

DISSERTATION

COLORADO'S PRESCHOOL TO POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION ALIGNMENT ACT:  
A QUALITATIVE APPROACH EXPLORING THE POLICYMAKING PROCESS

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In partial fulfillment of the requirements

For the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Colorado State University

Fort Collins, Colorado

Spring 2019

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## ABSTRACT

### COLORADO'S PRESCHOOL TO POSTSECONDARY ALIGNMENT ACT: A QUALITATIVE APPROACH EXPLORING THE POLICYMAKING PROCESS

Within the last 30 years, state initiated education policy reform sharply rose throughout the United States. Among the myriad of reforms, establishing increased collaboration between traditionally separated P12 and higher education systems assumed a prominent stage. In 2009, Colorado established its own version of alignment through Senate Bill 08-212, the Preschool to Postsecondary Education Alignment Act of 2008, commonly referenced as the Colorado Achievement Plan for Kids (CAP4K). The passage of the bill was swift and demonstrated remarkably high bipartisanship. While policy analysis often analyzes areas of high conflict, there is also a need to understand how policy developed successfully in a collaborative environment. Facilitating this opportunity, the researcher used a qualitative methodology emphasizing three components. First, guided by narrative inquiry, the researcher conducted thematic analysis of interviews from Governor, Bill Ritter, his chief policy advisor, Matt Gianneschi, and an anonymous individual involved with the Colorado Department of Education. Second, using the Advocacy Coalition Framework's (ACF) theory on belief's and advocacy coalitions, the researcher applied the predesignated construct of secondary beliefs to the thematic analysis of education committee hearings. The final component addressed themes identified from the Colorado Department of Education (2009) regarding teachers' concerns on the implementation phase of CAP4K. The findings suggest one dominant advocacy coalition grew within Colorado's education policy subsystem. Additionally, evidence of secondary beliefs did

not weaken coalition alignment. Finally, teachers' voices iterated the importance to be included in the decision-making process of implementation.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I give special thanks to all of the professors I have had over the years. In particular, I thank my advisor, Dr. Donna Cooner, whose continued encouragement prodded me along my, often, clumsy path and moments of despair. In addition, I am sincerely grateful to Dr. Pamela Coke, Dr. Heidi Frederiksen, and Dr. Gene Gloeckner who showed patience and thoughtfulness throughout the doctoral journey as I often stumbled through the writing and research process. With a patient hand but high expectations, they encouraged me to push myself. Finally, to my editor, Megan Huwa, whose honesty and remarkable patience managed to help me through this daunting process.

## DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to the following persons: First and foremost, to my parents who have always been there for me; to my sister, Laura, and nieces, Elizabeth and Jenna; and in memory to my grandparents, Carmel and John O'Connor and Dolores and Everett Koers; and, to my great friend and *de facto* brother in arms—on and off the ice—and the countless laughs, David Yockey.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT.....	ii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	iv
DEDICATION.....	v
LIST OF TABLES.....	x
LIST OF FIGURES.....	xi
CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION.....	1
The Colorado Model.....	3
Why Study Colorado’s Education Policymaking Process and CAP4K?.....	7
Research Problem.....	13
Purpose of the Study.....	14
Research Questions.....	15
Definition of Terms.....	16
Limitations.....	18
Researcher’s Background.....	18
CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE.....	20
Analyzing State Education Policy From a Theoretical Approach.....	21
P20 Literature.....	23
Foundations of the ACF.....	29
The Policy Subsystem.....	29
Methods Used With ACF.....	31
Literature Applying the ACF.....	33
Strengths of the ACF.....	35
ACF’s Criticisms and Making the Interpretive Turn.....	36
Conclusion.....	40
CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY.....	43
Research Approach.....	43
Chapter Organization.....	47
Philosophical Foundation.....	50
Narrative Methodology.....	52
Personal justification.....	54

Social justification .....	55
Theoretical Frameworks .....	56
Liebich et al.'s Four Main Narrative Approaches .....	56
Clandinin and Connelly's (2000) Three-Dimensional Space to Inquiry .....	57
Interaction/sociality .....	59
Continuity/temporality .....	59
Situation/place.....	60
Advocacy Coalition Framework's Theory of Beliefs and Coalitions.....	61
Population and Sampling Procedures .....	61
Interview Questions .....	62
Instrumentation and Data Collection .....	62
Data Analysis .....	64
Inductive and Deductive Approach to Thematic Analysis .....	64
Phases in Braun and Clarke's Thematic Analysis .....	65
Phase 1: Familiarizing yourself with your data.....	65
Phase 2: Generating initial codes .....	65
Phase 3: Searching for themes.....	66
Phase 4: Reviewing themes.....	67
Phase 5: Defining and naming themes .....	68
Phase 6: Producing the report.....	68
Credibility and Trustworthiness.....	71
Conclusion .....	71
CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS .....	73
Restatement of the Problem.....	75
Background and Setting.....	76
Interview Findings .....	78
Research Question 1a.....	78
Bill Ritter .....	78
Matt Gianneschi .....	84
Participant 3.....	88
Summary of Research Question 1a.....	90
Research Question 1b .....	90



Bill Ritter .....	90
Matt Gianneschi. ....	91
Participant 3.....	95
Summary of Research Question 1b.....	96
Research Question 1c.....	96
Bill Ritter .....	96
Matt Gianneschi. ....	97
Participant 3.....	104
Summary of Research Question 1c.....	105
Research Question 1d .....	106
Participant 3.....	110
Summary of Research Question 1d.....	111
Summary of Interview Findings .....	111
Committee Hearings .....	113
Research Question 2 .....	114
Secondary themes from legislators.....	116
Policy secondary themes from non-legislators.....	121
Summary of Committee Hearings .....	127
Research Question 3 .....	129
Theme one: Teacher voices .....	130
Theme two: Relevancy .....	131
Theme three: Alignment of systems.....	131
Theme four: Partnerships .....	132
Summary of Research Question 3.....	133
Conclusion .....	134
CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION.....	138
Review of the Problem.....	139
Review of Methodology .....	141
Major Findings.....	142
Research Question 1a.....	142
Research Question 1b .....	143
Research Question 1c.....	144

Research Question 1d .....	145
Research Question 2 .....	147
Research Question 3 .....	151
Recommendations.....	152
Creation of a Broad Stakeholder P20 Council.....	153
Leadership.....	153
Build Strong Coalitions Around Core Beliefs .....	154
Curtail Secondary Belief Derailment Within Coalition Alignment.....	155
Create Flexibility Within Proposed Policy .....	155
Maintain Transparency in Policy Development .....	155
Develop Partnerships and Support With Educators Throughout the State.....	155
Develop Capacity.....	156
Strengths and Limitations .....	156
Conclusion .....	159
REFERENCES .....	163
APPENDIX A: SB-08-212 .....	175
APPENDIX B: COLORADO P-20 COUNCIL & SUBCOMITTEE MEMBERS.....	178
APPENDIX C: CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN A RESEARCH STUDY .....	183

## LIST OF TABLES

Table 2.1. Frequency of All Categories of Inquiry: Theory, Continent Analyzed, Policy Domain, Data Analysis, Data Collection, and Number of Observations Reported.....	31
Table 2.2. Frequency by Data Analysis of Collection and Number of Observations Reported.....	32
Table 2.3. Frequency by Theory of Methods of Data Analysis, Collection, and Number of Observations Reported.....	33
Table 3.1. Three-Dimensions of Space to Narrative Inquiry.....	58
Table 3.2. Braun and Clarke’s 15-Point Checklist of Criteria for Good Thematic Analysis.....	69

## LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 2.1. Advocacy coalition framework flow diagram.....	27
Figure 3.1. Methodology flow chart.....	48
Figure 3.2. Narrative analysis classification chart.....	57
Figure 3.3. Three dimensions of experience.....	58
Figure 3.4. Braun and Clarke's (2000) six phases to thematic analysis.....	69

## CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

In 1983, the National Commission on Excellence in Education published *A Nation at Risk* and alarmingly predicted an impending, precipitous decline by the United States as the dominant world power if it did not radically alter its education system to address its perceived decline. This call for change illustrated a growing sentiment about the United States' seeming economic and competitive decay in the face of increased globalization. The report's introduction exemplified its distressing tone surrounding the growing uneasiness of America's perceived weakening:

Our Nation is at risk. Our once unchallenged preeminence in commerce, industry, science:[sic] and technological innovation is being overtaken by competitors throughout the world. This report is concerned with only one of the many causes and dimensions of the problem, but it is the one that undergirds American prosperity, security, and civility. We report to the American people that while we can take justifiable pride in what our schools and colleges have historically accomplished and contributed to the United States and the well-being of its people, the educational foundations of our society are presently being eroded by a rising tide of mediocrity that threatens our very future –[sic]as a Nation and a people. What was unimaginable a generation ago has begun to occur. Others are matching and surpassing our educational attainments. (National Commission on Excellence in Education, A report to the Nation and the Secretary of Education, United States Department of Education, 1983, p.5)

Widely considered a significant symbolic catalyst rallying the cry for subsequent education reform, the report helped initiate increased state and federal educational policy reforms, which, in turn, increasingly overshadowed local education autonomy (McBeath et al., 2008). At a minimum, a cursory awareness of state and federal education reforms offered a veritable social petri dish of research opportunities for education policy analysts. The 1980s reflected a new era characterized by state involvement in education policy reforms attempting to redirect the dire course from the perils projected by *A Nation at Risk* (National Commission on Excellence in Education et al., 1983). As education policy scholar, Mazzoni (1993) stated, “The

1980s witnessed unprecedented activism by American state governments in the attempt to ‘reform’ American schools” (p. 357). In similar fashion, there was a correspondingly growing federal involvement towards increased accountability and countrywide standardization (McBeath et al., 2008).

State efforts pushing for reform, however, were largely sporadic, disjointed, and reflected a wide variety of educational governing systems from one state to the next (McBeath et al., 2008). At the federal level, education reform conversations increasingly emerged and eventually rose to the top of the legislative agenda. Ultimately, the education role of the federal government gained increased importance and signified efforts improving nationwide expectations throughout the United States. Most notably, the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) in 2002 substantively and symbolically marked the rise by the federal government in exercising its power to stimulate education reform. Characterized by unusually high bipartisanship, NCLB sought to influence state education reform through the corrective threat of withholding money from states that did not comply and meet certain expectations of performance. Under this new accountability arrangement, schools within each state needed to meet annual yearly progress (AYP) or face a range of costly interventions from the federal government.

Since the mid to late 1980s, a multitude of reform-minded recommendations surfaced. Emerging among the top of these growing recommendations were a broad mix of proposals advocating for, among other things, increased accountability, revamped teacher evaluations, elimination of tenure, privatization of schools, increased assessments, unified standards, charter schools, and pay-for-performance incentives. Most recently, the Obama administration renewed the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) with the creation of Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). In addition, the Obama administration, under the advisement of the

Secretary of Education, Arne Duncan, implemented a \$4.35 billion competitive grant called Race To The Top (RTTT) on July 25, 2009, and created a state competition in the hopes the grant would further stimulate education reform.

### **The Colorado Model**

Colorado was not immune from the growing education reforms advanced in the 90s. In response to a requirement of NCLB, Colorado established the Colorado Student Assessment Program (CSAP). After 16 years since its inception, CSAP was subsequently replaced by the Transitional Colorado Assessment Plan (TCAP) in 2011, and by 2015, the state transitioned into the Colorado Measures of Academic Success (CMAS). The shift into CMAS reflected a larger, preceding philosophical shift in Colorado's education system and challenged a status quo characterized by a disconnected system of incongruent parts extending throughout the state's local school districts. Schools and districts operated as islands, each designing as well as reflecting their own idea of what education should look like for the community's children. The difference in curriculum and expectations ranged widely from district to district and school to school.

This changed dramatically under Colorado's push for reform beginning in the early 2000s and resulted in a number of significant transformations garnering enthusiastic recognition from the U.S. Department of Education. The catalyst sparking this enthusiasm centered on Senate Bill 08-212, the Preschool to Postsecondary Education Alignment Act. Commonly referred to as the Colorado Achievement Plan for Kids (CAP4K), at the broadest level, the law sought to dissolve Colorado's dichotomously operating P12 and higher education systems. Central to CAP4K, the policy sought increased collaboration between P12 and higher education by synchronously

aligning the traditionally separate systems toward common objectives oriented around a nebulous defined goal of workforce and post-secondary readiness.

Colorado's proactive P20 efforts attracted enthusiastic applause from the education community and the attention of former U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan who referred to Colorado's education reforms as "The Colorado Model" (Duncan, 2012). As Duncan (2012) stated:

The best evidence for the rigor and excellence of these efforts has been other states' adoption of key elements of what is increasingly known as 'the Colorado model'... These accomplishments underscore Colorado's commitment to improving education for all students and demonstrate how states can lead the push for education reform.

CAP4K significantly shaped how Colorado's education system, from prekindergarten through graduate school, would align to meet the intended goals in preparing students for workforce and post-secondary success. Ten years following this bill's passage, several aspects related to the bill are still unfolding.

The philosophy underlying CAP4K and its subsequent manifestation creating a seamless P20 system reflected a broader national trend throughout most states in the United States, which gained momentum beginning in the 1990's. Since then, most states have begun, at a minimum, some conversation around alignment between P12 and higher education systems. Georgia, Texas, and Oregon were the first to implement some variation of the idea. By 2000, six states had created P16 councils and by 2010, 38 states had P16 councils (Durand, 2011).

The P20 movement attempts to take a traditionally fragmented system characterized by a separation between prekindergarten through Grade 12 and higher education systems.

Historically, each entrenched system acted within a semi-autonomous bubble and mirrored separate overall objectives. Most importantly, the autonomous nature between the two separate systems kept them from merging into a collaborative dialogue around an interconnected vision.



P20 advocates argued this division was antiquated (Van De Water & Rainwater, 2001). The separation was no longer suitable in addressing education in an increasingly globalized world progressively dependent on information-based economies. Rather, P20 advocates claimed these separately operating systems should be coexisting synchronously instead of autonomously functioning in separate spheres of communication and overall visions. Additionally, the transition from one grade level to the next should be fluid throughout the child's experience as they move through the education system. High school graduation requirements should align with college entrance requirements. Overall, P20 advocates argued this change facilitates a closing in the achievement gap and improve college and workforce readiness.

P20 advocates contended that the current system reflects ideas put in place over a hundred years ago when the United States was transitioning from an agrarian based economy to an industrial centered economy, and the current system is woefully inadequate in addressing the rapidly changing needs of a quickly fluctuating global economy (Van De Water & Rainwater, 2001). An alternative system should be adept at producing a workforce capable of adapting to the rapid vacillations of globalization and the fast-changing needs of industry, as well as the rigorous academic requirements of higher education institutions whom felt incoming freshman were ill prepared for the academic rigor expected.

An additional component usually linked with the idea of P20 advocacy was in creating a unified system of learning standards in states where every child, regardless of school or district, gained access to the same learning opportunities as every other child. The view contended that poor school districts often lag behind its more affluent counterparts when it came to achievement and access to rigorous learning opportunities. With common expectations of learning targets for every school district throughout the state, in theory, each child was guaranteed the same learning

opportunities as anyone else, regardless of socioeconomic, racial, or ethnic background. Creating a unified system of learning targets and expectations throughout the state enables an equitable education for all children. P20 approaches also focus assessment measurements around growth and demonstration of proficiency. For high school students, this departed from the traditional conception of Carnegie Units, which by obtaining credits—or as some have suggested, the number of hours a student sits in a seat in the classroom—the student graduates; rather, students moved forward by demonstrating levels of proficiency.

In Colorado, formal discussion on P20 alignment began with Governor Bill Owens who created the Education Alignment Council (EAC) by executive order in 2006. However, the conversations emanating within the EAC never materialized. Nevertheless, though the EAC failed to translate alignment into actual implementation, the conversation signified a growing discontent with Colorado's current system and foreshadowed P20 alignment and CAP4K.

Owen's successor, Bill Ritter, made education one of his key platforms while running for office. Following his successful victory, Governor Ritter quickly established, through executive order the P20 Education Coordinating Council (ECC). The council's recommendations produced several prescriptions for the current education systems alignment along a P20 continuum, and in March in March of 2008, a draft bill was introduced. On May 14, 2008, Governor Ritter signed into law Senate Bill 08-212, the Preschool to Postsecondary Alignment Act of 2009, commonly referenced as CAP4K. The question remains on whether the long-term effects of CAP4K lives up to the intended outcomes of increasing student achievement, closing the historically entrenched achievement gaps, and preparing P12 students to successfully transition into the workforce and/or college.

The growing conversation around P20 alignment by states throughout the United States, and Colorado's efforts in particular, offered this researcher an important and stimulating opportunity to understand P20 education policymaking processes. However, as illustrated in the subsequent literature review, research exploring the educational policymaking process underlying P20 reforms was very limited, especially considering that P20 reform illustrates such a significant paradigm shift from the traditional, dichotomous model separating P12 from higher education systems.

### **Why Study Colorado's Education Policymaking Process and CAP4K?**

As previously discussed, Colorado's education landscape dramatically shifted because of CAP4K, reflecting a challenge to the previously continuous reification of the P12 and higher education system dichotomy. Today, the educational landscape in Colorado looks significantly different and the effects of CAP4K's influence continues ten years following implementation.

Some of CAP4K's prescriptions center on creating a new set of standards, which eventually led to adopting the Common Core, establishing a statewide data system tracking students' longitudinal growth and common high school graduation standards across the state. Ultimately, CAP4K's emphasis on creating a statewide overarching blueprint encouraging P20 alignment dramatically altered the traditional, autonomous islands of P12 and higher education. By dissolving this separation, the two entities were now, in principle, inextricably linked together with common objectives and a common vision.

Deciphering the intermingling parts reflected through CAP4K's successful, bipartisan development offers an opportunity for education policy researchers to explore the unique fingerprint in Colorado's P20 alignment process. However, as the shifting educational landscape moved toward P20 alignment, what remains unanswered is how such a comparatively important education bill moved so quickly through the process with such large-scale bipartisanship.

Policymaking analysis is a tricky endeavor and potentially involves considering thousands of actors at multiple levels of government and nongovernment institutions and influence. To say the least, education policy researchers have a daunting task ahead in order to understand the complexity of the education policy process in general and, no less, in Colorado.

Despite this challenge, it is necessary to understand how such policies come to fruition and, for those in Colorado's education community, specifically understanding Colorado's historic CAP4K legislation. Policy, in general, constantly permeates our daily lives. There is hardly a moment in our day-to-day lived experiences where we escape the impact of public policy decisions. From an educational policy perspective, its influence on our daily lives seems especially augmented for those involved in the education of children.

The broad goal of creating a seamless P20 system is complex and multifaceted. Effectively interpreting the goals and translating those through implementation requires a comprehensive, systemic awareness of interconnected changes and coordination of an entire system to realize its full potential. Almost ten years since CAP4K became law, the process of implementation and interpretation continues unfurling at the time of this study. Pieces of the CAP4K puzzle are continuously challenged such as the adoption of the Common Core standards, which, increasingly, is translated as a federal overstep and a highly politicized issue. Education politics in Colorado, like other states, is witnessing a significant increase in political involvement with school board races, which have generally been a benign process, but now are seeing a large influx of campaign donations (Garcia, 2016). Exploring the policymaking process underlying this law offers a window for other states, policymakers, and researchers to explore how significant change in Colorado's education system happened so quickly and with such significant bipartisan support. How can we understand the complexity of Colorado's policymaking process

underlying the development of CAP4K? What were the lived experiences of policymakers closely involved in the process? These are just a couple of the questions, among many others, a researcher might explore.

To help answer these questions of the policymaking process, I have utilized developments from the field of political science. The field's extensive and ever-increasing body of research focused on policymaking dynamics lends assistance to the educational policy researcher. Political science and the rise in theoretical tools help researchers make sense of the seemingly undecipherable and overwhelming complexity of policymaking. These advances support the researcher in organizing the multiple moving parts and help construct meaning out of the multifaceted nature of the policymaking process. The use of theories, models, and frameworks, coupled with the development of a wide array of research methods, act as a map the researcher applies to help organize their analysis. This mapping makes the complexity relatively coherent, consistent, and manageable to navigate while helping the researcher gain insights and answers to the questions posed.

Surprisingly, despite the increasing policy developments emerging from the field of political science, education policy researchers adopting their approaches remained largely absent (McLendon, 2003a, 2003b; Leslie & Berdahl, 2008; McLendon, Cohen-Vogel, & Wachen, 2015). In the *2015 Handbook of Education Politics and Policy*, education policy scholars McLendon et al. (2015) contributed an article illustrating how, in spite of the significant rise of state education policymaking, a surprising lack of attention by education policy analysts employing policy research from the field of political science persists. Moreover, scholarship exploring educational policymaking processes remained considerably deficient (McLendon et al., 2015). As they further noted, "Despite the clear importance of these and other recent

fluctuations in state policy for education, scholarly understanding of the forces shaping educational policy change in the American states remain woefully underdeveloped” (McLendon et al., 2015, p. 87).

McLendon et al. (2015) commented that some important questions (and opportunities) were missing from the current body of research:

What factors propel states to undertake the policy reforms they do? Is it variation in the sociodemographic or economic patterns of the states that accounts for across-state differences in state education policies? Or does “politics,” in the sense of institutional political actors, such as interest groups, legislative leadership and design, partisanship, election cycles, more fully explain patterns in state policy change for education? How do problems gain attention, solutions emerge, and issue agendas take shape before state governments? To what extent do beliefs, values, ideas, and interest in the determination of education policy outcomes? How, precisely, do education policies change? If rationalism and incrementalism have lost the paradigmatic power they once enjoyed, how can the vast policy changes in education of the past three decades best be explained? What are the implications for effective policy advocacy of these different ways of conceptualizing change? (p. 87)

Likewise, though there is a significant gap within the literature seeking a better understanding of the P20 alignment policymaking process, there was an equal absence from the field of education applying research approaches coming from the field of political science (McClendon et al., 2015). This unintended oversight, I argued, hindered advancing the education fields understanding of the education policy process. By applying the increasingly developed and revised theoretical approaches coming out of the field of political science, education researchers are primed to stimulate further education research to add depth of understanding the education policy process. In light of this study’s topic, there was opportunity to explore the policymaking process underlying P20 alignment in Colorado with the tools made available through the field of political science. The relative rise in state-initiated reforms invited a scholarly opportunity to explore the processes involved in policymaking with a vast collection of opportunities for research (McClendon et al., 2015). Further, it also illuminated areas of

education policy traditionally neglected and sheds light on how policy change occurs. The ripple effects of policy profoundly affects people's lives.

Echoing McClendon et al.'s (2015) contention, this study assumed education policy researchers could gain valuable insights into our understanding of P20 alignment in Colorado and education policymaking processes in general. By considering theoretical developments from the field of political science, education scholars can extend the breadth of their interpretations and sharpen the lens of analysis.

There is a comprehensive range of *a priori* theoretical approaches available to the researcher from the field of political science. Policy experts Sabatier and Weible identified over 10 approaches in their influential book *Theories of the Policy Process* (2007). One of the most popular approaches identified is the advocacy coalition framework (ACF). The ACF is widely applied to a far-reaching range of global policy settings prolific in the policy-oriented research literature.

At the heart of the framework, and a component partially influencing elements of this study, was the concept of *beliefs* (Sabatier & Weible, 2007). Beliefs act as the glue binding together likeminded policymakers. The conceptualization of beliefs in the ACF suggests that policymakers with similar beliefs enhance their power through coalition building and organize themselves into distinct *advocacy coalitions* (Sabatier & Weible, 2007). The idea of beliefs in the ACF was an important consideration that separated the ACF from other approaches, which generally posited material self-interests as the prime motivation to create policy (Sabatier & Weible, 2007).

Like all of the approaches covered in Sabatier and Weible's (2007) book, the ACF reflected a positivist orientation and pursued predictive, generalizable findings transferrable to a

broad range of policy settings. However, the positivist orientation and goal in developing predictive generalizations were at odds with this study's constructivist foundation and methodological interpretive approach. Interpretive oriented policy scholars such as Hajer (1995) and Fischer (2003) similarly raised this concern. Hajer's criticism did not necessarily concern the ACF itself; instead, Hajer was concerned with the ACF's positivist orientation. To help reconcile the epistemological and ontological contrasts with the positivist positioning of the ACF, I emphasized an interpretive approach highlighting a narrative method in order to explore the lived experiences of several individuals closely involved in CAP4K's policymaking process. Subsequently, the application of a narrative methodology, I explored, key aspects of the ACF focused on the *policy subsystem, beliefs, and advocacy coalitions*.

Opening the ACF's paradigmatic orientation to an interpretive approach emphasizing narratives of interviewees encouraged a contextually deeper understanding of the lived experiences of those involved in CAP4K's policymaking process without projecting analysis confined by the frameworks *a priori* positioning. Additionally, it offered opportunities for exploring the complexity underlying how policymakers constructed their views and, in the case of this research, how they developed meaning around the policymaking process specifically associated with CAP4K's development. This constructivist perspective encouraged a unique understanding of the complex nature in how those within coalitions make meaning in the policy world. Thus, by reorienting the ACF's positivist viewpoint from a framework focused on prediction and generalization, I argued the constructivist window extends a deeper sensitivity to the complex narratives of Colorado's P20 education policy community sensitive to its specific local context.



## **Research Problem**

Within the last 10 years, Colorado's education system witnessed significant changes. Initiated through CAP4K, the center of these changes attempted to dissolve the historically divided education landscape characterized by the autonomously operating P12 and higher education systems incongruously focused on separate objectives. The essence of this legislation sought increased P20 alignment by collaboratively redefining mutual objectives fostering the ultimate goal in preparing students for workforce and post-secondary success in order to meet the demands and challenges of rapid globalization.

Colorado's efforts were widely regarded as a model for other states to replicate. Yet, an understanding of the policymaking process underlying its development was missing. Furthermore, the empirical research on P20 educational policymaking was limited at best, leaving a significant gap in our understanding of how such change occurred.

Researchers studying educational policymaking underutilized the growing theoretical advancements made from the field of political science (McLendon et. al, 2015). Equally neglected were applications of policy approaches to help researchers understand the growing application of state directed education policymaking. Moreover, research exploring the policymaking process underlying P20 alignment was noticeably absent, with few exceptions, and was particularly empty regarding the perceptions of key policymakers' experiences.

To address this shortfall, this study adopted an element from the ACF which complemented this studies narrative emphasis and focused on the framework's conceptualization of beliefs, advocacy coalitions, and policy subsystems. The use of these constructs helped the researcher organize and manage a complex policymaking environment.

## **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study explored the policymaking process underlying Colorado's P20 alignment and emphasized the lived experiences of key policymakers closely involved in CAP4K's development. This provided an opportunity for education policymakers and scholars to gain insights into a specific historical setting representing major educational reform in a state pursuing P20 alignment. The period of P20 alignment in Colorado reflected rare bipartisanship and ambitiously minded leadership challenging the historically ingrained stasis of separately operating spheres of P12 and higher education in Colorado.

While the echoes of P20 alignment continued to reverberate throughout many states at the time of this writing, those engaged in or those thinking about P20 alignment may gain insights through the lived experiences revealed through the interviews. Colorado's P20 efforts locally reflect a unique convergence of its own historical influences and contextually bound impacts.

From a methodology consideration oriented around narrative inquiry that is philosophically rooted within a constructivist paradigm, this study contributes to the existing body of literature on educational policymaking and specifically P20 alignment by exploring and emphasizing the experiences of those closely involved within Colorado's policymaking process. Further, the emphasized narrative method in this study concentrates the analysis of individuals closely involved in CAP4K's development. This narrative approach enabled the researcher to gain contextually rich data through the experiences of policymakers heavily involved in Colorado's P20 alignment and fundamental restructuring of Colorado's education system.

Ultimately, I hope this study provided an informative window into the experiences of individuals challenging a perceived outdated education system in Colorado. CAP4K reflected a

unique, bipartisan effort collaboratively tackling perceived problems and solutions. Whether or not the reader agrees with Colorado's P20 alignment efforts or the specific prescriptions outlined by CAP4K, the researcher is optimistic this study encouraged others interested in education change to realize that broad, systemic change promoting the welfare and future of our children is possible.

### **Research Questions**

The focus of this study centered on the lived experiences of three individuals closely involved in the policymaking process of P20 alignment in Colorado. This study's topic explored the following three questions:

1. What were the lived experiences of interviewees in the development of CAP4K?
  - a. What were the interviewee's perceptions of the problems and solutions of Colorado's education system leading to CAP4K?
  - b. What were the interviewees' experiences in successful coalition building leading to the broad support for CAP4K?
  - c. What were the interviewees' perceptions of the challenges in their experiences with the development of CAP4K?
  - d. How did interviewees ascribe meaning to the development and impact of CAP4K?
2. How does policy core and secondary beliefs in committee hearings explain the passage of CAP4K?
3. How did themes identified by the Colorado Department of Educations' statewide tour gathering teachers' input illustrate concerns on CAP4K?

## Definition of Terms

1. *Advocacy coalition*. A coalition contains persons from a broad range of backgrounds. They could be government officials, non-governmental organizations, and representative from a wide range of interest groups “who share a particular belief system – i.e. a set of basic values, causal assumptions, and problem perceptions – and who show a non-trivial degree of coordinated activity over time” (Sabatier, 1988, p. 139).
2. *Beliefs*. The idea of beliefs for this study reflects the meaning used by the ACF. The idea of beliefs assumes people participate in politics as a way to translate their beliefs into action. The ACF posits three layers of beliefs. The first considered are “core” beliefs (Sabatier, 2007, p. 194-196). These are deeply held personal beliefs often associated with a person’s faith and are very unlikely to change. Next, there are “policy core” beliefs (Sabatier, 2007, p. 194-196). They reflect beliefs toward policy which should address perceived problems and solutions (Sabatier, 2007). For the purposes of this study core beliefs are identified as the main solutions embodied within CAP4K. The third belief from the ACF is called secondary aspects. These beliefs are the most likely to change (Cairney, 2012, 2013). For the purposes of this study, I emphasize *policy secondary beliefs* in the analysis of education committee hearings.
3. *Interpretive Policy Analysis*. For the purposes of this study, Interpretive Policy Analysis represents a broad area of analysis focused around the meaning-making constructs of policymakers (Bevir & Rhodes as cited in Wagenaar, 2011).

4. *Policy Subsystems*. Coalitions compete with each other to dominate policymaking in subsystems. Subsystems are issue-specific networks. They are pervasive in government because elected officials devolve policymaking responsibility to bureaucrats who, in turn, consult routinely with participants such as interest groups. While the literature on policy communities and monopolies described the potential for insulated relationships between a small number of actors, the ACF identified many actors in each coalition (Cairney, 2012, 2013).
5. *P20*. The term P20 is used to mean preschool through graduate school and represents a variety of policy interventions mainly focused on a seamless transition from each grade to the next, and an emphasis on preparing students for the workforce and/or post-secondary readiness. Other terms denoting similar concepts of educational alignment are P16, K16, K20, etc. For this study, I use P20 throughout.
6. *P20 EAC*. Education Alignment Council (EAC). The first P20 oriented council started by Governor Owens.
7. *P20 ECC*. Education Coordinating Council (ECC). Created through executive order by Governor Ritter, this committee reflected a broad range of stakeholders (APPENDIX B) charged with identifying problems and solutions in Colorado's education system.
8. *Reform*. The idea of reform, for this study, suggests changes meant to improve student achievement.
9. *Senate Bill 08-212*, Preschool to Postsecondary Education Alignment Act of 2009. Commonly referenced as the Colorado Achievement Plan for Kids (CAP4K), this bill encouraged P20 alignment between P12 and higher education systems.

## **Limitations**

This study explored the lived experiences of key policymakers involved with CAP4K. The researcher relied on the recollection of the people interviewed almost ten years following the legislation. How they responded in the interview may have looked differently if interviewed right after the passing of CAP4K. However, interviewing participants 10 years after CAP4K's implementation gave them an opportunity to reflect on its current state. Additionally, this study was limited to three people the researcher determined particularly involved in the process of this legislation. This study's emphasis on three influential policymakers advocating for P20 alignment in Colorado inevitably left out others who were possibly overlooked in the initial vetting process.

There are many ways to apply the ACF (Weible et al., 2009). Some researchers combined elements of the ACF with other frameworks. Still, others have analyzed one particular piece from the ACF, such as the role of beliefs (Weible et al., 2009). From the researcher's perspective, the latitude for exercising a researcher's creativity in how they explore the research questions carries considerable freedom. By narrowing this research to three major components, and specifically, secondary beliefs of the ACF, the researcher left out other considerations.

The interpretive policy analysis approach that predominantly shaped this study rested on one of the best techniques for exploring the meaning making constructed by the participants on this particular phenomenon. Although there were many, qualitative approaches at the disposal of the researcher, interpretivism allowed a comfortable flexibility to work with the participants.

## **Researcher's Background**

I began my career in education as a special education teacher in Michigan working with adjudicated male youth entrenched in the criminal justice system. The experience heightened my

sense of empathy to their unimaginable stories and which, in turn, made me a better teacher, but also sensitized me to the enormous complexities and circumstances shaping students' lives.

After this position, I taught high school social studies in northern California and soon, thereafter, I accepted a 7<sup>th</sup> grade literacy and social studies position in Colorado. Ironically, I began my teaching career in Colorado around the same period when Bill Ritter became the 41<sup>st</sup> governor and policymakers in the state were seriously exploring P20 alignment.

I would not fully comprehend the magnitude of CAP4K's significance until I assumed an associate principal and eventual principal position in a small rural school district in Southwest Colorado. Through the experience as an administrator, I began noticing all of the major changes taking place at the state level in Colorado and CAP4K catalyzed many changes in our school and district.

Through these accumulated experiences, I noticed two major themes. First, policymaking at the state level offered a powerful opportunity to shift problems in education, which could benefit all students. In particular, I realized the state's potential to change the inequitable injustices so many of our schools' children face every day. Unfortunately, I began realizing that the emancipatory promise often attributed to the potential of education was lost on those entrenched within school systems, which, more often than not, unknowingly reified such inequities through structural pitfalls. Second, policy also has the unintended effect to paint such a broad stroke that it fails to notice the complexity and challenges of our diverse communities, schools, and ultimately, the amazing complexities of every single child. Thus, this study, albeit very specific in scope, was an attempt to understand how education policy unfolds in order to grasp, perhaps, a glimpse into its potential.

## CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

This chapter focused on four main objectives. Collectively, they demonstrated the need for further research exploring the education policymaking underlying P20 alignment and CAP4K's development. The first objective briefly illustrates the existing body of theoretically oriented education research applied to understanding state-level policymaking. This is a relatively minor area of emphasis in education policy research (McLendon et al., 2015) which emerged in the 1960s as researchers increasingly applied a theoretical perspective to help explain education policymaking within states.

The second objective examines P20 literature illustrating examples of research centered from an advocacy and empirical perspective (Durand, 2011). The relatively predominant advocacy-based literature encourages states to pursue P20 alignment in the broad effort to conjoin traditionally separate P12 and Higher Education systems. Generally, the advocacy-based literature calls for education reform to prepare students for workforce and post-secondary success (Durand, 2011). Conversely, empirically driven studies explore examples of P20 development and implementation with analysis spread on various components often associated with P20 recommendations (Durand, 2011). This limitation in empirically driven research suggests further evidence for the need of this study.

The third objective briefly outlines the main components of the ACF with emphasis placed on elements related to this study's focus. Essentially, there are three significant concepts within the ACF used for this study. The first assumes most policymaking operates within a policy subsystem. The second level focuses on the role that beliefs have on coalition building. Finally, the third level regards the concept of advocacy coalitions. These coalitions reflect



likeminded individuals coalescing to enhance their power. The prominence given by the ACF to the role that beliefs and advocacy coalitions play in shaping alliances offers a unique departure from other policy theories emphasized in Sabatier and Weible's popular book *Theories of the Policy Process* (2007). This study's adoption of the ACF's concepts of beliefs, advocacy coalitions, and policy subsystem facilitated the researcher's analysis around Research question 2 which sought to understand the role of secondary beliefs on the dominant coalition. Subsequently, the researcher highlighted the existing literature applying the ACF to education policymaking which however is noticeably thin.

Finally, the fourth objective addressed criticisms targeting the ACF. Most importantly, the researcher underscored the criticisms advanced by policy experts Hajer (1995) and Fischer (2003). Their perspectives significantly influenced this studies research approach mitigating the ACF's positivist orientation by using interpretive policy analysis and, in particular, narrative methods. Through this interpretive adjustment, the researcher opened the opportunity for gaining a deeper understanding of the lived experiences of participants in CAP4K's policymaking process and recognized the unique historical, local, and social contexts of the specific setting to which CAP4K emerged (Yanow, 2014).

In similar manner to Hajer's (1995) contention, the researcher did not construe the ACF itself as problematic, but rather the ACF's positivist orientation, which sharply contrasts with this studies constructivist paradigm. Influenced through this constructivist window, the research method emphasized the narrative analysis of the three participants.

### **Analyzing State Education Policy From a Theoretical Approach**

The beginning of state oriented, education policy analysis informed by a theoretical perspective traces back to the late 1960s when Iannaccone (1967; Iannaccone & Cistone, 1974)

explored the interconnected relationships of the policy process at the state level (Ceperley, 1997). Since Iannaccone's research, a number of prominent studies emerged.

An important work illustrating state education policy analysis was through Usdan, Minar, and Hurwitz's (1969) article, which explored the dichotomous relationship between elementary and secondary grades and the separation of those two from higher education systems in the U.S. Paradoxically, this study eventually influenced advocates of P20 alignment. Usdan et al.'s general conclusions illustrated a significant conflict between the separately existing systems of K12 and higher education and recommended alignment to offset this separation. Other studies similarly conveyed a growing interest. For example, Milstein and Jennings (1973) explored state education policymaking in New York. Further, in the book, *The Politics of Education in the States*, Zeigler and Johnson (1972) explored the application of theory in better understanding state education politics.

McGivney (1984) attempted to synthesize existing models analyzing state education politics and further demonstrated an increased interest in theorizing the policymaking process. Mazzoni has played a particularly prominent role in exploring education policymaking and politics at the state level from a theoretical perspective (Ceperly, 1997). An early study by Campbell and Mazzoni (1976) illustrated a comprehensive case study of twelve states examining school finance policy relationship with states and signified a relatively new approach to analyzing state education policymaking. According to Mazzoni (1993), the timeframe for state focused studies has been narrow and sometimes confined to a single legislative session. Mazzoni argued that the traditional approaches taken by previous education policy researchers were too myopic. Further, Mazzoni illustrated that the ACF is a promising tool for policy analysts through its comprehensive scope of consideration. Additional theoretical applications

could be seen in Mintrom and Vergari's (1996) study combining elements of the ACF with Punctuated Equilibrium in order to understand policy reform in Michigan.

Despite this growing literature, there remains a need for more studies seeking a better understanding of education policymaking through a theoretical lens at the state level. Borrowing advances from the field of political science could facilitate this endeavor. As illustrated in the introduction, McLendon et al. (2015) have energized the call for using theoretical developments emerging from the field of political science.

## **P20 Literature**

While the trend of education policy analysis focused on policies emerging from the state grew, there was a corresponding development in a wide range of recommendations for education reform, as indicated in this study's Chapter One overview. Most notable among them was the growing body of research promoting an increased connection between P12 and higher education systems (Van de Water & Rainwater, 2001; Kirst & Venezia, 2001, 2005; Kirst & Usdan, 2007; Krueger & Rainwater, 2003). Advocates of this position described an American education system historically connected to an outdated organizational model that reflected America's agrarian-focused history. Instead, due to the rapid advancements of a post-industrial economy, the American education system, according to P20 advocates, needed to depart profoundly from its antiquated ways. Most notably, state education systems needed to dissolve the historical divide between P12 and higher education systems.

By 1985, a policy report emerged called *All One System* and called for the integration of K12 and higher education systems (Hodgkinson, 1985). In 1999, Hodgkinson subsequently revisited this previous work and added the importance of alignment. In 2000, The Consortium for Policy Research in Education issued a report calling for the alignment of standards and

assessments between K12 and higher education systems. In addition, the report encouraged aligned data systems. Subsequent articles emerged calling for alignment. In 2001, researchers Van de Water and Rainwater (2001) wrote a P20 advocacy article, in connection with the Education Commission of the States, and recommended additional elements attached with alignment. Primarily targeting legislators throughout the U.S., the article made the following suggestions: First, education leaders needed to come together and define the problem in their state and develop a vision of transformation. Second, policymakers should identify policy options to achieve the created vision. Third, policymakers should develop a collective agreement around the ideas of alignment. Van de Water and Rainwater suggested states needed to develop integrated budgeting for all education levels and agencies, incentivize collaboration between the two entities, and allow for joint budgeting across education levels and agencies. Ensuing calls for alignment increased in the literature and the growing momentum advocating for alignment significantly influenced states across the United States (Portch, 2002, 2006; Rochford & Conner, 2005; Rochford et al., 2005). Eventually, most states began conversations around P20 alignment.

Nevertheless, though the advocacy research called for increased alignment, studies exploring examples of states implementing P20 collaboration lagged behind with few exceptions. Several studies explored elements related to alignment efforts between K-12 and postsecondary schooling. For example, Brown and Conley (2007) explored the relationship between state assessment standards and their alignment with college entry-level courses. They found there was very little association between the two entities and recommended that states, which used exams, align to college readiness measures (Brown & Conley, 2007).

In a brief written for the Education Commission of the States, Dounay (2006) suggested that at a minimum, most students will need to obtain some type of post-education experience to succeed in the job market of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Dounay suggested states embed college readiness indicators in their assessments and curriculum. In a subsequent article, Dounay (2008) forwarded recommendations to creating P20 education councils.

In a dissertation, Rasch (2004) completed an historical case study of Florida, exploring dual enrollment, an often-associated aspect connected to P16 alignment, and noted the challenges it faced. Others, such as L'Orange and Ewell (2007), explored statewide data systems and concluded there was a broad difference in the progress states had made in data system alignment. In the article, *Do "Education Governors" Matter?* Mokher (2010) analyzed the role governors have in facilitating the creation of P16 councils. Using network theory and event history analysis, Mokher's study suggested that education-oriented governors influenced the formation of P16 councils.

In a recently published dissertation, Durand (2011) applied policy discourse analysis to national P-16 advocacy-oriented documents. The findings suggested that earlier discourses used in describing P-16 advocacy reflected an economic and sociological orientation. The discourses, however, increasingly reflected an economics focus (Durand, 2011). A subsequent dissertation by Bowens (2014) analyzed the effectiveness of Florida's K20 alignment efforts and examined legislation around college readiness as well as student preparedness for post-secondary education.

Most recently, Thachik's (2016) dissertation examined the implementation of P20 initiatives in Tennessee and Texas, resembling this study's methodological lens through

interpretive policy analysis. In addition, Thachik complemented the interpretive approach with Kingdon's (1996) multiple streams theory as a structural map.

In summary, P20 literature is primarily oriented around promoting increased alignment between P12 and higher education systems. The broad vision of alignment suggests improving student success as they transition into the workforce and college. The number of suggested reforms promoted in this literature was wide ranging, such as data alignment, curriculum matching the needs of colleges, and the implementation of assessments accurately illustrating a student's likelihood for success when transitioning into college. Conversely, the available literature exploring empirical examples of P20 policymaking processes is minor despite the profusion of P20 efforts spreading among states across the U.S. Thachik's (2016) dissertation's focus on P20 alignment and methodological focus on interpretive policy analysis complemented with multiple streams theory approximates my study's approach. Rather than multiple streams theory, however, the researcher applied components of the ACF.

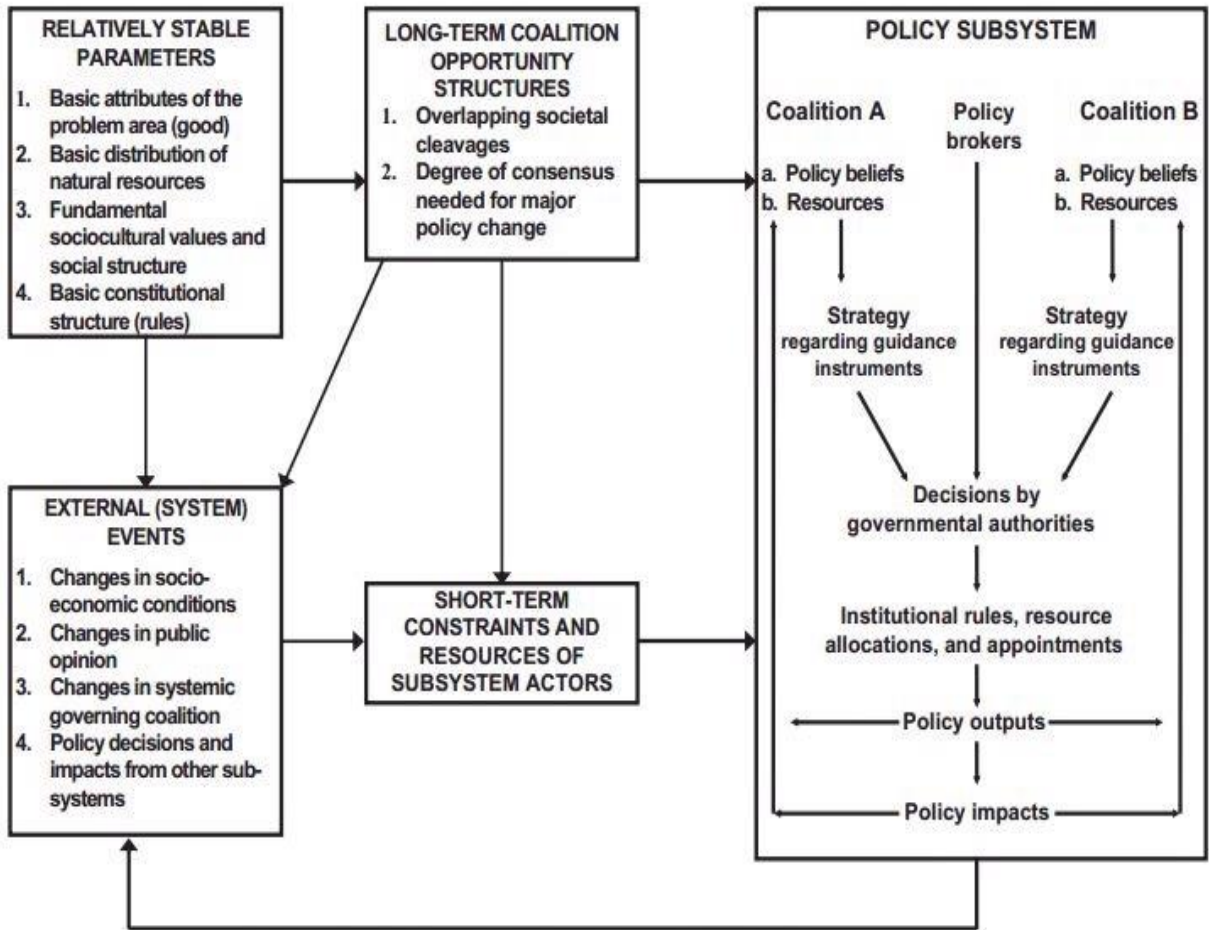


Figure 2.1. Advocacy coalition framework flow diagram. From *In Theories of the Policy Process* (p. 191), by P. A. Sabatier and C. M Weible, 2007, Boulder, CO: Westview Press.

There are numerous theories from the field of political science attempting to explain the complex nature of public policymaking. In the book, *Theories of the Policy Process* (2007), Sabatier put forth four benchmarks, which narrows the list of theories. The first suggested that acceptable theoretical frameworks must reflect scientific criteria in which propositions and ‘falsifiable hypotheses’ were clear in identifying causal mechanisms established enough to inform generalizable conclusions. Second, each framework should go through empirically rigorous testing in their application. Third, frameworks should be broad in scope and help explain a significant portion of the policy process. Finally, they needed to consider the multiple features

political scientists have considered such as socioeconomic influences on the policy process (Sabatier, 2007).

After going through this filtering process, what we have left, according to the authors criteria, are the following frameworks available for the policy analyst: institutional rational choice, the multiple streams framework, the network approach, punctuated equilibrium, the advocacy coalition framework (ACF), innovation/diffusion theory, and policy process approaches using Large N comparative studies (2007). Of the various approaches included by Sabatier, the ACF has garnered some of the most attention by policy scholars (Weible, Sabatier, & McQueen, 2009, Cairney, 2012, Cairney, 2015).

Originally introduced as a symposium issue for *Policy Sciences* by Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith in 1988, the ACF has since grown into an ambitious tool for public policymaking analysis (Cairney, 2015). The ACF offers a unique approach to the study of the policymaking process by emphasizing the role of *beliefs*, as well as, conceptualizing *advocacy coalitions* and *policy subsystems* (Cairney, 2015). The ACF extends its outlook beyond many of the theories covered in *Theories of the Policy Process* (Sabatier & Jenkins-Smith, 1999; Sabatier & Weible, 2007) by ambitiously applying a broader, systemic interpretation of the policymaking process and an emphasis on policymakers' beliefs as a key catalyst explaining the motivation underlying policymaking (Cairney, 2015).

The ACF contributes to the understanding of a complex policy world (Weible et al., 2009). It has been cited over 2,200 times with additional works having been cited 1200-1870 times in the last 15-20 years and producing over 80 applications in publications by the authors, their colleagues, and other scholars (Weible et al., 2011). However, though the burgeoning application of the ACF applies to diverse policy settings within the United States and abroad, the



literature applying the popular framework to education policymaking is significantly deficient, particularly at the state level.

### **Foundations of the ACF**

Three major tenets or “foundations” of the ACF guided the frameworks general organization and analytical emphasis (Sabatier & Weible, 2007, p. 191). First, there was what Sabatier and Weible (2007) labeled as the *macro* level (p. 191). This assumed most policymaking takes place within a *policy subsystem* (Sabatier & Weible, 2007, p. 191). The second foundation, the *micro* level, centered on an individual’s belief system and is heavily influenced by social psychology (Sabatier & Weible, 2007, p. 191-192). According to the ACF, individuals translate their beliefs into policy. To increase their power they align themselves with other like-minded policymakers and create advocacy coalitions (Weible et al., 2011, Cairney, 2012). The ACF’s attention on beliefs acknowledges the significant role ideas play in coalition formation and influencing policymaking. Finally, the third foundation, *advocacy coalitions*, is positioned at the *meso* level (Sabatier and Weible, 2007, p. 196-198). The conception of advocacy coalitions is an analytical tool organizing the diversity of policy actors into a manageable construct binding these individuals into likeminded groups supporting a policy (Sabatier & Weible, 2007).

### **The Policy Subsystem**

The *policy subsystem* is the main, overarching unit of analysis (Sabatier & Weible, 2007, p. 192). Within the policy subsystem, policymakers specialize in an area because of the sheer vastness and complexity of issues (Sabatier & Weible, 2007). In the case of CAP4K, for example, there was a discernable education policy subsystem oriented around P20 alignment.

The parameters created through the concept of a policy subsystem assist the researcher in managing a complex policy environment by bounding analysis.

A salient characteristic of the ACF's distinctiveness is the framework's emphasis on the role individual beliefs have in shaping the policymaking process (Cairney, 2015). According to the ACF, there is a three-tiered system of beliefs. The first level is wide-ranging and called *deep core beliefs*. Deep core beliefs largely reflect socialization and define the hard-held value systems about how someone views human nature, morals and ethics, etc. Deep core beliefs are very difficult to change (Sabatier & Weible, 2007). *Policy core beliefs* are the second level posited by the ACF (Sabatier & Weible, 2007, p. 194-196). These are the basic normative obligations and causal insights spanning across a subsystem (e.g., relative importance of economic development versus environmental protection) that a person projects to a policy problem/solution (Sabatier & Weible, 2007). Finally, the ACF identifies the concept of *secondary beliefs* and is the key consideration for this studies Research question 2 which examines evidence of secondary belief conflict in education committee hearings. Secondary beliefs are a set of narrower beliefs regarding specific attributes of a policy (Sabatier & Weible, 2007).

The third major component of the ACF's foundation is the notion of *advocacy coalitions* (Sabatier & Weible, 2007, p.196-198). The notion of advocacy coalitions centers on policy networking and connects with the framework's emphasis on individuals' belief systems. The idea assumes policymakers naturally tend to align with similarly like-minded policymakers (Sabatier & Weible, 2007, p.196-198). Often they reflect closely tied perceptions of the problem and the solutions necessary to address the problems. The concept of advocacy coalitions

emphasizes interpersonal relationships connected through similar belief systems (Sabatier & Weible, 2007).

The idea of advocacy coalitions underscores the need for policymakers to seek others who hold similar policy viewpoints. Joining forces and sharing resources increases power and facilitates the realization of their beliefs into policy (Sabatier & Weible, 2007, p. 196-198). Finding allies is critical to success and building coalitions is a powerful tool enabling asset sharing and developing a unified strategy (Sabatier & Weible, 2007). Consequently, the arrangement of advocacy coalitions reflects a pragmatic translation of a person’s policy core beliefs through group cooperation to improve their chances of policy success (Sabatier & Weible, 2007, p. 194-196).

**Methods Used With ACF**

There are three major theories encased within the ACF; policy learning, policy change, and advocacy coalitions (Pierce et al., 2017). This study concentrates analysis around advocacy coalitions. The majority of existing literature focus on one of the three theories for analysis and rarely consider the framework in its entirety. Similarly, the methods used are predominantly qualitative. Pierce et al. (2017) provided a metanalysis of the methods, policy domains and theory of the existing literature.

Table 2.1

*Frequency of All Categories of Inquiry: Theory, Continent Analyzed, Policy Domain, Data Analysis, Data Collection, and Number of Observations Reported*

Categories	Frequency
<b>Theory</b>	
Multiple	42% (67)
Only Coalitions	41% (66)
Only Policy Change	9 % (14)

Only Learning	9 % (14)
<b>Continent Analyzed</b>	
Europe	46 % (71)
North America	36% (56)
Other	18% (28)
<b>Policy Domain</b>	
Other	57% (91)
Environment/Energy	43 % (70)
<b>Data Analysis</b>	
Qualitative	91% (147)
Quantitative	27 % (37)
<b>Data Collection</b>	
Interviews	67% (108)
Document Analysis	60% (96)
Survey	18% (29)
Other	11% (17)
<b>Number Observations Reported</b>	<b>69% (111)</b>

*Note.* From “Common Approaches for Studying the Advocacy Coalition Framework: Review of Methods and Exemplary Practices” by J. J. Pierce et al., 2017, *European Consortium for Political Research General Conference 2017 in Oslo, Norway*, p. 10.

Table 2.2

*Frequency by Data Analysis of Collection and Number of Observations Reported*

	<b>Qualitative (n=147)</b>	<b>Only Qualitative (n=124)</b>	<b>Quantitative (n=37)</b>	<b>Only Quantitative (n=13)</b>
<b>Collection</b>				
Interviews	<b>72% (106)</b>	<b>71% (88)</b>	<b>54% (20)</b>	<b>8% (1)</b>
Documents	<b>63% (93)</b>	<b>66% (82)</b>	<b>38% (14)</b>	<b>23% (3)</b>
Surveys	<b>12% (17)</b>	<b>4% (5)</b>	<b>65% (24)</b>	<b>85% (11)</b>
Other	<b>12% (17)</b>	<b>13% (16)</b>	<b>3% (1)</b>	<b>0% (0)</b>
<b>Number Observations</b>				
<b>Reported</b>	<b>65% (96)</b>	<b>60% (74)</b>	<b>100% (37)</b>	<b>100% (13)</b>

Note. From “Common Approaches for Studying the Advocacy Coalition Framework: Review of Methods and Exemplary Practices” by J. J. Pierce et al., 2017, *European Consortium for Political Research General Conference 2017 in Oslo, Norway*, p. 12.

Table 2.3

*Frequency by Theory of Methods of Data Analysis, Collection, and Number of Observations Reported*

	<b>Multiple (n=67)</b>	<b>Only Coalitions (n=66)</b>	<b>Only Policy Change (n=14)</b>	<b>Only Learning (n=14)</b>
<b>Analysis</b>				
Qualitative	99% (66)	86% (57)	100% (14)	71% (10)
Quantitative	16% (11)	30% (20)	0% (0)	43% (6)
<b>Collection</b>				
Interviews	73% (49)	64% (42)	57% (8)	64 % (9)
Documents	73% (49)	44% (29)	71% (10)	57 % (8)
Surveys	12% (8)	24% (16)	0% (0)	36% (5)
Other	13% (9)	8 % (5)	7% (1)	14 % (2)
<b>Number Observations Reported</b>	69% (46)	70% (46)	57% (8)	79% (11)

Note. From “Common Approaches for Studying the Advocacy Coalition Framework: Review of Methods and Exemplary Practices” by J. J. Pierce et al., 2017, *European Consortium for Political Research General Conference 2017 in Oslo, Norway*, p. 15.

### **Literature Applying the ACF**

In a 2009 article by Weible et al. titled *Themes and Variations: Taking Stock of the Advocacy Coalition Framework*, the authors conducted a literature review on the ACF, which revealed 80 peer-reviewed journal articles, books, and related book chapters from 1987 to 2006. Weible et al. found that the ACF’s application grew considerably in their scope and application since the ACF’s initial conceptualization by Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith two decades earlier.

Since then the ACF has continued to rise in popularity. In 2011, a special issue was dedicated to the ACF in *The Policy Studies Journal*, the preeminent academic journal in policy studies. In this special issue, there were six ACF applications to a wide range of policy topics spanning extensive geographic areas (Weible et al., 2011). For example, Henry (2011) looked at U.S. transportation policy in California. Matti and Sandström (2011) looked at carnivore management in Sweden. Pierce (2011) applied the ACF to United States foreign policy to Israel. Ingold (2011) applied the ACF to Swiss climate policy. Nohrstedt (2011) analyzed Swedish Intelligence policy. Albright (2011) analyzed U.S. flood management policy. Montpetit (2011) explored biotechnology policy in Europe and United States. Finally, Shanahan, Jones, and McBeth (2011) devoted their article to theory development with a specific lens geared toward narratives.

Additionally, all articles had a specific focus within the framework. For example, Montpetit (2011) placed analysis around the role scientific information played in policy subsystems and found debate among scientists correspondingly increased with higher rates of conflicts in the policy subsystem. Shanahan et al. (2011) explored narratives by looking at the communicative discourses of policymakers in the effort to illustrate how narrative policy analysis can complement the ACF. Nohrstedt (2011) and Albright (2011) focused their lenses on the role of behavior in coalitions during policy change. This special issue provides a cursory overview of the wide applicability of the ACF.

Like other policy frameworks, the application of the ACF to education policymaking is lacking. With the assistance of Colorado State University's librarian, the researcher conducted a ProQuest search of dissertations applying the ACF turned up 141 studies ranging in years from 1995 to 2016 with the clear majority falling after the year 2000, perhaps suggesting an increase

in popularity. Of those, only 10 focused on education policy. Seven studies broadly applied the ACF to education policymaking in the U.S. Several dissertations applied the ACF to state education policymaking. Ceperley's (1997) study applied the ACF to understand education politics in Tennessee with a focus on testing pre-established hypotheses. Shepley (2003) applied the ACF to understand major reading policy change in California and Texas. Chanley (2005) used elements of the ACF to understand education policymaking around citizenship education in Arizona. Davis (2007) used the ACF with two other policy theories to explore higher education policymaking in Utah. Shaw (2015) examined budgetary cuts to arts programs in Michigan.

In articles, there exists only a few examples looking at state education policymaking. Ness (2010) combined the ACF with Multiple Streams Theory (Kingdon, 1995) to understanding the policy process in determining state merit aid. Brecher, Brazil, Weitzman, and Silver (2010) applied the ACF to understanding the rise of coalition building in pursuing policy change for after school programs in five cities. One group of researchers applied the ACF to understand interest group politics around school choice (DeBray-Pelot et al., 2007). Another study considered higher education and the politics of undocumented immigrants receiving in-state tuition in Texas and Arizona (Dougherty, Nienhuser & Vega, 2010). This limited body of research exemplified an opportunity to apply the ACF, or elements thereof, to education policymaking in states.

### **Strengths of the ACF**

One of the ACF's greatest strengths rests in its analytically wide breadth and scope of specific factors shaping policy, which broadened its explanatory power (Weible & Sabatier, 2007, p. 131-132). Additionally, the development of the ACF departed from more traditional approaches explaining policymaking with a stages heuristic lens. The latter interpreted the

policy process sequentially by isolating analysis within specific realms such as “... problem identification, agenda setting, adoption, implementation, monitoring, and enforcement” (Weible & Sabatier, 2007, p. 131-132). Second, the ACF’s emphasis on beliefs uniquely situated itself separately from other frameworks, which emphasized material self-interest as a key motivator in policymaking. Third, the ACF provided a way to aggregate hundreds, and perhaps, thousands of policy participants through its concept of advocacy coalitions and bounded concept of the policy subsystem (Weible & Sabatier, 2007). Fourth, the ACF was unique among policy frameworks by highlighting the importance of policy learning as an important vehicle promoting change in individual and advocacy coalition beliefs. Finally, the ACF’s application to a wide variety of policy settings, issues, and geographic areas over the last three decades suggested its flexibility. The ACF’s flexibility and longevity made it an important framework contributing to our understanding of the policymaking processes (Weible & Sabatier, 2007).

### **ACF’s Criticisms and Making the Interpretive Turn**

Like any framework, the ACF was not immune from reproach, and criticisms emerged over the years. Some argued the framework simply stated the obvious. For example, suggesting external influences, such as economic downturns, may affect significant policy change seems obvious. A second criticism placed on the ACF was due to its constant revisions over the years to adjust the framework with new insights. Critics argued that the ACF was unmanageable and unwieldy as a result of this constant adaptation (Sabatier & Weible, 2007). Nevertheless, Sabatier and Weible (2007) contend this is a strength of the ACF. For them, its ability to adapt to new challenges and contextual settings suggested the framework’s potency and not a weakness.



However, there were deeper critiques of the ACF regarding its positivist orientation. The ACF's goal to identify and establish 'causal' mechanisms generating predictive universals potentially obscured a deeper contextual analysis gained through an interpretive lens (Hajer, 1995). With the need to fit analysis within the confines of the ACF's hypotheses, meaningful data was often overlooked (Fischer, 2003).

The ACF's positivist orientation drew some of the most criticism, and despite the ACF's ambitious intentions to develop a comprehensive framework drawing upon varying developments from other theoretical predecessors, policy expert Fischer (2003) suggested this empirical demand endangers the framework's potential. A researcher rooted within a constructivist paradigm cannot reconcile the framework's positivist presuppositions and the framework's desire for establishing law-like causal mechanisms for generalizable utility. This paradigmatic incommensurability between positivism and constructivism presents a problematic contradiction regarding each paradigm's epistemological and ontological presuppositions. Indeed, Sabatier appears openly unreceptive to a constructivist paradigm in the introduction of the 1999 edition of *Theories of the Policy Process* (Warne, 2008, p. 9).

Furthermore, the ACF lacked a broader consideration of the distinctive historical and social context on how policy change unfolded because of its quest to develop generalizable hypotheses, which, by necessity, intentionally escaped the specific environmental factors unique to the policy setting (Fischer, 2003). Additionally, the ACF's assumption and fixed categorization of three-tiered beliefs as the *de facto* point of coalition formation and policy construction precluded recognizing policymaking as a far more complex phenomenon than the ACF would suggest. Instead, as policy expert Hajer (1995) argued, analysis should extend beyond the idea of beliefs by generating a deeper understanding of the narratives and the

storylines policy participants construct in the policymaking process. Through this consideration, understanding reflects the specific, local context. This approach broadened the idea of beliefs and suggested extending analysis through a lens of policymaking constructions, which are malleable and not predetermined by the fixed concept of beliefs as the ACF suggested.

From an interpretive perspective, narratives and storylines build and maintain coalitions which resonate most with policymakers rather than a translation of beliefs alone (Fischer, 2003). Instead, beliefs are just one part in the complex policymaking process framed and reframed through narrative adjustments, revisions, and persuasive arguments.

This critique was mostly concerned with the conduct of methodology and inspired this study's repositioning and subsequent adjustment to the ACF. The storylines required interpretive analysis deeply immersed within the specific context of the policy setting. Through careful acknowledgement of the specific context, the researcher gained an enriched picture honoring the intricate stories and unique experiences of those involved within the policymaking process (Fischer, 2003; Hajer & Wagenaar, 2003; Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002; Yanow, 2014). Additionally, the assumptions of individual beliefs as static, unchanging, and stable over time was problematic. Individuals often express changing value preferences in their meaning making constructs (Fischer, 2003; Hajer & Wagenaar, 2003; Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002; Yanow, 2014).

The researcher studied the interviews and focused on the meaning making constructs to gain a sense of the unique contextually shaped stories of key influential policymakers' lived experiences in Colorado's pursuit of P20 alignment. The ACF's categorizing potentially inhibited creative discovery often associated in suspending the influence of predetermined causal mechanisms (Fischer, 2003). The interpretive approach opened the door into a far more complex

world than the ACF implied through its orderly framework focused on establishing law-like generalizations devoid of context.

Interpretive policy analysts (Wagenaar, 2011; Yanow, 2000, 2014a, 2014b; Yanow & Schwartz-Shea, 2006) emphasize the importance of context and the unique complexity of individuals' social constructions on meaning making. Yanow (2014) succinctly captured the essence of interpretivism:

Central to interpretivist methodologies is the role that meanings – values, beliefs, and feelings (sentiments) – play in the understanding of social realities. Such an approach argues in favour of thickly contextualized renderings of social realities and of recognizing the inescapable subjectivity of the researcher as well as of the researched, along with the *intersubjective* making of situated meaning. (Yanow, 2014, p. 131-159, emphasis original)

Yanow's statement illustrated the methodological emphasis placed on a person's meaning making constructs and stretches the ACF's conception of beliefs to also include values and feelings.

Yanow continued:

As one of the main evidentiary sources of policy meanings and their communication is language, interpretive policy analyses have largely engaged discourses, both written and oral, as well as non-verbal and other forms of language-based theories and methods; but evidentiary sources also include acts and material artefacts, and they are also included when they figure in the specific policy under consideration. (p. 131-159)

The implications involved with this statement reinforces this study's narrative emphasis on the meaning making constructs communicated by the interviewed participants involved with Colorado's P20 policymaking process (O'Donoghue, 2007). However, in facilitating an explanation for Research question 2, the researcher accepts the ACF's categorization of secondary beliefs as a predesignated concept in the deductive thematic analysis of the education committee hearings.

## Conclusion

This chapter pursued several objectives. First, it briefly demonstrated various examples of literature applying a theoretical approach to understanding education policymaking at the state level. Despite a steadily growing number of applications during the late 20<sup>th</sup> century, theoretical applications to state education policymaking are still a relatively new area of analysis with a limited body of existing research (Ceperley, 1997).

Perhaps more than any other researcher, Mazzoni has conducted numerous studies focused around a better understanding of state education policies (Ceperley, 1997). Mazzoni (1993) applied various theoretical constructs in the analysis of Minnesota education policies. Most recently, McLendon et al. (2015) called on researchers to adopt theoretical developments in the field of political science and its sub-branch of policy studies to facilitate a better understanding of the educational policymaking process at the state level. Among several approaches highlighted by McLendon et al. (2015) such as multiple streams and punctuated equilibrium theory, they similarly highlighted the ACF. The timing of this study should contribute to the lack of research in educational policy analysis utilizing a theoretical approach at the state level.

A second objective of this chapter highlighted examples of the advocacy literature focused on P20 alignment. Some broad ideas often included in this advocacy-based literature was a narrative defining an American education system anchored by its agrarian past. In addition, implementing significant P20 realignment successfully prepares students for workforce readiness in the face of a rapidly transforming society where demands for a technically literate workforce are growing. Moreover, calls for an aligned, seamless P20 system, will, proponents

argue, prepare students for post-secondary success. The literature exploring P20 efforts, in various forms, however, is inadequate.

The third objective of this chapter introduced the main concepts of the advocacy coalition framework. The ACF is a widely applied theory in policy analysis and maintains four qualities: (a) a broad consideration of the many factors shaping policy change; (b) a unique boundary of analysis encapsulated by the concept of a *policy subsystem*; (c) an important emphasis on the role *beliefs* have in shaping policy and coalition formation; and (d) the notion of *advocacy coalitions*, which suggests individuals align themselves with other likeminded individuals who hold similar beliefs.

A point emphasized by the ACF is a strong dependence on the role beliefs play in the policymaking process. It is through individual beliefs, as represented through a three-tiered belief system, which motivates individuals to pursue a solution to a perceived problem and mobilize through coalition alignment. Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith (2006) have aggregated the individuals into advocacy coalitions to make analysis more manageable due to the complexity of the policy subsystem, which often has hundreds of participants in the policy making process. The literature applying the ACF was relatively large and the framework has steadily continued its popularity over the years. From its initial focus on environmental policy, it has expanded in scope to a wide range of policy topics and settings. Unfortunately, applications of the ACF to education policymaking in general and education policymaking at the state level was significantly thin. This further suggested the timeliness for this study.

Finally, this chapter explored some of the criticisms applied to the ACF. The most influential criticism shaping this study's approach came from Hajer (1995) and Fischer's (2003) overall critique of the ACF's positivist orientation. The ACF's emphasis on replicating the

physical sciences by producing hypotheses for generalizable predictions applied across a broad range of policymaking settings and topics potentially clouded contextually specific understandings of the unique setting explored. The implication, in conjunction with Hajer and Fischer's line of arguments, the researcher contends, suggests interpretive methods, particularly a narrative approach emphasizing interviews, recognizes the distinctive contextual setting in which P20 alignment unfolded through the lens of Colorado's key policymakers.

However, the researcher's application of an interpretive methodology emphasizing the narratives of interviewees did not suggest the ACF was a lacking framework. Instead, it offered an excellent opportunity to bound analysis around key concepts such as the policy subsystem, advocacy coalitions, and particularly beliefs. Nevertheless, similar to Hajer (1995) and Fischer (2003), the researcher rejected the ACF's positivist orientation. Instead, the ultimate goal of this study explored the lived experiences of Colorado's key policymakers through interpretive analysis, which was situationally distinctive. From this perspective and for the purposes of this study, the researcher applied the ACF as more of an organizational framework facilitating the identification of consistent units of analysis while revealing the complex storylines, narratives, and discourses of key actors involved in the development of CAP4K through an interpretive lens. More importantly, the use of the concept of the ACF's secondary beliefs facilitated a means for the researcher to identify concerns with CAP4K from legislator and non-legislator committee hearings.

## CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

The researcher's qualitative study applied a narrative methodology which highlighted three components to this study. First, the researcher examined three individuals' lived experiences surrounding their uniquely positioned vantage point with the development of CAP4K. The first interviewee, Governor Bill Ritter, made P20 alignment a priority in his gubernatorial campaign. The second interviewee, Matt Gianneschi, was the Governor's chief education policy consultant and was charged with the task of facilitating P20 alignment. The third interviewee, Participant 3, offered a perspective grounded in their experiences working for the Colorado Department of Education (CDE) during this period. Each individual account revealed a distinct interpretation of their involvement and shed light on the complex dynamics involved in the policymaking surrounding CAP4K.

Subsequently, the researcher analyzed legislator and non-legislator testimony from the education committee hearings. Through this analysis, the researcher applied the predesignated construct of secondary beliefs in a deductive approach identifying issues of conflict within the hearings. Finally, the researcher analyzed a study conducted by the CDE (2009) in order to gain a deeper insight on how teachers perceived the implications of the policy on their practices. The researcher's goal of this latter aspect sought to extend analysis beyond the policymaking process to understand how teachers' concerns with the implementation of CAP4K illustrated the importance of collaborative decision-making.

### **Research Approach**

Philosophically situated within a constructivist paradigm, this narratively-oriented study focused on three components. First, the researcher examined the meaning making constructs of

interviewees' lived experiences communicated through their stories. This component accentuated the distinctive characteristics and complex perceptions of CAP4K's policy process encouraged through the broad umbrella of interpretive policy approaches (Wagenaar, 2011; Yanow, 2000, 2014a, 2014b; Yanow, Engeli, & Rothmayr, 2014; Yanow & Schwartz-Shea, 2006). Narrative inquiry underscored the importance of how interviewees' stories ascribed meaning to their experiences. Their stories revealed a conceptual map where they actively identified elements they felt relevant to their experiences.

Second, the researcher transcribed committee hearings to identify themes from the perspectives of legislators and non-legislators in order to explore significant secondary belief differences with CAP4K. The researcher's prioritized thematic analysis of interviews and thematic analysis of committee hearings then transitioned into the third component of this study which examined findings from the CDE's statewide 13-city teacher-input tour that followed CAP4K's passage. The researcher's analysis intended to gauge the sense of teachers' perceptions on CAP4K. Initiated in January 2009, the tour conducted by CDE "engage[d] teachers in a statewide discussion about CAP4K, its relevance to practice, its impact on teaching and learning and the kind of help that teachers would find useful for classroom implementation" (CDE, 2009, p. 3). The CDE report opened with the following quote from education expert Richard Ellmore: "For every increment of performance I demand from you, I have an equal responsibility to provide you with the capacity to meet that expectation" (p. 3). This guiding principle signaled the CDE's good intentions to support teachers' concerns with the complexity of translating CAP4K into classroom practice. This analysis provided insights to teachers participating in this process and spoke to their interpretation and translation of CAP4K in the classroom. Their voices spoke to the actual details of how this law translates into practice and



extended significant consideration beyond the ambiguous nature of preparing students for career and postsecondary success meeting new 21<sup>st</sup> century demands articulated in the law.

To facilitate multiple analytical perspectives to this study's narrative methodology, the researcher's analysis included two separate thematic approaches: inductive and deductive. The inductive approach was broadly shaped by Clandinin and Connelly's (2000) *three-dimensional narrative inquiry space* and structured the researcher's analytical awareness around the three constructs of personal/social interaction, temporality/continuity, and place/situation. The focal point of this approach was applied to the transcribed interviews. An explanation of these three guiding concepts for narrative analysis are illustrated below.

In the second component of this study the researcher used deductive thematic analysis, which was guided by the Advocacy coalition framework's (ACF) theory regarding beliefs and advocacy coalitions and explored the emergence of a dominant advocacy coalition around the central tenets of P20 alignment. This analysis focused on the transcribed education committee hearings. Deductive thematic analysis around the ACF was imperative in gauging the perceptions of legislators and non-legislators' policy core and secondary beliefs. Finally, the third component of this study examined the findings of the CDE's (2009) study to understand how teachers' perceptions of CAP4K illustrated additional considerations regarding the policy.

Ultimately, the use of narrative analysis to explore the unique phenomenon of Colorado's P20 alignment afforded the opportunity for the researcher to access a contextually rich perspective from individuals closely connected with its development. More specifically, applying narrative analysis through an interpretive lens offered a careful look into policymakers' lived experiences with P20 alignment.

Furthermore, this interpretive policy approach supported the use of a constructivist informed narrative analysis and emphasized the opportunity to gather deep, contextually rich data highlighting how policymakers perceived education reform in Colorado (Yanow, 2014). Moreover, this sensitive approach encouraged particular attention to events transpiring around Colorado's specific local context P20 alignment (Lincoln & Guba, 2013). Interviewees contended that CAP4K was the most significant reform in Colorado's education history. Likewise, the researcher accessing the lived experiences of those closest to the policymaking process underlying Colorado's P20 alignment offered a unique window into how they perceived the complex process and derived meaningful recollections otherwise inaccessible had the researcher relied on other data techniques, such as questionnaires.

The researcher's interpretivist approach did not intend to replicate the physical sciences and develop generalizations for predictive utility (Schwartz-Shea & Yanow, 2012). Rather, the interpretive approach contrasted a positivist-oriented philosophy, implying that phenomena can be isolated and neatly arranged for the researcher's convenience to extend generalizations and predictable causal formulas transcending context. Conversely, the central focus for interpretivism investigated participants' meaning making constructs, beliefs, and emotional vicissitudes (Yanow, 2014). These then affect the creation of policy development. "Interpretive approaches to political studies focus on meanings that shape action and institutions, and the ways in which they do so" (Bevir & Rhodes, 2004, p. 130 as cited in Wagenaar, 2011, p. 3). Therefore, the researcher's narrative emphasis on interviews as the primary point of analysis for this study appropriately situated itself within the interpretive tradition and, more precisely, the use of a narrative methodology. To facilitate the interpretive approach that emphasized the

narratives of participants' perceptions on CAP4K's policymaking process, the researcher explored the following questions:

1. What were the lived experiences of interviewees in the development of CAP4K?
  - a. What were the interviewees' perceptions of the problems and solutions of Colorado's education system leading to CAP4K?
  - b. What were the interviewees' experiences in successful coalition building leading to the broad support for CAP4K?
  - c. What were the interviewees' perceptions of the challenges in their experiences with the development of CAP4K?
  - d. How did interviewees ascribe meaning to the development and impact of
2. Was there evidence of secondary beliefs communicated in the committee hearings about CAP4K?
3. How did themes identified by the Colorado Department of Educations' statewide tour gathering teachers' input illustrate concerns on CAP4K?

### **Chapter Organization**

The layout of this chapter addressed five major components outlining the researcher's methodological approach and methods for analysis is displayed in Figure 3.1. First, the researcher provided an overview of my constructivist positioning and briefly explained the paradigm's distinct epistemological and ontological presuppositions.

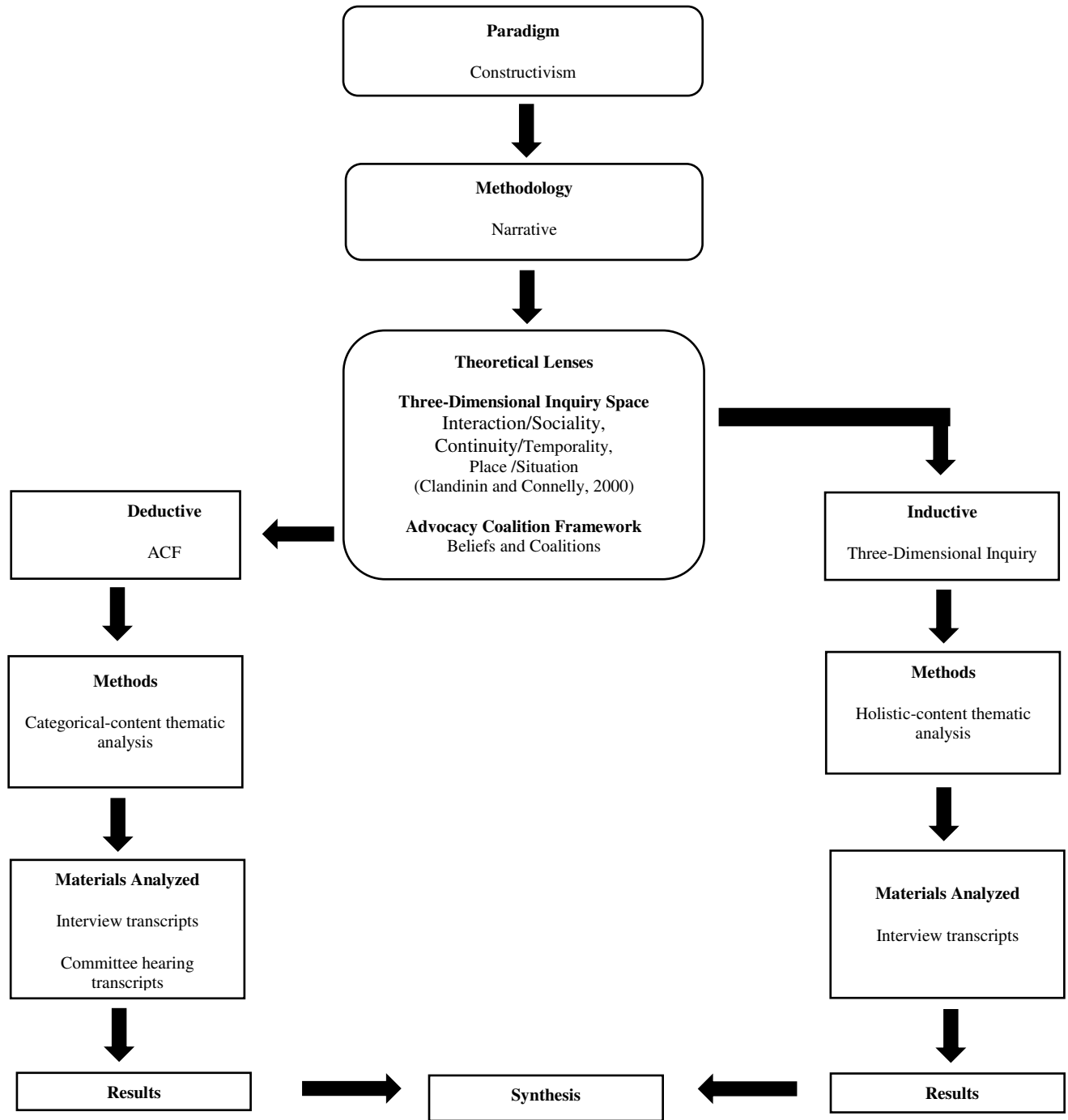


Figure 3.1. Methodology flow chart.

Despite the widely varied application of narrative methodology, which spans various domains of inquiry and academic disciplines (Lindsay & Schwind, 2016), the researcher illustrated several definitions of the narrative approach which provided the overall basis for

interpretation and ensuing application exploring the lived experiences of the interviewees with CAP4K's policymaking process. Next, the researcher provided the rationale justifying the application of narrative methodology. The researcher organized this rationale based on Clandinin and Connelly's (2000) three-part standards for justifying the use of narrative inquiry that are identified as the *practical justification*, *personal justification*, and *social justification*.

Following the rationale for using a narrative methodology, the researcher briefly turned attention to Lieblich et al.'s (1998) four-part schematic classification of narrative approaches, which represented different analytical emphases. The researcher provided a brief explanation of each. Next, the researcher presented the approaches utilized by this study, which used both a holistic-content and categorical-content approach to inductive and deductive processes. The researcher described both holistic-content and categorical-content approaches and further outlined the specific data analysis of the inductive and deductive approaches applied to the interviews and committee hearings.

With an analytical lens influenced by the holistic- and categorical-content strategy to narrative analysis, the researcher then illustrated the two overall structures organizing the narrative plan used in the thematic analysis of the interviews and committee hearings. For convenience of the reader, the researcher separated these two approaches when discussing the findings following the data analysis. However, the final chapter's discussion illustrated the similarities and differences of each, and subsequently offered a synthesized interpretation. The first approach, inductively oriented, adopted the broader structure developed by Clandinin and Connelly (2000).

The broad ACF is a researcher's springboard for analyzing varying theoretical starting points within its constituent parts (Weible et al., 2011). The second approach used for this study

focused analysis around one of the three theories encased within the broad ACF, which is a common strategy used by researchers applying the ACF (Pierce et al., 2017). As Pierce et al. (2017) illustrated through their meta-analysis of the ACF's methodological approaches, the application of one of the ACF's three theories is common. Most studies using the ACF were qualitatively oriented with emphasis on interviews and document analysis (Pierce et al., 2017). This study centered on beliefs and coalitions in the analysis of secondary beliefs in the committee hearings.

Following the illustration on how the researcher applied the three-dimensions of narrative space inquiry and the focus on ACF's theory on beliefs and coalitions, the researcher provided an explanation to the data gathering methods used to identify participants in Colorado's P20 alignment. To complement the interviews, the researcher explained the steps used in the application of the ACF through categorical-content analysis of the transcribed legislative committee hearings to explore how legislators and non-legislators were interpreting CAP4K. The procedures used for this study's thematic data analysis adhered to Braun and Clark's (2006) six phases to thematic analysis. Finally, the researcher disclosed aspects of trustworthiness and credibility as well as the ethical considerations surrounding the conducting of this research project and the Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval process.

### **Philosophical Foundation**

This study's constructivist foundation presupposes three main characteristics. First, the ontology, the understanding of the nature of reality, is relative and, as Lincoln and Guba (2013) stated,

exist[s] only in the minds of the persons contemplating them. They do not "really" exist. That is, they have ontological status only in-so far as some group of persons (frequently, social scientists, but often the rest of us, also) grants them status. (p. 39)

Second, the constructivist's epistemological lens, the concept of how we know that we know something, is subjective, and the relationship between the knower and what is to be known is contextually informed (Lincoln & Guba, 2013). The transaction, as Lincoln and Guba stated,

is necessarily highly subjective, mediated by the knower's prior experience and knowledge, by political and social status, by gender, by race, class, sexual orientation, nationality, by personal and cultural values, and by the knower's interpretation (construction) of the contextual surround. (p. 40)

What we know is shaped by context; it is not something that has been exposed (Lincoln and Guba, 2013). The subsequent methodology, therefore, sought to explore how humans assigned meaning from/to their experiences (Lincoln & Guba, 2013).

As such, those involved in Colorado's education policymaking subsystem had their own perspective on the issues of P20 alignment. As the interviewer, the researcher engaged in a mutual conversation of meaning making with the storyteller. Together with the interviewee, we collaborated on an understanding emphasized through member checks of my interpretation. The researcher and the interviewees' communicative understanding approximated a sense of agreement on the explored phenomenon; thus, the collaboratively co-constructed dialogue spoke to a central point of narrative inquiry. As Clandinin and Connelly (2000) stated,

Narrative inquiry is a way of understanding experience. It is collaboration between a researcher and participants, over time, in a place or series of places, and in social interaction with milieus. An inquirer enters this matrix in the midst and progresses in the same spirit, concluding the inquiry still in the midst of living and telling, reliving and retelling, the stories of the experiences that made up people's lives, both individual and social. (p. 20)

Clandinin and Connelly's (2000) statement spoke to the important relationship between the interviewer and the participant. This understanding is a poignant element distinguishing positivist-oriented approaches and those rooted broadly by constructivism and narrative inquiry in particular. Pinnegar and Daynes (2007) succinctly illustrated,

In the turn toward narrative inquiry, no change in direction is more important than the change in an understanding of the relationship of the researcher to the researched. In the move toward narrative inquiry, the turn is characterized as a movement away from a position of objectivity defined from the positivistic, realist perspective toward a perspective focused on interpretation and the understanding of meaning. In turning, narrative inquirers recognize that the researcher and the researched in a particular study are in relationship with each other and that both parties will learn and change in the encounter. (p. 9)

## **Narrative Methodology**

In the social sciences, narrative research applications have increased in the last several decades (Goodson & Gill, 2011). Often referenced as the narrative turn or narrative revolution, narrative methodology includes the application of interpretive and critical approaches of inquiry that challenge the predominant positivist approaches of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (Caine, Estefan, & Clandinin, 2013; Clandinin, 2006; Goodson & Gill, 2011; Lieblich et al., 1998; Ollerenshaw & Creswell, 2002).

There are numerous examples of narrative approaches; however, the centralized emphasis is the story as an explanation of events organized in order to make meaning of those experiences (Pinnegar & Daynes, 2007). At the heart of narrative inquiry is the focus on people's stories, a global presence expressed in every day human communication and within a person's own inward meaning making of his or her experiences and interpretation. As McAlpine (2016) stated,

Whether we have thought about it or not, narratives, whether oral or textual, are a distinct genre that we all know and use. In fact, we all tell stories about our lives every day since narrative provides a practical means for a person to construct a coherent plot about his/her life with a beginning, middle, end—a past, present and future. Each account, whether told only to oneself or to others, provides a robust way of integrating past experience into meaningful learning, locating oneself and others in the account, and foreshadowing the future. (p. 33)

A nuanced perspective offered by Clandinin and Rosiek (2007) spoke to the historically rooted ancestral presence of narratives:

Narrative inquiry is a ubiquitous practice in that, human beings have lived out and told stories about that living for as long as we could talk. And then we have talked about the



stories we tell for almost as long. These lived and told stories and the talk about the stories are one of the ways that we fill our world with meaning and enlist one another's assistance in building lives and communities. What feels new is the emergence of narrative methodologies in the field of social science research. (p. 35)

Clandinin and Rosiek spoke to the rise of narrative as a point of emphasis in analysis and a distinct approach in the social sciences; however, they remind the reader that narratives are anything but new.

Riessman (2005) extended Clandinin and Rosiek's (2007) explanation by illustrating the role of narratives in constructing meaning for people politically:

As nations and governments construct preferred narratives about history, so do social movements, organizations, scientists, other professionals, ethnic/racial groups, and individuals in stories of experience. What makes such diverse texts "narrative" is sequence and consequence: events are selected, organized, connected, and evaluated as meaningful for a particular audience. Storytellers interpret the world and experience in it; they sometimes create moral tales—how the world should be. (p. 1)

Although there is a broad and diverse interpretation of what narrative is, Clandinin and Connelly (2006) offered the following definition, which reflected a generally agreed upon set of common characteristics, and thus, represented this study's interpretation:

People shape their daily lives by stories of who they and others are and as they interpret their past in terms of these stories. Story, in the current idiom, is a portal through which a person enters the world and by which their experience of the world is interpreted and made personally meaningful. Narrative inquiry, the study of experience as story, then, is first and foremost a way of thinking about experience. Narrative inquiry as a methodology entails a view of the phenomenon. To use narrative inquiry methodology is to adopt a particular view of experience as phenomenon under study. (p. 375)

Clandinin and Connelly spoke to narrative methodology and the focus on peoples' experiences as a phenomenon. Ultimately, the essence of narrative methodology in this study was the narrative inquiry rationale.

Clandinin and Huber (in press) offered three areas the researcher should consider in order to justify why he or she are using the three spaces to narrative inquiry approach: personal justification, practical justification, and social justification.

**Personal justification.** Clandinin and Huber (in press) suggested that the justification of narrative inquiry for a researcher should consider three important pieces. First, the researcher needs to personally justify the methodology “in the context of their own life experiences, tensions and personal inquiry puzzles. Personal justification is commonly only thinly described in published narrative inquiries” (Clandinin & Huber, in press, p. 8). This researcher’s background as a middle school teacher, assistant principal, and principal in Colorado public schools has afforded a clear perspective of education policy from the federal and state levels. During these experiences, this researcher often wondered how such policies came to fruition and struggled to decipher the broad changes in Colorado education largely initiated by CAP4K.

**Practical justification.** A second area identified in the three spaces to narrative inquiry elicits a researcher’s practical reasons for using narrative research. Clandinin and Huber (in press) stated:

In order to justify narrative inquiry practically, researchers attend to the importance of considering the possibility of shifting or changing practice. For example, practical justifications are sometimes made in narrative inquiries around teacher education puzzles concerning the kinds of situations in which pre-service students might undertake practicum, deepening their understandings of who they are in relation with children and families or in medical education around puzzles concerning the conditions under which medical residents engage in reflecting on their clinical practice. (p. 8)

Although Clandinin and Huber referenced the practical justification of what teachers and medical professionals gain from narrative research, this researcher believes school leaders and education policymakers can gain important insights for school leaders by studying how education policy materializes. Often in this researcher’s experiences as a teacher and administrator, there was a

prevailing and collective sense that change was disconnected from the actual day-to-day complexities of teaching and managing a school. This often reflected a deep skepticism around the intentions and the lofty aspirations of these policies. More often than not, teachers saw these changes as just another requirement enforced upon them.

While the researcher was embedded in this skeptical view of policies, a curiosity grew of how these policies manifest. It can be assumed that the state education policymaking were well intentioned policies; however, how teachers and policymakers viewed education seemed disconnected. Through the narratives of policymakers, this researcher could gain deeper insight on how they viewed education reform, and perhaps, future policymaking could be a collectively shared experience and buy-in. As a school leader, communicating state-imposed changes to teachers can be difficult. Teachers have seen policies cycle throughout their careers. In this researcher's experience, many teachers and administrators would play the game and check the boxes, but few teachers saw new policies as beneficial to their students. There was also a frustration that as soon as teachers and administrators figured out what they needed to do, a new policy touting student success would quickly replace the old one, and thus, the cycle took on a never-ending process.

**Social justification.** The third consideration focused on the social justification for conducting narrative research. Clandinin (2000) stated:

Narrative inquiries are socially justified in terms of addressing the *so what* and *who cares* questions important in all research undertakings. We can think of social justification in two ways: theoretical justification as well as social action and policy justifications. Theoretical justification comes from justifying the work in terms of new methodological and disciplinary knowledge. Social action or policy justification comes in terms of social action such as making visible the intergenerational impact of residential schools on Aboriginal youth. (p. 8; emphasis in original)

This study's methodological narrative emphasized the theoretical justification in two ways: First, the narrative emphasis accesses the perspectives of significant stakeholders that contributed to the law. Second, through policymakers' stories of how they perceived the positive social impact of this policy, we can see how they viewed the problems and solutions in Colorado's education system.

### **Theoretical Frameworks**

Clandinin and Connelly's (2000) three-dimensions of inquiry space in conjunction with Lieblich's et al. (1998) holistic-content approach was applied to facilitate the structure and analytic perspective of this study's narrative analysis. Ollenereshaw and Creswell (2002) applied a similar approach in comparing the three-dimensions of narrative space inquiry from a holistic-content perspective with Yussen and Ozcan's (1997) problem-solution approach with data set gathered from a science story told by fourth graders' experiences in the classroom.

### **Lieblich et al.'s Four Main Narrative Approaches**

In the influential book, *Narrative Research: Reading, Analysis, and Interpretation*, authors Lieblich et al. (1998) identified four main areas of narrative approaches, as seen in Figure 3.2: holistic-content, holistic-form, categorical-content, and categorical-form (p. 13). In holistic analysis, the "story is viewed as a whole and the parts within it interpreted in relation to other parts of the story" (Lieblich et al., 1998, p. 13). Conversely, in categorical analysis "units are abstracted from the complete stories" (Lieblich et al., 1998, p. 13).

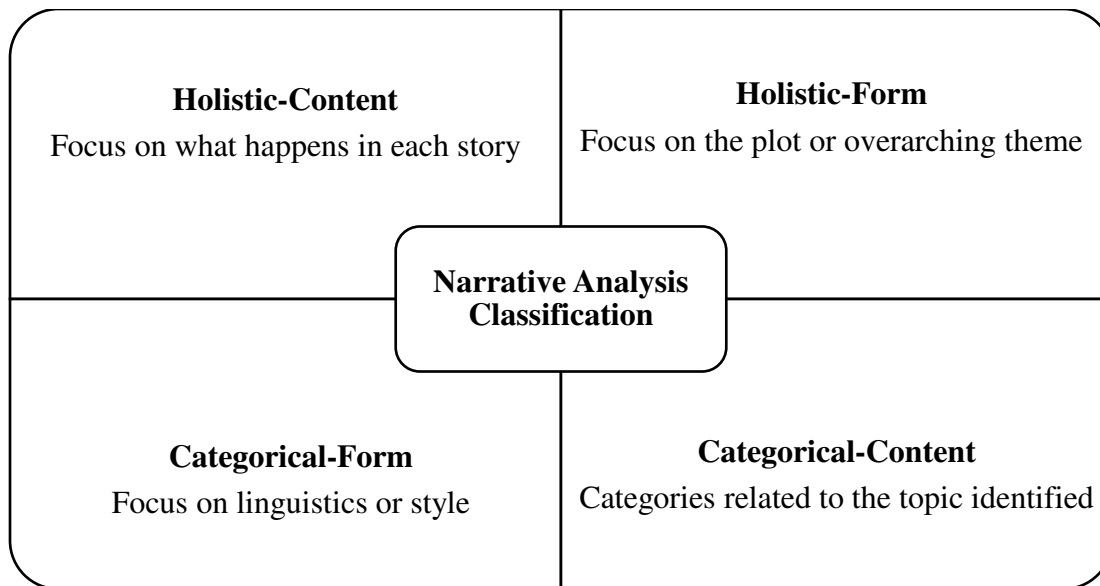


Figure 3.2. Narrative analysis classification chart.

Though Lieblich et al.'s (1998) four-approach schematic offered insight into each approach and implied an explicit dichotomy, this researcher's analysis did not need to subscribe to one approach. As Beal (2013) indicated, "Narrative analysis need not fit neatly into one of the four dimensions of their schema" and "combining analytic approaches is common in narrative research" (p. 694-95). For the purposes of this study, this researcher used two approaches: holistic-content and categorical-content to offer different angles for interpretation relative to the use of inductive and deductive approaches.

### **Clandinin and Connelly's (2000) Three-Dimensional Space to Inquiry**

The three-dimensions to narrative inquiry structure was based on Clandinin and Connelly's approach identified in their text, *Narrative Inquiry* (2000). The philosophical basis for this approach was influenced by John Dewey's philosophy of experience and was conceptualized around three components that shape a person's overall perception: personal/social, continuous/temporal, and situational/place oriented (see Figure 3.3).

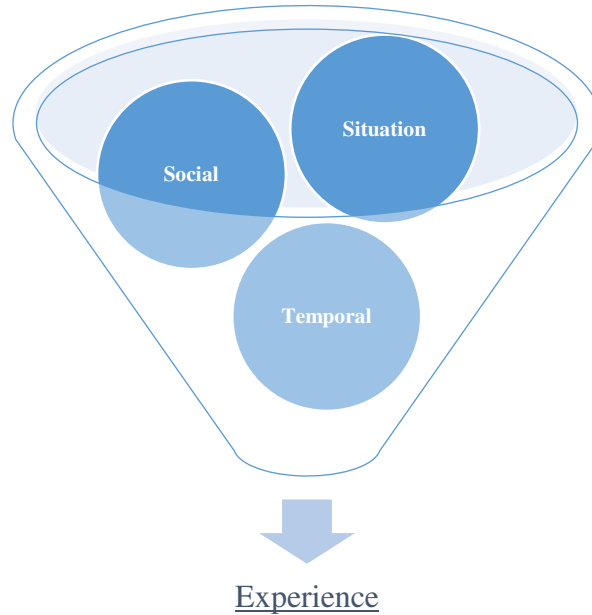


Figure 3.3. Three dimensions of experience.

Thus, the focus related to the experience of people inside and outside of those three realms of consideration, as shown in Table 3.1. Clandinin and Connelly stated:

Using this set of terms, any particular inquiry is defined by this three-dimensional space: studies have temporal dimensions and address temporal matters: they focus on the personal and the social in a balance appropriate to the inquiry: and they occur in specific places or sequences of places. (p. 54)

Table 3.1

*Three-Dimensions of Space to Narrative Inquiry*

<b>Interaction/Sociality</b>		<b>Continuity/Temporality</b>		<b>Situation/Place</b>	
<b>Personal</b>	<b>Social</b>	<b>Past</b>	<b>Present</b>	<b>Future</b>	
Look inward to internal conditions, feelings, hopes, aesthetic reactions, and moral dispositions.	Look outward to existential conditions in the environment with other people feelings, and their intentions,	Look backward to remembered experiences, feelings, and stories from earlier times.	Look at current experiences, feelings, and stories relating to actions of an event.	Look forward to implied and possible experiences and plot lines.	Look at context, time, and place situated in a physical landscape or setting with topographical and spatial boundaries with

	purposes, assumptions, and points of view.				characters' intentions, purposes, and different points of view.
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*Note.* From “Narrative Research: A Comparison of Two Restorying Data Analysis Approaches” by J. A. Ollerenshaw and J. W. Creswell, 2002, *Qualitative Inquiry*, 8(3), p. 340.

**Interaction/sociality.** Clandinin and Connelly (2000) organized narrative inquiry by outlining three-dimensional domains. The first dimension concerns the interaction or sociality of the individual. Analytical emphasis of the interviewees in this domain carefully looked at how the individual referenced himself or herself within the story. Similarly, analysis within this domain looked at how the individual referenced himself or herself in relation to others. The term sociality suggests that “narrative inquirers attend to both personal conditions and, simultaneously, to social conditions. By personal conditions, we mean the feelings, hopes, desires, aesthetic reactions and moral dispositions” (Connelly & Clandinin, 2006, p. 480) of the inquirer and participants. Social conditions refer to the milieu, the conditions under which people’s experiences and events are unfolding. These social conditions are understood, in part, in terms of cultural, social, institutional and linguistic narratives. A second dimension of the sociality commonplace directs attention to the inquiry relationship between researchers’ and participants’ lives. Narrative inquirers cannot subtract themselves from the inquiry relationship (Connelly & Clandinen, 2000, p. 480).

**Continuity/temporality.** Second, there is continuity/temporality, which references the past, present, and future. As Ollerenshaw and Creswell (2002) stated:

Continuity or temporality is central to narrative research. The researcher analyzes the transcript or text for information about experiences of the storyteller. In addition, it is analyzed for present experiences illustrated in actions of an event or actions to occur in the future. In this way, the analyst considers the past, present, and future. (p. 339)

This study's analysis, by necessity, isolated the emergence of CAP4K and potentially suggested its development was a static phenomenon stripped from the broader context. However, the awareness of temporality reminded the researcher and reader that the process in actuality was a fluid, constantly changing environment in a continual state of flux. This researcher interpreted Clandinin and Connelly's (2000) concept of temporality metaphorically analogous to taking a photograph. The photograph is a quick snapshot, yet this snapshot frozen in time is actually a fluid temporality reflecting a complex and dynamic flow of complexity. The snapshot implies stasis. Similarly, isolating analysis around CAP4K suggested singularity; however, in reality, it reflected the confluence of a complex dynamic too complicated to reduce into a single view. CAP4K is not static. The acknowledgement of temporality for a researcher's analysis of a bounded phenomenon is a reminder of its broader interconnections.

As Clandinin and Connelly (2000) stated, temporality is focused on "directing attention temporally [and] points inquirers toward the past, present and future of people, places, things and events under study" (p. 479). Clandinin and Connelly extended the concept of temporality to note that we are constantly constructing and rewriting the narratives to our own experiences. The authors further illuminated that "narrative inquirers need to attend to the temporality of their own and participants' lives, as well as to the temporality of places, things and events (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 4).

**Situation/place.** The third dimension of inquiry is situation/place. Clandinin and Connelly (2006) defined place as "the specific concrete, physical and topological boundaries of place or sequences of places where the inquiry and events take place" (p. 480). Ollerenshaw and Creswell (2002) stated, "Situation or place needs also to be analyzed in a transcript or text. Narrative researchers look for specific situations in the storyteller's landscape. This involves the



physical places or the sequence of the storyteller's places" (p. 339). Thus, this researcher's analytical process sought examples within the interviews that referenced the physical spaces their stories alluded.

### **Advocacy Coalition Framework's Theory of Beliefs and Coalitions**

A critical component to the policymaking considerations of the ACF is the role of beliefs and advocacy coalitions. A central argument of this concept is that policymakers seek others with similar policy core beliefs. As Weible and Sabattier (2007) stated, "The ACF argues that policy participants will seek allies with people who hold similar policy core beliefs among legislators, agency officials, interest group leaders, judges, researchers, and intellectuals from multiple levels of government" (p. 196). This wide inclusion highlighted the importance of policy actors beyond legislators which also reflected the ACF's concept of the policy subsystem.

This study explored the second hypothesis within the ACF's theory of beliefs and advocacy coalitions: "Actors within an advocacy coalition will show substantial consensus on issues pertaining to the policy core, although less so on secondary aspects" (Weible & Sabattier, 2007, p. 220). In Colorado, the proposition suggested that the majority bipartisanship reflected by legislators and non-legislators' linking of policy core beliefs fostered P20 alignment in Colorado, thus, accounting for the overwhelming passage of the law. Further, any concerns voiced in the committee hearings likely reflected issues pertaining to secondary policy beliefs.

### **Population and Sampling Procedures**

The method for selecting participants for this study followed a purposeful sampling approach (Creswell, 2007). Participants were deeply involved in Colorado's P20 alignment process and had a uniquely positioned vantage point. Individuals considered influential in the decision-making process were determined through an initial analysis of documents and

exploratory conversations beginning with former Governor Ritter. Governor Ritter recommended several people he thought were critical to Colorado's P20 alignment efforts.

### **Interview Questions**

The researcher intentionally kept the formal interview process semi-structured and managed interviews around topics related to the research questions. When appropriate, the researcher asked clarifying questions, but ultimately, let the participants tell their story. The following pre-designated list of questions facilitated areas the researcher wanted to cover during the unfolding interviews:

1. Can you describe your experience in the development of CAP4K?
2. What was your understanding of the perceived problem of Colorado's education system at the time this policy was under consideration?
3. What was your understanding of the perceived solution?
4. Do you recall any opposing coalitions to the policy?

### **Instrumentation and Data Collection**

Interviews were the main source of data collection for this study of Colorado's P20 alignment. The research questions guided the data collection process and focused on the lived experiences of three individuals closely involved with Colorado's P20 alignment. Education reform was a significant piece to Governor Ritter's campaign agenda, and P20 alignment emerged as one of his most significant accomplishments. Through an initial informal interview with Governor Ritter, the researcher obtained several names of individuals the Governor felt were uniquely involved with P20 alignment. The researcher then contacted those individuals and either met with them face-to-face or had a conversation with them on the phone. These were informal interviews to gain a sense of their involvement in the policymaking process. Through

those informal interviews, the researcher then ascertained names repeatedly emerging as some of the most prominent individuals involved with P20 alignment and eventual passage of CAP4K.

The researcher reduced the interview list to four who were frequently mentioned from the previous conversations. Due to various conflicting responsibilities, one individual could not participate in a formal interview. Three individuals provided accounts of their involvement within the policymaking process underlying P20 alignment. Colorado State University's Institutional Review Board (IRB) process approved my research proposal, and the participants signed the appropriate releases. Former Governor Ritter and Gianneschi agreed to use their names and the third preferred anonymity. The researcher assigned the name of Participant 3 to this person.

Two voice recorders were used in case one failed during the interview. The researcher conducted the first interview with Participant 3's over the phone. The researcher conducted the second interview face-to-face with Gianneschi, Governor Ritter's chief education policy consultant at the time and a person of whom I considered critical in facilitating CAP4K. This interview took place in his Colorado Mountain College office located in downtown Glenwood Springs. The third conducted interview with former Governor Ritter took place at his Colorado State University downtown Denver office. The interviews garnered over a hundred pages of transcriptions. Each interviewee had the opportunity to redact, add, or clarify any statements within the transcriptions.

Additionally, the researcher worked with Molly Otto, Manager of Library Services at the Colorado Joint Legislative Library in recording the education committee hearings and assisted in the collection of all audio-recorded legislative hearings. In all, the researcher's transcribed audio recordings totaled over 100 pages. The 74-page report by the CDE (2009) was the third major

component utilized for analysis, which illustrated teachers' concerns and comments related to CAP4K.

### **Data Analysis**

Using Braun and Clarke's (2006) guide to thematic analysis, this researcher utilized a holistic-content approach for the analysis of interviews coupled with the overarching structure of Clandinin and Connelly's (2000) three-dimensional space inquiry. Using the holistic-content approach focused, my attention focused on themes in relation to the whole story (Lieblich et al., 1998, Fraser, 2004).

In a separate analysis, the researcher applied a categorical-content approach framed by the ACF's theory regarding beliefs and advocacy coalitions (Lieblich et al., 1998; Jenkins-Smith et al., 2007). The categorical-content approach entailed that "categories of the studied topic are defined, and separate utterances of the text are extracted, classified, and gathered into these categories/groups" (Lieblich et al., 1998, p. 13). The application of this deductive approach was applied to the committee hearings.

### **Inductive and Deductive Approach to Thematic Analysis**

As Braun and Clarke (2006) illustrated, "A theme captures something important about the data in relation to the research question, and represents some level of *patterned* response or meaning within the data set" (p. 12; emphasis in original). Thematic analysis can include an inductive bottom up approach, or a deductive top down approach (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Braun and Clarke (2006) said:

An inductive approach means the themes identified are strongly linked to the data themselves. They would also not be driven by the researcher's theoretical interest in the area or topic. Inductive analysis is therefore a process of coding the data *without* trying to fit it into a pre-existing coding frame, or the researcher's analytic preconceptions. (p. 12)

The inductive approach was framed around Clandinin and Donnelly's (2000) three-dimensions of space inquiry. In contrast, Braun and Clarke (2006) said:

Thematic analysis would tend to be driven by the researcher's theoretical or analytic interest in the area, and is thus more explicitly analyst-driven. This form of thematic analysis tends to provide less a rich description of the data overall, and more a detailed analysis of some aspect of the data. (p. 12)

### **Phases in Braun and Clarke's Thematic Analysis**

The analytical phases outline the process and provide a means for identifying major themes.

**Phase 1: Familiarizing yourself with your data.** Before the researcher started coding, the transcripts from the interviewees and committee hearings were read several times to gain a sense of the data. Braun & Clarke (2006) stated that during this phase,

[it] is vital that you immerse yourself in the data to the extent that you are familiar with the depth and breadth of the content. Immersion usually involves repeated reading of the data, and reading the data in an *active* way—searching for meanings, patterns and so on. It is ideal to read through the entire data set at least once before you begin your coding, as your ideas, identification of possible patterns will be shaped as you read through. (p. 17; emphasis in original)

This corresponds with Lieblich et al.'s (1998) recommendations in their steps to both holistic and categorical analysis. A significant part of this process meant listening to the interviews and hearings repeatedly before transcribing. Next, the researcher transcribed the recordings of the interviews and committee hearings (Braun & Clark, 2006, p. 17).

**Phase 2: Generating initial codes.** The second phase to Bruner and Clarke's (2006) process involved the identification of initial codes. This phase emphasized identifying codes and organizing the data into meaningful groups. Because this research used both a deductive and inductive approach, the researcher approached the initial coding process accordingly:

1. With the deductive process, the researcher first looked for data reflecting those identified with ACF's use of policy core beliefs and pre-designated two main categories on coalitions and beliefs. A sub-category around the ACF's concept of secondary policy beliefs was included. These categories were then applied to the transcribed interviews and committee hearings.
2. The inductive coding process shaped a holistic-content perspective identified around Clandinin and Connelly's (2000) three-dimensions of space inquiry: interaction/sociality, continuity/temporality, and situation/place; these categories acted as broad initial categories for organizational purposes. The inductive process involved identifying categories identified from the interviews. The researcher then organized the data around meaningful groups (Braun & Clark, 2006, p. 29). In this stage, the researcher manually highlighted the data corresponding with each of the three dimensions and conducted this analysis for each interview separately.
3. Following Braun and Clarke's (2006) advice, the researcher coded for as many themes and patterns as possible (p. 20). During this phase, Braun and Clarke suggested keeping as much context as possible. Using the holistic-content approach encouraged a contextually holist perspective precluding a loss of context. Additionally, this was a preliminary coding process. Nothing was permanently shielded from change as the process unfolded and new understandings were identified.

**Phase 3: Searching for themes.** The next phase identified by Bruner and Clarke (2006) followed the initial process where the researcher coded and began grouping codes into themes. To facilitate this inductive process, the researcher mapped out preliminary themes and connecting identified categories and subcategories. Additionally, using Table 3.1 as a

representation of the three-dimensions of inquiry space, the researcher began by placing examples from the interviews within of the appropriate three categories. For example, Governor Ritter mentioned traveling throughout the state of Colorado prior to his campaign. This was located in the place category as well as the temporality category.

For the deductive approach, the researcher scanned anything resembling a fit with one of the three designated categories. For example, interviewees consistently identified a core belief in preparing students for workforce readiness and post-secondary success; therefore, the researcher established this as one of the dominant themes under the policy core belief category. This approach was similarly applied to the committee hearings.

**Phase 4: Reviewing themes.** The next phase began with the researcher's set of preliminary themes and used Braun and Clarke's (2006) two-level process in reviewing and refining themes which was applied to both the inductive and deductive approaches. The first level considered a reviewing process of the codes the researcher identified. As Braun and Clarke stated:

This means you need to read all the collated extracts for each theme, and consider whether they appear to form a coherent pattern. If your candidate themes appear to form a coherent pattern, you then move on to the second level of this phase. If your candidate themes do not fit, you will need to consider whether the theme itself is problematic, or whether some of the data extracts within it simply do not fit there—in which case, you would rework your theme, creating a new theme, finding a home for those extracts that do not currently work in an already-existing theme, or discarding them from the analysis. (p. 20)

Braun and Clarke (2006) further described the second level:

Consider the validity of individual themes in relation to the data set, but also whether your candidate thematic map 'accurately' reflects the meanings evident in the data set as a whole. To some extent, what counts as 'accurate' representation depends on your theoretical and analytic approach. However, in this phase you re-read your entire data set for two purposes. The first is, as discussed, to ascertain whether the themes „work“ in relation to the data set. The second is to code any additional data within themes that has

been missed in earlier coding stages. The need for recoding from the data set is to be expected as coding is an ongoing organic process. (p. 21)

**Phase 5: Defining and naming themes.** Once the researcher had two thematic maps of the data for both inductive and deductive, the researcher proceeded through phase five where “you then define and further refine the themes that you will present for your analysis, and analyze the data within them” (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 21). Further, Braun and Clarke (2006) explained:

By “define and refine” we mean identifying the “essence” of what each theme is about (as well as the themes overall), and determining what aspect of the data each theme captures. It is important not to try to get a theme to do too much, or to be too diverse and complex. You do this by going back to collated data extracts for each theme, and organizing them into a coherent and internally consistent account, with accompanying narrative. It is vital that you do not *just* paraphrase the content of the data extracts presented, but identify what is interesting about them and why! (p. 21; emphasis in original)

For each individual theme, the researcher needs to conduct and write a detailed analysis. The researcher must identify the story that each individual theme communicates; furthermore, Braun and Clark (2006) said:

[I]t is important to consider how it fits into the broader overall story that you are telling about your data, in relation to your research question or questions, to ensure there is not too much overlap between themes. So you need to consider the themes themselves, and each theme in relation to the others. As part of the refinement, you will identify whether or not a theme contains any sub-themes. Sub-themes are essentially themes-within-a theme. They can be useful for giving structure to a particularly large and complex theme, and also for demonstrating the hierarchy of meaning within the data. (p. 22)

**Phase 6: Producing the report.** The final phase was producing the report. Because the researcher used an inductive and deductive approach, the preceding phases were conducted twice and reported separately in analyses. The first related to the ACF and the predesignated constructs the researcher adopted. The second analyses applying the three-dimensions of inquiry



to the data. In the discussion, the researcher synthesized the findings from both approaches.

Figure 3.4 provides a visual of the phases.

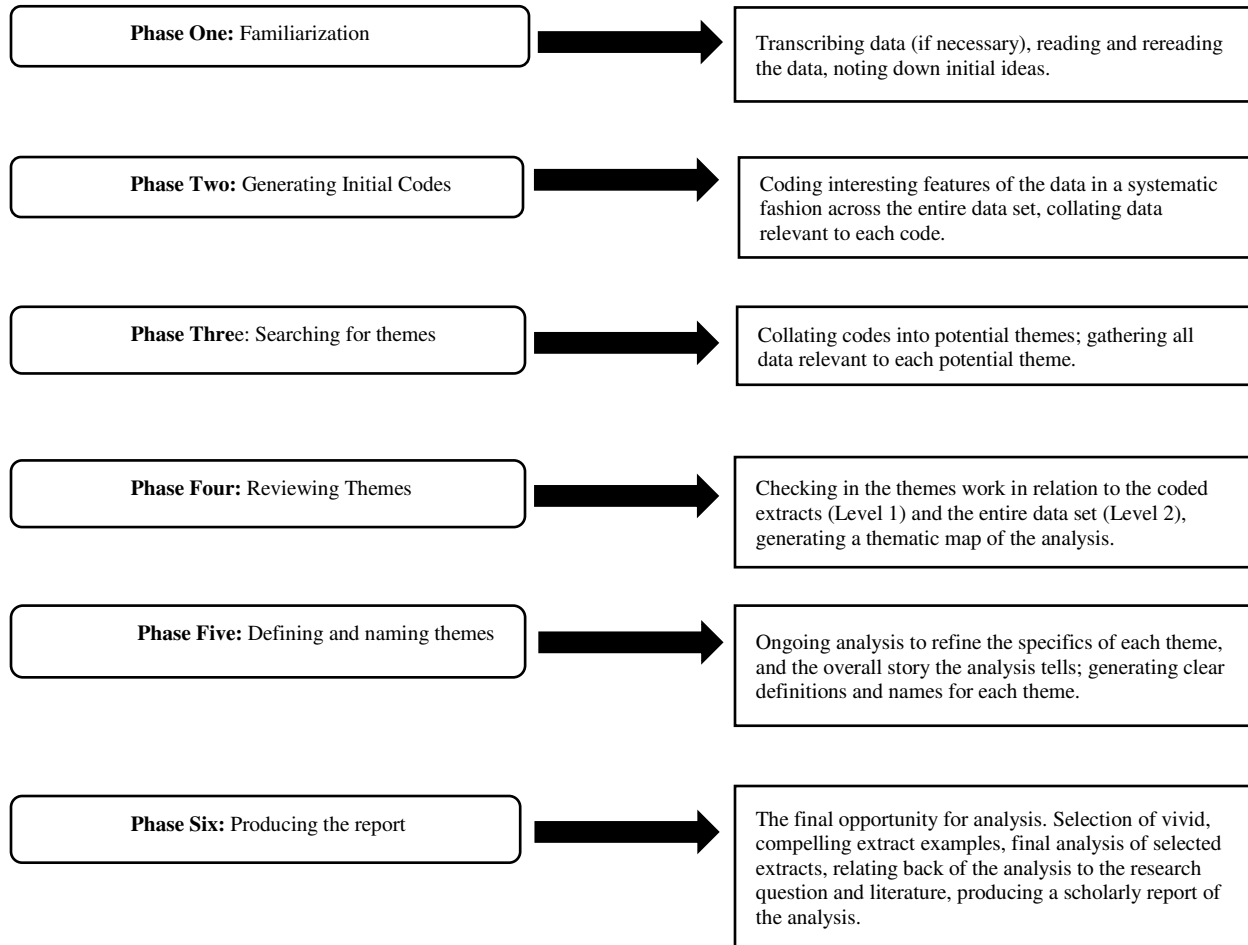


Figure 3.4. Braun and Clarke’s (2000) six phases to thematic analysis. Adapted from “Using Thematic Analysis in Psychology” by V. Braun and V. Clarke, 2006, *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3(2), p. 35.

Finally, Braun and Clarke (2000) provided a guide facilitating both inductive and deductive approaches. Each step was carefully followed to ensure replication. Further ensuring that the steps were followed, the authors provided a 15-step checklist (see Table 3.2).

Table 3.2

*Braun and Clarke’s 15-Point Checklist of Criteria for Good Thematic Analysis*

Process	No.	Criteria
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Transcription	1	The data have been transcribed to an appropriate level of detail, and the transcripts have been checked against the tapes for accuracy.
<hr/>		
Coding	2	Each data items have been given equal attention in the coding process.
	3	Themes have not been generated from a few vivid examples (an anecdotal approach), but instead the coding process has been thorough, inclusive, and comprehensive.
	4	All relevant extracts for each theme have been collated.
	5	Themes have been checked against each other and back to the original data set.
	6	Themes are internally coherent, consistent, and distinctive.
<hr/>		
Analysis	7	Data have been analyzed–interpreted, made sense of–rather than just paraphrased or described.
	8	Analysis and data match each other–the extracts illustrate the analytic claims.
	9	Analysis tells a convincing and well-organized story about the data and topic.
	10	A good balance between analytic narrative and illustrative extracts is provided.
<hr/>		
Overall	11	Enough time has been allocated to complete all phases of the analysis adequately, without rushing a phase or giving it a once-over-lightly.
<hr/>		
Written report	12	The assumptions about, and specific approach to, thematic analysis are clearly explicated.
	13	There is a good fit between what you claim you do, and what you show you have done–i.e., described method and reported analysis are consistent.
	14	The language and concepts used in the report are consistent with the epistemological position of the analysis.
	15	The researcher is positioned as <i>active</i> in the research process; themes do not just emerge.

*Note.* From Braun and Clarke, 2006.

## **Credibility and Trustworthiness**

Research oriented around a positivist paradigm uses such terms as validity and reliability. Conversely, a constructivist perspective highlights terms emphasizing trustworthiness and credibility (Lincoln & Guba, 1986; Shenton, 2004). To ensure credibility and trustworthiness in this study, this researcher engaged in a preliminary analysis of documents and initial conversations with potential interviewees. The researcher carefully built strong, trusting relationships with interviewees. Each participant had an opportunity to clarify and/or redact anything said in the recorded interviews, as well as, the opportunity to review the transcriptions of the audio recordings. Additionally, interviewees always had the opportunity to opt out of any questions they were uncomfortable with answering. Frequent debriefing with interviewees about the researcher's interpretation of their stories was ongoing during the interview to ensure that credibility.

The researcher used multiple pieces of evidence from numerous sources to establish a chain of evidence. The researcher then carefully analyzed the interview, committee hearings, and archival data multiple times. Every attempt to triangulate the sources of data to increase the credibility and trustworthiness was taken.

## **Conclusion**

This qualitative study used a narrative methodology exploring the policymaking process in CAP4K. Informed though an overarching paradigm constructively grounded, the study focused on the meaning making ascribed by interviewees and committee hearing participants. Additionally, the researcher analyzed committee hearings.

There is a broad range of *a priori* approaches influenced by the field of political science available to the researcher in deciphering the complexity of policymaking. Conversely, narrative inquiry is an inductive approach that sought an understanding of the inquired phenomenon

following analysis. To gain insights from both perspectives, the researcher provided two approaches. The first was guided by Clandinin and Connelly's (2000) dimensions of space inquiry using a holistic-content approach to interview analysis. The second approach applied the ACF's major theory regarding beliefs and advocacy coalitions using a categorical-content analysis to committee hearings. Both approaches were subsequently analyzed following Braun and Clarke's (2006) six phases to thematic analysis. However, the researcher departed from the ACF's positivist orientation. Instead, this study rooted itself within a constructivist paradigm and employed a narrative analytical approach emphasizing the lived experiences of three individuals who influenced the development and passage of CAP4K. The primary emphasis for this study focused on interviews. Through narrative content analysis, the researcher built themes and categories around the research questions.

Colorado's P20 alignment significantly signaled a shift in officially addressing the dichotomous relationship between Colorado's P12 education system and higher education. Among other things, the extensive and ambitious legislation of Senate Bill 08-212, the Preschool to Postsecondary Education Alignment Act of 2009 known as CAP4K, provided an avenue creating a seamless system between grade levels while preparing students for workforce readiness and post-secondary success. CAP4K intended to accommodate the quickly changing landscape of an increasingly global and interconnected society. The preliminary footwork leading to this policy change was a complex interplay involving a broad range of interest groups and political maneuvering.

## CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS

This qualitative study used narrative methodology to explore the development of Colorado's P20 alignment policymaking process culminating in Senate Bill 08-212, the Preschool to Postsecondary Education Alignment Act of 2009. Narrative analysis emphasized the lived experiences of former Governor Bill Ritter, his chief education policy advisor, Matt Gianneschi, and Participant 3, an anonymous individual from the Colorado Department of Education (CDE) closely involved with the policymaking dialogue and implementation of CAP4K.

The study also analyzed the House and Senate education committee hearings on CAP4K by supplementing the interviews to identify how legislators and testifying non-legislators formulated their own interpretations, meaning, support, and concerns on CAP4K. Finally, this study examined themes identified from the CDE's findings gathered from a statewide tour exploring teachers' perceptions on CAP4K, which illuminated how teachers interpreted the legislation from their practitioner perspectives (CDE, 2009). Three main research questions guided this study:

1. What were the lived experiences of interviewees in the development of CAP4K?
  - a. What were the interviewees' perceptions of the problems and solutions of Colorado's education system leading to CAP4K?
  - b. What were the interviewees' experiences in successful coalition building leading to the broad support for CAP4K?
  - c. What were the interviewees' perceptions of the challenges in their experiences with the development of CAP4K?

- d. How did interviewees ascribe meaning to the development and impact of CAP4K?
2. Was there evidence of secondary beliefs communicated in the committee hearings about CAP4K?
3. How did themes identified by the Colorado Department of Educations' statewide tour gathering teachers' input illustrate concerns on CAP4K?

This study applied two analytical strategies inductively and deductively to facilitate a multiple perspective. The inductive approach structured its analysis around Clandinin and Connely's (2000) *three-dimensions to narrative inquiry*. With a lens emphasizing identified themes from the broad, contextual information provided within each interview, a holistic-content (Lieblich et al., 1998) perspective complemented the three-dimensions to narrative inquiry. The deductive approach applied the ACF's concept of secondary beliefs as predesignated categories and utilized a categorical-content approach (Lieblich et al., 1998).

The first section of this chapter delivers a historical snapshot of significant events leading to P20 alignment in Colorado and briefly reviews the bill's core ideas to provide the reader with general context. The second section addresses research question one and provides the findings from the inductive approach applied to the interviews. The third section addresses research question two and illustrates the findings from the application of the deductive process to the committee hearings with the predesignated construct of secondary beliefs. Finally, section four addresses the third research question and explores the themes identified by the CDE's statewide teacher tour on CAP4K.

## **Restatement of the Problem**

The historically entrenched divide characterizing P12 and higher education systems in Colorado dramatically shifted under CAP4K's implementation in 2008. This significant departure from previous practices in Colorado's education system was widely considered the most noteworthy education policy reform Colorado ever enacted; however, an understanding of the underlying policymaking process fundamental to its development was absent in P20 alignment research. More broadly, research investigating P20 movements throughout the country were relatively minimal, as demonstrated in the literature review.

This gap demonstrated a need to understand the policymaking dynamics involved with Colorado's ambitious pursuit of P20 alignment. Furthermore, examining Colorado's experience contributes to the limited literature by providing further evidence for education policy researchers. From a methodological consideration, this study's application of an interpretive approach emphasizing narrative methods focused on the lived experiences of those close to the development of CAP4K, thus, offering insight into the unique individual stories on Colorado's educational transformation. Additionally, the narrative methodology was complemented by a deductive approach using a component of the ACF in committee hearing analysis.

Moreover, the study of state level education policymaking by applying developed theories from the field of political science were very limited (McLendon et al., 2015). Among the many theories available to the policy scholar, the ACF has emerged as a popular model assisting researchers interested in understanding the policymaking process. Although this study did not fully apply all of the components related to the ACF, the ACF's theory on secondary beliefs and advocacy coalitions facilitated the organization of a complex policy setting while simultaneously funneling analysis around the ACF's emphasis on beliefs. The alliance of

individual beliefs of the problems and solutions of Colorado's education system resonated with Democrats and Republicans as well as highly diverse stakeholder interests.

### **Background and Setting**

In 2006, Governor Owens (R) created the Education Alignment Council (EAC) in the attempt to spark dialogue on P20 alignment in Colorado. The EAC mirrored ideas throughout the United States about education reform and alignment across P12 and higher education systems. Other evidence of Colorado's interest with alignment between P12 and higher education extended from state Senator Tupa (D-Boulder) who introduced a bill advocating proposals similar to the EAC's proposals on P20 alignment. Despite Tupa's bill passing both chambers of Congress, Governor Owens vetoed the bill and suggested he had already established a council exploring P20 alignment through the EAC, which rendered Tupa's bill unnecessary (Ortiz, 2008, p. 3). However, nothing amounted from the EAC, and P20 alignment efforts stalled.

Notwithstanding the failure of the EAC and Tupa's bill translating into policy, the conversation around Colorado education alignment appeared, expressing concern and acknowledging that changes in Colorado's education system needed consideration (Ortiz, 2008). This mounting discontent likely paved an open path for incoming Governor Ritter (D) to take advantage of the momentum (Ortiz, 2008, p. 31). In November of 2006, Governor Ritter won the governorship by a wide margin. Once in office, Governor Ritter quickly created the P20 Education Coordinating Council (ECC) by executive order, an uncommon practice in other states interested in P20 alignment (Ortiz, 2008, p. 32).

Through the ECC, a number of broad and ambitious solutions emerged. Ultimately, these solutions envisioned a seamless coordination between P12 and higher education systems,



emphasizing students' preparedness for the workforce or post-secondary success as they transitioned from high school. In addition, the ECC created recommendations advocating for the development of meaningful assessments oriented around academic growth, a statewide data system tracking longitudinal trends of student achievement, and a rigorous standards-based curriculum for all students in Colorado. The EEC's recommendations eventually made their way to Governor Ritter's desk and were ratified through Senate Bill 08-212 and, two months later culminate in the *Preschool to Postsecondary Education Alignment Act of 2009*.

CAP4K required the CDE, in conjunction with the Colorado Department of Higher Education (CDHE), to revise standards extending from preschool through Grade 12. Secondly, CAP4K charged the CDE to modify content standards with the ultimate goal of preparing students for postsecondary success and workforce readiness. Finally, CAP4K obligated the CDE to meet the highest standards associated with national and international evidence of success. In turn, local education agencies were required, at a minimum, to meet the level of standards set forward by the CDE.

As part of the changes stimulated by CAP4K, Colorado incrementally shifted away from its current assessments, the Colorado Student Assessment Program (CSAP). This transition resulted in the next layer of assessments called the Transition Student Assessment Program (TCAP). At the time of this writing, the state uses the Colorado Measures of Academic Success (CMAS), which reflects the Common Core national standards in language arts and math facilitated through a partnership with an outside consortium called The Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers. The new standards and measurement of performance align with college admissions criteria and, in principle, indicate whether the student is ready for workforce and postsecondary success.

## Interview Findings

Broadly, Research Questions 1a-d focused on interviewed participants' experiences with CAP4K, and offered a unique interpretation revealing the complex dynamics in CAP4K's education policymaking process.

### Research Question 1a

Research Question 1a asked: What were the interviewees' perceptions of the problems and solutions of CAP4K? Three aspects of analytical awareness were considered by applying the three-dimensions of inquiry: interaction, continuity, and place/situation. Combined, the elements represented the intertwined pieces shaping the interviewees experiences.

**Bill Ritter.** The inductive analysis of Governor Ritter's interview on the perceptions of the problems and solutions of CAP4K produced two prominent themes. Firstly, Ritter's frustration with assessments related to NCLB. Secondly, the need to realign Colorado's education system to meet student preparedness for workforce and post-secondary success. Each theme figured significantly in how Ritter understood Colorado's problems, which equally shaped his understanding of the solutions he felt necessary to move Colorado's education system forward.

***Theme one: Assessments.*** Ritter began our interview by illustrating the three aspects of interaction, temporality, and situation. Through these intertwined aspects, he deliberated on how the various issues in Colorado formulated with his initial thought to run for Governor:

When I began to think about running for governor, I began to look at different pieces of the pie in terms of public policy, and one of those was education and the second part of that was education funding. So I sort of went to school for a couple years really trying to understand as much as I could what the issues were and what we could do in Colorado to improve upon whatever public policy was currently in place.

Ritter's account opened a window into how he started to learn about the various issues confronting Colorado and suggests the process was a calculated attempt to figure out what the problems were in the state.

The collateral, unintended impacts related to the federal government's No Child Left Behind (NCLB) legislation particularly resonated with Ritter. Extending from a 2002 update of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) created in 1965, this reauthorization of ESEA garnered significant bipartisan support in Congress in 2001 and was signed by President Bush into law in 2002. The broad intent focused on narrowing the achievement gap between English Language Learners, students with special education needs, and students who were poor or minorities, whom traditionally lagged behind in academic performance relative to their peers. A significant point of contention with NCLB centered on accountability. Schools, districts, and states faced a possible disciplinary impact related to not meeting Annual Yearly Progress (AYP). Mostly troublesome for Ritter concerned the fairness of NCLB's accountability system. For him, inner city schools and those already failing were at a significant disadvantage. He explained:

While I am campaigning—that is during the Bush administration, the federal administration—there had been a big effort there about No Child Left Behind, and was really about trying to think about how the federal government could impose standardization, particularly standardization on testing. I think it'd be fair to say that in my learning as much as I could about this . . . I got to a place of understanding in the way we were assessing students was inadequate, and particularly inadequate for a failing school or for an inner-city school that had a lot of kids who had a lot of issues that dealt with learning.

The potentially profound implications related to unsatisfactory performance by school and school districts on assessment achievement data furthered Ritter's frustration with the high stakes testing mandated through NCLB. The one size fits all implications of NCLB and the inequitable

implications for disadvantaged communities as a result of one tests' results was central to

Ritter's frustrations:

So you had the federal picture of No Child Left Behind, which I think a lot of people felt was, itself, not geared toward inner cities, not geared toward really thinking about students and student growth and school growth and those kinds of things. Then you had these individual schools that were being shut down, where the complaint was, we're not getting any credit for helping students more than maybe our peers were helping them. What we're being measured at was where [the] student happens to be on a given day, with an assessment that maybe even measures it pretty narrowly.

The social interactions of talking to teachers and members of the union reflected his learning process, which influenced Ritter's thinking. Through those interactions, he increasingly felt these assessments fell short of their intention because they were a snapshot of a student's performance on any given day in whatever month they were doing the assessments. He believed teachers and schools did not get credit for growth and, instead, were disproportionately judged by a shortsighted assessment devoid of a longitudinal context in academic progress. Though there was accountability, the measurement potentially held significant consequences due to the federal government's retributive approach, which could ultimately, result in school closure or takeover by the state.

Ritter's conversations with educators and community members about the amount of time consumed from mandated testing further exemplified the dimensional aspect of social interaction shaping Ritter's experience, as well as demonstrating his uneasiness with the current education system. These discussions also highlighted the hours required for testing and the hours detracted from classroom learning in an education system already stretched for instructional time. Additionally, a common frustration with the assessments regarded the limitations of the assessments, which lacked critical and creative thinking measurements. This concern ultimately influenced Ritter's thoughts on advocating for new learning standards and revised assessments

incorporating critical and creative thinking skills within the broader umbrella of P20 alignment. Ritter recalled, “We actually mentioned specifically that this new assessment, this new student assessment has to include those kinds of things [critical and creative thinking] as well. . . .”

Adding to his personal thoughts, Ritter considered who would help him advance his interests in helping kids and move Colorado’s education system forward. He chose Barbara O’Brien, an experienced and passionate child advocate in Colorado. The following account illustrated Ritter’s personal interaction while simultaneously setting the place where this thought process unfolded. He stated:

So just generically, kids were such a big part of my interest here, and sort of thinking about this. This is late October, early November of 2005, so a year out from the election. I was napping [in the car, and he made it clear to me he had a driver] and I said, "It's Barbara O'Brien!"

Barbara had run the Children's Campaign for as long as I had been in public life. She was just this phenomenal advocate for children and children's issues. So I approached Barbara and asked her, and she said yes. And we announced, I think, in January of 2006 that we were running as a ticket. Then Barbara was very involved on the campaign side and on the policy side. I'm thinking, "Okay, what are the kinds of things we need to do next?"

In a landslide victory, Ritter became the 41<sup>st</sup> Governor of Colorado, and following his inauguration, he quickly formed the P20 ECC in 2007 through executive order, signaling his robust education agenda. Governor Ritter created three co-chairs, two of which included Barbara O’Brien and Joe Garcia, who, at the time, was President of Colorado State University at Pueblo. In a tip to Ritter’s bipartisan mindset, he additionally selected Bruce Benson for the third chair who was, at the time, on the Board of Trustees at Metro State University and passionate about education issues, as well as someone carrying a prominent profile within the Republican Party and oil industry.

*Theme two: Workforce and postsecondary readiness.* Theme two of Governor Ritter's interview exemplified his concern with Colorado's need to address workforce and postsecondary preparedness. Illuminating the social and situational dimension to his experience, Ritter recalled how during his transition into office, he heard others at the state capitol saying:

This is a different day, you know? That a college degree now operates a little bit like what high school degree was when you were in high school. It is important. Then an advanced degree can make all the difference in the world, like a college degree used to make all the difference in the world in terms of employment.

Ritter's reference to the perceived declining competitiveness of a college diploma offered an additional insight around the complex challenges surrounding Colorado's education system. A high school diploma did not carry as much weight as it used to and getting a bachelor's degree was falling into a similar pattern. Ritter explained that getting a graduate degree seemed to give someone the competitive edge. Although the insight was not a rationale for workforce and postsecondary readiness in the broader policymaking process, the narrative instead focused on preparing students for an increasingly changing and competitive industry. Further, postsecondary preparedness was largely predicated around the argument that incoming college students were ill prepared for the academic rigor demanded, which was a result from inadequate secondary preparation.

Ultimately, the education challenges Ritter heard from Coloradoans while on the campaign trail and from those surrounding him in office significantly shaped his beliefs around Colorado's education problems. High stakes testing, workforce readiness, learning standards embedding critical thinking skills, and college preparation all seemed to roll into one major concern for Ritter. These eventually were the key points emphasized in CAP4K and further prompted him to extend grade level alignment through higher education. Ritter stated:

We're really clear in the bill, CAP4K, that we're also about workforce training, about technical and vocational education, about community colleges, trying to inspire community college to be a part of it. But it was clear to me that the learning that happens in our lifetime doesn't end in year 20 after K-20, but that we needed to include it in our thinking in trying to decide what are the kinds of standards and what's the kind of testing we want to have in place—have this go all the way up. There were just so many complaints as well about the number of Colorado high school grads going to four-year universities and having to take remedial courses. That was part of the problem statement as well. So, I was like, "No, we're not going to take this just to 16. We're going to take it all the way up to 20."

A portion of the recommendations emerging from the P20 ECC reflected both the Governor's evolving education views and many others' concerns from the education community concerning testing and readiness at the earliest grades. For Ritter, he believed that when students started behind, they stayed behind. He stated:

This whole issue again—start behind, stay behind. So let's determine a definition of readiness for kindergarten and first grade, and let's look at longitudinal testing that will measure growth over time, and not be a static measurement that a school then, or a teacher, is graded against on a given day for a given child, who might have come in and actually been behind when they got there.

Ritter then provided insight on his belief on CAP4K as a process bill requiring a longitudinal outlook and continual opportunities to reassess. This awareness suggested that his perception of the solutions embedded within CAP4K were not something which could simply be implemented and everything would work itself out. Rather, he acknowledged the intentionality within the bill was to build in a process whereby opportunities for periodic reflective analysis on its progress was available:

Then [we] take another look at it [the bill] because as we know, in the policy world, you can do things and do them well, but you might not get everything right. I think we took a look at readiness after five years or six years, and then we look at assessments after seven years. That was, I think, a really important thing to realize in the doing of this, that . . . you need to tinker with these kinds of big systems to make sure you're doing it, and maybe you need to tinker big. Hopefully you'll just need to tinker small, but nothing is going to be a perfect and self-executing system that you put in place for legislation.

Education reform in Colorado was beyond minor adjustments and Ritter's perception of Colorado's education system required significant changes. As he said, "This was a system that needed the big tinkering."

**Matt Gianneschi.** The analysis of Matt Gianneschi's interview on the question of the perceived problems and solutions of Colorado's education system identified two prominent themes related. The first theme represented the vision to *think big* on making changes to Colorado's education system and fundamentally address the shortfalls of its perceived inadequacies. The second major theme regarded the move to demonstrations of proficiency as a key component with an aligned P20 system, which simultaneously necessitated a revision of the state's content standards and assessments.

Reflecting the social, temporal, and situational dimensions, Governor Ritter's chief education policy advisor, Matt Gianneschi, immediately began our interview by recalling his first contact with Ritter's campaign staff prior to the election, and thereby, signaling his view on how to facilitate a change to Colorado's education system; albeit, at the time, an abstract and somewhat nebulous recommendation. Ritter's policy team wanted to get Gianneschi's opinion on some ideas developed on the gubernatorial candidate's education platform concerning higher education. Gianneschi, with a strong background in Colorado's higher education system, stated:

[Ritter's] staff had reached out to me at one point and said-. So here's a true story. The staff reached out to me. I wasn't looking at the K-12. They sent the higher ed information to me and they said, "What do you think?" I said, "It's nice. It's not going to do any harm." They said, "What do you really think?" I said, "Well I think that it lacks any real vision of where it's going."

This interactional facet of Gianneschi with Ritter's staff exemplified his vision and, for him, a critical solution to solving Colorado's perceived problems. Reaching out to Gianneschi



also pointed to Ritter's concern with making education reform an important aspect of his campaign.

Gianneschi further described their conversation:

They said, "Well, do you think you could do something different?" I said, "Well sure." They said, "Why don't you jot a few ideas down and send them to us." This is 2004/2005. I sent them some ideas. I was like, okay, I'm working at midnight at my home computer and I just sent a few ideas to them. The next thing I know . . . my opinions actually end up becoming his platform.

Two years after this conversation between Gianneschi and Ritter's campaign staff, Ritter became the next Governor, and soon thereafter, Gianneschi received a call from Governor Ritter's staff requesting to meet with the Governor. Gianneschi's description of the moment painted the situationally oriented frantic pace associated with a new, incoming governor, but more importantly, his account hinted at the Governor's belief in making significant reform a critical part of his aggressive education agenda:

They were like, "Governor wants to meet with you. You need to come in." I said, "Okay." I drive down to Denver and I'm sitting there for like an hour because governors are never on schedule. They eventually get on schedule, but at the beginning of the term, it's just chaos. He comes blazing in and he sits down, in his very friendly Bill Ritter way, and he's like, "So it's time for you to make good on all those promises you made me make." That's what he told me. I said, "Governor." I said, "I would be happy to, but—" I said, "I got to ask you. Are you ready to go big because little fixes aren't going to get you there." I was like, "You got to think big."

Soon thereafter, the P20 Education Committee Council was established by executive order and comprised a broad composition of stakeholders (Appendix C) with Gianneschi assuming responsibility for the new council's coordination.

Assigned to varying subcommittees, council participants focused on topics exploring a range of perceived problems with Colorado's education system and possible solutions.

Gianneschi said:

Those subcommittees would meet and talk about certain topics and then they'd come back together, and then they would meet with the P20 group, and as a group . . . they'd say, "Well what did you learn in your subcommittee?" And then they would bring the recommendations, and they would fold those into a large group of, "Here are all the things that we think we should do from early childhood to K-12 to data systems to drop-out prevention and recovery to college readiness."

The council's recommendations reflected a broad but interconnected set of ideas eventually shaping the development of CAP4K. Gianneschi periodically updated the Governor on the council's progress and suggested Colorado's education reform efforts required bold decisions, which were indicated in a memo updating the Governor:

He [the Governor] says, "Tell me about this memo." I said, "Well you know all this work you've been talking about with P20?" I told him the same thing. I was like, "In order to get this done, you have to offend everybody because you have to take issue with the fundamental assumptions in our current system, and you have to rethink it from start to finish. Everybody's going to have some role to play here." He said, "You think we can do it?" I said, "There's only one person in this state who can actually do this, and it's you." I said, "I can write the bill for you. I can make this work. Only the governor of the state can do this."

This account by Gianneschi spoke to his aggressive policy outlook on multiple levels. First, Gianneschi perceived the importance of Colorado education reform required a new way to look at the "current system." He saw that fixing one aspect of the system was not the perceived solution, but rather, comprised of multiple pieces. Second, Gianneschi's forwardness that this change would "offend everybody" perhaps reflected how serious he felt the "system" was so organizationally entrenched that many people would be "offended." Calling for big reform of a perceived "system" inevitably suggested that those rooted within are part of the problem simply by its reification of practices. Third, Gianneschi was very candid with the Governor, and highlighted the importance of the Governor's leadership is to get this accomplished.

State standards and graduation requirements were one of the biggest issues during this time, and also a main point of contention and a significant piece to the solution for Gianneschi:

There were no standards, so there was a 10th grade . . . . I guess 10th grade, but there was nothing for 11th and 12th grade. Nothing. We switched to the ACT and all kinds of things, but there were no common graduation criteria. I take that back, there was one: a half a Carnegie Unit in Civics. That's the only requirement to graduate in Colorado. Only. Zero. If you do that and nothing else, the school district could technically graduate you.

No graduation criteria, nothing beyond 10th grade. All these things were just open. There were no standards, because they said effective ninth. Of course we'd joke, "There's standard lists? Eleventh grade and 12<sup>th</sup> grade?"

Then I'd say things like, "Well, if we're basing our admission criteria on courses, how confident are we that the courses are the same?" They'd say, "We have no way of telling." I was like, "No, there's actually a way of finding out." I was like, "It's called standards. Standards-based instruction is really what you want."

Gianneschi's explanation on standards and graduation requirements highlighted the current system's dependence on a standards-based system, which significantly challenged the characterization that many school districts' practices included giving students credit for simply finishing a course. Further, a student getting an 'A' in one district might be a 'C' in another school district, and course credit depended on the relative expectations and curriculum in place which varied significantly throughout Colorado.

Gianneschi illustrated how they intentionally avoided defining what post-secondary workforce readiness was in CAP4K because it needed flexibility in order to reflect the changing dynamics of society. Workforce readiness today will likely look very different 20 years from now. Gianneschi said that the main stipulation of CAP4K required the CDE and CDHE to communicate with each other and agree on a common set of expectations.

Gianneschi acknowledged another important contribution made by the creation of CAP4K. He said the bill essentially guaranteed every Colorado student access into a Colorado college if they can graduate because of its aligned system. Gianneschi noted:

The actions in the bill have the effect of saying that the state will provide assurances to every student, that the system will work for them as long as they continue to make good choices along the way.

We will not leave it to chance. Every student is going to graduate assuming they are college ready. Now did we assume every student would go to college? That was one of the big critiques. "My kid doesn't need to go to college," and I was like, "Okay, that's your choice, but your kid deserves to have a choice."

That's all. You decide. They can become college ready and then say I don't want to go. Fine. But that's different than saying I can't even choose because my system didn't work for me.

I'm graduating from a school that happened to say I'm graduating from high school without the capacity to have a choice. We said the system has already failed that student. Let's make sure the system doesn't fail, period. Now they can make whatever choices they want, and we're going to try to do the best we can to help them make good choices—whatever those are—but we're not going to say the system has chosen for you based upon your zip code, [or] based upon your language you speak at home.

None of that. Every kid in Colorado is assumed to have this trajectory that leads to a point where they can make a choice, but it is a real choice. That was a big, big change in everything we did.

Gianneschi viewed the problems primarily oriented through the lens of a disconnected education system held back by flawed standards and assessments, antiquated high school graduation requirements based on Carnegie Units instead of demonstrations of proficiency, and separation of goals with P12 and Higher education. Gianneschi's solution emphasized what he perceived as the vision, the alignment between P12 and higher Education systems around a mutually defined goal of preparing students for workforce and postsecondary success. Achieving this goal required a revision of standards reflecting 21<sup>st</sup> century needs and graduation requirements based on proficiency. By demonstrating proficiency, all Colorado students would be guaranteed access to a Colorado college.

**Participant 3.** Participant 3 acknowledged a slightly nuanced perspective, yet similarly highlighted the problems and solutions surrounding Colorado's education system. Participant 3's responses resulted in one theme pertaining to the perception of the problems and solutions in Colorado and shared the CDE's early acknowledgement to make changes regardless if CAP4K

passed. At the heart of these changes reflected the need to address the shortcomings of assessments, which did not indicate the growth of students. Working closely with Gianneschi, Participant 3 highlighted some key solutions that Colorado's education system needed to create, such as a:

four tier evaluation system, growth model for longitude in academic growth, ways to define what constitutes educational excellence, [and] performance zones, as I recall. Which is [our current] system—it's what is in existence in Colorado right now. Anyway, we said these are the things we're going to do.

The trend of Colorado's higher education complaints centered on the high rates of remediation at the college level for incoming freshman. Participant 3 stated the higher education community wanted "kids who are prepared, who they can place a bet on and say they're going to do well in school." To achieve this, Participant 3 explained, was to increase expectations across the board, and legislation should reflect this expectation. Participant 3 stated:

If we come up with a piece of legislation that commits the state to upping its expectations, one thing Dwight [Jones] was very clear about was that the path to improvement, it begins with expecting more of students and ourselves as adults and that students will rise to the level of your expectations. You just need to marshal the resources in a way that allows them to do good work.

Interestingly, Participant 3's point on raised expectations differed from the previous participants. Instead of addressing solutions as physical interventions, such as creating a based system, Participant 3 said that an important piece to reform was a more metaphysically minded change that raised expectations for students and adults.

Participant 3 described the interactional aspects of the atmosphere as a collaborative environment when many people shared ideas: "We were matching up ideas, between what Dwight [Jones, Commissioner of Education] thinks is important, what the Governor wants, and Gianneschi was the chief author of the bill." Participant 3 explained there were several months of drafts motivated with a strong sense of determination: "What happened was that we went

through several months of drafts, and what went through was very ambitious . . . in one year. . . I think the timetable is pretty tight.” An additional daunting part of the process was raising standards in 13 subject areas with a subsequent focus on developing better assessments.

### **Summary of Research Question 1a**

Conversations on the campaign trail significantly shaped Governor Ritter’s perception of the problems with Colorado’s education system. Frustration toward the federal government’s approach to accountability and the assessments lacking creative and critical thinking skills prompted the Governor to make education reform a key piece of his agenda. Gianneschi highlighted the learning standards in Colorado and alignment of college admission criteria. Additionally, Gianneschi felt strongly that college admission requirements in Colorado should reflect levels of proficiency of high school standards. Ideally, a student in high school demonstrating proficiency should seamlessly transition into college. Participant 3 highlighted the importance of growth-oriented assessments of performance and emphasized the new mindset associated with the Commissioner of Education Dwight Jones in raising of expectations.

### **Research Question 1b**

Research Question 1b asked: What were the interviewees’ experiences in successful coalition building leading to the broad support for CAP4K? This question explored the interviewee’s experiences in building a successful dominant coalition around CAP4K.

**Bill Ritter.** Analysis of Ritter’s interview identified two themes to successful coalition building leading to CAP4K’s success: diverse stakeholder involvement and a conducive political climate. Ritter stated there was broad stakeholder involvement with Colorado education reform. He said, “There wasn't a lot of pushback in doing it because, I think, people had recognized that this was a system that needed the big tinkering.” He further explained that the political climate

was open to change and recognized something needed to be done to fix Colorado’s education system.

Ritter further stated the policymaking process “was collaborative” and “done in a really bipartisan way, and in a way that had the participation of all these advocacy groups who recognized that the present system needed to change.” Ritter explained that a key characteristic in CAP4K’s unusual bipartisanship was in the administration’s ability to bring together broad stakeholders together from the beginning. Too often problems are created from an ideological perspective, which drive the interpretation of a perceived problem. Ritter said:

You're making up your problem. You're making up a problem, because you've got this ideology around a bit of policy. So when we brought together a pretty serious group of people from different walks of life inside the education system—but also from different ideologies—and had them sit at a table, I think the result we got, the recommendations we got, were really rational. It was important that it was a broad set of stakeholders that got us there.

**Matt Gianneschi.** Analysis identified one prominent theme to Gianneschi’s experiences in successful coalition building that led to CAP4K’s success: P20 council legitimacy. Two sub-themes related to P20 legitimacy included a bipartisanship mindset and the Governor’s strong leadership.

The creation of the P20 ECC reflected the bipartisan nature underlying CAP4K. The process for determining membership was thoughtful and deliberate, stressing a bipartisan culture centered on what the ECC considered best for Colorado’s education system, and what they perceived as the best solution for its children. This approach enabled buy-in and fostered a collaborative culture. Additionally, the commission’s composition limited the number of participants and was intentionally designed to maximize flexibility with bipartisan membership and educationally-minded professionals. As Gianneschi stated:

That [P20 Commission] did a number of things for us. Yes, we put it together, and yes, we were trying to be very representative of the state, and we were trying to make sure that we were getting—we used to call them two-fers and three-fers. . . . We wanted to keep the committee small so that it was able to be nimble enough to handle issues without feeling like we were creating another legislature.

We wanted to create a small enough committee of really smart people who knew these issues inside and out, and we wanted to have the typical—. You want to have eastern plains, western slopes, Southern Colorado, Alamosa, so places where we're trying to make sure we had representation. You want to have an equal number of men and women, equal number of democrats and republicans.

Gianneschi subsequently added that they wanted strong advocates and possible opponents of P20 alignment on the commission:

we were also trying to get people who were either going to be strongly for or strongly against. That was important. We didn't want a bunch of yes people in the room. We were trying to bring the critics into the P20 Counsel so that we could say if something passed P20 recommendations, then it's already been pre-vetted.

Gianneschi expressed their intention to leave legislators out of the council membership.

Gianneschi explained:

People in the legislature didn't like that at the time. Yeah. They would say, "I think I should be on this counsel," and we would say, "You'll get your chance." We said, "If anything comes from this committee, you will get legislation that you will be able to deal with any way you want. We don't want to give you two bites at the apple. You get one bite just like every other Coloradan." We're going to bring in the best, smartest, people who are going to be engaged on the issues. Let them talk it through. Whatever good ideas come out with that majority, we'll give it to you at that point.

Remaining true to the bipartisan approach, Gianneschi, as he often did throughout the interview, repeated this was not about Democrats and Republicans. Instead, he said it was “trying to keep this as a pure education conversation but bring in the most powerful thinkers in the state.”

He recalled the collaborative policymaking process at the time: “Bipartisan, everybody’s in agreement. It was just an amazing time. Looking back, I go, ‘Hey, that was really incredible.’” Gianneschi’s interview further highlighted the bipartisanship characterizing the



process around P20 alignment and his own ability to maintain relationships regardless of political affiliation:

There were a lot of legislators who we had close relationships with, and that is something never to be taken for granted. . . . You can have the best idea in the world, but if they don't trust you, if they don't think that you have integrity, it's not going anywhere. I developed a relationship, and I'm not going to say that others don't have it. I just happen to have one where Democrats and Republicans trusted me to give them good advice and to give them good bills, and they knew that I didn't care about Ds and Rs.

Gianneschi also pointed out the ideas extending from the P20 council were much bigger than himself and other legislators:

They knew that I was like, "Look, yeah, I work for the Governor and we're going to push his agenda, but at the end of the day it's bigger than all of us." This is about getting it right, and they knew that. We could prove it to them over and over. Then I would end up with legislators who would come to me, even very influential legislators, maybe Republicans on the other side of the aisle from my boss, and they'd say, "Hey, can you come talk to me about my ideas. I just want to work them through with you and see if this something your boss might support." It wasn't adversarial. It was really about how do we all think creatively and get something done, and so it was a really remarkable time.

During our interview, Gianneschi emphasized transparency and building bridges across the party divide throughout the entire process. He brought in lobbyists and representatives from the Colorado Association of School Executives (CASE), the main organization representing school executives in Colorado, and the Colorado Association of School Boards, so they could make comments on CAP4K. By March of 2009, the ideas and additions of CAP4K started coming together.

Throughout the interview, Gianneschi emphasized the importance of Governor Ritter's leadership that facilitated coalition building. He elaborated on this point by stating, "This was not about typical partisan politics, but the details they really left us. Governor Ritter did not go to the senate president and the speaker of the house and say, 'Would you carry my bill?'"

Gianneschi recognized Governor Ritter's ability to choose the right people for the job.

Gianneschi continued, saying that this was not “about Ds and Rs.” It was “about doing what’s right.”

In our conversation, Gianneschi repeated the importance of a Governor’s resoluteness and bipartisanship orientation:

[I] think it's important to understand that this bill doesn't pass without a strong governor. This bill doesn't pass without trust. This bill doesn't pass without people who are willing to let down their partisan guard and talk to each other.

Gianneschi elaborated on the bipartisan climate surrounding this bill and said:

I remember sitting in the room and having conversations with people who are in public, seemingly always at each other’s throats, but on this issue, they were meaningful—not just saying, “Well that sounds good.” They were like, “Okay, what would you do? Can we do this? Hey, I know you want to do this English language thing. Is there a way that we can write that so that my caucus doesn't freak out and your caucus is fine?”

Gianneschi reflected on the cooperation underlying CAP4K and the collective feeling shared beyond individual politics:

It was really that kind of very sensible, “Let's do the right thing. Let's work with each other.” There is always a push by everyone to get their pet issues into the legislation. It was important to have the right bill sponsor. Every group that had some issue they wanted to get run[n]ing, and that's why you need good sponsors. Let me tell you, and this is just political strategy 101: anybody who works at the legislature, you need to know when you pick your bill sponsor. That will tell you whether or not your bill is going to get beaten up like when it goes to committee; it will tell you a lot about whether or not that bill sponsor knows enough about the topic to actually help you. It may even be that they are willing to give in to special interests and other groups. CAP4K changed the way the state thinks about education.

Gianneschi talked about how people, based on their current perceptions of a highly politicized climate, in amazement still come up to him and ask how this bill ever got through.

He told me, half-joking, that his typical reply is to say Common Core was not around:

Because nobody knew that there was a thing called Common Core. We were all saying we're going to go fix this and we worked together. Again, there were plenty of disagreements and plenty of things going along the way, but it wasn't like today where we were in these almost tribal encampments about where this is good and bad based upon what you call it.

Gianneschi explained that the strategy of creating a sense of transparency and bipartisan involvement throughout the decision-making process was another component facilitating alignment for CAP4K. Gianneschi said, “This was a transformative event,” and “politics notwithstanding, this is a fundamental rethinking of education.” He explained the necessity in building collaborative ownership as it was a “consensus approach.”

**Participant 3.** Participant 3’s interview revealed the theme of leadership as the key component facilitating coalition building.

Participant 3 reflected about the Commissioner of Education, Dwight Jones, and suggested that Jones’ background as an advocate of school choice resonated with Republican-minded people, particularly with a former House Representative who sat on the school board at the time. The relationship between this board member and Jones was positive. Participant 3 explained:

But he [Jones] was so good at being President of the state board. He [Board Chairman] had an agreement with Dwight. . . . He said that the chairman said to Dwight, "You just deliver. You run the show when you need to. I'll take care of the board, I'll do the showmanship, and I'll keep people off your back. Just make it happen."

He [chairman] said, "But you should know that my interest, I'm going to express my views publicly. . . . Be a good soldier and I'll support, but I openly believe choice most."

The relationship between Dwight and the chairman of the board member helped dampen any resistance coming from school choice and those coming from free-market minded constituents antagonistic to government intervention. Participant three stated:

There was push back that existed from those that believed [in] charters and the market mechanism. That parents should be able to call the shots on the curriculum for their kids, and things like that. And it wasn't the state's job to be doing that.

Participant 3 reflected on Jones’ ability to work with various coalitions, such as the Colorado Educators Association. Participant 3 further acknowledged Governor Ritter and Gianneschi also had the same ability to work across a broad spectrum of interest groups.

### **Summary of Research Question 1b**

Analysis of Ritter's interview identified the importance of stakeholder involvement and a conducive political climate. Ritter expressed the importance of bringing a diverse array of representation and persons from both sides of the political aisle. Also, Ritter also acknowledged the conditions just seemed right. Most understood Colorado's education system needed changes. Gianneschi emphasized the importance of the P20 Council. Further, the sense of bipartisanship was a significant factor to coalition building. Additionally, as Gianneschi continually recognized, the Governor's leadership was critical. Finally, Participant 3 identified Dwight Jones's ability to manage potential detractors.

### **Research Question 1c**

Research Question 1c asked: What were the interviewees' perceptions of the challenges in their experiences with the development of CAP4K. This question explored how interviewed participants perceived the challenges facing CAP4K.

**Bill Ritter.** Ritter indicated there was very little opposition to the policy and the beliefs extending from CAP4K and suggested that a conducive political climate open to the solutions proposed in CAP4K aided in the policy's acceptance. He stated, "I think it was just the right time. It was the right scene." Though it was a positive political climate, analysis of Ritter's interview identified two briefly referenced themes on the perceived challenges during CAP4K's policy process. The first alluded to the plummeting national economy, which was sure to affect the state budget. Gianneschi offered a much more detailed story on the impact of the faltering economy; however, Ritter acknowledged the challenge with funding in the face of the growing economic depression.

Interestingly, Ritter also illustrated the evolving tension growing around the Common Core standards, which originally had widespread bipartisan support and a broad alliance among

the Governor's throughout the United States in creating standards with the far-reaching goal of preparing students for workforce and postsecondary success. As Ritter stated, "We had 48 out of 50 states on board with what I would call common core standards. Part of the thinking on the assessment area was that it was going to dovetail with the Common Core Standards." He went on further to say, "The only two states that weren't were states governed by Rick Perry, Texas and Sarah Palin in Alaska. The other 48 were on board for the Common Core Standards. That's all kind of fallen apart."

The changing tide of common standard approval dramatically shifted into a partisan issue with Republicans claiming the national Common Core standards compromised local control. As Ritter stated, "There's a lot of governors that go there later, when they started paying attention to it, and conservatives inside the party, the freedom caucus started paying attention to it." The freedom caucus Ritter was referencing too and the conservatives within the Republican party were staunch and vocal advocates for as little government in society. Ritter continued, "The Common Core, it is viewed by most right leaning Republicans as dangerous." Though the shifting tone from governor's signaled a deterioration of a common agreement with standards, the work of CAP4K had already been passed and insulated from the subsequent noise reinvigorating state autonomy.

**Matt Gianneschi.** Analysis identified three themes from Gianneschi's interview centered on the challenges confronting CAP4K: the Republican counter bill, school district concerns with funding, and the faltering national economy.

***Theme one: Republican plan.*** Gianneschi expressed a significant hurdle extending from a more limited proposal developed by Republicans' Senator Josh Penry and Representative Rob Witwer. This proposal coincided with the period CAP4K was going to be rolled out. However,

Penry (R) and Witwer (R) preemptively brought forward the Republican Party's education reform plan prior to the Governor's State of the State Address where Governor Ritter planned to highlight the proposed CAP4K plan. The Republicans' main idea focused on changing high school graduation criteria to meet the admission standards for Colorado colleges. Gianneschi said that Penry and Witwer "were also thinking about alignment, but they were thinking about it differently." According to Gianneschi, they said, "What if we introduce a bill that mandates that the high school graduation criteria in the state must be the admission criteria to higher ed?"

Penry and Witwer's proposal garnered widespread support and potentially blurred the momentum of CAP4K and its broad-reaching solutions. Gianneschi mentioned that the *Rocky Mountain News* endorsed the Republican plan, and increasingly, the plan attracted support from college presidents and the business community, including an endorsement from the Denver Chamber of Commerce who said, in Gianneschi's words, "Yes, we love this. Keep pushing. Keep doing it."

Gianneschi recalled a conversation with Governor Ritter about the Republican education agenda and the Governor asked if they should just work with them, perhaps recognizing the Republicans growing support. Gianneschi responded to Governor Ritter:

That depends, Governor. Do you believe that alignment means that our courses are the same because you can call a course a lot of different things?" I was like, "Once you're making an argument based on courses, you've eliminated the option of students being able to qualify based on competence. If you really want to innovate, you got to get out of the model of what a course is.

Gianneschi's position mirrored similar points made from the CDE. The question was not about the number of hours a student sat in the seat, but rather, the demonstration of proficiency. As Gianneschi recalled, the CDE's leadership said:

"Governor, we believe in demonstrations of proficiency, not courses." They said, "What if a student doesn't have that math course at their high school but they take it online or they learn it on their own and they demonstrate that they know trigonometry, but it

doesn't show up on a transcript? Is that student less qualified than the one who took a course?"

The Governor agreed with Gianneschi's counterarguments. Gianneschi alluded to the interactional aspects of working with Penry and Witwer and the importance of relationships. He said:

The governor agreed, and I do not recall exactly how we got to this point, but he said, "Can you go talk to Rob Witwer and Josh Penry and see what they think?" I did. I went upstairs and I pulled the two. This is, again, relationships. I had a really good relationship with Josh and Rob. We were on different parties, but they are really good people.

They were willing to listen to me, and I came in and I remember sitting. We were on the third floor outside the Senate meeting room chambers at the floor. We're sitting outside the committee room and Rob comes up, and Rob and Josh and I are just sitting there together, and I said, "Guys I hate to ask you to do this, but the Governor wants to know if you'd be willing to kill your bill." We call it PI'ing. "Would you be willing to PI your bill? It's called postponed indefinitely. It just means you're withdrawing it and you're not going to ask for action on it. Obviously, they were like, "Are you nuts?"

Gianneschi continued:

They're like, "Look, the bases are loaded. The pitcher's already thrown 150 pitches. What do you mean? We got this game lined up." I was like, "Guys, I know where you're going and trust me I believe in where you're going. I actually fundamentally believe in what you're trying to do. I believe it. I just think the mechanism's wrong. It's not that you didn't think this through. You thought it through. You were using what's available." I was like, "But there's another way," and I told them about it. I said, "What if the whole system aligned? Not just high school graduation; what if the whole thing aligned?" They said, "Well, let us think about it."

Gianneschi expressed the nervousness he felt from asking prominent legislators to drop their bill, which was almost certain to go through, and thus, preempt the Governor's plan extended from the P20 Council. Gianneschi recalled thinking, "Did I just end my career? What if I'm wrong here? What if this doesn't go well and these guys never trust me again?" He further noted it was "huge." The request to kill their bill was part of the official Republican education agenda.

Gianneschi suggested this could never happen under today's politically charged climate.

The interactions illustrated the bipartisanship characterizing the political climate during this time. Further, the concern by both parties about Colorado's education system illustrated the broader belief there was a problem that needed reform.

***Theme two: School funding.*** The second theme regarded school districts' concerns with funding. Following continued discussions, the Republicans shelved their bill and acknowledged the merits proposed by the P20 Council's recommendations. As part of the compromise, the bill went to appropriations to determine the cost. Unsurprisingly, school districts throughout Colorado were concerned with the fiscal impact it would have on their budget. Gianneschi explained:

The school districts came to us and said, "Hey, we like what you're doing, but this sounds expensive. Where's the money going to come from?" They were like, "How are you going to demonstrate that there really is an impact on us?"

Gianneschi explained that, generally speaking, school district impacts do not show up in state bills because they are not considered state entities. They are considered local. They are funded through the School Finance Act, so it is a different mechanism. Gianneschi said that the school districts responded, saying, "'We would like an assurance that there is the ability to analyze the fiscal impact of this before full implementation.' We were like, 'Yeah, that's reasonable. Sure. Let's do it.'" The eventual report indicated a total cost of implementation at an estimated \$328 million that would be assumed by Colorado's 178 school districts (Chalkbeat, October 14, 2011). This cost followed a \$776 million in budget cuts as a result of the plummeting economy (Chalkbeat, October 14, 2011). Though school districts were not considered state entities, they undoubtedly would be financially impacted.

***Theme three: Economic downturn.*** The third theme, a plummeting national economy, presented a new hurdle for CAP4K. Gianneschi expressed:



We're in crisis. While we're talking about education alignment and all these warm fuzzy ideas and these things, the state is in financial crisis. I'm sitting down with Governor Ritter on a Sunday afternoon. He calls us all into the office. He's like, "I need everybody at the office." We go in and we have to sit with the Governor and go through—he has probably four binders that are about 12 inches thick. Four of them in a row. They were all of the recommendations of all the things that we need to cut in the state in order to balance the budget.

Gianneschi painted a grim picture. They just passed what was widely considered the most important education bill in Colorado's history, and suddenly, the serious financial obstacles facing the government threatened the funding of CAP4K and other government programs. Faced with looming cuts, the Governor stressed that the staff go through the budget, line by line, seeing what needs should be preserved and what needs should be eliminated. Gianneschi recalled:

We had to sit with him [Governor Ritter] and go line by line, and he'd pull to the next recommendation and we'd go to the next recommendation. We're looking at these things in a group going, "These are all the things we built and now we're taking them away. We're cutting everything." We're cutting hospitals in rural communities. We're cutting nursing programs. We're cutting roads. We're cutting rock scaling knowing the rocks will fall. There's no money for it. We just lost \$700 million out of our budget.

It doubled after that. It went from \$700 million, I think the first was \$400 million, then \$700 million, then \$1.2 billion.

That first year we're like, okay, so we're in implementation mode on CAP4K. Recession's deep, and this is unlike anything we'd ever seen before to the point where the governor, and this is the thing that only people who work closely with the people who are in these kinds of positions get to see, but I remember sitting with them. I remember it's fall. It's like October/November of 2009. We're going through and we're just cutting things. We're cutting \$1 million here and \$5 million there and \$3 million and \$200,000 here, and it's becoming so routine because we're trying to get to \$400 million or we're trying to get to \$700 million. We're just kind of moving through and moving through.

It was a desperate time, which tempered the excitement around CAP4K. Gianneschi explained how this significantly affected the Governor:

The Governor finally says, "I need a break." He's like, "I need a time out." We all were like, "Yeah, of course sir. Whatever you need." He just got up and went for a walk. He walked around the Capitol for about an hour, and he came back and we just were sitting there waiting for him. We understood how taxing this was.

He sat down and he said, "I didn't run for office to hurt people." He said, "I'm hurt. All we're doing today is taking things away that hurt."

We thought we were going to have to hatchet everything, including CAP4K. We were like, "Okay, we're on postponement until this is done." What happens right after that?

Well the federal government passes an Emergency American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, the ARRA. The ARRA, the Recovery Act is a 1,500-page appropriations bill. Senator Bennett was sending us faxes of the bill. It's 1,500 pages. We're just watching these pages come in. They're like allocating his notes in the margins from the senator, and he's like, "Can you check on this?" He'd send it through. Then they would meet again at midnight and then another version would come through. For about six or seven days there, the Recovery Act is in the U.S. senate and they're debating this and we're trying to keep up. I'm like, "This is happening in every governor's office anywhere in the country."

I asked Gianneschi if the appropriations bill was passed could that money plug some of the holes? He replied, "Here's the thing—we don't know because the versions are changing."

Fortunately, they averted the worst-case scenario through the federal government's Recovery Act.

As Gianneschi continued, his disappointment was noticeable as he talked about CAP4K and the emerging polarization around the concept of Common Core. For him, this changing national dialogue put the recent accomplishments of P20 alignment in Colorado on the backburner because of the growing polarization around the Common Core. The Common Core initiative advocated for the alignment of mathematics and English language arts intended for the adoption by all states in order to bring cohesion to an otherwise disconnected system of learning targets. In line with CAP4K's foundation, the Common Core focused on standards preparing students for college and workforce readiness. Primarily sponsored through the National Governors Association (NGA) and the Council of Chief State School Officers, a wave of vocal opponents emerged who stressed that the standards compromised state autonomy, thus, reinvigorating the debate between federal activism and states' rights to make their own decisions

on what should be learned and taught. The developing polarization blurred the momentum of CAP4K and shifted Colorado's bipartisan climate into polarized camps. Gianneschi explained:

CAP4K ended up becoming, and it's not that it's not still important, it's just CAP4K's power is in talking about we had this idea for a state before all this political noise got in the way. We were all in agreement, and the state board agreed, and the Commission on Higher Ed agreed, and the legislature agreed, and CASE and CASB and the rural caucus, they agreed. These events that happened right after, not that it derailed it, but it certainly changed the way that we approached it. We went through a succession of commissioners, so Dwight Jones left, Robert Hammond came in. Robert Hammond was there, but Robert— He's a wonderful guy, but Robert was the CFO. He became the commissioner, so Robert's job was to do the work, but because the board couldn't agree upon where it wanted to go, the board had changed in new members and they were getting political partisan and Common Core now became a very partisan issue.

Gianneschi's account revealed the changing dynamics unfolding in Colorado and nationally. The growing rhetoric around the Common Core grew louder, and the debate shifted from a bipartisan tone to one politicized along party lines. Gianneschi's perception was that Colorado, unfortunately, could not deflect the mounting tension. He stated:

Understand that as you think about CAP4K, it's important to contextualize the difference between 2007, '08 and '09, and what followed. What followed was not anything that Colorado did. What followed was a national dialogue around the use of federal funds to incent states to do certain things, and the backlash that followed from states that had adopted the Common Core and adopted teacher evaluation, another component.

Gianneschi suggested that the educational momentum and the main ideas articulated through CAP4K shifted with the convergence of several transitions unfolding around the same time. Governor Ritter left after serving one term. President Obama's Race To The Top (RTTT) competition fueled resentment among many states, which viewed the adoption of the Common Core as a federal overstep. Additionally, the convergence of varying factors created instability. Gianneschi elaborated:

The political groundswell again started just accumulating and accumulating. By the time you get into President Obama's second term and Governor Ritter's not there anymore, Hickenlooper comes in and his job—get to this in a second—but the momentum had shifted because you couldn't just say common core anymore because that may be a

partisan statement. It changed the financial motivations and it changed the players and the Governor's not there and a new commissioner and a new Department of Ed.

Gianneschi suggested the relatively quick turnover rate in leadership impeded efforts to maintain the bipartisan momentum initially reflected through the legislation of CAP4K.

Gianneschi said:

When [leadership] moves that many times and all the subordinates that move that many times and the commission has shipped that many times, and the State Board of Education's become even more political than it used to be and they've had three new commissioners since that time. . . . Going back to that momentum of 2007/08 is hard to create.

Gianneschi made it clear that the decreasing bipartisanship in Washington D.C. permeated the political atmosphere in Colorado, and term limits further stifled collaboration. Gianneschi noted:

Unfortunately, what happened in D.C. started to infiltrate local politics because then you see because of term limits, legislators, there aren't the same legislators in place anymore. They don't remember 2007. They've been replaced, now all they know is what they hear from D.C. is that this is good and that's bad and that's President Obama's bill. That's the congress's bill.

Gianneschi went further by stating, RTTT “instantly politicizes what was not politicized.”

**Participant 3.** Analysis identified one prominent theme from Participant 3 on ideologically driven interest groups and rural constituents. Participant 3 expressed challenges extending from ideologically-driven interests. However, Participant 3 explained the relationship between Jones and the President of Colorado's State Board of Education dampened any resistance coming from school choice and free market minded constituents. Participant 3 stated:

There was push back that existed from those that believed [in] charters and the market mechanism. That parents should be able to call the shots on the curriculum for their kids, and things like that. And it wasn't the state's job to be doing that. Now Dwight, of course, worked in El Paso County, a big evangelical place.”

Participant 3 reflected on Jones' ability to work with various coalitions such as the Colorado Educators Association. Participant 3 further acknowledged Governor Ritter and

Gianneschi also had the same ability to work across a broad spectrum of interest groups.

Participant 3 said one of the biggest pushbacks came from the Independence Institute based in Denver. The Independence Institute is a far-right organization leaning towards a libertarian agenda. Their biggest push in education centers on school choice. Participant 3 said, “Well, the Independence Institute, they were emboldened.” Participant 3 further stated that this group “believed that standards were gibberish or psycho-babble.”

Participant 3 also iterated the resistance coming from rural communities who boasted their relatively high achievement scores on state assessments and felt unfairly burdened by new mandates coming from the State. Participant 3 pointed out that rural schools may have high scores on average, but marginalized groups such as Hispanics and others from low socioeconomic backgrounds indicated significant and persistent gaps in success:

Three or four years ago the rural counties wanted to secede from Colorado. So a lot of those folks say that, "Look, don't be telling me how to do my business. . . ." A lot of the rural superintendents wanted to gloss over the fact that they had high average scores, but they had really lagging scores from like the Hispanic students.

The reluctance by rural school district superintendents seems understandable considering the lack of continued budget constraints. From their perception, new policies often meant further stretching resources. Participant 3 claimed that these rural school districts often exhibited high achievement rates, but when data was disaggregated, Hispanic students almost consistently fell behind their more affluent counterparts. Alignment presumed this disparity would eventually erode by ensuring every student in the state was exposed to the same, rigorous new standards united with workforce and postsecondary readiness.

### **Summary of Research Question 1c**

Governor Ritter explained that there were very few challenges to CAP4K. Gianneschi, however, communicated several. First, he acknowledged the Republicans counter bill. True to

the bipartisan tone, though, the Republicans killed their bill in favor of the broader, aggressive proposal outlined through CAP4K. Gianneschi also mentioned the concern by school districts concerned with the costs potentially incurred as a result of CAP4K. Finally, Gianneschi spoke to the plummeting national economy which threatened Colorado's budget. Fortunately, the Colorado budget crisis was averted and CAP4K was able to move forward. Finally, Participant 3 mentioned the push by ideologically groups from the right side of the political spectrum which were nervous about state intrusion into local school affairs.

### **Research Question 1d**

Research question 1d asked: How did interviewees ascribe meaning to the impact of CAP4K? As the following demonstrates, each participants' meaning developed as CAP4K assumed different aspects.

**Bill Ritter.** Analysis of Governor Ritter's interview responses identified one major theme ascribing meaning to CAP4K: His vision of CAP4K reflected a continuous transition, rather than the current education system that consisted of disconnected grade levels.

Ritter metaphorically characterized CAP4K as "a long stream that starts here, that you move through, but move through at different paces, depending upon readiness, depending upon assessments". The metaphor referenced the alignment of the P20 system while emphasizing the shift in how the state conducts testing. Ritter continued that the goal was to "really improve the way we assessed students, and therefore assess schools." Rather than the high stakes snap shot of previous assessment practices prompted through NCLB requirements, a new focus centered on the growth of a student. Even a schoolchild indicating unsatisfactory results yet remained unsatisfactory on a subsequent assessment could still show growth by upwardly progressing within the unsatisfactory range. The shift had dramatic implications for interpretation.

Longitudinal growth was now considered, and a more accurate understanding of a student's progress could be determined.

Characterizing CAP4K “as a long stream” also implied the grade levels themselves within the P12 system flowed, ideally, with mutually interconnected learning targets building one after another with a culmination, upon graduation, of student preparedness for the workforce or postsecondary opportunities.

**Matt Gianneschi.** Analysis of Gianneschi's interview revealed two overall themes that related to the impact of CAP4K: a complete change on how we think about education, and bipartisanship.

***Theme one: New view on education.*** Gianneschi's personal reflection on the meaning of CAP4K illustrated that a more systemic understanding was a new way of thinking taking hold throughout Colorado and the United States:

Putting it into context, this is important for those who, if you think of CAP4K being something that was just invented out of thin air, it really wasn't. It was a monumental shift in the states, both in policy as well as the way we think about education. It just transformed the way that we approach this question of how should the system behave on behalf of the students and the state. Really important point is to recognize it changed everything.

Gianneschi's first point was important: CAP4K policy did not culminate “out of thin air.” P20 alignment, in various forms, was on the educational radar of school reformers since the 1980's, and by now, spread throughout most states (Hodgkinson, 1985). However, for Colorado, this was a huge leap, and CAP4K reshaped the vision of Colorado's educational future. As Gianneschi stated, “It changed everything.” For Gianneschi, among others, this was a significant change in how Colorado envisioned its education system. For Gianneschi, CAP4K symbolized this change.

*Theme two: Bipartisanship.* The idea of CAP4K transcending the individual permeated Gianneschi's perspective throughout the interview. He often reiterated how this bill exceeded the idea of political victories. He stated, "CAP4K is also, in many ways, an exercise in understanding the difference between giving somebody the ability to claim a victory and looking at the big picture and claiming a victory for the whole state." According to Gianneschi, transcending individual wins seemed to embody most representatives' interpretation. He recalled one conversation with a representative: "They were like, 'Yep, this is bigger than us. This is bigger than the little fight. . . We're going to push for the big picture.'"

Gianneschi talked about the importance of creating a seamless set of Colorado learning standards; Colorado only targeted Grades three through eight before CAP4K. Following CAP4K, the state now had standards in place for high school as well, which also matched the needs of higher education. Gianneschi said:

CAP4K aligned those standards into ninth grade, 10th grade, 11th grade, 12th grade, college ready. [CAP4K], for the first time, gave the state a formal fixed definition of this is what it means to be college and career ready. That's what it means, post-secondary and workforce ready. It's right there.

Gianneschi further elaborated on the impact CAP4K had in Colorado:

CAP4K was about how does the system perform on behalf of students? That's it. You read the declaration, [and] it doesn't say anything in there about teachers, it doesn't say anything about administrators. It doesn't say about here's whose right, here's whose wrong. It says from the moment a student, regardless of zip code, when a student comes into our system, whether that's preschool, kindergarten, wherever they come in, the system statewide will presume that each student is entitled to have an aligned system from the moment they come in and progress through even transfers. If they leave, their parents move, they get a new job, they go to a different middle school, they go to a different high school, that the system still knows how to pick up and keep them going. All students—regardless of what you call math—I don't care what you call math. You can call math really good math. That can be the title, This is Really Good Math. I don't care what you call it. What standards are in your class called Really Good Math?

It's not based upon local choice at that point. And then what I mean is there's still local choice, but a student's progression is not based on its local choice. The assumption that a



student will be college and career ready with a common definition is not left to chance. Everybody follows the same thing. That's different than saying that we're going to evaluate our teachers to see which ones are teaching these standards effectively. That starts to imply a whole lot of things about how systems operate and in particular that you actually can have assessments sensitive enough to know how effective a teacher is year to year.

Gianneschi went on to talk about some of the prominent storylines coming out of

CAP4K:

There are a number of stories to tell. There's one about moving a state from no alignment to full alignment. That's one big story. Moving a state from alignment and then implementation in the face of the largest recession in history and understanding the impact that environmental impacts have on implementation. Even the best ideas out there can't do it without the resources and without the ability to have consistency and fidelity.

As Gianneschi and I started concluding our interview, he revealed a key summation that reflected his ultimate interpretation of CAP4K and how it drew support from so many different interest groups:

An imperative question to answer, and certainly something that can be answered with the transcripts. You can pull all the committee hearings that we went to. You can look at all the documents we were publishing. You can look at all the press and their coverage of what we were doing. You can see it. You can look at CASE and CASB newsletters and what they were saying about it. They were for it. You can look at who actually showed up in committee and agreed that this was a good idea. CASE, CASB and everybody. Charter schools. Home schools. The gifted and talented group. Everybody showed up and said, "We're on board."

It's because it wasn't mandated. It was mandated and wasn't. It was a vision for the future but it enabled the state to create. . . . The mandate in it was you need to have a vision.

The mandate was you need to come to a consensus of what these definitions mean and implement them. How you get there, what you do—it's up to you. Then periodically we're going to come back and revisit this. That was the other thing is we said we're not going to assume we got it right the first time. Every four years we're going to go back and we're going to revisit, which is what's happening this year.

Gianneschi's emphasized the non-mandates to CAP4K which drew support from stakeholders.

For Gianneschi, part of CAP4K's success rested on its broad support. This collaborative effort offered a key understanding of the policies' legitimacy and overwhelming support. Furthermore,

components requiring periodic checks throughout the implementation phases were built within the CAP4K in order to adjust to fluctuating challenges. Together with stakeholder collaboration, non-mandated processes, and opportunities for future adjustments, these pieces, according to Gianneschi, separated this policy from traditional policymaking processes reliant on mandates.

As Gianneschi stated:

Now what have we learned? That can be the part where you go looking ahead. It's not to say CAP4K is right or wrong, I think, but you can say what went into the creation of this bill is fundamentally different than what we see in these majority rule kinds of concepts.

From Gianneschi's perspective, the new policy enabled the state to maintain a balance between alignment, new standards, and assessments while simultaneously giving Colorado's 178 school districts an empowered voice in how they add their own unique approach to implement these changes.

**Participant 3.** Two themes were identified during the analysis of Participant 3's interview: the legitimacy provided by CAP4K on the CDE's ongoing work, and the support the CDE received from the business community.

**Theme one: Legitimacy.** Participant 3 described CAP4K as an "historic moment." Further, he described it unfolding within a "big context," implying the sweeping educational changes embodied with CAP4K. Participant 3 characterized CAP4K's policymaking process as a liberating educational shift from the past, which opened a new way of thinking; CAP4K added additional validity to the CDE's work. Participant 3 said:

It's very freeing. It's nice to have this law [CAP4K]. The law brought legitimacy to what we were doing. . . . What happened was, when the bill was passed it added to this grim chorus that was pressing for change and we found it extremely helpful.

**Theme two: Support.** Participant 3 then acknowledged the business community's importance in Colorado and stated that Colorado "has willing business leaders that are willing to

get behind bold education reform.” More poignantly, Participant 3 mentioned that CAP4K “built buy-in by [what] the business community had to say, that there's an important aspect to all this.”

### **Summary of Research Question 1d**

Ritter construed CAP4K as a new system where students move from one grade level to the next. Gianneschi viewed CAP4K as a completely new paradigm on how Colorado views education. Further, he emphasized how the climate was amazingly bipartisan and transcended political wins or losses. Participant 3 viewed CAP4K as a policy formally legitimizing the work of the CDE. Additionally, CAP4K’s success illustrated the important support given by the business community.

### **Summary of Interview Findings**

The three-dimensions of narrative facilitated analytical awareness of three components. An inductive approach was used to identify themes. First, this researcher looked for interactional aspects, which included both personal and social. Second, this researcher considered continuity of past, present, and future aspects in the participants story. Finally, this researcher considered situational awareness of the participant’s story including the setting and context. Themes identified from the interviews were then reassembled relative to the research questions.

Analysis of the interviews revealed several distinct interpretations of Colorado’s education policymaking process relative to the three components of the three-dimensional approach. For Ritter, based upon his conversations with others, his initial thoughts on Colorado’s education problems were rooted with his personal frustrations with high stakes testing and its potential impact on schools, which particularly hurt urban and other economically disadvantaged school districts. He envisioned a future where this perceived unfairness could be ameliorated through, most prominently, developing a growth model on assessment data, changing the standards and, ultimately, believing Colorado’s children needed preparation in

order to successfully transition into the workforce or postsecondary opportunities upon high school graduation.

Gianneschi's story, on the other hand, highlighted more specific solutions with Colorado's education system. His initial interactions with Ritter's campaign staff illuminated the ideas that would eventually help inform the direction of Ritter's education policy. Further, Gianneschi highlighted the role of the P20 Council's diverse stakeholder composition which likely dampened accusations that Colorado's reform efforts were one-sided policy directions extending from the Governor's office. Moreover, Gianneschi painted a narrative of bipartisanship with his interactions with the Republicans as well as reflected their ability to compromise their agenda for a more broad, but robust policy of education reform.

Participant 3 acknowledged that the CDE was already undergoing processes addressing some of the components related to the solutions articulated in CAP4K. However, as Participant 3 acknowledged, CAP4K provided an amplified sense of legitimacy to the CDE's work. This enhanced legitimacy suggested two understandings. First, though the policy of CAP4K was new, the ideas embodied within it were already being explored by the CDE, particularly around the idea of growth on the data analysis of assessments. Second, the notion of the CDE realizing some of the solutions prior to the bill were likely informed by legislators and the P20 Council on research-backed options. The participants' perception of CAP4K reflected the law's magnitude and carried different interpretations. Ritter viewed CAP4K as a metaphor envisioning Colorado's education as a long, interconnected stream where students seamlessly moved from one grade level to the next. Gianneschi depicted CAP4K as an exercise in creating policy transcending a focus on wins and losses and viewed as legislation that is much bigger than the

individual. Participant 3 likened CAP4K as an affirmation legitimizing the CDE's restructuring efforts to accommodate the changes initiated by the law.

### **Committee Hearings<sup>1</sup>**

The interviewed participants' experiences with CAP4K's bipartisan process and tacit acknowledgement of the solutions and the core beliefs of CAP4K were similarly exemplified in the committee hearings. In a highly attended public meeting on March 27, 2008, Senator Romer's (D) opening statement encapsulated the positive optimism and bipartisanship characterizing the pro-CAP4K atmosphere: "[CAP4K's] vision and boldness really has power and will transform many, many schools and will affect the lives of lots of children." He continued, "When you get a diploma in Colorado, it really is going to matter" (March 27). He further state that Colorado's education was now going to be a "world class system" (Senate Committee Hearings, personal transcription, March 27, 2008).

The sentiment expressed by Romer permeated non-legislator testimony during the Senate Committee Meetings as well. Frank Waterous, senior policy analyst with the Bell Policy Center, a nonprofit, non-partisan organization, voiced support for the bill and stated CAP4K was "a net opportunity gained for the state and for our students... and is a remarkable bill" (Senate Committee Hearings, personal transcription, March 27, 2008). With similar optimism, Monte Moses, a Cherry Creek School District Superintendent stated, "Senate Bill 212 gives a P20 perspective to align the system together with the goal of having every student on course for post-secondary success and ready to live out their own American dream" (Senate Committee Hearings, personal transcription, March 27, 2008). Similarly supportive, Bruce Caughey, on

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<sup>1</sup> Citations of transcribed Preschool to Postsecondary Education Alignment Act of 2009 (2008) committee hearing statements quoted in this study include the senators' or stakeholders' name in-sentence and a parenthetical citation that includes the type of legislative hearing, personal transcription, followed by the date of the committee hearing.

behalf of the Colorado Association of School Executives, expressed support by stating, “We strongly believe in the concepts of this bill” (Senate Committee Hearings, personal transcription, March 27, 2009). Likewise, John Karakoulakis, the Director of Legislative Affairs at the Department of Higher Education stated, “The Department fully endorses the conceptual framework and goals of this legislation” (Senate Committee Hearings, personal transcription, March 27, 2008). John Berry, a school superintendent, stated, “I find this bill to be bold. I find it to be transformational” (Senate Committee Hearings, personal transcription, March 27, 2008). Jane Urschel, Deputy Executive Director of the Colorado Association of School Boards, offered support for the bill, characterizing it as a “revolution in education” (Senate Committee Hearings, personal transcription, March 27, 2008).

Evidently, with the overwhelming passage of CAP4K and the significant of number of legislator and non-legislator support, confidently stating there was widespread agreement on the core beliefs outlining the solutions to the presumed problems of Colorado’s education system is not an analytical stretch. Further, this cohesive and prevalent agreement on the core beliefs of CAP4K suggested the existence of one dominant advocacy coalition. This alignment around the core beliefs, however, did not necessarily preclude the existence of conflict or concerns around the secondary beliefs of CAP4K. Indeed, as the findings below illustrate, there were vocal debates concerning the specific breakdown of the broad core beliefs of CAP4K over secondary beliefs. These details are the heart of the subsequent analysis focused through Research Question 2.

## **Research Question 2**

Research Question 2 asked: Was there evidence of secondary beliefs communicated in the committee hearings about CAP4K? The emphasis utilized from the ACF in this study

centered on the secondary beliefs of policy actors and how those beliefs potentially threatened coalition alignment around CAP4K. The ACF includes two types of beliefs: policy core beliefs and secondary beliefs. The first is policy core beliefs which “are the basic priorities, goals, and values related to a particular issue; examples include general policy preferences, perceptions of problems spanning the scope of an issue, or perceptions of whose welfare counts” (Weible et al., 2014, p. 67).

For this study, the core beliefs in CAP4K exhibited the perception of a problem around Colorado’s education system inadequately anchored to an outdated model characterizing a dichotomous relationship between P12 and higher education systems and ineffective standards preparing students for workforce and postsecondary readiness meeting 21<sup>st</sup> century demands. This required several additional core components of beliefs in CAP4K as part of the solution. First, Colorado’s dichotomously entrenched higher education and P12 systems required alignment. Second, Colorado’s existing content standards required an overhaul to address the perceived challenges of a rapidly shifting society in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. These new standards would presumably prepare Colorado’s students to meet these new 21<sup>st</sup> century demands. Third, these standards simultaneously required new assessments accurately measuring the intended end goal of demonstrating proficiency for students to move forward. This component also served as an accountability measure in order to address gaps in district and school performance.

The broad core ideas of the problems and solutions were overwhelmingly aligned by legislators and non-legislators; however, the specifics of what these core ideas looked like in practice led to the second component of beliefs forwarded by the ACF: secondary beliefs. These “are more narrow and specific, often involving empirical descriptions of the world, sub issues related to the policy debate, or the beliefs concerning the means or instruments for achieving the

goals of a policy” (Weible et al., 2014, p. 67). The latter aspect, “the means or instruments” was particularly relevant to this study’s secondary belief analysis. The secondary beliefs around CAP4K illustrated concerns centering on appropriate funding mechanisms, accurate assessments, timeframes for implementation, and other concerns that the findings below exhibit.

The Advocacy coalition framework’s theory on policy beliefs and advocacy coalitions posits that coalition alignment occurs when those in the policy subsystem align around firstly, the fundamental policy core beliefs (Weible et al., 2014). Based on the overwhelming passage of CAP4K, the framework suggests that a dominant coalition emerged, which aligned with the policy core beliefs of CAP4K. This alignment showed a coalition around the core values of P20 alignment, reform of standards and assessment, and the need to prepare students for workforce and postsecondary readiness to meet the quickly changing demands of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

Research Question 2 sought to identify secondary beliefs through the committee hearings and explore any significant conflict with CAP4K’s underlying policy goals in line with the ACF’s contention that “actors within an advocacy coalition will show substantial consensus on issues pertaining to the policy core, although less so on secondary aspects” (Sabatier & Weible, 2007, p. 220). Therefore, evidence over the non-alignment of secondary beliefs in the committee hearings among legislators and non-legislators would support the ACF’s contention.

**Secondary themes from legislators.** Analysis identified four prominent secondary belief concerns: assessments and the implications of results, English language proficiency assessment as a graduation requirement, the role of a civics education in the definition of workforce and postsecondary readiness, and the potential to track students. Accordingly, four respective themes were identified: (a) worry was raised on making the results of assessments mindful of potentially skewed data because of mistakes made on the administration of tests; (b) a



vocal, albeit minor, push making English language competency a requirement for high school graduation; (c) a secondary belief concerned the perceived relegation of civics education behind the primacy of language arts, science, and mathematics; and (d) apprehension that the new emphasis on workforce and postsecondary readiness would place students at an early stage in their education development towards one route or the other without flexibility.

*Theme one: Assessment impact.* Theme one concerns spoke to the importance of carefully considering the impact results have on a school and community. Addressing something as seemingly benign as a mistake such as wrongfully bubbling answers on a test could potentially skew the results. Most importantly, however, was the realization that flawed data results could have in the broader picture. Representative Rice (D), for example, wanted assurance the state would put in place mechanisms to correct mistakes and adjust data results accordingly. More revealing, however, was Rice's perception on how skewed data affected larger areas, such as the community. Rice stated, "And you know these CSAP reports are important, that they affect things like real estate values and the attractiveness, reputation of a community and a school, and it allows those to be accurately reflected" (House Committee Hearings, personal transcription, May 1, 2008).

Representative Solano (D) agreed with Representative Rice but extended the argument by the stating that in addition to acknowledging errors made on tests, the state should also not penalize parents' rights to keep their student from taking the test; further, if a parent chose to have his or her child to not take the test, the school should not be penalized as a result.

Representative Solano stated:

Parents have a right to choose whether they want their children to take the tests or not. We should be looking at moving away from penalties, so I ask that we not continue to tack on penalties for schools when there's inadvertent errors or when a parent chooses

what the best situation is for their child. (House Committee Hearings, personal transcription, May 1, 2008)

In an interesting twist of opposition to Rice and Solano's concerns Representative

Witwer (R) stated:

This amendment, in my view, substantially diminishes this bill. I think it sends a signal that the state does not stand behind accountability and assessments, and if this amendment becomes a part of the bill, I have to question and assess whether this bill is truly reform or may actually be a step backward. (House Committee Hearings, personal transcription, May 1, 2008)

Representative Solano raised further matters regarding assessments and their impact on the student, teacher, etc. One issue was the level of stress. A second issue was the amount of instructional time. The last issue was the time needed for taking the assessments, and whether the time needed for taking the assessments was appropriate to the ages and capability of students at each testing level. Representative Solano continued by stating:

You have kids crawling underneath the table, and on top of the table, and their desk, and then they cry and pee their pants—I'd say that was a little stressful. And that is exactly what is happening in our classrooms today. But if you're not comfortable with that, I will withdraw that number one. (House Committee Hearings, personal transcription, May 1, 2008)

***Theme two: English language proficiency.*** The second theme, English language proficiency, was identified in the committee hearings. Representative Gardner (R) proposed an amendment stipulating high school seniors must pass an English language proficiency test in order to graduate and stated:

If we are not graduating students who are competent in the English language, then we have failed them. It is incumbent upon us as a general assembly to require, as we fund education, that we are providing the right kind of education, the education of value, and at the very, very least, our high school graduates are competent in the English language. (House Committee Hearings, personal transcription, May 1, 2008)

In response to Representative Gardner's attempt to attach English language graduation requirements to CAP4K and the implied assertion equating English language proficiency with

“the right kind of education,” (House Committee Hearings, personal transcription, May 1, 2008).

Representative Scanlan (D) countered by illustrating that English language proficiency is important, yet basing a graduation requirement on demonstrations of English proficiency is beyond the scope of CAP4K:

It was absolutely reaffirmed in the Education Committee, and throughout this bill, the importance of English language competency. It would be completely inappropriate to only have one high school graduation requirement in this bill, which is what this amendment would essentially do. Rather, what we're doing is saying English language competency absolutely must be attained by students. We're going to write standards to that effect, and we are going to have appropriate assessments to that effect. We are reaffirming that. I can't say that more strongly. (House Committee Hearings, personal transcription, May 1, 2008)

Representative Gardner continued pushing for the amendment and suggested this would send a message declaring demonstrations of English proficiency equated to student success in Colorado and the United States. For Gardner, as his following statement would show, English language proficiency was considered a key ingredient to student success. Further, Gardner perceived this would send a message throughout Colorado and the United States that this was the most important issue. As Representative Gardner stated:

This is not dictating curriculum. This is not dictating to the school board what they must do in terms of carrying out the policy. It is the state of Colorado talking about assessments, and one assessment is English proficiency. We can very glibly stand here and say, "Oh no, we're not going to single out English proficiency," but we didn't mind and don't mind singling out sex education. We don't mind a myriad of other things, but let's take the first thing that matters to success of a student in the state of Colorado and in the United States of America and let's send a message about that. This is a legislative declaration and an implementation of a requirement for English proficiency. (House Committee Hearings, personal transcription, May 1, 2008)

Representative Gardner's strong support for an assessment measuring English language proficiency as a graduation requirement reflected a strong secondary belief to his perception of education.

***Theme three: Workforce and postsecondary readiness.*** A third theme identified from the committee hearings regarded the reform of Colorado's standards to meet workforce and postsecondary readiness. Though the idea of new standards meeting the target of workforce and postsecondary readiness was a widely agreed upon solution, the details of such new standards depended on the legislator's interpretation of what workforce and postsecondary readiness actually meant when defining it and the new standards. Representative Weissman (D) framed a secondary belief around the importance of social studies and civics and sought the inclusion of it within the definition of workforce and postsecondary readiness:

There's some gaping holes in that definition of post-secondary and workforce readiness. One of them we've briefly talked about, and that's the only graduation requirement we have, and that's civics. That's the social studies aspect, which isn't part of that post-secondary and workforce readiness. I quite frankly think that that's a major part of what workforce readiness is and graduation. (House Committee Hearings, personal transcription, May 1, 2008)

Weismann's concerns would similarly be raised by non-legislators in the committee hearings.

***Theme four: Tracking.*** Addressing a separate concern, Representative Weissman raised apprehension with the potential for tracking as the system adjusted to identify students at an early age who were candidates for the workforce or postsecondary track:

In developing the preschool through elementary and secondary education standards, the state board shall also take into account any career and technical education standards adopted by the community college. What I fear that we are going to do if we go down this road and pass this bill and align standards is do what they do in other countries—to do what they do in Japan, and that's early on separate out kids. "You're the tech school kid. You're the Harvard kid." That's not what education ought to be about and that's not what public education is about, but indeed that's how we're aligning some of those standards, is taking those in account. That, I think, is a very dangerous path that we would be going down. (House Committee Hearings, personal transcription, May 1, 2008)

While Weismann's concerns are noted, the intention of CAP4K is not focused on rigidly pigeonholing students into workforce or a college ready track. This system intended flexibility

and students, ideally, should move according to their own interests and be appropriately supported by the system.

**Policy secondary themes from non-legislators.** Similar to the previous findings illuminating concerns over CAP4K's secondary policy beliefs, findings from non-legislators demonstrated a variety of apprehensions. From the analysis of committee hearings, several noticeable secondary beliefs were identified, and accordingly, several themes characterizing non-legislator testimony emerged: (a) concern over implementing effective assessments in preschool, and the need to create relevancy for students and teachers; (b) the importance of sufficient funding; (c) a call for public input, particularly from the voices of professional educators, in defining the specific details on the implantation of CAP4K; and (d) a call for a more robust integration of civics education and social studies in general with CAP4K.

**Theme one: Assessment.** Theme one identified from the non-legislator committee hearings centered on a variety of sub-themes. Of these, the primary emphasis was not on CAP4K's call for developing new assessments, but on offering a range of recommendations on how they should be developed. For example, Beverly Ingel, representing the Colorado Education Association, stated that assessments should be

national[ly] normed, that the results come back in a timely fashion, because right now coming back as they do for CSAPs is just abysmal for what we need for timely information. And the test is relevant to all students, parents, and teachers. Although this is an opportunity, and we also must remember that any newly required tests must replace the tests that we're already taking, because students are over tested between the requirements from national, state, and local districts. (Senate Committee Hearings, personal transcription, March 27, 2008)

Ingel's point echoed similar frustrations Governor Ritter acknowledged in the interview: mainly, teachers did not receive the assessment results timely enough for them to make any adjustments

instructionally. Similarly, Ingel illustrated the frustration on the amount of time required to take the tests which detracted from classroom instructional time.

Garrett Westerfeld, the executive director of the Build Initiative, which focuses on early childhood policy, stated assessments from preschool through third grade was critical and identified, “Under our current system, we don't know until third grade really how well our kids are doing, and it isn't too late, but we've lost a golden opportunity to intervene and provide resources to kids when it can do the most good. I think the principle is right on” (Senate Committee Hearings, personal transcription, March 27, 2008). With this point made, Westerfeld also acknowledged the importance of using reliable assessment measurements and is difficult with preschoolers through grade three children. “It's harder to know if you have the right measures. It's harder to know if you're using those measures correctly in the way that they were intended to be used, and you also have to be very clear in early childhood assessment about whether you have people in the system have the skills and the training and the money that they need in order to meet your standards. The funding adequacy question becomes a really, really big issue” (Senate Committee Hearings, personal transcription, March 27, 2008). No doubt, Westerfeld’s cautionary point about creating reliable and valid assessments is a challenge for younger children. It is also a similar concern with any assessment throughout the P12 system.

An interesting consideration raised around assessments was creating relevancy for students. A common perception shared among those testifying about assessments felt students lacked motivation. Unlike the ACT, for example, where many students saw good performance as an important motivation factor to gaining college admission, state tests were perceived more of a nuisance and waste of time. To tackle this perception, some testimony encouraged new assessments should be relevant. As school superintendent Monte Moses stated, assessments are

the “linchpin of the entire system. . . . We have to get that part right if the standards are going to have meaning. Many students right now don't see the value in some of the tests we give, so that debate should go on and we should look for not just standards, but assessment systems that not just measure what students know, but motivate them to do their best and look forward to a bright future” (Senate Committee Hearings, personal transcription, March 27, 2008).

Representing the Colorado Association of School Executives Bruce Caughey expressed similar concerns while extending a recommendation that students need to see that the standards and assessments are aligned around workforce and postsecondary readiness:

[Principals] believe students need motivation and incentives to do well in high school assessments. That they're able to see their progress over time, and see the relevancy to actual jobs, students will take testing more seriously. They believe that high school assessments must align with what's being taught, and they believe we need to develop standards and assessments for 11th to 12th grades that correspond with college and workforce readiness, as well as 21<sup>st</sup> century skills. (Senate Committee Hearings, personal transcription, March 27, 2008)

Caughey expressed the importance of intrinsic motivation for students. The perception was that students were not previously motivated and therefore results did not reflect their best efforts. If relevance could be established, more accurate data would be provided. Certainly the call for motivation is necessary, but the implication that students' motivation depended upon knowing that the revised standards were connected with workforce and postsecondary readiness is a separate matter warranting further research.

***Theme two: Funding.*** A prominent theme, unsurprisingly, identified from analysis centered on funding. Clearly, with all the major components proposed in CAP4K as well as its long-term focus, a commitment to state provided financial resources must correlate. Beverly Ingel, on behalf of the teacher's union, highlighted several areas of funding concerns. First, Ingel advocated for funding which would provide professional development for educators. “Funding for staff development, to implement change for teachers, counselors and support

professionals. If new standards are written, and new tests are designed, and new curriculum develops, training is imperative for the implementation to take place” (March 27, 2008). Ingel further addressed technology upgrades and stated, “Funding for 21<sup>st</sup> century technology upgrades is essential” (March 27, 2008) Additionally, the issue of class sizes was a concern as well and that “ funding is needed to lower the class sizes” (March 27, 2008) Additionally, funding “to provide intensive instruction on poor remediation to students who don't come to school with the prerequisite skills in order for them to be successful” (Senate Committee Hearings, personal transcription, March 27, 2008).

Waterous expressed concerns that “the bill does not directly, as has been said, address the increased financial investment and commitment that will be required if the reforms outlined in it are to become reality.” (March 27, 2008) Fully aware of the necessary financial investment, Waterous iterated an important recommendation underlining the critical piece of funding.

Waterous further noted:

We also believe that the people of Colorado need to know that we can't achieve those goals, the goals that are set forth in this bill, simply by reallocating current resources. If we want a 21<sup>st</sup> century education system in our state, and it's a priority, then we need to step up to the plate, [and] then we have to fund that system. And we have to fund that system as a part of a comprehensive fiscal strategy that allows Colorado to achieve all of our social and policy aspirations. (Senate Committee Hearings, personal transcription, March 27, 2008)

Certainly, the concerns raised by Ingel and Waterous point to an important consideration.

Regardless of how audacious CAP4K’s plan is, without the appropriate funding the policy becomes relegated simply as a rhetorical instrument. The costs, as previously identified, are enormous.

***Theme three: Public participation.*** Analysis identified a secondary belief around public participation on the implementation process of CAP4K. Because CAP4K was a process bill



focused on long-term implementation rather than an instant application of the goals surrounding CAP4K, vocal apprehensions highlighted the secondary belief recommending broad input on the process. Urschel, for example, stated, “The public must have a say.” (Senate Committee Hearings, personal transcription, March 27, 2008). Furthermore, Urschel said, “We are unclear as to what role the bill contemplates for the local district and the local communities,” (Senate Committee Hearings, personal transcription, March 27, 2008) thus, signifying the potential ambiguities to the bill’s impact on these entities.

Caughey provided a specific recommendation on public input and emphasized the need for educator specialists to have a role in how the bill unfolds in the operation phase. Caughey stated, “There needs to be practitioners directly involved in the conversations leading to implementation. And that we need to have regional educator meetings and a process that is inclusive across the state of Colorado” (Senate Committee Hearings, personal transcription, March 27, 2008). Illustrating a similar concern, Anderson said there should be “regional conversations between secondary and post-secondary educators” (Senate Committee Hearings, personal transcription, March 27, 2008). Anderson stated further:

I can assure that every educator in the state wants every student to be successful, and so I think they need to have the opportunity for secondary educators to have those conversations with post-secondary educators as we begin to develop these 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup>-grade standards, so they are aligned. (Senate Committee Hearings, personal transcription, March 27, 2008)

Ingel expressed concerns on how the standards re developed and recommended regional meetings involving teachers. Ingel explained:

Another concern that the bill is missing practitioner review. We believe to create the most fundamentally sound standards that there should be regional hearing or hearing for real input from people who work with our students and standards day in and day out. There is language that asks for public input, but practitioners need a bigger voice. (Senate Committee Hearings, personal transcription, March 27, 2008)

Indeed, this recommendation would be included as part of the bill and result in this study's next section which analyzes the CDE's statewide teacher tour.

***Theme Four: Civic education standards.*** The final theme identified from the analysis of non-legislator testimony spoke to the new proposed standards, and specifically, concern over civics education. As Almeky, a social studies teacher representative stated, "There is no mention of civics, history, government, or economics in that section as some of the important or most important course subjects, and I think that would be an important place to start." (Senate Committee Hearings, personal transcription, March 27, 2008). The point reflected a perception of the growing importance placed on science, mathematics, and language arts, and demoted social studies and civic education for students. For some teachers, as Almeky would anecdotally report, there was a sense that language arts teachers were now, more than ever, expected to integrate civics education within their lessons. Almeky explained,

Language arts teachers are primarily becoming the folks that take care of the social studies curriculum in Aurora, so there's less and less of people with expertise and training in it. I understand the aspect of trying to address the non-fiction piece in the literacy block and saying that was social studies, but it's also like doing science without the lab. (Senate Committee Hearings, personal transcription, March 27, 2008)

Almeky further stated, "If we desire a greater number of students to be productive, active citizens with increasing abilities to accept economic and civic systems, shouldn't we be ratcheting up the emphasis on social studies learning and civics learning and civics teaching?" (Senate Committee Hearings, personal transcription, March 27, 2008). Notwithstanding the rhetorical question, the emphasis made it clear of the perceived irony on the important connection of teaching students to successfully participate in a democracy as part of their readiness.

Perhaps more ominously, Almeky shared with the committee that following 9/11, teachers were feeling increasingly uneasy teaching topics around the constitution and civil rights, implying there was an unstated pressure to avoid potentially contentious topics. Almeky stated:

Just a couple of stories that kind of relate to the current state. Seven years ago after 9/11, as a coordinator in Cherry Creek, I heard from elementary teachers that they were being asked not to teach social studies. Fifth grade teachers who were assigned the revolution and the constitution and civil rights felt like they had to be covert and go underground in order to address what is an essential part of the Cherry Creek curriculum, at least at the district level. Those stories have not gone away in the seven years I've spent in this position. If anything, they've increased, and I've heard more from other districts. (Senate Committee Hearings, personal transcription, March 27, 2008)

Barbara Miller, representing the Center for Education in Law and Democracy, voiced similar concerns:

“Nowhere does it talk about rigorous civic content and civic skills. So, social studies is being treated differently than math, science, and language arts, and we are hoping that this group will elevate social studies to the same status as the other disciplines. (Senate Committee Hearings, personal transcription, March 27, 2008)

Both Almeky and Miller spoke to the perception that social studies was increasingly relegated as inferior to language arts, mathematics, and science. With those latter three subject areas receiving the most pressure on assessment and results, Miller, Almeky, and others sought a greater push to increase attention on them. This trend, perhaps, represented the collateral damage caused by such a focus on language arts, mathematics, and science. Each year, as educators and policy analysts nervously await results from state tests, the focus is on the latter three areas, and thus, neglect social studies.

### **Summary of Committee Hearings**

Secondary beliefs from legislators illustrated a comparatively pronounced concern with several components of CAP4K. Particularly poignant was Representative Gardner’s concern to make English language proficiency a graduation requirement. Similar to legislators’ alignment

with the core beliefs of CAP4K, non-legislator testimony aligned. However, analysis of testimony indicated secondary policy belief concerns. However, despite evidence indicating secondary beliefs from legislators and non-legislators, CAP4K maintained an overwhelming approval and suggests the ACF's assertion that advocacy coalitions and, in the case of CAP4K, one dominant advocacy coalition, remained intact as long as agreement persists around the policy core beliefs. This further suggests CAP4K's pro advocacy coalition, understood Colorado's education system required a significant overhaul and, despite concerns over secondary beliefs, realized expediency of CAP4K's broad solutions was preferable than potentially derailing the entire bill over secondary belief concerns.

With the seeming inevitable secondary belief concerns, which would come up with how the broad solutions proposed by CAP4K actually translate into specific practice, it seems unsurprising secondary belief concerns would arise. Interestingly, as the ACF's proposition asserts, the presence of concerns and conflict over secondary beliefs did not compromise the dominant coalition's cohesiveness. Legislators have the ability, at a minimum, to stall a policy. Yet, despite the secondary belief differences, particularly Gardner's determination to include a graduation assessment on English language proficiency, the policy quickly moved forward and bridged party ideological divisions within a couple months being proposed by the Governor.

Similar to the complexities revealed by secondary beliefs in the committee hearings, which provided a microscope on how the broad goals of CAP4K would be interpreted, an extended illustration of the intricacies involved with implementation is revealed from the CDE's statewide tour garnering teachers' concerns. The following section explores the perspectives of teachers and reveals an even deeper complexity involved when it comes to implementing the policy in the classroom.

### **Research Question 3**

Research Question 3 asked: How did themes identified by the Colorado Department of Educations' statewide tour gathering teachers' feedback illustrate concerns on CAP4K? Notwithstanding the complexity involved with the policymaking process perceived from the experiences of the interviewed participants, and legislator and non-legislator voices heard in the committee hearings, the changes precipitated by CAP4K, particularly with new standards and assessments, would equally demonstrate the complexity of policy interpretation and implementation for teachers. Perhaps most importantly, however, without effectively understanding how to translate the intents of the policy, the lofty goals of P20 alignment's fruition would likely fail. As a result of the calls for public participation, especially from teacher practitioners, which was heard in the committee hearings, the CDE (2009) conducted a statewide study on teachers input, and published their findings identifying teachers' concerns on major elements related to CAP4K (May, 2009).

The CDE (2009) identified four overarching themes capturing teachers' input. This participation, broadly, related to recommendations directly connected to the processes of implementation and receiving the necessary support to make the reforms effective. Although the study was conducted following the passage of CAP4K, the insights gathered from these findings exemplified an important look into how teachers perceived the new legislation. As part of the CDE tour, teachers were asked to comment on two primary questions: (a) "What impact will the next generation of standards and assessments have on teaching and learning" (p. 3)? (b) "What support will teachers need to implement the next generation of standards and assessments" (p. 3)? The CDE identified four broad themes.

**Theme one: Teacher voices.** A major theme identified from the discussions pointed to teachers wanting to have a significant voice as the implementation phases unfolded. An important aspect to this emphasized participation by teachers would facilitate a sense of collaboration and voice in the process. CDE (2009) stated, “Teachers want to be engaged in Colorado’s education reform. Without strong teacher buy-in and conversations led at the classroom level, the potential CAP4K holds to redefine teaching and learning for this state may be compromised” (p. 7).

Three subthemes were identified under theme one: (a) appreciation for the CDE’s statewide teacher tour in gathering their input; (b) how CAP4K will affect students and teaching; (c) skepticism on how this policy will be different from previous changes with teachers emphasizing the need to be involved in the changes of standards and assessments, a significant concern with funding (CDE, 2009, p. 7).

Breaking this down, several important takeaway’s can be discerned. First, the call in the committee hearings recommending input from teacher practitioners demonstrated the importance in making the implementation process transparent and inclusive. From the CDE’s findings, teachers were definitely appreciative of the extended outreach. The importance of reaching out to teachers in the developing the implementation process creates a legitimizing force by empowering teachers’ voices and creating a sense of collaborative ownership as the complex implementation process unfolds. Further, as findings indicated, the CDE’s proactive outreach to teachers potentially alleviated teacher frustrations with past initiatives for ‘reform’. Often, changes from the state were perceived by teachers as passing fads with little muscle behind the policy for ensuring long-term sustainability.

**Theme two: Relevancy.** A second theme identified was that teachers believed “successful design and implementation of CAP4K will result in a true competency-based system where relevance and motivation have new meaning, for both teachers and students” (p. 8). This speaks to the new focus of demonstrating proficiency as part of the change with standards. Additionally, teachers spoke to the need to establish meaning for their students which gives them a sense new standards and assessments actually feel they’re important. The same call was spoken by legislators and non-legislators demonstrated in the committee hearings.

The central component of this theme speaks to the complexity of students needs and sheds light on the potential ambiguities associated with broad policymaking such as CAP4K. Teachers realize every student is unique with specific learning, emotional, and physical needs. An important factor perceived by teachers stressed the need for assessments to be relevant for them as well as the student. As illustrated by concerns addressed in the interviews and committee hearings, relevance was an important factor perceived as a component to overall success in CAP4K. Furthermore, teachers expressed that the data from the results needed to reflect the learning that has taken place, with timely feedback for teachers to adjust instructional practices.

**Theme three: Alignment of systems.** Theme three expressed by teachers indicated that “the impact of the next generation of standards and assessments on teaching and learning will be aligned systems, clear expectations and greater transparency around what it takes for all students to succeed after high school” (CDE, 2009, p. 9). Subthemes identified included systemic linking considering all components in the education system and, most prominently, that “CAP4K’s greatest impact will be addressing the misalignment between P-12, higher education and workforce expectations. Aligning these three systems is imperative to the success of all students

and the future of Colorado's economy" (CDE, 2009, p. 9). This reiterated and suggested teachers' affirmation of CAP4K's goal of P20 alignment. Presumably, teachers also understood that there was a disconnect and suggested support. Teachers further emphasized a connection with workforce readiness by integrating the needs of aligning workforce preparation. Further, teachers had the assumption that alignment will translate as a positive condition facilitating Colorado's economic situation.

The logic seemed clear: Preparing students for workforce readiness should mean that businesses will have a supply of educated, knowledgeable workers. This will support businesses as well as workers with reciprocal benefits to local communities. Whether or not this logic upholds warrants further research.

**Theme four: Partnerships.** Theme four showed the need "to implement the next generation of standards and assessments education professionals must partner in new ways that deliver 21<sup>st</sup> century support for 21<sup>st</sup> century teaching and learning" (CDE, 2009, p.10). At the heart of this partnership were teachers' expressed recommendation to update several professional areas. First, teachers requested the need for professional development. This professional development should be specifically tailored meeting their needs and, often, individualized. Second, teachers expressed a need for more time for planning and be provided a structured timeline of expectations as implementation developed. Finally, teachers recommended a renewed partnership with CDE for support (CDE, 2009, p. 11)

Theme four the CDE's findings reinforced theme three and reflected teachers' concern for professional support and an ability to build structural scheduling opportunities to realize their own growth potential. Underlying these concerns were that teachers understood CAP4K was a



major adjustment in the educational system. To adequately address these changes, support needed to follow.

### **Summary of Research Question 3**

Teachers' concerns with CAP4K illustrated significant support for the reform efforts under CAP4K, yet they expressed more specific details relative to aspects of its implementation. What appears clear is that the broad goal of CAP4K to prepare its students for workforce and postsecondary readiness was supported by teachers. Additionally, efforts in alignment between all grade levels also received support. With regards to alignment efforts, teachers spoke to the more complex needs of their highly diverse student population and offered more specific insight than the interviewees and committee hearings expressed. At the policymaking level encompassing the executive and legislative branches, alignment was more broadly defined without specific definitions to the actual complexity of students and how that would be addressed. However, this responsibility would lie in the collaborative efforts of the CDE and school districts with teachers having a voice. Teachers in the classroom understand the unique differences of every child that walks through their door. The intent of P20 alignment is critical, yet it needs to be coupled with the recognition of the actual diverse complexities of their students.

These details exceeded the broad beliefs expressed around the policy beliefs of the interviewees and committee hearings. Teachers similarly expressed that in order to meet the requirements of CAP4K, a number of components were critical in facilitating its success of P20 alignment and the broad goal of preparing students for workforce and postsecondary success. One of those pieces regarded their frustration with the current statewide assessment system. They encouraged an overhaul, which should extend beyond revising standards to match 21<sup>st</sup>

century needs around workforce and postsecondary readiness. The assessments needed timeliness and relevancy for teachers. For example, before CAP4K, data from CSAP would not reach teachers until the following school year, and essentially precluded timely instructional adjustments. Instead, teachers argued data needs to be relevant and timely and have a quick turnaround of results. Further, teachers advocated for several formative assessments throughout the year in addition to the traditional end of the year summative assessments. This would help them proactively target students throughout the year.

An additional piece tied in to P20 success were teachers' advocacy for ongoing professional development to access best instructional practices and individualization. Individualized professional development would specifically target teachers' own instructional gaps rather than provide all-encompassing professional development, which was not individualized.

### **Conclusion**

Governor Ritter's interview illustrated a unique perspective on P20 alignment in Colorado. From the beginning of his decision to run for Governor, Ritter realized a need to adjust Colorado's education system to match the needs of a quickly changing societal landscape. Several prominent themes emerged from the interview with former Governor Ritter.

Firstly, Governor Ritter developed a strong sense of unfairness about the federal government's approach to accountability resulting from No Child Left Behind. Assessment focused on a snapshot representation of a student's achievement and, from Governor Ritter's perspective, assessments unfairly measured teacher performance. Ameliorating this shortcoming required individualized acknowledgement of the student's relative growth in performance and incorporate critical and creative thinking skills.

Secondly, Governor Ritter highlighted the importance in creating policy, especially policy like CAP4K, which included requirements for reflection on whether or not the changes were having the intended impact. Implementing CAP4K was not a magic cure. It was a road map to follow for many years in Colorado's education system.

Thirdly, Governor Ritter was keenly aware of surrounding himself with subject-area experts. Most importantly, Governor Ritter recognized the value bipartisanship offered and emphasized the importance of building a broad range of stakeholder involvement of support that was bipartisan in composition. Bipartisanship and collaboration with a diverse range of stakeholders precluded ideologically-driven policymaking.

Gianneschi's interview alluded to the importance of Governor Ritter's leadership. He recognized the Governor's ability to delegate and intentionally bring together people representing different political positions and party affiliation. Gianneschi was keenly aware of highlighting CAP4K's necessity for the future and doing what he perceived was best for Colorado's children. The policies surpassed party affiliation and reflected an overall picture that emphasized a systemic perspective. The bipartisan nature, beginning with the Governor's own leadership, percolated to the top of the intentional decisions on the P20 Council's membership comprised of experts spanning varying positions which added legitimacy. Similarly, the Republican leadership appeared willing to sacrifice their own political wins for the sake of CAP4K's broader considerations. Consensus and collaboration characterized the policymaking process underlying the overwhelming passage of the legislation.

Though faced with the daunting pressures from a quickly faltering economy, CAP4K survived. Significant implications resulting from CAP4K stimulated collaboration between P12 and the higher education communities and paved the way for subsequent legislative acts, such as

the creation of dual enrollment which allowed qualifying high school students to enroll concurrently in free college courses while still in high school. CAP4K's aligned content standards held all Colorado school districts accountable to the same expectations. Assessments now factored in growth as a part of the measurement.

The period marking CAP4K's unusual bipartisan success in Colorado changed, however, with the politicization surrounding RTTT and the advocacy of Common Core standards during ballooning debates around Federal versus States' rights. The result affected the collaborative nature inherent to CAP4K's bipartisan nature.

Broadly, interview participants illustrated a collective concern with creating an education system built around preparing students for the workforce and post-secondary success. The latter goal emphasized a concern by the higher education community with the number of high school graduates entering college with significant learning gaps. This shortfall required such students to take remedial courses to catch up to the level expected for incoming freshman.

CAP4K articulated a plan ameliorating this through a range of changes to its system, which centered on adjusted assessments, accountability, growth, and aligned standards. The main emphasis, however, focused on developing a seamless system from preschool through high school. This concept integrated a standards-based system of learning objectives situating the student within a proficiency-based model of achievement. The three interviews revealed the underlying policymaking process and highlighted the critical bipartisanship necessary to achieve CAP4K's broad vision.

Analysis of committee hearings revealed broad support from both legislators and non-legislators with the core policy beliefs of CAP4K. Nevertheless, evidence illustrating concerns over secondary beliefs indicated non-alignment with several components of CAP4K. However,

despite the evidence of conflicting secondary beliefs, the preservation and success of the pro-CAP4K dominant advocacy coalition supports the ACF's assertion suggesting coalitions will remain intact as long as they align around policy core beliefs. In essence, the proponents of CAP4K's alignment around the core policy beliefs successfully insulated itself from any conflicts emerging from the committee hearings. Indeed, the secondary beliefs themselves were only intended as either recommendations to the proposal or small amendments.

The CDE's analysis of teachers concerns broadly suggested support for CAP4K; however, teachers expressed the need to receive support in making the transition. This support included the need for relevant and timely assessments, relevant professional development, and a call to be strong participants in the development of standards. Further, and perhaps most importantly, teachers saw CAP4K as an opportunity for a renewed, collaborative partnership with the CDE in order to facilitate the broad goal of student workforce and postsecondary preparedness.

## CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION

This qualitative study, which emphasized interviews and education committee hearings, explored Colorado's policymaking process shaping the Preschool to Postsecondary Alignment Act of 2009 (CAP4K). Interviews focused on the lived experiences of three participants possessing a unique vantage point within Colorado's CAP4K development. Subsequently, the researcher used thematic analysis predesignating the ACF's concept of secondary beliefs to facilitate interpretation of education committee hearing transcripts. Essential to this second approach focused on committee hearings, the researcher's analysis explored the ACF's assertion that advocacy coalitions will remain aligned around policy core beliefs despite possible conflict over secondary policy beliefs. Finally, in an effort to appreciate teachers' perceptions of CAP4K, this researcher examined the CDE's report (2009) which highlighted themes from a statewide tour gathering teacher input regarding their concerns and questions on next steps for CAP4K implementation. Most importantly, teachers' voices illuminated the complexity involved with the details to implement underlying broad, well-intended state education policies. Ultimately, research showed that teachers *must* be provided the support to effectively implement CAP4K.

The researcher organized this chapter into five sections. First, the researcher briefly reviews the research problem and methodology. Second, the researcher's findings of Research Question 1 are discussed as each participant demonstrated comparable and divergent interpretations of their experiences with CAP4K. Third, the researcher's findings related to Research Question 2's are discussed which focus on the evidence of secondary beliefs in committee hearings. Analysis of legislator and non-legislator testimony indicated a diverse array

of differences regarding secondary policy beliefs. Nevertheless, the hearings suggested support for the ACF's assertion that advocacy coalitions will remain intact as long as agreement aligns around the policy core beliefs despite evidence suggesting conflicts or concerns over secondary policy beliefs. Fourth, the researcher's findings related to research question three are discussed, with particular emphasis placed on teacher's interpretations of the broad goals outlined in CAP4K specific to their responsibilities. The findings exemplified the multifaceted nature of implementation, which often can expose the potential hindrance of any broad reaching educational policies such as CAP4K.

In all, the findings led to what this researcher considered among the most important aspect to any research endeavor that analyzes policy, namely, to learn from the strengths and weaknesses in order to provide recommendations for education policy advocates and practitioners. As such, a variety of recommendations are offered which, hopefully, offer some general guidance for future education policymaking efforts.

The fifth section examined how this study's methodology, inductive approach influenced by the awareness of the three aspects related Clandinin and Connelly's (2000) three-dimensions of narrative inquiry and deductive thematic analysis, predesignated the ACF's concept of secondary beliefs to the transcripts of the committee hearings. Finally, I concluded this chapter with reflective, personal observations related to this study and social policy in general.

### **Review of the Problem**

The goals of CAP4K challenged the historical divide previously characterizing Colorado's P12 and higher education systems and sought to bridge this division around revised standards, assessments, and graduation standards matching the perceived needs of a rapidly changing workforce and higher education. Despite the historical significance of CAP4K, an

understanding of the policymaking process underlying its successfully resounding and swift bipartisan endorsement remained unexplored. Moreover, accessing the lived experiences from the perspective of individuals closely involved in CAP4K's development offered a promising opportunity for researchers interested in seeking to explore policymaking through their narrative accounts.

Existing research centered on the policymaking process shaping P20 alignment efforts was limited, leaving a significant gap in understanding the role policymakers have in creating education policy change (Durand, 2011). Further, existing research applying theoretical approaches singularly or in combination developed from the field of political science to education policymaking was correspondingly narrow (McLendon et al., 2015). Adding to the limitations, the majority of P20 research predominantly reflected an advocacy-based orientation with few empirical examples (Durand, 2011).

A comparable shortfall existed of studies applying the ACF to educational policymaking. In line with the large body of literature predominantly applying the ACF to one aspect of its many pieces of the framework (Pierce et al., 2017), this study emphasized the frameworks concept of policy secondary beliefs in coalition stability and persistence. Clearly, there was a presence of a single, dominant coalition around the policy core beliefs of CAP4K.

Facilitating an understanding of CAP4K's development were three research questions:

1. What were the lived experiences of interviewees in the development of CAP4K?
  - a. What were the interviewees' perceptions of the problems and solutions of Colorado's education system leading to CAP4K?
  - b. What were the interviewees' experiences in successful coalition building leading to the broad support for CAP4K?



- c. What were the interviewees' perceptions of the challenges in their experiences with the development of CAP4K?
  - d. How did interviewees ascribe meaning to the development and impact of CAP4K?
2. Was there evidence of secondary beliefs communicated in the committee hearings about CAP4K?
3. How did themes identified by the Colorado Department of Educations' statewide tour gathering teachers' input illustrate concerns on CAP4K?

### **Review of Methodology**

A qualitative orientation was used, emphasizing narrative analysis centered on participants' experiences with Colorado's P20 alignment guided by Clandinin and Connelly's (2000) three-dimensions of narrative space. This narrative guide provided a lens encouraging analytical awareness around three aspects related to experience, which included consideration of the social and personal interactive aspects of the participant, the temporality of the participants, and situational or place of the participants account.

Legislative education committee hearings provided the second major source for analysis. Contrasting with the interviews inductive approach, thematic analysis from a deductive approach applied the predesignated concept of secondary beliefs to both legislator and non-legislator testimony concerning CAP4K. Finally, a third consideration centered on the CDE's (2009) report identifying major themes from their statewide tour, which wanted teacher input on their concerns and recommendations moving forward with the complex implementation elements of CAP4K. The analytical goal focused on seeing how teachers' concerns and recommendations exposed the complex nature of state education policy.

## **Major Findings**

Contrasting with the focus on secondary beliefs with Research question 2 the sub-questions organized under Research question 1 sought to explore the experiences from the perspectives of the three participants.

### **Research Question 1a**

In Research Question 1a the researcher explored participants' perceptions with the problems in Colorado's education system and their perceived solutions. The education challenges Ritter heard from Coloradoans on the campaign trail significantly shaped his beliefs around Colorado's education problems. High stakes testing, inadequate learning standards, and insufficient preparedness of students for workforce and college readiness all seemed to roll into one major concern for Ritter and eventually reflected some of the key points emphasized in CAP4K.

The analysis of Gianneschi's interview reflected his awareness around change which was more systemic oriented. He saw the importance of different but interconnected pieces helping the overall solution of Colorado's education system. I believe this is why he framed reform as thinking big. Rather than a piecemeal approach such as adjusting graduation requirements, Gianneschi believed P20 alignment meant updating the standards, creating assessments that were growth oriented, and adjusting how the transition from one grade level to the next be based on demonstrations of proficiency rather than the amount of time spent in a class.

Gianneschi's advocacy for a broader approach reflected many of the recommendations emerging from the P20 advocacy-oriented literature. Notable among them was the growing body of research promoting an increased connection between P12 and higher education systems (Kirst & Wirt, 1982; Kirst & Meister, 1983; Kirst & Venezia, 2001; Kreuger & Rainwater, 2003; Van

de Water & Rainwater, 2001) and calling for the consideration of broader implementation components, which departed from fragmentary approaches.

Participant 3 highlighted the importance of factoring in growth as part of the solution to Colorado's perceived problems. Interestingly, though awareness of growth was an important solution for Participant 3, he also indicated on several occasions that a solution was also about raising expectations. This included a wide call, from students to educators, to believe they can achieve more. I do not know exactly what this entailed but assume it reflected more of an existential realization to perform at your best. This attitude seemed to be an important component in making an organizational shift towards systemically-minded focus motivated by high expectations within the CDE.

### **Research Question 1b**

In Research Question 1b the researcher focused on the interviewees' accounts on the creation of a coalition supporting CAP4K. There was clear, enormous support for CAP4K from its onset. As such, there was widespread alignment around the policy core beliefs. Ritter's suggestion that there was broad stakeholder involvement seemed to illustrate a key component to the overwhelming successful passage of CAP4K. He further elaborated on how the timing seemed particularly conducive. Gianneschi similarly echoed Ritter's point around broad stakeholder support but also highlighted the intentional bipartisan design in the P20 ECC's membership composition. Comprising a broad array of stakeholders representing diverse interests from the teachers' union, higher education, and the business community made any accusation of partisan political interests against Governor unlikely. Further, the solutions explored that ultimately reflected key solutions in CAP4K struck the appropriate rhetorical chord. In particular, the broad goal of preparing Colorado's students for the workforce *and*

postsecondary readiness was difficult to argue against because, for those in the private sector as well as higher education, many young high school graduates were perceived as having insufficient preparation. By including both as optional goals for graduating seniors appealed to both the business community as well as higher education institutions.

Gianneschi, like Ritter, also acknowledged a conducive political climate, yet also acknowledged from his perspective the Governor's leadership. From this researcher's perspective, this was a critical piece. Ritter believed in bipartisanship and working across the aisle, particularly when it came to education. A similar theme on leadership was communicated by Participant 3's reflection on the Education Commissioner, Dwight Jones' ability to work with various coalitions such as the Colorado Educators Association and more conservative leaning interest groups. Participant 3 also reiterated Gianneschi's point that acknowledged Governor Ritter's ability to work across a broad spectrum of interest groups and further reinforced the importance of a governor's leadership. Recognizing the significance of a governor's leadership in P20 alignment supported Mokher's (2010) analysis.

### **Research Question 1c**

In Research Question 1c the researcher explored the perceptions of interviewees' experiences with the challenges they encountered in CAP4K's development. Though Ritter briefly acknowledged the burden faced with the economic downturn as well as the competing Republican bill, he conceded it was a remarkably smooth process. Gianneschi correspondingly explained CAP4K development was a remarkably non-confrontational process; however, he detailed the challenge of the Republican's bill. It appeared that if the Republicans were unwilling to kill their bill, then the likelihood of CAP4K going through was doubtful.

An interesting point Gianneschi raised concerned his perspective on the President Obama's Race To The Top (RTTT) competition as well as the Common Core movement. Although these developments did not pose challenges because they unfolded following the passage of CAP4K, there is an interesting interpretation highlighting these two advances. Gianneschi suggested the educational momentum and the main ideas articulated through CAP4K shifted with RTTT competition, which fueled resentment among many states. Gianneschi said the adoption of the Common Core, by many, was viewed as a federal overstep. Colorado's alignment of standards partially reflecting the Common Core national standards took on a new tone with RTTT and subsequently splintered into partisan allegiances.

### **Research Question 1d**

In Research Question 1d the researcher highlighted the perception of CAP4K and what it meant to the participants. Each contributor confirmed a unique standpoint on how they interpreted the policy's importance. For Ritter, CAP4K assumed a metaphoric description equating the policy to a long stream where children, ideally, seamlessly move from prekindergarten through high school graduation and, eventually, the workforce or postsecondary opportunities. The idea elicited the connection of standards throughout where each grade level built upon previous learning. Moving forward, students needed to demonstrate proficiency to go to the next grade level. Previously, the system, in most cases, promoted students to the next grade level regardless of proficiency. Gianneschi characterized CAP4K as "a visionary education bill". Most importantly, Gianneschi interpreted CAP4K as a new way for the state to think of education and illustrate that "big ideas" were possible. For Participant 3, CAP4K opened a new way of thinking. He added that the law formerly legitimized the CDE's

organizational transformation. Further, Participant 3 acknowledged the business community's importance in Colorado.

Collectively, the participant contributions demonstrated a commitment to reforming Colorado's education system and reflected the advocacy literature contending U.S.'s education system needed significant reforms in order to accommodate the rapidly changing dynamics of increased globalization and a progressively dependent knowledge-based economy. Preparing children for workforce readiness and post-secondary success lied at the heart of P20 reform. Part of the recommended prescriptions extended from the Consortium for Policy Research in Education (2000) which identified aligned standards and assessments between K12 and higher education systems as crucial components. Additionally, the report called for aligned data systems that could track students' progress longitudinally. These areas reflected components established by CAP4K.

Subsequent articles recommended education leaders come together to create a vision and identify the problems and solutions (Van de Water & Rainwater, 2001). CAP4K similarly reflected these recommendations. The literature shared ensuing calls for increased alignment and the growing momentum advocating for alignment had a major influence on many states across the United States (Portch, 2002, 2006; Rochford & Conner, 2005; Rochford et al., 2005). Eventually, the majority of states began conversations around P20 alignment throughout the U.S.

Nevertheless, though the advocacy literature accelerated in popularity, studies exploring examples of states implementing P20 policy lagged behind with comparatively few exceptions. Several studies explored elements related to alignment efforts between K-12 and postsecondary schooling. Part of CAP4K's goals sought better coordination between state assessment standards with college entrance requirements and reflected the recommendation by Brown and Conley

(2007). Additionally, CAP4K addressed Dounay's (2006) recommendations to embed college readiness indicators in assessments and curriculum.

## **Research Question 2**

In Research Question 2 the researcher asked: Was there evidence of secondary beliefs communicated in the committee hearings about CAP4K? Analysis identified four prominent secondary belief concerns among legislators: assessments and the implications of results, English language proficiency as a graduation requirement, the role of a civics education in the definition of workforce and postsecondary readiness, and the potential to track students.

Similar to the previous findings illuminating concerns over CAP4K's secondary policy beliefs, findings from non-legislators demonstrated a variety of apprehensions as well. The analysis emphasized concerns over assessments, funding, public participation on the implementation process, and calls to include civics education among the criteria defining workforce and postsecondary readiness.

The overall findings from the committee hearings of legislator and non-legislator analysis of secondary beliefs confirmed the existence of secondary belief anxieties with CAP4K's broad solutions. Most importantly, the existence of these suggested support for the ACF's proposition that coalitions will align on core beliefs but less so on secondary beliefs. The implications further suggested the single dominant coalition supporting CAP4K remained resolute to pass the bill and move forward with the understanding that CAP4K was a process bill. The importance of CAP4K being a process bill rather than one specifically stipulating the exact details on what implementation measures would be put in place allowed for flexibility to address secondary belief concerns at a later time. Further, it appeared the dominant coalition or, as I would suggest, the only coalition, was so strong in its alignment around the policy core beliefs of CAP4K that it

easily insulated itself from secondary belief challenges. For example, Corey Gardner's adamant stipulation there should be an English language assessment for high school graduation was seemingly pushed aside by the dominant coalition and was relegated to a later discussion.

A particular piece, as evident in the hearings, were calls for greater input from the public and, in particular, educational practitioners. This resulted in the CDE's statewide tour which gathered teachers concerns on the implementation phase of CAP4K. Through the processing of teacher input in collaboration with the CDE, specific details would materialize.

The strong alliance around CAP4K and its ability to withstand concerns addressed primarily by legislators on the secondary beliefs signaled, perhaps, the bills own malleability to subsequent changes based on the needs of education. Perhaps the most poignant concern was Gardner's adamant attempt to include demonstrations of English language proficiency as a graduation requirement. It appeared alignment, including Gardner's own agreement with the core beliefs, was enough to deflect his concern for another day and get the bill passed.

Like other policy frameworks, the application of the ACF to education policymaking was considerably lacking. Brecher, et al (2010) applied the ACF to the rise of coalition building in pursuing policy change for after school programs in five cities and indicated coalitions differed over their policy core beliefs. With CAP4K, broad coalition alignment over core beliefs was nearly unanimous. Although speculative, this suggested if two or more coalitions developed, then the swiftness of the bill's passage would have taken much longer to go through. Further, based on Brecher, et al (2010) research that concluded if multiple coalitions aligned around different core beliefs, there would be significant conflict; namely, there would be conflict over CAP4K's core beliefs. Clearly, there were none this research identified.



Ceperley's (1997) and Dougherty et al. (2010) research analysis indicated a strong relationship between the coalition alignment and individual beliefs; a similar conclusion is drawn from this research. Similarly, despite Colorado's bipartisan composition reflecting a broad range of ideological variations, the dominant coalition, nevertheless, accepted the solutions in common.

This study's consideration of the role policy core beliefs influencing and maintaining advocacy coalition formation in Colorado's P20 alignment process within the policy subsystem suggested several overall conclusions. First, the identified problems pre-established for the P20 education committee council structured attention on specific pre-identified problems. Second, the council's diverse composition reflected a broad range of stakeholder interests and professional backgrounds. Finally, the creation of the P20 council essentially established a centralized policy subsystem, which, following their recommendations to the Governor, successfully resonated with outside legislators' core belief system around the perceived problems and solutions of Colorado's education system.

Although interviewed participants often echoed the unique time characterizing Colorado's bipartisanship, bipartisanship and the significant support the recommendations garnered ultimately reflected the ability to bind policy core beliefs around the perceived problems and solutions transcending party ideology. In essence, the creation of the P20 Council established a strong coalition base that effectively gained support of their recommendations and resonated with other policymakers.

Just like the ACF's solutions to negotiate collaboration, the P20 ECC was composed of diverse stakeholders to support "the necessity of including representatives from all relevant groups of stakeholders" (Sabatier & Weible, 2007, p. 206). Further, Gianneschi's shared in his

interview that they intentionally designed inclusion of potential opposition voices. This similarly fell in line with the ACF's recommendation "that it is better to include them from the start rather than waste time in negotiations likely to be nullified or circumvented by appeals from excluded stakeholders" (Sabatier & Weible, 2007, p. 206).

The successful negotiation and support of CAP4K seemed to rest on a widespread belief that the status quo of Colorado's education system was unacceptable. This belief supports the ACF's contention that "the basic precondition to successful negotiations is a situation in which all parties to the dispute view a continuation of the status quo as unacceptable" (Sabatier & Weible, 2007, p. 206).

Though this research focused on the ACF's theory of advocacy coalitions and beliefs, and specifically, secondary beliefs, other observations regarding the frameworks around policy-oriented learning and policy change can be gleaned. For example, the creation of the P20 ECC provided a forum to share ideas and research on issues pertaining to Colorado's education system. Further, due to the ECC's diverse make-up, individuals were afforded an opportunity to learn from each other and develop as well as adjust their own perceptions of the problems and solutions.

The third theory of the ACF focused on policy change highlights four potential paths to policy change: external shocks, internal events, policy-oriented learning, and negotiated agreement (Sabatier & Weible, 2007). Clearly, CAP4K was the result of a negotiated process to align the solutions outlined in its policy proposal. Thus, negotiation appeared to be the primary description explaining the policies' overwhelming successful passage, which supports other research using the ACF to understand collaborative government efforts (Koebele, 2016). Further, the P20 ECC demonstrated the role of educational expertise which facilitated policy-

oriented learning around the problems and solutions of Colorado's. This information supported the role research may play in formulating and reformulating policy perceptions (Weible, 2008; Weible, Sabatier, & Lubell, 2004).

### **Research Question 3**

In Research Question 3 the researcher asked: How did themes identified by the Colorado Department of Education's statewide tour gathering teachers' input illustrate concerns on CAP4K? Extending the push by legislators and non-legislators to gather greater input from teachers on their concerns with CAP4K, the CDE's statewide tour illustrated the complexity of implementation when viewed through the eyes of teachers. Part of their concern, and one expressed by legislators and non-legislators as well, was developing assessments that were relevant to teachers as well as to their students. Under the CSAP assessment structure, teachers received test results long after they could make adjustments accordingly for the school year. Further, teachers felt students did not see the significance in taking the tests. As a result, teachers believed the results did not reflect their students' best efforts. An additional concern expressed by teachers was that they wanted to feel part of the process in developing the implementation phases of CAP4K. They strongly felt the success of the law depended on their input (CDE, 2009).

Rightfully, teachers voiced that they needed support from the CDE (2009). This meant teachers required specific direction outlining expectations. The perception from past policy changes was that teachers were left trying to figure out what they were actually expected to do. An important piece of support related to effective professional development. Interestingly, teachers recognized this professional development would be collective as well as individualized, which reflected similar learning practices for students. Just like students, teachers vary in their

instructional strengths and weaknesses. Some, for example, may have a strong command with engagement strategies and others may understand the correct applications of Bloom's revised taxonomy. Teachers also saw this new legislation as an opportunity to build a strong collaborative connection with the CDE as the state moved forward.

Overall, a number of considerations can be gleaned from teachers' perspectives regarding CAP4K. First, based upon policy implementation, the CDE's outreach was an important piece to legitimizing the process of CAP4K. Unfortunately, teachers often feel marginalized in the decision-making processes that unfold at the federal and state levels mainly because they do not feel connected in the process. There's a sense among teachers and administrators that policymakers are disconnected from the realities that exist in our schools. By the CDE reaching out, teachers felt like their voices matter.

Second, the CDE's findings exposed the realities of CAP4K's broad and often ambiguous solutions. When it comes to the actual implementation phase, teachers' feedback is a perfect example of how to navigate the difficult phase. As a former teacher and principal in Colorado, I relate and understand the concerns addressed by teachers. The schools and the classrooms within those schools are highly complex social communities just as complex as the communities they inhabit. Each child arrives to school with a wide variety of advantages and disadvantages, and every child possesses an incredible range of learning styles. Within the classroom, 30 students mean 30 complex emotional, physical, and learning ranges that often fluctuate depending on an amazingly complex set of circumstances.

### **Recommendations**

The findings from the participants, committee-hearings, and the CDE's study (2009) are considered in the following recommendations. Though some of these recommendations

specifically relate to state generated P20 alignment efforts, they also serve as a general guideline serving any state seeking education policy reform.

### **Creation of a Broad Stakeholder P20 Council**

The formalized creation of Colorado's P20 ECC quickly signaled the sense of urgency to address Colorado's perceived education problems. A conscious decision to include a diverse collection of stakeholders representing numerous education interest groups strengthened this urgency. Stakeholders ranged from teacher union representation, school districts, school boards, business community, and non-profit education advocacy groups, to name just a few. This stakeholder diversity legitimized the process by bringing together many voices. Opponents struggled to claim this was a partisan directive by Ritter when there were so many voices represented.

Further, the ECC's process provided a forum for discussions separate from the legislative process. This allowed an opportunity to identify components members felt were important to Colorado's reform efforts, which subsequently resulted in a concrete set of recommendations made to the Governor and eventually materialized in various forms through CAP4K. In a sense, this committee engineered the blueprint with Governor Ritter well before legislators could start debating the policy core or secondary beliefs. Additionally, due to its diverse membership composition, anticipated conflicts could, for the most part, be worked out well ahead of the legislature.

### **Leadership**

Without Ritter's interest for education and reform, it is plausible that this legislation could not have happened. Most importantly, Ritter used his position of executive privilege by creating the education agenda focused on changing what he and many others believed was a

serious problem with Colorado's education system. Certainly, other states looking to move forward with alignment would benefit from a governor advocating for education change as a top agenda item. I also believe other efforts at education reform would receive a considerable advantage if a governor personally saw this as a critical piece of their policy program.

### **Build Strong Coalitions Around Core Beliefs**

Colorado's swift passage of CAP4K included the single dominant coalition aligned around the policy core beliefs. Many factors likely influenced this dominant coalition alignment. For example, the previous Owens' administration formed their own version of a P20 council, suggesting that Colorado's education system needed reform connected to policy. Although the council's recommendations never materialized, this gestured that education required change. Further, the national wave of states exploring some type of alignment also signaled pressure externally, thus, further illustrating Colorado's concerns were not isolated and, perhaps, added some pressure that Colorado also needed to change.

Additionally, the mounting frustrations of professional educators over state assessments easily offered a significant base for support. Moreover, the business and higher education communities presented an additional audience potentially supporting CAP4K as they were growing concerned with Colorado's ill-prepared high school graduates for the workforce and higher education. Therefore, it appeared the foundation of likely proponents was there to help recognize the problem and support the solutions embodied through CAP4K. The challenge, however, was not to develop a set of core beliefs around just an agreement with the problem. Instead, from this researcher's perspective, the solutions seemed most complicated to align. Policymakers, like any other human, reflect an array of experiences that have shaped their

outlook, and thus, they come with a complicated set of assumptions on what those solutions should be.

### **Curtail Secondary Belief Derailment Within Coalition Alignment**

Maintaining coalition alignment was absolutely critical during the policymaking process. In Colorado's experience, the dominant coalition maintained resilience in the face of several potential threats. Part of this resilience can be attributed to concessions such as allowing for the CDE to garner statewide input from teachers or ensuring budget projections were put in place.

### **Create Flexibility Within Proposed Policy**

One of the greatest strengths of CAP4K lied within its emphasis as a process bill. Rather than articulating the fixed solutions to Colorado's problems that would materialize immediately once enacted, the bill instead created multiple opportunities to gauge its progress over the years and allowed for adjustments accordingly as fluctuating challenges inevitably emerged. Inherent within this process format is a high degree of flexibility. Conversely, a bill rigid in its format may raise considerable concerns and potentially derail coalition alignment. Thus, malleability is recommended as a part of a proposed policies structure.

### **Maintain Transparency in Policy Development**

Part of CAP4K's successful ability in building a strong dominant coalition also rested on a high level of transparency in the process. P20 recommendations were open to the public for comment. This transparency unveiled the process, and, I believe, contributed to its legitimacy.

### **Develop Partnerships and Support With Educators Throughout the State**

As committee hearing testimony showed, a clear call for teacher input on the implementation phase was encouraged. This directly led to the CDE's statewide tour explored in this study. During the writing of this dissertation, the implementation process of CAP4K was

still taking shape; however, I cannot imagine a process which didn't include teachers' input. Every day Colorado's teachers are faced with innumerable challenges, yet they know, more than anyone, what it is like to be in the classroom.

### **Develop Capacity**

Colorado's historic education policy was ambitious to say the least. However, in addition to the hindrances of policy neglecting the complexities inherent to implementation, a similar weakness occurs when the capacity to meet the policy's challenges is not addressed. Thus, it is encouraged state education policy ensures state education agencies have the capacity to effectively train and execute components related to implementation.

### **Strengths and Limitations**

This study's separate use of narrative analysis applied to interviews, and the application of the ACF's theory around policy beliefs and coalitions necessitated contrasting approaches. Research Question 1 encouraged participant stories to unfold freely with minor exceptions provided through the semi-structured interview. Employing narrative analysis shaped through a consideration of the three-dimensions of narrative inquiry required an inductive approach to analyze the interviews in order to maintain the integrity of the participants' perspectives unrestrained from predesignated constructs. Conversely, the application of the predesignated construct of secondary beliefs to committee hearing analysis facilitated a better lens for answering Research Question 2. The following discussion looks more closely at the strengths and weaknesses in using the three-dimensions of narrative inquiry of the interviews and predesignating the ACF's concept of secondary beliefs to the researcher's committee hearing analysis.



During analysis, the three-dimensions highlighted participant stories in the researcher's analysis. Though the three dimensions underscored awareness of the stories' context, including interaction, continuity, and situation, these reference points were used by the researcher for general consideration of the participants' experiences.

The method of using interviews demonstrated several benefits. First, the interview format allowed the participants to tell their story from their experiences and perspectives. All three were deeply embedded in the process and could personally attest to the policymaking process. Second, allowing their stories to unfold offered unpredictable insights and nuances other data methods, such as using surveys, may have missed. Finally, the three dimensions reminded the researcher to look at how the participants' stories situated experiences at three levels which provided a full, inclusive perspective for interpretation.

Several limitations existed with the researcher's experience in the interviews, however. First, the interviews took place almost ten years since the policy was developed. Entrusting participant accuracy of their recollections potentially involved inaccuracies. Additionally, the researcher interviewed three participants. With more time, the possibility to include additional interview participants may have been helpful. Finally, due to the participants' busy schedules, assuring equal interview time was difficult. At a minimum, however, each participant was interviewed for at least an hour. Gianneschi, due to unexpected availability, was able to interview for several hours.

The second major research component sought to explore the ACF's assertion that coalition alignment around policy core beliefs can insulate itself from breaking down despite the possibility of evidence illustrating conflicting secondary beliefs regarding the specific nature, or translation, of core beliefs. This assertion encouraged a deductive approach appropriate for the

committee hearings to identify evidence of secondary beliefs by legislators and non-legislator testimony. The strength of this deductive approach pointed to the specific research question being asked on the presence of secondary beliefs in the committee hearings.

Although this research focused on one component of the ACF, other areas were inevitably left out, such as two other theories embodied within the ACF which are concentrated on the role of policy learning and policy change. These are two additional areas worthy of further exploration. However, the focus on the ACF's theory of beliefs and advocacy coalitions and, more specifically, secondary beliefs, fell in line with the existing body of research similarly narrowing its focus on one aspect of the framework (Pierce et al., 2017). Satisfactorily applying the entire framework with rigor was beyond the resources and scope of this study's research endeavor.

An interesting point worth further consideration is that the ACF's policy researchers typically apply the ACF to issues characterized by high uncertainty and reflecting multiple competing coalitions (Sabatier & Jenkins-Smith, 1999). In Colorado, there was no evidence suggesting competing coalitions formed against P20 alignment. The dominant advocacy coalition focused on the solutions generated from the P20 Councils recommendations and subsumed any fringe challenges.

The third component of this research analyzed the themes identified by the Colorado Department of Education (2009). These themes were the result of a statewide study in order to gather teachers' concerns with the implementation phase of CAP4K. The importance of this analysis from this researcher's point of view was to understand how teachers concerns fit within the broader context of implementation. It was important, from this researcher's perspective, to understand how teachers considered the potential impact and opportunities from this policy in

order to broaden the policy picture beyond the policymaking process and include their voices regarding the implementation.

### **Conclusion**

From this researcher's perspective, there are several intersecting takeaways from these findings. First, taking a step back to review the general historical national context served as an important backdrop. Since calls for the United States to regain its preeminent dominance in its education system, symbolically highlighted through the 1983 *A Nation at Risk* report, an increasing trend for education reform has significantly grown. The alarming report declared the United States was losing its economic competitiveness as a result of a perceived deteriorating education system. This call overlapped with and reflected a broader call for competitiveness in the world. The alarm was triggered, and U.S. education was now to train the country's children to succeed in the U.S. workplace.

Among the immense array of recommendations over the last several decades, an increasing push calling for the alignment of P12 and higher education systems was seen as an important piece to broader educational reform. With Georgia inaugurating the first push for alignment in 1994, by the turn of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, a succession of states soon followed with most exploring at least a minimum level of conversation around P20 alignment. Colorado was comparatively late in this movement; however, what Colorado lacked in speed, they rapidly gained national notoriety because of the breadth and scope of their P20 alignment efforts and became known as the "Colorado model".

When viewing the overwhelming bipartisan alignment and non-legislator approval with Colorado's swift passage, it is tempting to suggest CAP4K was inevitable. However, though the conditions seemed certainly ripe for this opportunity, there was nothing deterministic or

inevitable about its successful outcome. As seen in the interviews, there were examples showing a complex range of participants' experiences indicating several prominent challenges and potential derailment. Gianneschi's interview painted the real life details of a Governor faced with budget cuts and illustrated the lens of a person tasked with cutting funding. Despite these challenges, individuals made decisions, and through those decisions, CAP4K successfully passed.

This study's illustration of teachers' perspectives also highlighted the importance to include them on the decision making phase of implementation. They are the professionals critical to any broad policymaking because they live within the complex role of ensuring children reach the intended goals. Without their support and, in turn, the support from the state, any policy is likely destined for failure.

This study explored the education policymaking process of Colorado's P20 alignment efforts. The objectives of P20 alignment in Colorado challenged the pre-existing, dichotomous relationship between P12 and higher education systems with its intent to better prepare students for workforce readiness and post-secondary success. Shifting a culture embedded with systems in place was no easy task. The changes catalyzed by CAP4K in Colorado still echo today as new political shifts in the education environment continually reflect a constant state of flux. At the time of this writing this manuscript, Colorado is currently reviewing CAP4K to make adjustments and vigilantly position itself to continue the broad goals outlined in the historic policy.

CAP4K's development never intended to be a final remedy solving the complex mosaic facing the education system. Rather, CAP4K reflected a vision on how Colorado's education system should adapt to the fluctuating social, economic, and political dynamics constantly

unfolding in a quickly evolving, rapidly interconnected global world. These forces are constantly in motion; however, despite such uncertainties, Colorado's policymakers anticipated the needs of its fragmented education system and proactively attempted to steer Colorado's education in the right direction to accommodate perceived challenges.

An interesting component to CAP4K is the realization by the education community to think systemically about the solutions. In a shift away from piecemeal approaches to education reform, CAP4K recognized the interconnection of mutually supportive interventions. Ultimately, CAP4K illustrated how large-scale change can happen. Too often, state education policymaking myopically channels a solution, unintentionally dismissing the interconnected pieces in the education system as a whole, and unwittingly dooming itself to failure.

Unfortunately, some 10 years following CAP4K's implementation, Colorado continues to wrestle with significant achievement gaps and, with few periodic but often fleeting pockets of exceptions, the performance needle barely budged in a positive direction (Chalkbeat, December 21, 2017). From the researcher's perspective, the emerging systemic mindfulness reflected in CAP4K needs further encouragement. New assessments, longitudinal growth, data systems, and other interventions initiated by CAP4K were a great start. However, like the P20 movement's quest to dismantle the separation between P12 and higher education systems, a new movement needs to extend the boundaries of an education focus and factor in ways to support impoverished communities. Low-income students and Hispanics, among other marginalized groups, continue to lag behind their more advantaged peers (Chalkbeat, December 21, 2017). As a former teacher and school principal in Colorado, I have seen how marginalized communities face tremendous challenges and are repeatedly caught within the never-ending Sisyphean battle for a better quality of life.

On June 2017, Colorado's Governor John Hickenlooper created the Education Leadership Council through Executive Order. The objectives mirrored similar ideas leading to CAP4K and appeared to be an initial effort to review and formulate future considerations. How this new council's recommendations unfurl remains to be seen. I hope the day will come where policymakers see education as an important piece within the broader social landscape. Education policy should couple simultaneous concerns with creating sustainable communities through a strong safety net of supports in health care, housing, and a clean, livable environment. Until this broader, systemic perspective takes hold, impoverished and marginalized communities will continue to fall behind their more advantaged peers, thus, further exasperating social inequities and the continued generational recycling of inequality. Regardless of if you agree or disagree with the P20 process and the prescriptions articulated through CAP4K, the idea that where broad, sweeping change initiated at the state level in CAP4K's development lends optimism and an intimation to our existential capacity to create ambitious policy change transcending traditionally fragmented spheres of policy focus. This challenge requires a significantly broader umbrella echoing systemic thinking in all areas of our communities.

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## APPENDIX A: SB-08-212

### **CAP4K, COLORADO ACHIEVEMENT PLAN FOR KIDS Senate Bill 08-212**

**Bill Summary**, prepared by Jett Conner, Ph.D., Lead Consultant on CAP4K, DHE

**Official Title:** Preschool to Postsecondary Education Alignment Act

**Goal:** Move Colorado to the next generation of standards-based education to prepare students for the knowledge and skills required for the 21st century.

**Charge:** Directs the State Board of Education and the Colorado Commission on Higher Education—and their respective departments, the Colorado Department of Education (CDE) and the Department of Higher Education (DHE)—to collaborate in creating a new seamless system of public education standards, expectations and assessments—from preschool through postsecondary education—designed and aligned to prepare high school students to enter postsecondary education, or technical or trade schools, or the workforce without the need for further remediation. Specifically requires the state board and CCHE to “negotiate a consensus and adopt a description of postsecondary and workforce readiness” on or before December 15, 2009. This is developed as a single description.

**Effect:** Eliminates the current Colorado Student Assessment Program (CSAP) and replaces it with new state content standards applicable to a broad array of subjects and skills; the bill specifies that the standards for grades nine through twelve are aligned with postsecondary and workforce planning, preparation and readiness assessments adopted by the state board and CCHE. Standards and testing are designed to meet federal law.

**Details & Deadlines:** Below are key provisions and deadlines for SB 08-212 arranged by section numbers. You may use this link to access the entire bill:

[http://www.leg.state.co.us/CLICS/CLICS2008A/csl.nsf/fsbillcont3/E59947996C92A16F872573D3005F88ED?Open&file=212\\_enr.pdf](http://www.leg.state.co.us/CLICS/CLICS2008A/csl.nsf/fsbillcont3/E59947996C92A16F872573D3005F88ED?Open&file=212_enr.pdf)

**22-7-1004** On or before 12/15/08 the state board must adopt a description of school readiness for kindergarten or first grade; by 12/15/10, the state board adopts assessments, aligned with the description of school readiness, for purposes of measuring school readiness, for determining instruction and improvement needs, and for establishing population-level results for baseline data reporting purposes.

**22-7-1005** On or before 12/15/09, the state board adopts standards related to the knowledge and skills students should have as they progress from preschool through elementary and secondary education, aligned where possible with career and technical education standards adopted by the state board for community colleges and occupational education. The state board of education also collaborates with the CCHE to ensure that the standards are aligned with the description of postsecondary and workforce readiness outlined in section 22-7-1008, below. In addition to students’ subject-Gianneschier knowledge in reading; writing; mathematics; science; history;

geography; visual and performing arts; physical education; world languages; English competency; economics and civics (22-7-1005), the standards also are designed to ensure students develop and demonstrate such skills as creativity and innovation; critical thinking; communication and collaboration; social and cultural awareness; initiative and self-direction; character and leadership; productivity and accountability; and information technology application skills.

**22-7-1006** On or before 12/15/2010, the state board adopts assessments designed to measure the preschool through elementary and secondary education standards and ensure, among other things, longitudinal measurement of students' academic growth, a high level of accountability across the state for students, schools, and school districts and compliance with federal law testing requirements. NOTE: Assessments adopted may include portfolios, projects and performances in addition to standardized measures. Assessments retain a system of ratings for public schools and may include writing assessments developed with local education providers, and timely evaluations of same.

**22-7-1007** Beginning with the 2008-09 academic year, requires the CDE to implement a pilot program in several districts to evaluate different kinds of high school testing plans.

**22-7-1008** Postsecondary and workforce readiness: On or before 12/15/09 the state board and CCHE establish a description of postsecondary and workforce readiness which, at a minimum must include, among other requirements, describing knowledge and skills designed to demonstrate students' postsecondary and workforce proficiencies in English language competency; successful completion without need for remediation of core academic courses (23-1-125(3)); and the skills referred to above in 22-7-1005, all of which must be aligned with the description of postsecondary and workforce readiness. On or before 12/15/2010, the state board and CCHE shall adopt postsecondary and workforce planning, preparation and readiness assessments to be administered by local education providers (public schools, school districts, BOCES, charter schools, etc.).

Additional provisions in the bill provide for the state board and CCHE to make revisions, on or before 7/1/2015, to the description of postsecondary and workforce readiness, and, on or before 7/1/2016 and every six years thereafter, to the planning, preparation and readiness assessments adopted by the state board and CCHE. The state board and CCHE are required to collaborate to set standards for special kinds of diplomas (22-7-1009). Though the bill does not mandate statewide graduation requirements, schools are required to align their content standards with the newly adopted state standards and revise their curricula accordingly, by 12/15/2011 (22-7-1015), and begin administering assessments by 12/15/2012 (22-7-1016); a high school student's final transcript shall describe the student's level of postsecondary/workforce readiness, including any endorsements of special achievement (22-7-1017). Students who graduate with a high school diploma that includes a postsecondary and workforce readiness endorsement are guaranteed to meet minimum academic qualifications for admission (subject to additional institutional qualifications) to all open, modified-open, or moderately selective public institutions of higher education in Colorado. The bill requires a review of public IHE admission standards (23-1-113) and teacher preparation programs (23-1-121) to ensure alignment with the new state standards.

The bill mandates public and interest group involvement throughout the process. Definitions in the bill may be found in section 22-7-1003.

APPENDIX B: COLORADO P-20 COUNCIL & SUBCOMMITTEE MEMBERS

<u>Name</u>	<u>Organization</u>	<u>Position</u>
Benson, Bruce	University of Colorado	President
Garcia, Joe	Colorado State University-Pueblo	President
O'Brien, Barbara	Office of the Governor	Lieutenant Governor
<i>Council Members</i>		
Aragon, Bill	Colorado Uplift	Executive Director
Ausfahl, Bev	Colorado Education Association	Past President
Baca, Amie	Adams 12 School District	Counselor
Bowman, Linda	Community College of Aurora	President
Bravo, Adele	Boulder Valley Schools	Teacher
Callum, Kathy	Denver East High School	Principal
Gianniny, Gary	Fort Lewis College	Professor–Geology
Haynes, Anna Jo	Mile High Montessori	Executive Director
Henderson, Jim	University of Colorado– Springs	Professor–Mathematics
Horrell, Dorothy	Bonfils-Stanton Foundation	President
Hundley, Lucinda Hyatt,	Littleton Public Schools	Assistant Superintendent
Mark Keefe,	The Classical Academy	President
Gerald Lucero,	Kit Carson School District	Superintendent
Dan Medina,	Colorado ACTE	Executive Director
Barbara Mills,	Colorado Department of Education	Director ELA
	Mesa Valley County 51 School District	Superintendent
Moses, Monte	Cherry Creek School District	Superintendent
Peña, Theresa	Denver Public Schools	Board Member
Phelan, Adele	Metropolitan State College Board of Trustees	Chair
Ritchie, Dan	University of Denver	Former Chancellor
Salazar, LeRoy	North Conejos School District	President of Board
Sanchez, Frank	University of Colorado at Denver and Health Sciences Center	Associate Vice Chancellor of Student Affairs
Sheehan, Eugene	University of Northern Colorado	Dean
Shepard, Lorrie	University of Colorado-Boulder	Dean
Sirbu, Jerry	Platt College	President
Snyder, Tim	Colorado On-line Learning	Executive Director Emeritus
Sowell, John	Western State College	Provost
Thayer, Paul	Colorado State University	AVP–Student Success

<u>Name</u>	<u>Organization</u>	<u>Position</u>
<i>Ex Officio (Advisory Committee Members)</i>		
Colorado Commission on Higher Education	Chair Education	
Jones, Dwight	Department of Education	Commissioner
Skaggs, David	Department of Higher Education	Executive Director
Suckla, Pam	State Board of Education	Chair

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<u>Name</u>	<u>Organization/Position</u>
<i>P-3 Subcommittee</i>	

### **Staff**

#### **Chair**

Bruce Atchison	Office of Lt. Governor
Kristie Kauertz	Office of Lt. Governor
Barbara O'Brien	Lt. Governor

#### **Council Members**

Adele Bravo	Boulder Valley Schools
Anna Jo Haynes	Mile High Montessori
Adele Phelan	Metropolitan State College of Denver

#### **Legislators**

Judy Solano	State Representative
Suzanne Williams	State Senator

#### **Invited Experts**

Ginger Maloney	University of Denver
Jennifer Adler	Invest in Kids
John Covington	Superintendent, Pueblo City Schools Steve
Federico, M.D.	Colorado Children's Campaign
Tami Havener	Family Development Center, Steamboat Springs Elsa
Holguin	Rose Community Foundation
Bruce Hoyt	Denver Public Schools Board
Jeff Perry	West Grand School District
Joelle Riddle	Commissioner, La Plata County
Kristen Steed	Marsh Elementary
Marie Hueston	Family Flex

*Data and Accountability Subcommittee*

**Staff**

**Chair**

Adrian Miller	Office of Governor
Alex Medler	Colorado Children's Campaign
Elliot Asp	Cherry Creek School District

**Name**

**Organization/Position**

**Members**

Beverly Ausfahl	Colorado Education Association (retired) Lucinda
Hundley	Littleton Public Schools
Frank Sanchez	University of Colorado at Denver and Health Sciences Center Lorrie
Shepard	University of Colorado-Boulder
Theresa Peña	Denver Public Schools

**Legislators**

Debby Benefield	State Representative
Amy Stephens	State Representative
Mike Kopp	State Senator

**Invited Experts**

Ken DeLay	Colorado Association of School Boards
Andrew Brodsky	Consultant
Julie O'Brian	University of Colorado at Denver
Julie Carnahan	Colorado Department of Higher Education
Charlotte Brantley	Clayton Foundation
John Crawford	Denver Public Schools
Janeen Demi-Smith	Colorado School District 11
Floyd Beard	East Central BOCES
Lorie Gillis	CFO, Jefferson County Schools
Dave Herman	Chair, Fountain-Ft. Carson School District Board
Elliot Asp	Cherry Creek School District

*Educator Recruitment, Preparation, and Retention Subcommittee*

**Staff**

**Chair**

Robert Reichardt	University of Colorado at Denver TBD
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**Members**

Mark Hyatt	The Classical Academy
Barbara Medina	Colorado Department of Education
Tim Mills	Mesa Valley County Schools 51
Dan Ritchie	Daniels Fund Board of Directors
Eugene Sheehan	University of Northern Colorado
John Sowell	Western State College



**Legislators**

Sue Windels	State Senator
Andy Kerr	State Representative
Ellen Roberts	State Representative

**SBE**

Randy DeHoff	State Board of Education
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**Invited Experts**

Sheryl Mitchell	Teacher Cadet
Beverly Ingle	Colorado Education Association
Kathy Nutting	Regis College
Kathleen Stiles	Smart Start Colorado
La Vonne Neal	University of Colorado at Colorado Springs
Lisa Weil	Great Education Colorado
Robert Fulton	Jones International University
Lynn Huizing	Colorado Parent Teacher Association

*Preparation and Transitions Subcommittee***Staff****Chair**

Gully Stanford	College in Colorado
Joe Garcia	Colorado State University at Pueblo

**Members**

Linda Bowman	Community College of Aurora
Dorothy Horrell	Bonfils-Stanton Foundation
Gerald Keefe	Kit Carson Schools
Paul Thayer	Colorado State University
Dan Lucero	Association of Career and Technical Education
Monte Moses	Cherry Creek Schools
Jerry Sirbu	Platt College
LeRoy Salazar	North Conejos School District
Gary Gianniny	Fort Lewis College

**Legislators**

Tom Massey	State Representative
Nancy Todd	State Representative
Bob Bacon	State Senator

**SBE**

Karen Middleton	State Board of Education
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**Invited Experts**

Judi Diaz-Bonaquisti	Metro State College Denver
Helayne Jones	Boulder Valley School Board
Tim Taylor	Colorado Succeeds
Mark Hatchell	Colorado Springs District 20
John Hefty	Colorado Association of School Executives
Sandra Veltri	Trinidad State Junior College
Antwan Wilson	Montbello High School
Christine Scanlan	Summit RE-1 School Board

## APPENDIX C: CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN A RESEARCH STUDY

### Colorado State University

**TITLE OF STUDY:** COLORADO'S P20 ALIGNMENT: AN INTERPRETIVE APPROACH EXPLORING THE POLICYMAKING PROCESS THROUGH NARRATIVES

**PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR:** DR. DONNA COONER, PHD, SCHOOL OF EDUCATION, (970) 491-5292, [DONNA.COONER@COLOSTATE.EDU](mailto:DONNA.COONER@COLOSTATE.EDU)

**CO-PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR:** GREGORY KOERS, PHD CANDIDATE, SCHOOL OF EDUCATION, 719-849-8615, [GKOERS@RAMS.COLOSTATE.EDU](mailto:GKOERS@RAMS.COLOSTATE.EDU)

**WHY AM I BEING INVITED TO TAKE PART IN THIS RESEARCH?**

I am contacting you because of your involvement in the creation of the Colorado Achievement Plan for Kids (SB 08-212).

**WHO IS DOING THE STUDY?**

The research is being conducted by doctoral candidate, Gregory Koers, under the guidance of his advisor, Donna Cooner, Ph.D.

**WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THIS STUDY?**

The purpose of this study is to explore the experiences around the development and process by influential policymakers of Colorado's public education system leading to the development of the Colorado Achievement Plan for Kids (SB 08-212).

**WHERE IS THE STUDY GOING TO TAKE PLACE AND HOW LONG WILL IT LAST?**

The interview is expected to take 1-2 hours. The interview setting will be arranged based around your convenience and may include the following: Phone, Internet (i.e. Skype), or face to face at a location and time determined by you. The researcher will follow-up with you after your interview has been transcribed and you will have the opportunity to read the transcript to ensure accuracy. Your total time commitment for the interview and member checking is approximately 1-2 hours.

**WHAT WILL I BE ASKED TO DO?**

You will participate in one audiotaped interview. The interview questions will address four broad research questions:

1. What were the perceptions of influential policy makers regarding Colorado's public education systems challenges leading to the development of Senate Bill 08-212: Colorado's Achievement Plan for Kids (CAP4K)?

2. How have influential individuals behind Colorado's public education system perceived the problems and solutions leading to the development of CAP4K?
3. What were the dominant narratives used by influential individuals Colorado's K-12 policy subsystem to persuade potential opposition?
4. What lessons were learned by influential individuals behind the development of CAP4K, which could be used to benefit future policy makers seeking public education policy change in Colorado's future?

#### ARE THERE REASONS WHY I SHOULD NOT TAKE PART IN THIS STUDY?

You should only participate in this research if you were an influential policy maker underlying the development of Colorado's Senate Bill 08-212, the Colorado Achievement Plan for Kids.

#### WHAT ARE THE POSSIBLE RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS?

There are no known risks associated with the interview, but there is a potential risk of a loss of confidentiality because there are only 3-5 participants in this study. It is not possible to identify all potential risks in research procedures, but the research team will maintain the confidentiality of the data and have taken reasonable safeguards to minimize any known and potential risks, but also unknown risks. If there may be political risks, the participants should be informed of this as well.

#### ARE THERE ANY BENEFITS FROM TAKING PART IN THIS STUDY?

There are no direct benefits to the participant. However, by participating in this study the interviewee has the opportunity to communicate their story.

#### DO I HAVE TO TAKE PART IN THE STUDY?

Your participation in this research is voluntary. If you decide to participate in the study, you may withdraw your consent and stop participating at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

#### WHO WILL SEE THE INFORMATION THAT I GIVE?

We will keep private all research records that identify you, to the extent allowed by law.

For this study, we will assign a code to your data (i.e., assigned number) so that the only place your name will appear in our records is on the consent and in our data spreadsheet which links you to your code. Only the research team will have access to the link between you, your code, and your data. The only exceptions to this are if we are asked to share the research files for audit purposes with the CSU Institutional Review Board ethics committee, if necessary. When we write about the study to share with other researchers, we will write about the combined information we have gathered. You will not be identified in these written materials. We may publish the results of this study; however, we will keep your name and other identifying information private.

## WHAT IF I HAVE QUESTIONS?

*Before you decide whether to accept this invitation to take part in the study, please ask any questions that might come to mind now. Later, if you have questions about the study, you can contact the investigator Gregory Richard Koers at (719) 849-8615. If you have any questions about your rights as a volunteer in this research, contact the CSU IRB at: [RICRO\\_IRB@mail.colostate.edu](mailto:RICRO_IRB@mail.colostate.edu); 970-491-1553. We will give you a copy of this consent form to take with you.*

## WHAT ELSE DO I NEED TO KNOW?

The researchers would like to audiotape your interview to be sure that your comments are accurately recorded. Only our research team will have access to the audiotapes, and they will be destroyed when they have been transcribed. Do you give the researchers permission to audiotape your interview? Please initial next to your choice below.

- Yes, I agree to be digitally recorded \_\_\_\_\_ (initials)
- No, do not audiotape my interview \_\_\_\_\_ (initials)

Please let us know if you would like your comments to remain confidential or attributed to you. Please initial next to your choice below.

- I give permission for comments I have made to be shared using my exact words and to include my (name/position/title). \_\_\_\_\_ (initials)
- You can use my data for research and publishing, but do NOT associate my (name/position/title) with direct quotes. \_\_\_\_\_ (initials)

Your signature acknowledges that you have read the information stated and willingly sign this consent form. Your signature also acknowledges that you have received, on the date signed, a copy of this document containing 3 pages.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of person agreeing to take part in the study \_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Printed name of person agreeing to take part in the study

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name of person providing information to participant \_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Research Staff