

**“SOME RECKONING OF GAINS IS MADE”:  
A HISTORICAL INQUIRY INTO ASSESSMENT IN  
CHILD-CENTRED CURRICULA**

**JAMES DAVID REMPEL**

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**JAMES DAVID REMPEL**

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Dr. A. von Heyking, Thesis Supervisor	Associate Professor	Ph.D.
Dr. L. Fowler Thesis Committee Member	Professor	Ph.D.
Dr. R. Bright Thesis Committee Member	Professor	Ph.D.
Dr. P. Clark External Examiner University of British Columbia Vancouver, British Columbia	Professor	Ph.D.
Dr. D. Slomp Chair, Thesis Oral Examination Committee	Associate Professor	Ph.D.

## Abstract

Child/learner-centred curricular reform has struggled to be an enduring force in Alberta since its first appearance in the 1936 Enterprise curriculum. Through researching assessment theory, policy, and practice in Alberta's Enterprise curricula from 1936 to 1950 this thesis has derived recommendations that can further strengthen current learner-centred reform in Alberta. Existing research into these Enterprise curricula suggests that teachers did not properly implement the goals of these child-centred programs in their assessment, with assessment being compromised by the persistence of teacher-centred testing, and yet this has not been systematically researched. What were Alberta Department of Education expectations for assessment in Enterprise curricula from 1936 to 1950, and to what extent did Alberta educators implement these expectations? My historical inquiry uses a documentary analysis of primary sources from this period to answer these questions. Findings show that departmental curriculum expectations moved from a discernible child-centred assessment theory in 1936 to a more clearly articulated version in 1940 which was mandated. A 1943 curriculum update shifted expectations to an emphasis on blending disparate child-centred and traditional teacher-centred assessment, an emphasis continued by the 1947 and 1949 curricula. Sources suggest significant educator implementation of child-centred assessment until the late 1930s when practical and theoretical problems began to inhibit implementation, and these became pronounced in the early 1940s. Sources also suggest that by 1947 many educators had increased their teacher-centred assessment alongside a continuation of child-centred assessment. These understandings diverge somewhat from existing research by suggesting the significant endurance of child-centred assessment throughout this period.

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learner-centred pedagogy, and directed me to theorists who shaped my thinking in this area, informing the thesis. Their thinking and teaching embody learner-empowerment.

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As with most building of meaning, this thesis has been a collaborative endeavor.

## Table of Contents

Abstract .....	iii
Acknowledgements .....	iv
Table of Contents .....	vi
List of Tables .....	x
Chapter One: Introduction .....	1
Introduction to Enterprise Curricula in Alberta .....	2
Rationale for Thesis Significance .....	7
Child-centred reform yet to be realized .....	7
Historical research matters for education .....	10
Assessment is central to pedagogy .....	12
Conclusion: History Has Currency .....	16
Chapter Two: Historiographical Literature Review .....	17
Defining Progressive Education in the United States .....	18
Progressivism: Distinct Movement or Distinctive Ideologies .....	18
Progressivism: Romantic and Utilitarian .....	28
Defining Progressive Education in Canada .....	32
Elementary curricular reform of the 1930s .....	32
Hybridized progressive curricular reform .....	34
Implementation of Canadian Progressive Curricula .....	44
Assessment Research on Canadian Progressive Reforms .....	47
Department of Education expectations for assessment .....	48
Educators' implementation of assessment .....	50

Conclusion: Research Need Confirmed .....	51
Chapter Three: Methodology .....	52
Assumptions and Methods .....	57
Primary Source Internal Criticism .....	59
Department of Education expectations for assessment: Sources ...	59
Educator implementation of assessment: Sources .....	65
Study Boundaries .....	68
Constructivist Paradigm .....	68
Conclusion: Empowering Guidelines .....	73
Chapter Four: Department of Education Assessment Expectations .....	74
Constructing a Child-Centred Assessment Theory: 1936 – 1943 .....	75
Curriculum documents .....	78
1936 Alberta Enterprise curriculum .....	78
1940 Alberta Enterprise curriculum .....	81
Textual considerations and theoretical constructs .....	85
Curriculum support documents .....	87
Dickie’s handbook .....	87
Other curriculum support documents .....	92
Attribute one .....	92
Attribute two .....	97
Attribute three .....	100
Attribute four .....	101
Summary .....	103

Child-Centred Assessment Theory Augmented: 1943 – 1950 .....	103
Curriculum documents .....	104
Textual considerations and theoretical constructs .....	112
Curriculum support documents .....	114
Blended Attributes .....	114
Summary .....	117
Conclusion: Curricula Circle Back .....	118
Chapter Five: Educator Implementation of Assessment Expectations .....	120
Implementing a Child-Centred Assessment Theory: 1936 – 1943 .....	121
General educator implementation of Enterprise curricula .....	123
Specific educator implementation of child-centred assessment ...	126
Attribute one .....	127
Attribute two .....	130
Attribute three .....	131
Attribute four .....	132
Summary .....	134
Implementing a Blended Assessment Theory: 1943 to 1950 .....	135
General educator implementation of Enterprise curricula .....	135
Specific educator implementation of blended assessment theory ...	137
Summary .....	147
Conclusion: Assessment as Inspiration and Inhibition .....	147
Chapter Six: Engaging and Sustaining Curricular Change .....	150
Empowering Educators: Engaging and Sustaining Change .....	152

Implication: Inspiring educator engagement .....	153
Implication: Sustaining educator commitment .....	155
Assessment practices and instruments needed .....	155
Structures for differentiated projects aid productivity .....	158
Exploratory learning needs resources .....	160
Curricular latitude encourages implementation .....	161
Teacher roles need redefinition .....	166
Conclusion: Moving Forward .....	167
References .....	170

## List of Tables

Table

1. Primary Sources Used in Two Research Question Themes .....	52
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## Chapter One: Introduction

An enterprise is an undertaking chosen, after careful consideration, for its interest and value; carefully planned in advance, carried out according to plan, and brought to a definite conclusion, after which some reckoning of gains is made.

(Alberta Department of Education, 1936, p. 288)

The above synopsis of using an “enterprise” was included in Alberta’s innovative *Programme of Studies for the Elementary School* in 1936, hereafter referred to as the *Enterprise* program due to its central emphasis on enterprises, which were understood as project-based activities. The foreword to this curriculum document outlines its re-orientation away from purely traditional teacher-centred transmission of subject matter toward including child-centred collaborative discovery learning through relevant subject-integrated enterprises (pp. 3-6). This new program was directly linked to the “activity programme” of progressive educational reformers at the time (pp. 3, 6). It was the first child-centred educational reform in Alberta.

The brief quote above indicates that enterprises were not intended to be a haphazard, unstructured playing with learning. Enterprises were to be highly intentional and carefully planned. In this context it is somewhat ironic that the role of assessment at the end of this summary is quite unclear: it is characterized as “some reckoning of gains ... made.” This lack of clarity about assessment in a statement that otherwise emphasizes particular planning of the learning experience raises several questions: Why such a lack of clarity? What were Alberta’s curriculum leaders thinking about assessment within the context of this significant curriculum shift? Was it important to them, or an area that had not been carefully considered? Was there some sense that assessment needed to be different in this new program, but had not yet been properly articulated? The reference to

“some reckoning” and also to “gains ... made” rather than a traditional reference to evaluating/grading levels of student understanding or marking the accuracy of their work, suggests that there may have been new thinking at work.

Did these curriculum thinkers have a well articulated assessment theory that fit with their child-centred pedagogy, and if they did, was it thoroughly shared with educators who would embody this new program in classroom practice? Historians who have examined the nature and implementation of Alberta’s child-centred curriculum in the 1930s and 1940s suggest that assessment policy and practice during this time did not align with the goals of the Enterprise program (Patterson, 1986a, 1986b; von Heyking, 2006; Tomkins, 2008; Lemisko & Clausen, 2012). This led me to a focusing research question:

What were Alberta Department of Education expectations for assessment in Enterprise curricula from 1936 to 1950, and to what extent did Alberta educators implement these expectations?

My research into this question reveals two theories of assessment emerging in Enterprise curricula from 1936 to 1950, and the variable nature of their implementation by Alberta educators.

### **Introduction to Enterprise Curricula in Alberta**

The Enterprise model of child-centred education in Alberta began with the 1936 curriculum indicated above, and continued with a revised version brought forward in 1940, with subsequent Enterprise curricula in 1947 and 1949 which continued a modified form of the 1940 model (Alberta Department of Education, 1936; 1940; 1947; 1949). The Enterprise model continued into the 1950s using the 1949 iteration of this curriculum.

Child-centred pedagogy was understood as outlined in the introduction to the 1936 Alberta Enterprise curriculum. Students were to problem-solve through subject-integrated collaborative enterprises or projects that were relevant to student lives, with student self-direction and individual student progress being priorities (Alberta Department of Education, 1936, pp. 3-6). It was, however, a pedagogy that was to sit alongside traditional teacher-centred, subject-based pedagogy. The use of the child-centered enterprise approach was optional in 1936 (Alberta Department of Education, 1936, pp. 3, 5, 267). One section explains the value of both “the regular subjects of a standard-type programme .... [using] formal teaching”, and use of the “enterprise procedure” (p. 5). They each served a purpose, with formal teaching helping to seat specific content and skills, and enterprises helping to develop attitudes and habits (p. 5). The 1940, 1947 and 1949 Enterprise curricula no longer allowed for optional use of enterprises, requiring their inclusion and their dominance in instruction, while still calling for subject-specific instruction to address specific content and skills where deemed necessary (Alberta Department of Education, 1940; 1947; 1949). The Enterprise curricula were, therefore, hybrid programs that placed child-centred pedagogy alongside continuation of traditional teacher-centred pedagogy.

A key distinction in these curricula was the combining of the six separate elementary grades into two divisions. The 1936 curriculum indicates the use of Divisions I and II, with three grades in each; these divisions were mandated for the one-room schools, but suggested for all schools (Alberta Department of Education, 1936, p. 3). This was to result in “promotions” every three years, rather than promotions for each grade, thereby considering individual’s progress within a broader three year span (p. 3). This

underscored the child-centred emphasis on honoring each learner's individual capacities in the educative process. The later Enterprise curricula continued this divisional structure.

The child-centred vision brought forward in 1936 was under the direction of Hubert C. Newland, Supervisor of Schools for Alberta (von Heyking, 1998, p. 68). Newland was a prominent child-centred reformer who believed in the need to empower students to become more effective social agents in their society through the use of socially relevant problem-based learning (pp. 70-71; cf. von Heyking, 2006, p. 63). The enterprises that were initially recommended and later mandated for Alberta teachers revolved around nine themes of social living: clothing; shelter; work; transportation and communication; recreation; expression; education; government, health and protection (von Heyking, 1998, p. 73). Enterprise projects were suggested in these themes that involved students in socially active roles. For example, Division I involved project suggestions surrounding the protection of "life and property in our homes, schools and community" that included: "organizing a school council;" "investigating public problems such as particularly dangerous traffic areas and suggesting solutions;" or, "writing safety rules" (p. 73). Students were to be actively engaged in inquiring into the potentially problematic aspects of their social environment.

Newland carefully chose curriculum writers to design the first Enterprise curriculum in 1936 around this social problem-solving, the most prominent of whom was Dr. Donalda Dickie (von Heyking, 1998, p. 71). Dickie was a Normal School instructor in Alberta with impressive academic credentials, and she wrote a book to support the implementation of the Enterprise curriculum, *The Enterprise in Theory and Practice* (Dickie, 1941). This treatise stressed the development of the child as "a well-balanced

personality capable of happy citizenship,” having developed the “interests” and “powers” that would enable them to work productively within their social context (von Heyking, 1998, p. 72). Dickie’s book, therefore, supported Newland’s vision.

The people behind the development of the Enterprise curricula were clearly dedicated to a strong citizenship-orientation. They were “preparing future citizens to take an active role in shaping their democracy” which could only be adequately realized if “students had experience in governing themselves, rather than having discipline imposed upon them by outside authorities such as teachers” (von Heyking, 2006, p. 67). These child-centred curricula endeavored to shift the focus of learning from passive knowledge transfer towards active knowledge acquisition based on social relevancy, with the goal being social empowerment.

This model grew out of a particular social context. North America after World War I exhibited a particular attention to augmenting educational opportunity and examining the presuppositions of schooling. An emphasis on enhancing independent and critical thinking combined with increasing attention to the individuality of young learners and their psychological needs, expressing itself in child-centred movements throughout Canada in the 1920s and 1930s (Patterson, 1990; von Heyking, 2006). The 1930s were rife with threats of fascism and communism in Europe, and educational theorists in America responded by stressing the importance of education in building appreciation for democracy and the skills and attitudes that would best support it (Patterson, 1990, p. 105). Acquiring these skills/attitudes became a powerful priority, and the collaborative inquiry involved in project-based problem-solving was seen as refining the skills associated with democratic participation: “decision making, investigation and reasoning

in a social context and with people of different abilities, interests and attitudes” (p. 103). Here were highlighted the central democratic values of individual freedom and worthiness, combined with a critical involvement in social interactions that served a communal goal. Students were to experience freedom in their learning along with developing the corresponding discipline necessary for self-governance within a community, and together these would enhance democratic citizenship (von Heyking, 2006, p. 67). The field of psychology also had much to say to educators at this time regarding the need to understand and work with individuality in learners, the needs of the whole child, and the importance of mental health. These psychological priorities pushed education in the direction of interest-based relevant learning and collaborative activity-based learning (pp. 65-67; Patterson, 1990, p. 105). A further consideration prompting an interest in child-centred learning was that school populations were soaring during this time, and teachers in rural one-room schools were particularly struggling with this. It was increasingly untenable for rural teachers to handle the preparatory load of traditional subject-centred pedagogy when they were dealing with more students in more grades, and this became the leading educational problem at this time (von Heyking, 2012; Patterson, 1990, p. 103). Child-centred learning addressed the issue by moving away from a traditional focus on separate subjects in separate grades, where each student had to be evaluated on their mastery of content in each subject area. Instead it advocated collaborative projects involving widely integrated subject matter, carried out among students of various ages contributing in differentiated ways according to interest and ability (von Heyking, 2012, pp. 97, 106-107; Patterson, p. 104). Thus, the demands placed on the teacher by the subject-centred progress of each student were supplanted by

group-oriented learning that spanned various subject areas. von Heyking (2012) argues that Alberta's child-centred curriculum revisions in 1935 were an intentional response to the problems of rural education at that time.

However, in considering this social context it is important to note that while Canadian reformers advocated for child-centred reform they did not embrace it wholeheartedly. The hybridized form of child-centred and traditional subject-centred learning that we have seen as characteristic of Alberta's Enterprise curricula was also typical in other areas of Canada. Patterson suggests that "the distinctive Canadian flavor of progressive education was its tendency to endorse a cautious, moderate approach to reform" which encouraged a continuation of the old curriculum alongside cautious revision (Patterson, 1990, p. 100; cf. Tomkins, 2008, pp. 173ff.). Patterson attributes this to a nationalistic sentiment in Canadian education that ironically borrowed extensively from American child-centred theorists while maintaining that their indigenous Canadian models of reform were being more carefully considered (pp. 99, 100).

Thus, Alberta's Enterprise curricula were constructed in a Canadian social context that prompted a pairing of the old and the new. There was reformist zeal in examining traditional presuppositions, and yet there was caution that advocated for a continuation of subject-centred pedagogy alongside child-centred reform, resulting in the co-existence of disparate pedagogies within these curricula.

### **Rationale for Thesis Significance**

**Child-centred reform yet to be realized.** When considering the history of child-centred curricular reform in Alberta, there has been little enduring success. The Enterprise curricula described above were already being compromised by strong criticisms in the 1940s and 1950s, with their demise as a broad curricular mandate

happening in 1963 when Enterprise learning was subsumed under social studies (von Heyking, 2006, pp. 92-107; cf. Tomkins, 2008, pp. 261-268). An attempt to resurrect the principles of child-centred learning emerged a decade later in the Worth Report (Worth, 1972), which again outlined a systematic child-centred focus for new curricula in Alberta. The Worth reforms were too dramatic for Alberta educators at the time, with strong resistance leading to the reinstatement of traditional teacher-centred, subject-based curricula by the late 1970s, although child-centred ideas of student engagement through inquiry continued to influence curricular directions (Tomkins, 2008, pp. 279, 287-292).

With this history of unfulfilled child-centred initiatives, it is critical to understand what can be learned from these historical situations in order to help inform the current initiative in child-centred curriculum revision in Alberta. This revision began in 2009 with an initiative called *Inspiring Education: A Dialogue with Albertans*, where dialogues were conducted in person and online with various Alberta stakeholders in education (Alberta Education, n.d.). This led to a call, in the *Curriculum Development Prototyping Guide* (Alberta Education, 2013), for curriculum redesign proposals which would reflect enhanced student engagement with learning. With new curriculum development underway in Alberta today, educators have been given another chance to bring about the success of child-centred pedagogy – referred to in the prototyping guide as “learner-centred” or “student-centred” (p. 3). Alberta Education has made learner-centred pedagogy its primary guiding principle in this current curricular reform (p. 3). That this new direction is strongly learner-centred is readily determined by even a cursory examination of the articulated curricular mandates. In this prototyping guide I have found four major areas of direct congruency with child-centred pedagogy as understood by the

1936 Enterprise curriculum: social interaction as mediator of learning; socially relevant learning; in-depth interdisciplinary exploratory learning; and, interactive ongoing assessment to support progress in learning. These four areas are a virtual manifesto of the vision provided by Enterprise curricula: collaborative problem-solving of enterprises with peers and teachers was considered the way of making meaning; enterprises were to be relevant to student contexts and involve students in choices to increase relevancy; exploratory problem-solving was to cross artificial subject boundaries leading to a breadth and depth of understanding; and, ongoing peer and teacher assessment of progress within collaborative enterprises was expected. This similarity led me to see the value in using historical understandings of child-centred assessment to help inform these current realities.

I believe that assessment supports and drives instructional practice as teachers assess/judge the intended outcomes of classroom learning. It follows that having an understanding of Enterprise assessment implementation, which this thesis provides, offers understandings of both assessment and instruction, and their interdependency. Thus, the assessment understandings that emerge from a study of the Enterprise curricula can broadly inform our current learner-centred curriculum implementation in Alberta.

We cannot ignore the understandings that historical inquiry could provide to inform current implementation of learner-centred pedagogy. It is too important for educational success, as current educational commentators are increasingly pointing out,<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> While this call to acknowledge the values of learner-centred pedagogy abound, there are two contemporary theorists who I believe have made singular contributions in this area. Ted Aoki, a Canadian curriculum theorist who is seen as an influential thinker in North American curricular discourse, is one whose writings present a powerful apology for learner-centred thinking (Pinar & Irwin, 2005). Another theorist, Marc Prensky, is more populist in his writings, but has passionately argued for child-centred pedagogy in 21<sup>st</sup> century schooling (Prensky, 2012).

and as I deeply believe after many years devoted to implementing this pedagogy in my classroom.

**Historical research matters for education.** The understandings of historical inquiry can foster powerful reflective thinking about the nature of current realities in education, thereby contributing to the broadening of perspectives on current issues. In developing my historical inquiry, I have made the assumption that information gleaned about assessment thinking/practice in the Enterprise curricula could serve to inform considerations about current curricular reform in Alberta. There can be no direct lesson, since the circumstances of that distant historical period have their own contextual variables, many of which will be distinct from our contemporary situation. Nor can we ever be entirely sure about the circumstances of historical situations, filtered as they are through the lenses of whatever historical accounts are available. Nevertheless, accepting the lack of certitude and the necessarily interpretive nature of historians' conclusions, the understandings of the Enterprise curricula provided by this thesis will be shown to inform the current learner-centred directions in Alberta's curriculum.

Cuban (2001) argues that history cannot provide direct lessons for contemporary policy makers. Instead, he argues that carefully conducted educational histories will provide,

...contemporary policymakers ... [with] comparisons and contrasts with current issues facing them. They might even come to appreciate the range of alternatives and conflicting forces impinging on earlier generations of policymakers and the choices that were made. Such histories inform the making of policy rather than urge decisionmakers toward particular current reforms. (p. 465)

This careful use of history to inform educational policy in the present is a position shared by Lagemann (2005). Lagemann argues that historians interested in current educational policy issues must not draw “exact lessons from the past to the present”, but rather come to “the past on its own terms, as different from the present, and in drawing such a contrast help to illuminate both past and present” (p. 17).

An additional perspective on the value of educational history is that of Kliebard (2001), whose argument stresses history’s role in making us reflective thinkers about the questions and assumptions that govern our contemporary educational policy. Adding to Lagemann and Cuban, Kliebard urges us to consider not just how history might generally inform current policy issues, but also how history can help us to see whether these current policies are even the ones that should be considered (pp. 194-195). Kliebard is, therefore, calling for the use of history to help examine whether the assumptions underlying current policy issues need to be reconsidered. In so doing he prompts historians to be more intentional about the critical thinking power that they can wield in using historical research to build logical lenses for critiquing present assumptions.

Moving beyond policy issues, Clark (2013) argues for the value of educational history in the pedagogical growth of prospective teachers studying education. Clark identifies four ways in which educational history builds pedagogical efficacy in prospective teachers forming their teacher identities. First, it builds historical awareness of continuity and change, opening them to possibilities for appropriate educational evolution (p. 34). Second, history reveals effective criteria for deeply critiquing the principles on which their practice is based (pp. 34-35). Third, history provides specific knowledge of problems and successes in past educational innovations, and while this

knowledge from a different time will not provide direct lessons, it can inform the implementation of similar innovations in the present. Fourth, history builds a broader perspective that helps to guard against the conventional thinking in which we are immersed, or as professor emeritus Ken Osborne states, to avoid being “governed solely by the short-term imperatives of the here and now” (as cited in Clark, 2013, p. 35). Through these arguments, Clark adds an important dimension to the policy-driven arguments of many educational historians, namely that teachers implement policy, and history builds their capacity to think about effective and ethical implementation of generalized policy in their contexts. As Clark asserts, educational history “should assist teacher candidates to make connections between the phenomena, events, and ideas they are examining and those in other times.... and help them make reasoned judgments about where we should be going and how to get there” (p. 37). Through this enhanced critical capacity teachers are empowered to effectively reconstruct their present realities and move toward a better educational future.

Together, these four educational historians compel us to value the role of history in addressing current educational contexts. Historical inquiry holds the power to generally inform the unfolding of current policy, to consider foundational assumptions that could fundamentally redirect policy, and to empower the prospective teachers who will implement this policy.

**Assessment is central to pedagogy.** Another assumption I have made is that assessment is central to pedagogy in supporting and influencing instruction. Therefore, historical inquiry into child-centred assessment is important to help inform current learner-centred pedagogy. That assessment is central in supporting and influencing

instruction is an intuitively powerful idea since teachers assess the intended outcomes of their classroom learning. Hence, assessment practices used will reflect the learning, but also constrain the learning. This can be understood in the following way: assessment reflects learning because educators assess intended learning outcomes, but assessment also constrains learning because what is taught should fit modes of assessment. Thus, educators will shape assessment to fit intended learning outcomes, but once those assessment modes have become normative they in turn influence the type of teaching that will be done.

This interdependency between assessment and instruction is the focus of Black and Wiliam (1998), who place assessment at the heart of instructional practice. Black and Wiliam argue that in their ideal classroom, a social-constructivist classroom, assessment and instruction are two parts of a whole. Assessment is to be primarily about continually and interactively informing learning and instruction, and if summative assessment is required by jurisdictional authorities, then it should be about providing students with the opportunity to demonstrate *what* they have learned in the social-constructivist *way* that they have learned it (pp. 140, 146-48). For them, if assessment is being done within a social-constructivist epistemology, it will be integral to and reflect all aspects of the learning process. And yet, even when assessment is not being done in the way they advocate, they still argue that instructional practice and assessment are inextricably linked. In this regard they argue that traditional transmissional teaching, with the student's passively receptive role, is inextricably linked to a belief in evaluation only after the data has been transferred (pp. 145-146). For traditional teachers, ongoing, interactive formative assessment is not an operational construct, with coverage of

material and individual or whole-class drill and practice to reinforce transmitted learning being normative (pp. 145-146). Thus, assessments are determined by the type of instruction. Therefore, Black and Wiliam, both in their call for social constructivist pedagogy and in their criticism of traditional transmissional pedagogy, operate from a clear philosophic belief in the interdependency of assessment and instruction.

Shepard (2000) also believes that assessment and instructional practice are two parts of a whole. Shepard argues that often in current learning environments there is misalignment between instruction and assessment, due to each emerging from different epistemological paradigms (p. 4). Current instructional practice often shows inspiration from the emergent social-constructivist paradigm, while assessment is often grounded in the measurement approach of an earlier social efficiency paradigm, and they work in uneasy tension with each other (p. 4). She illustrates how this dissonance has resulted in instructional and assessment practices that work against each other: instruction often offering interactive, exploratory sense-making of real-world problems with awareness of student diversity, while assessment is often statically measuring a body of predetermined information (pp. 6-7). Shepard, in keeping with Black and Wiliam, argues that in order to facilitate effective learning educators must use an awareness of these competing epistemologies to work toward consistently social-constructivist pedagogy, contending that measurement-oriented assessment works against constructivist tendencies in instruction and inhibits its full expression (pp. 7-10). Thus, like Black and Wiliam, Shepard argues that effective social-constructivist pedagogy requires assessment to support instruction.

A recent study provides further evidence for the contention that assessment practices affect classroom instruction. A meta-analysis by Slomp, Corrigan, and Sugimoto (2014) focuses on the consequences of large-scale writing assessment for writing instruction in Canadian schools. Their study systematically explores the impact that large-scale standardized assessments have had on instructional practice across Canada, thereby demonstrating one aspect of the interdependency of assessment and instruction: namely, that evaluation shapes instruction. Slomp, Corrigan, and Sugimoto's research provides a complex examination of many Canadian standardized assessment studies which have used consequential validity constructs to study the consequences of large-scale testing programs. They tie together these various studies using their own consequential validity framework. They demonstrate that the consequence of standardized literacy assessments has been the undermining of effective instruction. Based on the premise that effective literacy instruction must acknowledge student diversity, the authors point to an unfortunate irony in Canadian education:

Increases in diverse student populations in the Canadian educational system have been accompanied by a concomitant proliferation of large-scale testing .... these two movements (one toward increased diversity, the other toward increased standardization) seem at odds with one another .... [highlighting] the need for a systematic approach to understanding the consequences that accrue as a result of tests, especially with respect to their effects on diverse populations of students (p. 277).

Their study uncovers the negative consequences for diversity in literacy instruction that have accrued from standardized tests in various provinces, and the authors summarize

their unequivocally negative results into three broad themes: tests limited “writing as a construct”; tests limited “pedagogical diversity”; and, tests “undermined diversity through their negative impacts, especially on marginalized populations of student and their teachers” (pp. 295-296). These significant impacts on instructional practice show the powerful influence of assessment.

The above studies demonstrate the assumption that assessment and instruction are inextricably linked. Thus, studying past assessment practices in child-centred pedagogy can provide understandings that broadly inform current learner-centred pedagogy.

### **Conclusion: History Has Currency**

In the past, Alberta has been unable to sustain child-centred curricular reform. Implementing this pedagogy is a calling that must be systematically pursued if the deeply rooted teacher-centred transmissional model is to evolve and ultimately be re-shaped. This pursuit will be powerfully aided by informing current educational reform with systematic historical understandings of assessment in the child-centred Enterprise curricula, assessment that we have seen is central to pedagogy.

## **Chapter Two: Historiographical Literature Review**

The child-centred Enterprise curriculum introduced in Alberta in 1936 explicitly situated itself within the “activity programme” of educational reform in North America (Alberta Department of Education, 1936, pp. 3-6). This activity or project-based reform movement sprang from a group of American reformers collectively referred to as progressive despite significant variations in their progressive visions (Kliebard, 1995, p. 194). Thus, the activity-based Enterprise curriculum in Alberta can be seen as a particular iteration of the progressive reform movement in America.

American and Canadian educational historians have explored the nature of progressive educational reforms initiated in the early twentieth century. Their work has been helpful in shaping my understanding of the various strands of progressive education from this time, and has informed my research focus. First, definitions of progressive educational reforms in the United States helped me understand how progressive curriculum reforms in Canada, such as Alberta’s Enterprise curriculum, defined themselves relative to these American progenitors of educational progressivism. Second, defining Canadian progressivism revealed the similarities between Alberta’s Enterprise reform and other provincial progressive reforms, and told a story of significant struggle in implementing them. An important part of this struggle was assessment implementation. Third, despite the evident problems with assessment at this time, it became apparent that research into assessment implementation in these progressive curricula had not been dealt with systematically.

## **Defining Progressive Education in the United States**

The historians who follow made significant contributions to our understanding of progressive education in the United States in the first quarter of the twentieth century. The strands of progressive education they identified shaped the growth of progressivism in Canada. Therefore, these historians have informed my research question by helping me understand how different conceptions of progressive education influenced subsequent Canadian progressive movements such as Alberta's Enterprise curricula.

**Progressivism: Distinct movement or distinctive ideologies.** Lawrence Cremin (1961) and Herbert Kliebard (1995) serve as touchstones in the field of American educational progressivism. They will be treated together in a comparative light, since Kliebard builds on the seminal work of Cremin. Cremin's work provides a generalized awareness of the reform impulse of American progressives, which broadly unified them in common cause, while Kliebard followed with a more analytic awareness of distinctions within this broad impulse toward progressive reform.

Cremin is acknowledged as redirecting educational history away from educational missionary work that justified why schools were the way they were, instead "establishing history of education as an integral part of social and cultural history" (Kliebard, 1995, p. 232). John Rury (1991) echoes these understandings of Cremin's historical impact. He indicates that by providing a critique of historical education that did not see "the development of public schooling in the United States ... [as] a matter of continued improvement with growth" Cremin removed himself from the "laudatory historiography" of education that had prevailed to that point (p. 68). How then did Cremin conceive of educational progressivism in America?

Cremin argues “progressive education meant different things to different people” (Cremin, 1961, p. x). There were, however, some common qualities that provided a general coherence to what he sees as a movement (pp. ix-x). Progressive educators were all trying to embody the social and political progressivism growing at this time in America, a democracy-strengthening progress, using schools to improve the lives of individuals in several ways: first, by moving beyond strictly intellectual development to include learning specific to personal health, vocational pursuits, and social life; second, by applying scientific research from the social sciences to pedagogical development; and third, by tailoring instruction to the various individual needs of students who were being brought into the school (pp. viii-ix). Thus, Cremin essentially does provide a broad social and political agenda for the commonality that unified the progressive educational movement, even though it is not a neatly encapsulated definition.

Cremin provides some instructive analysis of distinctions within this broader movement. He acknowledges that some progressive thinkers in the 1920s were part of “the whole scientific movement in education” (Cremin, 1961, p. 200), but does not identify it as a distinct group. Cremin acknowledges their focus on education being a preparation for adulthood, with curricula needing to focus on the actual activities of the adult world, scientifically analyzed and arranged so as to provide a graduated organizational map that would “classify and detail” a progression of studies best preparing students to emerge into the adult world (p. 199). Cremin emphasizes that this scientific group focused on scientific organization that measured what it could measure in the real world in order to prepare students to be effective in what was their adult world, not on a broad, idealistic “progressive quest for the better life through education” (pp.

199-200). Another distinction in this broader movement is what Cremin terms the “frontier” position in progressivism, with its emphasis on frontiers of social development that needed to be explored through education (pp. 224 ff.). Furthermore, Cremin makes distinctions between child-centred and social-reform approaches to progressivism. He emphasizes that the more radical social reformers were moving beyond the child-centred reformers (p. 261), and he does at one point refer to the “extreme child-centred and the extreme social-reformist positions” (p. 266). However, Cremin characterizes this distinction between the two positions as infighting, rather than as separate progressive groups contesting each other (pp. 266-267).

Thus, Cremin provides some distinctions within this educational progressivism, which Kliebard makes the focus of his later research. Cremin emphasizes that the reform impulse in all of these early American theorists gave them a common sense of social promise, of striving to find a new way forward to deal with the social ills of America. In this, Cremin has informed my understanding by providing a realistic sense of the dynamic reformist zeal that set all progressives apart from their traditional educational context.

However, in this willingness to acknowledge a socially progressive vision as unifying the various expressions of progressivism, Cremin goes too far for Kliebard. Kliebard indicates that Cremin’s belief in a movement made up of various strands with common goals is not supportable on several levels (Kliebard, 1995, p. 234). First, Kliebard uses his own and other scholarship to maintain that even calling the progressives a movement is misleading because their aims were so divergent that they could not claim to have a single ideological position (pp. 239-248). He indicates that

Cremin's use of general terms to define the progressives is misleading because they were not stable enough as attributes to consistently define the various groups, as Cremin had to acknowledge in often revealing "inconsistencies and contradictions" (p. 246). Rury (1991) supports this objection of Kliebard's indicating that educators with a wide variety of views, "some of them in stark conflict - are lumped together under the banner of progressivism" (p. 71). Second, Kliebard indicates that, as suggested by the previous idea, the subgroups of progressivism did have identifiable ideological positions that distinguished them clearly from each other, and that these progressive subgroups sometimes had to overcome their ideological differences to form expedient coalitions in moving their reform agenda forward (Kliebard, 1995, pp. 246-247; cf. Rury, 1991, p. 71). Third, Kliebard raises an objection to seeing the goals of progressives as a substantive unifying force. He argues that while they all claimed to be working toward the progress of society, Cremin's assertion that they can be broadly identified as agents of social and political progressivism through educational reform should mean that they were instrumental in such progress, but the contrary often happened (Kliebard, 1995, p. 239). Kliebard points to revisionist historians' understandings "that much of what went on in the progressive era was socially and politically, and perhaps even pedagogically, regressive" (p. 239). Rury corroborates this understanding of revisionist historiography that questions the gains of progressivism, pointing in particular to the legacy of the "scientific" progressives. According to revisionist historians, scientific progressive values of "classifying and measuring students' abilities, and designing curricula to meet presumed social needs" have contributed to distinctly undemocratic tendencies that have been "a starting point for many of the most troubling developments in twentieth-century

education” (Rury, 1991, pp. 71-72). With these qualifications of Cremin in mind, Kliebard’s emphasis on the ideological distinctions within progressivism can be examined in depth.

Kliebard’s (1995) thesis is that there is not one way in which progressive education was understood from its roots in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century to its heyday in the 1920s and 1930s in America. In the midst of their ideological distinctions, the four groups he identifies as progressive reformers did have one broad commonality: namely, that curriculum needed to be reformed in order to see society progress. In elaborating this thesis of ideological difference, he argues that not one of these four types of progressivism could be said to have gained “absolute supremacy” over the others, and often there was a mixing of their various platforms in curricular reform (pp. xvii, 25, 179-204, 230). Of particular interest in this argument is that Kliebard delineates the background voice of John Dewey, showing that Dewey’s vision of progressive reform did not match any of the other three more formalized camps of progressivism. Dewey, in essence, while influencing progressive educators, formed another single-person camp in the conflicting camps of American progressive educators.

The three groups that set down formalized roots in the 1890s alongside Deweyan progressive thinking were the “developmentalist,” “social efficiency,” and “social meliorist/reconstructionist”<sup>2</sup> reform groups, unified superficially around a common goal of curriculum reform to help society progress, but demonstrating markedly different reform visions (Kliebard, 1995, pp. 11-24). Kliebard explains:

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<sup>2</sup> Kliebard uses both “social meliorist” and “social reconstructionist” to designate this group of social reformers.

The word progressive had been applied to ... [these reform] practices in education as early as ... the 1890's .... For the most part it was used synonymously with adjectives like 'modern' and 'new' to designate something other than traditional practice .... what was known as progressive education became analogous to a chemical mixture in which different elements are thrown together but still retain their own characteristics. The tenuous common cause that held them together was their disillusionment and in some cases outright antagonism to the traditional course of study. The source of the opposition, however, varied. By some, the traditional curriculum was seen as ignoring the natural course of development in children and youth as well as their interests and penchant for activity [developmentalist reformers, but also involving Dewey and the social reconstructionists]; by others, it was regarded as supremely non-functional, dangerously ignoring the actual activities that adults are called upon to play in our society, leaving society bereft of the trained individuals that would make it work [social efficiency reformers]; and by still others, it was clearly lacking in social direction, particularly irrelevant to issues of social justice and social renewal [social reconstructionists, but also including developmentalists and Dewey]. (p. 194)

I have provided in this quotation parenthetical identifications with the four reform groups that derive from Kliebard's analysis. These brief distinctions need further explanation to understand more clearly how the four groups envisioned curricular change.

The developmentalist reformers emphasized that a child's studies needed to match their psychological development rather than a fully developed adult formulation, and that

each child would therefore be learning at their own pace (Kliebard, 1995, p. 139). They focused curriculum on the use of problem-solving projects with students choosing projects based on their on their learning capabilities and their personal social interests, or purposes (p. 140). By actually working through these real purposeful problems in their school experience they were interactively participating in worthy living, becoming better social problem solvers (p. 140). This realistic problem-solving was fundamentally opposed to having a curriculum focused on a series of artificially analyzed units of instruction, the material of traditional subject-oriented instruction (p. 140). This “wholehearted purposeful activity [was] proceeding in a social environment” (p. 140), in other words filled with realistic interaction to help meet purposive needs. This pragmatic approach to curriculum stressed the authentic integration of various relevant subject matter in the service of actively “accomplishing human purposes,” resonating with the child’s socially interactive inquiry into ways of dealing with problems (pp. 142-143). In these emphases it became commonly known as a child-centred pedagogy, where students socially interacted to help in self-directed learning through personally relevant problem-solving (p. 164). Kliebard emphasizes W. H. Kilpatrick’s key role in promoting developmentalist theory.

Social efficiency reform, in contrast, promoted teacher-centred instruction in a progression of coursework, rigorously articulated with increasing complexity and abstraction through the years, curbing anti-social tendencies in the child through controlled schooling (Kliebard, 1995, pp. 81-93). These reformers worked out a carefully graduated articulation of school grade levels using what they called a scientific approach. This approach focused on analyzing societal structures into their components,

determining how these could be learned in steps of increasing complexity, and figuring out how students could best learn these components through the grade progressions of their schooling (pp. 81-93). The mind needed to be directly taught the exact skills that were needed (p. 93), with the reinforcement of their acquisition through frequent testing (p. 162). They also promoted ability or “I.Q.” testing, and general standardized testing, in order to efficiently diagnose and place each student in the learning situations that would best prepare them for potential societal roles, since they believed each individual had their own level of native ability (pp. 92-95). Schooling was no more and no less than a preparation for adult life, and social efficiency educators devoted their energy to the objective or scientific study of their society in order to determine its constituent parts. It was a detached objectification of society, founded on the belief that society was strengthened when its students were specifically prepared to take on and bring ultimate efficiency to their adult roles. Kliebard stresses J. L. Bobbitt and E. F. Thorndike’s central roles in the social efficiency movement.

Social reconstructionist reformers proclaimed a gospel of social amelioration that advocated intentional curriculum design to build student capacity in addressing the ills of American society (Kliebard, 1995, pp. 167-174). Textbook development was used as a direct vehicle for providing teachers with resources that would highlight the consideration of social issues. This social justice orientation gave them common ground with developmentalists in opposing social efficiency reformers who advocated for education that stressed social conformity. On the other hand, social reconstructionism placed more emphasis on an intentionally designed curriculum than the developmentalists, criticizing them for neglecting directed curriculum that would engage

students in wrestling with important social problems, and thus, for having more student independence than was helpful (pp. 166-167). However, despite believing in more directed curriculum design than developmentalists, the social reconstructionists paralleled the developmentalist emphasis on a child-centred program of worthy living through collaborative problem-solving activities connected to the students' world (pp. 140-141). Indeed, Kliebard indicates that Kilpatrick, despite his leadership of the developmentalists, became a prominent contributor to their journal of social reconstruction (pp. 168-169). Also, in 1928 a prominent reconstructionist co-authored a handbook of developmentalist reform entitled *The Child-Centered School* that was considered a resounding endorsement of Kilpatrick and the growing project of activity-centered developmentalism (p. 173). Reconstructionism was, therefore, a redirection of emphasis in child-centred reform rather than being dramatically separate from developmentalist reform. Kliebard highlights the leadership of G. S. Counts and H. O. Rugg in the reconstructionist movement.

John Dewey's reform vision paralleled and diverged from the three other reform groups. Dewey distinguished himself from social efficiency reformers by indicating that while curriculum design was necessary, it was not a design focused on sterile analysis of societal practices leading to a curriculum focused on efficient transfer of graduated societal knowledge and skill. Rather, curriculum design should look to analyze occupational<sup>3</sup> experiences that formed the essential qualities of that society, highlighting the problematized nature of these experiences, and emphasizing a connection of these experiences to the developmental life and interests of the student through problem-

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<sup>3</sup> Dewey conceived of occupational experiences in a much broader way than job-related occupations, using the word occupation to denote the broad activities of people that occurred within a culture (Kliebard, 1995, pp. 60-61).

solving experiences (Kliebard, 1995, pp. 60-61). Dewey also believed that the social efficiency focus on passive reception of transmitted knowledge and skill for some future role in life failed to actively and interactively engage students. The motivation of socially interacting to solve socially relevant problems right now in the classroom was lost, resulting in the loss of all “power to direct student energies” (pp. 104-105). Dewey, therefore, informed the developmentalist and social reconstructionist reformers in fostering an interactive classroom environment which engaged students through socially relevant problem-solving activity. On the other hand, through his broader social foundations approach to the planning of curriculum, Dewey showed an emphasis that went beyond the more specific social issues focus of the reconstructionists. Dewey also took issue with the developmentalists’ open-ended approach to curriculum, stating that their child-directed projects were often trivial and needed to be properly orchestrated by the curriculum and teachers in order to build a proper understanding of society (p. 153). Dewey, while believing that activities needed to reflect the realities and developmental levels of students’ lives, argued that teachers have “not only the right but the duty to suggest lines of activity .... [being responsible for] discovering ... worthwhile activity and ... arranging the conditions under which it can be carried forward” (as cited in Kliebard, 1995, p. 166). In this, Dewey was advocating for guiding students to deal with coherently organized subject matter rather than allowing students to engage in a “mere succession of unrelated activities” (p. 166). This echoed in part the organized curricula of social efficiency reformers, but as we have seen Dewey saw instruction in a wholly different way than social efficiency theorists. Kliebard thereby emphasizes Deweyan theory as critical of all other progressive groups, although his disagreement with

developmentalists and social reconstructionists was more a disappointment in their lack of a fully developed theory, rather than a significant re-orientation of thinking.<sup>4</sup>

Kliebard's identification of these four distinguishable groups of progressive educational reform contrasts with Cremin's conclusions. Cremin uses a broad definition to unify progressivism as a movement in America, while Kliebard sees marked ideological differences which created distinct camps of reform.

**Progressivism: Romantic and utilitarian.** Another American educational historian, David Labaree (2005), draws explicitly on the definitional work of Kliebard and Cremin, and that of other educational historians, to stress the romantic tendencies of what he refers to as the "pedagogical progressives" in early American progressivism, distinguishing them from the utilitarian "administrative progressives" (pp. 280-284). In this emphasis, he brings into focus a distinction that Kliebard touches on but does not systematically develop.

Before considering Labaree's romantic versus utilitarian division, it needs to be noted that while he highlights and expands on an idea of Kliebard's, he does not add specific definitional components to Kliebard. His understanding of the romantic pedagogical progressives, who he indicates roughly approximate Kliebard's child-development/developmentalist and social meliorist/reconstructionist groups (Labaree,

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<sup>4</sup> Modern scholars have compared Dewey to European progressive theorists who were his contemporaries: Rudolf Steiner and Maria Montessori. Although Dewey seems not to have written about Steiner or Montessori (Ensign, 1996; Thayer-Bacon, 2012), these parallel progressive traditions were circulating in America during Dewey's time and could have influenced his thought. Certainly, Ensign and Thayer-Bacon show congruencies between these three in common emphases on interactive, exploratory, self-directed, activity-based learning that tapped the instincts of the child. However, Ensign and Thayer-Bacon indicate contrasts between these thinkers despite a broad similarity. Thayer-Bacon also considers Kilpatrick's critical book on Montessori, to which Dewey contributed with manuscript suggestions, a book that marginalized her influence in America. Furthermore, Kliebard (1995) makes no mention of Steiner or Montessori in his work on the four camps of American progressivism. Therefore, while these European iterations were concurrent and similar examples of progressivism, they seem not to have been notable influences in shaping Deweyan or other American progressive thought in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century.

2005, p. 279), mirror Kliebard's understandings. Similarly, his explanation of the utilitarian administrative progressive group, or what he acknowledges as basically Kliebard's social efficiency reformers (pp. 279, 281), also follows Kliebard's analysis.

However, his emphasis on "romanticism" in defining pedagogical progressives does augment Kliebard. This emphasis helps to create awareness of the unifying concepts that identify this progressive group, and in so doing helps to foster an appreciation of their goals. Using the thinking of E.D. Hirsch, Labaree points to pedagogical progressive's "essential romanticism" which revolves around two beliefs: first, that there is an innate goodness in human nature, and the child should be allowed to develop naturally without imposing social mores such as predetermined bodies of study, which corrupt the child; second, the child is not simply an unschooled version of an adult, but is naturally a "special being ... with unique, trustworthy – indeed holy – impulses that should be allowed to develop" (p. 280). Based on these naturalistic tenets, pedagogical progressives emphasized that learning had to adapt to the "natural developmental capacities of the learner" or stages of development, and that the natural form of this learning in school was a "holistic form, where multiple domains of skill and knowledge are integrated into thematic units and projects instead of being taught as separate subjects" (p. 281). These qualities of naturalistic romanticism help to clarify the roots of this type of progressive thinking and contrast it sharply with the decidedly system-oriented tendencies of the utilitarian administrative progressives.<sup>5</sup>

Another important emphasis is Labaree's comparison of pedagogical and administrative progressive influences on educational reform. Labaree explores the largely

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<sup>5</sup> Kliebard touches on these qualities, most notably when he refers to Jean Jacques Rousseau's influence on developmentalist thinking (Kliebard, 1995, p. 152), but his analysis is without Labaree's unifying touchstone of romanticism.

rhetorical, academic strength of the pedagogical progressives that dominated American universities compared with the pragmatic strength of the administrative progressives dominant in American grade-schools (pp. 284-288). He details the idealistic philosophic appeal of pedagogical progressive romanticism, making it deeply attractive to university theorists. He contrasts this with the administrative progressive ability to work within the existing school structures, making them more efficient in their practices.

Labaree argues that administrative progressives were successful in schools because of their focus on making the existing subject-oriented, teacher-directed school system more efficient (pp. 284-288). He compares this success to the pedagogical progressive's lack of success in American schools resulting from their romantic emphasis on radically altering schooling by placing children in the driver's seat in the classroom. This resulted in a "caricature version of child-centered instruction" promoted by Kilpatrick and his followers that left children strongly engaged but "academically unchallenged" (pp. 284-288), a charge we have seen Dewey also directed at developmentalist reformers. Labaree's consideration of the implementation problems of this romantic child-centred pedagogy was helpful for me in reflecting on the frequent lack of success in Canadian progressive reform that we will see emerge in the next section.

Kliebard (1992) supports Labaree's contention that pragmatism is a key to the success of educational reform. He refers to Dewey's critique of educational reforms that were too idealistic to recognize the pragmatic realities of school classrooms. For Dewey, the "reason why many educational reforms fail is that there is a conflict between the purposes and standards that are inherent in the innovative practice .... [and] the actual

structure of schooling” (p. 103). Kliebard points out that child-centred progressive reform was threatening to the classroom environment because it called for a lack of teacher-control which threatened teachers and administration. They called for “risk-taking” that was not easy given that “teachers are absolutely required to maintain a precarious order, and only the very courageous are willing to risk its loss” (p. 104). Kliebard’s emphasis on the need to interpret reform in light of pragmatic situations in the classrooms underscores Labaree’s contention that idealism, as a defining trait of child-centred progressives, inhibited their ability to effect reform in schools.

Labaree’s distinction between the dominance of administrative progressivism in grade schools as compared with the dominance of pedagogical progressivism in universities helped me understand why Canadian progressivism defined itself in certain ways. Canadian iterations of progressive education, with one exception, focused on child-centred pedagogical progressivism, as we will see in the following section on Canadian progressivism. This makes sense when we consider that Canadian curriculum leaders were reading about progressivism primarily from the point of view of pedagogical progressives who dominated the American academy. Furthermore, many Canadian progressives were educated in American universities, therefore being steeped in the child-centred progressivism that prevailed in these university faculties. Tomkins (2008) provides the most thorough sense of this widespread American child-centred influence in Canadian progressivism. He considers the child-centred focus in Canadian progressive reading, the use of child-centred American progressives to speak at Canadian educational conferences, and the child-centred training of Canadians in American educational faculties (pp. 174-181). Von Heyking (1998) also treats the child-centred American

training for Alberta's curriculum leaders (pp. 69-71), as do Coulter (2005, p. 684) and Lemisko and Clausen (2012, p. 118). This awareness was fundamental in helping me understand why Canadian progressive curricula were, with one notable exception, so decidedly child-centred in their focus.

### **Defining Progressive Education in Canada**

Canadian historians have explored how progressivism was understood in Canada in the 1930s when the groundswell of Canadian progressive curricular reform was beginning, and during which Alberta's Enterprise curriculum began. How did Canadian progressive reformers define their programs with reference to the various camps of American progressivism that preceded Canadian reforms? What were Canadian progressive educators trying to accomplish?

Canadian historians generally argue that the type of progressivism focusing Alberta's Enterprise reform and that of numerous other provinces was similar, a hybridized curriculum involving a child-centred progressive emphasis, and it was only systematically employed in elementary curricula. Furthermore, the story that emerges of implementing this hybridized progressive reform is one of struggle, a significant part of which was the struggle to implement assessment. Nevertheless, the extent of Canadian research into how assessment was formulated and implemented in this hybridized progressivism is incomplete.

**Elementary curricular reform of the 1930s.** Tomkins (2008) demarcates the 1930s as the decade of progressive curricular reforms in Canada, citing curriculum historian Robert Patterson who explains that a progressive thrust was evident in most Canadian provinces in the program revisions of the 1930s (p. 176). Tomkins also cites

Peter Sandiford, a professor of education at the University of Toronto during this time, for whom the 1930s was the “era of the first wholesale curriculum revisions Canadian educators had ever undertaken” (p. 174). Thus, despite some attempts at progressive pedagogical reform prior to the 1930s<sup>6</sup>, the attempts to articulate systematic progressive curricula only occurred during the 1930s.

Canadian historians examining the history of progressive education focus on elementary curricula rather than high school curricula. Tomkins states that even in the 1930s the high school revolved largely around a traditional perpetuation of formal subject-centred mental disciplinary studies that were narrowly focused on traditional academic subjects: there was a “formalism and conservatism of the Canadian high school during the interwar period .... [and] high schools remained pre-eminently academic institutions .... [although] modest curricular changes widened the academic base somewhat” (p. 187). Tomkins does indicate the beginnings of the junior high school, from grades seven to nine, in a number of provinces in the 1930s, which had some general progressive tendencies. Greater course and promotion flexibility for students as well as academic/vocational guidance programs reflected enhanced individual differentiation (p. 188). Although these tendencies could be seen as characteristic of child-centred thinking, Tomkins indicates no correlation with formal progressive programs in these junior high curricula. Thus, Tomkins’ identification of progressive reforms during this period focuses on the elementary curricula of Canadian provinces, treating them as the only systematic progressive reforms (pp. 176-181).

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<sup>6</sup> Tomkins (2008, pp. 174-177) details three progressive “plans” for individualized instruction along subject-integrated lines that were introduced in Alberta, but “used only partially” in Alberta and with an “impact [that] does not appear to have been significant” in “several other provinces” including Saskatchewan. Also, in the Putman-Weir Survey of 1925 which proposed progressive curricular reform, British Columbia foreshadowed their later curriculum revision of 1936.

**Hybridized progressive curricular reform.** Various scholars have provided pieces to the puzzle of provincial definitions of progressive reform begun in the 1930s, but George Tomkins (2008; first published in 1985) and Robert Patterson (1986a; 1986b) have provided an overview of all provincial iterations of progressivism during this time. Tomkins, in comprehensively surveying Canadian curricula from the mid 1800s to 1980 frames the field of curriculum history research in Canada.<sup>7</sup> Patterson's work focuses on the progressive period of reform in the 1930s throughout Canada. Therefore, Tomkins and Patterson will be touchstones for a consideration of all the provincial progressive curricula, with other curriculum historians' work included in the provinces which they have researched.

These historians have given considerable attention to the nature of progressive reform advocated in Canadian provinces in the 1930s. Their conclusions are unequivocal in describing hybridized curricula, which in all but one province combined child-centred, activity-based progressivism with traditional teacher-centred, subject-based learning. The one partial exception was British Columbia which bolstered its teacher-centred emphasis with a powerful social efficiency progressivism, while still supporting a measure of child-centred thinking. The ubiquitous hybridization of teacher-centred and child-centred pedagogies in provincial progressive curricula highlights a conservative feeling that specific knowledge acquisition would be lost in the greater flexibility of child-centered activity programs. In this there is a strong sense of Deweyan progressive thinking. Dewey had worried that the unbridled freedom of child-driven developmentalist curriculum would not lead to proper building of ever more complex societal understandings over the

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<sup>7</sup> Since 2008 the work of Gidney and Millar (2012), focusing just on the period from 1900 – 1940, could be added to that lexicon of Canadian curricular history, although their book blends curriculum into the whole spectrum of school-based realities in English Canada.

course of the child's school life. The connection of Canadian progressives to this Deweyan combination of child-centered and teacher-directed curricula is emphasized by Patterson (1986b), who indicates that Canadian curriculum reformers were aware of the Deweyan critiques of an excessively free child-centered curriculum and his call for an overarching organization to the curriculum (p. 82). While these provincial hybridized programs continued to include, as we will see, a teacher-directed component of skill and drill in subject-centered sections of the curriculum that Dewey would certainly have objected to, they did nonetheless reflect his concern regarding unbridled freedom in child-centered programs. Their curricula, then, did not reflect Dewey's complex understandings of active child-centered problem-solving guided in curricular stages by the teacher, but a more simplistic balancing of the child-centered agenda with traditional transmissional pedagogy.

Looking specifically now at historians' characterizations of each provincial progressive reform, I will follow a chronological arrangement based on the order in which provinces put forward formal progressive curricula.

Saskatchewan introduced the first systematic progressive curriculum. Tomkins (2008) and Patterson (1986a; 1986b) develop a clear picture of hybridization in this elementary program. Tomkins indicates that this curriculum embodied "a mixture of the old and new, the eclecticism of which gave license to teachers to maintain a tradition of information accumulation and storage" (Tomkins, 2008, p. 176) though he does not specify how this traditional subject-centred, teacher-directed focus was put forward in the curriculum document. Tomkins indicates that this traditional focus was to be combined with an activity approach consistent with developmental progressivism. Patterson (1986a;

1986b) confirms the tentative nature of this progressive reform, suggesting the “*flavor* of progressive education was present in the [curriculum] revision” (Patterson, 1986a, p. 67; italic emphasis mine), and indicating that it wasn’t until a further progressive revision in 1940, inspired by Alberta’s 1936 progressive curriculum, that Saskatchewan’s curriculum began to more fully encourage child-centred ideals (p. 67). Patterson indicates that while the 1940 revision was much more progressive, “there was still an apparent reluctance on the part of department officials to depart significantly from the more traditional view of schooling” (Patterson, 1986b, p. 85), and one official expressed the view that “we must not allow ourselves to swing to the opposite pole and adopt in its entirety the program of the ultra-progressive school of thought” (as cited in Patterson, 1986b, p.85).

Nova Scotia also implemented a partially progressive curriculum in 1933. Patterson (1986a) states that Nova Scotia implemented this progressive elementary curriculum focusing on “life situations” in studies, indicating its indebtedness to the Hadow Report from Britain that had introduced the term “enterprises” for an activity/project-based program (p. 68). Patterson then indicates that this curriculum was balanced with a warning “that the child’s needs and interests were not sufficient to determine instructional material .... the desirability of well organized drill ... [could not] be ignored” (p. 68).

The next provinces to introduce progressive elementary programs of study, British Columbia and Alberta, did so in 1936. However, they implemented distinctly different forms of progressivism. In both provinces, Tomkins and Patterson are more comprehensive with their analysis, and there are provincial scholars who add to a more complete picture of each province’s hybridization.

British Columbia focused on a primarily “social efficiency” model which Tomkins (2008) also characterizes as an approach typical of the “scientific expertise [of] administrative progressives” (p. 177). In this he uses phrasing that parallels both Kliebard and Labaree in identifying the camp of progressivism using scientific development of subject-specific curricula differentiated to efficiently place students in areas of personal strength, and administered through a teacher-centred pedagogy. Tomkins details British Columbia’s carefully analytic, scientific curriculum building in separated subjects with increased subject differentiation to make studies more educative along “efficiency-minded” lines, with a powerful focus on extensive testing of students to guide educational programming decisions and placement of students (pp. 177-178; cf. pp. 166-167). Nevertheless, British Columbia curriculum guides also had suggestions of child-centred progressivism, advocating for Kilpatrick’s project method, but treated it “so perfunctorily as to give British Columbia’s teachers little meaningful help in introducing such a radical innovation” (p. 177). Tomkins speaks of a distinct “irony in promoting ostensible autonomy and self-direction for pupils, while imposing detailed prescription on teachers” (p. 177). This irony is seen in their curriculum bulletins which provided curricular directions for integrating material within subjects, seemingly supportive of projects, but combined with the social efficiency emphasis on comprehensive detailing of all subject and even unit objectives (pp. 177-178). Half of instructional time was still to be devoted to the three R’s, and if preferred, these subjects were to be given priority, with the social objectives typical of progressivism then being addressed incidentally (p. 177). Patterson (1986a) provides brief corroboration for Tomkins’ understandings of this reform, referring to the standardized tests and objective measurement standards being employed

in British Columbia alongside a child-centred emphasis on “ the learner rather than on the school subjects” (pp. 68-69).

British Columbia curriculum historians, Glegg and Fleming (2004) and Fleming and Raptis (2005), also develop the social efficiency dominance in British Columbia’s curriculum. They add to Tomkin’s work by referring to E. L. Thorndike’s legacy in impacting the systematic diagnostic testing programs undertaken in British Columbia, and detail the centrality and comprehensive extent of this testing within the implementation of its curriculum (Glegg and Fleming, p. 125; Fleming and Raptis, p.186). Fleming and Raptis acknowledge the presence of child-centred Deweyan elements, indicating that these were manifest in some subjects that stressed integrated subject matter, namely social studies and general science, and in an emphasis on courses suited to the social needs of students, but they make no direct mention of activity-based learning (pp. 185-187).

In contrast to British Columbia, Alberta’s 1936 curriculum reform moved clearly to the child-centred side of progressive reform in promoting a mainly project-oriented, subject-integrated progressive curriculum designed to build strong citizens. Tomkins (2008) indicates that the term “enterprises” was borrowed from the British Hadow Reports to designate the activity/project-based learning characteristic of child-centred progressivism (p. 178). There was also the promotion of “divisions” in creating individualization of learning (p. 178). Divisions created groupings of three grades that allowed for differentiated student progress within a broad three year time-span and no longer used grades “as a basis for promotion” but only as attainment levels in each division (p. 178). This was a more individualized program within each division with

promotion happening only at the end of every three years (p. 178). This individualized approach was also to involve students in helping to choose enterprises, creating personal interest and a movement away from teacher-centred transmissional learning. Tomkins refers to a book on the Enterprise method by Donald Dickie, an Alberta Normal School instructor and curriculum writer for the 1936 curriculum, that refutes notions of “students’ minds as receptacles ... [which] failed to see ... [their minds] as powers used by the students for some purpose which attracts their interest” (p. 179). While these expectations were clearly child-centred, Tomkins briefly points out that there were traditional subject-centred elements that remained in Alberta. He indicates that the enterprise method was optional, although teachers were expected to experiment with at least “one or two enterprises” each year (p. 179).<sup>8</sup> Also, the “three R’s ... [were] still taught as distinct subjects outside the new program” with enterprises being used for only part of the day (p. 179). Tomkins’ emphasis is, therefore, on the child-centred enterprise aspect of this hybrid, although he does acknowledge the continuance of subject-based traditional pedagogy.

Patterson (1986b) supports Tomkins’ conclusions about Alberta’s intentional blend of child-centred project-based learning and traditional subject-based instruction (pp. 85-86). Patterson clarifies continued teacher-centred expectations when he writes about the central “skill subjects – reading, writing, arithmetic and language” which were taught separately, focused on the “formal or drill method” (p. 85). Patterson also adds to Tomkins in indicating a social reconstructionist focus in Alberta, influenced by H. C. Newland, Supervisor of Schools, who directly promoted this philosophy (Patterson,

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<sup>8</sup> Tomkins is partly correct about enterprises being optional. Sheane (1948), a scholar contemporaneous with these reforms whose research Tomkins refers to, indicates that while the 1936 enterprise curriculum made enterprises optional, the revised 1940 curriculum required their use (p. 127; cf. p. 176).

1986a, p. 70). Patterson also quotes M.E. LaZerte, Dean of Education at the University of Alberta, whose three thematic foci for Canadian progressive curricula include one that clearly stresses the reconstructionist emphasis on social training to remake the social order and develop social ideals (p. 70).

von Heyking (1998; 2006) corroborates and adds to this understanding of a hybrid curriculum revision in Alberta. She expands an explanation of the teacher-centred skill or “tool” subjects, indicating that they had specific content and skill objectives that contrasted with the absence of these objectives in all the other courses that were generally integrated within enterprise work (von Heyking, 2006, p. 68). This absence of specific objectives for the integrated subjects was important because the flexibility for student exploration and choice within project-based learning was central to creating the personal relevancy that motivated learning, a tenet of child-centred theory (p. 66). She also supports and adds to Patterson’s indication of social reconstructionist goals, but is more forceful about the importance of them and much more comprehensive in explaining them within Alberta’s hybrid as she develops the theme of citizenship in its progressive vision. She affirms Newland’s connection with reconstructionist theorists, making clear his goal of an informed and active citizenship growing from the child-centred learning of Alberta’s curricula (von Heyking, 1998, pp. 68-71; von Heyking, 2006, p. 63). The enterprise focus was the ideal way to have students grow in social self-determination since they were guided rather than controlled by teachers (von Heyking, 2006, p. 66). There was to be some freedom in classroom work, both in choices of learning and in classroom interactions (p. 67). A key aspect of this was the emphasis on open interactions to support cooperative learning with fellow students, which one needed in the social

interactions of democratic society (p. 67). This was, therefore, learning focused on preparing for an active future role in shaping democracy, but this was accomplished through social training in the *now* of the classroom (p. 65). Thus, this social training was seen in terms resonant of Dewey and Kilpatrick, who said that learning was not a *preparation* for life, it *was* life. von Heyking details the problematized social situations from students' current experience that were to provide social training in their enterprises (von Heyking, 1998, p. 73), a testament to the problematized social issue orientation of Dewey, Kilpatrick and the social reconstructionists. She also lists the three categories of outcomes for Alberta's elementary program, the second of which stressed that "information learned by students should contribute to social living" by developing understanding of how to gain "increasing control" over the environmental factors in life (p. 72). Thus, in Alberta's hybrid von Heyking powerfully underscores the centrality of Enterprise pedagogy with its emphasis on self-determination for students and its reconstructionist vision for democratic citizenship experienced in the classroom.

In 1937, Ontario joined the movement towards implementing progressive curricula. As with Alberta and British Columbia, a number of historians have focused on Ontario, providing a faceted portrayal. Tomkins (2008) indicates that Ontario's curriculum from this time borrowed heavily from the Alberta curriculum of 1936, to such an extent that Alberta's Supervisor of Schools, Newland, "proudly noted that the new curriculum guidelines included wholesale plagiarizing of his own province's program descriptions" (p. 181). Ontario adopted the same enterprise structure, with two divisions of three grades, and a flexible approach to grading and promotion (p. 181). And yet, there was a "conservative thrust" in the curriculum that led to a difficulty in shifting from the

continuation of “textbook dominance, dictated notes, formal testing, competition, and enforced classroom silence” (p. 182). Patterson (1986b) indicates that Ontario emphasized maintaining “the place of fundamental skills” and “drills” as a balance to the Enterprise program (p. 86), much as Alberta had done in 1936. Christou (2012) affirms that while the curricular language in Ontario represented a significant departure from traditional pedagogy (p. 124), nevertheless the curriculum was understood as not breaking with this traditional method, but rather as encouraging movement beyond it through progressive augmentation (p. 131). He quotes a strident call by the Chief Inspector for Public Schools to continue traditional drill, review and examination of subject matter in addition to activities which can often result in “much energy ... [but] little progress made” (p. 131). Progressive themes of active, individualized and socially relevant learning were framed as a “viable pedagogical alternative to the traditional curriculum” (p. 119). Lemisko and Clausen (2012) also corroborate this emphasis on the dominance of teacher-centred, subject-based instruction in Ontario, indicating that enterprises were not included in the curricular requirements for all elementary grade levels, but not specifying how this was organized (p. 122). They also indicate that the curriculum did not include details about how to use the project method, nor did it provide specific enterprise ideas for teachers (p. 122). Furthermore, they stress that the curriculum left choices in instructional strategy to the teacher’s discretion (p. 122). Stamp (1982) also supports this sense of a flexible hybrid leaning to the side of teacher-centred, subject-based learning. Stamp stresses that the two designers for Ontario’s new curriculum were deeply concerned about “unlicensed freedom” and the teacher must remain “firmly in control” (p. 167). This resulted in a continued emphasis on formal

drilling and testing in subjects, alongside the push to include project-based learning (pp. 168-169). Thus, the Ontario hybrid seemed to lean to the conservative side of traditional instruction with an emphasis on adding Enterprise learning.

Milewski (2008) seems to diverge from the above conclusion in his discourse analysis of the language within Ontario's progressive curriculum. He emphasizes a "discursive rupture" resulting in "departures" of the new child-centred discourse from tradition (pp. 91-94; cf. pp. 102-105). Given this attention to highlighting the changing discourse in favor of child-centred thinking, Milewski doesn't emphasize the continuation of traditional thinking in the document, but acknowledges that the curricular "changes implemented in 1937 did not ... [transform] elementary schooling in Ontario" (p. 110).

Finally, Tomkins and Patterson point out that, by 1940, Manitoba, New Brunswick and Protestant Quebec schools all introduced curricula that focused on the enterprise or activity model. Patterson indicates that their reforms were "similar to those in other provinces ... [with] stress placed upon the importance of activity" (Patterson, 1986b, p. 69). Elaborating on how activity was "stressed" but not mandated, Patterson emphasizes that these provinces, and all other provinces, shared this caution about an unbridled "emphasis upon student interest and freedom" embodied in an activity-based program (p. 86). Although little detail is provided about these three provincial revisions, they seem to have generally followed earlier reforms in instituting a hybridized curriculum combining traditional subject-based instruction and child-centred activity-based learning.

## **Implementation of Canadian Progressive Curricula**

In addition to explaining how progressive educational reform was defined in Canada, Canadian historians have focused on the nature and extent of progressive reform implementation in these provinces.

The scholarship dealing with implementation tells an unsettling story of the struggle to deal with programs that were essentially hybrids of child-centred and traditional pedagogies. The two polarities of pedagogy represented in these curricula pulled educators in opposite directions. On the one hand there was a project-based, integrated-subject model of child-centred initiative, and on the other a model based on the transfer and drill of prescribed information and skills within specific subjects, with teacher-centred regulation. Somehow, educators were expected to teach part of the day in a child-centred model and part of the day in a teacher-centred model. Change does not happen easily, particularly if there is an intentional continuation of traditional thinking existing alongside the innovations. It was a compromised pedagogical pairing, and yet this is the type of reform that educators in these provinces were faced with implementing.

Patterson (1986a; 1986b) and Tomkins (2008) provide an overview of the difficult implementation within these hybrids. Tomkins (2008) indicates that he is following Patterson when he states that “the rhetoric and reality of [progressive] change were far apart” (p. 182), speaking of a struggle to properly implement progressive instruction and assessment arising from these oppositional pedagogical theories, and of a continued dominance of traditional instruction and assessment. This problem of inadequate implementation was compounded by the perceived elitism of progressive reformers in government who were “well-informed and well-qualified” while the rank

and file of teachers had little grasp of progressive theory and practice (Tomkins, 2008, p.176). Tomkins further develops this scenario when he says that these “reformers mounted a ‘hard sell’ which provoked negative reactions among teachers” (p. 183). Patterson called teachers involved in these reforms “pedlars of subjects rather than life builders” (as cited in Tomkins, 2008, p. 183). Also, Patterson makes it clear that the graduates of provincial normal schools had neither the conceptual knowledge of progressivism nor the skill in implementing it (Patterson, 1990, p. 110). Furthermore, even when enterprise learning was used, it was frequently ill-conceived due to teachers’ lack of competence. Tomkins points out how the true child-centred objective of powerful problem-solving through engaging and relevant enterprise projects, with strong student self-direction, was often replaced by teacher-directed formalized enterprises that placed a premium on showy final results for the project (p. 181). This problem was compounded by a lack of sufficient learning resources in many classrooms to support the broad exploratory learning of enterprises (p. 183). Also, the assessment of enterprises was a significant problem as educators struggled uneasily with the new non-graded “continuous assessment” of progress in problem-solving projects, continuing traditional grading of work and summative testing (p. 182).

In considering this story specifically within Alberta, given the focus of this thesis, historians make similar arguments. Although the first Alberta Enterprise curriculum was introduced in 1936, it was not until 1941 that an explanation of the theory and practical implementation of this curriculum was provided for educators in *The Enterprise in Theory and Practice* by Donalda Dickie (1941). This handbook on enterprise implementation was a full five years behind the first Alberta Enterprise curriculum, and

so it is not surprising that Alberta educators felt “pressured into some new, vague procedures at the instigation of a group of theorists” (an Alberta teacher anonymously cited in Tomkins, 2008, p. 179). The lack of training among Alberta’s teachers is strongly emphasized by Tomkins, who draws on a dissertation by Sheane (1948) in stressing the inexperience of teachers trying to deal with the open-ended nature of enterprise projects (Tomkins, 2008, pp. 179-180). von Heyking (1998) indicates that Alberta educational leaders made a valiant and systematic attempt to “sell” the Enterprise method to educators, from normal school instruction to conferences for existing teachers, and yet she suggests a lack of progressive penetration into classrooms, particularly among rural teachers who often lacked proper education and were somewhat isolated from outside influence (p. 69). In a later article on rural implementation of the Enterprise program, von Heyking (2012) mitigates this scenario by providing evidence of some success in rural schools, despite various difficulties that included teacher inexperience. Alberta also experienced difficulties in the often ill-conceived nature of enterprises, with an emphasis on showy concrete enterprise products, like a native village or some other construction, rather than on solid learning developing during the project work (Tomkins, 2008, p. 179). Lemisko and Clausen (2012) also stress the lack of meaningful learning in most enterprise implementation, with many becoming pleasant time-filling activities, purely mechanical exercises rather than explorations, or simply bodily movement activity (p. 123). The lack of adequate resources to support more open-ended project exploration was also emphasized in Alberta’s context due in part to the depressed economy of the 1930s, with students often being asked to “scrounge at home” for needed materials (Tomkins, 2008, p. 179; cf. von Heyking, 2012, p. 99). Lastly, the struggle by Alberta teachers to

assess this open-ended work is brought forward by von Heyking (2006) and Lemisko and Clausen (2012). von Heyking indicates that even when teachers understood the purpose of enterprises as “the creation of responsible citizens” they were “simply at a loss to measure the extent to which students met this objective” (p. 73). Lemisko and Clausen quote Herbert Newland, Alberta’s Supervisor of Schools, as indicating that teachers could not figure out how to measure student achievement with “[progressive] program goals emphasizing habits, appreciations and the creation of responsible citizens” (as cited in Lemisko and Clausen, 2012, p. 123). Sheane (1948) adds that a non-graded progress-oriented report card was instituted in Alberta in 1939, but that teachers struggled with and resisted a non-graded approach (p. 138). He also indicates that, despite this emphasis on progressive non-graded reporting of progress, no attempt was made to deny teachers the use of tests, which “were considered as valuable” (pp. 172-173). Clearly, Alberta was struggling to find its way in implementing the new child-centred enterprise curriculum.

This story emerging from Canadian researchers is one of inadequacy and compromise in implementing Enterprise curricula, with assessment revealed as a major problem. In keeping with my thesis question, how systematically have historians dealt with this problem of assessment implementation?

### **Assessment Research on Canadian Progressive Reforms**

Has significant assessment research been done into Alberta’s Enterprise curriculum at this time, or the curricula of any of the six provinces sharing Alberta’s hybrid form of project-based and traditional pedagogy (hereafter, these seven provinces referred to as *project-method provinces*)? What does the research reveal in project-

method provinces in terms of assessment expectations and educator implementation of these expectations?

**Department of Education expectations for assessment.** One historian has examined Department of Education expectations solely for the child-centred non-graded assessment of progress promoted by project-method provinces (Milewski, 2008). Milewski's research is based on Ontario's curriculum reform, considering theoretical expectations for their child-centred assessment, and uncovering some practical expectations for classroom assessment as well. Milewski is quite specific in indicating how the general theory of guidance-oriented continuous assessment in student-directed enterprises was to be implemented. Non-graded anecdotal observations of personal abilities and particular attitudes were to be generated, and then shared as non-judgmental advice for students. And yet, although this provides some specificity, even here one is left with many questions. Is his focus on only the child-centred approach to assessment a fair reflection of departmental expectations given the continuation of subject-specific pedagogy in this hybrid model? Was child-centred assessment only to be used with subject-integrated projects or also applied in specific subject-area learning? Was assessment of progress solely a teacher's role, or was this to include self and peer assessment? How did the assessment of progress emphasize content understandings alongside developing attitudes/behaviors and skills? How frequent were individual guidance assessments to be – what was feasible? What form were these individual assessments to take? Did the Department of Education provide actual child-centred assessment instruments? If so, what did these instruments look like, and how were teachers to use them?

Other historians examining these project-method provinces go beyond Milewski's singular focus on child-centred assessment. These include von Heyking (2006) dealing with Alberta, Lemisko and Clausen (2012) with Alberta and Ontario, Christou (2012) and Stamp (1982) with Ontario, with Patterson (1986b) and Tomkins (2008) with various provinces. All of these historians add to Milewski's focus on child-centred assessment expectations by revealing a hybrid combination of child-centred and teacher-centred assessment expectations. These researchers acknowledge or suggest continuing departmental expectations for teacher-centred summative assessment of subject-matter, with some providing brief practical indications of this, such as testing of subject-matter and examinations. However, none indicate theoretical expectations for this teacher-centred assessment. In contrast, their treatment of child-centred assessment expectations involves some development of theoretical expectations, such as expectations for progress-oriented or continuous assessment to support individual development of students. Several explicitly develop departmental expectations for child-centred assessment as non-graded in order to support the growth of individuals, with one indicating a non-graded report card in Alberta. However, none of them address practical classroom expectations for conducting this child-centred assessment. Thus, the questions left unanswered by Milewski are also unanswered here, and some other questions appear as well. How much traditional content testing was to take place, and was it to be used just in subject-specific instruction or also partly used in evaluating project work? What was this testing to look like? Was it to be a purely traditional testing of content acquisition, or was it to be adjusted to take into account the new attitude and behavioral expectations that were central to project-based progressive learning?

A further area for research is determining the modes of communication used for assessment expectations by project-method provinces. What was communicated on assessment expectations beyond the curricular documents, and how readily accessible to educators were these communications? The above group of Canadian researchers provides occasional references to assessment information contained in official reports by government officials, but these references are occasional and we can only surmise whether the understandings about assessment they contain were communicated directly to teachers.

The limited information provided by historians raises the question of how they derived the few conclusions that they provide regarding assessment expectations. We don't know if the primary sources they used provided cohesive sections focused directly on assessment, used directly recognizable assessment vocabulary, and elaborated on their assessment ideas with supporting explanations and examples. A more specific and thorough examination of relevant primary source documents would help us understand whether these progressive curricula developed a truly cohesive progressive theory of assessment. A thorough examination of sources would also show how effectively assessment information was conveyed to educators at this time. This would help in understanding to what extent educators were supported in understanding and implementing these assessment expectations.

**Educators' implementation of assessment.** Research by Canadian educational historians generally indicates that there was a limited implementation of child-centred assessment in the project-method provinces. However, there is almost nothing specific about how school jurisdictions and their teachers understood these progressive

assessment expectations and how they implemented and reported on assessment. What few examples are provided by the above Canadian historians speak briefly of an inability to work with the newly recommended progress-oriented assessment, an indifference to trying it, or a direct contravention of it by perpetuating traditional graded assessment. Their research is a helpful start, but there is more to be revealed concerning how school jurisdictions and their teachers thought about and tried to implement new expectations for assessment.

### **Conclusion: Research Need Confirmed**

This survey of historical research has shown that the research question proposed in the introductory chapter requires further research:

What were Alberta Department of Education expectations for assessment in the 1930s-1940s Enterprise curricula and to what extent did Alberta educators implement these expectations?

We have seen that Department of Education theories and expectations for assessment and educators' implementation of assessment require further research in project-method provinces.

In chapters four and five my research into this question reveals that two theories of assessment emerged at different times in Enterprise curricula from 1936 to 1950, and that these theories were variably implemented by Alberta educators. In chapter six these understandings of assessment theory and practice will be shown to be critically important for informing current learner-centred reforms in Alberta. However, before considering my research and its implications, the methodology used to explore and structure this research must be considered.

### Chapter Three: Methodology

This study is an historical inquiry into assessment theory, policy, and practice related to the child-centred Enterprise curriculum in Alberta in the 1930s and 1940s. Since the secondary literature exploring Enterprise curricula is limited in addressing the assessment that was expected and undertaken in Alberta, this thesis systematically addresses the following question:

What were Alberta Department of Education expectations for assessment in the 1930's - 1940's Enterprise curricula and to what extent did Alberta educators implement these expectations?

Research into this question was conducted using a documentary analysis of primary sources from this period found within Alberta archives and library collections. Research involved the analysis of various sources that deal with the two themes of this question: departmental expectation for and educator implementation of assessment. The sources consulted are identified in the table below, presented in their order of appearance within the two findings chapters on these themes.

Table 1: Primary Sources Used in Two Research Question Themes

<b>Theme 1: Department of Education Expectation for Assessment in Enterprise Curricula</b>			
<b>Source</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Author</b>	<b>Audience</b>
<p><b>Curriculum Documents</b></p> <p><i>The Programme of Studies for the Elementary School in Alberta</i> (Note: The 1949 curriculum document removes the archaic <i>Programme</i> term, and uses <i>Program</i> instead.)</p>	1936;1940; 1947;1949	Department of Education designated writers. Authors not stated in Programmes. I did find the 1936 designated writers: Dickie, D. J.; Fisher, O. M.; Hay, W. E.	Curriculum program requirements for educators.
<p><i>Supplementary Bulletin on the Programme of Studies for the Elementary School With Directions to Teachers and Statement of Minimum Essentials</i></p>	1943	Written by Department of Education designated writers. Authors not stated in either bulletin.	Curriculum supplementation requirements for educators.

<p><i>Bulletin 1: An Introduction to the Program of Studies for the Elementary and Secondary Schools: Foundations of Education</i></p>	1949		
<p><b>Curriculum Support Documents: Resources Recommended by Department of Education</b></p> <p>1. Handbook on Enterprise pedagogy:</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;"><i>The Enterprise in Theory and Practice</i></p> <p>2. Resources recommended in Programme of Studies' bibliographies and in Dickie's handbook bibliography:</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">"The Project Method"</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;"><i>The Child-Centred School</i></p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;"><i>The Activities Curriculum in the Primary Grades</i></p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">"The Social Point of View in Professional Education"</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">"The Essentials of the Activity Movement" and "The Social Philosophy of Progressive Education" (Note: these two form a single pamphlet)</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;"><i>What is the Activity Plan of Progressive Education?</i></p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;"><i>The Activity Program</i></p>	<p>1941</p> <p>1918</p> <p>1928</p> <p>1931</p> <p>1933</p> <p>1934</p> <p>1935</p> <p>1936</p>	<p>Dickie, D. J.</p> <p>Kilpatrick, W. H.</p> <p>Rugg, H. and Shumaker, A.</p> <p>Stevens, M. P.</p> <p>Kilpatrick, W. H.</p> <p>Kilpatrick, W. H.</p> <p>Burr, S.</p> <p>Melvin, A. G.</p>	<p>Handbook for educational leaders and teacher practitioners.</p> <p>These resources were all written for educators in general. Some were more practical, seeking to address the teacher educator, while others were more theoretical and would likely have been read mainly by jurisdictional leaders and governmental officials.</p>
<p><b>Curriculum Support Documents: Periodical Writings by Departmental Officials</b></p> <p>1. Government bulletins published in <i>The A.T.A. (Alberta Teachers' Association) Magazine</i>:</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">"Official Bulletin"</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">"Official Bulletin"</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">"Official Bulletin"</p> <p>2. Articles by government officials published in <i>The A.T.A. (Alberta Teachers' Association) Magazine</i></p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">"A Comment on the New Course of Study for Elementary Schools."</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">"Our Teachers' Helps Department: The Activities in the Enterprise."</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">"Our Teachers' Helps Department: Normal Practice School, Citizenship Attitudes Exhibited During Enterprises."</p>	<p>1937, February</p> <p>1937, November</p> <p>1938, March</p> <p>1936, November</p> <p>1936, December</p> <p>1936, December</p>	<p>Alberta Department of Education (no specified author)</p> <p>Alberta Department of Education (no specified author)</p> <p>Alberta Department of Education (no specified author)</p> <p>Dickie, D. J.</p> <p>Anonymous departmental official</p> <p>Anonymous departmental official</p>	<p>Informing Alberta educators of government expectations.</p> <p>Alberta teachers' professional magazine sent out to educators of the A.T.A.</p>

<p>“Enterprise Procedure: A Brief Summary of How to Choose, Plan, and Organize an Enterprise.”</p> <p>“A Tentative List of Outcomes for Enterprise Education.”</p> <p>“Individualized Instruction.”</p> <p>“‘Democracy and Education’ in Alberta.”</p> <p>“Some Considerations in Being an Effective Teacher Today.”</p> <p>“Whither, Progressive Education?”</p> <p>3. Circular articles sent by government officials found in the files of A. G. Bayly, Supervisor of Elementary Schools for Edmonton Public School Board</p> <p>“Letter to Mr. G. Bayly.”</p> <p>“Memorandum.”</p> <p>“Enterprise Report.”</p> <p>“Commentary to Accompany the Film ‘Developing the Enterprise.’”</p>	<p>1937, September</p> <p>1937, October</p> <p>1938, September</p> <p>1939, June</p> <p>1939, January</p> <p>1945, February</p> <p>1947, February 7</p> <p>1947, October 1</p> <p>1947, no month</p> <p>1949, June</p>	<p>Dickie, D. J.</p> <p>Dickie, D. J.</p> <p>Ricker, M. B.</p> <p>Trout, H. B.</p> <p>Currie, A. B.</p> <p>Graham, I. H.</p> <p>Oviatt, D. T.</p> <p>Alberta Department of Education (no specified author)</p> <p>Alberta Department of Education (no specified author)</p> <p>Alberta Department of Education (no specified author)</p>	<p>Departmental communications sent to jurisdictional leaders in the various Alberta School Divisions.</p>
<b>Theme 2: Educator Implementation of Assessment During Enterprise Curricula</b>			
<b>Source</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Author</b>	<b>Audience</b>
<p><b>General Educator Implementation of Enterprise Curricula: 1936 to 1943</b></p> <p>1. Governmental Sources</p> <p>“Our Teachers’ Helps Department: Preparing for Fall Work on the new Curriculum.” <i>The A.T.A Magazine</i>.</p> <p><i>Annual Report of the Department of Education of the province of Alberta 1936.</i></p> <p><i>Annual Report of the Department of Education of the province of Alberta 1937.</i></p> <p><i>Annual Report of the Department of Education of the province of Alberta 1938.</i></p> <p><i>Annual Report of the Department of Education of the province of Alberta 1941.</i></p>	<p>1936, May</p> <p>1937</p> <p>1938</p> <p>1939</p> <p>1942</p>	<p>Anonymous Alberta Department of Education writer</p> <p>Alberta Department of Education</p> <p>Alberta Department of Education</p> <p>Alberta Department of Education</p> <p>Alberta Department of Education</p>	<p>Magazine sent out to educators of the A.T.A.</p> <p><i>Annual Reports</i> were for the legislature, and were made available to jurisdictional leaders.</p>

<p><i>Annual Report of the Department of Education of the province of Alberta 1942.</i></p> <p><i>Annual Report of the Department of Education of the province of Alberta 1943.</i></p> <p>2. Educator Sources</p> <p>“Our Teachers’ Helps Department: Pupil Progress Under the Enterprise and Conventional Techniques.” <i>The A.T.A Magazine.</i></p> <p>“My First Year With Enterprise Education.” <i>The A.T.A Magazine.</i></p> <p>“Are we Marching Backward?” <i>The A.T.A Magazine.</i></p>	<p>1943</p> <p>1944</p> <p>1937, June</p> <p>1937, June</p> <p>1941, December</p>	<p>Alberta Department of Education</p> <p>Alberta Department of Education</p> <p>Anonymous staff writer</p> <p>Bell, J. M.</p> <p>Bercuson, L.</p>	<p>Magazine was sent out to educators of the A.T.A.</p>
<p><b>Specific Educator Implementation of Child-Centred Assessment: 1936 to 1943</b></p> <p>1. Attribute One: Non-Graded Guidance Assessment of Individual Progress.</p> <p>“Self Tests.” <i>The A.T.A Magazine.</i></p> <p>Correspondence [Letters between H.E. Rosvold, principal of Irvine School, and F. G. McLaughlin, Secretary Treasurer of Cypress School Division #4].</p> <p>Edmonton Public Schools Report Card for Division Two, Grades IV, V, VI. [Two year-end report cards for grade VI student, Betty Blanchett, filled out and signed by the teachers]</p> <p>2. Attribute Two: Guidance Assessment of the Whole Child.</p> <p>“Our Teachers’ Helps Department: Pupil Progress Under the Enterprise and Conventional Techniques.” <i>The A.T.A Magazine.</i></p> <p><i>Annual Report of the Department of Education of the province of Alberta 1936.</i></p> <p>“Education by Concussion.” <i>The A.T.A Magazine.</i></p> <p>Edmonton Public Schools Report Card for Division Two, Grades IV, V, VI. [Two year-end report cards for grade VI student, Betty Blanchett, filled out and signed by the teachers]</p> <p>3. Attribute Three: Collaborative Guidance Assessment of Progress.</p> <p>“Our Teachers’ Helps Department: Our Helpers - Division II.” <i>The A.T.A Magazine.</i></p> <p>“Self Tests.” <i>The A.T.A Magazine.</i></p>	<p>1939, December</p> <p>1940</p> <p>1940-1942</p> <p>1937, June</p> <p>1937</p> <p>1940, January</p> <p>1940-1942</p> <p>1937, April</p> <p>1939, December</p>	<p>King, W.</p> <p>Rosvold, H. E.</p> <p>Blanchett, B.</p> <p>Anonymous staff writer</p> <p>Alberta Department of Education</p> <p>King, W.</p> <p>Blanchett, B.</p> <p>Anonymous teacher contributor</p> <p>King, W.</p>	<p>Magazine sent out to educators of the A.T.A.</p> <p>Letter for divisional leadership</p> <p>Reports were for students, parents, and school leadership</p> <p>Magazines sent out to educators of the A.T.A.</p> <p>For legislature, and jurisdictional leaders.</p> <p>Magazines sent out to educators of the A.T.A.</p> <p>Reports were for students, parents, and school leadership</p> <p>Magazines sent out to educators of the A.T.A.</p>

<p>4. Attribute Four: Diagnostic Measurement Assessment to Guide Progress.</p> <p>“A Friendly Convention.” <i>The A.T.A Magazine</i>.</p> <p>“Our Teachers’ Helps Department” (Untitled) <i>The A.T.A Magazine</i>.</p> <p>“How not to Measure in Education.” <i>The A.T.A Magazine</i>.</p> <p>“Survey Tests in Arithmetic.” <i>The A.T.A Magazine</i>.</p>	<p>1939, April</p> <p>1938, December</p> <p>1939, March</p> <p>1940, November</p>	<p>Sansom, C.</p> <p>Anonymous staff writer</p> <p>Harvey, J.</p> <p>LaZerte, M. E.</p>	<p>Magazines sent out to educators of the A.T.A.</p>
<p><b>General Educator Implementation of Enterprise Curricula: 1943 to 1950</b></p> <p><i>Annual Report of the Department of Education of the province of Alberta 1945.</i></p> <p><i>Annual Report of the Department of Education of the province of Alberta 1947.</i></p>	<p>1946</p> <p>1948</p>	<p>Alberta Department of Education</p> <p>Alberta Department of Education</p>	<p><i>Annual Reports</i> were for the legislature, and were made available to jurisdictional leaders.</p>
<p><b>Specific educator implementation of blended assessment theory: 1943 to 1950.</b></p> <p>“Planning for the Skill Program.” <i>The A.T.A Magazine</i>.</p> <p>“Are Exams Necessary?” <i>The A.T.A Magazine</i>.</p> <p>“Evaluation of Educational Objectives.” <i>The A.T.A Magazine</i>.</p> <p>“The Enterprise – After Seven Years.” <i>The School</i>.</p> <p>“Department of Elementary Education, Newsletter No. 3, October 1948, Edmonton Public Schools.” Bayly Files.</p> <p>“Stages in the Organization and Development of an Enterprise.” Bayly Files</p> <p>“The new Report Card for Division One: Edmonton Public Schools” and “The new Report Card for Division Two: Edmonton Public Schools.” Bayly Files.</p> <p>“Planning the Enterprise: Typical Plans and Suggestions from Edmonton Teachers” and “The Enterprise in the Primary Grades: Suggestions for Planning Enterprises.” Bayly Files.</p> <p>“General Design and Purpose of Proposed Report on Progress.” Bayly Files.</p>	<p>1944, January</p> <p>1944, February</p> <p>1944, April</p> <p>1946, February</p> <p>1948, October</p> <p>ca. 1948</p> <p>1947</p> <p>1948</p> <p>ca. 1947</p>	<p>French, G. C.</p> <p>Thompson, H. G. &amp; Traxler, A. E.</p> <p>French, G. C.</p> <p>Walker, L. A.</p> <p>Bayly, A. G.</p> <p>Bayly, A. G.?</p> <p>Bayly, A.G.</p> <p>Anonymous teachers</p> <p>Powell, A. J. H.</p>	<p>Magazine was sent out to educators of the A.T.A.</p> <p><i>The School</i> was published until 1942 in Ontario for educators</p> <p>Sent from the Supervisor of Elementary Schools in Edmonton, A. G. Bayly, to the teachers of Edmonton Public Schools</p> <p>Presentations for the Edmonton Teachers’ Convention</p> <p>Letter from Edmonton principal, presumably sent to A.G. Bayly as Supervisor of Elementary Education for Edmonton Public Schools</p>

## **Assumptions and Methods**

The analysis of the above primary sources has been conducted using the following methods which are informed by certain historiographical assumptions. The first assumption is that we can more accurately appreciate historical source constructions of meaning if we are conscientious in setting aside bias when we see it in ourselves, allowing the historical evidence uncovered to form a picture that is not made to conform to our pre-existing thinking. Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2007) detail the potential distortions arising from the analysis of historical documents, stressing how personal bias can result in not only overly critical or uncritical distortions of the documentary evidence, but also interpretations based on inaccurate understandings of historical context (pp. 195, 196). We are shaped by our own historical positionality, our own context, and so if we are careful not to bring presentist thinking into historical analysis we can limit these distortions. I have attempted to understand the various historical perspectives that are reflected in the primary sources. Evidence has been considered and reconsidered, and findings have been derived only after intentionally questioning conclusions so as to reconsider interpretations of all data. I worked to be aware of when conclusions are being shaped to fit neatly with pre-ordained ideas or being distorted by presentist thinking. For example, progressive educational writers in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century understood aspects of assessment or evaluation in ways that might seem strange to progressive educators today and I have tried to carefully reflect these historical constructions in my discussion of findings. The wording of sources, and understandings derived from other sources which might help with interpreting historical positions, have been used to inform my discussion of findings.

An attendant assumption is that, no matter how carefully historians interpret these documents, their interpretations should be tentatively presented as offering historical perspectives or constructions of meaning. Historians are interpreting the interpretations of the authors of primary source documents. Again, Cohen, et al. (2007), stress this provisional aspect of historical interpretations, indicating the ways in which every primary source is particular in reflecting the realities it addresses (p. 195). From primary source authors' level of training in the events being observed, to their support for or antagonism towards these events, to their writing capacity as communicators of the events observed, no source is without its own perspective (p. 195). Thus, historians will always be trying to carefully piece together an accurate sense of empirical realities knowing that they are reflecting various people's perspectives in that situation. The method following from this assumption is that sources used by this thesis are interrogated using "internal criticism" (p. 195). This requires a careful consideration of the primary source author's position emerging from their context, thereby helping to determine their perspective. The method that also follows from this is that conclusions and implications are stated in tentative terms to reflect their basis in these various perspectives.

Another assumption is that historians need to be diligent in uncovering as much historical documentation as can be realistically uncovered. Part of this assumption is that elements of the historical reality will only emerge in part, since the evidence available will always be limited. Cohen, et al. (2007), write about the tendency of historical reconstructions to be "sketches rather than portraits" due to the difficulty of obtaining historical documents (p. 191). While accepting this limitation, historians must still be diligent in their quest for varied documentation, since they will then have the benefit of

being able to broadly represent facets of constructed reality within their field of inquiry. The method following from this assumption is that I have, as indicated in the chart above, collected a widely varied sampling of the historical evidence on assessment, both at the governmental and jurisdictional levels. Within the parameters of a Masters level thesis I have only been able to go so far with this, but have intentionally broadened the base of my research in terms of types of primary source documentation and amounts of documentation within a given type. The fact that one can never hope to uncover all available data has allowed me to rest in what I believe is a widely representative body of data. I have focused on six Alberta archives and four university libraries that were realistically accessible to me and provided me with various perspectives connected to assessment at the governmental and jurisdictional levels.

### **Primary Source Internal Criticism**

In researching the two thematic foci of my research question I have used primary sources, delineated in the chart that begins this chapter, which reflect various perspectives on assessment from 1936 to 1950. They represent facets of understanding regarding Alberta's Enterprise assessment that need to be identified and interrogated using the "internal criticism" of primary sources called for by Cohen, et al. (2007). In recognizing these facets I hope to have developed the perspective necessary for relevant, albeit tentative, findings and implications.

**Department of Education expectations for assessment: Sources.** Primary sources used in researching government assessment expectations were notably diverse. One might expect the Programmes of Study and official government bulletins dealing with the Programmes to be the only voices setting forth departmental expectations.

However, there were other less official voices of government in articles written by government officials for *The A.T.A. (Alberta Teachers' Association) Magazine* and circulars sent to jurisdictional leaders explaining aspects of implementing the official program. Furthermore, government sanctioned curriculum support resources must be considered, such as a handbook on Enterprise learning, and the child-centred resources recommended for educators in Programme bibliographies.

First, the Programmes of Study for Alberta and official bulletins on the Programmes were formal governmental documents reflecting Department of Education perspectives and goals for instruction in the province. The 1936 Programme was written by various subcommittees and a general steering committee particularly chosen by officials in the Department of Education (Sheane, 1948, p. 96). These multiple authors were chosen from the staffs of normal schools and from school inspectors, and thus represented a cross-section of government supervised employees (pp. 96-97). Sheane notes writers for the 1936 curriculum: D. J. Dickie, O. M. Fisher, and W. E. Hay (p. 97). I was unable to discover writers of the other curricular documents. The audience was all Alberta educators for whom these documents set out broad pedagogical vision statements, a sense of theoretical foundations, as well as specific programmatic expectations. These were not typically designed to provide detail regarding day-to-day implementation of the program, although they did provide some, for example, the fully articulated sample enterprises of the 1936 curriculum, or the enterprise themes chart of the 1940 curriculum. As government supervised documents, these Programmes of Study and Programme Bulletins would have been shaped in part by prevailing educational scholarship, departmental leadership, and political pressures. From the first Programme

of Studies in 1936 to the fourth in 1949 there was a noticeable change in the discourse within these documents, as my findings show, pointing to a changing departmental context. These Programmes and curriculum bulletins are important for this thesis because they were official educational policy in the province and thus the basis for how the Department of Education conveyed their expectations for assessment in the Enterprise curricula, expectations underscored by regular school inspection. Their importance also lies in the variable assessment expectations within these four Programmes, and how this may have affected Alberta educators implementing these expectations.

Other primary sources used were documents that provided supportive understandings for the official Programmes and curriculum bulletins. I have used two broad types of curriculum support documentation: resources recommended by the Department of Education to supplement curricular understanding, and periodical writings by departmental officials related to curriculum understandings. These various support documents were not all equal in their potential influence on Alberta educators.

Beginning with resources recommended by the Department of Education to supplement curricular understanding, one immediately stood out as greater in influence for Alberta educators. Dickie, who was a Normal School teacher and a key departmental writer for the 1936 Enterprise curriculum, provided what she called a handbook on Enterprise education that was vigorously practical, laden with specific classroom procedural examples and suggestions on assessment. As the only Canadian book on Enterprise implementation that I was able to find at this time, its influence must have been significant. Also, as a Normal School instructor, her handbook would have had a wide teacher readership in her courses and in other Normal School courses. Furthermore,

its intent as a practical handbook made it highly accessible reading, and I suspect that many schools and individual teachers purchased it. I personally received a copy from a long retired Alberta teacher, my father, who wanted to pass on some treasured books. Dickie's book was a highly important resource, because as an official and widely known handbook for Enterprise implementation in Alberta, it allowed me to compare its widely influential assessment expectations with those of the curricula.

Another group of departmentally recommended resources were those to support Enterprise or activity-based programming contained in Dickie's bibliography and in the 1936 and 1940 curriculum bibliographies. I chose from these bibliographies a selection of the more prominent progressive theorists from the time. I found three recommended resources by W. H. Kilpatrick. Kilpatrick, as we saw in Kliebard, was the leader of the child-centered or developmentalist progressives. I found one recommended resource by H. O. Rugg and A. Shumaker. Rugg, as Kliebard indicates, was a prominent child-centred activist who provided leadership in the social reconstructionist refocusing of child-centred progressivism. M. P. Stevens' book was specifically recommended in the 1936 curriculum bibliography as being very helpful in practice. It is not surprising that my copy of the book had "Summer School" written on the inside front cover, suggesting its use in teacher summer-school courses conducted by Normal Schools. Another recommended book was by S. Burr who worked extensively with the direct implementation of progressive activity programs in American jurisdictions. The copy that I worked with was stamped as being from the "Provincial Normal School Library, Calgary, Alberta," making it a resource likely used in teacher education programs within the province. A final recommended resource was by A. G. Melvin, a professor of

education in New York and a prolific writer on progressive pedagogy at this time. While being written by prominent progressives and, therefore, important references for educators, these resources would have been less influential than Dickie's handbook. They had a tangential role as recommended further reading in bibliographies, and were often theoretical resources, likely resulting in a limited audience among Alberta educators. This audience would probably have been largely within the Department of Education or among jurisdictional leaders. Nevertheless, their audience would have included those connected to the Normal Schools, as we saw in the two stamped books, with audiences including both instructors and teachers studying in these programs. As such, these recommended resources were important because they provided a discernable influence on educators working out the implementation of government expectations for assessment.

None of the bibliographic resources recommended in the 1936 and 1940 curricula to support the Enterprise program appeared in the 1947 and 1949 curricular bibliographies. I chose not to specifically analyze particular resources from these later bibliographies for two reasons. First, an important argument by omission was immediately evident: namely that the absence of the earlier recommended resources revealed important understandings about assessment expectations in the 1947 and 1949 curricula. Second, a general analysis of titles revealed a theme that also supported these later curricular assessment directions. Thus, given the necessary limitations of my thesis research, I saw a sufficiency in these two understandings that directly corroborated my findings from the 1947 and 1949 curricula.

Another category of curriculum support documents dealing with Enterprise assessment expectations were periodical articles written by Department of Education

officials appearing within *The A.T.A. (Alberta Teachers' Association) Magazine* from 1936 to 1945.<sup>9</sup> Two of these articles were anonymous departmental officials, a number by Normal Schools instructors, D. J. Dickie, I. H. Graham, M. B. Ricker, H. B. Trout, and one by a school inspector for the department, A. B. Currie. The audience of the magazine was the whole professional group of educators in Alberta, a significant readership. Despite this, these articles were likely somewhat limited in their influence on educator interpretations of government assessment expectations, because they were discretionary reading, they were not comprehensive writings, and were opinionated treatments of their material. These factors may have mitigated their weight in educators' minds. However, they were potential sources of readily accessible thinking by authoritative governmental officials that could have impacted many educators.

A further category of articles in *The A.T.A. Magazine* were the official government bulletins that appeared occasionally to address aspects of the Enterprise curriculum. Three of them during this time related to departmental assessment expectations. These were all by anonymous departmental authors, and provided updates on items of curricular importance to the educator audience of the magazine. They would, therefore, have been widely read since their official Department of Education Bulletin heading would have drawn the attention of educators. Their importance as sources lies in the official interpretations and extensions of curriculum expectations that they provided for educators across Alberta.

A final group of periodical writings was departmental circulars periodically sent out to jurisdictional leaders. I found a number pertaining to assessment expectations in the files of the Supervisor of Elementary Schools for Edmonton Public School Board, A.

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<sup>9</sup> My search within this magazine continued until 1948 but no further related articles were found.

G. Bayly. Three of the circulars were by anonymous departmental officials, while one was by D. T. Oviatt. These circulars provided instructions and materials on curriculum related issues by departmental officials, and as such were important for understanding departmental expectations communicated directly to jurisdictions throughout the province.

**Educator implementation of assessment: Sources.** Turning to primary sources used in researching educators' implementation of government assessment policy, these resources also covered a broad range. Governmental writings and educator writings that reflected the general level of educator implementation of the Enterprise curricula were considered, since they were strongly suggestive of the levels of child-centred assessment going on. Also, three types of primary resources were chosen that specifically addressed educator implementation of Enterprise assessment theory: first, indirect articles – articles that provide indirect evidence of teacher assessment practices; second, jurisdictional policy directives – school district leaders' directions to teachers; and third, direct teacher communications – sources directly indicating teacher assessment practices. Educator implementation throughout this province is an extensive field of research, and relative to this broad scope, the resources I uncovered, while varied, were limited. My findings on this theme must, therefore, be considered as suggestive of provincial implementation.

Governmental and educator sources that considered the general level of teacher implementation of Enterprise curricular expectations were suggestive of levels of assessment implementation in this program, and therefore could not be overlooked. Several educator sources were from *The A.T.A. Magazine*, and provided personalized accounts of the successes and failures of Enterprise implementation which were

suggestive of broader implementation in Alberta. All governmental sources in this area, with one exception, were government *Annual Report* analyses provided for the legislature and jurisdictional authorities. The one exception was a government official writing in *The A.T.A. Magazine*. These analyses tried to provide an overall sense of how well teachers were addressing curricular expectations, often providing percentage levels of perceived implementation. While these *Annual Report* publications were government documents that may have tended toward self-congratulation, the dramatic falling off of their percentage figures in the 1940s seemed to be an attempt to accurately reflect implementation levels. Furthermore, they were not hesitant in the later reports to strongly denounce the ineffective practices they perceived throughout the province. This transparent presentation of the difficulties being experienced in their program suggests that there may have been a fair degree of honesty, making these documents important for this research.

Turning to the resources specifically addressing teacher implementation of assessment practice, the first type were indirect articles which suggested teacher assessment practice. These suggestions emerged through the authors' presentation of arguments regarding the proper nature of assessment practice. Nevertheless, despite this indirect quality these were important sources of information, given that these authors' arguments emerged from the context of their teaching practice and their understanding of other teacher practice. The indirect articles came almost exclusively from *The A.T.A. Magazine* in Alberta, a teachers' professional journal that was published throughout the time focused on by my research. While having researched the magazine from 1936 through to 1948 in order to cover the whole spectrum of curricular changes during this

1936 to 1950 period, there were few resources dealing with assessment issues in the later part of this period, 1943 to 1950. Just three were found, all in one year, augmented by one from *The School* magazine, published in Ontario at this time. However, the earlier 1936 to 1943 period provided extensive articles from *The A.T.A. Magazine* on assessment implementation, covering a wide range of assessment foci. This was probably attributable to initial enthusiasm following the 1936 introduction of this new curricular focus, although these too dropped off after 1940.<sup>10</sup>

The second type of resource indicating assessment implementation was jurisdictional directives for assessment policy within their districts. These were more direct indications of teacher practice, since district policies were mandated practice and monitored within jurisdictions. While the first period, from 1936 to 1943, revealed no jurisdictional policy documents, the second period was rich in these resources due to the Bayly files from Edmonton. A. G. Bayly was the Supervisor of Elementary Schools for Edmonton Public Schools beginning in the mid 1940s, and his archival files provided numerous sources indicating how his jurisdiction was specifically implementing the elementary curricula of this time. Edmonton's policies for assessment implementation were also suggestive of how other jurisdictions may have approached this implementation.

The final assessment implementation resource was writing indicating directly how teachers were using assessment in their classrooms. The audience of these writings was varied, with articles for a province-wide teacher readership, letters to district leaders,

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<sup>10</sup> World War II, beginning in 1939, likely had an impact on the amount of educator writing done for the magazine. In my fourth chapter I show the concerns that Alberta Department of Education had during and after the war years with teacher shortages and the struggles of new teachers brought in. These new teachers had little training in general, and little appreciation for the new Enterprise learning in particular.

report cards for students and parents, and conference materials prepared for presentation to district teachers. These resources were deeply important in moving my research from inferences about assessment implementation into the lived experience of teachers. Quite a number were found, and they illuminated particular details of assessment practice, a number of which were not even suggested in the other sources.

### **Study Boundaries**

Moving from primary sources and their relative importance in this historical inquiry, another consideration in this methodology is of the study's boundaries. The Enterprise model of child-centred education in Alberta began with a curriculum introduced in 1936, and continued with a revised version brought forward in 1940, with subsequent Enterprise curricula in 1947 and 1949 continuing a modified form of the 1940 model (Alberta Department of Education, 1936; 1940; 1947; 1949). The Enterprise model then continued into the 1950s using the 1949 iteration of this curriculum. The period from 1936 to 1950, during which the Enterprise model remained central to Alberta's elementary curriculum with four consecutive Enterprise curricula, and during which important transitions occurred in these curricula, allows a broad picture of assessment expectation and implementation within these curricula to emerge.

### **Constructivist Paradigm**

This historical inquiry is informed by a constructivist paradigm. A paradigm, as outlined by Guba and Lincoln (1994),

... may be viewed as a set of *basic beliefs* that deals with ultimates or first principles. It represents a *worldview* that defines, for its holder, the nature of the

“world,” the individual’s place in it, and the range of possible relationships to that world and its parts. (p. 107)

A paradigm is a way of looking at the world that “makes particular demands on the researcher, including questions that are asked and the interpretations that are brought to them” (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994, p. 13). The constructivist paradigm is a set of ontological and epistemological beliefs focused on relativistic or “specific” co-constructed reality, an experiential reality where participation in social transactions co-creates thought constructs, prompting continual re-construction of subjective realities (Lincoln, Lynham, & Guba, 2011, pp. 102-104). Essentially, the empirical, knowable world is only known as individuals construct their own understanding of reality based on interactions with their world. This constructivist paradigm has influenced the methods of my study in the following ways: first, in uncovering and appreciating varied constructions of meaning by participants in Enterprise implementation; second, in appreciating the nature of interactions in which the Department of Education communicated assessment expectations to educators, shaping educator constructions of assessment understanding; third, in using the lens of constructivist beliefs about the nature of learning to understand the Enterprise theory of assessment; and fourth, in using the findings of my thesis to potentially prompt reconstructions of contemporary child-centred policy, programming, and practice.

First, constructivism sees individuals as constructing subjective meanings from their experiences, and so I have looked to uncover and appreciate the varied complexity of participants’ meaning-making. Constructivism is not interested in creating a sense of monolithic meaning, but rather in recognizing the multiple and varied constructions of

participants, and from these to suggest a sense of the context in which they participated (Lincoln, Lynham, & Guba, 2011). Thus, I have uncovered as many constructions of assessment meaning as possible within the limitations of my study. They were uncovered at the governmental level, considering not only formal curricula, but also theorists who were recommended by these curricula, and various government officials who promoted governmental expectations. These governmental constructions were considered in all of their complexity, since this multi-faceted governmental context would have variously impacted educators' constructions of assessment meaning. With practicing educators, I considered not only classroom teachers' constructions, but also those of school and district administrators. Also, teacher representatives, such as Alberta Teachers' Association staff writers, were considered. Understanding these various constructions of assessment meaning provided a rich palette of interpretive colors that enabled me to construct a more multifaceted representation of Enterprise assessment realities at this time. This awareness of multifaceted constructions means that some of my findings were stronger in representing the constructed realities of this time than others. Within the limited field of Department of Education official expectations for assessment, my findings were comprehensively faceted, and could be seen as strongly representing governmental constructions. However, my second group of findings on educator implementation of assessment expectations came from a much bigger field of inquiry, and my limited findings had to be represented as a selection of facets that were suggestive, not indicative, of broader assessment implementation.

Second, constructivism asserts that the social interactions we engage in will influence our construction of meaning (Lincoln, Lynham, & Guba, 2011). This key

understanding is at the heart of a method used by this thesis in working with the primary source data: namely, the way in which assessment understandings were communicated to educators during the enterprise curricula must be examined, since the nature of these assessment interactions shaped how educators constructed their understandings of assessment. For example, I attended to how the Department of Education conveyed its expectations for assessment to the educators of Alberta. It was not enough to look at all the various expectations from these documents and then play the redactor pulling together their own overarching synthesis of what the government was saying without critical examination of the ways in which these ideas were presented. Rather, I needed to consider how the pieces of information were presented in order to try understanding how educators at the time might have interacted with and interpreted this information. This method allowed me to carefully consider the ways in which documents from the Enterprise period presented their ideas. This included, for example, whether there were cohesive sections focused directly on assessment, whether there was a use of directly recognizable assessment vocabulary, or whether there was a comprehensive development of their assessment ideas with supporting explanations and examples? This exegetical approach has been fundamentally important, since how assessment information was conveyed to educators in documents of the time directly impacted their capacity to construct and implement their own assessment methods.

Third, the fundamental expectations for assessment in the Enterprise curricula can be understood with the lens of constructivist beliefs about the nature of learning. Lincoln, Lynham and Guba (2011) characterize a constructivist learning theory as knowledge accumulation or construction through “communities of inquiry embedded in communities

of practice” (p. 101). This characterization of learning resonates with how the progressive reformers of this time understood learning. They believed that students would develop knowledge by becoming interactive, communal constructors of meaning through their collaborative problem-solving of enterprises that were relevant to practices in the students’ social context. These progressives believed that students were helped to build meaning by assessment interactions with other students and the teacher, actively fostering the gradual and ongoing formation of meaningful constructions. Students were to be removed from the passivity and practical irrelevance of traditional transmissional teaching situations. Transmissional learning limited interactions surrounding the transferred learning, and was characterized by detached factual knowledge that was not immediately relevant to students. Here deeper construction of practical meaning could not take place. The whole progressive theory of Enterprise reform resonates with the touchstones of a constructivist theory of learning. Therefore, these touchstones have helped me to frame my own constructed understandings regarding this child-centred model.

A fourth connection of constructivism to the methods of this inquiry involves the belief that reconstruction of understanding is prompted by social influences (Lincoln, Lynham, & Guba, 2011). In order for current government officials to consider potential reconstructions surrounding their current learner-centred curriculum reform, they will need something to prompt them towards a reconstructive stance. Without having contextual prompts to reconsider their thinking, they will tend to remain in stasis within the comfort of their current framework of understandings. Furthermore, educators implementing this new curricular direction will need prompts to inform this significant

reconstruction of traditional pedagogy. It is my hope that the implications from my research findings may prompt these reconstructions among current governmental leaders and educators.

### **Conclusion: Empowering Guidelines**

This historical inquiry is empowered by methodological guidelines. First, the assumptions of historical data analysis provide cautionary touchstones that will make research methods more carefully intentional in order to represent data as authentically as historical inquiry will allow. Second, conducting an internal criticism of primary sources helps to appreciate the constructed voices of various sources used, allowing conclusions to be more carefully drawn. Third, chronological boundaries provide a delimited field of inquiry for this assessment research that make it manageable, and yet are set broadly enough to substantively address the questions at issue. Fourth, working within a constructivist paradigm provides an overarching worldview that informs all research methods. With these methodological guidelines this thesis has moved forward confidently, resting in the knowledge that valuable historical understanding is the result.

#### **Chapter Four: Department of Education Assessment Expectations**

In the preceding literature review it is clear that assessment within Alberta's hybridized Enterprise curriculum needs to be more fully understood in both areas of my research question: Department of Education expectations for assessment, and educators' implementation of assessment expectations. The first area of departmental expectations will focus this chapter of research findings, with the second area of educator implementation focusing the following findings chapter.

This chapter reveals Alberta's Department of Education expectations for assessment from 1936 to 1950, both theoretical and practical, communicated in curriculum and curriculum-support documents. These expectations exhibited two distinct theoretical frameworks in different periods. In the introduction to this thesis I speculated about whether Alberta's Department of Education had a coherent theory of child-centred assessment when the new Enterprise curriculum was implemented. I argue here that these curriculum writers did in fact have a theoretical framework for assessment in mind, but their theory changed over time. Furthermore, while their assessment thinking often was not clearly or systematically presented as a theory, I will show that this did not reflect a lack of theoretical constructions, but rather their intention to communicate these theories in less explicit ways. Gutek (2009) defines a theory as the formulation of abstractions about the nature of things into a set of generalizations that can guide practice (pp. 297-298). With this definition in mind it will become clear in this chapter that the Department of Education formulated two discernible sets of general understandings about the nature of assessment that were to guide educator practice, clearly theoretical constructs.

The Department of Education's theory of assessment in 1936 was a distinct but undeveloped model for moving assessment from teacher-centred norms to child-centred norms, with optional implementation. The 1940 curriculum more fully developed the 1936 theoretical framework, and made implementation mandatory. This theory was presented as emerging from within the organic whole of child-centred pedagogy, not intended to be presented separately. As such, it was not systematic and often not explicit, but it was discernible. Curriculum support documents from this time underscore the theory that emerges in these curricula. This period can be seen as a time of tentative, but directed, theoretical beginnings with a gradual gaining of momentum. This assessment theory began to alter in 1943 with the appearance of a supplemental curricular bulletin that signaled a caution about child-centred teaching practices. By 1947, and continuing in 1949, Alberta's curricular assessment theory became a blended theory that allowed child-centred assessment but also encouraged traditional teacher-centred assessment once again. During this later period the vague and seemingly contradictory curricular assessment expectations will be shown not as a theoretical vacuum, but as an intentionally ambivalent assessment theory that acknowledged value in child-centred assessment while also seeing value in teacher-centred graded assessment. Curriculum support documents also corroborate this blended theory of assessment. Assessment theory had come back to acknowledging worth in the traditional theory it had moved away from in 1936.

### **Constructing a Child-Centred Assessment Theory: 1936 – 1943**

Enterprise curriculum documents in Alberta tentatively framed a theory of child-centred assessment in 1936 with a distinct but undeveloped set of assessment

expectations, which were more fully developed in 1940. These curricula laid out four critical attributes of their child-centred assessment theory which contrasted to the traditional assessment prevalent at the time. Curriculum support documents corroborate these four attributes as framing the child-centred vision for assessment.

The first attribute was using non-graded guidance of individual student progress in all stages of assessment. In both ongoing and end-point assessment the guidance would provide awareness of areas for future personal growth. Its guidance of individualized progress contrasted with the traditional assessment focus on graded end-point assessment of teacher-directed assignments and tests. The student was to be guided in personalized learning rather than tested and graded through external, teacher-driven standards.

The second attribute was that this guidance was to support growth of the whole child. This concern with developing all areas of personal/individual development was expressed through adding attitude and behavior learning outcomes that were considered vital to the learning process. These were as important as knowledge and skill development. This strong emphasis on assessment of attitudes and behaviors in addition to knowledge and skills went well beyond traditional teacher-driven assessment. Not only was it guidance rather than ranked assessment, but it was also opening up a whole new area in which students were to develop standards: the attitudes and behaviors that shaped their learning.

The third critical attribute was that the student was guided not only through collaboration with teachers, but also with fellow students. The idea of broad collaboration emerged from a central tenet of child-centred learning: namely, that learning was in response to social problem-solving needs, and we naturally collaborated with those in our

environment to help us solve those problems in socially appropriate ways. Thus, guidance involved teachers and peers ongoing help of a student as the student developed internal standards to guide their own behavior. Social interaction, as the medium through which self-generated standards were constructed, contrasted with traditional teacher-centred end-point assessment of how accurately external standards were assimilated.

A fourth attribute was the use of diagnostic measurement assessment of knowledge and skills to guide student progress. This diagnostic testing was again called for with on-going and end-point assessment of progress. Ongoing testing diagnosis of knowledge and skills was to provide remediation for student growth. This contrasted with the teacher-directed use of testing for ranked, graded assessment.

These four critical attributes of Enterprise assessment theory in the 1936 and 1940 curricula demonstrate a consistency with the theories of child-centred progressives like Kilpatrick and Dewey. For them, learning was individualized, a developmentally appropriate progress for each child aided by collaboration with teachers and peers. They emphasized this interactive guidance process in helping the whole child to develop standards for dealing with socially relevant problem-solving in their learning activities. The child was engaged through the natural collaboration that attended problem-solving in their social lives. Dewey emphasized more direction in the teacher's guidance than Kilpatrick, but in general they held these child-centred beliefs in common. These beliefs exhibit the first three attributes clearly, but the fourth attribute is hard to link to these theorists. Diagnostic tests using external standards for a graded evaluation of progress seem strange beside the collaborative standard-making of child-centred theory. However,

since this was diagnostic measurement assessment to support student progress it had a partial consistency with child-centred theory.

This use of testing to measure progress may also tend to suggest the social efficiency progressives' use of diagnostic testing. While this sounds similar to the social efficiency emphasis on testing diagnosis to efficiently place students in suitable learning contexts, the use of diagnostic testing in a child-centred program was different. Rather than efficient placement of students into suitable learning situations, it was about indications of student growth in their individualized progress.

**Curriculum documents.** Turning now to the curricular *Programme of Studies for the Elementary School*<sup>11</sup> for 1936 and 1940, these documents formed the basis for educators' understandings of assessment since they were the legal documents governing their teaching practice. Both the 1936 and the 1940 Enterprise curricula were hybrid documents combining subject-based and Enterprise-based pedagogy. Nevertheless, despite each allowing some degree of traditional instruction, these curricula focused entirely on promoting a theory of guidance-oriented assessment of individualized progress, an intentional use of child-centred theory to shape assessment. This theory involved the four attributes indicated above.

**1936 Alberta Enterprise curriculum.** The Enterprise curriculum of 1936 (Alberta Department of Education, 1936) offers little specificity in this new theory of child-centred assessment. And yet, the first three critical attributes of this theory are discernible, and the fourth attribute comes forward clearly.

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<sup>11</sup> Rather than using the formal document title *Programme of Studies for the Elementary School*, I will hereafter use the shorter term *curriculum* to refer to these curricular documents.

Its use of two “divisions” with three grades in each, Divisions I and II, was to result in “promotions” only between the divisions, rather than promotions for each grade (Alberta Department of Education, 1936, p. 3). Although not developed in detail, and only required for one-room schools, the reduction of “promotions” is indicated as acknowledging the need for more attention to individualized progress for students (p. 3). The curriculum makes a number of general references to “individual differences ... individual needs” and emphasizes the individual “progress” of the student (p. 3). In Enterprise work the teacher is to keep “an eye on the changes produced in the child by the child’s activity... [which] reside in the experience of the child; they must be worthwhile in the eyes of the child” (p. 4). Corroborating this sense of the teacher as an ongoing guide in activities desirable to the child, the curriculum writers stress that, “The teacher who is a genuine educator, rather than a mere animal-trainer, will watch carefully and patiently for the learning outcomes of social activities and experiences [enterprises]” (p. 4). Furthermore, there is a reference to having peers involved in the ongoing learning with natural social interaction allowing them to make a “personal contribution to the efforts of the group” (p. 4). There is also an indication of end-point assessment in enterprises being about individual progress: “[at the end of the enterprise] some attempt to sum up the pupil’s gains should be made” using the four enterprise outcomes of “attitudes and appreciations,” “abilities and traits of character,” “skills,” and “knowledge” (p. 289). This suggests an orientation towards individualized reporting of progress in outcomes rather than comparative grading of work resulting in final overall grades. The indication that individual “gains” or progress in outcomes are to be considered would suggest personalized reporting of progress through perhaps anecdotal,

descriptor-based, or checklist-oriented reporting on outcomes. Also, here we clearly see assessment moving beyond traditional knowledge and skills to include the attitudes and behaviors of students. The progress of the whole child has been recognized.

These allusions to the first three attributes are brief when compared with the fourth attribute. This curriculum strongly emphasizes the diagnostic measurement of growth in learning (p. 3). Teachers must periodically use,

... diagnostic tests to discover the level of development of each child ... and then begin teaching him at the point where his knowledge stops.... Standards should be established and looked upon as stepping stones on the road towards the goal to be striven for.... (p. 85; cf. p. 289)

Specific standardized tests in knowledge and skills are suggested specifically for checking individual growth and guiding remediation in all the skill subject areas – reading, spelling, writing, and arithmetic – and it would follow that these diagnostic tests would also have been used when their knowledge/skills entered into the other integrated subjects used in enterprises – history/geography (social studies), science, health, literature, music and art (see below, pp. 7-8, for an explanation of this hybrid of skill subjects and enterprises).

A noticeable omission in this document is the absence of any reference to traditional forms of assessment, which is important since this curriculum acknowledges a hybrid approach that blends traditional and child-centred instruction. I have referred before to the optional nature of enterprise instruction in this 1936 curriculum (Alberta Department of Education, 1936, pp. 3, 5, 267) and in my introductory chapter indicated that both traditional and Enterprise instruction were seen as serving a purpose and should

both be used (p. 5). The curriculum stated that the skill subjects of reading, language and spelling, writing, and arithmetic were to be given special attention as discrete subjects, with definite formal training in the skills involved (p. 5). These were to be combined with six enterprises throughout a year, integrating the remaining subjects where possible – history/geography (social studies), science, health, literature, music, and art– with these enterprises fitted in where suitable (pp. 267, 287-289). However, it was accepted that discrete instruction would still occur in these remaining subjects (p. 5). This acceptance of traditional learning as an accompaniment to enterprise learning would seem to call for references to traditional assessment, and yet there are none in this curriculum. What is clear is that the only theory of assessment brought forward here is child-centred.

***1940 Alberta Enterprise curriculum.*** The 1940 revision to the Enterprise curriculum (Alberta Department of Education, 1940) also speaks of an assessment theory in these same child-centred terms, but is more comprehensive in explaining how the first three attributes are to be envisioned, and equally comprehensive in promoting the fourth attribute. This curriculum takes the further step of mandating the use of this theory and the use of a report card that embodied its attributes.

The document states unequivocally that children are not to be compared to others or to some standard. Children are never to be treated as “failures” and a new progress report will be used that is “not designed for the purpose of comparing the pupil with others of his class, but to inform the parents of the progress he is making in all-round development” (Alberta Department of Education, 1940, pp. 25, 26). The new “*Report on Progress* ... makes no mention of ‘grades,’ ‘tests,’ ‘examinations,’ ‘marks,’ ‘passing’ or ‘promotion’ .... [which was] traditional jargon ... barring the way to better education for

Alberta children” (p. 27).<sup>12</sup> This censure of comparisons arising from a graded pass/fail system is reiterated a number of times such as when “competition and invidious [unfair] comparisons” are targeted as counter-productive to building cooperative learning environments (p. 24). The 1940 curriculum goes on to indicate that all schools are to organize themselves into two divisions rather than grades, extending the one-room school mandate for this in the 1936 curriculum, and there is much more development of the approach to this divisional structure in the 1940 curriculum. It indicates a preference for no grades to be indicated within these two divisions to discourage the traditional idea of “passing” grade level expectations in subjects and being “promoted” to the next grade (p. 26). It states explicitly that for “pupils within the same Division, teachers and parents should have little concern with regard to promotion” (p.26). Furthermore, for promotion from Division I to Division II the “main determining factor will be social maturity... [earning] promotion by the natural process of growing a year older” (p. 26). Thus, the idea of promotion on the basis of assessed success in learning is discarded, and there is strong censure placed on the traditional school’s “futile attempt to enforce ‘standards’” which have done much to “wreck the personality of many children” (p. 26; cf. p. 24).

The 1940 curriculum also emphasizes guidance of students in this non-comparative, individualized progression of learning. Teachers are to guide students’ personalized goal-setting which forms the basis for ongoing growth towards goals that are meaningful and interesting for them (Alberta Department of Education, 1940, p. 24).

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<sup>12</sup> Since the particular structure of this report card is not provided in this curriculum, and I was unable to find it in my archival search, I will include the explanation of G. Sheane (1948) regarding this report card. He describes this non-promotional reporting procedure for the province as using a system of letters that descriptively reflected individual student progress: “C” indicated “commendable”, “N” indicated “making normal progress”, and “R” indicated “receiving special assistance” (p. 137). These descriptors highlight the focus on assessment as indications of progress.

The teacher is directed to encourage freedom in students' decision-making, and to guide them in the pursuit of thinking for themselves (p. 23). The teacher is directed to assist their guidance of students by making notes on their individual progress in three categories of intended enterprise outcomes: "socialization, understandings, skills/abilities" (p. 36; cf. pp. 51ff.). The socialization outcomes, described as "attitudes and appreciations developed in the individual" (p. 51), specifically call for a movement beyond the traditional focus on assessing only knowledge and skills. The three and a half page list of these attitudes/appreciations that is provided compares to the two page list for knowledge and skills, clearly showing that progress of the child is perhaps based more on attitude than knowledge or skill. An end-point check-up on these three outcomes is also called for to determine individual progress (p. 36). This assessment of the three categories of outcomes does introduce an element of external standards, but it must be remembered as we saw above that there is to be no grading of standards, no attempt to enforce standards, but only an anecdotal assessment of personal progress in the various subjects that are integrated in a given enterprise. And, the student is assessed in personal growth not only by the teacher, but also by the peer group, with a strong emphasis being placed on "group planning, group responsibility, group evaluation, and group control" (p. 24). Furthermore, students should be taught not only to peer evaluate, but to also self-evaluate. A list of questions for students to use in self and peer evaluation during and at the culmination of enterprises is provided, with the emphasis that this is "informal" guidance assessment (p. 36).

Thus, the first three attributes involving collaborative non-graded guidance of the whole child are unequivocal in this curriculum, and so too is the fourth attribute of

diagnostic testing. Like the 1936 curriculum, this curriculum stresses the diagnostic measurement of individual progress through standardized testing, providing many examples throughout its subject outlines of standardized tests that teachers could find useful.

... [diagnostic] tests are given in order that both child and teacher – it is as important for one as for the other – may learn whether the former has profited by the ... experiences of the section. To allow the matter to end merely with ascertaining that the child has a low mark [on the test] is an inexcusable fault.... If teaching is ever to become a profession claiming any basis in scientific procedures, the teacher must learn to seek the causes of failure and to remedy them.... with diagnostic and remedial exercises. (Alberta Department of Education, 1940, p. 273)

The intent is clear to seek out causes of student difficulty and remedy them to promote student progress.

Like in the 1936 curriculum there is no development of traditional forms of assessment, and in fact, an explicit rejection of examinations and marks. Again, this is important since despite its strongly child-centred assessment theory, the 1940 curriculum acknowledges, like the 1936 curriculum, a hybrid blend of traditional and child-centred pedagogies. It blends these pedagogies with far less acceptance of the traditional pedagogy than in 1936, and stresses that the use of enterprises is now mandatory (Alberta Department of Education, 1940, pp. 28, 29). Nevertheless, it still indicates that curriculum is organized partly as “subjects” and partly as an “integrated sequence” (p. 27). There is, however, a clear directive that all learning is best accomplished within the

context of the problem-solving enterprise that naturally integrates relevant subject material, rather than within discrete subject lessons (p. 6). It actively encourages as much integration through enterprises as possible in all teaching, not just in the three integrated subjects that form the mandated integrated sequence – social studies, health, science – but also encouraging enterprises “for the greater part of the work in the appreciational subjects – Literature, Art and Music, and for a substantial part of the work in Language, Reading and Arithmetic” (p. 29). It goes so far as to say, at the beginning of the subject-specific outline provided for language and spelling that “All of the language teaching that is necessary may be given during the preparation of the enterprises, instead of being arranged in a series of unrelated lessons and exercises” (p. 206). This doesn’t eliminate subject-specific work, but makes it minor, at best, with its role being to augment Enterprise development of learning rather than supplanting or standing alongside enterprises. Given this acceptance, however minor, of teacher led formal lessons in subjects, it is noteworthy that all forms of traditional assessment are explicitly rejected in this curriculum. The 1940 curriculum, thus, provides a clear message for Alberta educators that they are to embrace child-centred assessment theory un-compromised by traditional graded assessment.

*Textual considerations and theoretical constructs.* Both the 1936 and 1940 curricula have an often unsystematic delineation of assessment expectations. The 1936 document has little explanation of its brief and abstract statements about guidance-oriented assessment, and even less about what it will practically look like. There are no sections dealing systematically with evaluation or assessment. Instead, ideas are embedded into discussions about pedagogy throughout the document. Furthermore,

references to growth and progress often take the place of using the explicit terms evaluation or evaluate, although they do sometimes occur, more frequently in the 1940 curriculum. The 1940 curriculum is more direct, with pockets of assessment thinking that use evaluation terminology, and some practical suggestions provided. Again, the ideas are not systematically delineated in one section on assessment. They are found in various places, and some ideas must be pulled from sections that have no direct connection to assessment.

This lack of a coherent treatment of assessment could be seen as the absence of a theoretical framework, an opportunistic assembly of ideas about guiding and measuring student growth that seem to fit with child-centred learning but are without a conceptual foundation. However, these ideas remain consistently clustered around the same four attributes of progress-oriented assessment throughout the 1936 and 1940 curricula. What may appear as a lack of coherent direction for assessment is, rather, a weaving of assessment expectations into child-centred curriculum theory. The means of assessing students is simply merged within the organic whole of child-centred pedagogy.

Admittedly, the 1936 curriculum is sparse in its expectations regarding assessment, and yet there is a consistent set of theoretical attributes when the reader has the lens of child-centred thinking through which to look, with the 1940 curriculum making these even more evident. Nevertheless, this lack of explicit and systematic expectations regarding assessment would have made it more difficult for educators to assemble a child-centred theory of assessment, particularly if they had not philosophically embraced a child-centred pedagogy. This should not, however, lead to the assumption that these curriculum writers were unclear about their expectations. These

curricula had a holistic way of presenting assessment theory within their larger child-centred theory, but it is a consistent theory of assessment they promote.

**Curriculum support documents.** Various curriculum support documents from this time also bring forward the theory of assessment shown above in the curricular documents. Resources dealing with child-centred pedagogy recommended by Alberta's Department of Education were one source of curriculum support, led by a handbook for educators on Enterprise implementation, and including recommended resources from bibliographies in this handbook and in curriculum documents. Also, periodical writings by Department of Education officials were another source of curriculum support, such as Department of Education circulars periodically sent out to jurisdictions or bulletins published in *The A.T.A. (Alberta Teachers' Association) Magazine*, and departmental articles in this same magazine.<sup>13</sup> As supplemental sources of government sanctioned ideas available to educators, these recommended resources and periodical writings emphasized and clarified the Department's assessment expectations during this time.

I separately consider the handbook's support for the four attributes of governmental assessment theory, given its central importance in interpreting Alberta departmental expectations. This is followed by a less comprehensive treatment of the other sources' support for the attributes, given their more limited influence.

**Dickie's handbook.** Donalda Dickie was one of the principal writers for the 1936 Enterprise curriculum in Alberta (Sheane, 1948, p. 96), and in 1941 published *The Enterprise in Theory and Practice*, an "introductory handbook to the theory and practice of progressive education" for Enterprise educators (p. v). It was a book specifically

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<sup>13</sup> Here I use the term periodical in the broad sense of appearing at intervals. This covers the occasional intervals of governmental circulars sent out to jurisdictions, and the regular intervals of a published magazine.

written for practicing educators and student teachers, and as a Normal School instructor in Alberta (p. iv), Dickie had an immediate audience for the book. This profile made it an important resource for Alberta educators in addressing the Enterprise curriculum, and so it will be treated extensively as it pertains to the four attributes of progress-oriented assessment.

Dickie provides a theoretical vision of the four attributes solidly supported by practical examples. She assures the reader that “Every theory outlined here is the result of discussion and argument growing out of classroom practice; every illustration is a faithful record of actual enterprise work” (Dickie, 1941, p. v). She devotes a complete section in her book specifically to “The Evaluation Period” in enterprises, providing many examples of the evaluation at work (Dickie, 1941, p. 206-211).<sup>14</sup> This “evaluation period” sits at the end of the enterprise work undertaken on a given day and at the end of the whole enterprise process where collaborative judgments of the work are undertaken by the students, guided by the teacher (pp. 172-173, 193, 206), but Dickie doesn’t intend this evaluation to be limited to concluding times in the enterprise work. Her fourth chapter on “Enterprise Procedures” (pp. 171-212), which contains the section on the evaluation period, is rich with expectations for ongoing guidance during the work, through interaction and facilitation, again filled with classroom illustrations of what this ongoing evaluation would look like. Within this chapter there is no mention of graded evaluation, but rather a constant reference to student and student-teacher interactions to guide learning. There is an emphasis on ongoing evaluations of students among themselves, independent of the teacher, as the work is proceeding, that are conducted

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<sup>14</sup> Dickie uses the term “evaluation” to consider assessment. The evaluative act for her has nothing to do with grading/ranking the student but is rather non-graded interaction regarding the value of demonstrated learning, as shown in my analysis of her book.

with candor so students come to readily acknowledge constructive criticism in furthering the standards of their work (pp. 193-194, 200-201, 207). Teacher interactions with students are also ongoing. These interactions to “guide the march” (p. 194) of student learning involve questioning of students, interactions to support and guide, listing questions for further student research, ongoing discussions of progress and problems, and planning out, with continual re-visitation, the components of project work (pp. 193-194, 206-211).

As the evaluation proceeds, the teacher guides the discussion away from trivialities, focusing it upon important matters, and sees that it keeps to the point until a conclusion has been reached. He asks rather than answers questions, and suggests sources of information instead of giving it.... to set up standards in their minds. It is by striving to make the work conform to one’s own developing standards, and not by imitating the work of another, that self-expression becomes truly creative. (p. 208)

In this description Dickie rejects the idea of evaluative grading, the comparison of the student to an external standard set by the teacher. For her, rather than being graded by comparisons, evaluation is a deep realization of where each student is at and the use of social interaction to guide each student in their own growing standards in the areas of attitudes, knowledge, and skills. There is a telling section where she speaks of the teacher making a list as evaluation is underway that includes listing understandings needed, but also desirable attitudes, remedial exercises in content or skill areas to help an enterprise, indications of who needs a sympathetic ear for their growing appreciations, needed celebrations of success, and other anecdotal evaluative notes to guide ongoing work (p.

208; cf. p. 194). This is a teacher working with each student to support and guide the whole individual in assessing not just traditional knowledge and skill standards that apply to their work, but also attitude standards. This ongoing collaborative assessment by teachers, and as we have seen by peers, in order to aid self-assessment is a powerful assessment trio. Teachers, peers, and the self together continually address developing personal standards in dealing with immediate goals in the enterprise, and the assessment is therefore eminently usable. Dickie notes that it is particularly usable because students are self-assessing learning that is of personal relevance because they have helped to choose the broad enterprise problem and their personal focus within this broad group undertaking (p. 171). Students are helped to construct ever more refined standards for dealing with parts of the enterprise problem that have relevance for them (p. 171). Dickie's guidance theory of teacher/peer/self assessment is, therefore, directly focused on the personal growth of the whole individual in learning relevant to them. As such it opposes the traditional model of externally imposed learning situations and standards which are externally evaluated at the end by teachers who rank students' learning.

In addition to demonstration of the first three attributes of child-centred assessment, Dickie also provides practical support for the fourth attribute. She writes about diagnosis of difficulties in the standards of the skill subjects in order to provide remedial "element practice," mainly focusing on this diagnosis as informed teacher observation, but she also indicates the use of diagnostic pre-tests (Dickie, 1941, pp. 106-107). In discussing end-point evaluation of the three kinds of development in enterprises – skills, information, and personal qualities – she indicates that "Information is best tested by objective tests" (p. 133). However, the results of these tests are only for

diagnostic purposes of determining “gains and losses,” and are recorded in the form of reactions in a private record for each student (pp. 133-134). I did not find references to the use of broadly standardized tests as indicated in the 1936 and 1940 curricula, but I did find several references to objective tests set by the teacher for measuring knowledge and skills. Dickie, at one point, indicates that the teacher must be sufficiently informed to have a sense of the developing standards in the various skill subjects and how to apply them to the individual student (p. 106), and I suspect that this leads her to emphasize teacher standards in testing that take into account individual needs within particular enterprise work. For example, a sample enterprise she includes indicates in two places the use of teacher-made objective tests, one in comprehension skills (p. 233), and another at the end in science knowledge (p. 273). Thus, testing diagnosis and remediation to support growth in knowledge and skills is a part of Dickie’s guidance of the child.

Dickie’s book was a central support resource for the Enterprise curriculum at this time, given her role as curriculum writer and Normal School instructor in Alberta, and so I will consider, like with the curricular resources, how the way she presented the material may have influenced readers’ interpretation of assessment expectations.<sup>15</sup> Her presentation of the theoretical attributes of child-centred, growth-oriented assessment is never short of explanation and practical examples, despite stopping short of providing actual exemplars of assessment tools. Also, there is an evaluation section using evaluation terminology which is devoted to a fairly thorough presentation of evaluation ideas. However, despite having this separated section on evaluation, not all of Dickie’s ideas about assessment fall within this rather brief five page section. Dickie exhibits

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<sup>15</sup> This consideration of the import of textual presentation was to be limited to curricular documents because of their foundational role as official policy documents. However, an exception has been made for Dickie’s handbook, given her notably influential role in informing educators about curricular expectations.

tendencies like those of the 1936 and 1940 curriculum, where many additional assessment ideas simply emerge in the broader context of her discussion of Enterprise procedures. Like in the curricula, these additional understandings are elaborated as a natural outgrowth of child-centred understandings of individualized growth through guided exploration. Dickie's work, then, provides an accessible theory of assessment in the section designated to evaluation, but this section is more illustrative than systematically explanatory. Also, other assessment ideas emerge in contexts outside of this section, making the discussion less coherent. However, as with the curricular documents, the consistency of the four attributes, even when they emerge here and there in other contexts, indicates a theoretical framework built on the foundation of child-centred individualized progress in learning.

*Other curriculum support documents.* Turning now to other curriculum support resources, I will consider two broad types of resources: some prominent resources recommended in the bibliographies of Dickie's book and the 1936 and 1940 curricula, hereafter referred to as the *three bibliographies* (Dickie, 1941, pp. 437-440; Alberta Department of Education, 1936, p. 6; Alberta Department of Education, 1940, pp. 30-32), as well as periodical writings by government officials. These two types of resource will be summarized more briefly, since they would have had less influence on Alberta's educators than Dickie's handbook.

*Attribute one.* This first attribute is foundational in its emphasis on teacher guidance to encourage and strengthen the individual learner in their largely self-determined learning journey. A key tenet of this guidance is that it is non-graded/ranked since it is guidance to support growth rather than to determine standing.

Kilpatrick (1918; 1933; 1934) reveals this non-graded, progress-oriented theory of individualized assessment in writings included in these bibliographies. His article, “The Project Method” (1918), while not directly listed in these three bibliographies, was acknowledged in a number of resources from the three bibliographies as a seminal work in the activity movement.<sup>16</sup> In this article he promotes the student as a largely independent agent guided as they progress in self-directed learning. He summarizes this theory of assessment as involving guidance of the child in forming and carrying out their own worthy purposes (p. 324). This supporting guidance approves of or rejects learning directions, but it is judgment to support growth, not to grade or rank (p. 324). A chapter in a progressive anthology recommended in the bibliographies, “The Social Point of View in Professional Education” (Kilpatrick, 1933), also argues for the teacher as a guide who provides ongoing criticism of the child’s personal progress focused on preparing them to develop ever more effective social understanding and action (p. 262). His recommended 1934 pamphlet combining two articles, “The Essentials of the Activity Movement” and “The Social Philosophy of Progressive Education” (Kilpatrick, 1934), also supports this guidance model as he sets out the fundamental premises of the activity movement. He devotes considerable attention to the child-centred vision of students struggling individually, but with guidance, as they carefully weigh possibilities and develop the various standards that meaningfully apply to their purposeful problem-solving activity (pp. 9-11). Kilpatrick contrasts this guided purposeful activity with the

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<sup>16</sup> For example, Rugg and Shumaker (1928), whose book appears in all three bibliographies, emphasize the importance of Kilpatrick’s 1918 article as a rallying point for child-centred progressives (pp. 46-47). Kilpatrick’s 1918 monograph may have been omitted from the bibliographies because of the curriculum writers’ desire for a sense of currency in their recommended resources. Certainly, all the publication dates of the recommended resources were after the mid 1920s, with most being in the 1930s.

“subject-matter-set-out-to-be-learned” approach where the teacher is to “test the acquisition and promote or fail accordingly” (p. 4).

Rugg and Shumaker’s *The Child-Centred School* (1928) shows this non-graded, guidance-orientation in their classic child-centred juxtaposition of the “doctrine of growth” versus the “doctrine of discipline” (pp. 34-37). Rather than the discipline of learning systematized subject matter, the child sets their own standards in realistic, experiential work that they have had a hand in choosing, working with the teacher’s guidance to realize these standards (pp. 62-64; cf. pp. 36-37). This teacher guidance role in assessing largely self-directed student growth is metaphorically presented at the end of their book: the child-centred teacher is an artist using artistic intuition in working to guide the child (pp. 323-324). Also, Rugg and Shumaker stress that this guidance of progress negates the “false notion of ... competition” for grades between students, which is counterproductive to the very real need to work cooperatively in dealing with their group enterprises and with life (p. 65).

Another resource from the three bibliographies is Stevens’, *The Activities Curriculum in the Primary Grades* (1931). Stevens provides the theoretical expressions of assessment as guidance of individual progress in the first several chapters of her book, but also a highly pragmatic sense of this assessment when she devotes a chapter to the systematic consideration of child-centred reports and records (Stevens, 1931, pp. 84-99). She focuses on non-graded reporting of progress, providing a complete example of a non-graded report card using a three point sliding-scale descriptor of “High,” “Average,” and “Low” to address specific outcomes in attitudes, skills, and subject area knowledge (pp. 97-99). This non-graded progress-oriented approach to collecting and reporting

assessment is indicated in various forms in this chapter on records, with extensive examples of anecdotal and checklist reporting on progress in everything from spelling words to group activity work (pp. 90-95).

In *The Activity Program* (1936), Melvin emphatically states the dominant role of the child in self-assessment with limited teacher guidance. Melvin describes the teacher checking learning by constantly having curriculum goals ready in checklist form, assessing the progress towards these goals, but these checklists are only to supplement the student's key role, or "overruling judgment," in assessment (pp. 118-119). And, self-assessment is to be dominant within and at the end of activities, with the teacher only augmenting the standards of the child even in final evaluations of activities (pp. 121-124). Non-graded checklist results, which may be reported on report cards if the teacher wants, are the only reporting that is provided (p. 120).

This vision of non-graded guidance of individualized progress is also supported in various ways by periodical writings of governmental officials appearing in *The A.T.A. Magazine*. An article by Dickie (Dickie, 1936, November) explains the structure of the new 1936 curriculum of which a key part is the guidance role of the teacher in Enterprise work. It stresses in the integrated enterprises – including history, geography, science, art and music – guiding students to seek information by themselves, the teacher guide being a stimulator of personal learnings (p. 35).<sup>17</sup> An anonymous article in the "Our Teachers' Helps Department," that I assume is by a Normal School instructor or other department

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<sup>17</sup> However, she indicates that the skill subjects – reading, writing, language, arithmetic – are to be taught by the traditional methods of "formal instruction, drill and test which have been used in the past" (Dickie, 1936, November, p. 35). This makes explicit something that we saw was unclear in the 1936 curriculum, namely that even though the curriculum does not mention traditional assessment, nevertheless there existed an expectation for continuing limited traditional assessment alongside the child-centred guidance model.

official because of its official tone and references (Our Teachers' Helps Department, 1936b, December), argues that in enterprises students need to participate in selecting their own learning directions and assess their own progress in these (p. 31). However, the student is not wholly self-directing, since this is not the most effective dynamic for learning, with significant teacher guidance and assessment of student purposes being critical (p. 31). A brief official bulletin (Alberta Department of Education, 1937, February) supports the non-graded aspect of this assessment by indicating the removal of promotional examination testing by the province in the elementary grades IV, V, and VI. In keeping with the somewhat tentative nature of the 1936 curriculum, this 1937 bulletin states that "Until more is known respecting the difficulties encountered in the elementary school programme by teachers and pupils, the type of test required cannot be determined" (p.14). While not unequivocal about the long-term removal of this promotional testing,<sup>18</sup> nevertheless there is support here for the individualized progress of students by eliminating promotion based on graded standing. Another bulletin (Alberta Department of Education, 1938, March) acknowledges that evaluation was not dealt with in an explicit way in the 1936 curriculum and that there is a need to specifically "formulate [this] ... final step for the enterprise procedure" (p. 7). The bulletin provides a synopsis of evaluation expectations for educators in their Enterprise work, and is a resounding affirmation of non-graded teacher guidance in their largely self-directed progress (p. 7). A departmental article by a Normal School instructor (Ricker, 1938, September) supports the self-directing and non-graded aspects of this assessment. Ricker suggests that the guided individualized exploration of Enterprise work be supplemented by individualized

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<sup>18</sup> The 1936 curriculum was not unequivocal either about removing promotion based on standing, only requiring that one-room schools remove promotion within divisions, which could explain this bulletin's uncertain tone.

instruction in skills that the Winnetka Plan would provide (p. 28). This Winnetka Plan individualized skills instruction through the use of extensive self-instructive materials (pp. 28-29), and like Enterprise work, had no competition and no failure, with each student working at their own rate. This movement away from ranking and grading is also stressed in an article by an Alberta school inspector (Currie, 1939, January). He argues that “no other single change in this province has had such a tonic effect on classroom teaching as the large scale abandonment of ... the external, written exam” (p. 7). The drilling and grading of pre-ordained knowledge is antithetical to individual growth, with such external standards resulting in a student having to forfeit his own individuality (p. 8; cf. pp. 7, 9).

*Attribute two.* This second attribute adds to the foundation of the first attribute an awareness that the child’s progress is being guided not just in the traditional assessment areas of knowledge and skill, but also in the whole cluster of attitudes and behaviors central to how the child engages in learning.

Kilpatrick (1918), while not using the terms attitude or behavior, refers to guiding the child in a rich life-process of working with a purposeful undertaking which is clearly indicative of the attitudes and behaviors needed to work through a real-life problem-solving situation (p. 324). Kilpatrick (1933) makes this explicit when he emphasizes that teachers must understand one key truth: that educating the child is a holistic procedure that is life itself (pp. 259-263). The child-centred classroom recognizes that in everything a child learns they are learning not just detached data, but a whole cluster of understandings and attitudes about “everything that enters significantly to them in whatever is then going on” (p. 260). This, to Kilpatrick, is life itself, full of social

implications, with social relevancy being the purpose of learning (p. 260). Therefore, the whole child as a becoming social agent is the focus of the teacher's guidance. Kilpatrick (1934) adds to this by stressing that teachers must guide the child in developing the necessary attitudes and behaviors that will allow them to be conscious of evolving standards for their learning (pp. 10-11). Self-empowered learning is the goal, and this can only happen when the child develops the necessary attitudes and practices that will empower them to be continuously conscious of developing and refining their own standards in learning.

Rugg and Shumaker (1928) also stress that the teacher guide must encourage well-rounded student growth through an understanding of the rich tapestry of dynamics that go into a given learning situation (pp. 321-322). The guiding teacher's "slogans ... are growth, freedom, individuality, initiative" (pp. 321-322). This portrays the teacher guide as a motivational coach of primarily attitudinal dynamics in the learning child, not just of understandings and skills. Rugg and Shumaker emphasize the importance of social dynamics in learning when they call for increased child-centred research devoted to producing systematic recording practices or measures of the outcomes of this new education in the area of "social traits" (p. 317).

Methods for assessing the whole child are provided by several authors. In her practical chapter on records, Stevens (1931) stresses the use of checklist tools for assessing not only knowledge and skills, but also attitudes (pp. 97-99). Burr's *What is the Activity Plan of Progressive Education* (1935), in addition to using traditional objective measures for knowledge until ones more effective for child-centred objectives can be devised, provides practical suggestions for how teachers can subjectively gather

information to guide growth in attitudes and skills, such as filming students at work, using opinions of visiting parents, or questionnaires given to parents (pp. 168-170).

Melvin (1936) actually provides a sample curriculum progression for the elementary program that includes outcomes for knowledge/understanding, abilities, and appreciations for each of the grades (pp. 77-98).

The whole child as the focus of guidance also emerges in periodical writings by government officials. An anonymous appendix to the “Our Teachers’ Helps Department” section of the magazine provides a formal assessment tool used by the Normal Schools (Our Teachers’ Helps Department, 1936c, December). This assessment tool focuses on citizenship qualities with a descriptor-based checklist that delineates eight attitudes considered necessary in citizenship (p. 34). This emphasis on assessment of attitudes is also supported in an article by Dickie (1937, October). She shares a list of outcomes for attitudes, appreciations, and mental and physical habits generated by Normal School classes (p. 33). She stresses that generating specific outcomes in not only knowledge and skill, but also attitudes and behaviors, will help enterprises to properly focus on character and social education (p. 33). A government bulletin (Alberta Department of Education, 1938, March) on evaluation in Enterprise work, calls for teacher records of evaluation to emphasize the whole child’s growth: “knowledge actually assimilated, skills improved, sympathies enlarged, generous tendencies strengthened, desirable habits extended, jealousies eradicated, and misconceptions clarified ... [with] a frank statement of errors made, coupled with suggested remedies for future use” (p. 7). Another article by a Normal School instructor (Trout, 1939, June), using excerpts from Dewey’s *Democracy and Education*, brings forward a similar message. Quoting Dewey, Trout highlights the

idea that knowledge and skill acquisition apart from the forming of effective social dispositions is not socially valuable learning (p. 2).

*Attribute three.* The third attribute adds to the above two attributes that peers help with guidance, and that this guidance in turn promotes the self-assessment of the child. Therefore, this broadly collaborative process has as its goal strengthening individuals in their own self-assessment.

Kilpatrick (1918) presents a collaborative vision of learning as a wholly natural life process. Just as a factor in life is collaboration to solve problems, so too careful peer and teacher guidance or judgment in the classroom must support the child in developing their own assessment of worthwhile standards (p. 324). Rugg and Shumaker (1928) write at one point about the child being guided to take over the “criticism of reports” (p. 57). Although it is not indicated whether this involves self-evaluation and peer-evaluation, the generic language suggests that they are speaking of both. Stevens (1931) emphasizes the same dynamic in a practical way with a number of her assessment tools being for self and peer assessment, in addition to her assessment tools for the guiding teacher (pp. 84-95). Burr (1935) also sees the teacher and peers as guides for the student with the goal of strengthening self assessment in all the processes of an activity (p. 40). Melvin (1936), in his heavy emphasis on student involvement in establishing and refining standards, is not explicit about the involvement of peers, but his language is suggestive of broad student involvement in standard setting which could include peer assessment (p. 121).

This broadly collaborative guidance to strengthen self-assessment also emerges in one governmental periodical writing from this time. A government bulletin (Alberta Department of Education, 1938, March) on Enterprise evaluation emphasizes that

assessment is to be suggestive guidance among pupils and teacher and focus on students' self-evaluation of standards in their work, a sincere but "kindly mutual criticism" coupled with "candid self criticism" (p. 7).

*Attribute four.* The first three attributes form the core of child-centred assessment for individual growth, and yet Alberta's 1936 and 1940 curricula emphasized a fourth way to more specifically support the individual growth of the child: diagnostic measurement testing in knowledge and skills to identify needed areas for remedial guidance.

Stevens (1931) directly acknowledges the need for diagnostic testing of knowledge and skills to support progress. We have seen her powerful call for non-graded assessment, supported by a non-graded report card and a plethora of non-graded assessment tools, and yet she allows that there is a role for "standard educational tests ... as necessary checks on progress in the formal studies" (p. 84). By "formal studies" we can assume she means knowledge and skill outcomes in the tool or skill subjects. She emphasizes that these tests are only to be used as "checks on progress" and indicates that such tests will not be included in her work "since these are outside the scope of our subject" (p. 84). They are placed firmly in the realm of progress checks to guide teachers' continual assessment of progress, with the inference that they should not assume too much importance in ongoing diagnostic work.

Burr (1935) also provides direct and developed support for diagnostic testing of knowledge and skill, and a direct call to develop this testing for attitudes and behaviors as well. In a chapter entitled, "Testing the Results Secured in Activity Schools," he argues that assessment of all outcomes should be objectively measured by testing to guide

student growth in socially relevant learning (pp. 168-170; cf. pp. 38-47). At this point adequate measurement testing is only available for knowledge and skill areas, although it is only adequate and needs further development to meet progressive ideals, but he urges teachers to use that available testing wherever possible for the time being (p. 38; cf. p. 170). He acknowledges that attitudes and behaviors can only be measured subjectively at this point, stating that further research is needed to develop satisfactory objective testing devices that can measure progressive “attitudes, habits, ideals, as well as accomplishment in reading, spelling, etc.” (p. 170). Burr’s call for development of diagnostic testing measurement to address all outcomes of a socially relevant pedagogy shows the pragmatic tendency we have seen in him to support educators in their practice.

Periodical writings by Normal School instructors and Department officials offer further advice for teachers regarding the place of traditional assessments in the new program. Dickie (1937, September) states that in the integrated subjects of the Enterprise program “gains in information.... may be checked by objective tests” (p. 7). This clearly diagnostic role for objective knowledge testing in the enterprise integrated subjects is not considered here for the core tool/skill subjects, although this article focuses only on the planning of enterprises, so that would not be expected. Given the way in which the 1936 curriculum encourages diagnostic testing in the tool/skill subjects, we can assume that Dickie, as a curriculum writer, also would have supported it in these subject areas. However, as we saw in the earlier Dickie article (Dickie, 1936, November), she was promoting traditional assessment in the skills subjects for the 1936 curriculum, so it is possible that she saw a dual role for these objective tests in the skills, one of diagnosis, and another for testing in order to provide grading. A departmental bulletin (Alberta

Department of Education, 1937, November) has a section focusing specifically on standardized tests in each of the skill subjects which are “recommended for use by teachers” (p. 21). However, this bulletin does not indicate what particular purposes these listed tests of knowledge/skills are to be used for. As indicated above, it is possible that the tests in this list were intended for both diagnostic and grading purposes, given the ambivalent approach to assessment before 1940, which could explain why there is no explicit indication of their purpose in this bulletin.

**Summary.** From equivocal but clearly emergent beginnings in the 1936 curriculum, a child-centred assessment vision coalesced into the unequivocal expectations of the 1940 curriculum. The holistic embedding of assessment theory within their larger child-centred theorizing was somewhat difficult to access for educators, but there was a central theory woven through these documents, and through curriculum support documents, calling the educator to use four attributes of assessment in promoting individual student progress.

### **Child-Centred Assessment Theory Augmented: 1943 - 1950**

Alberta Enterprise curriculum documents from 1943 to 1950 moved away from exclusively endorsing child-centred ideas of assessment toward including more traditional teacher-centred graded assessment, creating a blended theory of assessment. This movement began in 1943 with the release of a major bulletin to supplement the 1940 curriculum. It called for accountability in covering basic requirements for knowledge and skills within the program, suggesting that teachers had become inattentive to these in their exploratory Enterprise learning. With the 1947 and 1949 curricula, two critical attributes of a new blended theory emerged: first, qualified continuation of child-centred

progress-oriented assessment, and second, encouragement of traditional teacher-centred, graded assessment. Curriculum support documents corroborate this movement of assessment expectations away from the fully child-centred guidance of individualized progress that had focused Enterprise assessment from 1936 to 1943.

**Curriculum documents.** A 1943 departmental bulletin to supplement the 1940 curriculum signaled this theoretical shift for assessment (Alberta Department of Education, 1943b).<sup>19</sup> It calls for accountability in covering the “minimum requirements” for knowledge and skills within the program, providing an explicit outline of required subject-based “minimum outcomes” (p. 3). In contrast to the 1940 curriculum, the 1943 bulletin uses prescriptive language about these subject outcomes. Furthermore, the bulletin goes on to revive the traditional importance of teacher-centred formal repetition and drill, repeatedly emphasizing its importance in building mastery of knowledge and skills (Alberta Department of Education, 1943b, pp. 4-7). The 1940 curriculum was explicitly cautious about the drill method (Alberta Department of Education, 1940, pp. 29-30; cf. pp. 54, 252), and referred to facts/skills as only being important in the context of a meaningful enterprise purpose (p. 23). These shifting emphases in the 1943 bulletin suggest changes in assessment theory. For this bulletin, assessment is about encouraging thorough competence, and should never “condone sloppiness in skills and knowledge” (Alberta Department of Education, 1943b, p. 4). In a specific evaluation section, it calls for a combination of child-centred assessment with teacher-centred assessment.

Attributes of the 1940 child-centred assessment remain in that the bulletin stresses teacher and peer guidance of self-directing progress in enterprises, and it emphasizes the

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<sup>19</sup> Patterson (1990) emphasizes the importance of this bulletin in signaling a shift away from the child-centred focus of the 1940 curriculum (p. 109).

attitudes and behaviors that would support their enterprise learning (pp. 6-7). But, formal teaching to support mastery and retention of knowledge and skills is also encouraged in this evaluation section which is suggestive of traditional testing of content and skills (p. 7). This document, therefore, blends two disparate attributes: a continued emphasis on guidance-oriented assessment, and assessment to support mastery of knowledge and skills through traditional means.

The two attributes of this new blended theory are clarified in the 1947 and 1949 curriculum documents, involving a continued but limited emphasis on guiding individual student progress, and an implicit and explicit encouragement of movement back to traditional graded testing of subject matter.

In 1947 the Alberta government issued a revision to the 1940 elementary curriculum that is notable for shifting away from full child-centred assessment theory, despite claiming to embrace essentially the same thinking about instruction and assessment as the 1940 document: “the programme is not a new one .... it is an attempt to present in clearer and more useful form the existing programme, being based on essentially the same fundamental principles” (Alberta Department of Education, 1947, p. 3). The 1947 curriculum had further minor revisions done to it in 1949, cleaning up “the imperfections of the 1947 curriculum” (Alberta Department of Education, 1949b, p. 1), but it is essentially the same document as the 1947 curriculum, with occasional phrasing changes and additions, and yet almost completely a word for word reproduction of the 1947 document. In terms of assessment, the 1949 curriculum contains the same understandings as the 1947 curriculum. Therefore, I will present what has been gleaned on assessment from the 1947 curriculum as being representative of both curricula.

However, I will also add in considerations from one further curricular bulletin from 1949: *Bulletin 1: An Introduction to the Program of Studies for the Elementary and Secondary Schools: Foundations of Education* (Alberta Department of Education, 1949a). This document provided philosophical foundations for the 1947 and 1949 curricula.<sup>20</sup>

The 1947 curriculum proposes the same primacy of enterprises in the learning environment as was asserted in the 1940 curriculum, indicating that all subjects are “to be regarded as fields for correlation [within integrated enterprises], and are to be treated in as close a conjunction to the Enterprise **as may be feasible**” (Alberta Department of Education, 1947, p. 16). Thus, while suggesting that enterprises are to be used as widely as possible in subject-integrated learning, there is still openness to subject-specific learning. This overarching congruity with the 1940 vision in promoting a largely enterprise-oriented curriculum is not, however, seen in the emphases concerning child-centred assessment. There are no systematic sections dealing with assessment expectations, and the assessment expectation pieces woven sparsely into the document only provide limited support for child-centred assessment.

The 1947 curriculum opens the door to the testing of discrete subject-based content. In an introductory section devoted to the “Foundations of Education”, the document summarizes the content of a separate *Bulletin I* (Alberta Department of Education, 1947, pp. 5-9).<sup>21</sup> In one part that focuses on psychological theories of

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<sup>20</sup> This *Bulletin 1* was also released two years earlier as *Bulletin I*, alongside the 1947 main curriculum document. However, I have been unable to find a copy of the 1947 *Bulletin I*, despite its being referenced in the 1947 curriculum as being released alongside the main *Bulletin II* curriculum document (Alberta Department of Education, 1947, p. 5). Therefore, I will deal with the 1949 version of this bulletin, *Bulletin 1*, with the understanding that it and the 1947 *Bulletin I* were basically the same document. Based on the synopsis of *Bulletin I* provided in the 1947 main curriculum document (see pp. 5-9 in the 1947 *Bulletin II*) I can see no general differences.

<sup>21</sup> See footnote number 20 above which explains that this *Bulletin I* from 1947 could not be located.

cognition, a summary of the “Connectionist” or stimulus-response theory is provided alongside the “Gestalt” theory (p. 8). The connectionist summary emphasizes how, through practice, connections becomes stronger and stronger. Therefore, it emphasizes “drill and testing, and the breaking down of subject matter into elements or parts” (p. 8). This endorsement of drill and testing of discrete subject-matter does not stand alone, and is balanced with the Gestalt ideas of teaching “by whole rather than by part and to present clear over-all mental pictures” (p. 8). The Enterprise activity program would, therefore, be supported by Gestalt theory. However, despite this balancing of the two theories, the door is left open to using drill and testing of discrete subject matter when the document goes on to say that the “practical classroom teacher may not subscribe exclusively to either theory but seeks whatever seems most valuable in each” (p. 8).

A second section that brings forward the possibility of testing subject-matter is one specifically devoted to “Subject Matter in Enterprise Work” (Alberta Department of Education, 1947, p. 14). Here the curriculum puts forward strong demands for adequate coverage of subject matter: “one of the most serious charges against the activity movement in education is that it lacks any guarantee of adequate coverage of what the traditional schools considered essential subject matter” (p. 14). The 1947 curriculum indicates that “appreciation [of society] demands definite understandings which in turn derive from an accurate and complete evaluation of facts” (p. 15). It goes on to make this thinking perfectly clear: “**There is no condonation in this programme for inaccurate and incomplete coverage of the basic knowledge concerning topics on which Enterprises have been attempted**” (p. 15). The change in discourse from the 1940

curriculum is strikingly emphasized with the boldfaced text used. The “evaluation” of levels of accuracy and completeness immediately suggests testing regimens.

Another qualification to guidance-oriented assessment of individualized student progress emerges when this curriculum adjusts the two division structural focus of the 1940 curriculum into a three division structure. The new structure of moving students along is now to be based where possible on three rather than two divisions, with the option opened up for schools to choose individual grades as well (Alberta Department of Education, 1947, pp. 19, 20; cf. chart on pp. 32-33). There is no discussion of promotion in this document, unlike the clear directive to stop promotions in the 1940 curriculum. Therefore, it is left to the educator to consider whether the new three-step or optional traditional six-step structure is calling on them to begin promotions again. Omitting the clear stipulation from 1940 to take out promotions is strongly suggestive that academic promotion is now being allowed if districts choose that approach.

The child-centred vision for assessment is further called into question by a glaring omission: the 1947 curriculum has no references to the non-graded assessment reporting that was introduced in the 1940 curriculum. This was a pillar of the 1940 curriculum, with a new non-graded report card introduced, and the clear directive to Alberta educators that there was to be no grading, no tests, and no sense of failure in the assessment of students. The implication by omission seems clear: given the various doors left open to traditional testing of subject-matter in this curriculum, teachers are being allowed to choose traditional assessment in this latest Enterprise curriculum.

Another less glaring omission in the 1947 curriculum that may suggest movement away from assessment of individualized progress is the elimination of all specific

suggestions in the course outlines for diagnostic tests to support growth in knowledge and skill. There is no explanation of the role of standardized testing to support diagnosis and remediation in knowledge and skill areas. This reverses the practice in the 1936 and 1940 curricula of specific standardized testing lists in all skill subjects to check student growth and guide remediation.

Having noted these elements that qualify or contradict the child-centred assessment vision, there are some passing references to child-centred assessment that are made in this document, though they are limited. There is a small, half-page section on the keeping of “Enterprise Records” which contains a few references to assessment records (Alberta Department of Education, 1940, p. 20). First, it indicates that teachers in successive years are helped by “careful observations and relevant notes from previous years” (p. 20). Then it speaks of finishing an enterprise with “written records for future reference [of subsequent teachers]” (p. 20). It indicates that “A good portion of the record may be compiled by the students themselves under the guidance of the teacher” (p. 20). In these references, written records could mean anecdotal summaries of progress, but could also generically mean a record of whatever assessment was conducted, including marks and progress summaries. Thus, the suggestion of child-centred progress notations is here, but these records could include a summary of whatever assessment was being used.

There are also a few child-centred assessment references in a section on sequencing of activities in divisions, and they only appear in the first division for grades I/II. First, there is a suggestion of the teacher as guide, although no development of the guidance role, when there is a reference to students needing to be willing to accept

“constructive criticism” (Alberta Department of Education, 1947, p. 35). This is accompanied by a recognition that “Some sense of self-evaluation can be applied by very young children and should be encouraged at all times” (p. 35). Also, students having “Opportunity to make decisions and assistance in looking ahead to probable consequences will promote a sense of independence” (p. 35). This encouragement of more independent student work suggests some of the attitudes and behaviors that are important in enterprises. These attitudes are directly stressed when teachers are encouraged to promote proper social behavior to support the activity work (pp. 35-36). Another direct child-centred reference emerges when teachers are instructed to avoid ranking in evaluation: “Evaluation of criticism should, of course, be in terms of relative effort and ability rather than in comparable achievement” (p. 35). While the wording here is awkward when speaking of “evaluation of criticism,”<sup>22</sup> this statement calls for individualized or “relative” assessment of progress in effort/ability rather than a comparative or graded assessment. Some of the child-centred attributes that we have seen in the 1940 curriculum, therefore, remain: non-graded teacher guidance of increasingly self-directed growth, including a focus on attitudes and behaviors in this growth. As indicated, this collection of often indirect assessment thoughts is not contained in a separate assessment section. More importantly, as indicated above, these child-centred references only surface in the first divisional section, with no similar references in the divisional sections for grades III/IV and V/VI. These few statements that show up on just two pages in this 127 page document form the only references to child-centred assessment in this document.

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<sup>22</sup> It may be a typographical error, and perhaps should read “Evaluation or criticism....”

What is also noteworthy is that the support document for this curriculum, *Bulletin 1: An Introduction to the Program of Studies for the Elementary and Secondary Schools: Foundations of Education* (Alberta Department of Education, 1949a), expounds for 75 pages on the philosophy that underpins this program of studies but there is no systematic development of assessment theory, and only one direct reference to assessment practice, a reference clearly supportive of traditional graded assessment.<sup>23</sup> The one direct reference to assessment is in a “Reward and Punishment” section:

The awarding of grade and marks has often been criticized on the basis of artificiality. The complaint has been that students tend to work for the mark rather than for the knowledge, that the shadow supersedes the substance. From the practical point of view it appears that so long as marks and gradings are given educational acceptance by the public and the school alike, pupils will be justified in seeking to improve their mark standing. If marks do not correlate highly with genuine improvement then perhaps the fault lies as much with the evaluation program as with the marks themselves. (p. 65)

The rather cryptic final statement about “fault” implies that if a graded evaluation program is conducted properly then gradings are not as much of a problem, although what a proper evaluation program would be is not made clear. The acceptance of grading in this quote is also underscored when it indicates that public acceptance of grades results in grades creating motivation for student learning. While not directly calling for graded

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<sup>23</sup> In the earlier *Bulletin 1* summarized at the beginning of the 1947 curriculum document (the full *Bulletin 1* document I have been unable to locate, as I indicated above) we have seen the reference to “drill and testing.” Similarly, there is in the “learning process” section of this later *Bulletin 1* from 1949 an acknowledgement of “drill” to reinforce learning. However, for some reason the “testing” that the 1947 summary connects to “drill” is not referred to in this document (Alberta Department of Education, 1949a, pp. 39-41). This omission of “testing” leaves just the one reference to assessment in the 1949 *Bulletin 1*.

assessment, this reference in *Bulletin 1* suggests that the curriculum developers have re-aligned their thinking on graded assessment since the 1940 curriculum.

Therefore, the 1947/1949 main curriculum documents and accompanying bulletins present a considerably different picture of assessment than that of the two earlier Enterprise curricula. In opening the door to graded assessment, this curriculum seems to be closing the door to consistent child-centred assessment despite briefly recommending its continuation for the early primary grades, I and II. These two assessment strategies were grounded in such different theoretical paradigms as to seem largely contradictory, and yet they appear together in these documents. Educators were left to infer that perhaps it is only in the early primary grades that fully child-centred assessment is considered important, younger students having a greater need for individual guidance, with the remaining two divisions open to teacher decisions about how to blend child-centred and traditional evaluation. The curriculum introduction clearly stresses that a decision regarding the relative use of connectionist and gestalt theories of learning was being left up to the educator. The curriculum writers seem to imply that in the upper elementary grades child-centred assessment was to be used in the ongoing evaluation of progress during enterprises, with periodic graded assessment of knowledge and skills. The emphasis in these curriculum documents on the importance of ensuring knowledge and skill retention also is suggestive of formal testing. This blending of two disparate assessment theories suggests the end of coherent child-centred assessment.

***Textual considerations and theoretical constructs.*** Educators found little explanatory development and few practical indications of assessment practice to develop their understanding of the new blending proposed in the 1947 and 1949 curriculum

documents. There are no exclusive, systematic sections dealing with assessment anywhere in these documents. Educators could be excused for thinking that there was no coherent theory of assessment being presented. However, there is intentionality in this blending of disparate theories that points to a theoretical construct. Despite appearances to the contrary, curriculum writers did not want to negate the progressive assessment vision that Alberta had officially espoused for eleven years, with the curricular documents clearly endorsing the continuation of the 1940 Enterprise model. In the primary grades, I and II, they still call for full child-centred assessment. And yet, throughout these documents they make it clear that they are concerned about fuzzy thinking in poorly directed Enterprise work, suggesting that they believed assessment of knowledge and skill was too difficult for teachers using a purely child-centred approach. In their defensive statements about not condoning sloppiness in knowledge and skills, they seem to be responding to criticisms of the Enterprise method. Therefore, in the upper elementary grades their intention was to bolster the child-centred assessment with traditional assessment in a blend that they felt would support conscientious continuation of the Enterprise method. Their indirect endorsement of traditional assessment methods was not a rejection of child-centred assessment, but a subtle encouragement of teachers to blend graded drill into their child-centred work in order to bolster knowledge and skill retention within enterprises. This reflects their intention to maintain the child-centred approach in the face of criticism, by supporting it with traditional drill and testing assessment to augment knowledge and skill development. It was, in essence, a theoretical construct that blended progressive and traditional goals.

**Curriculum support documents.** Curriculum support documents from this time also bring forward the two attributes of this blended theory of assessment expectations. The recommended resources in the 1936 and 1940 curricular bibliographies which significantly supported the child-centred vision are not duplicated in these later curricular bibliographies, a finding which supports the shifting emphasis of this period. *The A.T.A. Magazine* included only one article from 1943 to 1948 which related to departmental expectations for assessment, but it is an article that also illustrates the criticism of child-centred pedagogy and the struggle to defend it. The files of George Bayly, Supervisor of Elementary Schools for the Edmonton Public School Board, provide some further evidence of shifting assessment expectations through four departmental communiqués with jurisdictions during this time. These were sources of government sanctioned ideas available to educators, and as such could have shaped educators' interpretations of governmental assessment expectations during this time.

**Blended attributes.** The bibliographies of the 1947 and 1949 curricula tell a revealing story of pedagogical redirection. These bibliographies shift the focus from one entirely on progressive literature and the activity method in 1936 and 1940, to one that ignores this activity-based literature. These later bibliographies contain none of the resources from the earlier bibliographies (pp. 76-77). There is only one recognizable progressive resource listed in this bulletin (p. 77), John Dewey's *Democracy and Education: An Introduction to the Philosophy of Education* (1916). Not one child-centred resource is recommended that could provide an easily accessible treatment of the implementation of child-centred learning and assessment, only Dewey's book that is noteworthy for its difficulty of language and level of abstraction. Instead of activity-

based progressivism, these bibliographies show a marked interest in the burgeoning work of educational psychology. These psychological theorists had become central in this curricular re-shaping of pedagogy, with an elaboration of the contrasts between Connectionist/stimulus-response and Gestalt theorists that moved this curriculum in the direction of greater attention to repetition, drill, and testing of discrete information (Alberta Department of Education, 1947, p. 8).

In the article from *The A.T.A. Magazine*, the sense of choosing between the two worlds of child-centred and teacher-centred theory is also strongly felt. Aptly titled “Whither, Progressive Education?” (Graham, 1945, February), this Normal School instructor extensively quotes from Dewey’s work *Experience and Education* to point out that the pedagogy of child-centred progressivism is viable and not just a “passing phase” (p. 39). It is telling that Graham uses the phrase “passing phase,” and that he sets up his article as a response to problems posed by those critical of child-centred progressivism. It suggests that departmental officials were responding to criticism of Enterprise learning and perhaps considering a shift in curricular direction. Nevertheless, Graham makes a valiant effort to support a continuation of child-centred directions, including assessment directions. He quotes from Dewey to argue against the objection that enterprises are simply wide-open, undirected activity, showing instead that they involve the guiding judgment of teachers in student progress:

Traditional education tended to ignore the importance of personal impulse and desire as moving springs. But this is no reason why progressive education should identify impulse and desire with purpose and thereby pass lightly over the need for careful observation for wide range of information, and for judgment if

students are to share in the formation of the purposes which activated them. (as cited in Graham, 1945, February, p. 39).

By arguing for the viability of child-centred assessment in addressing the information of learning, Graham illustrates the reservations about progressivism that were obviously being felt in departmental circles and that led to such an intriguing blend of traditional and progressive assessment in the 1947 and 1949 curricula.

Turning to jurisdictional departmental communiqués found in the Bayly files, there are four that address assessment issues. They all support the blending of progress-oriented assessment alongside traditional graded assessment. One resource introduces the first departmental tests in the elementary program since their removal in 1937 (Oviatt, 1947, February 7). These tests of arithmetic, language, and reading were to be administered to all grade VI students throughout Alberta according to very strict guidelines. This concern with standardized knowledge and skills in these core tool/skill subjects reflects the criticism of loose informational work in enterprises. The blended assessment thinking going on in the department becomes evident in that these are province-wide achievement tests which were traditionally promotional tests in the province, but these are termed “Achievement Survey Tests” and teachers were directed not to use them for “promotion of individual pupils” since their purpose was to improve instruction in the skill subjects. The second Bayly resource is a memorandum to divisional and city superintendents in Alberta from the curriculum branch of the Department of Education (Alberta Department of Education, 1947, October 1). In it the department indicates the issuing of an “Enterprise Plan Book,” which they attach, for teacher use in organizing their enterprise activities. In the attached plan book there is a

section for evaluation and it sets out the two part assessment that we have seen in the curricular documents. There is an extensive section for anecdotal comments on “favorable pupil growth” in various outcomes including attitudes, knowledge and skills, and then another separate section on “tests given.” There is no indication here if the tests are to be used for grading students, or only for diagnostic purposes. However, given that the testing section has been separated from the section on growth assessment, it seems that both diagnostic and graded uses are possible. A further resource in the Bayly files is a teacher questionnaire on enterprises sent out to jurisdictions (Alberta Department of Education, 1947, no month). In the final section on evaluation, teachers are asked if pupils rate their own work, and if peers rate each other’s work. It also asks if they give tests in enterprises, if they assign marks during the projects, and if they assign final marks or “standing” in enterprises. This openness to a blend of child-centred and teacher-centred assessment is direct. The final Bayly resource also suggests a similar openness. It is the text to a film by the Department of Education on how to develop enterprises, with added textual commentary (Department of Education, 1949, June). The film has a section on evaluation that has the child-centred call for self, group, and teacher evaluation of ongoing and end-point growth. It also calls for teacher evaluation through regular testing to measure growth in knowledge and skill. The use of testing to measure growth suggests a diagnostic use of testing, but may also involve the grading that the curriculum allowed for after grades I and II. These Bayly resources, therefore, demonstrate in varying degrees the intentional blending of child-centred and teacher-centred assessment attributes.

**Summary.** The 1943, 1947, and 1949 curricula intentionally combined two disparate theories into a blended theory of assessment. The justification for this seems to

lie in a desire to respond to the difficulty of working with open-ended Enterprise learning. The response was to augment the deficiencies of child-centred assessment with traditional assessment of knowledge and skills within Enterprise work where feasible, or with discrete subject-based drill and testing. The curriculum support documents corroborate this concern with specific attention to information acquisition using a blending of child and teacher-centred assessment. This blended assessment theory allowed educators to choose the path of least resistance. For many educators, this would have been a choice to follow the easily prepared for, easily controlled, easily evaluated structures of traditional teacher-centred pedagogy.

### **Conclusion: Curricula Circle Back**

Historians who have examined Department of Education expectations for assessment in the project-method provinces present a hybrid of child-centred and traditional teacher-centred pedagogies. This hybrid conclusion is completely supported by these findings, since all Alberta curricula to some degree included traditional pedagogy alongside their progressive pedagogy. However, the historians do not deal with how different progressive curricula over time variously emphasized this hybrid. This is where my findings add to the historical discourse, by moving beyond these monolithic understandings. My findings have demonstrated that Alberta's Department of Education expectations for assessment in its Enterprise curricula from 1936 to 1950 moved in a circular fashion away from teacher-centred theory and then back toward it. The Enterprise program began in 1936 with a distinct but undeveloped theory for moving assessment from teacher-centred norms to child-centred norms. This theory exhibited four attributes that emphasized guiding the individualized progress of students. By 1940

this theoretical framework had been more fully developed, with implementation becoming mandatory. However, by 1943 this theory began to be questioned, with an increasing caution about child-centred learning, leading in 1947 to a theory that intentionally blended the two disparate attributes of child-centred and teacher-centred assessment in order to provide more attention to knowledge and skill acquisition. This theory expected the full use of child-centred assessment in grades I and II, but otherwise allowed for and encouraged a movement toward including teacher-centred graded assessment. Thus, by 1950, Alberta's child-centred theory of assessment had undergone a shift back toward the traditional assessment it had so intentionally moved away from in 1936.

## Chapter Five: Educator Implementation of Assessment Expectations

My literature review indicated that not only was more research needed into departmental expectations for Enterprise assessment, but also the extent to which educators implemented these expectations. Most historians investigating Enterprise implementation have pointed to educators' difficulties with assessment, without systematically developing educators' work with assessment. Having considered departmental expectations in the previous chapter, I now have a structure of assessment expectations with which to consider educators' implementation of these expectations.

From 1936 to 1950 the Department of Education communicated two distinct theoretical frameworks for assessment. The first, from 1936 to 1943, was a child-centred theory involving four attributes: non-graded guidance of individual progress; assessment of the whole child; collaborative assessment of progress; and, diagnostic testing to guide progress. The second framework, from 1943 to 1950, was a theory that intentionally blended two seemingly disparate attributes: child-centred progress-oriented assessment theory and teacher-centred, graded assessment theory. These two frameworks provide the structure of departmental expectations for assessment that are used in this chapter to address the extent to which educators implemented these expectations.

The findings of this chapter suggest that inspiration<sup>24</sup> and inhibition were two forces at work in the implementation of Enterprise assessment expectations. Sources suggest that the first child-centred theoretical framework was significantly reflected in

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<sup>24</sup> Inspiration is used in its most basic sense to denote being filled with the spirit of something, or *inspired*. In this case I refer to being filled with the spirit of child-centred pedagogy, a sense of the natural or real-to-life learning of this pedagogy. Each individual will learn naturally at a personal rate in response to perceived needs in resolving social problems, and does so through collaboratively addressing these challenging experiences of life. Labaree (2005) provides a strong sense of this naturalistic core of child-centred progressivism.

educator implementation in the early years, with indications of strong inspiration as they worked with the challenges of these child-centred assessment expectations. However, beside signs of ongoing inspiration there were growing inhibitory signs by 1940 of non-compliance and ineffective implementation of this challenging framework. The 1943 curriculum update responded to these perceived signs of pedagogical difficulty by mandating a blending of child-centred and formal teacher-centred pedagogy. In this second blended period sources suggest that while widespread difficulties with enterprise assessment continued, there were strong attempts by educators to work out this blending. These attempts varied in the degree to which each method was reflected in assessment. In these blended efforts there were ongoing signs of inspiration with child-centred assessment, but also of inhibitions prompting greater adoption of teacher-centred assessment.

The qualified wording that I have just used to state overall findings is intentional, and reflects how limited my research materials are relative to the huge field of province-wide implementation. Given the limited scope of my archival research, the primary source material that I have discovered dealing with educator implementation is necessarily limited. It presents various facets of educator implementation around Alberta, and should be seen as suggestive of broader implementation.

### **Implementing a Child-Centred Assessment Theory: 1936 to 1943**

Educators largely embraced the new curricular direction in Alberta in 1936. Child-centred pedagogy was put forward by the 1936 curriculum as a calling for educators, described as a natural way of learning contrasted with the artificiality of traditional pedagogy (Alberta Department of Education, 1936, pp. 3-5). As such, it

provided an inspiration to new educational thinking. Primary sources in the first few years of this curriculum reflect educators' desire to develop this promising child-centred learning. They are resonant with the idealism that attends such dialectic shifts in direction. This is strikingly illustrated by an Alberta educator whose article focuses on the "spiritual" transformation attending child-centred learning: "the spirit in him [teacher] contacts the spirit that sustains the child" (de Savoye, 1940, October, p. 30). Assessment implementation, as a part of this inspirational movement, clearly embraced the four curricular attributes of child-centred assessment during these early years of the 1936 curriculum.

However, by 1940 most sources reflect a changing perspective about general child-centred programming, and in particular about the four attributes of assessment theory. After educators' early enthusiasm in the first few years of Enterprise programming, reservation about child-centred pedagogy had begun to surface. Sources suggest that reconsideration of the pedagogy had arisen because of growing practical concerns about an inability to effectively implement it. They suggest that a teacher shortage due to the war was partly responsible for this practical inhibition, but also a theoretical concern that teachers who filled in were unprepared to accept the novel thinking of this new program. In addition, the sources suggest that educator non-compliance arose because of the strident refusal of the 1940 curriculum to be theoretically flexible with its assessment. Non-compliance due to theoretical objections also was suggested when one of the assessment attributes was questioned as to its suitability in child-centred pedagogy. There were still indications of inspired child-

centred implementation in this later time, but numerous practical and theoretical inhibitions had begun to surface.

This section will begin with a consideration of sources that speak generally about Enterprise implementation during this time. Despite not directly referring to assessment implementation, these sources must not be ignored. They provide indications of general pedagogical implementation which are suggestive of how much child-centred assessment was being attempted. Following these general findings, I will consider specific indications of educator implementation of child-centred assessment arising from the sources.

**General educator implementation of Enterprise curricula.** Primary sources from the early years of this period indicate strong educator support for general implementation of the 1936 Enterprise pedagogy. By 1940 they show that educators were questioning this child-centred program. This will be shown through governmental communications about educator implementation of the general Enterprise program, followed by educator communications about this general implementation.

Governmental sources describing educator reactions to Enterprise implementation reflect a gradual movement from educator support to educator resistance. An anonymous staff writer for *The A.T.A. Magazine* in 1936 reports on an inspector's survey of four teachers from various locations in Alberta (Our Teachers' Helps Department, 1936a, May) and the report is resoundingly enthusiastic. All four teachers were described as having students who were "intensely interested in enterprise work, and enthusiastically in favor of this new procedure which has less of the routine recitation of lessons" (p. 34). The report also indicates that "behavior responses have become more natural, business-

like, practical, and matter-of-fact” (p. 34), pointing to the collaborative social dynamic of the child-centred classroom. Various *Annual Reports of the Department of Education* between 1936 and 1938 also show enthusiastic implementation of the Enterprise program. In 1936, it was reported that 80 percent of elementary teachers used enterprises (Alberta Department of Education, 1937, p. 53). In 1937 the report was that 85 percent were using them, particularly in social studies (Alberta Department of Education, 1938, p. 63), and that “several thousand teachers have taken special courses in enterprise education at the Summer School” (p. 16). By 1938 the report indicated that their use was almost universal in rural and urban elementary schools, with 60 percent using them effectively to integrate the curricular subjects (Alberta Department of Education, 1939, p. 61). But by 1941 teachers were portrayed by the government as anything but enthusiastic, with the *Annual Report* of that year claiming that tradition was very strong in Alberta schools, compromising Enterprise implementation (Alberta Department of Education, 1942, p. 14). By 1942 the concern was powerfully evident, with a summary of superintendents’ and school inspectors’ reports indicating that the “results of the new programme fall far short of expectations” (Alberta Department of Education, 1943a, p. 29). They indicate that the main problem was with insufficiently trained teachers due to the war, resulting in a shortage that has had to be filled with retired teachers from the old system or new teachers with but a few months training (pp. 29-30). A further problem was the lack of sufficient resources in classrooms to sustain enterprise activity (p. 29). The result was that teachers fell back to traditional formal teaching, or an inept use of enterprises that formalized them in keeping with traditional instructional practices (p. 30). The 1943 *Annual Report* also stressed teacher ineptitude in dealing with enterprise work,

with superintendents estimating that only 60 percent of elementary teachers were open to progressive principles, but that not more than 40 percent were actively trying to implement these principles in their classrooms (Alberta Department of Education, 1944, p. 26). These governmental perceptions of Enterprise implementation suggest a shift from initial enthusiasm to later ineptitude and resistance due to increasing teacher inhibitions with the theory of Enterprise education and to practical inhibitions of insufficient resources.

Sources written directly by educators also describe this sense of initial enthusiasm, followed later by criticism of the Enterprise program. In 1937 an anonymous staff writer for *The A.T.A. Magazine* (Our Teachers' Helps Department, 1937, June) writes about Edmonton schools participating in a study to determine levels of student progress with Enterprise learning. He offers the various conclusions of the study in 12 categories that were based on teacher responses, and in each the responses of Edmonton teachers are positive, with several minor qualifications (p. 47). Some notable quotes from teachers emerge: "There can be no questioning the beneficial effects of the new programme" and "School has become a place where new and thrilling experiences are awaiting them around each and every corner" (p. 47). A further article from the same month of the magazine provides a teacher's perspective on their first year of work with enterprises (Bell, 1937, June). Bell concludes that "the new method and Course of Studies are far superior to anything we have worked with before and have undoubtedly made the classroom a more pleasant and interesting place for pupil and teacher alike" (p. 48). However, an article by a teacher in *The A.T.A. Magazine* in 1941 presents a very different picture (Bercuson, 1941, December). Bercuson speaks of the "clouds of

uncertainty and misgiving [that] hang low over the heads of many Alberta teachers these days” (p. 11). He speaks of the struggle between the progressive and traditional models as being noticeably unresolved, and quotes the president of the Alberta Teachers’ Association who speaks of widespread disillusionment among Alberta teachers with the Enterprise model. For them “the whole framework of progressive education is nothing more than another ‘batch of thrills’ which will eventually be discarded” (as quoted in Bercuson, 1941, December, p. 11), and the president indicates the need for association members to face this issue. While Bercuson argues later in the article for the efficacy of progressive education, he does admit the problem, saying that “there is growing unrest among great numbers who contend that not only is the word ‘progressive’ a gross misnomer... but that Alberta is marching backward at an alarming rate toward the abyss of low standards, anarchic class rooms and wholesale inefficiency” (p. 11). These teacher perspectives on implementation suggest the same movement from enthusiasm to widespread ineptitude and criticism by the early 1940s. Again, teacher resistance to Enterprise theory is suggested as an inhibitor causing this shift.

These findings highlight two themes about educator resistance to implementing child-centred programming by 1940. A first theme is that practical issues arose that inhibited implementation, such as a lack of sufficient materials. A second theme is that educators’ resistance to the theory of Enterprise programming had begun to inhibit implementation. These two themes also emerge in educators’ experiences of implementing Enterprise assessment theory.

**Specific educator implementation of child-centred assessment.** I have chosen three types of primary resources that specifically address educators’ implementation of

Enterprise assessment theory: first, indirect articles – articles that provide indirect evidence of teacher assessment practices; second, jurisdictional policy directives – school district leaders’ directions to teachers; third, direct teacher communications – sources directly indicating teacher assessment practices.

The sources uncovered suggest widespread implementation of the four attributes of child-centred assessment theory from 1936 to 1943. However, they also suggest that practical and theoretical inhibitors to Enterprise assessment began to develop.

*Attribute one.* To what extent did teachers attempt to implement assessment practices focused on the non-graded guidance of individual progress? An article directly discussing teacher practice in Redcliff, a southern Alberta community, reveals teaching practices that help students to form their own standards of achievement in knowledge development (King, 1939, December). King uses student generated tests of the essential knowledge in a given enterprise to create a class test, with students marking their own work using discussions of appropriate answers guided by the teacher (p. 11).

Acknowledging that the prime objective of enterprises is the lived experience, he asserts that this lived experience cannot progress without the necessary knowledge to explore enterprise problems, which he states is strongly enhanced by these self-tests (p. 11). King clearly values students being guided to form their own standards regarding necessary knowledge. A final consideration is that he indicates proudly that students are receiving grades from tests of their own design which they mark themselves, and so they are contributing to their own grades used in promotion (p. 11). Given the 1936 curricular lack of prescription surrounding promotion and grading, this still places him in alignment with curricular expectations at that time.

Another source for the first attribute is a set of letters between the principal of Irvine School and the divisional office in Medicine Hat (Rosvold, 1940). The principal requests that their school be allowed to use its own report cards, since the non-graded report cards required by the government “are not very useful in conveying information to the parents of the pupils.... [whereas reports that I have made] allow us to give the parents much more information than do the prescribed reports” (Rosvold, 1940, October 6). The responses to Rosvold from the secretary treasurer of the divisional office first indicate that they will take the matter to the next Board Meeting (Rosvold, 1940, October 15), and then later indicate that the Board requires the use of the provincially mandated report cards (Rosvold, 1940, November 9). On two levels this correspondence indicates teacher assessment practice. First, the resistance to non-graded descriptor-based reporting of progress provincially mandated in 1940 suggests a theoretical opposition to this assessment method, based on the belief that somehow the descriptor-based system of reporting does not communicate much information to parents. Although there is no further explanation in these letters, perhaps the novelty of a non-graded, descriptor-based system was an inhibiting factor. In any case, this is evidence of immediate and direct resistance to the province’s inflexible stance in the 1940 curriculum. The second indication of teacher practice is that if divisional offices distant from the Department of Education in Edmonton are mandating the use of provincial reporting of progress, then this is suggestive of widespread use of non-graded reporting of progress at this time, regardless of teacher resistance.

This questioning of non-graded assessment practices is also seen in a set of two Edmonton Public School Board report cards for a grade VI student, one for 1940-1941

and the second for 1941-1942 (Blanchett, 1940-1942). These report cards exhibit several facets of assessment practice that are contrary to the 1940 curricular expectations, but several that are congruent. First, the 1940-1941 report card is entirely graded with letter and percentage gradings for all areas, including the extensive section devoted to “Citizenship Habits.” The idea of individualized progress where no one is compared or ranked against another is ignored, with the report card indicating that “a pupil’s standing will be given in terms of marks.” This directly contravenes the non-graded requirements of the 1940 curriculum, and indicates that this division has ignored the mandated non-graded provincial report cards. Second, this 1940-1941 report card indicated that students who are below a “C” or 60-69% are “in danger of having to repeat the grade,” and a section at the end asks teachers to justify non-promotion of students if they choose to keep a student in the same grade. This is a divisional report card format, and so this indicates that Edmonton teachers were being asked by this jurisdiction to contravene the explicit requirement of the 1940 curriculum to always promote students. However, congruence with 1940 curricular expectations can be seen in the heavy emphasis on “Citizenship Skills” in a separated section, with 12 categories of behaviors and attitudes. And, by the next year the 1941-1942 report card has moved to the non-graded reporting required by the 1940 curriculum. It uses a system of anecdotal reporting similar to the “C/N/R” system Sheane (1948) indicated for the 1940 non-graded provincial report card: “C-Commendable”; “Av.-Average”; “R-Requires Special Attention” (p. 137). Furthermore, the subject areas are now filled with specific outcomes that are each assessed with the descriptor code, creating an impressive listing of 24 outcomes, to which are added 14 citizenship outcomes in a separate section. This gauging of individual

progress in a variety of specific outcomes is a strong indication of support for the curricular mandate. Despite this significant shifting to the child-centred non-graded theory, this later report card still allows for non-promotion of students, a theoretical lapse from the 1940 curricular perspective. Also, resistance to the theory of non-graded descriptor-based assessment can be seen on the part of the individual teacher who completed this later report card. The teacher uses descriptor-based assessment in the three terms prior to the final term, but in the final term column summarizes the years' work in percentages for all outcomes except the citizenship skills. Again, a seeming inability to accept descriptors of progress as sufficient for a final assessment points to the difficulty of accepting the dramatic theoretical change of the 1940 curriculum.

*Attribute two.* To what extent did educators attempt to guide growth of the whole child, assessing attitudes as well as knowledge and skills? A study into levels of pupil progress in Enterprise programming (Our Teachers' Helps Department, 1937, June) summarizes the results of testing of achievement in the various skill subjects, and testing of social attitudes. While this limited testing for the purposes of a one-time study is not directly indicative of teacher practice, it is suggestive that the area of social skills was considered an important one for assessment, showing alignment with the 1936 curriculum.

The *Annual Report* for 1936 (Alberta Department of Education, 1937) refers to teacher attitudes about assessing the whole child. It indicates that 1936 curricular goals emphasizing habits, appreciations, and creating responsible citizens were difficult to measure, stating that Alberta teachers were "simply at a loss" about how to assess these attitudes (p. 15). This suggests that teachers were attempting to implement the 1936

curricular theory, but were practically impeded by inadequate assessment tools to facilitate implementation.

King (1940) provides a teacher's theoretical support for whole child assessment. King is suggestive of his classroom practice based on his beliefs about the values of progressive education. His thesis is that it is not knowledge and skill that most benefits a learner, but to "acquire a true wisdom for rational living" (p. 15). He quotes a number of theorists who emphasize that the training of will, emotions, and character is as important as training in knowledge and skill (pp. 15-16). This attention to the whole child was also seen in his earlier article focusing on student self-determination (King, 1939). The somewhat polemical nature of the article also suggests that this attention to the whole child is something that King is not seeing enough of in fellow teachers' practice, and it has begun to bother him. The highly theoretical tone of King's argument would imply that several years into this curricular implementation he was noticing theoretical obstacles that were keeping teachers from assessing growth of the whole child.

A final resource showing assessment of the whole child is the collection of report cards from Edmonton (Blanchett, 1940-1942). Both the 1940-1941 and the 1941-1942 report cards include extensive sections devoted to "Citizenship Habits." The 1941-1942 report card has added specific knowledge and skill outcomes in the subject areas, and when combined with the 14 attitude and behavior outcomes in citizenship, provide a powerful tool for implementing whole child assessment in the classroom.

***Attribute three.*** To what extent did educators implement collaborative feedback from peers to assist the student in developing assessment standards for their own progress? A first source is an enterprise outline for Division II shared in *The A.T.A.*

*Magazine* by an anonymous teacher (Our Teachers' Helps Department, 1937, April). It stresses peer collaboration as a central focus of the enterprise endeavor. In a section on "Abilities" developed during this enterprise the first three abilities listed are about peer collaboration in ongoing work: "work in groups; co-operate; consider fellow-pupil's advice" (p. 38). The emphasis on considering "advice" directly addresses collaboration to help development of personal standards in assessing work. In a section on the "Culmination" of the enterprise this collaborative advice extends into the final evaluation with a class-wide evaluative discussion by teacher and students (p. 38).

King's article, *Self Tests* (1939), focuses on collaboration in assessing tests taken within enterprises. Students actively collaborate in discussing how the various questions should be marked, with the guidance of the teacher (p. 11). The goal of this collaboration is to build the individual's own capacity for generating standards by assessing the value of their answers in light of the various perspectives shared by peers and teacher (p. 11).

**Attribute four.** To what extent did educators implement testing as diagnostic assessment to help guide student progress? In an article in *The A.T.A. Magazine* (Sansom, 1939, April) a staff writer opines that the testing to measure growth being promoted at a recent A.T.A. convention is theoretically unsound from a child-centred perspective. He states that Dewey would have been taken aback by this use of testing, arguing that measuring change or growth does not align with the progressive idea of the child working with guidance to develop suitable standards within purposeful activities (p. 3). Dewey writes that "Ends function within action" (as cited in Sansom, 1939, April, p. 3). Growth needs to be assessed within the activity as the student responds to the various felt needs arising from the activity's problems (p. 3). Standards are developed relative to the felt

need, which external standardized testing does not provide as it has no context in active purposeful learning. Sansom concludes by talking about how progressive implementation is a matter of “degree or emphasis” (p. 3), which indirectly suggests that some teachers are being swayed by the lure of easy testing, giving too much emphasis to that type of evaluation and avoiding an emphasis on the more challenging activity-based assessment of progress. Thus, Sansom is contesting measurement testing to diagnose growth, implying that the 1936 child-centred curriculum has embraced an element of assessment that contradicts core values of child-centred theory.

A second source directly supports teacher use of standardized testing for diagnostic purposes. It is an article about the use of skill-subject tests standardized to Edmonton students by the Normal School (Our Teachers’ Helps Department, 1938, September). These standardized tests were used throughout Edmonton Public schools, and the school board in this article gives permission to reproduce the tests so other teachers may use them as a standardized base for diagnosing their pupils’ progress (p. 25). Teachers are encouraged to use them twice, in September and again in June (p. 25). It emphasizes that these tests are to gauge the individual progress of students so as to help teachers in guiding students to work at a level commensurate with their level of knowledge and skill (p. 25).

Another article from *The A.T.A. Magazine* also provides a direct teacher perspective on their use of measurement assessment to support growth (Harvey, 1939, March). Harvey stresses that measurement testing is only for measuring the extent and results of changes, not for marks (p. 9). He cautions that proper measurement of growth must be in the area of ideas which are the heart of learning, and that this is difficult to do

(p. 10). He does not provide examples of strong measuring tools for ideas, but instructs teachers not to use inappropriate testing which “degrade[s] his profession by turning out long lists of meaningless figures” (p. 10). These thoughts indicate that testing of discrete data is not proper measurement testing for Harvey. He provides, then, some indication that teachers were trying to implement the 1936 curricular call for diagnostic measurement testing, with the qualification that it must test the important learning of Enterprise activities.

A final article from The A.T.A. Magazine showing direct teacher implementation of this attribute (LaZerte, 1940, November) considers the purchase and use of Arithmetic survey tests provided by the Normal School. Any teachers who purchase them are asked to send in the results, which will then be compiled to create tests standardized for the Alberta context. LaZerte stresses that these tests are only to be used for diagnostic purposes (p. 10). The article indicates a desire on the part of jurisdictional leaders and individual teachers to purchase copies of these tests, showing that this testing practice is being actively pursued by a number of educators (p. 10).

**Summary.** There is evidence that educators tried to shift their assessment practices in ways that were consistent with the Department’s new child-centred theory. However, while sources suggest widespread and inspired early use of the four attributes, by 1940 there was a growing sense of practical and theoretical inhibitors to implementing this assessment. The Alberta Department of Education felt this lack of capacity and discontent. In 1943 we have seen that it sent out a curricular bulletin to update the 1940 curriculum (Alberta Department of Education, 1943b), shifting emphasis partly away from the troublesome Enterprise pedagogy and toward greater traditional formalized

pedagogy to enhance knowledge and skill acquisition. This realignment had a significant impact by prompting a blended approach to assessment in the 1943 to 1950 period.

### **Implementing a Blended Assessment Theory: 1943 to 1950**

The previous findings chapter on governmental expectations showed that, beginning with the 1943 curriculum bulletin and continuing with the 1947 curriculum, there was a call to blend Enterprise-based programming with a traditional teacher-centred subject-based program. This was a call to blend two disparate assessment theories: child-centred guidance assessment of individual progress, and traditional teacher-centred testing of knowledge and skills. The 1947 curriculum states that the “practical classroom teacher ... seeks whatever seems most valuable in each [theory]” (Alberta Department of Education, 1947, p. 8). This call to create a blend of these theories is reflected in the primary sources for this later period. They show various attempts by educators to work out a blending of the two in their implementation, a struggle to reconcile the disparate nature of these two assessment theories. There are educators continuing to be inspired by child-centred assessment, working to fit curricular suggestions for testing into their child-centred assessment. And, there are those diminishing child-centred assessment and emphasizing testing assessment. The possibilities for various blending were an opportunity for teachers to determine their own assessment, and they were engaged by it.

**General educator implementation of Enterprise curricula.** Sources from this later period provide a general sense that despite an ongoing theoretical and practical struggle with child-centred learning, educators began to improve in this area. However, they also show that the governmental emphasis beginning in 1943 on formalized

instruction and assessment to enhance knowledge and skill acquisition was having the desired effect.

In 1945 the *Annual Report* emphasized that there was a lack of teachers sufficiently trained to understand and engage with Enterprise learning, stating that “the present status of activity and group techniques is far from encouraging” and that Alberta would continue to fall short of their goals for Enterprise education until this teacher training issue was properly addressed (Alberta Department of Education, 1946, p. 24). To these theoretical barriers the report added practical problems with insufficient equipment to sustain proper Enterprise activity work (p. 24). The focus in all of this was that the inadequate use of Enterprise learning was resulting in students’ poor skill and knowledge development (p. 24).

However, the 1947 *Annual Report* (Alberta Department of Education, 1948) presents a more encouraging summary of general implementation. It states that a strengthening of Enterprise work is needed in general, but singles out the rural schools as having “quality of work ... that leaves much to be desired” (p. 30). However, it indicates that the 1947 curriculum helped educators to more effectively implement enterprises because of its approach to sequencing enterprises through the grades, its delineations of the broad scope of any enterprise, and its suggested outlines for enterprises (p. 30). It also refers to strengthened learning through increased implementation of formalized subject-specific learning (p. 30). Overall, Enterprise work is starting to improve and is being blended with formalized teaching of subjects which is resulting in increased knowledge and skill learning.

These sources, while limited, have important implications. First, it seems probable that to help with what the Department has perceived as the superficial nature of Enterprise work, it provided teachers with a more directed approach to Enterprise structures in its 1947 curricula. This directed approach seems to have been prompted by the practical and theoretical obstacles to effectively implementing enterprises, resulting in a more teacher-directed approach which diminished the flexible, significantly student-driven exploration which was promoted in the 1940 curriculum. A second implication is that the 1943 and 1947 curricula provided an opportunity for teachers to devote greater attention to a more easily implemented teacher-directed instruction and testing. There can be no question that it was easier for teachers to work with traditional teacher-centred learning focused on subject-specific transmissional teaching and testing. Practical and theoretical inhibitors to Enterprise learning had prompted the Department to ease the difficulties with Enterprise learning which were felt by 1940 and which were exacerbated by the war. By 1943 teachers were presented with the need to use their discretion in blending these two disparate pedagogies, and it is the variable nature of this blending that focuses sources on assessment implementation during this period.

**Specific educator implementation of blended assessment theory.** How did teachers respond to this call to blend child-centred and traditional teacher-centred assessments? The following sources all reveal educators' interest in working out various blends of child-centred and teacher-centred assessment practices.

Articles in *The A.T.A. Magazine* indirectly demonstrate the struggle Alberta educators are having as they try to justify how to piece together these disparate methods. The first article is by an A.T.A. staff writer for their magazine (French, 1944, January).

The author immediately shows the struggle of how to use assessment to evaluate the progress of a student in knowledge and skill within the skill subjects when he differentiates between those who “stress the subject development more than individual pupil development” (p. 23). His article argues that using testing to insist on a minimum attainment in a subject area based on “comparison of all pupils by testing and observation with some preconceived grade standard” is unacceptable to progressive thinking. He emphasizes instead that testing for individual diagnosis be used as a part of “careful collection of comprehensive evidence regarding individual pupil progress, and [as part of] a determination of individual pupil attainment in terms of the behavior expected of each child” (p. 24). French’s argument points indirectly to the struggle that he has observed in teacher implementation of assessment, and cautions teachers to emphasize a child-centred approach where formalized teaching and testing supports individual growth, rather than simply comparatively grading them.

A second article from *The A.T.A. Magazine* is reprinted from an out-of-province periodical, but by deciding to reprint it in their teacher periodical, I believe the magazine is indirectly showing the struggle that they perceive in Alberta teachers at this time (Thompson & Traxler, 1944, February). The article asks the question of whether exams are necessary, and provides a juxtaposition of two authors’ arguments in favor of and against these exams. The author in favor of exams is notable for stressing that competition from graded exams is healthy and a factor in social competence (p. 28). The author arguing against exams states that marks from exams are put forward on reports as though they say something significant about a child’s learning, when in fact they do not (p. 24). He argues for specific anecdotal explanations of progress that can only be derived

from a teacher's thorough knowledge of their student's growth (p. 24). This polemical article illustrates the struggle that these authors see Alberta teachers facing as they try to blend traditional formal assessment with child-centred assessment.

A third article from 1944 by French (1944, April) argues for a balanced approach to assessment. He claims that assessment for progress requires appropriate paper and pencil testing measures, but also checklist measures of the whole child through observations of "the ideals, attitudes and appreciations which are listed as immediate objectives of an activity or enterprise" (p. 12). He stresses that standardized testing is diagnostic in nature to further the progress of the individual child, and should not be graded, but that teacher-made tests which are specific to the enterprise work undertaken should be graded (p. 11). French, like in his earlier article, is strongly supportive of child-centred assessment, but here argues for the use of graded and non-graded testing within this progress-oriented model. He offers no explanation for why he feels that teacher-made tests should be graded rather than just used for diagnostic purposes as he had indicated in his January article just three months earlier. Certainly the rest of his argument is directly from the child-centred assessment perspective, and his contradictory inclusion of graded testing here does suggest that influences to endorse grading have had an impact on him. These arguments, again, are strongly suggestive of the swirling discourse going on among Alberta educators about how to resolve this call to blended assessment.

In 1946 an out of province periodical, *The School*, published an article by the Supervisor of Public Schools for Medicine Hat, Alberta (Walker, 1946, February). Walker is defensive of the growing criticisms of inadequate knowledge and skill acquisition, and emphasizes that Enterprise learning need not be weak in this area if

teachers pay proper attention to their formal instruction of knowledge and skills (p. 494). Although he does not specifically refer to testing assessment in this formal instruction, his repeated use of the term formal seems indicative of the drill and testing that was commonly understood as formalized instruction at this time. For Walker, teacher-centred assessment must always be grounded in the enterprises, stating “that knowledge and skill are meaningful only when considered in relation to the problems which they help to solve and that they are best acquired by being applied to the different problems found in social situations [enterprises] (p. 494). Thus, Walker is asking for only contextualized testing of information relevant to current enterprises. Walker also stresses child-centred assessment as the “contributions of individual pupils in each enterprise” and encourages teachers to be careful to assess the various contributions, pointing to the whole child focus which includes attitudes, knowledge, and skills (p. 495). Walker does not refer anywhere to whether assessments should be graded, and his strong child-centred emphasis would suggest not. Thus, Walker is providing a blending of teacher-centred formal assessment and child-centred individual assessment, but with a strong emphasis on all assessment being focused on the child’s enterprises. In this, we see indirectly that Walker has felt compelled to clarify an assessment implementation problem he has experienced. Teachers have been using testing in superficial ways to test discrete information and skills, rather than using it to support the child’s effective engagement with their problem-solving activities.

These four sources of understanding about assessment implementation all indicate a struggle among educators to appropriately blend child-centred and teacher-centred assessment. While one article simply sets up the polemic for educators to consider, the

other three all argue forcefully for the careful implementation of testing, emphasizing that it must always be in support of the individualized pupil-progress at the heart of child-centred assessment. These articles advise teacher colleagues to carefully incorporate testing within the spirit of child-centred assessment, indirectly suggesting that this kind of implementation is not always happening.

There is also evidence that school district leaders implemented policy to help teachers blend child-centred and traditional assessment. The files of George Bayly, the Supervisor of Elementary Schools for the Edmonton Public School Board in the late 1940s, provide examples of this policy. As official policy, they indicate quite directly the implementation practice of teachers within that jurisdiction. The jurisdictional blending of teacher-centred and child-centred assessment in these documents is not characterized by justifications of the blend, unlike in the articles by teachers.

The first document is a newsletter to the teachers of Edmonton Public Schools (Bayly, 1948, October). It devotes one section to urging teachers to give a proper “share of attention” to “the activity side of our program” now that the new curriculum is in place. This share of attention is only mandated for the “main areas of social living (social studies, science and health).” The significance of this for assessment implementation seems to lie in limiting the enterprise mandate, a limitation that is a liberal interpretation of the 1947 curricular encouragement to make integrated enterprises the main focus of learning. Thus, the way is being opened to more formal teaching in the subject areas, and with it one would assume the encroachment of traditional teacher-centred testing assessment. Presumably the pronounced emphasis in the 1943 and 1947 curricular documents on using formalized traditional instruction to avoid sloppiness in knowledge

and skill acquisition prompted this allowance of a shift to more formalized subject-based learning. An injunction in this section “strongly urges” teachers to keep thorough records for all enterprise work, which in addition to properly assessing the attitude and behavioral objectives at the heart of these social undertakings, would also suggest the emphasis on making sure that enterprises provide for adequate knowledge and skill acquisition. As if to highlight a shifting emphasis, this section on Enterprise learning is immediately followed by a section entitled “Testing in the Skills.” Here, plans for the development of an extensive testing service are outlined, which will “supplement the informal tests and examinations ordinarily used.” The implication that teachers are already widely using tests is clear. Bayly is also making sure that standardized testing assumes a more prominent role. An extensive list is given of standardized tests that the district already possesses, along with timelines for when to give these tests during the year, and a reminder to teachers to give these tests if they have not already done so. These references to testing assessment make no mention of grading, but neither do they prohibit grading as was done after the 1940 curriculum prohibition on grading. This document suggests that the Edmonton jurisdiction was committed to embracing and enhancing the formal instruction and assessment called for by the curriculum at this time, while still blending in child-centred assessment, although it does not explain the nature of that child-centred enterprise assessment. Neither does it provide any theoretical discussion of how the testing it calls for is to be blended into child-centred learning.

A second jurisdictional circular from Bayly’s files (Bayly?, ca. 1948), instructions for organizing and planning enterprises, provides the jurisdictional view of child-centred assessment in Enterprise work. It blends both child-centred and teacher-centred

components of assessment, but with a strong child-centred emphasis within this blending, surprisingly strong given the emphasis in the above newsletter on teacher-centred testing components. The Enterprise assessment is described as an ongoing collaborative undertaking, with peers and teacher interacting, guiding each other as enterprise choices are made and as each forms personal meaning in the ongoing problem-solving. It also indicates that as students get older their Enterprise work can become more self-directed. The strong emphasis on personal progress in a collaborative context is further enhanced by the culminating evaluation, which is described as observations of how well students have accomplished their goals, and of “what things will need to be done better another time.” Of note here, is that an extensive pupil self-evaluation is appended to the document. Thus, end-point evaluations, rather than a ranking of accomplishment, are growth-oriented with student’s self-generated standards being prominent. However, the emphasis on testing is also brought into these final evaluations, with gains in knowledge being “determined by the use of comprehensive tests.” Also, the student self-evaluation has a section where it asks students how well prepared they are for their final factual tests. These references to testing assessment, as with the above document, do not mention grading. And there is no consideration of how the tests fit within a strongly progress-oriented theory of assessment. A final aspect of implementation expectations is that the document ends by encouraging teachers to get a better understanding of the Enterprise method by reading Dickie’s powerfully progress-oriented *The Enterprise in Theory and Practice* (1941). These jurisdictional expectations for assessment in Enterprise work reflect a blend that leans more to the side of child-centred thinking, but does not consider

the theoretical fit of the two pedagogies. It provides a more complete perspective on jurisdictional expectations for child-centred assessment than the earlier newsletter.

The grading question is cleared up in another divisional circular from Edmonton (Bayly, 1947) which details the new divisional report cards issued in 1947 by this jurisdiction for grades I through VI. There are two sections explaining the reporting, one on “Growth in Citizenship” and another on “Progress in School Subjects” which together demonstrate a blending of progressive and traditional assessment. The first section explains how to rate a range of behavioral traits by numbers using a four-point numerical scale, with the numbers signifying more complicated descriptors, which are provided and explained in an appendix. Initially, it indicates that this number scale is to distinguish it from subject area gradings, but in the appendix it states that the behavioral ratings are “a common basis throughout the system upon which they [teachers] can make their gradings.” The second section on subjects explains the use of a “grading code” of letter or percentage rankings for all subject areas. The letters are correlated with percentage ranges, for example: “D = under 40.” The circular indicates that these new report cards “reflect the philosophy of education under which we are operating,” presumably referring to an openness to grading in the 1947 curriculum. There is no discussion of philosophical considerations in this blend, or any attempt to explain the fact that it reverses six years of non-graded report cards.<sup>25</sup>

These documents indicate that this major Alberta district enhanced formal instruction in subject areas with a commensurate emphasis on increased testing, but that it also promoted Enterprise programming and progress-oriented assessment. The documents also show the re-emergence of graded reporting that is blended with

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<sup>25</sup> We saw earlier the first non-graded report card in Edmonton in 1941-1942.

descriptor-based reporting. None of these district sources provide justifications to support their blend.

In contrast to this lack of justification for blending, sources providing more direct evidence of teachers' assessment practices strongly justify their blending. One provides a blending of assessment which theoretically argues for the spirit of progress-oriented thinking, and the other theoretically rejects observational assessments of behavioral traits which are at the heart of assessing the whole child's progress.

A guide for planning enterprises in the primary grades I-III and in the upper elementary grades IV-VI (Edmonton Teachers' Convention, 1948), written by unnamed Edmonton teachers for their city's teacher convention, reflects a similar blending to that seen in the Edmonton jurisdictional circular. However, theoretical considerations of how this blend should work punctuate the document. The full range of child-centred assessment is shown here, with ongoing collaborative guidance to help individual self-assessment being prominent. Teachers and peer committees help the individual student construct standards. Extended development of these areas provides the child-centred theory behind them, and how this should be reflected in teachers' practice. With final evaluations, emphasis is placed on teacher observations as the major basis for this summing up, but testing of "certain types of information" is also allowed, although teachers should work "with types of tests which will measure children's ability to use, rather than merely to state, knowledge." This stress on usable knowledge brings forward the child-centred emphasis on working with knowledge that emerges from purposeful problem-solving in activities. This knowledge will be retained by students, thereby contributing to their learning growth. Summative self-evaluation is also heavily

emphasized, with a listing of four major approaches to this self-evaluation, such as reflecting on portfolios of individual work. This major emphasis on self-evaluation highlights the individual growth that defines child-centred theory. These authors, therefore, theoretically build their assessment blend around the growth of the child, with testing sparingly and carefully worked into this growth orientation.

Another source, however, denies the value of observational growth-oriented assessment. A letter written by an Edmonton principal in response to the new report cards proposed by Bayly in 1947, it also includes the perceptions of teachers in his school (Powell, ca. 1947). We have seen that the Edmonton report cards combined two major sections, one on observational ratings of behavioral traits, and one on subject-specific grading. Powell devotes his whole letter to contesting the first section on observing and recording ratings for the behavioral traits, which suggests that he did not see problems with the subject-specific gradings based on formal instruction. His first contention indicates that it is psychologically harmful to make these observations evident to the child. This psychological argument has a number of layers, examples of which are that sharing these behavioral ratings could cause children to become proud, or conversely could create self-consciousness and antagonism toward the teacher critiquing their essential personality. Powell's second argument indicates that teachers will feel psychologically separated from students by constantly judging them with these ratings of myriad behavioral traits, when they should be working with them. Furthermore, he practically characterizes it as an unrealistic requirement because there is not enough time for classroom teachers to deal with all of these traits in an ongoing way and properly attend to "doing their job." He calls for the Edmonton jurisdiction to reverse its decision

and relieve teachers of this burden since it does not “rally the support of the teachers.” The arguments that Powell provides on behalf of his teachers theoretically and practically challenge the idea of ongoing progress-oriented assessment and tacitly accept subject-specific grading, thereby suggesting traditional teacher-centred assessment preferences.

These sources of direct teacher implementation further demonstrate, like the sources from the mid 1940s, a struggle to theoretically justify their blend. One is inspired by child-centred assessment, and the other theorizes about how this assessment inhibits his teachers. While the jurisdictional sources in simply setting forth their blended policy show a reticence to engage in this dialogue, individual teachers show the need to justify personal actions.

**Summary.** Curricula in 1943 and 1947 encouraged teacher implementation of a blended pedagogy, probably because of a pragmatic need to ease the difficulties with Enterprise pedagogy experienced by teachers beginning in the late 1930s. Sources from the 1943 to 1950 period demonstrate the variable influences of inspiration and inhibition as educators tried to justify their blended implementation. The sources of this period suggest that, although the inspiration of child-centred pedagogy remained in evidence, many teachers took the opportunity afforded by curricular expectations to move toward increased teacher-centred assessment.

### **Conclusion: Assessment as Inspiration and Inhibition**

Most historians who have examined the extent and nature of teachers’ implementation of progressive education have argued that implementation was undermined by the persistence of traditional assessment practices and the difficulty of implementing child-centred assessment. My findings mainly confirm this judgment, but

add to the historical discourse by suggesting that this traditional assessment was variably used during the four Enterprise curricula, with child-centred assessment as an enduring presence. The findings suggest that forces of inspiration and inhibition determined educator implementation of assessment during this time. Suggestions of widespread inspiration for child-centred assessment began this experiment with Enterprise learning, and continued to some extent through to 1947. Throughout these years, numerous sources are notable for their carefully intentional, strongly worded arguments to justify child-centred assessment. This is paralleled by suggestions beginning in the late 1930s of an increasing movement toward teacher-centred assessment, because of various practical and theoretical inhibitions with child-centred assessment. Even with mandatory child-centred assessment in the 1940 curriculum, suggestions are that some educators resisted and complied only gradually. Supported by the 1943 and 1947 curricular mandate to incorporate more traditional assessment alongside child-centred assessment, educators increasingly used teacher-centered pedagogy to the extent that the Department noted its province-wide increase in 1947. However, even with this increase, a number of educators still showed an inspired commitment to the principles of child-centred assessment, sparingly working testing into their assessment visions. This endurance of thoughtful child-centred assessment even when governmental expectations gave educators reason to compromise their commitment to this assessment speaks of an inspirational component. These were educators for whom child-centred assessment possessed an essential attraction. And yet, at this point it is important to remember that the limited sources I have uncovered are perhaps not wholly reflective of the general educator population in Alberta at this time. Most of my sources are published writings,

and as such are reflective of more highly educated and thoughtful educators who would submit their work for a provincial publication and who would be accepted for such publication. Nevertheless, child-centred assessment can be seen as an ongoing force in Alberta assessment implementation to the end of this period. Despite the inhibitions that seemingly led the Department to compromise its commitment to child-centred pedagogy, educators inspired by the qualities of child-centred learning and assessment still emerge powerfully in these sources.

## **Chapter Six: Engaging and Sustaining Curricular Change**

The endurance of child-centred assessment from 1936 to 1950, despite not initially being mandated and despite growing inhibitions to fully implementing it in the 1940s, suggests the persistent value of child-centred pedagogy for thoughtful educators. Educational historians have generally revealed the hybridized nature of the Enterprise curricula, combining traditional teacher-centred and child-centred pedagogies, with traditional assessment persisting beside often inadequate child-centred assessment. While my findings are largely similar, they highlight that a coherent child-centred assessment vision remained in evidence throughout this period, presented by educators as foundational to a child-centred pedagogy deeply worthy of defending.

The endurance of child-centred assessment throughout this period makes it important to briefly question the prominent study on the role of assessment in learning culture by Shepard (2000). Shepard's study argues that throughout the twentieth century in the United States there was a dominance of traditional objective testing which emerged from a paradigm combining "social efficiency curricula, behaviorist learning theories, and scientific measurement [in education]" (p. 4). She dismisses any significant development of child-centred assessment by quoting Cremin (1961) who indicated that this progressive instruction didn't spread widely because teachers were not highly skilled enough to facilitate such demanding learning situations (p. 12). She argues that it was only in the 1980s and 1990s that the dominance of traditional testing assessment began to be called into question by emerging child-centred assessment (pp. 4-5). While my findings corroborate in part the overarching role that Shepard gives to traditional testing assessment in the twentieth century, the continued emphasis I show on child-centred

assessment from the mid 1930s to 1950 calls into question the extent of Shepard's conclusions. If, despite the opportunity to embrace a traditional testing culture, many Alberta educators during the Enterprise curricula seem to have kept alive the inspiration of child-centred assessment alongside traditional testing, perhaps this was also the situation in the United States at the same time. The United States was experiencing the same fascination with child-centred pedagogy as Canada in the 1920s and 1930s (Kliebard, 1995, pp. 132 ff.), and it certainly is conceivable that the inspiration of child-centred assessment also was strong in the United States during this time.

The appeal of child-centred learning rooted in growth-oriented assessment has made it a source of ongoing educational inspiration. In Alberta, this model of learning inspired educators during the Enterprise curricula, and again during the child-centred reform of the 1970s (Worth, 1972), and now is doing the same with the "Inspiring Education" curriculum reform (Alberta Education, 2013). This ongoing inspiration with child-centred learning is a powerful impetus to provide recommendations informing current reform, based on the implications of my findings. Recommendations have emerged that can inform teachers and policy-makers with ideas for what they might emphasize, what they might emphasize more, and what they might continue emphasizing. Historical understandings of the Enterprise period are not directly transferable to current learner-centred reform, nor can they provide specific lessons for how to proceed. However, similarities between this past and our present can lead to generally informing the direction of current policy and practice, or raising questions as to its direction.

### **Empowering Educators: Engaging and Sustaining Change**

Inquiring into assessment expectations and implementation within Enterprise curricula has revealed many understandings about how educators engage with and sustain child-centred pedagogical reform. Implications arising from these understandings are immediately suggestive of the current learner-centred reform in Alberta, leading to recommendations for this curricular reform.

Initial educator enthusiasm seemed to be surprisingly high after introducing the 1936 curriculum, given how different the new child-centred program was from traditional teacher-centred pedagogy, and given that implementing these Enterprises remained optional until 1940. Statistics provided by the Department of Education regarding teacher implementation of child-centred thinking indicated that already in 1936 80 percent were using Enterprise learning, by 1937 85 percent, and by 1938 “almost universal” use (Alberta Department of Education, 1937, p. 53; 1938, p. 63; 1939, p. 61). So, just two years after this significant change in pedagogical direction, the Department claimed that its implementation within a province of largely rural educators, isolated and unsupported, was “almost universal.”

And yet, by 1941 the Department had significantly changed their perspective. Teachers were portrayed as strongly traditional in their orientation (Alberta Department of Education, 1942, p. 14), by 1942 results were “far short” of expectations (Alberta Department of Education, 1943a, p. 29), and by 1943 it was claimed that less than 40 percent were using Enterprise learning (Alberta Department of Education, 1944, p. 26). This indicates a dramatic reduction in the commitment to a program that had been long

established and which had recently, in 1940, been provided with more carefully delineated program expectations which were now mandated.<sup>26</sup>

I am immediately impressed by two implications arising from these government reports: that an inspired engagement with pedagogy does not necessarily follow from careful delineation of programming or from mandate, and that sustaining inspiration is a difficult matter. Various recommendations follow from these implications.

**Implication: Inspiring educator engagement.** First, considering sources of educator inspiration, the writings of Enterprise educators supportive of child-centred learning had a zealous tone. They sounded inspired by the naturalistic qualities of child-centred pedagogy that curriculum writers referred to in their curricular introductions in 1936 and 1940 (Alberta Department of Education, 1936; 1940). This natural learning which avoids “subject matter mastery [that] constructs an artificial environment for the child” (Alberta Department of Education, 1940, p. 3) is what Labaree (2005) develops as the core quality of child-centred pedagogical progressives. For Labaree this naturalism was “essential romanticism” that allowed the child to develop as nature intended without imposing predetermined studies, and acknowledged each child’s unique, indeed “holy,” nature (p. 280). The child was not an unschooled version of an adult, and learning had to adapt to the “natural developmental capacities of the learner” (p. 281). The natural form

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<sup>26</sup> The validity of the above statistics must be considered, based as they are on governmental self-reporting which is in turn based on the self-reporting of government inspectors and jurisdictional leaders (the Departmental *Annual Reports* frequently refer to their results being derived from school inspector and superintendent reports; for example, see Alberta Department of Education, 1943, pp. 29, 30). My findings are supportive of the governmental reports of initial educator enthusiasm following the 1936 curriculum and significant waning of enthusiasm by 1940. Furthermore, the government reports themselves are transparent in acknowledging province-wide inadequacy in implementing the 1940 curriculum, and this honesty about uncomfortable situations is also suggestive of some validity in their reports. Therefore, while this government reporting is based on self-reported impressions of teacher implementation, it likely holds sufficient validity to derive general implications for educational change.

that this learning took was of drawing from various areas whatever learning was needed to solve relevant social problems. Therefore, the natural form of learning in school was a “holistic form, where multiple domains of skill and knowledge are integrated into thematic ... projects instead of being taught as separate subjects” (p. 281). Many Enterprise educators demonstrated these fundamental beliefs in writings we have seen, and argued forcefully for how these beliefs resulted in certain approaches to learning. They demonstrated a belief that each individual child needed to be engaged in learning meaningful for them, and be allowed to collaborate with other individuals in building their own personal capacities for ongoing learning in life, learning skills and standards that would empower them in whatever social situation they encountered. They stressed the social reconstructionist emphasis on students having experiences that would help them to grow in their personal capacity to be an effective citizen in their society (von Heyking, 2006). These beliefs were clearly founded on ideals of equality, individual worth, and individual contribution to society. Each of us has this desire to believe that the individual is important in the massive, often impersonal structures of society, and in my experience educators tend to feel this keenly as they work with the growth of individuals. It seems that it is this type of inspiration that propelled Enterprise educators forward in the initial years of implementing their curriculum, and attending to this need for inspiration is important for current curricular reform. If educators can look at their curriculum and say that it takes inspiration from a romantic vision of naturalistic learning, providing engaging and relevant problem-based learning suitable for each important individual entrusted to their care, they will be inspired to engage with this learning.

**Implication: Sustaining educator commitment.** Turning to the second implication, educators may have an inspiring child-centred curriculum to follow, one that energizes them with a feeling of individualized mentoring through guidance assessment of personally relevant learning, but if they find it too difficult to sustain this highly demanding calling, they will opt for learning that is more easily managed. Teachers will reject the ideals of progressive change if they conflict too strongly with existing school structures, as Dewey indicated (Kliebard, 1992, p. 103). Kliebard confirms this problem, stressing the “risk-taking” and courage needed to allow greater self-determination in student learning, with teachers facing a destabilization of the precarious order in the classroom collective (p. 104). It would seem that these were the problems facing Enterprise educators by the late 1930s. We saw the Department of Education at that time emphasizing in their *Annual Report* summaries the growing conservatism of teachers and their resistance to child-centred methods. Also, the Department’s movement in the 1943 and 1947 curricula toward re-establishing the importance of teacher-centred learning was shown in Chapter Four as a response, in part, to the difficulty of sustaining child-centred pedagogy. These difficulties with sustaining implementation after an initial inspirational engagement are of critical importance for current educational reform. What can be done to support teachers in sustaining child/learner-centred pedagogical theories that are difficult to implement within existing school structures?

***Assessment practices and instruments needed.*** There are compelling implications and recommendations emerging from my study about how to sustain the complexities of a child-centred program. First, we have seen the need for teacher assessment practices and actual instruments to support the complicated ongoing assessment for growth woven

throughout this learning, assessment which supported the individualized progress of this pedagogy. Alberta Department of Education maintained that teachers were “at a loss” with how to assess the attitudes and behaviors that were considered central to the citizenship ideals of child-centred learning (Alberta Department of Education, 1937, p. 15). Furthermore, assessment during Enterprises was seen as insufficient to promote ongoing growth of knowledge and skills. It was this issue of enterprises being too loosely supervised to promote the necessary development of knowledge and skill that was stressed by the Department (Alberta Department of Education, 1946) and by teachers (Bercuson, 1941). We have seen that this led to the resurgence of teacher-centred instruction and assessment in the 1943 to 1949 curricula.

Child-centred theorists from this time saw the centrality of this issue for their pedagogy, providing specific assessment instruments or techniques to support the central role of assessment in the growth of the whole child. Stevens (1931) provided many actual exemplars of the assessment instruments that were so clearly needed. Melvin (1936) also stressed particular methods of assessment practice. Dickie (1941) was adamantly focused on the pragmatic needs of classroom teachers, and her handbook is rife with classroom scenarios and explicit suggestions for assessment techniques. This was assessment that was not easily measured, and they particularly questioned whether the attitudes and behaviors could be evaluated in this way (Rugg and Shumaker, 1928; Stevens, 1931; Dickie, 1941). Even the knowledge and skill outcomes were not best assessed by traditional testing, although some acknowledged that testing was an adequate assessment for the time being. Burr (1935) acknowledged traditional testing as sufficient for now, but not adequate in the long term in addressing the kinds of knowledge and skill promoted by

child-centred learning. Melvin (1936) would not even consider the use of testing, only allowing for teacher-made checklists to assess knowledge and skill that was directly pertinent to students in their projects, completed in consultation with students. Even Dickie (1941) indicates that testing must be based on the direct experience of the child with their activity learning and, therefore, only teacher-made tests are occasionally referred to in her handbook. And, she does not highlight this testing, focusing almost exclusively on teacher observational assessment to support student progress. These theorists were struggling to combine their focus on growth of the individual child in particular enterprises with the broader need to consider their overall developmental progress. And, a part of this focus on the child's growth was the responsibility to somehow report this individual progress. Melvin (1936) provided a detailed curriculum of the essential outcomes in attitudes, knowledge, and skills to help educators focus on what was necessary in their incremental assessment and reporting. Enterprise curricula after four years did work out a way to meaningfully address reporting with the 1940 curriculum's descriptor-based reporting in specific subject outcomes. All of these components of assessment practice needed to be addressed and resolved for child-centred pedagogy to be effective. It was not an easy issue for child-centred theorists of the past to resolve, and it remains a central issue today.

If child-centred learning is to be meaningfully embraced in current reforms, assessment practices and instruments will be needed that allow educators to effectively work with individualized progress of the whole child, and with realistically reporting this individualized progress. Teachers will need help in moving beyond traditional testing of disembodied data and grading of teacher-directed assignments, and toward the individual

assessment of growth in important attitude, behavior, knowledge and skill outcomes related to experiential, problematized learning. How could letter or numerical grades that do not specifically address needed areas of growth help in this? How could tests of standardized, discrete data help with learning that is seated in problematized experiences? How can the individual develop their own internal standards to guide learning if external standards in testing are the only focus of assessment? Educators need to be liberated from traditional assessment if a movement toward personally relevant assessment is to properly occur, and they will need the instruments to do this. However, this is assessment that is not easily reported, and the means to meaningfully do this must also be addressed in current reform, just as was done by the 1940 curriculum. A report card that condenses key areas of learning into outcomes and provides the descriptor-based means for addressing these outcomes will further empower educators. Teachers' belief in the effectiveness of child-centred learning will be sustained when the individual is being honored, when assessment is something done for students, rather than done to students.

*Structures for differentiated projects aid productivity.* Teachers will also be helped to sustain their inspiration if they are encouraged to experience another foundational child-centred belief that grows out of guidance assessment: students involved in a properly guided process of individual learning will be productive. Kliebard (1992) referred to concern with how the destabilizing effects of individualized learning in a classroom inhibited reform. However, using appropriate organizational structures, the classroom can be a place that effectively combines various personal foci into the whole of the project focus, resulting in general engagement. Dickie (1941) helped educators to this organizational place by providing the structures that would effectively govern the various

foci within a broad child-centred project, thereby keeping the engagement of students. As the Edmonton Public School Board recommended so many years ago (Bayly?, ca.1948), educators need to read Dickie's book. This book needs to be republished, something that a Department of Education could do. Current practitioners of project-based learning would find in Dickie's book an author who has focused on observing the enterprises of many teachers, and who precisely explains the stages of planning and carrying out a classroom enterprise, with constant illustrative examples. In general, her scenarios provide a powerful sense of ongoing industriousness in the children at each stage of a precisely delineated process, and show a teacher who is not concerned about noise and activity but is rather in the midst of the constant interaction and activity, helping where needed, and providing the ongoing assessment to aid student progress. The scenarios reveal that, within a classroom governed by a major project, individual students can be involved in the overall focus in their chosen ways, ensuring their interest and concentration. There is a powerful sense of students collaborating in work and peer assessment, and of a working relationship with the teacher, as they work through their individual components of the larger project focus. Dickie's book, dealing as it does with fundamental interactions and organizational structures in classrooms generally similar to those of today, makes me confident in suggesting transference of her historical literature into the present context. Current project-based learning resources typically provide similar organizational structures to Dickie's,<sup>27</sup> and yet her work would be a valuable

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<sup>27</sup> For example, Patton (2012, February) provides many of the same organizational strategies as Dickie: personalizing project foci within the larger class project focus, trusting and empowering students with significant responsibility in ongoing work, collaboratively agreeing on protocols for working together in projects, having a realistic approach to struggling with problem-solving that honors difficulties and learning from failure, ongoing self/peer/teacher assessment, and a culminating exhibition of project results.

addition even with her dated tone. Nowhere have I seen her narrative capturing of the momentary processes of a classroom project. Teachers need this practical sense of how differentiated project work can be effectively planned, helping to ensure that unfocused, unproductive behavior does not become an issue in the classroom. This will help to sustain educators' commitment to the project-based learning at the core of child-centred learning.

*Exploratory learning needs resources.* Another value that attends the guidance model of child-centred learning is that exploratory learning must be taken seriously. Helping current curriculum planners and educators empower this exploration will also help to sustain educators' commitment to this pedagogy. Strong child-centred learning can only be realized if students are actually able to access the resources they need to explore their individual project problems. One of the primary concerns of departmental officials in the Enterprise period was the lack of resources needed for broadly exploratory learning (Alberta Department of Education, 1943a; 1946). What was then a concern with the necessary books for this exploration has today opened into a much bigger issue. The issue in the 21<sup>st</sup> century is no longer limited to book resources. Given the vast internet resources of our digital age, it has become an issue of teachers allowing students to fully access possible internet resources to help them deal with their problem-solving in a suitably comprehensive manner. Prensky (2012) addresses this issue directly in calling for a commitment to learner-centred pedagogy as the learning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, a pedagogy that he maintains has now been made universally possible because of the ability of students everywhere to access the internet in working to resolve their problems. Prensky asserts that contemporary teachers often restrict student access to the freedom of

exploration afforded by the internet, and that this centers learning in the restricted resources offered by the teacher, rather than opening up the full possibilities of internet exploration to the individual guided by the teacher. Prensky wants all personal computing devices fully allowed in the classroom and wants schools to focus on ensuring that digital computing resources are the priority of schools, rather than buying books. Within the broad internet liberty that he supports, Prensky does caution teachers to guide students in effective internet research to ensure valid and reliable results (pp. 165 ff.).

I am compelled by Prensky's argument, and would urge school jurisdictions to make these digital priorities their own. The challenge of available resources to empower Enterprise learning is no longer a problem if students are empowered to work effectively with internet resources. I have often witnessed the wondering engagement of students exploring the possibilities of the internet for their project work, with enriching finds that add to the scope and depth of their work. Allowing the full scope of internet learning guided by a teacher broadens the possibilities for child-centred exploration immeasurably and the student engagement this allows for will help sustain educators' commitment to this pedagogy.

*Curricular latitude encourages implementation.* These various recommendations for implementing child-centred pedagogy will be made significantly more effective if teachers are given curricular latitude in implementing this learning model. My findings have shown that recommendations to encourage latitude in curriculum reform implementation are needed in two areas: first, provincial timelines for accomplishing curriculum implementation goals need to be flexible; second, the curriculum itself must have flexible outcomes.

First, the need for latitude in timelines emerges when, within two years of introducing the optional and flexible 1936 Enterprise program, the Department of Education claimed very strong implementation of Enterprise learning, “almost universal” according to government reports (Alberta Department of Education, 1939, p. 61).<sup>28</sup> Earlier I connected the enthusiasm that educators felt during this time to the naturalistic connection they felt to child-centred learning, and it also appears that the Department’s decision to encourage rather than prescribe Enterprise learning had an impact on this enthusiasm. Following this 1936 curriculum, with its non-mandated Enterprise learning and its flexible hybrid of traditional and progressive pedagogies, we have seen that many educators were seemingly captivated by experimentation with child-centred learning. While a direct correlation between educator enthusiasm and flexibility in curriculum cannot be made based on these findings, certainly the coincidence of these two dynamics is strongly suggestive. Individuals are more readily engaged when allowed to choose their actions, and when they do not fear proscription due to improper or inadequate action. It seems that this dynamic was at work immediately following introduction of the 1936 curriculum. The 1936 curriculum used encouraging, non-prescriptive language in its introduction, explaining the naturalistic benefits of this learning (Alberta Department of Education, 1936, pp. 3-4), and suggesting that educators “should attempt” enterprises (p. 5). The educator commitment to working with this optional new pedagogy in the first three years seems to have been remarkable given how different it was from their traditional teaching. Current learner-centred reformers should consider providing a similarly flexible dispensation as they introduce curricular reform. A new curriculum that

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<sup>28</sup> I acknowledged earlier that these self-reported claims may not be entirely accurate, and yet likely are generally valid.

demands immediate implementation of full child-centred learning in all instruction is likely to result in muted, cautious compliance with prescribed goals, and potentially educator resistance. I have seen this direct resistance already in my community, and heard of it in other areas of the province, as secondary educators reacted with disbelief and active opposition to *Inspiring Education* directives to integrate subject-areas in project learning (Alberta Education, 2013). When this resistance to change is compounded with the complexities of learner-centred pedagogy, the need for latitude in early curriculum expectations for working with this learning becomes strongly apparent. Such latitude within a learner-centred curriculum will encourage educators to voluntarily experiment with the child-centred program, and in a non-threatening curricular context gradually build their feeling of capacity for using it effectively.

An additional benefit of this flexible implementation is that it provides an opportunity in the province to have teachers contribute to the building of learner-centred capacity. The province, as a part of this general encouragement to experiment, could ask teachers to contribute their learner-centred efforts to the province-wide implementation effort. In the Enterprise period we have seen this accomplished through the forum of *The A.T.A. Magazine*. Today more powerful opportunities are available. Online forums and dissemination strategies could be instituted that would broaden the province into a large learning community, a fitting testament to the fundamental belief in collaborative communities of inquiry which we have seen in child-centred theory. Teachers would help each other by providing practical strategies, instructional and assessment tools, and actual exemplars of projects used, but also by working together to refine material brought forward. Teachers would be engaged in solving their own and others problems in an

effort to create workable pedagogies for their contexts. A better way to gain and sustain engagement from teachers would be hard to find. We have seen historical examples of the unsolicited capacity of teachers to invent and share the means to implement this learning. Excellent examples are King's (1939, December) idea of self-tests, the Edmonton teachers' (Edmonton Teachers' Convention, 1948) elaboration of four self-evaluation strategies and their use of testing focused on students ability to use information rather than recall it. Current educators, by engaging in this collaborative building of learner-centred capacity in the province, would strengthen and sustain the current learner-centred reform.

The second area of curricular latitude needed is having a reduced number of curricular outcomes, which will allow educators to properly engage with individualized exploratory learning. We have seen that child-centred project-based learning is founded on students having some choice in project directions in order to provide them with an opportunity to work with their developmental learning capacities and allowing them to engage with areas of problem-solving need within the overall project that are relevant for them. This is a learning situation, then, that calls on teacher and student to be engaged in an ongoing flexible discourse of guided choices throughout the project, with the goal being learner growth in various curricular areas related to the student's choices. This will not happen if teachers are circumscribed by large numbers of detailed curricular outcomes that are mandated for a grade level. We have seen Dewey calling on curriculum planners to provide broad curricular foci for the years of schooling, incrementally developed to enhance students' growing learning capacities over the course of their schooling (Kliebard, 1995, pp. 60-61). These curricular outcomes were to be based on

analyzing the broad activities of people within that culture, activities which formed the essential qualities of a society, and then highlighting the various problems that arose in these activity areas. These would become the general foci on which teachers and students would base problematized learning situations suitable for students' developmental capacities and interests (pp. 60-61). They were not to be the detailed curricular outcomes of social efficiency theorists, where a particularized analysis of knowledge and skill formed the basis for a proliferation of specific learning outcomes that had to be mastered in detail before the student moved on. The child-centred curriculum was to include broad societal foci which were used to guide project choices. This is what the 1940 curriculum did in providing a grid for enterprise choices in the two elementary divisions, with choices provided under the rubric of nine "themes of social living" (Alberta Department of Education, 1940, pp. 44-45). Furthermore, this curriculum assured teachers that the grid of enterprise themes and the additional subject outlines were there to provide possibilities for teachers and student to make project choices, not to restrict them (pp. 23-25).

This is the spirit and the structure that current learner-centred curricular reform will need to embrace if it is to inspire educators to appropriately implement project-based learning. Without a limited number of broad curricular outcomes and the flexibility to variably work with implementing them, teachers will tend to prescribe projects that cover various specified curricular outcomes to ensure that curriculum expectations are met. Such teacher prescription will minimize the guided individual choices of relevant learning foci, resulting in project-based learning losing vitality. This vitality emerges from focusing attention on the individual growth of learners, their choices and personal

engagement, and it will help educators to sustain their inspiration in child-centred project learning.

*Teacher roles need redefinition.* While suitable curricular flexibility will facilitate project learning of this exploratory type, curriculum constructs alone will not be enough to enable this exploratory learning. Teachers will need to redefine their roles in order to properly embrace the flexible nature of exploratory learning, setting aside concerns about traditional coverage and control. And, current curriculum reformers will need to help in this by empowering teachers to redefine their traditional classroom role. Control is needed in the significant background organization needed to begin a project, and throughout as students pursue directions that the teacher must be prepared to guide. However, combined with this intense background organization is the ability of the teacher to open themselves to the dynamic uncertainty of these learning situations. Teachers who are too controlling of students will compromise this learning. These dynamic situations involve project choices at the outset, ongoing choices of direction during the project, and continual guidance of the problem-solving underway. Rather than telling students, the teacher is continually guiding them in their personal resolution of problems, building learning capacities and individual standards to guide learning that will be embedded in the individual's thinking. Aoki (2005), a Canadian curriculum theorist, helps teachers to redefine their traditional roles in order to work with this dynamic tension in learning situations. He describes working productively in the tensionality between planned curricular frameworks and curriculum as lived experience in the classroom, seeing the teacher's responsibility as working to create opportunities for students that acknowledge the planned curriculum while having latitude within the plans

so that a lived curriculum can unfold which honors the individual student (pp. 204-207).

Aoki works to liberate the teacher to work productively within this tension, not to remove the tension by providing controlled, carefully delineated information transfer (p. 204).

Teachers can be empowered to work with the somewhat amorphous nature of child-centred project-based learning if curriculum reformers emphasize teacher capacities for working within the tension of these learner situations. It is not a traditional teacher role, and teachers will need to be encouraged to operate between the lived experience of students and the curriculum plan, a plan hopefully open to student self-determination through using limited numbers of broadly applicable learning outcomes. Aoki calls this living rightly in the “multiplicity of betweenness ... resisting enframing” (Aoki, 2005, p. 207). Teachers being encouraged to redefine their role identity in this way will help sustain them in the ongoing complexity of working with individualized project-based learning.

### **Conclusion: Moving Forward**

Child/learner-centred pedagogy is difficult to implement. Enterprise programming from 1936 to 1950 demonstrates this conclusion. This type of program, grounded in individualized problem-based project learning guided by the teacher, will require much wisdom to implement successfully. If current educators are empowered to engage with and sustain this challenging pedagogy in the ways I have just explained, policy makers for Alberta’s learner-centred curriculum reform will likely avoid the compromises of increased teacher-centred learning that became evident in later Enterprise curricula.

Alberta Education (2013) has already done much in the beginning stages of its “Inspiring Education” learner-centred reform that conforms to the recommendations I

have provided. In their curriculum development guide considerable space is devoted to a vision for learning that will inspire educators and students, filled with strong belief and value statements about the foundational worth of this learner-centred pedagogy. The guide shows a commitment to finding a limited number of essential curricular outcomes, a maximum of 10 in each subject area, derived from 10 cross-curricular competencies, thereby allowing the flexibility for exploratory subject-integrated learning. It also calls for provincial educators to support implementation through a prototyping program for the new curriculum, and this will hopefully be followed by involving educators in a capacity-building program to provide curriculum implementation materials. In this new program educators are instructed to be aware of the changing role of assessment, and that there will be changing assessment needs in a learner-centred program. Again, hopefully this will be followed by a call to educators to provide assessment methods and instruments that will build teacher capacity in engaging with much more complicated assessment needs. This curriculum development guide also establishes a central role for digital literacies in building capacity for engaging with exploratory problem-solving. In addition, it honors the individual student by having three core vision statements that are expressed in “I can” learner statements stressing active learner engagement (pp. 4-5). It further honors students by stressing flexibility in student choices of project foci, relevancy in their learning opportunities, and the need for developmentally appropriate learning for each student. Alberta Education is clearly moving in the right direction in its implementation of this reform.

If Alberta Education continues in this direction it will probably avoid the compromises that would dilute learner-centred implementation. The Enterprise period

informs us that a transmissional model which is easily planned, easily delivered, easily monitored, and easily marked will always lure policy makers and educators with its neatly prescriptive boundaries. Alberta's current curriculum reform provides a strong framework with which to empower teachers in weaning themselves from the beguiling control of teacher-centred pedagogy and sustaining their commitment to a significantly more demanding learner-centred pedagogy. I am under no illusions about the ease with which this can happen, but believe that the difficulties of this process are more than warranted by the benefits of learner-centred programming. I have been inspired in my teaching career by the naturalistic appeal of learner-centred pedagogy, and as such have embraced this historical inquiry into Enterprise learning, seeing there a committed attempt to realize this powerful pedagogy in Alberta's past. It is my hope that learner-centred pedagogy will continue to inspire our educational system in Alberta.

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