sees Little Action as Session Winds Down," *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, May 14, 1999.

[68] Debra OConnor, "Capitol Briefing," *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, May 18, 1999.

[69] Michael Khoo, "Legislature Keeps "Profile," But Future Is Uncertain," *Minnesota Public Radio*, May 18 1999.

a $7.9 billion education financing bill, which was an increase of about one billion dollars over the previous budget.[70] Most of the money was to go to the general education fund; money was also allocated to special education funding, an expansion of the school breakfast program, and class size reduction in the primary grades.[71] The funding bill gave increased control over spending to local districts.

Opinions of the Profile

Conservative Opinions

Katherine Kersten continued to write in opposition to the Profile. In a January 1999 column in the *Minneapolis Star Tribune,* she encouraged parents to become active in seeking to repeal the Profile. After describing portions of performance packages, she explained that the "brave new world of Minnesota's Profile of Learning "did away with "subjects like English and science" and instead contained "learning areas like 'read, view, and listen' and 'inquiry!'."[72] Kersten described the performance packages as particularly problematic because she believed they took time away from "class time formerly devoted to instruction" and could prevent even a straight-A student from graduating.[73] She accused CFL of "hiding behind the mantle of 'local control'" in leaving the "mind-bending details of Profile implementation to school districts." Noting

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[70] Ibid.

[71] Anthony Lonetree, "Schools Pick up $7.9 Billion but Also Hold onto Profile of Learning," *Minneapolis Star Tribune*, May 18, 1999.

[72] Katherine Kersten, "Profile Sacrifices Kids," *Minneapolis Star Tribune*, January 27, 1999.

[73] Ibid.

that things had gone "badly awry" at CFL, Kersten concluded that the state was "sacrificing the best interests of Minnesota children in order to save face for the bureaucrats" and expressed concern particularly for "disadvantaged kids" and "gifted kids," although she believed that "all students will suffer."[74]

Kersten also authored a longer article in the *American Experiment Quarterly* in which she developed a critique of the Profile. She described the "experiential theory" underlying the Profile, argued that its "central premise—that skills can be developed without a broad framework of factual knowledge—is flawed" and described the Profile as attempting to address skills while disparaging knowledge.[75] She supported her argument by reviewing the unfavorable reports from the AFT and noting that the Thomas B. Fordham Foundation and the National Council for History Education had also found the Profile unsatisfactory. She then included a "case study" of the People and Cultures learning area, including a lengthy critique of one of the associated performance packages. Finally, she described the Profile's "threat" to "disadvantaged" as well as gifted children.[76]

Allen Quist, a conservative who had unsuccessfully sought the Republican nomination for governor in 1998, wrote a book critiquing Minnesota's "new education system" that was published in 1999 by the Maple River Education Coalition.[77] The

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[74] Ibid.

[75] Katherine Kersten, "Minnesota's Profile of Learning: The Radical Mutation of a Good Idea," *American Experiment Quarterly* (Summer 1999): 35.

[76] Ibid.: 34.

[77] Allen Quist, *The Seamless Web: Minnesota's New Education System* (Chaska, MN: EdWatch, 1999). The Maple River Education Coalition changed its name to EdWatch in 2003. The second edition of the book was published in 2007.

book began with a forward by Renee Doyle, the coalition's president. Each of its eighteen chapters was devoted to one aspect of the education initiatives affecting Minnesota at the time, including Goals 2000, the Profile of Learning and the performance packages, school-to-work initiatives, and life work plans. Throughout the book, Quist criticized the diminished importance of academic learning and the increased focus on social issues and particular ideologies.

Profile opponents organized several large events during the 1999. In February, a daylong conference attended by over 900 parents and teachers was held in the Twin Cities suburb of Arden Hills. The conference featured speakers known for their active role in opposing the Profile, including former gubernatorial candidate Allen Quist, Maple Rive Education Coalition President Renee Doyle, and columnist Katherine Kersten. Conference participants bemoaned increased government control, weakening of parental control, and the increase in group projects in school.[78] In April, a protest involving over 3,000 people was held at the state Capitol, again featuring Renee Doyle, who stated that the event was "the start of the revival of traditional core academic education here in the state of Minnesota."[79]

Other Stakeholder Opinions

At a meeting with about 150 concerned parents in July, Commissioner Jax attempted to explain that she was interested in working with school districts to identify and solve problems with the Profile. Many parents remained skeptical, however, with

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[78] Norman Draper, "Group Wants to End Profile," *Minneapolis Star Tribune*, February 21 1999.

[79] Paul Tosto, "Profile Critics Say Grad Plan Must Go," *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, April 25, 1999.

some noting that the Profile was overly complex and others stating that they "never thought there was a problem with our education system" to begin with.[80] In October, 400 students added their voices to the mix during the 1999 Minnesota Student Summit; their comments led the *Pioneer Press* reporter to conclude that "teens don't understand the new graduation standards, teachers aren't prepared to teach them, and too often the Profile standards are grafted on to classes where they don't fit."[81]

A poll of registered voters conducted in April 1999 by the *Pioneer Press* and Minnesota Public Radio showed that, for this group, opinions of the Profile were generally positive. Only 9 percent of the respondents wanted to eliminate it altogether. About 33 percent said the Profile should be modified to make it "easier for students and teachers to work with."[82] Around 40 percent said that more time was needed for implementation. The remaining 17 percent said that they were not well enough informed to comment.[83]

The opinion of the delegates of the Minnesota School Boards Association mirrored that of the general public. They voted 107 to 4 to "urge the state to retain" the graduation standards, but make some changes.[84] The group felt, however, that more money and training was needed for implementation and that requirements should be

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[80] John Welsh, "Parents Voice Profile Concerns at Meeting," *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, July 23, 1999.

[81] Linda Owen, "Students Speak out against Grad Standards," *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, October 13, 1999.

[82] Debra O'Connor, "Let's Not Scrap Grad Standards, Say Minnesotans," *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, April 15, 1999.

[83] Ibid.

[84] Paul Tosto, "Metro/Regional Briefing: Minnesota School Board Members Back Graduation Standards," *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, December 9, 1999.

adjusted to allow more opportunity for electives. They also noted that confusion about the performance packages needed to be clarified.

The Profile became an issue in the Stillwater school board elections in fall 1999. Five candidates, endorsed by the Republican party, took a strong anti-Profile stance, noting that they did not send their own school-age children to public school because of concerns about the Profile's impact.[85] In other districts' school board elections, the issues were more widespread. A questionnaire sent to Twin Cities-area candidates showed that they identified lowering class size, improving student achievement in general, improving aging buildings, and "getting back to basics" as important issues.[86] In Stillwater, neither the party endorsement (a first for a school board race there) nor the focus on the Profile seemed politically effective, as all five candidates were defeated.[87] One of those candidates was Michelle Bachmann, who would continue in her quest for public office and repeal of the Profile.

Response from Teachers and Districts

Many teachers had an unfavorable opinion of the Profile. A poll conducted in spring 1999 by Education Minnesota, the statewide teachers union, showed that 63

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[85] Linda Owen, "Stillwater School Board Forum Keys on Standards," *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, October 21, 1999.

[86] Norman Draper, "School Candidates Lean toward Basics," *Minneapolis Star Tribune*, October 31, 1999.

[87] Linda Owen, "Republican-Endorsed Challengers Rebuffed," *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, Novermber 3 1999.

percent of the respondents opposed the Profile in its current form. The union's position was that the Profile should be repealed if it could not be repaired.[88]

In at least some districts implementation of the Profile moved forward with relatively little controversy. In White Bear Lake, where the board had passed a resolution in support of the Profile, a March 1999 school board meeting focused on the graduation standards drew about 100 people. Although some were expressed "bitter opposition" to the standards, others expressed support or suggested that only minor changes were needed, and the discussion remained "low-key."[89] Other districts reported that summer professional development opportunities had helped build teachers' understanding of the Profile. Many districts seemed to have "refocused…on living with the law," although they also were interested in determining what kind of flexibility might be allowed through the anticipated but ill-defined waiver process.[90]

District responses to the Profile appeared to depend at least partially on the district context. Minneapolis was "hit so hard with the basic skills failure that nobody really paid attention to the rest of it."[91] The use of performance packages did not fit well into district culture and traditions; nevertheless, the district office oversaw the development and distribution of a series of packages for use in district classrooms.[92] Bev Lillquist, the district standards technician, established a network of elementary

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[88] O'Connor, "Let's Not."

[89] John Welsh, "White Bear Plows Ahead on Profile of Learning," *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, March 20, 1999.

[90] Paul Tosto, "Grad Standards Still Puzzling," *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, August 29, 1999.

[91] Beverly Lillquist, interview by author, September 20, 2007, Minneapolis, MN.

[92] Charlayne Myers of Minneapolis Public Schools, who oversaw the development of the district packages, provided this information along with copies of the packages.

representatives from each building to attend staff development and relay information back to buildings, but its effect was limited because the teachers "didn't have the confidence to buck the system, which is what they were being asked to do."[93]

Leaders in one affluent suburban district with a reputation for academic excellence "reacted to the elements of the Profile by calculating what was and what was not advantageous to the district."[94] This district had no need to focus on basic skills because they had a very high passing rate on the tests. The district maintained a public sense of solidarity in relation to Profile implementation, but in fact many teachers disliked the Profile and struggled with its implementation.[95]

A similar phenomenon seemed to occur among standards technicians, who continued their public role as liaisons between CFL and their districts but also talked among themselves about problems of implementation. Some districts "dug in their heels and said 'we're going to let this all blow over'."[96] The apparent lack of a strategy for holding teachers or districts accountable for implementation appeared to make this a viable option.

The Commissioner and the Board

Commissioner Christine Jax, left with the task of continuing to implement a policy that had little support in its current form, said that she would "comb through the

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[93] Beverly Lillquist, interview by author, September 20, 2007, Minneapolis, MN.

[94] Koch, "When "All Together" Isn't", 161.

[95] Ibid.

[96] Beverly Lillquist, interview by author, September 20, 2007, Minneapolis, MN.

Profile of Learning rule with a fine-tooth comb and try to figure out what kinds of things are open to interpretation, what kinds of things we're doing right now that have caused problems in implementation that we can stop doing, what kinds of things we can do to help the teachers better reach the students."[97] Jax also expressed concern that the teachers' expectations that the Profile would be eliminated or significantly altered might have resulted in little effort toward implementation.[98]

In a "testy exchange," Jax and the board discussed the power that each had to grant waivers and then referred the question to Attorney General Mike Hatch.[99] There was also some debate about whether a district that requested a waiver would have to return the $14 per pupil allocation it had already accepted in return for a promise of immediate implementation of the Profile. Hatch thought that it was unlikely that districts would have to return the money. It was determined that a waiver process would have to recognize that the Profile remained the law and that students graduating in 2002 and beyond would have to meet its requirements. Potential for flexibility might occur in terms of assessments used or record keeping, however. MDE made it clear that requests for waivers would be judged individually and that no criteria for acceptance or rejection would be published beforehand.[100] The commissioner expected to have the ability to

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[97] Khoo, "Legislature Keeps "Profile"."

[98] Paul Tosto, "Profile Surprise Survivor of Session," *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, May 19, 1999.

[99] Paul Tosto, "Waiving Profile Goals May Come with a Price," *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, June 15 1999.

[100] Paul Tosto, "Profile Waivers Won't Cost Districts," *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, August 6, 1999.

grant waivers on January 1 of the following year when she would assume the authority previously residing in the state board. [101]

The State Board of Education, in the last months of its existence, continued to address the Profile. In October 1999, a small group of its members proposed eliminating the performance packages from the profile requirements. They hoped that removing the requirement would quell some of the controversy about the packages by addressing the widespread misconception that teachers were required to use the state's packages. The idea was immediately rebuffed by officials at MDE, who did not want to "get off on side issues" and engage in a lengthy rule-changing process.[102] Commissioner Jax also commented that the performance assessments were the "heart and soul of this reform," using the analogy of the behind-the-wheel portion (the performance assessment) of the drivers' exam to explain their importance.[103] The logistics of such a change would also be problematic because the board would cease to exist before the process would be completed. In December, the board voted against the change.[104] At the same meeting, the board also voted against a proposal to streamline the waiver of some Profile requirements for students taking AP or IB courses.[105]

The state board was also struggling with the issue of the passing score for the basic skills tests. The original rules had included a phased-in raising of the passing

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[101] Welsh, "Parents Voice Concerns."

[102] Paul Tosto, "'Performance Packages' Shelved by Subcommittee," *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, October 1, 1999.

[103] Norman Draper, "Education Board Folds without Much Fuss," *Minneapolis Star Tribune*, December 8, 1999.

[104] Paul Tosto, "State Board Votes Not to Alter Standards," *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, December 8 1999.

[105] Draper, "Education Board Folds."

score over three years, going from 70 percent the first year to 75 percent in the second year and finally to 80 percent the third year. Surprised at the number of students who were not passing the test, the board had delayed the move to the 80 percent passing score, but that temporary rule had expired, making action necessary. Parents, including representatives from the Maple River Education Coalition, attended the board's November 8 meeting to advocate for the higher score.[106] Despite these efforts, the board chose to continue with the 75 percent passing rate.[107] While the board debated the policy, the schools were still searching for strategies to assist the 5,700 seniors who had not passed one or more of the basic standards tests. They would be the first group to be denied high school diplomas because of the test.[108]

The board met for the last time on December 7, 1999. At this meeting, their last chance to act on the Profile, they rejected a proposal to eliminate the performance packages and left the policy intact. At midnight on December 31 of that year, the Minnesota State Board of Education ceased to exist.[109]

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[106] Paul Tosto, "Parents Push to Raise Basic-Skills Bar," *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, November 9, 1999.

[107] Norman Draper, "Board of Education Delays Vote on Profile of Learning," *Minneapolis Star Tribune*, October 13, 1999.

[108] Linda Owen and John Welsh, "5,700 Seniors Face Skills Tests - Again," *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, September 17, 1999.

[109] Draper, "Education Board Folds."

CHAPTER SEVEN

POLICY CHANGE

2000

With the demise of the Minnesota State Board of Education, nearly all its responsibilities along with its rule-making authority were transferred to the commissioner. Oversight of the department's activities, a function previously filled by the board, was transferred to the legislature. Commissioner Christine Jax indicated that she expected that "more will be the same than will be different" as her department took on increased responsibility for educational policy decisions.[1] There was some concern that the absence of the board's monthly meetings, which were open to the public, would result in diminished opportunity for citizen participation in the policymaking process, but public input appeared to shift to the legislature.

The desire on the part of many stakeholders either to change the Profile or to repeal it was reflected in the activity devoted to the policy during the legislative session, including a vote for repeal in the House, the introduction of an alternate set of standards, a bill that would allow local districts to choose which set of standards they would use, and finally work in conference committees that resulted in significant changes to the Profile. Opponents of the Profile continued to work for its repeal both during and after the legislative session. Late in the year, Achieve Inc. completed a review of the standards and the policy that noted strengths and weaknesses and

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[1] Allie Shah, "Education Duties Passed from Board to State Agency," *Minneapolis Star Tribune*, January 3, 2000, 23.

suggested actions that could be taken. The legislated policy changes had not ended the controversy.

The Commissioner and the Department

Authority for granting waivers related to the Profile of Learning resided with the commissioner beginning on January 1, 2000. Four districts, working in tandem, came forward with requests early that year. They stated that they supported the Profile, but needed to make some changes because of problems that had arisen in implementation. The districts requested reducing the number of standards required for graduation from 24 to 19, reducing the number of performance packages required at preparatory levels, and changing the grading system so that student work would be scored according to students' actual grade levels. Two of the four districts involved, Richfield and Annandale, had been pilot districts for the Profile.[2] The fact that they were requesting waivers suggested that full scale implementation of the Profile was more complex and burdensome than had been foreseen. It was particularly significant that Richfield, a district that had served as a "poster district" for the Profile work,[3] was requesting a waiver. Their superintendent told reporters that the Profile as currently written was overly burdensome and that she did not want "something that will end up dying of its own weight."[4]

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[2] Norman Draper, "Districts Want State OK to Revise Graduation Rule," *Minneapolis Star Tribune*, January 20, 2000.

[3] Ibid.

[4] Paul Tosto, "Districts Argue for Changing Standards," *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, January 21, 2000.

In February 2000, the commissioner granted two waivers. One allowed the North St. Paul-Maplewood district the ability to evaluate student work by comparing it to students in the same grade rather than students at the highest grade level addressed by a standard.[5] The district also wanted a longer time to phase in full implementation of the Profile, but was told that it was not possible to obtain a waiver for this. As a result, they decided to ask legislators to change the law to allow for such a phase-in.[6]

Commissioner Jax's January 2000 report to the legislature highlighted the accomplishments of the department related to the Profile of Learning over the previous year and a half. She reminded the legislators that by September 1998, all Minnesota school districts had submitted Profile implementation manuals that described opportunities to learn, performance packages, staff development, and plans for enabling students to meet requirements, reporting student progress, keeping records, and handling appeals.[7] Each district had a graduation standards technician; these people met as a group with their regional Minnesota Education Effectiveness Program (MEEP) coordinator at least six times yearly. Workshops for teachers had been conducted around the state. Best practices networks for mathematics, science, reading, writing, arts, and people and cultures included 375 practicing teachers around the state who were available to provide help to schools in all regions. Curriculum frameworks documents had been published for art, mathematics, science, decision-making, and people and cultures. Videotapes demonstrating exemplary work and scoring criteria for inquiry,

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[5] Paul Tosto, "2 Districts Exempt from State Standards," *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, February 9, 2000.

[6] Patty Mattern, "District Takes Profile Plea to Lawmakers," *St. Cloud Times*, February 25, 2000.

[7] Christine Jax, "Graduation Standards Report to the Legislature," (Minnesota Department of Children, Families, and Learning, 2000).

write and speak, and people and cultures had been distributed to every district. Copies of revised scoring criteria for performance assessments had been distributed and posted on the internet. A CD-ROM demonstrating scoring methods and criteria for the MCAs and BST had also been created and distributed to every district. A website known as the Minnesota Curriculum Repository had also been developed to support teachers and house model performance packages and the state scoring criteria.

Although the list of accomplishments was wide-ranging, their effectiveness appeared to be less than anticipated. The commissioner went on to describe feedback from data that had been gathered from a student summit, postcards sent to teachers, emails she had received, and postings on a feature called "Jaxchat" on the CFL website.[8] The comments indicated that the support system for the Profile had serious gaps. Districts lacked adequate staff development models and found that the CFL training models and resources were not coordinated. Many districts lacked curriculum specialists; CFL also lacked content experts in some learning areas. CFL leadership was not enough to sustain the current reform initiative. Record-keeping was a critical and unmet need of teachers. In response to these concerns, an effort was being made to collect data from each region in a systematic way in order to involve local stakeholders, influence plans for assistance from CFL, and inform policymakers. The department had also contracted with the Center for Applied Research and Educational Improvement (CAREI) at the University of Minnesota to prepare a report to better understand the views of stakeholders.

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[8] Ibid.

The CAREI report was released in February.[9] The data were based on structured focus group interviews. Every district in Minnesota had been asked to assemble a group that included a board member, superintendent or assistant, principal, graduation standards technician, teachers, parent(s), student(s), a community education representative, and a special education representative; ninety-nine percent of the districts did so. Interviews were conducted by the MEEP regional coordinators. The researchers found "remarkable consistency in the views of nearly 2500 participants."[10] There was a "wide acceptance of statewide standards among all educators in Minnesota," although the Profile of Learning was more controversial than the basic standards.[11] In regard to the performance packages, "few educational professionals" still viewed the state as "dictating the use of the model assessments"; parent and students, however, were "understandably ignorant of the issues surrounding performance assessment."[12] Districts had been fairly successful at integrating standards into their curricula but less so at aligning standards with teaching and assessment. Strong leadership, evidenced by "administrators who sent a clear and consistent message about the research base for standards-based education," was found to facilitate implementation.[13] Two significant problems, communication and time, were identified. The participants indicated that "clear and simple communication about the ideas which

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[9] "Minnesota Graduation Standards Implementation: How It Looks from Where It's Happening," (Minnesota Department of Children, Families, and Learning, 2000).

[10] Ibid., 1.

[11] Ibid., 2.

[12] Ibid.

[13] Ibid., 3.

support this reform effort has been lacking at every level."[14] Time for staff development was also viewed as lacking.

In April, perhaps encouraged by the CAREI report's mention of a research base for standards-based teaching, CFL produced a report entitled "Links between Research and Reform: Research that Supports Components Related to Minnesota's Standards-based Educational Reform."[15] Its intent was to answer the "frequently asked question" of what research said about the Profile of Learning by drawing on "findings from empirical studies, observations and perspectives drawn from scholarly theory, and events documented in historical records."[16] The document briefly described aspects of the Profile such as constructivist principles, interactive and collaborative learning, interdisciplinary learning, and applied learning, and then summarized either general or discipline-specific research that supported Minnesota's approach. It is interesting that the research base underlying the Profile was not made clear prior to this time; perhaps the increased attention to scientifically based research in national policy conversations made the connection more salient to stakeholders.

Opinions of the Profile

Teacher opinion of the Profile, according to results of another Education Minnesota survey reported in February 2000, continued to be predominantly negative,

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[14] Ibid.

[15] Beth Aune, "Links between Research and Reform: Research That Supports Components Related to Minnesota's Standards-Based Educational Reform," (Minnesota Department of Children, Families, and Learning, 2000).

[16] Ibid., 1.

with 90 percent of the respondents indicating that they were dissatisfied with the Profile in its current form.[17] Teachers continued to complain about too many requirements, too much paperwork, too little training, and too little time. Union co-president Judy Schaubach stated that the union supported making changes to the Profile to make it workable rather than eliminating it.[18] She noted, however, that "if the Minnesota Legislature does nothing again this year, Education Minnesota has predicted that the Profile of Learning will collapse of its own weight."[19]

Students voiced sentiments similar to those of teachers at a February forum sponsored by Minnesota Public Radio, suggesting either slower implementation or eliminating the Profile altogether. They described "being held back from pursuing courses they wanted to take" and having "too many hurdles to getting a diploma" because they were required to meet two sets of requirements.[20]

Newspaper columnists addressed the Profile throughout the legislative session. *Star Tribune* columnist Kim Ode, writing from a parent perspective, observed that most parents had tuned out the controversy surrounding the Profile, but that now it was "catch-up time" as "stuff starts coming out of the backpack."[21] An opinion piece in the *St. Cloud Times* urged legislators to look for common themes among proposals to

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[17] Norman Draper, "Poll Finds Most Teachers Dislike Profile of Learning," *Minneapolis Star Tribune*, February 3, 2000.

[18] Laura McCallum, "Stalemate Looms over Profile's Future," *Minnesota Public Radio* (2000), http://news.minnesota.publicradio.org/features/200002/03_mccallum_profile/.

[19] John Welsh, "One Teacher Likes Profile," *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, March 1, 2000.

[20] Paul Tosto, "Teen-Agers, Teachers Urge Delay in Implementation," *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, February 11, 2000.

[21] Kim Ode, "Tell Me Again, How Does This Work?," *Minneapolis Star Tribune*, February 6, 2000.

change the Profile. The article stated that the Profile of Learning had the potential to build on Minnesota's long-standing "reputation for offering quality public education" and called for amending the Profile "so that it builds on students' knowledge without watering down standards or overwhelming its participants."[22] Joe Nathan, writing in a column for the *St. Paul Pioneer Press,* advocated changes to the Profile that were based on "thoughtful concerns" and would serve to "end the frustration that many Minnesota teachers, parents and students are encountering with the Profile of Learning."[23]

In March, the editorial writers at the *Pioneer Press* wrote that it was "critical that schools build on the momentum for high standards already established" and suggested that the number of required standards be reduced "for a limited time" so that districts could address needs such as training and curriculum review.[24] They also recommended that "legislators fine tuning a compromise would do best to leave politics at the door" and work instead by looking for commonalities among the proposals introduced.[25]

Katherine Kersten devoted a March column in the *Star Tribune* to demonstrating that the Profile did not provide the "clear, uniform, and rigorous standards our children need."[26] Kersten advocated placing a "complete and indefinite moratorium on implementation of the Profile of Learning" until the report being done by Achieve Inc.

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[22] Randy Krebs, "Our View," *St. Cloud Times*, March 3, 2000.

[23] Joe Nathan, "Profile Shouldn't Undermine Ideas Already Working," *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, March 20, 2000.

[24] *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, "Editorial," March 15, 2000.

[25] Ibid.

[26] Katherine Kersten, "Hold Off on the Profile," *Minneapolis Star Tribune*, March 22, 2000.

was completed, at which point "we should know how the Profile's standards measure up to the best in the world."[27] She expressed her hope that legislators would, at that time, "have the good sense to act on Achieve's recommendations (assuming, of course, that these resemble those made to Indiana)."[28] Indiana's standards had previously been reviewed by Achieve and subsequently rewritten in a way that Kersten found to be "clear, uniform, and rigorous!"[29]

In the spring, Mitchell Pearlstein of the Center of the American Experiment published an article analyzing Minnesota's efforts at school reform, including the Profile of Learning. Pearlstein described the standards as "more ethereal than rigorous."[30] He suggested that this problem was due to the state's tradition of local control, the length of time it took to create the policy, and the "five distinct and often competing factions" with whom officials had to contend.[31] His five "factions" included conservatives who favor rigorous standards; conservatives who are opposed to the state setting standards; the business community who favored "vocationally flavored standards;" liberals who did not really want standards or accountability measures; and liberals who wanted standards but "not the academically grounded kind."[32] Pearlstein

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[27] Ibid.

[28] Ibid.

[29] Ibid.

[30] Mitchell B. Pearlstein, "Nothing Plain About These Plains: Minnesota's Motley Story of School Reform," *American Experiment Quarterly* (Spring 2000): 82.

[31] Ibid.: 83.

[32] Ibid.

also made numerous references to Katherine Kersten's "thorough critique" that had been published in the same journal the previous year.[33]

The opinions that were expressed publicly, at least in surviving records, reflect little support for the Profile. Virtually no one seemed to be advocating publicly to keep the Profile in place in its current form. The conversation had instead turned to how changes should be made.

The 2000 Legislative Session

Early in the legislative session, in an unexpected move, Commissioner Christine Jax joined with the state's teachers union, Education Minnesota, in calling for a moratorium on the Profile of Learning lasting for about two years. The moratorium would exempt the students in ninth and tenth grades during the 1999-2000 school year (the classes of 2002 and 2003) from meeting Profile requirements, while providing CFL time to determine what changes needed to be made.[34] In addition to the moratorium, Education Minnesota also wanted the legislature to reduce the number of standards, change the grading method, and provide additional training and funding for teachers.[35] Citing their recent survey that indicated that 51 percent of teachers wanted the Profile improved and 39 percent wanted to abolish it, union Co-President Judy Schaubach

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[33] Ibid.: 81. Kersten's article, "Minnesota's Profile of Learning: The Radical Mutation of a Good Idea," was published in the summer 1999 issue of *American Experiment Quarterly*.

[34] Norman Draper, "Jax, Teachers Call for Moratorium on Profile of Learning," *Minneapolis Star Tribune*, February 4, 2000.

[35] Ibid.

emphasized that "students and teachers cannot continue to struggle with a system that, in many cases, actually hinders teaching and learning rather than enhancing them."[36]

The House Repeal and the North Star Standard

On February 17, in a move the *Minneapolis Star Tribune* characterized as "a surprise attack with a familiar aim,"[37] the Minnesota House of Representatives voted 97 to 34 to repeal the Profile.[38] Commissioner Jax called the move "outrageous," while Representative Mindy Greiling (DFL-Roseville) criticized the House for acting before the House Education Policy Committee had heard testimony on the Profile.[39] Days later, Representative Kielkucki introduced a bill to replace the Profile with a new set of standards called the North Star Standard, which were intended to stress basic education in the core disciplines and grade students using an A-F scale.[40] The North Star Standard had been developed by a group of parents and teachers that included Renee Doyle of the Maple River Education Coalition.[41]

At its first meeting in late February, the House Education Policy Committee had to consider ten bills that all attempted to change the graduation standards in one way or

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[36] Kristina Torres, "Agency Seeks Easing of Profile of Learning for 9th, 10th Graders," *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, February 4, 2000.

[37] Anthony Lonetree, "Profile of Learning Dealt a Blow in the House," *Minneapolis Star Tribune*, February 18, 2000.

[38] Minnesota House of Representatives, "Journal of the House of Representatives, Eighty-First Session, 74th Day," (February 17, 2000).

[39] Lonetree, "Profile of Learning Dealt a Blow."

[40] Anthony Lonetree, "House Bill Proposes Trading Profile for Return to the Basics," *Minneapolis Star Tribune*, February 23, 2000.

[41] John Welsh, "Profile of Learning Deal Looks Unstable," *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, May 11, 2000.

another.[42] According to a reporter's analysis, the ten plans had "several common threads," including lowering the number of standards required for graduation, changing the grading system, and exempting the current ninth and tenth graders from the Profile requirements.[43] These commonalities were a source of hope for Representative Harry Mares (R-White Bear Lake), chair of the House Education Policy Committee, who wanted to work out a compromise. Democrats on the committee, however, thought it unlikely that Mares would be able to convince the anti-Profile activists that a "fix" was an acceptable alternative to abolishing the Profile entirely.[44] The committee heard testimony from a variety of groups and individuals, with the overall message being that the Profile should be kept but the problems with it should be solved.[45] The committee also heard testimony from a coalition representing 200 Minnesota school districts that preferred to move ahead with implementation of the Profile without delay.[46]

About a week after hearing this testimony, Representative Mares drafted a plan that attempted to combine many of the suggestions. His plan called for reducing the number of content standards required for graduation from 24 to 12 and reducing the learning areas from ten to six by eliminating decision-making, resource management,

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[42] Paul Tosto, "Profile of Learning Compromise Elusive," *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, February 25, 2000.

[43] Anthony Lonetree, "Profile of Learning Faces Test," *Minneapolis Star Tribune*, February 29, 2000.

[44] Ibid.

[45] Anthony Lonetree and Duchesne Paul Drew, "Legislators Hear Calls to Alter Profile," *Minneapolis Star Tribune*, March 1, 2000.

[46] Paul Tosto, "Coalition Opposes Delay in Graduation Standards," *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, February 29, 2000.

and inquiry. The remaining areas would be renamed using traditional terms.[47] Assessment would be determined at the local level; performance packages would not be required. Charter schools and alternative learning centers would be excused from Profile requirements, as would students taking AP or IB courses. Grades on Profile assignments would become part of students' course grades rather than being tracked separately. The most controversial part of the plan called for an indefinite moratorium that would last until a study of the Profile by an independent group had been completed and the legislature had voted to remove the moratorium.[48]

The Senate Proposal

While the House committee deliberated, their counterparts in the Senate approved their own plan for addressing problems with the Profile. The plan, introduced by Senator Larry Pogemiller, allowed schools to set the number of standards required for graduation through faculty voting and school board approval; districts, however, would have to offer all 48 standards. The plan also permitted school boards to exempt the current ninth and tenth graders, as well as students in AP and IB courses, from Profile requirements. Record-keeping problems would have to be solved by CFL so that student records could be transferred along with students who moved. No moratorium was included in the Senate committee's plan. While the plan technically would allow

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[47] The six required areas would be English language and grammar, composition and speech, mathematics, science, social studies, and literature and the arts. A seventh area, world languages, would be optional.

[48] Anthony Lonetree, "House Committee Explores Overhaul of Profile of Learning," *Minneapolis Star Tribune*, March 8, 2000.

schools to require no standards at all, Senator Pogemiller said he didn't expect that to happen.[49]

Governor Ventura, who supported continuing with the Profile, looked more favorably on the Senate proposal than the House plan.[50] The governor was not enthusiastic about the indefinite moratorium or the fifty percent reduction of required standards, two key aspects of the House plan.[51] Ventura believed that the problems with the Profile lay in its implementation, not in its substance, and had little patience for what he perceived as teachers and students complaining about hard work.[52] It appeared that the two parties would have to work out a compromise not only with each other, but also with the governor's ideas, if they were to make changes in the Profile. Perhaps because of their inability to pass any legislation related to the Profile the previous year, both groups seemed willing to keep working toward a viable solution.

A Surprise Vote

On March 16, the House unexpectedly voted 68-66 to allow districts to choose between the Profile of Learning, the North Star Standard, or the Carnegie-unit requirements that were previously in place,[53] even though the North Star Standard had

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[49] Anthony Lonetree, "Senate Panel OKs Profile Compromise," *Minneapolis Star Tribune*, March 9, 2000.

[50] John Welsh, "Senator Says His Plan Adds Flexibility," *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, March 9, 2000.

[51] John Welsh, "House Panel OKs Profile of Learning Revision," *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, March 10, 2000.

[52] Anthony Lonetree, "Basic Structure of Profile Sound, Ventura Says," *Minneapolis Star Tribune*, March 15, 2000.

[53] John Welsh, "House-Senate Gulf Widens over Profile of Learning," *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, March 17, 2000.

by this time been rejected by the House Education Policy Committee.[54] On the same day, the Senate passed its own Profile of Learning bill by a 44-22 vote. The senate bill provided waivers for the current ninth and tenth graders and provided districts greater flexibility in implementation by allowing them to reduce the number of standards that students would be required to meet in order to graduate.[55]

The issue of exempting students who were in ninth and tenth grade in the 1999-2000 school year was becoming more salient as districts realized that a number of students who had passed all required courses might not graduate. Although most districts had not yet predicted specific numbers, one principal estimated that 100 of his school's 753 sophomores would fall into that category. A Minneapolis high school counselor worried that students who were struggling academically would become overwhelmed and drop out. A central office administrator from Minneapolis noted that the focus had been on getting students to pass the basic skills test, with much less awareness of "what's going to hit the graduating Class of 2002."[56] Governor Ventura supported the idea of exempting the ninth and tenth graders, saying that he believed it was wrong to penalize students for implementation problems over which they had no control.[57]

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[54] Anthony Lonetree, "House Panel Backs Profile Overhaul," *Minneapolis Star Tribune*, March 10, 2000.

[55] Anthony Lonetree, "Showdown on the Profile," *Minneapolis Star Tribune*, March 17, 2000.

[56] Norman Draper, "Hard Times for Students Facing Profile Obstacles," *Minneapolis Star Tribune*, March 16, 2000.

[57] Lonetree, "Showdown on the Profile."

The House-Senate Conference Committee

The first meeting of the House-Senate conference committee that would seek a compromise on the issue was held on March 28. The Senate negotiators, led by Larry Pogemiller, proposed that districts be allowed to choose between the Profile and the North Star Standard, but not the previous Carnegie unit system. Critics noted that the North Star Standard was unproven and had the support of only one group, the Maple River Education Coalition. Officials at CFL questioned the feasibility of implementing two competing sets of standards.[58] The North Star Standard was an unknown and unproven entity that would require teachers to post lesson plans and other materials in public or school libraries and would also require the development of 59 new tests of student achievement.[59]

By April 3, House negotiators agreed to drop the indefinite moratorium on implementation of the Profile, a move that Representative Bob Ness (R-Dassel) viewed as a "major concession."[60] The committee agreed on the idea of allowing districts to exempt the ninth and tenth graders from standards that implementation problems prevented them from meeting.[61] The House conferees also abandoned their proposal to reduce the number of standards in the Profile, instead agreeing to add a standard in vocational education, bringing the total number of learning areas to 11. The number of standards that students would need to graduate remained unresolved; however, both

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[58] John Welsh, "Panel Mulls Multiple-Choice Grad Standards," *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, March 29, 2000.

[59] Norman Draper, "Profile Deal Is Crafted," *Minneapolis Star Tribune*, May 11, 2000.

[60] Anthony Lonetree, "Conferees Believe Profile Compromise Is Near," *Minneapolis Star Tribune*, April 4, 2000.

[61] John Welsh, "Profile of Learning Panel OKs Waivers," *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, April 4, 2000.

sides continued to express optimism about reaching an agreement and avoiding the same outcome as the year before.[62]

By April 10, the committee had agreed on a provision from the Senate that would allow teachers and school board members to determine the number of standards needed to graduate. This option was criticized by Minneapolis Superintendent Carol Johnson, who noted the complexity of implementing school-by-school voting in Minneapolis, which had over 100 sites at that time. Education Minnesota and the Minnesota Business Partnership shared her concerns.[63] These two organizations both encouraged the committee to keep a single statewide set of standards by revising the Profile, rather than allowing a choice between the Profile and the North Star Standard. Senator Pogemiller, however, believed that offering such a choice would be necessary for the committee to reach a compromise.[64]

Little action occurred for nearly a month, but as the legislative session drew near a close, the committee met again, this time agreeing on a plan in which schools and districts could either set their own Profile requirements or decide to use the North Star Standard instead. Teachers were to vote, in an advisory capacity, on the district's decision. Technical and vocational education was added as the eleventh learning area. The performance packages, the 1-to-4 scoring on standards achievement, and the requirement of 24 standards for graduation were eliminated. Ninth and tenth graders

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[62] Ibid.

[63] Anthony Lonetree, "Statewide Standards Could Be Lost In "Fix" Of Profile, Some Warm," *Minneapolis Star Tribune*, April 14, 2000.

[64] Ibid.

could be waived from meeting Profile requirements. The compromise met with the approval of Education Minnesota, but the Minnesota Business Partnership was not enthusiastic about the plan. Duane Benson, their executive director, pointed out that "[i]f you have multiple statewide standards, you don't have a statewide standard."[65] Commissioner Jax predicted that the bill might receive a veto from the governor because of the inclusion of the North Star Standard.[66]

The response of the anti-Profile Maple River Education Coalition to this compromise was reported differently in the two major newspapers in the Twin Cities. The *Minneapolis Star Tribune* quoted Renee Doyle, the organization's president, as saying "I think it's an excellent settlement. I believe the grass-roots movement [of the Profile opponents] set the tone of this entire debate."[67] The *St. Paul Pioneer Press* quoted Doyle as saying "It's a conflicting document that gives you the appearance that one gets a clean North Star choice. It's a very disappointing bill. It neither fixes the Profile or allows an option out of it."[68] Doyle met with House Speaker Steve Sviggum and other House members on May 16. Following that meeting, Sviggum announced that there was "no deal" on the Profile because the conference committee's report did not reflect his understanding of the agreement that had been reached early on May 10 after a long day and night of negotiating.[69] Sviggum and Senate Majority Leader Roger Moe,

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[65] Draper, "Profile Deal Is Crafted."

[66] Welsh, "Profile of Learning Deal Looks Unstable."

[67] Draper, "Profile Deal Is Crafted."

[68] Welsh, "Profile of Learning Deal Looks Unstable."

[69] Anthony Lonetree, "There's 'No Deal' on the Profile of Learning, Sviggum Says," *Minneapolis Star Tribune*, May 16, 2000.

along with House Majority Leader Tim Pawlenty, had joined the negotiations during that day and night. The committee had shaken hands on the agreement but postponed their vote until the following week in order to return to their respective chambers to vote on several budget bills that required action before the official end of the legislative day at 7 a.m.[70]

The North Star Standard became a major obstacle in coming to agreement on a bill. Commissioner Christine Jax insisted that, regardless of the standards used, all students should take the Minnesota Comprehensive Assessments (based on Profile standards), allowing for comparison between the two sets of standards. North Star supporters, however, said that using this Profile-based test to evaluate students whose instruction was based on the North Star Standard would weaken schools' ability to provide appropriate instruction and thus did not offer a true choice in standards.[71] Last-minute negotiations took place during the night on the final day of the legislative session, leading to speculations in the press that the legislative session would once again end without action on the Profile.[72] However, in the last hours of the last day of the legislative session, both the House and Senate passed a bill that kept the Profile in place while addressing many of the concerns with its implementation. The bill did not include the option of the North Star Standard.[73] Governor Ventura signed the bill on May 25.[74]

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[70] Jim Ragsdale, "Legislature Finishes with 30 Seconds to Spare," *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, May 11, 2000.

[71] Anthony Lonetree, "Profile Accord Proves Elusive," *Minneapolis Star Tribune*, May 18, 2000.

[72] John Welsh, "Debate over Graduation Rules Drags on into Morning," *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, May 18, 2000.

[73] John Welsh, "Profile of Learning Is Sole Survivor," *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, May 19, 2000, "Minnesota Session Laws 2000," (Chapter 500, Section 2).

Changes in the Profile

The bill that was passed encouraged local autonomy and addressed confusion about the graduation standards in several ways. The law explicitly stated that districts did not have to adopt the provisions of Goals 2000 or the federal School-to-Work program; the language related to the optional lifework development plans that had been part of the graduation rule was repealed. It also explicitly stated that districts were not required to use state or local performance packages for assessment; all language related to the use of performance packages was repealed. Districts also did not have to use the 1 – 4 grading system, although they did have to use state scoring criteria to assign scores or grades for those standards they required. Students' work was to be judged based on the student's grade level rather than the highest grade level to which the standard applied. Schools could set their own required number of content standards through a voting process involving teachers, administrators, and school board members. Regardless of the number of standards required, however, districts had to provide learning opportunities in all the preparatory standards and enough of the high school standards for students to meet the state's recommended requirement of 24 content standards among the ten learning areas. School boards could waive Profile requirements for the student in ninth and tenth grade during the 1999-2000 school year. Students

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[74] John Welsh, "Governor Signs into Law Modification of Graduation Rule," *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, May 26, 2000.

enrolled in AP or IB courses or post-secondary options could also have content standards waived.[75]

Schools were required to report their decisions on these matters to the commissioner every year; the results would then be made public each August. School districts were still required to keep extensive records related to both their implementation plans and their students' work, but the burden was eased somewhat because only work related to the district's own required standards had to be scored and recorded. The commissioner was directed to designate the software packages that were to be used for record-keeping.[76]

The names of some of the learning areas were changed to reflect more traditional disciplinary names. The controversial "People and Cultures" was changed to "Social Studies" and the equally controversial "Decision-Making" was changed to "Physical Education and Lifetime Fitness." An eleventh learning area, technical and vocational education, was added.[77] To support the implementation of the Profile, the commissioner was directed to establish Best Practices Networks for learning areas one through ten by the end of June and for learning area eleven by the following year.[78] These networks, which were already in existence for some learning areas, consisted of

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[75] Lisa Larson, "Profile of Learning: Legislative Action in 1999 and 2000," (Minnesota House of Representatives Research Deparment, 2000), 3-4, 8.

[76] Ibid., 5-6.

[77] *Minnesota Session Laws*, (Chapter 500, Section 2e, 2000). The eleven areas were: (1) read, listen, and view, (2) write and speak, (3) arts and literature, (4) mathematical concepts and applications, (5) inquiry and research, (6) scientific concepts and applications, (7) social studies, (8) physical education and lifetime fitness, (9) economics and business, (10) world languages, and (11) vocational and technical education.

[78] Larson, "Profile of Learning: Legislative Action in 1999 and 2000," 7.

practicing teachers throughout the state who were available to serve as professional development resources to schools. To further professional learning, districts were also allowed to use the additional three days that had just been added to the school year for professional development related to Profile implementation. The commissioner was also directed to maintain a high standards tool library in electronic format. Two websites had already been created for this purpose.[79]

The legislation also contained provisions for additional work to be done on the Profile. It called for a thorough review to be done by an external organization as well as the establishment of an academic panel of educators to provide recommendations on a biennial basis. Achieve, Inc., was already under contract to provide the external review and report.[80] The commissioner assembled the Academic Panel, which included "teachers, administrators, a school board member, and representatives of teacher preparation institutions of higher education," in September 2000.[81]

Response to the Changes in the Profile of Learning

The new legislation increased districts' power to make decisions about implementation of the Profile but did not leave them much time to do so. Reports from each district describing its requirements for the 2000-2001 school year were due to the commissioner by August 15. Although the Minnesota School Board Association urged its members to delay any voting about the Profile until after CFL had had time to work

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[79] Ibid., 10.

[80] Ibid., 7.

[81] Academic Panel to the Commissioner, "Recommendations for Continuous Improvement of the Profile of Learning," (Minnesota Department of Children, Families, and Learning, 2001).

out the details of the new law, many school districts, including Minneapolis and St. Paul, wanted to poll teachers before the end of the 1999-2000 school year. Others decided to conduct voting by mail during the summer.[82]

Results of the votes varied widely. Red Wing decided to keep the requirement for twenty-four standards. In Buffalo, teachers voted to reduce the required the required number to nineteen. Minneapolis teachers voted to exempt the classes of 2002 and 2003 and then slowly phase in the standards with subsequent classes, requiring eight standards for the class of 2004 and twelve for the class of 2005. In the affluent Twin Cities suburb of Wayzata, teachers voted to require none at all. Final decisions, however, had to wait for until the local school boards voted.[83]

The variation in requirements caused some to wonder about appearances. In St. Cloud, teachers voted to require 13 standards for the class of 2004, in contrast to the 24 standards required in neighboring districts Sartell-St. Stephen and Sauk Rapids-Rice, leading one local reporter to question whether this decision would result in the perception that St. Cloud had "lower standards – and potentially – a lower-quality education system."[84] Similar discrepancies arose in other neighboring districts in the state.[85] Minneapolis planned to offer 24 standards at all high schools by 2002, even though all students would not be required to complete them. Superintendent Carol

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[82] John Welbes, "Schools Race to Pick Which Standards Stay," *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, June 7, 2000.

[83] Norman Draper, "Educators Moving to Give Standards a Lower Profile," *Minneapolis Star Tribune*, July 30, 2000.

[84] Randy Krebs, "St. Cloud Has Profile Challenges," *St. Cloud Times*, August 9, 2000.

[85] Paul Tosto, "Districts to Take Phase-in Path to Profile of Learning," *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, August 15, 2000.

Johnson was quoted as saying that the district "didn't want to send the message to students who have been working hard to complete all the high standards that somehow they should go to the minimum."[86] Both Minneapolis and St. Paul planned full implementation for the class of 2006.[87]

An August report from CFL indicated that 84 percent of Minnesota's school districts planned to waive Profile requirements for at least some, if not all, of their sophomores and juniors (the classes of 2002 and 2003). The remaining 16 percent planned to move forward on the original implementation schedule, requiring 24 standards starting with the class of 2002. Districts that planned to waive requirements for the classes of 2002 and 2003 varied in the number of standards they planned to require after that. Rosemount-Apple Valley-Eagan, a district known for anti-Profile sentiments, planned to require only four standards through 2010. (The new law did not set a deadline for full implementation.)[88] Hastings, Sleepy Eye, Pillager and Little Fork-Big Falls planned to require no standards for the class of 2004. In contrast, about half of the state's districts planned full implementation by that date, with 24 standards required for graduation.[89] Another 120 districts planned to require the class of 2004 to complete between 13 and 23 requirements.[90]

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[86] Allie Shah, "Minneapolis School Board Backs Scaled-Down Profile of Learning," *Minneapolis Star Tribune*, August 9, 2000.

[87] Tosto, "Districts to Take Phase-in Path."

[88] Allie Shah, "Schools Plan Wide Use of New Freedoms," *Minneapolis Star Tribune*, September 2, 2000.

[89] Paul Tosto, "Profile of Learning Catches on Slowly," *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, September 2, 2000.

[90] Shah, "Schools Plan Wide Use."

A significant number of complaints about the tight timeline for decision-making prompted CFL to offer an extension until October 15, during which time districts' votes could be amended.[91] The four districts planning to require no standards for the class of 2004 were informed that they would need to file Profile of Learning reports for their elementary or middle schools or else lose Title I funding, which was tied to standards implementation. All four districts filed amended plans that indicated that they would comply with this requirement. Few other districts used the extended timeline to amend their plans; those that did made only minor changes.[92]

In addition to choosing the number of standards they would require, districts had the option of converting three student days to professional development days focused on implementation of the Profile of Learning. Three student days had been added to the school calendar by the legislature in 1997 to help Minnesota students "catch up with the industrialized world," according to House Speaker Phil Carruthers.[93] The additional days had been unpopular with teachers and districts, many of which had converted staff development days to student contact days in order to meet the requirement, resulting in a loss of professional development time just as the Profile was being implemented. The option of using days for professional development was thus appealing to districts.[94]

The responses of schools and districts to the new legislation troubled Senator Larry Pogemiller, one of the consistent supporters of the Profile of Learning. Noting

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[91] Draper, "Educators Moving to Give Standards a Lower Profile."

[92] Norman Draper, "Profile Deadline Passes with No Major Changes," *Minneapolis Star Tribune*, October 20, 2000.

[93] Anthony Lonetree, "Many Schools Cut Class Days," *Minneapolis Star Tribune*, August 28, 2000.

[94] Ibid.

that all of Minnesota's 347 districts had taken the $14 per pupil incentive (a total of nearly $14 million) to move to full implementation of the Profile starting in 1998, he now questioned the districts' commitment to that process. Scott Croonquist of the Association of Metropolitan School Districts responded that implementation work was slowed by the lack of the record-keeping software promised by CFL as well as uncertainty over what changes the legislature might make to the Profile.[95] As the 2000-20001 school year began, Senate Republicans had already publicly stated that part of their 2001 agenda would be making the Profile of Learning optional for districts.[96]

Opposition to the Profile

The Profile of Learning was an important issue in at least one State Senate race. In April, Michele Bachmann was chosen over longtime incumbent Gary Laidig as the Republicans' endorsed candidate from Stillwater (District 66).[97] Bachmann had run for the Stillwater school board as one of five Republican-endorsed candidates the previous year but had not been elected. The repeal of the Profile was not the only issue that Bachmann felt strongly about; she was also anti-abortion and favored tax cuts and the return of surplus state money to citizens. Bachmann won the primary election in September and continued to campaign against the Profile, stating that she had spent 2,000 hours studying it and concluding that "the Profile of Learning will not lay the

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[95] Anthony Lonetree, "District's Diligence on Profile of Learning Questioned," *Minneapolis Star Tribune*, September 7, 2000.

[96] Robert Whereatt, "GOP Senators List Goals for Next Session," *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, September 22, 2000.

[97] Mary Divine, "Laidig Loses GOP Backing," *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, April 4, 2000.

strong academic foundation that children need for success."[98] Bachmann was elected in November.

The Maple River Education Coalition continued to work against the Profile throughout the year. In February they organized a "Citizenship in Education Day" to encourage parents, students, and teachers to urge their legislators to repeal the Profile. Their objections remained the same: the Profile "dumbed down" education and privileged group work and projects over academic achievement.[99] They also continued to raise concerns about what they perceived to be the state's intention to use schooling primarily as training for later employment. Michele Bachmann, one of the speakers at the event, later told a reporter that "[t]he mission and focus of education has changed in Minnesota. It's no longer about acquiring knowledge, it's about training children in job-specific performance skills."[100]

Following the legislative session, Renee Doyle posted a lengthy update on the organization's website describing her perspective on what had occurred.[101] In the article she claimed that the legislature "did not fix the Profile. They expanded it."[102] She described the language of the legislation as "purposely ambiguous," allowing for "expansive interpretation" on the part of the commissioner.[103] Doyle accused the

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[98] Mary Divine, "Candidates Not Taking Anything for Granted," *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, October 14, 2000.

[99] McCallum, "Stalemate Looms over Profile's Future."

[100] Ibid.

[101] Renee Doyle, "The Fat Lady's Performance Is Postponed until 2001," Maple River Education Coalition, http://www.edaction.org/update34.htm.

[102] Ibid.

[103] Ibid.

newspapers of getting their information from the commissioner and printing information that was "blatantly false."[104] She then gave examples and explained her interpretation of what the new legislation stated. She also exhorted her readers to "support in every way those legislators who are still willing to defend us."[105]

The Maple River Education Coalition also handwrote comments on a copy of CFL's "Links between Research and Reform" and posted portions of the document along with the comments on their website.[106] The notes state that the research cited in the document is "no 'evidence,' only 'theory'." The concept of constructivism is criticized for viewing "understanding, meaning, reality" as "interchangeable" and for manipulating students into being "politically correct." The research base for the policy was clearly not persuasive to this group.

Statewide Testing

Statewide testing, which had been prohibited by law only two years earlier, generated little controversy in Minnesota by 2000. The Profile was controversial, but both the basic skills testing and the MCAs seemed widely accepted. The question of the passing score for the basic skills tests was settled in January, when an administrative law judge ruled that the state could leave the passing score at 75 percent indefinitely rather than raising it to 80 percent as originally planned. Testing experts from the University of Minnesota supported the decision, suggesting that increasing item

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[104] Ibid.

[105] Ibid.

[106] The document is available at http://www.edwatch.org/ under Minnesota>Curriculum>General. No author is given for the handwritten notes.

difficulty would be a more effective way of making the test more rigorous than raising the passing score. The Maple River Education Coalition viewed this decision as further evidence that schools were "not willing to use the kind of teaching methods that teach basic knowledge skills to students."[107]

The graduating class of 2000 was the first to be required to pass the basic skills tests in reading and mathematics in order to receive a diploma. In February, about 3,900 twelfth-grade students (around six percent of the total enrollment at that level) in the state had not yet passed the required tests. Of these, nearly 1700 were special education students. In Minneapolis, where 31 percent of the seniors had not yet passed both tests, students who were new immigrants, learning English as a second language, African-American, or American Indian were more likely to be in this group. An additional testing session for seniors was scheduled for April to provide a last chance to pass.[108]

In July, it was discovered that National Computer Systems, the company responsible for scoring the basic skills tests, had made errors that resulted in 7,989 students incorrectly being told they had failed. Of these, 336 were seniors who had been denied diplomas as a result.[109] The students were given their diplomas, although it was too late for them to participate in graduation ceremonies.

The basic skills writing test generated controversy when parents and legislators raised concerns over the writing prompt, which asked students to describe something

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[107] Paul Tosto, "Judge Upholds 75% Test Standard," *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, January 12, 2000.

[108] Tim Pugmire, "The First Test," *Minnesota Public Radio* (2000), http://news.minnesota.publicradio.org/features/200002/07_newsroom_guineapigkids/firsttest.shtml.

[109] John Welsh, "Test Goof 'Flunks' 7,989 Students," *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, July 29, 2000.

they would like to change about themselves. Commissioner Jax responded by allowing any student who wished to do so to retake the test with a different prompt.[110] The controversial prompt did not appear to affect student performance; 86 percent of the tenth graders taking the original test passed.[111]

In their third year, the Minnesota Comprehensive Assessments results showed score increases for students statewide in the third and fifth grades in mathematics and reading. Commissioner Jax attributed the improvement to high statewide standards; some educators suggested that the increased focus on mathematics and reading contributed to the rising scores. In contrast, some principals suggested that rising and falling scores over three years in their individual schools seemed to be caused more by differences in student cohorts than anything else.[112] Other explanations suggested that parents and special learning activities had positive effects.[113]

The Achieve Report

In November, Achieve Inc. provided CFL with a 166 page report on its evaluation of the Profile of Learning. Their study was designed to answer two questions using data obtained from documents and interviews.[114] The first was "What is the quality of the Profile of Learning?"; it included investigation of the degree to which the

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[110] Anthony Lonetree, "Scrutiny May Prompt Retake of Writing Test," *Minneapolis Star Tribune*, January 29, 2000.

[111] Norman Draper, "Writing Scores Steady," *Minneapolis Star Tribune*, May 16 2000.

[112] ———, "Grades 3 and 5 Get Good News," *Minneapolis Star Tribune*, June 8, 2000.

[113] Kate Bramson, Craig Lincoln, and Mary Thompson, "Northland Students Improve on Test Scores," *Duluth News-Tribune*, June 8, 2000.

[114] Achieve Inc. and Council on Basic Education, "Aiming Higher: A Report on Education Standards and Policy for Minnesota," (2000), 14.

policy's expectations of students were "clear, specific, measurable and challenging."[115] The second question asked whether the "laws, rules, curriculum guides, and interpretation and support documents provide a comprehensive system that supports districts in ensuring common high standards for all."[116] The report was organized into a review of the standards followed by a review of the policy.

The use of the phrase "common high standards for all" indicates that this study was based on a different set of beliefs than those that guided the creation of the Profile. The Profile's original inception was based on the belief that students would demonstrate differences in interests and achievement in various areas. The Profile was intended to portray this range of achievement through creation of a "profile" for each student while at the same time engaging all students in high level learning. The Achieve report, in contrast, appeared to assume that all students would meet the same "common" high standards. This difference in belief about standards-based education was consistent with changes that had occurred nationally during the time between the Profile's creation and the Achieve report.

In the section reporting the results of the review of the standards, the report described four strengths of the Profile of Learning. First was its emphasis on performance-based learning. Second, the mathematics and science standards were found to "reflect the key domains" found in other high-quality standards, including the

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[115] Ibid., 3.

[116] Ibid.

national standards.[117] Third, the primary level standards related to English language arts (learning areas one and two) contained "a beginning of a foundation for early literacy."[118] Finally, the Profile included a set of standards for inquiry and research.

The report noted that, despite these strengths, the Profile had "significant weaknesses that compromise[d] many of its innovative goals."[119] The first was its lack of clarity and specificity, a problem that impacted "every aspect of the Profile, including its rigor, manageability and usefulness as a document to be used in teaching."[120] The standards were too broad in general, the specificity varied among learning areas, and the wording of the standards was difficult to understand. The second weakness was that the Profile had "serious gaps in subject matter" as a result of both inadequate description and complete omission.[121] For example, the standards for reading failed to specify the "quantity, quality, and complexity of what students in various grade levels should be able to read" and the social studies standards failed to mention "specific historical events, people, concepts or topics."[122]

The third weakness was a lack of rigor and progression, partly due to the standards' lack of clarity and specificity, which resulted in a wide range of interpretation. The standards did not require enough high-level thinking and did not

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[117] Ibid., 18.

[118] Ibid., 19.

[119] Ibid.

[120] Ibid., 20.

[121] Ibid., 22.

[122] Ibid., 23.

"increase sufficiently in complexity as students grow older."[123] Fourth, the standards were unmanageable and lacked focus. Having 11 learning areas meant that the Profile "sacrifice[d] depth of knowledge for breadth of topics" and de-emphasized the "core subjects" of English language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies.[124] The Profile's "strong commitment to interdisciplinary learning" also negatively impacted the focus of the standards, as shown by the separation of inquiry from the disciplines in which the inquiry would take place and by the spreading of the traditional English language arts curriculum over three learning areas.[125] Finally, although the reviewers found that a "large percentage" of Minnesotans supported the ideas behind the Profile, they believed that the standards were not "balanced enough to ensure wide public support."[126]

The report's section on the review of the policy focused first on the systems for assessing student achievement on the Profile standards, noting that the multiple measures that were part of Minnesota's system were a "key strength" that "should be preserved and built upon."[127] The changes made by the 2000 Minnesota legislature received mixed reviews. While the changes had reduced the complexity, cost, and burden of much of the assessment related to the Profile, they had also "effectively done away with a common high standard for all students."[128] Evidence for this conclusion

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[123] Ibid., 25.

[124] Ibid., 26.

[125] Ibid., 27.

[126] Ibid.

[127] Ibid., 31.

[128] Ibid., 33.

included that observation that the number of required standards varied widely across the state. In addition, students were merely required to complete the standards, not to reach any specified degree of proficiency on them. Earning any score between 1 and 4 was considered completion of the standard, even though a score of 1 was defined as "work that is well below expected."[129]

The reviewers further concluded that there was wide variation in districts' capacities to create "useful, efficient, reliable performance assessments" and that the support system for performance assessments was inadequate. Four intended supports were specifically mentioned as failing to perform as intended. One was the state rubrics, which were intended to provide consistency in scoring the local performance assessments, but were not specific enough. The second was the curriculum frameworks that some learning areas had developed, which were also deemed insufficient. The third was the videos that the state had created to demonstrate lesson plans and exemplary student work, some of which had omitted "important components" and also made the standards seem "more complex than they need to be."[130] The fourth was the lack of a system for maintaining student records. According to the report, the challenges with assessment were exacerbated by the fact that the Profile in many cases operated as a stand-alone curriculum rather than being fully integrated into the school or district curriculum.

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[129] Minnesota Department of Children, Families, and Learning,, "Scoring with Quality Criteria Rubrics," (1998).
[130] Achieve Inc. and Council on Basic Education, "Aiming Higher," 36.

The policy review continued with a section examining "[a]ccountability for [a]dults" as a system for supporting high standards.[131] The report noted that Minnesota had two such systems in place: first, student incentives through graduation exams and, second, school and district report cards that made achievement data public. Minnesota was found lacking in the kinds of support systems seen in other states, however. The report suggested that the state needed to develop systems to assist low-performing students and low-performing schools and, once the state's standards and tests were "revised and strengthened," to "extend accountability to adults" through a system of rewards and sanctions for schools and districts.[132] Noting that training for teachers and implementation technicians was in progress, the reviewers urged the state to expand on these programs in such a way that teachers would have both adequate initial training and ongoing professional development related to standards implementation through face-to-face interactions with other professionals as well as web-based applications, which were then in the early stages of development. The emphasis was on teachers learning from each other or a "cadre of expert educators" that could help underperforming schools or from the information on the CFL website.[133] There was no mention of utilizing the resources from the state's institutions of higher education.

The reviewers found "strong support across various constituencies for a system of statewide standards"[134] although they also noted that "key members" of the public

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[131] Ibid., 37.

[132] Ibid., 39.

[133] Ibid., 40.

[134] Ibid.

had "grown weary of the Profile's complexity and scope."[135] They concluded that it was critical that "the governor, commissioner, and key legislative and business leaders" use the support that already existed to build a "broad-based coalition" that would be committed to moving standards-based reform forward in Minnesota.[136]

The report then summarized the reviewers' suggestions for moving forward, emphasizing once again the need for statewide assessments in high school in the areas of English language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies and noting that such a system did not require that the state "retreat from performance assessment."[137] The reviewers believed that once such a system of assessments was in place, the state should "revise the Graduation Rule" and "phase in the graduation standards over time."[138] In addition, they suggested that the state continue to develop systems to build capacity at the local level as well as to identify and support underperforming schools and students. The state's final step should be to develop systems of rewards and sanctions to establish "real adult accountability for results," thus shifting accountability for student performance to teachers and administrators.[139] The report concluded with a review of the standards in each learning area

Response to the report varied. Commissioner Jax was quoted as saying that the review used a national context while "Minnesota tends to be cutting-edge…We are the only state doing performance assessment, and it's harder for a group that's never seen it

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[135] Ibid., 44.

[136] Ibid., 41.

[137] Ibid., 42.

[138] Ibid., 43.

[139] Ibid., 44.

before to grasp it."[140] Twin Cities newspapers reported that both critics and supporters of the Profile would find something to like in the report.[141] House Education Policy chair Harry Mares acknowledged that the Profile "might be a bit too broad".[142] House K-12 Education Finance Committee chair Alice Seagren (R-Bloomington) thought it would be "criminal" to move forward with Profile requirements that "are clearly being criticized as vague, that don't have any content, and that have more process than content."[143] In contrast, Senator Pogemiller, outgoing chair of the Senate K-12 Education Budget Division, said that in his opinion the legislature was finished with the Profile and that the reviewers had "gotten themselves into areas they weren't commissioned to get into" when they criticized the recent legislative changes to the rule.[144]

Curriculum specialists at CFL promptly convened groups of teachers to respond to the Achieve report. Groups met by learning area; group size ranged from 2 to 21.[145] Most groups agreed with the report's finding that the standards lacked clarity and specificity and that the progression from the preparatory standards to the high school standards was not as explicit as it should be. They also responded favorably to the idea

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[140] Bess Keller, "Minnesota's Learning Standards Receive Mixed Review," *Education Week*, December 6, 2000.

[141] Norman Draper, "State's Graduation Rule Needs More Work, Report Concludes," *Minneapolis Star Tribune*, November 15, 2000; Paul Tosto, "Profile Needs Overhaul, Consultants Say," *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, December 1, 2000.

[142] Associated Press, "Profile of Learning Not a Dead Issue at Capitol," *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, November 25, 2000.

[143] Draper, "State's Graduation Rule Needs More Work."

[144] Ibid.

[145] "Response of Minnesota Teachers to 'Aiming Higher: A Report on Education Standards and Policy for Minnesota'," (Minnesota Department of Children, Families, and Learning, 2000).

of better support systems for standards implementation. Most groups disagreed with the idea that statewide tests should be developed and used as the primary method of evaluating student achievement. There was also resistance to focusing on the four "core" disciplines, especially from those groups that were not included in that category. The arts and literature group was especially adamant about not being relegated to "non-core" status.[146] Overall, the review groups accepted all of the Achieve report's praise and most of its criticisms, but generally rejected the proposed solutions.

The response of the teacher reviewers was consistent with the ideas expressed in an article in *Education Week,* which stated that Minnesota's education leaders would be "unlikely to readily embrace tests or content-heavy standards because such changes would fly in the face of the state's fundamental approach to school improvement."[147] The Achieve report seemed either to be unaware of this conflict or to disregard it. It noted that "Minnesota favored a performance-based system" that was based on a constructivist "vision of education" and that "emphasized interdisciplinary and applied learning"[148] and it also described Minnesota's long and strong commitment to local control.[149] Yet it went on to recommend statewide testing as the primary solution to the Profile's problems and the development of content-heavy standards as the next step.

As the year 2000 came to a close, the state's school districts were midway through the first year of implementation of the revised Profile policy. Profile opponents

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[146] Ibid., 9.

[147] Keller, "Minnesota's Learning Standards Receive Mixed Review."

[148] Achieve Inc. and Council on Basic Education, "Aiming Higher," 11.

[149] Ibid., 12.

remained active in the state. The federal policy context was uncertain because of the election of a new president and the upcoming reauthorization of ESEA. In this unsettled environment, the commissioner and the department were faced with overseeing the continued implementation of an increasingly idiosyncratic policy.

CHAPTER EIGHT

CONTROVERSY AND REPEAL

2001 – 2003

In early 2001, new messages about educational policy were coming from Washington as President George W. Bush was sworn into office. Bush intended to make education his top priority through a plan that he described as leaving no child behind. He quickly succeeded in gaining bipartisan support for his goal of improving the nation's schools. Although there was not agreement on all of his policy ideas, there was widespread support for increased accountability measures, including yearly testing in reading and mathematics in grades three through eight.[1] An increased federal role in education policy seemed certain.

In Minnesota, statewide testing was well established. Passing scores on the basic skills tests in reading, mathematics, and writing were required for high school graduation. The Minnesota Comprehensive Assessments in the same three subjects, given in grades three and five, measured progress toward the high standards of the Profile of Learning. These tests were scheduled to be expanded to high school.

The Profile of Learning had undergone significant change the previous year when the legislature gave local districts the ability to set the number of standards required for graduation. The resulting lack of a statewide standard and the local districts' ability to opt out of most of the rule made implementation more difficult.

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[1] David Westphal and Rob Hotakainen, "Bush Offers His Blueprint for Education," *Minneapolis Star Tribune*, January 24, 2001.

Nevertheless, officials at CFL continued to push forward, with a new plan from the commissioner, revisions of state scoring rubrics, and proposed revisions for the standards. The 2001 legislative session brought no changes in the policy.

The Profile continued to be controversial, with its opponents more vocal than those who supported it. More reports suggested more ways to improve the policy. The 2002 legislative session brought another attempt at repeal, this time only narrowly averted. The potential impact of full implementation was better understood as the class of 2002 graduated.

The elections of 2002 brought an anti-Profile Republican governor into power. Working with his newly appointed commissioner and a Republican-dominated House, he made repeal of the Profile a priority during the 2003 legislative session.

Plans for Change

Report of the Academic Panel

In February 2001, the Academic Panel submitted its report to Commissioner Jax. The panel's members, appointed by the commissioner, included one school board member, two award-winning teachers, five administrators, and three representatives from higher education.[2] No educators who had been vocal opponents of the Profile of Learning were included. The group's charge was to "examine, evaluate and seek ways to sustain the rigor of the Profile of Learning standards."[3] In six full-day meetings held

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[2] Academic Panel to the Commissioner, "Recommendations," Appendix.

[3] Ibid., 1.

between November 2000 and January 2001, the panel heard from representatives from Achieve Inc. and the Council on Basic Education, CFL curriculum specialists, and an outside consultant who had worked on the development of the Profile. The panel's overarching conclusion was that the state should continue to build on the Profile. In the report, they made nine recommendations to "sustain the rigor of the Profile and improve its implementation."[4] The panel viewed CFL as key to standards implementation, recommending that the commissioner have "expedited rule-making authority to carry out recommended revisions," that CFL have "sufficient staff and resources dedicated to the Profile," and that a "specific person within CFL" be named to lead a process of making necessary changes to the Profile.[5] They also felt that the Best Practices Networks should be fully funded and be given the task of revising the standards for clarity and providing instructional support.[6]

The panel identified a conflict between two roles for the Profile. Their report stated that, according to state law, the Profile was "to set high expectations for all Minnesota students. Yet in practice, the Profile has been expected to serve as a tool for improving teaching and learning and as a statewide measure of accountability."[7] Panel members believed that the public debate around the Profile had "been confused between these two roles."[8] Their view was that the Profile was well suited for improving student achievement but needed greater clarity in the standards and accompanying curriculum

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[4] Ibid., 5.

[5] Ibid.

[6] Ibid., 6.

[7] Ibid., 3.

[8] Ibid.

frameworks and exemplars. They noted that, while students and schools should be held accountable for Profile standards, the Profile should not serve as a statewide accountability system or a means of comparing students and schools. The group supported local control of performance assessments.

The panel directly addressed the 2000 Achieve report. In response to the recommendation that the Profile standards be given more clarity and specificity, the panel noted that these were two separate issues. They agreed that the standards needed more clarity, but did not believe that the standards needed greater specificity, suggesting that content specificity could be provided through other documents such as curriculum frameworks. In response to Achieve's recommendation that the standards focus on the core disciplines, the panel suggested "consolidating some Learning Areas as long as the breadth and comprehensiveness of the standards are preserved."[9] The Achieve report recommended the development of comprehensive accountability systems. The panel agreed that such systems should be developed and that it was essential that they be based on multiple measures.

The Commissioner's Action Plan

In March 2001, after taking into consideration the "issues identified during early implementation of the Profile of Learning," the 2000 Achieve report, and the report submitted by the Academic Panel, Commissioner Christine Jax created an action plan to "affirm Minnesota's public policy for standards-based reform and to recommend

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[9] Ibid., 7.

revisions to Minnesota's Graduation Standards."[10] Her plan retained the eleven learning areas of the Profile because she believed that they were "Minnesota's public policy definition of a comprehensive education for students" and that all the work to date had been structured around them.[11] The commissioner found more points of agreement with the Academic Panel's report than in the report from Achieve. She recommended that the standards be rewritten and reorganized for clarity, but felt that the specificity recommended by Achieve was a matter best left to local districts. She did, however, support the creation of curriculum frameworks for those areas that did not have them and the review of those frameworks already in existence. The commissioner also agreed with the panel that the number of standards for each level and the number of required standards at the high school "be examined and evaluated for reasonableness."[12] She stated that CFL would "continue to provide leadership and to develop and provide assistance" to "support the capacity" of schools to deliver standards.[13] She planned for the state's rubrics to be revised to align with revised standards.

Jax's report was delivered in the middle of the legislative session, at a time when the House Education Policy Committee had already approved two bills that would repeal the Profile. Representative Mark Buesgens (R-Jordan), the author of one of the

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[10] Christine Jax, "Commissioner's Action Plan for Refining the Profile of Learning," (Minnesota Department of Children, Families, and Learning, 2001), 1.

[11] Ibid., 4. The eleventh learning area identified in the 2000 legislative session, technical and vocational education, had been integrated into the existing ten areas rather than added as a separate area.

[12] Ibid., 2.

[13] Ibid., 3.

bills, expressed disappointment that the commissioner had not incorporated more of the recommendations from the Achieve/CBE report into her plan.[14]

The commissioner's public image deteriorated during her last year in the position. On Sunday, February 24, 2002, dissatisfaction with Jax was the subject of a lengthy front-page article in the *Minneapolis Star Tribune.*[15] The story accused the commissioner of missing important budget meetings and education-related gatherings and failing to follow through on her department's initiatives over the previous year, in contrast to her first two years in the job, when she was a "visible presence at the State Capitol, helping thwart efforts to repeal or undercut the Profile of Learning."[16] Charlie Kyte, the executive director of the Minnesota Association of School Administrators, was quoted as saying that "[t]here is widespread concern among educators at every level that we are not receiving the type of representation that we would expect and hope from a commissioner."[17] The commissioner was also criticized for her interest in and promotion of "spirituality and the schools," which had been the subject of some of her recent speeches.[18] This change in the commissioner may have contributed to the policy's eventual repeal.

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[14] Anthony Lonetree, "Jax Lays out Plan to Refine Profile," *Minneapolis Star Tribune*, April 3, 2001.

[15] Anthony Lonetree, "Education Chief Draws Criticism," *Minneapolis Star Tribune*, February 24, 2002.

[16] Ibid.

[17] Ibid.

[18] Ibid. Jax published a book related to this topic, *The Seven Stages of an Enlightened Teacher,* in 2006.

Revision of Scoring Rubrics

The scoring rubrics were in the process of revision as the commissioner prepared her plan. In February, CFL released new scoring criteria for the ten learning areas of the Profile, updating the rubrics that had been distributed in 1998.[19] The new scoring criteria included separate rubrics for primary, intermediate, middle, and high school levels in an effort to provide better alignment between the standard and its assessment. The revision was also intended to clarify the descriptions at each level. For example, in the rubric for reading at the proficient level for high school students, the descriptor "Knows and applies strategies for decoding and clarifying meaning of information presented"[20] was revised to "Successfully applies strategies to decode and clarify meaning of vocabulary in text,"[21] sharpening the focus and linking the learning to more observable behaviors. The revised criteria failed to address the issue of independent demonstration of achievement, however, which was a critical issue related to assessment of standards.

The revised criteria included directions for how and when the rubrics should be used, including situations in which standards were embedded across multiple courses. The directions and the rubrics clearly stated that assessment was based on "professional judgment" based on "multiple, varied, and sustained work over time" and that students

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[19] "Scoring Criteria," (Minnesota Department of Children, Families, and Learning, 2001). Only the high school level criteria remain in the Minnesota Department of Education archives.

[20] "Scoring with Quality Criteria Rubrics," (Minnesota Department of Children, Families, and Learning, 1998), 6.

[21] "Scoring Criteria."

must demonstrate learning "in all parts of the content standard."[22] Unlike the 1998 criteria, the 2001 version contained no references to performance packages. The lengthy explanation of rubrics and their use that was featured on the opening pages of the 1998 criteria was also missing from the 2001 version, suggesting that CFL officials believed that this method of scoring student performance was now familiar to Minnesota educators.[23]

Revision of the Standards

In fall of 2001, groups of teachers with subject matter expertise were assembled to begin revising the standards of the Profile of Learning. Their task was to rewrite the standards for greater clarity and specificity and to attend to a progression of learning across grade levels.[24] The new standards were to be written for the same four levels (primary, intermediate, middle, and high school), but the organization of the standards was to be different, returning to the delineation between declarative (what students should know) and procedural (what students should be able to do) knowledge that had been used in the May 1994 draft.[25] The learning area one (read, listen, and view) group's draft document was submitted to standards experts at MCREL;[26] extensive comments were returned to the group and incorporated into the final revision.[27] In the

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[22] Ibid.

[23] "Scoring with Quality Criteria Rubrics", "Scoring Criteria."

[24] The author participated in the group working on learning area one (Read, listen, and view).

[25] Read, Listen, View standards revision draft, November 26, 2001. Personal files of author.

[26] The organization later changed its name to Mid-continent Research for Education and Learning.

[27] Final draft: Reading, Viewing, Listening (Minnesota Department of Children, Families, and Learning, January 18, 2002). Personal files of author.

revised version, more precise language was used to convey the intent of the standard. For example, while the original Profile standard for primary grades required "pronouncing new words using phonics skills," the revised standard required "decoding words, for example, through the use of letter sounds, blends, digraphs, diphthongs, and word structures."[28]

The public relations firm Weber Shandwick was hired by CFL to obtain public opinion on the proposed revisions to the standards. Four community meetings involving parents, students, teachers, community representatives, administrators, school board members, statewide education organizations, and statewide business organizations were held at various locations around the state. The report from Weber Shandwick concluded that "[t]he overwhelming response from stakeholders, when asked to compare the proposed recommendations to revise the K-12 standards to the current standards, was that the proposed revisions were improvements."[29] The stakeholders believed that the revisions were more clear, showed evidence of progression between levels, reduced unnecessary redundancy, and were easier to understand.[30] They disagreed about whether the standards should be written in professional or lay language and whether the increased level of detail was helpful or too prescriptive.[31]

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[28] Ibid., 2-3.

[29] Weber Shandwick Minneapolis, "Summary of Stakeholder Group Feedback on Proposed Recommendations to Revise the K-12 Standards," (2002), 1.

[30] Ibid., 2-4.

[31] Ibid., 4-5.

The 2001 Legislative Session

Dissatisfaction with the Profile of Learning was again evident in bills introduced during the 2001 legislative session. In early March, a bill reinstating the State Board of Education was introduced in the House by a bipartisan team.[32] The representatives indicated that they were not satisfied with CFL's work on the Profile of Learning and wanted the state's citizens to have a stronger voice in educational policy, which they felt a state board of education would provide. Nothing came of the proposal.

In late March, Representative Kielkucki, backed by the Maple River Education Coalition, again sponsored a bill that would eliminate the Profile of Learning, noting that "[t]he issues haven't changed."[33] The bill established only basic skills requirements in reading, writing, and mathematics, depending on "local academic achievement tests of knowledge" to provide students with "an opportunity to excel."[34] It also proposed eliminating the Minnesota Comprehensive Assessments (MCAs) and replacing them with locally determined tests in mathematics and language arts in third grade, with those subjects plus science, history, and geography being tested in fifth and tenth grade.[35]

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[32] Anthony Lonetree, "Education Board May Be Revived," *Minneapolis Star Tribune*, March 23, 2001. The two representatives were Lyndon Carlson, DFL-Crystal, and Mark Buesgens, R-Jordan.

[33] Anthony Lonetree, "Controversy over Profile Brews Anew," *Minneapolis Star Tribune*, March 27, 2001.

[34] Ibid.

[35] Lisa Larson, "House Research Bill Summary: H.F. 2057," (Minnesota House of Representatives, 2001).

Kielkucki described his system as "fairly straightforward…we let teachers teach, and we test to see what areas we need to improve upon."[36]

Representative Mark Buesgens (R-Jordan), with the support of the Minnesota Chamber of Commerce, the Minnesota Business Partnership, the Citizens League, the Minnesota Education League, and the Center of the American Experiment, introduced another proposal that would replace the Profile with "an emphasis on the basics."[37] It is noteworthy that the Minnesota Chamber and Business Partnership were now actively engaged in efforts to replace the Profile. The Buesgens bill would rely on the Council for Basic Education to develop new standards in English, mathematics, science, history, and geography and new statewide tests in mathematics, reading, and writing. Both the Kielkucki and Buesgens bills were approved by the House Education Policy Committee.[38] They were then expected to go to the House K-12 Education Finance Committee, which could include one of the proposals in the education omnibus spending bill.[39]

The news of the House bills was met with skepticism on the part of Senator Sandy Pappas (DFL-St. Paul), chair of the Senate Education Committee. She told reporters that her committee was "wrapping up" and that the House had waited until too late to introduce their legislation.[40] She noted that the Senate had held a hearing on the

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[36] Lonetree, "Controversy Brews."

[37] Ibid.

[38] Anthony Lonetree, "Graduation Rule Dealt 2 Blows by House Panel," *Minneapolis Star Tribune*, March 28, 2001.

[39] John Welsh, "Profile of Learning Assailed," *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, March 28, 2001.

[40] Lonetree, "Graduation Rule Dealt 2 Blows."

Profile earlier in the session and that "it looked like things were going OK" and the legislature should "stay the course."[41] Governor Ventura also consistently opposed legislation related to the Profile during the 2001 session.[42] In late April, the Senate defeated a bill calling for repeal of the Profile "by the healthiest margin in three years."[43] The final omnibus bill left the Profile essentially unchanged, although it was expected to be addressed in the next year's session when CFL intended to propose revisions.[44]

Reports and Opinions

Quality Counts and the AFT Report

In early January 2001, *Education Week* published its annual *Quality Counts* report, this time focusing on standards, testing, and "the tools to succeed" in standards-based reform, and giving each state grades in various areas.[45] Minnesota received a grade of F in standards and accountability, a C- in improving teaching quality, a C in school climate, a B+ in adequacy of resources, and a C in equity of resources. [46] The report also compared scores on the National Assessment of Educational Progress

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[41] Welsh, "Profile Assailed."

[42] Anthony Lonetree, "Ventura Stresses Educational Priorities," *Minneapolis Star Tribune*, May 12, 2001; "Bill Tracker," *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, April 9, 2001.

[43] Anthony Lonetree, "Profile of Learning Foes Rally for Repeal," *Minneapolis Star Tribune*, April 30, 2001.

[44] John Welsh, "$8.7 Billion School-Budget Bill Passed in Midnight House," *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, June 29, 2001.

[45] *Education Week* and Pew Charitable Trusts, "Quality Counts 2001: A Better Balance: Standards, Tests, and the Tools to Succeed," (2001).

[46] Ibid., 146.

(NAEP), on which Minnesota ranked sixth in fourth grade reading, fourth in eighth grade reading, twelfth in eighth grade writing, second in fourth grade math, first in eighth grade math, and fifth in eighth grade science.[47] The report narrative did not address the incongruity between its poor evaluation of the state's standards and the high achievement of the state's students. It discussed the debates in the 2000 legislature, the "water[ing] down" of the "controversial Profile of Learning," and the resulting variation in requirements around the state.[48] The report highlighted the test scoring error of the previous year and the struggles to get more students to pass the basic skills tests on the first try, but also noted that state officials were "pleased by students' performance on the Minnesota Comprehensive Assessments."[49]

Twin Cities newspapers promptly published the news of the state's poor ratings and its placement above only Rhode Island, North Dakota, Montana, and Iowa on the *Quality Counts* chart evaluating standards.[50] Commissioner Jax told reporters that the failing grade was "because we have more local control than state control…we could get an A from this magazine if we had a statewide curriculum…[b]ut that is not a direction that we've wanted to go."[51]

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[47] Ibid.

[48] Ibid.

[49] Ibid.

[50] Anthony Lonetree, "State Scores an F in Accountability Study," *Minneapolis Star Tribune*, January 11, 2001; Paul Tosto, "Magazine Slams School Standards in Minnesota," *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, January 11, 2001. Minnesota actually tied with Rhode Island, but was listed just above it in the table on page 94 of the *Quality Counts* report.

[51] Tosto, "Magazine Slams School Standards."

The *Quality Counts* report relied on the assessment of standards done by the American Federation of Teachers (AFT), which issued another report evaluating states' "efforts to institute a standards-based education system."[52] As in past AFT reports, Minnesota's standards fared poorly. They were rated as "clear and specific in math and science at all three levels" but "not clear or specific at any level" in English and social studies.[53] The report criticized Minnesota for its lack of a "coherent system" of strong standards, curriculum and assessments aligned with those standards, and accountability for meeting the standards in every subject area except mathematics, which was considered to be "in pretty good shape" [54]

Opposition to the Profile

In January 2001, a new conservative education lobbying group calling itself the Minnesota Education League was formed by people who had been active in groups such as the Taxpayers League and the Partnership for Choice in Education.[55] In addition to lobbying for revisions to the Profile of Learning, the group was interested in increasing the number of charter schools and the availability of tax credits, making changes in teacher pay and licensing, and supporting any movement toward the use of vouchers.

The Maple River Education Coalition continued its efforts to repeal the Profile throughout 2001. In addition to working with Representative Kielkucki on legislation

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[52] American Federation of Teachers, "Making Standards Matter 2001: A Fifty-State Report on Efforts to Implement a Standards-Based System," (Washington, D.C.: American Federation of Teachers, 2001), 5.

[53] Ibid., 86.

[54] Ibid., 86-87.

[55] Anthony Lonetree, "Conservation Leaders Form Education Lobbying Group," *Minneapolis Star Tribune*, January 16, 2001.

for that purpose, the coalition cosponsored another rally at the Capitol on Sunday, April 29, 2001.[56] The crowd was estimated to be between 500 and 2000 people[57] despite the fact that the Senate had defeated a repeal attempt the week before. Kielkucki, whose bill was awaiting a House vote, attended the rally. As in previous years, the speakers emphasized that the Profile had taken freedom from the people.[58]

In addition to its efforts to repeal the Profile, the Maple River Education Coalition was active in opposing federal control of public education. They posted secure questions from the long-term trend National Assessment for Educational Progress test on their website to demonstrate that "they [were] an exercise in diversity training" and that "NAEP is essentially a way to set curriculum," according to Julie Quist, vice president of MREdCo.[59] NAEP officials downplayed the potential effects of the breach in security, but the Maple River Education Coalition moved "into the national spotlight" as a result.[60]

The coalition's efforts to repeal the Profile continued in 2002. Their website featured an explanation of the Profile that equated performance packages with standards and lamented that "[n]o longer is the focus on academics; rather children 'construct'

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[56] Lonetree, "Profile of Learning Foes Rally."

[57] Lou Gelfland, "Crowd Estimate Didn't Add up to One Reader," *Minneapolis Star Tribune*, May 6, 2001.

[58] Lonetree, "Profile of Learning Foes Rally."

[59] David J. Hoff and Michelle Galley, "NAEP Security Breached by Posting on Web Site," *Education Week*, October 24, 2001.

[60] John Welsh and Paul Tosto, "Security of Test Breached," *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, October 25, 2001.

their own meaning."[61] It was also critical of "government in the driver's seat of our children's future" through school-to-work initiatives.[62] The Coalition called on parents to review their children's curriculum, request alternatives as needed, and stop any career tracking, noting that "[p]arental involvement and non-compliance can have the greatest impact in stopping this system" and the need to return to the "true local control" which was the "most viable avenue to academic excellence."[63]

Katherine Kersten of the Center of the American Experiment again wrote in opposition to the Profile in a column for the *Minneapolis Star Tribune*.[64] In a February 14, 2001 column, she reviewed the 2000 Achieve report, which she believed "should set off alarm bells all across Minnesota" because it showed that the Profile standards were neither clear nor measurable and would not adequately prepare Minnesota's children.[65] She particularly objected to the lack of specific curriculum content. Kersten then described the Academic Panel as "interested in merely tinkering with the Profile" and criticized the commissioner for "being relatively satisfied with the Profile's philosophy and organization."[66] She accused CFL of disregarding "Minnesota students' real educational needs" by promoting a policy based on "untested theories that might make

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[61] Maple River Education Coalition Political Action Committee, "Minnesota's Profile of Learning: What Is It?," http://edaction.org/2002/020721.htm.

[62] Ibid.

[63] Ibid.

[64] Katherine Kersten, "Profile Requires Surgery, but Don't Hold Your Breath," *Minneapolis Star Tribune*, February 14, 2001.

[65] Ibid.

[66] Ibid.

an ed school professor's heart skip a beat" and concluded by encouraging "ordinary Minnesotans to make their voices heard on this issue."[67]

The Center of the American Experiment also published a critique of the Profile that had been presented by Diane Ravitch at the organization's forum in January 2001.[68] Ravitch reviewed the Achieve report and emphasized that Minnesota's standards were "lacking in clarity, rigor, and content, and lacking any clear definition of what students are expected to learn."[69] She expounded on her beliefs that "the abandonment of a central core of knowledge and skills has negative consequences" and that "all children should have the opportunity to enjoy the same quality of education that is offered to the children of the most advantaged parents," which in her view implied strong, teacher-centered instruction on knowledge from traditional academic disciplines.[70] Ravitch concluded that Minnesota was "engaged in a peculiar, a radical experiment, to see whether it is possible to educate an entire generation that knows next to nothing about history, next to nothing about literature, and that has only the scantiest, most episodic knowledge of mathematics and science."[71]

In April 2001 a *St. Paul Pioneer Press* community columnist used her column to criticize both the Profile of Learning and Minnesota's school-to-work initiative.[72] After

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[67] Ibid.

[68] Diane Ravitch, "A Century of Failed School Reforms: The Case of Minnesota's Profile of Learning," *American Experiment Quarterly* (Spring 2001).

[69] Ibid.: 16.

[70] Ibid.: 19.

[71] Ibid.: 20.

[72] Jean Swenson, "Are Minnesota's High Standards the Wrong Standards?," *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, April 1 2001.

clarifying that her concern was "the education system itself, not the dedicated educators," the columnist argued that Minnesota's system of graduation standards, which she described as a "minimum competency system," was weakening achievement in Minnesota's schools.[73] She argued that academics were being replaced by a focus on work force preparation that required every student to select a "career cluster" by eighth grade, engage in service learning, and develop a lifework plan.[74] Her column referred readers to the Maple River Education Coalition website for further information.

Support for the Profile

The editors at the *St. Paul Pioneer Press* continued their support for the Profile of Learning by commending the Academic Panel for its work balancing the Achieve report's recommendations "against the long-standing traditions in Minnesota for local school district control, and the decade-long campaign to develop and introduce the Profile."[75] They were particularly pleased with the panel's recommendation that a deadline for full implementation be set. The editorial concluded by noting that the "panel recommendations leave improvements in the hands of educators, where they belong."[76]

The editors at the *St. Cloud Times* also had a favorable view of the Profile, noting the "good news" that "thanks to experience, many districts and teachers are

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[73] Ibid.

[74] Ibid.

[75] *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, "Editorial," February 26, 2001.

[76] Ibid.

becoming more adept and creative at blending the standards into curriculum."[77] They gave examples from local superintendents who believed that the standards had "helped structure curriculum districtwide" and "broadened class topics for many students."[78] The editors suggested that all districts should focus on embedding standards during the upcoming school year.

Governor Ventura supported the Profile in a more passive manner, by opposing its repeal during the legislative session.[79] His attention to educational issues had shifted toward promoting his own policy agenda, which focused on fiscal accountability for both K-12 districts and institutions of higher education. The governor's refusal to support a repeal was important to the Profile's survival.

Teachers

Teacher opinion on the Profile continued to be divided. In May 2002, two researchers from the University of Minnesota released results of a survey of social studies and English teachers. The majority of respondents indicated that the Profile had had "no impact" on most aspects of both teaching and student learning, although smaller numbers of teachers reported both positive and negative impacts on both.[80] Local papers focused their reporting on the minority of teachers who noted benefits to

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[77] Randy Krebs, "Our View," *St. Cloud Times*, August 28, 2001.

[78] Ibid.

[79] Anthony Lonetree, "Ventura Stresses Educational Priorities," *Minneapolis Star Tribune,* May 12, 2001.

[80] Patricia G. Avery, Richard Beach, and Jodiann Coler, "The Impact of Minnesota's 'Profile of Learning' on Teaching and Learning in English and Social Studies Classrooms," *Education Policy Analysis Archives* 11, no. 7 (2003): 13-14.

students and the majority of teachers who reported decreased job satisfaction.[81] The completed research paper, published in 2003, notes that teachers identified additional time needed for preparation and performance assessments as well as the burden of record-keeping as negatively impacting their teaching. Implementation was made more difficult by "what teachers perceived as inconsistent direction from CFL, lack of local support and resources, public misunderstanding of the *Profile,* conservative political attacks on the *Profile*, and resistance to change."[82] Not surprisingly, teachers who believed they had had good training related to the Profile generally had more favorable opinions of it.[83] These findings echoed the concerns that teachers had been voicing since 1994.

In September 2002, Education Minnesota adopted a resolution calling for Minnesota's graduation standards to be "reconciled with the requirements of ESEA" and for changes in the standards to be "thoughtful, based on research, reliable data, teacher involvement" and "directly related to the improvement of learning."[84] The union was cognizant of changes in federal policy resulting from the No Child Left Behind Act that would require changes in the state policy and wanted a single coherent system in Minnesota. The influence of the federal policy can also be seen in the call for the standards to be research-based, which previously had not been an issue. In December

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[81] Norman Draper, "Teachers Still Divided on Value of Profile of Learning," *Minneapolis Star Tribune*, May 2, 2002; John Welsh, "Standards Help Kids, but Teachers Aren't as Happy," *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, May 2, 2002.

[82] Avery, Beach, and Coler, "The Impact of Minnesota's 'Profile of Learning'," 22.

[83] Ibid.

[84] Education Minnesota, "Profile of Learning Resolution," http://www.educationminnesota.org/index/cfm?PAGE_ID=7393.

2002, Education Minnesota included this position in a plan for improving public education in Minnesota. Their plan was criticized for calling for additional revenue for education at a time when the state was facing a budget shortfall.[85]

The 2002 Legislative Session

The Profile of Learning received little attention in the early part of the 2002 legislative session, but on April 18 the House voted 109 to 22 in favor of repealing the policy.[86] The repeal vote was no longer seen as particularly newsworthy; both Twin Cities papers ran only short articles on inner pages of their metro sections.[87] The *St. Paul Pioneer Press* described the event as the House "doing its part to welcome spring" by "vot[ing]—as it traditionally does this time of year—to kill the educational standards called the Profile of Learning."[88]

The repeal had been introduced as an amendment to the Clean Indoor Air Act by House Majority Leader Tim Pawlenty (R-Eagan), who was running for governor. Both Pawlenty and businessman Brian Sullivan, his major rival for the Republican endorsement, took credit for moving the legislation forward.[89] The interest in the Profile on the part of the candidates reflects the political nature of the policy.

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[85] Norman Draper, "Teachers Union Lays out Its Vision for 2003," *Minneapolis Star Tribune*, December 10, 2002.

[86] Minnesota House of Representatives, "Journal of the House, Eighty-Second Session, One Hundredth Day," (2002).

[87] Conrad deFiebre, "House Votes to End Profile of Learning," *Minneapolis Star Tribune*, .June 24, 2002; Rachel E. Stassen-Berger, "House Kills Profile of Learning--Again," *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, April 19, 2002.

[88] Stassen-Berger, "House Kills Profile of Learning."

[89] Ibid.

A few days later, the effort to repeal the Profile was rejected by the Senate on a tie vote after the voting board was left open for 45 minutes in order to allow several senators time to arrive at the Capitol and vote. Senators Sandy Pappas, Myron Orfield (DFL-Minneapolis), and Steve Kelley (DFL-Hopkins) arrived late in the voting process; their "no" votes were enough to create a 33 – 33 tie and defeat the proposal.[90] Senator Pappas suggested that opponents were "voting out of habit"[91] rather than responding to concerns from the educational community.[92] Profile opponents disagreed, saying they had "heard plenty."[93] Governor Ventura's office indicated that the governor opposed the repeal of the Profile.[94]

At the end of the legislative session, the Profile remained unchanged when the House-Senate conference committee abandoned efforts to find a compromise course of action.[95] While four of the six members of the committee "appeared ready to scrap the Profile," the presence of Profile-supporting Senators Larry Pogemiller and Sandy Pappas on the committee eclipsed that option.[96] Pogemiller proposed a process that would give CFL officials the ability to begin a formal rulemaking process, including

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[90] Anthony Lonetree, "Profile of Learning Survives Repeal Effort in Senate," *Minneapolis Star Tribune*, April 23, 2002; Minnesota Senate, "Journal of the Senate, Eighty-Second Legislature, One Hundred First Day," (2002).

[91] Lonetree, "Profile of Learning Survives Repeal Effort."

[92] John Welsh and Rachel E. Stassen-Berger, "Profile of Learning Survives Senate Vote," *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, April 23, 2002.

[93] Lonetree, "Profile of Learning Survives Repeal Effort."

[94] Welsh and Stassen-Berger, "Profile of Learning Survives Senate Vote."

[95] Anthony Lonetree, "Profile of Learning Left Untouched," *Minneapolis Star Tribune*, May 15, 2002.

[96] Ibid; John Welsh, "Panel Can't Compromise on Profile of Learning," *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, May 15, 2002. The support of two of the three members from each body of the legislature was required for a compromise.

public notice along with hearings and action by an administrative law judge, to change the Profile. His proposal was rebuffed by the House conferees, who "continued to criticize the education department's handling of the Profile."[97] Both sides told reporters that they believed that the future of the Profile would ultimately be decided by voters in the gubernatorial and legislative elections in the fall.[98] The Profile had the support of DFL-endorsed candidate Roger Moe and of Governor Ventura, who had not yet decided whether to seek re-election. Both Tim Pawlenty and Brian Sullivan were opponents of the Profile.[99]

Testing and Accountability

Achieve and the MCAs

In April 2001, Achieve, Inc. released its second report on Minnesota's standards, this time evaluating the "quality, rigor and alignment of the Minnesota Comprehensive Assessments (MCAs) to the Profile of Learning standards for reading, writing, and mathematics."[100] The review found that "on the whole, the tests measure content and skills found in the standards"; however, the quality of the tests was compromised because the standards were, in Achieve's view, neither clear nor rigorous.[101] The evaluators believed that the MCAs "laid the groundwork for a future

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[97] Lonetree, "Profile of Learning Left Untouched."

[98] Welsh, "Panel Can't Compromise."

[99] Lonetree, "Profile of Learning Left Untouched."

[100] Achieve Inc., "Measuring Up: A Benchmarking Study of the Minnesota Comprehensive Assessments," (Washington, D.C.: Achieve Inc., 2001), 3.

[101] Ibid., 13.

expansion of testing in Minnesota" through a process that should include revising the standards (as recommended in their previous report), revising the assessments "to ensure that they measure a broader range of standards," and "increase[ing] the level of rigor throughout the tests."[102] The results of the report were released by CFL on May 10,[103] but appeared to have little effect on the legislative debate over the Profile at that time.

High School MCAs

The first high school test designed to measure achievement on the standards was administered statewide in mid-April 2002 as the MCAs were extended to mathematics in grade eleven. Although the test was not high-stakes for students, it generated controversy even before it was given because of the perception that it was extraordinarily difficult. Math teachers, university professors, and legislators all had questions about the appropriateness of the test, but CFL officials were pleased with the interest the test had generated.[104] The scores, which were released in October, showed wide variation across the state. Scores were highly correlated with the number and level of math courses students had taken; not surprisingly, those with fewer math courses had lower scores. The differences were "big and stark," according to state testing director Reg Allen.[105] The state did not set proficiency levels for the test in 2002, making it

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[102] Ibid., 19.

[103] John Welsh, "State's Math, Reading Tests Too Easy, Review Finds," *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, May 11, 2001.

[104] John Welsh, "New Test Already Is Controversial," *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, March 3, 2002.

[105] John Welsh and John Welbes, "Math Exposure Lacking," *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, October 2, 2002.

difficult to interpret the scores, but the results appeared to support the increased math requirements that were part of the Profile of Learning.

Meeting Standards: The Class of 2002

The class of 2002 was the first to be required to meet the standards of the Profile of Learning in order to graduate, although the 2001 legislation had allowed each district to set its own requirements. As the end of the school year approached, schools and districts around the state were facing the implications of their decisions, and in some cases, making last-minute exemptions and changes. In some cases, because seniors could be enrolled in courses in which standards were embedded, it was difficult to know whether they had met all requirements until their courses were complete for the year. At St. Louis Park High School, approximately two-thirds of the senior class was exempted from the requirement of meeting 18 standards when school officials discovered that they would otherwise not graduate; reasons for exemptions included scheduling problems, substitution of higher level courses for course in which standards were embedded, problems arising from transferring schools, and enrollment in courses in which standards had not yet been embedded.[106] Two other metro area districts, Chaska and South Washington County, exempted their entire senior classes. Minneapolis, St. Paul, and Lakeville had decided in advance to exempt their seniors.[107]

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[106] Norman Draper, "Profile Complicates Graduation," *Minneapolis Star Tribune*, May 26, 2002.

[107] Ibid.

Elections

On June 15, 2002, after 12 ballots stretching over nearly 18 hours, Tim Pawlenty won the Republican endorsement for governor, joining DFL candidate Roger Moe and Green Party candidate Ken Pentel in the race. He identified "kids, roads and jobs" as the "bread-and-butter issues that really matter in the quality of people's lives" that would be the focus of his campaign for election.[108] On June 18, Governor Ventura announced to listeners of Minnesota Public Radio's Midday program that he was "not seeking re-election."[109] Tim Penny then became the Independence Party candidate.[110]

Funding for K-12 education was expected to be a prime issue in the race for governor. Each of the candidates viewed K-12 education spending as a priority despite a budget deficit. Moe and Penny stated that they would consider raising taxes if needed to balance the budget; Pentel declined to give specifics. Tim Pawlenty had signed a "no new taxes" pledge but claimed to have "no doubt" that education spending would rise under his leadership.[111] The Profile of Learning was also frequently mentioned by candidates.[112] Moe, Penny, and Pentel generally supported the Profile but wanted to make changes to provide for greater control for teachers and flexibility for local districts. Pawlenty wanted to replace the Profile with content-based standards in

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[108] Conrad deFiebre and Robert Whereatt, "Long Battle Pushes Pawlenty Forward," *Minneapolis Star Tribune*, June 16, 2002.

[109] "Midday " Minnesota Public Radio Program Archives, http://news.minnesota.publicradio.org/programs/midday/listings/md20020617.shtml#2.

[110] John Welsh, "Schools Are Key Issue This Year," *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, August 12, 2002.

[111] Ibid.

[112] Ibid.

reading, writing, mathematics, science, and social studies.[113] On November 5, 2002, Pawlenty was elected governor.

The day after the election, Governor-elect Pawlenty outlined his top priorities: first, the three billion dollar budget shortfall, and second, "replacing or dramatically improving" the Profile of Learning.[114] He expected the Republican majority in the House and the near parity in the Senate to help him accomplish his agenda.[115] The changes in the legislature gave it "more of an anti-Profile cast"[116] while the change in the governor's office marked the first time that the state's chief executive was "unabashedly opposed to the Profile of Learning."[117] Outgoing education Commissioner Christine Jax expressed hope that the new governor would be open to the changes she and her staff would propose, rather than abandoning the Profile. Buffalo superintendent Tom Nelson, however, said the Profile had been "buried on Tuesday night [the evening of the election]" and suspended any work on Profile implementation in his district in anticipation of its repeal.[118]

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[113] Patrick Sweeney, "Pawlenty: Scrap Profile of Learning," *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, September 4, 2002.

[114] Conrad deFiebre, "Busy Day Begins with an in-Line Victory Lap," *Minneapolis Star Tribune*, November 7, 2002.

[115] Ibid, "Party Control of the Minnesota Senate, 1951-," http://www.leg.state.mn.us/lrl/histleg/caucuss.asp#footnote, "Party Control of the Minnesota House of Representatives, 1951-," http://www.leg.state.mn.us/lrl/histleg/caucush.asp. The House had 81 Republicans and 52 DFLers; the Senate had 31 Republicans, 35 DFLers, and one Independent who caucused with the Republicans.

[116] Norman Draper, "Election Brings Trouble for Profile of Learning," *Minneapolis Star Tribune*, November 11, 2002.

[117] Darcia Harris Bowman, "State Journal: A Profile in Change?," *Education Week*, December 4, 2002.

[118] Draper, "Election Brings Trouble."

Federal Requirements

The reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act approved by Congress early in 2002, more commonly known as the No Child Left Behind Act, required dramatic changes in accountability measures for schools, including a requirement to test students in grades three through eight annually in reading and mathematics and to report subgroup scores based on factors including race, ethnicity, socioeconomic level, special education status and English proficiency.[119] Minnesota was already using a plan for determining Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) based on the MCAs but the new legislation would require a new plan and new tests. A variety of stakeholders, including representatives from school districts, education groups, and lawmakers, met with CFL officials to discuss Minnesota's response to the law, but by early November no plan had been formalized, although an expansion of the MCAs seemed the most likely scenario.[120]

The No Child Left Behind Act also required states to have standards with benchmarks for every grade level.[121] State education officials were required to present the United States Department of Education with a plan for meeting this and other requirements of the law by January 31, 2003.[122] Groups of educators had completed final drafts of proposed revisions of the standards by early 2002, but they did not meet

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[119] Education Week Research Center, "No Child Left Behind," http://www.edweek.org/rc/issues/no-child-left-behind/?

[120] John Welsh, "Minnesota Plans for Federal Test Requirements," *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, November 3, 2002.

[121] United States Congress, "No Child Left Behind Act of 2001," (2002).

[122] Welsh, "Minnesota Plans for Federal Test Requirements."

the requirements of the new law because they were written in grade level clusters (e.g., primary, intermediate) and did not contain specific grade level benchmarks.[123] In order to address this shortcoming, small work groups of educators with expertise in reading and mathematics were assembled in the fall of 2002 to write grade level benchmarks for these areas. The benchmarks were to be aligned with the proposed revised standards.[124]

The groups working on proposals for meeting the new federal law were working in a context of uncertainty. A new governor had been elected and would be appointing a new commissioner. According to Charlie Weaver, leader of Pawlenty's transition team, the position of commissioner was "one of the most important appointments, if not the most important," yet the position remained unfilled at the end of 2002, making it difficult to predict whether the new commissioner would be amendable to the proposals being developed.[125] Changes in the legislature, along with the budget deficit, also made funding of any proposals uncertain.

A New Governor, Commissioner, and Legislature

On January 6, 2003, Tim Pawlenty was sworn in as Governor of Minnesota.[126] Ten days later, Cheri Pierson Yecke was named as the new education commissioner, leaving a position with the federal government in which she had worked on teacher

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[123] "Final Draft: Reading, Viewing, Listening," (Minnesota Department of Children, Families, and Learning, January 18, 2002).

[124] Mary Lillesve, interview by author, July 20, 2007.

[125] Norman Draper, "Tests Await New Education Commissioner," *Minneapolis Star Tribune*, Novermber 25, 2002.

[126] http://www.mnhs.org/people/governors/gov/gov_40.htm

quality and school choice related to the No Child Left Behind Act.[127] Reporters speculated that she appealed to the Pawlenty administration because of her previous involvement in creating academic standards in Virginia and her lack of connection with the education establishment in Minnesota.[128] Response to Yecke from officials from the teachers union and school boards association was favorable after their initial meeting with the new commissioner.[129] Critics, however, worried about her conservative ideology, her ties with the Bush administration and the No Child Left Behind legislation, and her own elementary and secondary education, which took place in the Catholic schools of St. Paul rather than the public schools.[130] Yecke, looking forward to "genuine education reform,"[131] noted that the Profile of Learning was "the first thing on our agenda."[132] *Star Tribune* reporter Norman Draper pointed out that she was also faced with bringing the state into compliance with the No Child Left Behind Act and working in the context of a significant budget deficit.[133]

On February 6, Governor Pawlenty gave his first State of the State Address, a portion of which laid out his education agenda. Stating that "[t]he main thing is to keep the main thing the main thing," he announced that the Department of Children,

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[127] "Paige Statement on Cheri Yecke Being Named Minnesota Commissioner of Education," http://www.ed.gov/print/news/pressreleases/2003/01/01162003.html

[128] Norman Draper, "Federal Official to Head State's Schools," *Minneapolis Star Tribune*, January 16 2003, John Welsh, "Yecke Is Education Commissioner," *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, January 17, 2003.

[129] Draper, "Federal Official to Head State's Schools."

[130] Welsh, "Yecke Is Education Commissioner."

[131] "Paige Statement."

[132] Norman Draper, "New Course for Schools, Seasoned Hand for DNR," *Minneapolis Star Tribune*, January 17, 2003.

[133] Ibid.

Families, and Learning would revert to its former name, the Minnesota Department of Education.[134] He spoke of holding parents accountable for their children, improving the education of needy children, performance pay for teachers, and finding a new funding formula for schools. He also stated that the "Profile of Learning needs to be abolished and replaced with something better" and suggested that Minnesota's children "deserve nation-leading academic standards that are clear, rigorous, and focused on what students need to know."[135] The new governor gave few specifics related to these items.

Pleased to have a governor that supported their position, the Maple River Education Coalition sponsored a rally at the Capitol on January 8 to highlight their intent to push for repeal of the Profile in 2003,[136] promising to be "as tenacious as a bulldog on the back end of someone's behind."[137] Senator Michele Bachmann encouraged the group to "beat on the door of every senator, every legislator" to accomplish its task. Renee Doyle introduced newly elected anti-Profile House and Senate members to each other, noting that her organization was "the voice that has educated the citizens of Minnesota."[138]

Katherine Kersten, who served as a member of Pawlenty's transition team, again wrote a column for the *Star Tribune*, this time describing the Profile as "fundamentally flawed" because of the "theory of learning behind it: that process—how kids learn—is

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[134] Tim Pawlenty, "State of the State Address 2003," http://archive.leg.state.mn.us/docs/2003/other/030108.pdf

[135] Ibid.

[136] Kirsti Marohn, "Hundreds Protest Profile of Learning," *St. Cloud Times* January 9, 2003.

[137] Jim Ragsdale, "Anti-Profile Group Sees Victory Ahead," *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, January 9, 2003.

[138] Ibid.

more important than content—what kids learn."[139] Kersten also wrote an article for the *American Experiment Quarterly* in which she highlighted the Profile's flaws, with extensive attention being given to its approach to assessment.[140] She reviewed critiques of the Profile and concluded by describing the importance of good standards, which she noted "look nothing like the Profile of Learning," and calling on the Minnesota legislature to make repeal of the Profile "one of the major priorities of the next legislative session."[141]

New Standards for Reading, Language Arts, and Mathematics

On January 29, Governor Pawlenty and Commissioner Yecke announced a plan for the creation of new K-12 standards for reading, language arts, and mathematics that would replace those in the Profile. Their intention was to have these standards developed by a group of parents, teachers, and school administrators selected by the commissioner. No formal qualifications were listed for committee membership, although Yecke stated that she was looking for people with "strong content knowledge and high expectations for children."[142] The committee was expected to complete its work within about six weeks, with the final draft going to the legislature by the end of

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[139] Katherine Kersten, "No Amount of Tweaking Can Repair the Profile of Learning," *Minneapolis Star Tribune*, January 15, 2003.

[140] Katherine Kersten, "Minnesota's Profile of Learning: A Primer on Why It Still Flunks," *American Experiment Quarterly* (Winter 2002-2003).

[141] Ibid.: 51.

[142] John Welsh, "Profile to Be Made over in Weeks," *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, January 30, 2003.

March. Schools would be expected to implement the new standards beginning in fall 2003.[143]

The fast pace for development and implementation was cause for concern among many stakeholders. Senator Steve Kelley, chair of the Senate Education Policy Committee, thought the timeline was too short to come up with "a ground-up replacement" for the Profile standards.[144] Superintendent John Regan of South Washington County noted that it would be "difficult if not impossible" to make a change affecting 900,000 students by September 1.[145] Professor Deborah Dillon of the University of Minnesota noted that the timeline was not adequate for "the complexity of the task" and expressed concern about the use of a "cut and paste model" rather than "solid standards developed by experts."[146] Nevertheless, it appeared certain that the Profile would not survive the legislative session. The Republicans had expanded their margin in the House to 29;[147] the Democrats held only a slim margin of 3 in the Senate.[148] The bipartisan coalition that had built the policy was gone and for the first time there was a governor who wanted it repealed.[149]

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[143] Norman Draper and Anthony Lonetree, "New Course for Schools," *Minneapolis Star Tribune*, January 30, 2003.

[144] Welsh, "Profile to Be Made Over."

[145] Draper and Lonetree, "New Course for Schools."

[146] John Welsh, "Profile Plan Already under Fire," *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, February 6, 2003.

[147] Minnesota Legislative Reference Library, "Party Control of the Minnesota House of Representatives, 1951-." Total membership in the House was 133 in 2003.

[148] Minnesota Legislative Reference Library, "Party Control of the Minnesota Senate, 1951-." Total membership in the Senate was 67 in 2003.

[149] Draper and Lonetree, "New Course for Schools."

On February 6, the House Education Policy Committee voted 19 to 0 in favor of a bill authored by Representative Tony Kielkucki to repeal the Profile and replace it with the new academic standards that the governor and commissioner had promised. Although there was concern among some committee members about adequate funding for schools to make a "dramatic change," an amendment to the bill that would have required the state to pay for costs associated with implementing the new set of standards was voted down.[150] The Senate Education Committee was more cautious, questioning Commissioner Yecke about the costs and other implications of making the change. Senator Pappas noted that she was "starting to get panicky calls from parents and administrators," but the commissioner indicated that implementation of the new standards would not cause financial difficulties for districts.[151] Committee chair Steve Kelley stated that repeal of the Profile should wait until legislators agreed on what would replace it.[152]

On February 17, the House voted 118 to 10 for repeal of the Profile.[153] The bill directed the commissioner to present "proposed rules for implementing statewide rigorous core academic standards in English and mathematics" to the legislature by April 15, 2003.[154] Science standards were to follow in 2004 and history and geography

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[150] Anthony Lonetree, "Profile of Learning Is Dealt a First Blow," *Minneapolis Star Tribune*, February 7, 2003.

[151] John Welsh, "House Ready to Repeal Profile; Senate Wants New Plan First," *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, February 12, 2003.

[152] Ibid.

[153] Minnesota House of Representatives, "Journal of the House, Eighty-Third Session, Seventeenth Day," (2003).

[154] *H.F. No. 2, Third Engrossment, 83rd Legislative Session*.

standards in 2005. There was some disagreement about the language of the bill, which called for the new standards to "preserve and promote fundamentally American principles stated in the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution of the United States and other such principles as national sovereignty, natural law, and free market enterprise."[155] Several representatives questioned the meaning of the term "natural law" and the Duluth *News-Tribune* devoted an editorial to the "stealth agenda" that they believed represented the "agenda of the extreme religious right."[156]

The Senate seemed not to feel the same urgency to propose and vote on legislation. Senator Kelley planned a series of hearings related to education standards before he would ask the Senate Education Committee to hear and vote on legislation specific to repeal and replacement of the Profile.[157]

On February 13, seventy-six Minnesotans chosen in one week from 2,146 applicants were named to the Academic Standards Committee to develop language arts and mathematics standards.[158] The total group included parents, teachers, administrators, school board members, and businesspeople.[159] College professors were included in the mathematics but not the language arts group.[160] All committee members were provided with standards from Virginia and California. Standards for reading from

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[155] Ibid.

[156] *Duluth News-Tribune*, "Editorial," February 21, 2003, John Welsh, "House Repeals Profile," *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, February 18, 2003.

[157] Anthony Lonetree, "House Backs Profile Repeal - Again," *Minneapolis Star Tribune*, February 18, 2003.

[158] Norman Draper, "76 Are Chosen to Guide Schools," *Minneapolis Star Tribune*, February 14, 2003.

[159] John Welsh, "'Profile' Panel Is Diverse," *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, February 14, 2003.

[160] *Minneapolis Star Tribune*, "K-12 Standards" (Opinion Extra), March 15, 2003.

Alabama, Massachusetts, Nebraska, and Wisconsin were given to the language arts committee. The mathematics committee received standards from Kansas, Ohio, North Carolina, and South Dakota.[161] Their appointment letters stated that in addition to these documents, which were considered exemplary standards, committee members could "refer to whatever resources" they found "useful."[162] The proposed revisions to the Profile and the benchmarks created in the fall of 2003, however, were conspicuously absent from the documents provided to the committee.

At the group's first meeting on February 18, Governor Pawlenty encouraged them to develop standards that were "rigorous…focused…user-friendly…[and] don't celebrate and elevate process over substance."[163] The initial draft was to be completed by March 3.[164] To get the work done in the short timeframe, the group was divided into eight subcommittees based on curriculum area and grade level cluster.[165] Subcommittees went to work quickly, making use of the standards from other states. One member of the math committee described their process as a "Cal-Virginia cut-and-paste."[166]

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[161] John Welbes, "House Panel Reject Profile," *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, February 7, 2003.

[162] Draper, "76 Are Chosen." With the exception of Virginia, all the standards sent to committee members had been given a grade of "A" in 2000 by the Fordham foundation.

[163] Tim Pugmire, "Standards Group Meets for the First Time," Minnesota Public Radio, http://news.minnesota.publicradio.org/features/2003/02/19_pugmiret_gradstandards/.

[164] Draper, "76 Are Chosen."

[165] Pugmire, "Standards Group Meets." There were subcommittees for language arts and mathematics at the primary, intermediate, middle, and high school levels—the same organization that had been used for the Profile.

[166] John Welsh, "Group Dives into Rewriting Standards," *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, February 20, 2003.

A late February poll indicated that nearly two-thirds of Minnesota voters favored repeal of the Profile of Learning. There was less agreement about what should take its place beyond the notion that the new standards should emphasize "the basics."[167] Legislators also had not reached agreement on the replacement for the Profile. In early March, Senator Kelley and Representative Joe Opatz (DFL-St. Cloud) proposed a plan that would build new standards from those already developed by national academic groups rather than those from other states. The plan also addressed compliance with NCLB requirements.[168] Kelley later incorporated the standards that had been drafted by the groups of teachers and CFL officials during the previous year into his bill.[169]

On March 11, the commissioner released the proposed standards for reading and mathematics, with thirteen meetings scheduled around the state to allow for public comments.[170] Citizens were also invited to submit comments via email. According to the commissioner, response from parents was generally positive while response from teachers was more negative. Education professors were particularly critical. The volume of comments prompted Yecke to ask the legislature for an additional two-week time period in which the proposed academic standards could be reviewed by experts and revised.[171]

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[167] Paul Tosto, "Confidence in Schools, Spending Takes Dip," *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, February 27, 2003.

[168] John Welsh, "DFL Offers Standards to Replace Profile," *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, DFL Offers 2003.

[169] Norman Draper, "Fast Track to Learning Standards Is Slowed," *Minneapolis Star Tribune*, March 29, 2003.

[170] John Welsh, "Standards Refined or Rushed?," *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, March 12, 2003.

[171] Draper, "Fast Track."

On April 3, the Senate Education Committee, voting along party lines, passed a bill that would repeal the Profile and replace it with the standards previously created by Minnesota teachers and CFL officials. Senator Kelley stated that the proposal included clear academic standards but retained the Profile's goal of ensuring that students understood what they were taught, while Yecke's approach could turn education into a "superficial checklist."[172]

On April 15, the commissioner presented the second draft of her proposed language arts and mathematics standards to the education policy committees in both the House and Senate. The Republican-controlled House committee was generally favorable while the DFL-controlled Senate committee was less so.[173] Senator Kelley criticized not only the proposed standards but also the reluctance on the part of the governor and commissioner to attempt to find a compromise position. Yecke's process also came under criticism from some members of the language arts standards committee, who stated in both testimony and a letter that they had not had enough time to perform the task they were given and that their work needed input from experts in the field.[174]

On May 2, the Senate voted in favor of the DFL-sponsored plan developed by Senator Kelley that would repeal the Profile of Learning and replace it with a set of standards developed largely from the benchmarks created the previous year by groups

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[172] Anthony Lonetree, "Senate Committee Passes Profile-Repeal Plan," *Minneapolis Star Tribune*, April 4, 2003.

[173] John Welsh, "Graduation Standards," *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, April 16, 2003.

[174] Norman Draper, "Challenges Cropping up for Academic Standards," *Minneapolis Star Tribune*, April 16, 2003; Welsh, "Graduation Standards."

of teachers.[175] The Republican-sponsored bill that would repeal the Profile of Learning and replace it with the standards being developed by the commissioner's committee was rejected with a vote that generally followed party lines.[176] Senator Michelle Bachmann (R-Stillwater), who was aligned with the Maple River Education Coalition, described Senator Kelley's proposal as "a subterfuge of the Profile of Learning" and Governor Pawlenty referred to it as "Profile II: The Sequel."[177] Senator Kelley expressed hope that the legislature could "get past this stage of politicized education policy" and begin a discussion that would result in "bringing the two plans together."[178]

Editors at the *Star Tribune* advised lawmakers that they needed to "get it right."[179] They praised the Senate plan for building "on the lessons learned from the profile" and including an emphasis on students' ability to apply knowledge, noting that the initiative for standards-based education in the United States had arisen largely from concerns about that ability.[180] They commended the commissioner for her process of public hearings and her revisions based on feedback. The editors concluded that it was "crucial that the two sides agree on a set of rules that give clear direction on what students need to know and do."[181] The *Pioneer Press* editors made a similar plea, noting that the two sets of standards had "differences…but also a lot of commonality" and

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[175] Minnesota Senate, "Journal of the Senate, Eighty-Third Legislature, Forty-Eighth Day," (2003).

[176] Anthony Lonetree, "Senate OKs Its Own Plan to Scrap Profile," *Minneapolis Star Tribune*, May 3, 2003.

[177] Ibid.

[178] John Welsh, "Profile of Learning: Senate Passes New Academic Standards," *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, May 3, 2003.

[179] *Minneapolis Star Tribune*, "Editorial," May 4, 2003.

[180] Ibid.

[181] Ibid.

encouraging both the House and Senate to "begin moving constructively toward compromise."[182] Lamenting that Minnesota's standards movement had become "mired in hostile politics" while "the rest of the country moved on," the editors called on legislators to avoid creating another controversial standards document and chastised the Governor for his unwillingness to consider the Senate's plan.[183]

Late in the evening on May 16, House and Senate leaders announced that a compromise plan had been reached. The plan would require statewide standards in mathematics, language arts, science, social studies and the arts. Districts would be required to provide electives in health and physical education, vocational and technical education, and world languages. Credit requirements for graduation would be re-established. Details remained to be resolved.[184]

By May 19, details had been worked out. Students would be required to complete four credits in language arts, three in mathematics, three in science, three and one-half in social studies, and one in art along with eight elective credits in order to graduate.[185] The mathematics standards were based primarily on the work done by the commissioner's committee, while the language arts standards were a combination of the commissioner's proposal and the proposal by Senator Kelley.[186] Education Minnesota

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[182] *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, "Editorial," May 7, 2003.

[183] Ibid.

[184] Anthony Lonetree, "Framework Reached to Repeal Profile of Learning," *Minneapolis Star Tribune*, May 17, 2003.

[185] Anthony Lonetree, "Profile of Learning: Embattled State Graduation Rule Meets Its Maker," *Minneapolis Star Tribune*, May 20, 2003; John Welsh, "Profile of Learning: New Standards Win Legislative OK on a Bipartisan Vote," *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, May 20, 2003.

[186] Staff and wire reports, "Key Players Say Compromise near on New Standards," *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, May 20, 2003.

had been involved in creating the compromise standards in order to "ensure that the best interests of students [were] served."[187]

The Profile of Learning was repealed a few hours before midnight on May 19, the last day of the legislative session, with a House vote of 125-9 and a Senate vote of 64-3.[188] Governor Pawlenty signed the bill into law on May 21.[189]

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[187] Education Minnesota, "Profile Repealed, New Standards Adopted," *Minnesota Educator* (May 23, 2003), http://www.educationminnesota.org/index.cfm?PAGE_ID=7981.

[188] Welsh, "New Standards Win Legislative OK." "Minnesota Session Laws," (Chapter 129, Article 1, 2003).

[189] John Welsh, "New Grad Standards Become Law," *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, May 22, 2003.

CHAPTER NINE

CAUSES OF POLICY FAILURE

The Profile of Learning began as a forward-looking, cutting-edge educational policy, became controversial and contested, and ended with little support from most stakeholders and strong opposition from some. It was replaced by standards that reflected a more traditional approach to curriculum, assessment based on statewide testing, and a graduation rule that returned to the traditional Carnegie unit requirements. Reflection on and analysis of the story of the Profile suggests reasons that may have contributed to the policy's failure. This chapter will explore probable causes for the failure of the policy in relation to the four sections of the conceptual framework that guided the study: (a) the social and political context, (b) the policy actors, (c) beliefs about the purpose of schooling and the knowledge that should be contained in the curriculum, and (d) the policy levers of curriculum, assessment, and teacher learning.

The Policy Context

The National Context

In 1995, a survey done by *Education Week* showed that most states, including Minnesota, were still in the process of developing standards.[1] The approaches taken to the process varied widely:

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[1] Lynn Olson, "Standards Times 50," *Education Week*, April 12, 1995. The Educate America Act of 1994 required states to develop standards and assessments.

> Today, state approaches to standards-setting range all over the map. States call their standards everything from "content standards" to "curriculum frameworks" to "essential learnings." Some state standards are remarkably succinct, fitting on two sides of a page. Others encompass volume upon volume of detail. In some states, legislators have required that standards be set. In others, the state board of education or the department of education began the process.
>
> Some states have tied their standards to statewide tests, professional development, and graduation requirements; others have not. A surprising number of states are drafting standards without determining whether they will be voluntary or mandatory, how they will be used to measure student performance, or how they will be implemented.[2]

Minnesota's experience in 1995 was thus not unusual. Across the country, states were struggling with the ideas of standards and systemic reform.

Perhaps because of the wide variation in conceptualizing standards, several organizations took it upon themselves to evaluate each state's work, using criteria that reflected their beliefs in regard to standards. The AFT reports emphasized clarity and specificity in the four core content areas.[3] The Council on Basic Education focused on rigor.[4] The Fordham Foundation review relied on individual scholars in each discipline to create their own review criteria; overall their criteria reflected a traditional view of curriculum. Because each group set different criteria, the ratings sometimes resulted in widely differing ratings for the same set of standards.[5] In response to this inconsistency, the 1998 report from the National Education Goals Panel recommended that educators

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[2] Ibid.

[3] The four core areas were English language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies.

[4] Achieve, Inc. worked with the Council on Basic Education to evaluate the Profile of Learning. These ratings were also used in the *Quality Counts* report.

[5] Lynn Olson, "An 'A' or a 'D': State Rankings Differ Widely," *Education Week*, April 15, 1998. While some states got inconsistent scores, Minnesota got poor ratings from all groups throughout the life of the Profile.

seek consensus on "the 'essential features' of good standards," but correctly predicted that this process would be challenging because of "fundamental disagreements among experts."[6] Despite the lack of formal consensus on criteria for evaluating standards, terms such as *clarity*, *specificity*, and *rigor*, which had been emphasized in these evaluative reports, became widely used and accepted.

Mandatory testing also took one increased importance in relation to systemic reform. The 1997 *Quality Counts* report gave a grade of "A" to states that had "developed their own criterion-referenced assessments aligned with their standards, as well as performance assessments that present a more multifaceted picture of students' work."[7] (The report described performance assessment as "writing an essay" or "conducting a scientific experiment,"[8] a more narrow definition than Minnesota used.) In 2001, *Quality Counts* reported that the emphasis on testing had increased to such a degree that "state tests are overshadowing the standards they were designed to measure."[9] Minnesota had set out to do something innovative, redefining the meaning of a high school diploma and leading instruction and assessment in a new direction, but the country was moving in a different direction, making Minnesota's attempt at innovation seem misguided. The Profile's interdisciplinary learning, constructivist pedagogy, emphasis on performance assessment, and focus on application of knowledge

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[6] Kathleen Kennedy Manzo, "Report for Goals Panel Calls for Consensus on Standards," *Education Week*, September 9, 1998.

[7] *Education Week* and Pew Charitable Trusts, "Quality Counts 1997: A Report Card on the Condition of Public Education in the 50 States," (Education Week, 1997), 33.

[8] Ibid., 32.

[9] *Education Week* and Pew Charitable Trusts, "Quality Counts 2001," 8.

seemed to be vague and unwieldy ideas that would fail to produce the desired improvement in student achievement.

Some of the changes made in the Profile as it was revised prior to adoption were reflective of the national context, which emphasized standards in the core subjects. The "elements" were changed to "learning areas" that more closely aligned with traditional disciplines, reflecting movement toward more content-based standards rather than overarching processes. The idea of a completely new system in which graduation would be dependent solely on completion of standards that emphasized interdisciplinary work was replaced by a standards-based system that would be overlaid on the existing system through embedding standards in traditional high school coursework. Students could receive grades in their courses that were separate from scores on performance packages. These revisions resulted in the Profile being based more on content and less on competencies, but still did not create the rigor and specificity that had become part of the national conversation. Officials at MDE/CFL remained committed both to the idea of standards that emphasized the application of knowledge and to the use of performance assessments as a policy lever to drive changes in instruction, which kept Minnesota's standards work at odds with the national trends. They did, however, agree to the use of tests along with the performance assessments to measure student achievement. The increased emphasis on testing nationwide probably contributed to the legislature's decision in 1997 to repeal the prohibition on required statewide testing in Minnesota.

The national context was also shifting toward increased federal and state control of educational policy and reduced local control.[10] In Minnesota, however, the changes made by the 2000 legislature resulted in increased local control over Profile implementation and graduation requirements. This move again went against the national trend. After George W. Bush became President in 2001, the states took on additional responsibility in the implementation of the No Child Left Behind legislation. The implementation of this policy coincided with, and may have contributed to, the repeal of the Profile of Learning.

The State Context

In the public mind, Minnesota had a tradition of strong schools and high achievement. This belief was challenged by the unexpected failure rate on the basic standards test and the disparities between demographic groups.[11] The news, both surprising and embarrassing, was followed by changed responses to the idea of a graduation rule based on high standards. Governor Carlson, who emphasized standards and faith in public school teachers to implement them in his 1993 State of the State address, changed his education policy focus from improving public schooling to providing vouchers for use at private schools, suggesting a belief that public schools were not capable of achieving the desired results. As the state's urban districts struggled to raise the passing rates on the basic standards tests, this work took precedence over

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[10] A.K. Tyree, "Examining the Evidence: Have States Reduced Local Control of Curriculum?" *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis* 15, no. 1 (1993).
[11] *Education Week* and Pew Charitable Trusts, "Quality Counts '98: The Urban Challenge," (Education Week, 1998), 184.

work on the Profile of Learning and made the notion of high standards for all seem overly optimistic. Confidence in the state's public schools was diminished.

Controversy surrounding the policy increased as the policy moved through the initial pilot stage, into statewide implementation, and into the macro arena, where there was widespread participation in debate around the policy as practitioners, parents, local board members, the public, and the media became involved.[12] Opinions of the Profile of Learning had been varied since its introduction, but beginning in 1998 the widening controversy related to the Profile received increased media coverage. A search of the *Newsbank* index for articles in Minnesota newspapers containing the term "Profile of Learning" yields 12 articles in 1997, 144 articles in 1998, and 234 articles in 1999, suggesting that the issues surrounding the Profile were visible to the public. Readers of Minnesota newspapers would have been aware that response to the Profile was, at best, mixed and that the legislature was deeply divided on what should be done to address the problems.

The influence of the newspapers seems important to stakeholder perception of this policy. In the Twin Cities, newspaper articles about the Profile were often run on the front page or the front of the second section. Article titles such as "Citizens are Skeptical about Graduation Rule,"[13] "Teachers Feeling Stress of New Grad Rule,"[14] and "Profile Isn't Winning a Lot of Fans"[15] alerted *Minneapolis Star Tribune* readers to

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[12] Mazzoni, "Analyzing State School Policymaking: An Arena Model."

[13] Draper, "Citizens Skeptical."

[14] _____, "Teachers Feeling Stress."

[15] _____, "Profile Isn't Winning."

unfavorable stakeholder response to the policy. Articles in the *St. Paul Pioneer Press* proclaimed "Test Shows Most Kids Unprepared,"[16] "Profile Critics Say Grad Plan Must Go,"[17] and "Grad Standards Still Puzzling,"[18] highlighting issues with the policy's clarity and effectiveness. Katherine Kersten's columns, beginning in 1998, placed her strong anti-Profile perspective in the public's view and sought increased support for the conservative objections to the policy. In addition, newspapers provided coverage of the legislative debate and action related to the Profile.

Although the Profile had bipartisan support in its early phases, later opinions tended to split along party lines, with Democrats supporting the policy and Republicans opposing it.[19] In 1999, the Minnesota House of Representatives had a Republican majority for the first time since 1986, which probably contributed to the passing of a bill to repeal the Profile. The Democratic majority in the Senate dwindled over the life of the Profile, making Senate resistance to the House repeals increasingly difficult. The importance of the legislature in making educational policy increased with the demise of the state board of education at the end of 1999; the legislature then became the sole policy-making body for education in Minnesota. Having educational policy set in law rather than rule meant that the process of creating or modifying it required legislative action, making educational policymaking more political.

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[16] Tosto, "Test Shows Most Kids Unprepared."

[17] _____, "Profile Critics Say."

[18] _____, "Grad Standards Still Puzzling."

[19] *Education Week* and Pew Charitable Trusts, "Quality Counts '98: The Urban Challenge," 186.

The 2000 legislation increased local control to a degree that essentially eliminated statewide standards. It also took steps to address some of the more confusing aspects of the policy, such as the perception that it was focused on school-to-work initiatives and the belief that teachers had to use performance packages. Although the bill attempted to address issues of feasibility and correct problems in implementation, it did not address the underlying differences in beliefs that were at the heart of the controversy over the policy. *Education Week* reported that "[t]he new measure straddles a cultural fault line that divides educational traditionalists with a mistrust of government from innovators who believe that old educational approaches fall short of today's demands."[20] The article correctly predicted that, as a result, the protests would be "unlikely to fade away."[21]

By the 2000 legislative session, public opinion had coalesced around a viewpoint of the policy as being in need of change—or, in the case of the Maple River group, repeal—and legislators responded. In contrast to previous years, key legislators were committed to reaching a compromise to address problems with the Profile during the 2000 session. Governor Ventura had a significant impact on the legislative action. He had no patience with the Maple River Education Coalition, which he had previous described as the "group that think UFOs are landing next month…they think [the Profile] is some big government federal conspiracy!"[22] The governor's insistence that

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[20] Bess Keller, "Minnesota Reaches Uneasy Accord over Learning Standards," *Education Week*, May 31, 2000.

[21] Ibid.

[22] Martin Kaste, *The Politics of the Profile* (Minnesota Public Radio, September 7,1999).

the legislature find a way to make the Profile work most likely contributed to the legislators' commitment to doing so.

By this time many stakeholders had tired of the Profile and its problems. The 2000 Achieve report stated that "there is evidence that key members of the public, including parents, teachers, and school officials, have grown weary of the Profile's complexity and scope."[23] Additional stakeholders seemed to have reached this point of policy fatigue in 2001 and 2002. Legislators had worked hard in 2000 to arrive at a compromise bill that addressed the major problems with the Profile and did not seem interested in working together on additional changes. Some legislators remained staunchly anti-Profile while others remained supporters, but only those calling for repeal had the policy high on their political agendas. Practitioners were exhausted by the magnitude of the implementation tasks, the years of policy churn, and the House's annual vote to repeal the Profile. The turbulence made commitment to the policy difficult; the frequent change in the policy made it difficult to understand to what one might be committing. This fatigue helped pave the way for the demise of the Profile, especially in contrast to the relentless activity maintained by strong opponents of the Profile, including those from the Maple River Education Coalition and the Center of the American Experiment, who continued to advocate for repeal.

The results of the 2002 election widened the Republican majority in the House, narrowed the Democratic majority in the Senate, and gave Minnesota a new Republican governor, Tim Pawlenty, who had promised to repeal the Profile of Learning and

[23] Achieve Inc. and Council on Basic Education, "Aiming Higher," 44.

selected his commissioner with that goal in mind. The Profile did not survive this dramatic change.

Policy Actors and Stakeholders

The decision to move to a results-based graduation rule originated in the subsystem arena, through interaction of legislators, interest groups, and bureaucrats.[24] Policymaking in this arena generally involves change of a minor nature and proceeds in an orderly manner, with little media coverage; the incremental change from OBE to an unspecified "results-based" graduation rule had these characteristics. The Profile moved out of the subsystem arena during the formulation of the actual graduation rule, a process involving MDE officials, groups of teachers, and practitioners at pilot sites. It was at this point that the more dramatic changes such as the focus on applied knowledge and the use of performance assessments became part of the policy. Mazzoni's model does not address this arena.

The role of practitioners as policy actors increased as the policy moved into wider dissemination and implementation. Students and parents also became directly impacted by the Profile at this time. As controversy over the policy increased, the issue moved to the macro arena, which is characterized by policymaking that is "visible, accessible, ideological and contentious."[25] Media attention increased, as did the activity of interest groups. The actions and attitudes of the various policy actors and stakeholder

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[24] Mazzoni, "Analyzing State School Policymaking: An Arena Model." Mazzoni defines an arena as "the political interactions characterizing particular decision sites through which power is exercised to initiate, formulate, and enact public policy" (p. 116).

[25] Ibid.: 117.

groups are important in understanding the reasons for the events that comprise the Profile's story.

Policy Stance

Marshall, Mitchell, and Wirt suggest that state policymakers operate within "assumptive worlds" that comprise unwritten rules about policy actors and their behavior.[26] Firestone conceptualized educational policy as "a set of overlapping games," each with its own rules and rewards.[27] The case of the Profile of Learning suggests that groups of policy actors and other stakeholders operate not only with assumptions about actions, but also with expectations about what educational policy should "look like"—in essence, schema for education policy itself. This schema describes the stakeholders' stance toward educational policy. The stance of stakeholder groups varies; as a result, a policy that meets one group's expectations may be viewed as significantly flawed by another group of stakeholders. This difference in policy stance appeared to contribute to the failure of the Profile of Learning.

Legislators sought a policy that was politically viable, consistent with the state and national mood and trends, and acceptable to all their constituents. They wanted to maintain Minnesota's reputation as an educationally and economically competitive state. Legislators were well aware that respect for local control was essential for any education policy in Minnesota because of its long and strong traditions. Legislators

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[26] Catherine Marshall, Douglas E. Mitchell, and Frederick Wirt, "Assumptive Worlds of Policy Makers," *Peabody Journal of Education* 62, no. 4 (1985).

[27] Firestone, "Educational Policy as an Ecology of Games," 18.

needed to consider primarily the concept of the results-oriented rule, the timeline, and the costs; they did not need to consider the details. Generality and ambiguity are attractive to policymakers because they make agreement easier.[28] The legislators wanted a system that could be developed and implemented quickly.

Minnesota Department of Education employees working on the project, who were generally professional educators, conceptualized a policy that went beyond the basic legislative requirement of measuring results; they wanted to create dramatic change in the state's education system. This group seemed interested in being on the cutting edge, as exemplified by the emphasis on performance assessment. They sought a policy that aligned with their beliefs about constructivist teaching and learning. Compared to legislators, they were less concerned with political viability or straightforwardness. Their development of the policy focused more on goals and ideas rather than detailed plans for action and infrastructure. Their difficulty in transferring policy goals to specific objectives and actions contributed to the policy's failure.

Members of the state board of education seemed unsure of what they wanted, as evidenced by their inability in late 1995 (well into the development of the Profile) to describe to the commissioner their vision what the standards would look like. In comparison to those at the department, however, these stakeholders seem to have been less interested in ideology and more interested in a detailed and feasible plan of action. They made frequent requests to the department for such a plan.

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[28] Cohen, Moffitt, and Goldin, "Policy and Practice."

School and district-level practitioners took a different stance toward policy than legislators, MDE officials, and board members. They tended to situate their understanding of policy primarily in their particular classroom or school, where they had to deal on a daily basis with the policy's concrete manifestations. Classroom teachers viewed policy not only in terms of what effect it might have on their students, but also on what effects it might have on their own workload. They were also concerned about the support and compensation that would be available for the planned changes and the time that would be involved.[29] Administrators and district-level support teachers considered the effects on the larger student body and the implications for the teacher workforce. They had to consider, for example, the number of committees or task forces that would be needed to accomplish whatever the policy required, the budget for professional development and new materials, and potential changes in the organization of the teaching faculty (e.g., greater need for reading specialists). Practitioners were thus highly focused on feasibility of implementation and on the details of the policy.

Teachers and administrators were also interested in the source of the policy and previous examples of the policy ideas in action. In the case of the Profile, the association with OBE negatively impacted teachers' view of the new policy. The pilot sites were intended to provide examples of the ideas in action, but the pilot process did not work as intended, again negatively impacting the view of practitioners. Practitioners also had to consider the affective costs of the policy as it related to their image of

[29] James P. Spillane, "External Reform Initiatives and Teachers' Efforts to Reconstruct Their Practice: The Mediating Role of Teachers' Zones of Enactment," *Journal of Curriculum Studies* 31, no. 2 (1999).

themselves.[30] Practitioners who believed they were already highly effective teachers using more traditional pedagogy would have had little reason to embrace the reform effort; doing so would require that they change their view of their current and past teaching, considering it somehow inadequate and in need of change.

Parents tended to make sense of education policy in the specific context of their own children and the children of their friends. Like other stakeholders, parents made sense of educational policy through cognitive structures created from their own knowledge, beliefs, and experiences;[31] however, because this stakeholder group's experiences centered on their own experiences as students and their experiences with their own children, their context for understanding the policy was more circumscribed than that of practitioners. In some cases parents' interest in their own children appears to have outweighed the need to ensure that they were working with accurate information, as evidenced by the misinformation that was posted on the Maple River Education Coalition's website and the lack of attendance at informational meetings held by MDE.

The many individual differences among students help to explain the widely differing responses that parents had to this policy and the range of concerns that were raised. Some parents were interested primarily in adapting the policy to suit the needs of their child, as in the case of special needs or advanced placement students. Other parents believed that what was good for their child was good for every child and

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[30] Spillane, Reiser, and Reimer, "Policy Implementation and Cognition."

[31] Ibid.

advocated accordingly. This perspective is reflected in Renee Doyle's statement, "If the Profile of Learning is bad for some children, it is bad for all children."[32] Acting on this belief, a group of parents organized the Maple River Education Coalition, the political action group that was instrumental in the repeal of the Profile.

The business community was interested primarily in results. They believed that educational policy should focus on middle and high school and should ensure that anyone who received a high school diploma was prepared for either direct entry into the workforce, technical school, or other higher education. This preparation would require competency in reading, writing, speaking, and mathematics; competency would be demonstrated through meeting a set standard. Graduates should also have basic social skills and be able to solve problems independently. The business community was not interested in ideology and believed that the details of curriculum and instruction should be left to professional educators.[33]

The frequent media coverage of Profile issues brought the policy to the attention of members of the public who were not members of the groups noted above. As this is a large and varied stakeholder group, their stance toward the Profile is more difficult to determine. In the case of any education policy, however, members of the public make sense of the proposed policy through their own memories of school and, as a result, tend to question significant changes.[34] The public is also interested in the "common sense"

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[32] Renee Doyle, "Rep. Kielkucki Instrumental in Profile of Learning Negotiations," *Howard Lake and Waverly Herald* May 29, 2000.

[33] Bill Blazar, interview by author, July 22, 2008, Minneapolis, MN. Blazar referred to results from annual surveys done by the Minnesota Chamber of Commerce.

[34] Tyack and Cuban, *Tinkering toward Utopia*.

factor and less interested in overarching goals, concrete details, or underlying complexity. They are, however, concerned about the perceived political association of an educational policy, which is often linked with an educational ideology or theory. For example, in relation to the Profile, conservatives were strongly opposed to the constructivist theory, which they associated with a liberal orientation. Like practitioners, the public is interested in the source of the policy and whether the new ideas have been shown to be effective in other settings. Like parents, they are often not committed to ensuring that the information they have is accurate.

The differences in policy stance underscore the difficulty in designing a policy that all stakeholder groups will find acceptable. There were differences in beliefs about the primary goals of the policy, the context in which the policy is considered, and the level of specificity at which the policy is understood. In addition, the words of a policy can be interpreted in different ways by different stakeholders.[35] For example, the use of the term "constructivist" in relation to the Profile was interpreted by critics to mean that students invented their own ideas about topics rather than acquiring established knowledge in the discipline; in contrast, educators view the term as an approach to acquiring that knowledge. The differences in policy stance contributed to a lack of trust among stakeholder groups, which in turn contributed to the failure of the policy.[36]

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[35] Heather Hill, "Policy Is Not Enough: Language and the Interpretation of State Standards," *American Educational Research Journal* 38, no. 2 (2001).

[36] Cohen, Moffitt, and Goldin, "Policy and Practice."

Interest Groups

Historically, teachers unions and other professional education organizations have influenced education policy.[37] The two statewide teachers unions (later a single, merged union) in Minnesota, however, appear to have played a limited role in the development of the Profile. Officials at MDE/CFL believed they never had the support of the teachers unions;[38] surveys by Education Minnesota showed that their perception was correct. Although the union's public statements used moderate language, their calls for the Profile to be changed or repealed became more insistent over time. Because the success of the policy was dependent on implementation by teachers, their support for the policy was critical to its success. While the unions do not necessarily represent the opinions of all teachers, the lack of support from the teachers unions probably contributed to the failure of the policy.

Other interest groups were also involved in the story of the Profile. The Minnesota Business Partnership was instrumental in shifting the focus of the graduation rule to results and initially supported the Profile, but later (along with the Chamber of Commerce) called for its repeal. Arts advocacy groups were quickly and successfully involved in keeping arts standards in the Profile and an arts requirement in the rule that replaced it. The Maple River Education Coalition was formed in response to concerns with the Profile and was instrumental in its repeal. Increased activity on the part of interest groups both inside and outside of education, including business groups, national

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[37] Mawhinney and Lugg, "Interest Groups."

[38] Mary Lillesve, interview by author, July 20, 2007, St. Paul, MN.

subject matter groups, private foundations, and advocacy groups, tends to occur as states take on increased roles in educational policymaking.[39] The influence of these groups in Minnesota was probably increased when the state board of education was dissolved and educational policymaking became the purview of the state legislature as the various groups made use of their organizations' legislative relations people and their own elected representatives to promote their agendas.

The influence of some of interest groups in the story of the Profile could have been anticipated. For example, the difficulty of moving forward without the support of the teachers union was predictable based on the historical influence of this type of group. The business community's consistent focus on standards and results made its responses to the shifting policy somewhat predictable. In contrast, the influence of the Maple River Education Coalition would have been hard to predict when the policy was being developed as the group did not exist until five years later. This group made use of the new internet technology to spread its message. During the time the Profile was in effect, use of the internet became widespread, with fewer than 20percent of adults nationwide online in 1993 and more than 60percent online by 2003.[40] The combination of the Profile as part of increased federal and state control, the use of email and internet communication, connection with the Center of the American Experiment, and the transfer of policymaking to the legislature provided the opportunity for the Maple River group to rise rapidly to a level of significant influence.

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[39] Mawhinney and Lugg, "Interest Groups."

[40] Pew Internet & American Life Project, "Latest Trends: Internet Adoption," http://www.pewinternet.org/trends.asp.

The Governors

Minnesota's governors exerted important influence over the Profile of Learning and the politics that surrounded it. Governor Rudy Perpich laid the groundwork with support for outcomes-based policies. He also made the commissioner of education a position appointed directly by the governor rather than by the state board of education, with the results that the position became both more political and more unstable. Governor Arne Carlson was an early and vocal supporter of academic standards. He later shifted his policy agenda to the use of vouchers, but did not publicly oppose the work on the standards and assessments of the Profile, despite criticizing both the content and process of its development. Carlson's insistence that the standards pass the "barbershop test" led to multiple revisions. The frequent turnover in commissioners[41] during his term in office probably contributed to some of the difficulty in getting the policy formulated and adopted.

Governor Ventura took a more hands-off approach to the Profile, relying on his lieutenant governor and commissioner to take the lead on educational issues. However, his refusal to call a special session in 1999 and his consistent refusal to support a bill repealing the Profile was significant in the life of the policy. It was during his administration that both the 2000 revision of the policy and the annual attempts at repeal in the House took place. Controversy over the policy also escalated during his term. Although Ventura's support tended to be passive, the Profile might have been repealed sooner without it.

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[41] Commissioners Gene Mammenga, Linda Powell, Bruce Johnson, and Robert Wedl were appointed by Carlson.

Governor Pawlenty was clearly opposed to the Profile, making its repeal one of his campaign promises. He appointed a commissioner who would carry out this task, which was completed within the first five months of his administration.

Beliefs about Purpose and Knowledge

Beliefs about the purpose of schooling and the knowledge that should be taught and assessed were especially pertinent to the Profile. Knowledge, beliefs, and experiences are a critical part of the process by which stakeholders make sense of a policy.[42] Previous research has focused on the importance of sensemaking in implementation,[43] but the case of the Profile of Learning suggests that sensemaking in regard to a policy occurs on the part of all stakeholders throughout the policy process.

Beliefs about the Purpose of Schooling

Influenced by the Minnesota business community, legislators had accepted the idea that high school graduation should be based on demonstration of achievement. Outcome-based education had floundered but the standards movement that was sweeping the country offered another approach to school reform that focused on outcomes. Legislative support for an outcome-based rule had most likely been influenced by the ominous tone of *A Nation at Risk* and the continuing concern that Minnesota's high school graduates might not be prepared in a way that would uphold

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[42] Spillane, Reiser, and Reimer, "Policy Implementation and Cognition."

[43] Ibid.

the state's reputation for strong schools and a well-prepared workforce in an increasingly global economy.

The legislature had previously approved a mission statement for education that included the broad goals of ensuring "individual academic achievement, an informed citizenry, and a highly productive work force."[44] This statement may have precluded subsequent debate about the purpose of schooling by encompassing all the traditional purposes. Such a statement would have allowed most if not all legislators and board members to connect the idea of a results-oriented rule with their own beliefs and experiences related to schooling. Because legislators and board members did not have to define what a results-oriented system would entail, it was possible for them to agree on the idea even if they interpreted it in varied ways.

As the graduation rule was developed, it sought to include all of these beliefs, intending to ensure that students would be prepared academically as well as for work, citizenship, and a generally rewarding life. This broad view of the purpose of education is reflected in the competencies that were part of the earlier drafts of the Profile, such as directing one's own learning, acting responsibly as a citizen, and making lifework decisions. It is also reflected in the Profile's focus on being able to apply knowledge.

As the Profile moved through the pilot process and into wider dissemination, however, disagreements over the purpose of education contributed to significant controversy about the policy. This unstable environment is typical of the macro arena.[45] Critics particularly objected to the idea of education as preparation for the workforce. In

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[44] Minnesota Department of Education, "Success for Every Learner."

[45] Mazzoni, "Analyzing State School Policymaking: An Arena Model."

a 1999 radio discussion of the Profile, Renee Doyle claimed that "[u]nder the guise of the phrase 'educational reform,' we have a new federal system being implemented, which, instead of training children with a liberal broad-based education, it's a highly-specific skill-based training, based on what private industry and the economy desires from a student."[46] In response, Lieutenant Governor Schunk, a Profile supporter, asked "[i]sn't education about preparing you with skills for future success? I mean, let's face it: we're all going to move into the workforce after we're students."[47]

The Maple River Education Coalition continued to object to conceptualizing the purpose of education as preparation for the workforce throughout the life of the Profile. Their 2002 publication *Minnesota's Profile of Learning: What Is It?* states that "[b]y shifting the emphasis of education away from academics, and placing it on performance, the Graduation Standards have shifted the purpose of education. Instead of providing a broad base of knowledge to equip students as well-rounded individuals, students are now taught entry-level job skills."[48] This statement, aside from inaccurately describing what students would be taught, also serves as an example of the way that this group's belief that workforce preparation was not an acceptable purpose for education influenced their understanding of the Profile.

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[46] Kaste, *The Politics of the Profile*.

[47] Ibid.

[48] Maple River Education Coalition, "Minnesota's Profile of Learning: What Is It?," http://edaction.org/2002/020721b.htm.

Beliefs about Knowledge

Officials at MDE, charged with the responsibility of creating the graduation rule, had the complex task of translating the policy goals into standards and assessments, which required them to describe what students should know and be able to do. Records of the process undertaken in creating the standards have not survived, but the early drafts of the standards suggest that a decision had been made to focus the Minnesota outcomes and standards on overarching concepts and processes in an interdisciplinary manner rather than on traditional curriculum knowledge.

Events at the Department suggest that there was not agreement on the knowledge that should be represented in the standards, however. The turnover in personnel at MDE is evidence of differing opinions about the way the policy should be created. In particular, the firing of seven curriculum and assessment experts at a critical time in the development of the policy indicates different beliefs about the representation of knowledge in the policy. The use of practicing teachers to help write the standards most likely contributed to the conflict within MDE during this period as the curriculum and assessment specialists, formerly considered state-level experts in their fields, were displaced by practitioners.

The Profile standards were written to emphasize the application of knowledge, reflecting the belief that it was this ability that was critical to success as an adult. Profile designers had assumed that the content knowledge itself did not need to be explicitly stated in the standards as teachers would be able to identify the knowledge needed to meet the standards and create appropriate curriculum. The Profile's emphasis on the

application of knowledge caused some stakeholders to believe that content knowledge would no longer be taught. This misunderstanding set up a perceived dichotomy between the two aspects of knowledge that was reminiscent of longstanding educational controversies such as progressive versus traditional education, phonics versus whole language, and reformed versus classic mathematics curricula.

Following the adoption of the Profile in 1998, the perception of a dichotomy between content and process knowledge increased. Conservatives, including the Maple River Education Coalition, columnist Katherine Kersten, and Representative Tony Kielkucki, strongly advocated for a focus on a body of traditional content knowledge that would be conveyed to students. These stakeholders perceived this body of knowledge as a set of important facts that students needed to know. They were critical of the Profile's underlying constructivist philosophy, which they interpreted to mean that students would be invited to create understandings that might or might not match reality, thereby eliminating traditional disciplinary content knowledge from the curriculum.

Supporters of the Profile maintained that content knowledge was implicit in the policy, but that the more advanced process knowledge addressed in the Profile distinguished truly high standards. In their view, successful adults were able to put knowledge to use, not just know facts, and schools should be preparing students who had this ability. Profile supporters viewed constructivism as a way of understanding teaching and learning rather than as a way to allow students to create alternate realities.

As successive drafts were created over the life of the policy, the standards shifted somewhat toward more traditional academic content. Despite these changes, the standards never became the detailed curriculum that the authors of the Achieve and AFT reports, along with many stakeholders in Minnesota, wanted to see.

The Policy Levers

Fullan describes three policy levers that are part of systemic, standards-based reform: (a) curriculum, (b) assessment of students, and (c) teacher learning. The Profile of Learning relied heavily on one of these levers, assessment of students. It was assumed that teachers and districts would be able to develop appropriate curriculum once the assessments were in place. Attention to associated teacher learning was inconsistent. Training was provided to pilot sites, but districts were later expected to develop their own strategies for teacher learning. There was no system to monitor or evaluate teacher learning.

The decision to use teacher-developed performance assessments complicated the process of relying on assessment of students as the primary policy lever.[49] Performance assessment, although long in use in the arts, was a relatively new idea in traditional academic disciplines, which had tended to rely more heavily on tests to evaluate students at the high school level. The idea of authentic assessment or using real-world application of knowledge was also relatively new. Thus, nearly all stakeholders needed

[49] No records of the process of making this decision were found. According to Mary Lillesve, early in the process, Iris McGinnis had a graphic of a jigsaw puzzle showing multiple forms of assessment, but "somehow that evolved into a system of performance packages only." Interview by author, July 20, 2007, St. Paul, MN.

to develop new schema to make sense of the performance packages. To assist in this process, the state packages were intended to provide examples of the way that standards could be assessed, while leaving the curriculum and instruction used to address the standard and the development of the actual performance assessment to the discretion of the teacher or the local district.

The plan to use the performance packages as the primary policy level was not successful. Rather than spurring changes in curriculum and instruction, the packages became the focus of the policy. Mary Lillesve recalls that, rather than the Profile standards forming the basis of the system, "it became a system of performance packages" in which "the performance packages became the standards."[50] Michael Tillman's internal email in May 1997 states that "[t]oo many out there" believe that "[i]f you do a package, you've done a standard."[51] The confusion between standards and packages most likely occurred because the packages were the most concrete and thus most salient part of the Profile.[52] The implementing actors, who were new to performance assessment, focused on this concrete aspect of the policy—the performance packages—rather than the underlying conceptualizations of standards-based reform, authenticity, and application of knowledge.

The packages also caught the attention of other stakeholders and were confused with both standards and curriculum, although they were neither. According to the Maple River Education Coalition, "[m]any recognize the Profile as its 'performance packages,'

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[50] Mary Lillesve, interview by author, July 20, 2007, St. Paul, MN.

[51] Tillmann, email message "Musings for implementation," May 31, 1997.

[52] Spillane, Reiser, and Reimer, "Policy Implementation and Cognition."

now renamed 'standards'."[53] Norman Draper of the *Minneapolis Star Tribune* coined the phrase "lesson plans with attitude" to describe the packages, using it repeatedly in the articles he wrote. Not surprisingly, the CAREI report found that students and parents did not understand performance assessment.[54]

The difficulty with the packages was exacerbated by the fact that they were developed by teachers who had only a beginning understanding of performance assessment. After the initial pilot period that was intended to include the development of performance packages, only 16 useable packages out of the intended 240 packages had been created. The training apparently had been insufficient and the teachers lacked the necessary level of understanding of performance assessment. They may have instead focused on the concrete aspects of the new approach, creating "packages" by filling in the templates provided in the training manual,[55] but working from their previous understanding of assessment rather than an adequate understanding of the new approach.

Another problem was that the sample performance packages that were eventually made available were of limited use. In some cases, the packages were tied to specific curriculum. For example, there were two packages for the technical reading standard. The "Tech Reading/Food Service" package was designed for a food service class and required students to operate and repair food service equipment using technical manuals in addition to producing a written plan of action, passing a vocabulary test, and

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[53] Maple River Education Coalition, "Minnesota's Profile of Learning: What Is It?."

[54] "Minnesota Graduation Standards Implementation: How It Looks from Where It's Happening."

[55] Minnesota Department of Education, "Performance Assessment Training Manual."

passing a tools and equipment identification test.[56] The "Tech Reading/Small Engine" package was designed for a class in small gas engines; this package required students to use specialized vocabulary, disassemble and reassemble a large industrial engine using technical manuals, and maintain relative service equipment.[57] Neither of these packages would be of use to someone assessing the technical reading standard in a different course. As models, their use was also limited because they addressed only part of the technical reading standard.

The packages also varied in scope. Some were assessment plans for a semester or a year. For example, the "Academic Writing" package required students individually to write a film review, a persuasive paper, a personal narrative, and a literary analysis or analysis of a trend or a field study, and also "collaboratively produce" an academic journal or magazine for high school students.[58] Packages such as this one presented difficulties for teachers with students who moved partway through the school year. Other packages, such as the "Academic Reading File," were more like activities than assessments. This package required students to survey "information about an issue affecting youth" and collect notes in a reading file.[59] The variation in what constituted a "package" made the sample packages more confusing than helpful as models, possibly giving the idea that nearly any combination of activities, papers, or tests would suffice.

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[56] Families Minnesota Department of Children, and Learning,, "Performance Package: Tech Reading/Small Engines (Standard 1.12.1)," (1995).

[57] Ibid.

[58] _____, "Performance Package: Academic Writing (Standard 2.3.1)," (1995).

[59] _____, "Performance Package: Academic Reading File," (1995).

Because they were often not well constructed, the performance packages were easy for critics to ridicule. Katherine Kersten devoted five pages of her 1999 article in *American Experiment Quarterly* to a critique of a package entitled "Interaction and Social Change in Society."[60] The Maple River Coalition posted on their website a photo of a model of the Mexican government building, created from graham crackers and frosting, that they claimed fulfilled the requirement for the high school Spanish III assessment.[61] The idea of performance assessments also conflicted with the beliefs of stakeholders who valued objective tests as measures of learning.

The case of the Profile demonstrates that reliance primarily on the policy lever of student assessment was not effective. The situation was exacerbated by the selection of an unfamiliar form of assessment and an ineffective and inefficient strategy for producing the assessments. The strategy of using changes in assessment to stimulate needed changes in curriculum and teacher learning failed, lending support to Fullan's notion that all three policy levers must be in place to create standards-based reform.[62] The department's choice of the performance packages as a policy lever and its inability to provide high quality examples of these performance assessments was a major contributing factor to the controversy surrounding the Profile and its eventual repeal.

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[60] Kersten, "Minnesota's Profile of Learning: The Radical Mutation of a Good Idea." This package is not available in the Minnesota Department of Education Archives.

[61] http://www.edwatch.org > Minnesota > Profile of Learning > A Sample Project from the Profiles of Learning

[62] Fullan, *Change Forces with a Vengeance*.

Conclusion

A historical perspective on curriculum policy suggests that fundamental disagreements about the purpose of schooling and the knowledge that should be included in the curriculum play an important role in the controversy surrounding such policies; this situation proved to be true in the case of the Profile. In addition to these beliefs, stakeholders' different expectations of what an effective curriculum policy should comprise contributed to their sensemaking in regard to the policy and their resulting support for or opposition to it.

A wide range of stakeholders, including legislators, bureaucrats, interest groups, think tanks, and educators were involved in the formulation, adoption, and repeal of the Profile. The policy process became more political as it moved to the macro arena and the state legislature became the primary policymaking body for the state. The governors who held office during this time played a key role in the Profile's story. Stakeholders were also influenced by the state and national context.

Some of the reasons for the policy's failure originated within the policy itself. The policy relied heavily on the use of a single policy lever, student assessment, to drive changes in curriculum and teacher learning, a strategy that proved ineffective. The problem of reliance on a single policy lever was exacerbated by the fact that the assessments chosen required significant teacher learning and practice. As a historical

perspective suggests, dramatic change is less likely to be successfully implemented than more gradual change.[63]

The case of the Profile of Learning demonstrates the interconnected nature of the state and national context, the policy process and policy levers, and the policy actors and stakeholders and their beliefs. The causes of the policy's development, adoption, implementation, revision, and repeal lie in the interaction of these people, processes, and contexts.

[63] Cohen, Moffitt, and Goldin, "Policy and Practice"; Tyack and Cuban, *Tinkering toward Utopia*.

CHAPTER TEN

POLICY IMPLICATIONS

Analysis of the story of the Profile of Learning offers insight into the educational policy process. Difficulties in this process arose primarily at transitions between the policy ideas, the policy formulation and the implementation of the policy. The first transition occurred when the legislature set parameters for the policy and the work of creating it was delegated to the board and department of education. The second transition took place when the policy moved from formulation within the department to the implementing actors and eventually the public. As the policy moved through this process and became more specific and more concrete, more difficulties arose, suggesting that special attention needs to be paid to the policy in relation to these transition points. This chapter will first describe implications for policy formulation and implementation that can be drawn from the case of the Profile of Learning. It will then describe dilemmas or tensions that are inherent in the educational policymaking process.

Policy Formulation

The process of policy formulation translates the ideas or general goals of a policy into an implementation plan that comprises actions and concrete representations. The policy formulators must determine the extent of change in practice that the policy is

intended to create and the resources that will be needed to accomplish the change.[1] Their tasks include clarifying policy goals, selecting appropriate policy instruments, and planning the implementation process.[2]

Policy Goals

The 1992 session laws required the state board of education to "use its rulemaking authority…to adopt a statewide, results-oriented graduation rule."[3] Having learned from their experience with OBE, legislators sought to avoid issues around local control by specifying that the graduation rule could not prescribe "the delivery system, form of instruction, or a single statewide form of assessment that local sites must use."[4] The Profile was thus an attempt to create a statewide graduation rule while maintaining Minnesota's long and strong tradition of local control. A statewide rule implied statewide control, however, which set up an internal conflict in the policy goal itself.

The difficulty of creating a statewide, results-oriented graduation rule without being able to mandate curriculum, instruction, or assessment is clear in retrospect. The politically expedient notion of adopting conflicting goals may have served a short-term purpose but was untenable in the long term. Many of the disagreements that arose around the policy went back to this central contradiction that originated in the legislative directive. As work on the policy moved forward, however, the tension between establishing a statewide standard while maintaining local control of

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[1] Cohen, Moffitt, and Goldin, "Policy and Practice."

[2] Patton and Sawicki, *Basic Methods of Policy Analysis and Planning*.

[3] *Laws of Minnesota*, Chapter 499, Article 7, Section 32, 1992.

[4] Ibid.

curriculum, instruction, and assessment became one of the major points of contention for Profile opponents. The ongoing tension between statewide rule and local control points to the importance of clearly defined and internally consistent policy goals at the policy's inception.[5]

A results-oriented graduation rule was a shift from the previous rule requiring completion of a certain number of courses and attendance over a period of four years. The legislature did not define "results," leaving that to the state board of education, who in turn delegated the task to the department. The use of several hours of a legislative conference committee meeting in May 1999—seven years after the law requiring the development of the results-based graduation rule had been passed—to try to define such Profile terms as "standards" and "learning area" suggests that prior to that time the legislators had given somewhat superficial attention to what "results" might mean.[6]

"Results" could have been interpreted in multiple ways, perhaps simply as scores on a selection of standardized tests. The policy designers chose a more complex definition of "results," however, interpreting the term in a way that would require significant change in schooling in Minnesota. The early versions of the Profile emphasized competencies not previously associated with graduation, such as thinking purposefully, communicating effectively, directing one's own learning, working productively with others, acting responsibly as a citizen, and making lifework decisions.[7] In relation to academics, the idea of results was based on a constructivist

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[5] William N. Dunn, *Public Policy Analysis: An Introduction* (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson PrencticeHall, 2004).

[6] Tosto, "Lawmakers Talk."

[7] Minnesota Department of Education, "Performance Assessment Training Manual."

philosophy and emphasized interdisciplinary learning and cross-cutting areas such as inquiry and decision-making; traditional learning of content was emphasized less than the ability to integrate and apply learning. Lack of a clear definition of "results" allowed the policy formulation process to proceed in an uncoordinated manner. This problem illustrates the need for clear definition of policy terms.

Policy Instruments

A key step in policy formulation is the selection of one or more policy instruments that will translate the policy goals into concrete actions.[8] The Profile's policy designers chose to conceptualize "results" as a set of standards on which students would demonstrate competency through the use of performance packages. The required use of performance packages appears at first to be a mandate; however, a closer examination of the policy instrument shows that it is actually a hortatory policy. McDonnell argues that assessment policy is hortatory because it appeals to people's beliefs and values, assumes that they will take the appropriate (and desired) policy action , and depends on the motivation of the people targeted by the policy for successful implementation.[9] In the case of the Profile, the use of the performance assessments would not achieve the policy goals of increased student achievement. Teachers who made no changes in curriculum and instruction but added one or more performance packages to their course would be in compliance with the rule, but would presumably not be raising the level of student performance. For the assessment policy to meet the goal of improved student achievement, the assessments would need to drive

[8] McDonnell, "Assessment Policy."

[9] Ibid.

the changes in curriculum and instruction that would in turn increase student achievement. This sequence was the intent of the Profile's policy designers. The primary policy instrument was thus hortatory because it relied on teachers' voluntary compliance (implementation of intended changes in instruction) in order to accomplish the policy goal.

The case of the Profile illustrates the difficulty of using hortatory policy as the primary policy instrument for significant change. Hortatory policies depend on the policy targets (those people whose actions are intended to change as a result of the policy) to be influenced by symbols and information and to act on new information that they are given.[10] In the case of the Profile, in which practitioners were the policy targets, three problems prevented them from acting as desired. First, the practitioners were not only the policy targets (those expected to change) but also the implementing agents (those expected to create the change).[11] Practitioners thus had first to accept the notion that they were the problem and then grapple with understanding the intended solution and putting it into action. This problem is inherent in any educational policy intended to change classroom practice.

Second, this group was, as a whole, not readily influenced by symbols. Practitioners' stance toward educational policy is situated in their teaching or administrative work; exhortations—for example, to ensure that all students meet world class standards—are not particularly persuasive as they are too distant from the realities of the job. Further, the source of the exhortations was the legislature and the

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[10] Fowler, *Policy Studies*, 256.

[11] Cohen, Moffitt, and Goldin, "Policy and Practice"; Spillane, Reiser, and Reimer, "Policy Implementation and Cognition."

department, which had weakened their legitimacy[12] by the failure of the OBE policy that immediately preceded the Profile. This problem highlights the benefits of a cooperative relationship between policymakers and practitioners and the difficulties with an adversarial one.[13] The designation of the state legislature as the policy making body for education undermines this relationship.

Third, the intended change in understanding and behavior was too large. A certain amount of distance between policy and practice is needed to change practice; the larger the distance, however, the more difficult the change becomes.[14] The change to a graduation rule dependent on students' demonstration of achievement through performance assessments was a change of considerable magnitude. This problem resulted in the department significantly underestimating the amount of professional development that would be needed to effect the desired change. Hortatory policy was thus not sufficient for reaching the policy goals.

McDonnell notes that because hortatory instruments are usually not adequate on their own, such policies need to be "joined with other policies to produce sustained effects."[15] Other policy instruments were used as part of the Profile, but they were less effective than anticipated. The policy formulators appeared to recognize that capacity building would be key to the success of the policy; funding and training for pilot sites transferred resources to the sites for this purpose. As previously noted, however, this instrument failed to produce the desired results when the training proved inadequate for

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[12] Cohen, Moffitt, and Goldin, "Policy and Practice."

[13] Ibid.

[14] Ibid, Spillane, Reiser, and Reimer, "Policy Implementation and Cognition."

[15] McDonnell, "Assessment Policy," 399.

the task. In addition, although permanent change was the goal, the department expected rapid change and short-term production of standards and assessments: capacity building policies are best suited for change over a long period.[16] Funding that was transferred to districts as part of statewide implementation failed to produce results for the same reasons.

The $14 per pupil funding for districts that committed to full implementation in 1998 was an inducement as well as a capacity-building instrument. This policy instrument again failed to produce the required result because every district took the money but many did not complete the promised tasks. The state lacked any method of enforcing the policy, allowing districts the opportunity to buffer themselves completely from its requirements.[17] Inducements require oversight in order to be effective.[18]

The case of the Profile points to the need to select policy instruments that are aligned to and likely to be effective for the policy goals. Use of assessment policy as the primary policy lever was inadequate for the task; it did not result in the intended changes in curriculum and instruction, suggesting that specific attention to those two areas was also needed. Writing from the perspective of nearly a decade after the Profile was being developed, Fullan identifies curriculum, assessment, and teacher learning as the three policy levers used in effective standards-based policies.[19] The story of the

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[16] McDonnell and Elmore, "Getting the Job Done: Alternative Policy Instruments."

[17] Honig and Hatch, "Crafting Coherence."

[18] McDonnell and Elmore, "Getting the Job Done: Alternative Policy Instruments."

[19] Fullan, *Change Forces with a Vengeance*.

Profile supports his thesis. It also underscores the challenge of selecting appropriate policy instruments to bridge the policy-practice gap.[20]

The graduation requirements were intended to be a mandate, although their effectiveness cannot be determined because they were never fully implemented. It is interesting that the policy instruments put little focus on students, given the policy goal of ensuring that students achieved particular results in order to graduate. It was assumed that the standards and performance packages would produce changes in curriculum and instruction; these would then require students to engage in more advanced coursework and application of knowledge, finally producing the desired results. Actual change in student achievement, however, requires effort from both the teacher and the student.[21] This obvious fact, often overlooked in today's policy environment, points to the need for policies aimed at improving achievement to consider the students as important policy implementers and select policy instruments accordingly. Inducements such as scholarships for high achievement, for example, might prove effective in motivating students.

Overall, the case of the Profile demonstrates the importance of carefully selecting policy instruments that will accomplish the desired policy goals. The distance between policy goals and current practice should be carefully considered and not made so wide that it cannot be bridged. Once the intended shift has been established, policy instruments should be selected to address curriculum, instruction, teacher learning, and student engagement with the desired changes. It is especially important to consider the

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[20] Cohen, Moffitt, and Goldin, "Policy and Practice."

[21] Ibid.

costs associated with the policy instruments chosen, as a policy that cannot be enforced cannot be implemented.

Attention to Stakeholder Sensemaking

Creating the bridge between ideas and action was perhaps the most difficult part of the policy process for the Profile of Learning. The case points to the need for policy formulators to attend to sensemaking processes on the part of stakeholders. Sensemaking is not entirely predictable, but enough is now known about the processes involved[22] that policy formulators can consider these processes as they select policy instruments and create policy representations. The story of the Profile illustrates the need for policy designers to consider the concrete representations of the policy, the policy stance of the stakeholders, and temporally contiguous policies and initiatives.

The concrete representations of the policy are particularly important to the sensemaking process of stakeholders. The performance packages illustrate the critical importance of this step. They were intended to drive the intended changes in curriculum and instruction that the policy designers believed would lead to increased student achievement or "results," the overarching goal of the policy. Instead, to many people, the packages became the policy. In the sensemaking processes of stakeholders, the packages were the most salient aspect of the policy because they were the most concrete.[23] They thus had the unintended effect of moving attention away from the standards they were intended to assess.

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[22] Spillane, Reiser, and Reimer, "Policy Implementation and Cognition."

[23] Ibid.

This situation demonstrates that in order to facilitate the desired changes in thinking and practice, the concrete representations of a policy must be carefully selected and crafted. They should be created with the factors that will influence sense-making on the part of the intended audience in mind. Three of these factors seem particularly important. First is the likelihood that stakeholders will misunderstand the new as something familiar—for example, considering performance assessment to be another term for a project. Second, stakeholders faced with unfamiliar concepts or processes tend to focus on superficial, concrete features of the policy. In the case of the Profile, teachers used templates for creating performance assessments without acquiring an understanding of the theory behind them. Finally, stakeholders make sense of the policy in a historical context, considering the policies that preceded it. The Profile was preceded by OBE; the timing and the similarities between the two caused some stakeholders to believe that the Profile was really OBE by another name.[24] Care must be taken that the policy representations do not shift the focus away from the policy goals.

Particular attention should also be paid to the policy stance of the various stakeholders as this stance impacts sensemaking. The Profile policy formulators either misunderstood or did not adequately consider the policy stance of practitioners, parents, and the business community. An appreciation of the schema through which a particular group of stakeholders will view the policy can help policymakers craft representations of the policy in such a way that sensemaking is likely to result in an understanding of the policy that is congruent with its intent.

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[24] Ibid.

Sensemaking related to the Profile was influenced by issues that were not part of the graduation rule but were under consideration at the same time. These included the federal Goals 2000 school-to-work initiatives and the state work on the diversity rule. The strongest critics of the Profile continued to assert that the Profile included these initiatives, although this was not the case. This situation suggests that policies or issues that share media attention may become mingled in the minds of stakeholders. Policy formulators must be aware of other issues that are salient to stakeholders and delineate the relationship between the policy being developed and other concurrent policies or issues.

Policy Analysis (or Lack Thereof)

Evidence of the process of developing the policy is limited but it appears that there was insufficient attention given to the steps and structures that would be necessary to put the policy into action. Problems in the design and implementation of the Profile suggest that the policy analysis process, if it occurred, was inadequate. Evidence for this problem comes from the previously noted problems of choice of policy instruments and policy representations; in addition, the Profile was plagued by issues of feasibility.

Problems with technical and economic feasibility began to appear during the pilot process and increased when statewide implementation began. Issues arose around specific aspects of the policy, such as having teachers develop performance packages, providing exemplars for the packages, and creating an effective record-keeping system. The need for specific, concrete steps to implement these aspects of infrastructure was never addressed, nor was adequate funding available. In addition, the magnitude and

complexity of the policy as a whole became a feasibility issue when districts attempted to implement the entire Profile rather than working with only some standards or some students. It is noteworthy that after full implementation began, Richfield schools, one of the most successful pilot sites, requested a waiver because of the overwhelming task of implementing the complete policy.

The implementation timeline also created feasibility problems. The belief that a new system should be in place for the class of 2000 seems to have driven timelines. The beginning of a new century was generally perceived as signifying a new era and thus calling for innovation. This timeline was too ambitious for the magnitude of the changes planned, however, as it would require full statewide implementation of the policy beginning in 1996, allowing only two to three years for policy formulation, development of infrastructures, piloting, and dissemination of information. The short timeline was made more problematic by the dramatic changes planned by the policy designers; as a result, there were frequent proposals to delay implementation or phase in the Profile more slowly.

Issues with feasibility underscore the need for thorough policy analysis during the process of policy formulation. Technical and economic feasibility should be included in the criteria used to evaluate policy alternatives. The Profile also points to the need to evaluate the implementation the policy as a whole, as the combination of several individually workable strategies may become unwieldy and thus make the overall effect infeasible.

The case of the Profile points to the importance of backward mapping during the formulation of policies focused on changes in instruction. Backward mapping begins

with the endpoint in the implementation process and then seeks to describe the actions that will be necessary to reach that point, including the resources that will be needed.[25] This strategy can take into account the stances and potential sensemaking of the implementing agents and addresses the policy actions in detail.

Backward mapping is particularly appropriate for a curriculum policy focused on outcomes rather than inputs. Once a clear description of results is created, policy designers can establish procedures to achieve those results and ways to measure them. The policy design process for the Profile should have been somewhat linear, working backward with each component connecting to the previously developed one in order to ensure coherence, rather than a holistic process in which everything was developed simultaneously and revised repeatedly. While an entirely linear policy process is unrealistic, it is reasonable to assume that policymakers will "think about and plan change."[26] Clearly Iris McGinnis's model of "building the airplane while we're flying it" resulted in an airplane that did not fly. Developing assessments before determining the standards that were to be assessed is one example of the lack of logic inherent in such an approach, especially because standards-based reform was intended to provide coherent systems. This situation highlights the importance of understanding the nature of the particular policy being developed and proceeding in a manner that is appropriate for the policy's goals.

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[25] Elmore, "Backward Mapping: Implementation Research and Policy Decisions."

[26] Duke, *The Challenges of Educational Change*.

Challenges in Implementation

In a linear policy process, the official adoption of a policy shifts the focus from the policy formulation to its implementation. In the case of the Profile, debate about the design continued during implementation as the Profile moved to the larger public arena and involved a larger number of stakeholders. Although CFL attempted to move forward with implementation and the legislature provided additional funds, the effort was hampered by escalating controversy about the policy itself. Challenges to the assumptions under which the policy had been developed and persistent logistical problems related to implementation also prevented the implementation from moving forward smoothly.

Challenges to Assumptions

Policymakers began with the assumption that Minnesota already had a strong education system and that the new, results-oriented rule would strengthen and update it. The basic standards tests were intended to serve as a low-profile safety net that would demonstrate the truth of this assumption, while the real work of raising standards would be done by the Profile. The scores on the basic standards tests provided strong evidence that this underlying assumption was incorrect, however. The scores revealed that a surprising number of students lacked the designated basic skills and also that there were significant disparities in achievement across the state that correlated with socioeconomic status.

Officials in charge of implementation paid minimal attention to the test results, maintaining that the focus should be on the Profile and on establishing high expectations for all students. This decision was ill advised. The graduation rule required students to pass the basic standards tests in order to graduate; clearly schools with a high failure rate needed to address this problem. In districts and schools with large numbers of students who failed the tests, the basic standards became their focus and eclipsed attention to the Profile.

Another assumption was challenged when the vast majority of the performance packages developed at the pilot sites were unsatisfactory and could not be used. The policy formulators had assumed that pilot site teachers could complete this task, but clearly this was not the case as most of the packages created were judged unacceptable. Despite this evidence that teachers were, as a group, not adequately trained to create quality performance assessments at that time, the department continued to promise that model packages designed by teachers would be forthcoming and that any teachers could design his or her own assessments. The result was a lack of quality assessments that contributed to the controversy over the packages and the ultimate repeal of the Profile.

These incidents demonstrate the importance of attending to evidence that contradicts assumptions underlying a policy. Policy implementation plans should include periodic review of the implementation and the opportunity to make corrections if needed. Evidence that assumptions underlying the policy are incorrect requires a re-examination of the policy instruments and implementation plans.

Persistent Problems

A number of problems related to the Profile were indentified early in the pilot process and continued throughout the life of the policy. General issues related to implementation included the lack of time needed to make changes of this magnitude, the lack of resources to do so, the design and use of performance packages, the scoring of student work, and record-keeping related to student achievement. These problems remained unsolved, hampering the implementation of the policy.

The legislature provided funding at different points for implementation but it never seemed to the implementing agents to be adequate. The $14 per pupil incentive was offered to districts in 1998 to embed the standards and begin full implementation is an example. This incentive money was needed to fund individuals or committees to do the work of embedding standards and creating implementation plans, leaving most teachers to do the work of actual classroom implementation with no additional compensation. Even if the money had been given directly to teachers, it would have amounted to about $400 per teacher, the equivalent of one to two days of additional salary, while to implement the Profile effectively most teachers would need to spend appreciable additional time on a daily basis in addition to one or two days of long-range planning.

Problems related to assessment and record-keeping also continued over the life of the Profile. The performance packages were poorly understood, not only in terms of development but also in terms of scoring student performance. As the time when high school graduation would become dependent on the scoring system grew closer, this problem took on new urgency. The related problem of record-keeping remained

unsolved. The lack of a system to track students' performance on the standards was especially problematic for students who moved to different schools or districts and for districts that served mobile students. The problem was compounded by the fact that districts were also keeping A-F grades for students in their coursework, making the additional recording of scores on the Profile standards seem both burdensome and superfluous.

These problems were reported repeatedly during the piloting and implementation process but remained unsolved. In addition to slowing implementation, the ongoing issues eroded trust first between practitioners and policymakers and later between some members of the public and policymakers. As with the challenges to assumptions underlying the policy, the problems caused by persistent problems point to the need to address significant problems in implementation as they arise.

Policy Dilemma and Tensions

Cohen, Moffitt and Goldin characterize the relationship between policy and practice as a dilemma.[27] They observe that governments identify problems and propose solutions, but the "key problem solvers are the offending, needy, or damaged organizations and people."[28] Government power and policies are useful only if they are put to good use by the people whom the policy is intended to help. The success of education policy is thus dependent on the practitioners who are the targets of the policy.

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[27] Cohen, Moffitt, and Goldin, "Policy and Practice."

[28] Ibid., 66.

The case of the Profile suggests three additional tensions that impact policy formulation and implementation. The first is between expert and novice knowledge.[29] An expert in a given area—for example, assessment or a particular curriculum area—has a deep and comprehensive understanding of the subject, including the theoretical underpinnings and broad concepts and processes. The novice tends to focus on the most concrete aspects of the subject; practitioners, for example, tend to focus first on actions when learning a new teaching or assessment method and move to consideration of theory later.[30] Policy designers must consider ways to resolve the tension that results when experts craft the vision or select instruments for a policy that will implemented by novices. If the difference between the two is too great, the practitioners will be unable to grasp the intended policy message. If the difference is too small, the policy will not improve practice.

The second tension arises between the need to understand various stakeholder perspectives during the policy formulation process and the general lack of interest on the part of stakeholders until the policy has an immediate personal connection. In the case of the Profile, MDE/CFL consistently made attempts to disseminate information to and obtain feedback from stakeholders by holding informational meetings around the state. The meetings were somewhat sparsely attended and characterized by little controversy. Once the policy went into statewide implementation, however, it became highly and publicly controversial. Policy designers are in the awkward position of needing feedback from stakeholders much sooner than stakeholders are able or willing

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[29] Spillane, Reiser, and Reimer, "Policy Implementation and Cognition."

[30] Ibid.

to provide it. Relying on feedback from stakeholder meetings can provide a false sense of security, but waiting for the policy to become salient to the full range of stakeholders before seeking feedback is impractical as well as risky. Policymakers thus must try to utilize available feedback while also predicting what future response might be. This tension points to the importance of policy formulators forecasting the probable position of various stakeholders on the relevant issues.[31]

The final tension arises in relation to temporally contiguous policies. It is reasonable to assume that there will be multiple policies impacting states and local districts concurrently. The Profile co-existed with school-to-work initiatives and Goals 2000 and briefly with No Child Left Behind. Policy designers must decide between bundling the policies—having the same policy address multiple initiatives or issues—or keeping each policy distinct. Bundling the policies can create more coherence, but also risks having an entire policy set become associated with one initiative, as happened with the Profile and school-to-work. Keeping the policies separate results in an expanded number of concurrent policies that local districts must then try to organize in coherent fashion. In crafting coherence, districts may respond differently to different policy initiatives, creating bridges to some and buffering others.[32] Policy designers must determine the extent to which concurrent policy initiatives can be bundled for maximum effectiveness in implementation.

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[31] Dunn, *Public Policy Analysis: An Introduction*.

[32] Honig and Hatch, "Crafting Coherence."

Conclusion

The story of the Profile, as a failed policy, points first and foremost to the importance of good policy analysis. Many of the problems in policy formulation and implementation could have been avoided if a thorough analysis had been done. Clear goals, appropriate policy instruments, backward mapping during the policy formulation process, and attention to issues of feasibility would have enhanced the chances of developing a successful standards-based system. Unfortunately, at the present time policymakers are not well informed about practice and practitioners are not knowledgeable about policy;[33] this study points to the need to change this situation. Stronger collaboration between these groups would result in better policies. As noted in the previous chapters, the Profile's story also demonstrates the need to attend to the sensemaking processes of stakeholders throughout the policy process. An additional implication is the need to attend to evidence gathered during the implementation process and use it to make appropriate corrections.

The Profile of Learning attempted to create dramatic change in Minnesota's schools. Education policy is, in general, designed to improve schooling by creating a gap between policy and practice and then bridging that gap through the use of effective strategies and adequate resources.[34] In the case of the Profile, however, the gap was too large and the strategies for bridging it were inadequate. Policymakers were unable to provide adequate support for practitioners and practitioners were unable to implement the policy. The Profile's story thus supports the thesis of Cohen, Moffitt, and Goldin

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[33] Cohen, Moffitt, and Goldin, "Policy and Practice."

[34] Ibid.

that "policy and practice depend on each other."[35] An examination of the development, implementation, and repeal of the Profile provides insight into ways in which the relationship between policy and practice can go awry and offers strategies for improving that relationship in future policy development.

[35] Ibid., 66.

AFTERWORD

2008

The Profile of Learning was replaced by new English language arts, mathematics, and arts standards in 2003. Following a protracted battle over content,[1] the science and social studies standards were approved on the last day of the following year's legislative session.[2] The mathematics and arts standards were revised in 2007; the science standards are under revision in 2008.[3]

During the final night of the 2004 legislative session, the Senate voted along party lines not to confirm Cheri Yecke as education commissioner.[4] Democrats claimed that Yecke had been a divisive force in Minnesota and objected to her right-wing agenda.[5] In July of that year, state Representative Alice Seagren (R-Bloomington) was appointed education commissioner by Governor Pawlenty.[6] Seagren, a less controversial figure than Yecke, has continued in the position through the present time.

The MCAs were revised to align with the new standards in language arts and mathematics. The new tests, called the MCA-II, were given for the first time in 2006.As required by the No Child Left Behind Act, Minnesota's students are tested in reading

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[1] John Welsh, "Compromise near on School Standards," *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, May 16, 2004.

[2] Norman Draper, "Yecke out as Education Chief," *Minneapolis Star Tribune*, May 17, 2004.

[3] Minnesota Department of Education, http://education.state.mn.us/MDE/Academic_Excellence/Academic_Standards/index.html

[4] The Senate has the power to confirm or deny confirmation of appointed commissioners. If no action is taken, the appointment stands as made.

[5] Draper, "Yecke Out"; John Welsh and Patrick Sweeney, "Senate Says No to Yecke," *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, May 17, 2004.

[6] John Welbes, "New School Chief Picked," *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, July 20, 2004.

and mathematics every year in grades three through eight and once in high school. Scores from these tests are used to determine whether schools are making Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP). Nearly half of Minnesota's schools are now failing to make AYP; that number is predicted to include between 80 and 100 percent of the state's elementary schools within the next six years.[7] The basic skills tests have been phased out; students now have to achieve a certain score on the MCA-II in reading, writing, and mathematics in order to graduate. [8] MCA-II science testing was added at three grade levels (fourth, eighth, and high school) in 2007.

Minnesota's graduation requirement is based on course credits.[9] The present requirements are more numerous and more detailed that those that preceded the Profile; they include four credits of language arts, three credits of mathematics, three credits of science, three and one-half credits of social studies, one credit in the arts, and a minimum of seven elective credits. Ironically, the experience with the Profile resulted in the return of the previously discredited course credit ("seat time") system, albeit with more courses required. The state also has mandatory statewide testing and standards that closely approximate a statewide curriculum, both of which were expressly prohibited in the legislation calling for the creation of the results-based graduation rule.

The mission of public education in Minnesota remains the same as it was in 1991:

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[7] Emily Johns, "Back to School: Making the Grade," *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, August 31, 2008.

[8] Minnesota Department of Education, http://education.state.mn.us/MDE/Accountability_Programs/Assessment_and_Testing/Assessments/MCA_II/index.html

[9] Minnesota statute 120B.024, https://www.revisor.leg.state.mn.us/statutes/?id=120B.024

> …to ensure individual academic achievement, an informed citizenry, and a highly productive work force. This system focuses on the learner, promotes and values diversity, provides participatory decision making, ensures accountability, models democratic principles, creates and sustains a climate for change, provides personalized learning environments, encourages learners to reach their maximum potential, and integrates and coordinates human services for learners.[10]

The legislature added responsibilities of the department and commissioner to this mission statement in 1995 and 1998, but the controversy over the Profile did not otherwise result in a change in the statute.

Minnesota's system of standards continues to receive low ratings in national reports. In the AFT's most recent report, Minnesota's standards met the AFT criteria only for math and science at the elementary and middle school levels; all other standards—including high school standards in all four core disciplines—were considered inadequate. The AFT rated standards on clarity, specificity, and content. Interestingly, they also expected standards to address skills and processes along with content, a change from the days of the Profile.[11]

The 2006 *Quality Counts* ten-year retrospective on standards gave Minnesota a grade of C+ on standards and accountability. The report noted that Minnesota's standards were strong but the state lacked assessments in science and social studies. (The state now has statewide testing in science.) At the same time, it ranked Minnesota second in the nation on the National Assessment of Educational Progress, using an average of fourth and eighth grade reading and mathematics as the basis of

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[10] Minnesota Statute 120A.03, https://www.revisor.leg.state.mn.us/statutes/?id=120A.03

[11] American Federation of Teachers, "Sizing up State Standards 2008," (American Federation of Teachers, 2008).

comparison.[12] The apparent paradox of poor standards and high achievement was not addressed in the report. The 2008 *Quality Counts* report gave Minnesota a grade of C for standards, assessments, and accountability.[13]

The business community remains concerned about the preparation of a globally competitive workforce. Nationally, the New Commission on the Skills of the American Workforce issued a report in 2007 calling for the nation's schools to prepare students with both traditional academics and workplace competencies such as self-discipline and the ability to work as a member of a team.[14] In Minnesota, the Chamber of Commerce website notes that "[e]mployers are increasingly dissatisfied with the quality of the workforce pool."[15] Their policy initiatives include creating state proficiency standards that are internationally competitive and reducing the achievement gap between majority and minority students. The Minnesota Business Partnership advocates high standards for all students, measuring and reporting student progress, giving educators flexibility in matching instruction to student needs, and providing school choice to families.[16] These groups continue to view schooling as preparation for the workforce.

The Maple River Education Coalition, now EdWatch, keeps it members (and anyone else who wants to read its website) updated on issues in Minnesota and nationally. The list of alerts on their homepage in September 2008 notes that they are

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[12] *Education Week* and Pew Charitable Trusts, "Quality Counts at 10: A Decade of Standards-Based Education," (Editorial Projects in Education, 2006).

[13] _____, "Minnesota: A Special Supplement to Education Week's Quality Counts 2008," (Editorial Projects in Education 2008).

[14] New Commission on the Skills of the American Workforce, "Tough Choices or Tough Times," (Washington, D.C.: National Center on Education and the Economy, 2007).

[15] http://www.mnchamber.com/priorities/education_policy.cfm

[16] http://www.mnbp.com/article.cfm?aid=1&atid=68&cid=1

working against environmental education, early childhood education, the No Child Left Behind policy, the International Baccalaureate curriculum, and the rating of schools by *Newsweek* magazine.[17] Their homepage also indicates that the website can answer questions such as "What happened to local control of our schools?"; "Why are kids spending class time training for entry level jobs?"; and "Why is time spent on projects and group learning instead of the basics?", all issues that arose during the Profile's day.

Minnesota's current curriculum policy has been less controversial than the Profile. It also requires less of teachers and gives them more control over their instruction and assessment; the only accountability comes from the MCA-II tests, which affect only some curriculum areas. Standards have become an accepted and expected part of educational policy, but the state's citizens still hold varied beliefs about the purpose of schooling and the knowledge that should be contained in curriculum.

[17] http://www.edwatch.org/index.html

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APPENDIX

TIMELINE OF IMPORTANT EVENTS

1992-2004

Year	Governor	Commissioner	Events
1992	Carlson	Mammenga	Legislature directs state Board of Education to create results-based graduation rule to take effect for the graduating class of 2000, replacing the unpopular Outcome Based Education policy Board delegates task to MN Department of Education (MDE)
1993	Carlson	Mammenga (dismissed) Powell	Graduation rule will include basic standards and Profile of Learning. Twelve pilot sites are selected. Iris McGinnis assumes leadership for graduation rule development
1994	Carlson	Powell	Eleven pilot sites are added Pilot sites are given the task of developing performance packages
1995	Carlson	Powell (resigns) Johnson	Basic standards pilot test is given; passing rate is lower than expected. Seven specialists at MDE are dismissed. MDE becomes part of the Department of Children, Families, and Learning (CFL). Iris McGinnis resigns
1996	Carlson	Johnson (resigns) Wedl	Basic standards reduced to three areas. Implementation timeline extended. Basic standards tests given statewide; passing rate is low. American Federation of Teachers (AFT) gives MN standards a low rating.
1997	Carlson	Wedl	Legislature repeals prohibition against statewide testing Rule-making process begins for the Profile

Timeline continued

Year	Governor	Commissioner	Events
1998	Carlson	Wedl	Conservative columnist Katherine Kersten writes in opposition to the Profile in the *Star Tribune.* Legislature votes to abolish the State Board of Education effective December 31, 1999. Minnesota Comprehensive Assessments (MCAs) are given statewide in grades three and five. Board of Education votes unanimously to approve the Profile, completing the rule-making process. Legislature votes to abolish the State Board of Education effective December 31, 1999. Every local district accepts $14 per pupil incentive for full implementation in 1998-1999. Many fail to do so, but there are no consequences. Renee Doyle resigns from the Maple River School Board and begins to rally parents against the Profile, forming the Maple River Education Coalition. Media coverage increases as Profile becomes more controversial. The Graduation Standards Advisory Panel reviews the policy and makes recommendations for improvement. None are acted upon.
1999	Ventura	Jax	MN House has a Republican majority for the first time since 1986. It votes to repeal the Profile. Profile opponents hold a conference and rallies. State teachers union Education Minnesota polls its members and find that a majority are opposed to the Profile. MN State Board of Education meets for the last time. The legislature is now the primary educational policy-making body.

Timeline continued

Year	Governor	Commissioner	Events
2000	Ventura	Jax	Districts seek waivers from Profile requirements. Report from Center for Applied Research and Educational Improvement finds that the performance packages are not well understood CFL issues a report linking the Profile to a research base. MN House votes to repeal the Profile and replace it with the North Star Standard, a document produced by conservative groups Legislature approves significant changes in the Profile, resulting in more local control. Changes are also made in the names of the learning areas. Maple River Education Coalition and other Profile opponents form alliances with state legislators Achieve report notes significant weaknesses in the Profile standards and performance packages.
2001	Ventura	Jax	President George W. Bush takes office and advances his No Child Left Behind policy. The Academic Panel to the Commissioner submits its report, recommending that the state continue to build on the Profile but improve the infrastructure needed to support it. Two bills to repeal the Profile are introduced in the House but are never voted on. Teams of teachers working with CFL curriculum specialists revise the standards and the scoring rubrics. The *Quality Counts* report gives Minnesota a grade of F in standards and accountability. MN students' scores on the National Assessment of Educational Progress are among the highest in the country. Maple River Education Coalition holds another rally at the Capitol.

Timeline continued

Year	Governor	Commissioner	Events
2002	Ventura	Jax	MN House votes to repeal the Profile; Senate rejects the bill. Ventura opposed repeal. The policy remains unchanged. First high school Minnesota Comprehensive Assessments are given statewide. Groups of curriculum experts create benchmarks aligned to revised standards in order to meet requirements of No Child Left Behind.
2003	Pawlenty	Yecke	Repeal of Profile tops the new commissioner's agenda. Citizens' committees are created to write new mathematics and language arts standards. Profile is repealed on the last day of the legislative session MN Academic Standards for mathematics and language arts adopted
2004	Pawlenty	Yecke (confirmation denied)	MN Senate votes not to confirm the appointment of Commissioner Yecke on the last day of the legislative session