

2000

Lived experience of a Christian school teacher in comparison with the philosophies and policies of Christian Schools International

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**The Lived Experience of a Christian School Teacher In Comparison
With The Philosophies and Policies of Christian Schools International**

David B. O'Dell

**A thesis
submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of
Master of Education**

**Faculty of Education
Lakehead University
Thunder Bay, Ontario**

November 2000

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Abstract

This study examines and compares the lived experience of a Christian school teacher with the philosophies and policies of Christian Schools International. A qualitative approach was used as the methodology and characteristics of this research paradigm complimented the purpose of the study. Data were collected, analyzed and interpreted over a period of two years using taped interviews, journals, and non-participant observations. Analysis was conducted using a coding system to categorize, synthesize, search for patterns, and interpret the data. The data were sorted into themes based upon the coding scheme. These themes were then discussed with the teacher for verification and analyzed according to how they contribute to describing the lived experience of a Christian teacher.

Findings of this study provide insight into how a Christian teacher endeavors to fulfill school policies in her pedagogy through curriculum development, evaluation, and building community.

Insight is gained into how teaching Christianly moves from influence to theory to practice as I examine the influences of family and friends, teaching as a calling, learning to teach, metaphors for the teaching experience, molding the intellect, spirituality, and community. Each of these themes are then discussed in relation to the expectations of Christian Schools International: love for God; for students; competence and vision; and, building community both within and outside the Christian school.

Acknowledgments

This thesis is dedicated to Jenny for her willingness to share her life experiences with me and allow me to enter into her lived experience. It has been a journey of insight and I am honoured and privileged to have been a part of it.

I would like to acknowledge the tireless devotion and encouragement of Dr. Fiona Blaikie in seeing this thesis to completion. Many times she has encouraged me and inspired me to move forward when I faltered. I have not only come to appreciate her expertise and thoroughness as a mentor but her strength of character as a human being. God bless you Fiona.

Finally, to my in-laws, Albert and Shirley Fron, to my wife Cindy, our daughters Megan and Kylee, and our son Craig, I want to thank you for your love, encouragement, and sacrifice through this busy time. Not a day goes by that I do not thank God for each one of you. I love you!

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CHAPTER ONE

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

This is an ethnographic (Goetz & LeCompte, 1984) and phenomenological (Van Manen, 1990) case study of the lived experience of a Christian school teacher. My purpose was to explore the realm of a Christian teacher as she set about fulfilling the nature and purposes of Christian schooling and Christian approaches to teaching and learning. I sought to examine the manner in which the teacher conducted her teaching and compare her personal philosophy and practice to accepted Christian school philosophy and policy.

With regard to Christian education, philosophy and policy, I examined the literature and policy documents of Christian Schools International--an organization whose mission is to advance Christian education and to support schools and their staff in the task of teaching students to know God and His world and to glorify Him through obedient service (CSI, 1995). In doing this review I hoped to clarify and identify concepts not previously revealed or fully understood in the practice of Christian school teaching.

Rationale

In reviewing the literature I was unable to find any studies that dealt with Christian teacher practice. The decision to study a Christian teacher was undertaken to address this lack of information that exists about Christian teacher practice by examining the "lived experience" (Van Manen, p.36) of a Christian teacher from her point of view. Second, a study of this nature serves to provide some insight into how Christian schools aim to realize their nature and purposes regarding their educational policies. Finally, this study might help contribute to a Christian model for teaching and learning by examining the methods and means by which curriculum is developed and implemented at the classroom level by one teacher.

Definition of Terms

For the purposes of this study, the following term is applied:

Christian: A Christian person is one who believes or professes to believe in Jesus Christ and the truth as taught by him, who has accepted Christian principles of religious and moral life, and who has faith and pledged allegiance to God. In this study a Christian is one whose life conforms to the doctrines of Christ and who actively participates in a church that confesses and practices the doctrine of Christ.

For the purposes of this study, it is acknowledged that the above definition reflects the principles, bylaws and constitution of Christian Schools International.

Delimitations

The following items delimit the study:

1. Interviewing is a social encounter. In order to get as much information as possible I, as the interviewer, tried to build trust, and make the subject as comfortable and relaxed as possible.
2. I knew the subject prior to the study.
3. My knowing the subject beforehand set the stage for a relaxed and comfortable atmosphere. This allowed me to examine and discuss extensively the subject's lived experience as a Christian teacher.
4. The site was limited to one school in southern Alberta, and dealt with one teacher at one grade level.
5. Interviews, non-participant observations, field notes, and journals were the means of collecting information about the subject's lived experience.
6. The data were collected over the course of two school years.

Assumption

When conducting the interviews for this study I, as the researcher, assumed that the subject was honest and accurate in her responses to the interview questions.

Organization of Thesis Chapters

In Chapter two I review the literature from the mid-eighties into the early nineteen nineties on the Christian school culture. I then explore the purpose of Christian schooling focusing on three main types: fundamentalist schooling, parochial schooling, and world and life view schooling. This is followed by an examination of the views of knowledge and curriculum orientations that exist in the field of education today. Finally, I identify Christian learning outcomes as they pertain to the process of teaching Christianly.

Chapter three describes the methodology used to gather the data for this study. It includes an overview of the study and establishes the major guiding question. Theories of qualitative research are discussed including how the research design for this study was developed. As well, the means for selecting the participant, data collection procedures, ethical considerations, and the methods used to analyze the data are discussed.

Chapter four addresses the findings of the study and is organized into two sections: pre-teaching experiences, and the subject's lived

experience as a Christian teacher. Each section is further broken down into themes that have emerged as a result of data analysis.

Chapter five provides a summary of the philosophy of Christian Education as it is outlined in Christian Schools International Teacher Expectations. Expectations for teachers are compared with the subject's lived experience.

In Chapter six the purpose of the study is revisited in which I reflect upon the study and its findings as a whole. Finally, I present my personal reflections and considerations for further study.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Introduction: Studies on Christian Schools.

This chapter is divided into four sections. The first section provides an overview of types of Christian schools. The second examines the philosophies and purposes of Christian schools. The third section examines general educational worldviews, views of knowledge, and curriculum orientations. In the fourth section learning outcomes of Christian education are discussed.

Christian Schools

To date, a number of qualitative studies have focused on exploring and understanding the culture of the Christian school. An example of this is the study conducted by Alan Peshkin (1986) entitled God's Choice. Peshkin studied a Fundamentalist Baptist school from an ethnographic point of view in order to understand the culture of the Christian school. This type of fundamentalist school grew out of militant conservative American Protestantism in opposition to liberal tendencies, and emphasizes as fundamental to Christianity a literal acceptance of the absolute inerrancy of scriptures. Peshkin's (1986) study shows that this school sought to separate itself from the influences of the secular world.

Peshkin (1986) reveals that many studies have been undertaken concerning the impact of religious schools, but few examine the nature of Christian schools. A major focus of Peshkin's study became the relationship between doctrine and practice within the Christian school. Interested in describing the academic life of the Christian school, Peshkin set out to identify characteristics that would clearly identify whether a particular school was fundamentalist or not. He identifies several characteristics which would serve to differentiate between the two. First, fundamentalist schools identify the Bible as central to all learning, and of primary importance. Second, both teachers and students sign "behavioural intent contracts" (p. 97). Third, separation from the world and total indoctrination along with taking religious courses are required. Enrollment fees and specific gender expectations also characterize these schools. He identified what attracts some people to these schools.

More recently, Wagner (1990) examined a Christian school in her book, God's Schools, by conducting a case study using ethnographic participant observation. Like Peshkin (1986), she studied the culture of the Christian school and sought to reveal its function. Wagner's findings conflict with those of Peshkin because she sees both the conservative church and school as "total institutions" (p. 5) embedded in purely fundamentalist ideology. Wagner defines the total institution as one that

controls every aspect of people's lives, instructing them in certain behaviours and responses. Wagner further describes the total institution as one that is separate, devoid of compromise, and polarized, much like a prison or convent. Wagner's study reveals that Christian schools are far from being all-encompassing total institutions. She states that they are fraught with compromise due to the influence of North American culture (Wagner, 1990).

Rose (1988) examined systems, organizational structures, and daily lives within evangelical communities. Focusing on two schools, Rose provided a profile of each community and the interactions that occur within each. Rose spent two years participating in the activities of school, family and church life in each evangelical community, recording the daily form, style, and content of people's interactions. Her study focused on what evangelicals believe and how they act upon those beliefs. Rose held that exploring the evangelical institutions of church, home, and school at the grass-roots level affords us a better understanding of the appeal and practice of evangelicalism.

While these studies explored the culture of the Christian school, no studies were found that specifically examined teachers and their Christian teaching practices.

The Purpose of Christian Schooling

Beverluis (1982) states that Christians who establish their own alternative schools do so for a variety of reasons. They are agreed in their desire that the education of their children be Christian in ways that public education could never be. They are agreed, too, on the meaning of “Christian”, and that it should be taken in its orthodox and evangelical sense. Christian in its orthodox and evangelical sense refers to one who believes or professes to believe in Jesus Christ and the truth as taught by Him, one who accepts the Christian principles of religious and moral life, has faith in and has pledged allegiance to God, whose life conforms to the doctrines of Christ, and who has experienced redemption through Jesus Christ. However, within that general consensus, there are differing views about the ways Christianity should be related to Christian learning. Beverluis (1982), identifies three different kinds of schools reflecting different views, and identifies how they are distinguishable.

First, Beverluis (1982) identifies fundamentalist schools, which initially arose from parental dissatisfaction with the public school and its secular humanist approach to education. Originally established in protest against public education and its practices, fundamentalist schools came into existence because of a reaction against a certain philosophy of education, rather than as the creation of a unique philosophy of education. The

fundamentalist school holds that public schools are centers of secular humanism, and that only true knowledge and wisdom can be obtained through scripture. These schools call for separation and separateness from the world (Peshkin, 1986).

Second, according to Beversluis (1982), parochial schools exist for reasons that are different from fundamentalist schools. Supporters of parochial schools believe that throughout the child's growing years schooling should be kept under the direct care and governance of the church. This, they believe, will help instill in the young a commitment to sound doctrine, Christian morality, and an abiding church loyalty. Thus, supporters of parochial schools are not necessarily motivated by the lack of quality of public education at any given time.

Finally, Beversluis (1982) identifies those Christians holding the educational view of Christian Schools International (CSI), which seems to offer more complex reasons than do other groups for establishing Christian schools. These reasons go beyond protesting public school shortcomings and also beyond the desire to teach the young sound doctrine, Christian morality, and church loyalty. Far from being indifferent to such concerns, according to Beversluis (1982), CSI parents look to the school to teach a way of life--one that includes yet goes beyond mere rudimentary concerns.

CSI holds that school education must show how rudimentary concerns bear upon life in all its range and complexity, in what they call a "world and life view" (p. 2). In CSI schools, life in the Kingdom of Jesus Christ is a pivotal concept, via the idea that the Kingdom of Jesus Christ exists in and for the world (Beverluis, 1982). Blomberg and Stronks (1993) hold that because CSI schools are places where teachers and students should live and learn to live as responsive disciples of Jesus Christ, CSI schools are unique. They hold that the vision driving CSI schools affects the structure of the school, the length of the school year, the planning the program, the designing of curriculum, the instruction provided by the teacher, and all other aspects of the school.

With regard to the purposes of Christian schools, in general, Blomberg and Stronks (1993) hold that Christian schooling must lead to responsive discipleship. They maintain that Christian schools achieve this by seeking to conserve, discern, and reform in the following ways:

First, the Christian school conserves and passes on biblical stories and traditions, examining meaning, purpose, roots, cultural anchor points, and accumulated wisdom. Telling the Christian story, the Christian school seeks to conserve the truth of the gospel, and uses it to communicate answers to life's questions. Second, as discerner, the Christian school seeks to discern the spirits of our time by encouraging critical analysis of the world and human experience from a Christian perspective. In this regard, the Christian school serves to promote different ways of knowing and new insights. As well, the Christian school seeks to

discern by examining the morals and values of society, and by moving toward a Christian conception of goodness. Third, the Christian school seeks to model and teach a life of reforming discipleship that is responsive to God, within societal structures, through the Christianly perceived power of God's creativity. (p. 18).

Van Brummelen (1988) sees Christian education as one of three main agencies involved in the nurturing of the child: the home, the church, and the school, which Van Brummelen envisions as rooted educationally and spiritually in the teachings of the Bible. He states that this rootedness of home, church, and school in biblical teachings is necessary for a balanced Christian life. Van Brummelen sees the purpose of Christian schooling as helping children become citizens of the Kingdom of Jesus Christ. He shares Blomberg and Stronks, (1993) belief that the overall aim of Christian schooling is to help and guide students in becoming responsible disciples of Jesus Christ.

World View, Views of Knowledge and Curriculum Orientations

Worldview

One's worldview encompasses basic beliefs, assumptions, values, priorities, and biases, and it undergirds the way an individual views curriculum and curriculum planning. Conversely, the sum total of all educational decisions reflect worldview. Van Brummelen (1988) states that effective schools have teams of teachers who agree on the basic questions

of the meaning of life and the basis of morality as they plan curriculum. He states that their worldview determines their views on the purpose of schooling and the nature of the learner.

Views of Knowledge

As was the case for views of the person, the conceptions of knowledge held by curriculum developers are diverse. Van Brummelen (1988) describes curriculum developers who identify with empirical, rational, reconceptualist, and Christian points of view:

An empiricist believes that knowledge consists of propositions for which evidence exists, which is based on experienced observation. Since such evidence is never completely certain, truth is always open to revision.

Rationalists hold that objective truth exists, but can be known and determined only by reason. Rationality is their ultimate point of departure. Critical thinking and seeing how others have used their thinking throughout history becomes the focus of their curricula.

Reconceptualists feel that knowledge is subjective and personally constructed. Truth is relative, and we can be sure of nothing beyond the grasp of human consciousness. What must be chosen for curriculum content are learning situations where children create meaning for themselves (p. 87).

Van Brummelen (1988) states that Christian educators cannot accept any of these approaches. Christian educators know curriculum content is always chosen and interpreted within a paradigm of beliefs and values as pointed out by Thomas Kuhn (1970). Unlike the reconceptualists, Christians believe that God has created a reality with inherent meaning and

with a law structure about which we can reason. Distinct from empiricists and rationalists, Christian educators hold that their interpretation must take place within a biblical framework.

Van Brummelen (1988) identifies three related points that describe a biblical view of knowledge. First, true knowledge depends on revelation. Second, it involves one's whole being, not just one's intellect, and must lead to commitment, response and service. Third, it must point to God's providence and marvelous deeds, and instruct us in His ways.

To him knowledge does not become true knowledge unless the Word of God reveals it to us determining our commitment and framework of interpretation. God's revelation makes clear who He is and that His calling to us is to unite our whole being--thoughts, beliefs, words, deeds, affections--into a unity of purpose: Responsible and obedient service to God. In this way, true knowledge does not exclude or contradict reason and empirical evidence but becomes, as John Stott (1979) puts it, "the ladder by which faith climbs higher and higher" (p. 67).

According to Van Brummelen (1988) scripture makes clear that knowledge involves one's whole being, not just one's intellect. Scripture rejects the view that knowledge means only assimilating facts. Lack of knowledge in scripture means a lack of commitment, a failure to put into practice what has been learned. Knowledge that does not include

committed service is no more true knowledge than faith without works is true faith.

In addition, Van Brummelen (1988) states that in the school, “the content teachers choose, how they think about situations and issues, and the attitudes and dispositions they engender through what and how they teach must reflect their dedication to hear and carry out the Word of the Lord” (p. 89).

Van Brummelen (1988) believes that, ultimately, “true knowledge reveals the praiseworthy deeds of the Lord and shows students His ways of righteousness” (p. 89). He states that all school subjects must proclaim God’s handiwork and at the same time encourage children, “to act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with God” (Micah 6:8).

Curriculum Orientations

As with the practice of teaching, each teacher’s curriculum orientation is rooted in a particular worldview. In this section I discuss some common orientations: academic, cognitive processes, reconceptualist, social relevance and a Christian approach to curriculum (Edlin, 1994).

An academic orientation (Van Brummelen, 1988) espouses traditional subject matter to exemplify the power of human reason.

Within the academic orientation students are asked to reproduce and apply knowledge without any personal commitment to what is studied. The relation of subject content to the student's own lives and its relevance for life is largely ignored. This particular orientation conceives of curriculum as a body of disciplines to be covered by students (p. 92).

Characteristically, questions are factual ones or ones that encourage critical thinking about abstractions related to classification (Herbert Smith, 1977).

The cognitive processes orientation (Edlin, 1994) holds that students' intellectual processes are all-important. Specifically, students must learn to inquire, to investigate, and to solve problems. What is taught is not as important as teaching children how to learn; therefore, it is the process that is important. The assumption is that human inquiry can bring us closer to perfection and truth.

The reconceptualist orientation (Edlin, 1994 & Miller, 1983) emphasizes the primacy of personal meaning. Meaning arises from within the student and therefore educational programs are developed in concert with the student. Children are allowed to choose to investigate subject matter that is of interest to them. Van Brummelen (1988) states that while this approach avoids a purely academic orientation it creates self-centered individuals who become the center of their own universe and live for themselves.

The social relevance orientation (Armstrong, 1989 & Miller, 1983) educates students to serve the interests of society, especially by analyzing social and cultural phenomena. This orientation supplements traditional reception learning with discussions and projects focusing on multi-disciplinary social issues and values. Van Brummelen (1988) states that while Christians should certainly help children to address contemporary social issues such as the erosion of the nuclear family or the care of society's poor and oppressed, the content chosen for this orientation is often one-sided or even distorted, depending on the particular view of society held.

According to Van Brummelen (1988) curriculum content in a Christian context stresses focused learning rooted in children's own experiences. It encompasses "knowledge-that, knowledge-how, problem - solving and creative experiences, attitudes and dispositions that arise both out of subject disciplines and out of multi-disciplinary situations" (pp. 94-95). The content helps students experience both the unity and diversity of God's marvelous creation, to foster biblical attitudes and dispositions, and to see its relevance and application in life as they serve God and neighbor.

According to Van Brummelen (1994), in a Christian orientation to curriculum, "there are four distinct phases that address the rhythm of

learning, and the diverse learning styles of students. These phases are setting the stage, disclosure, reformulation and transcendence” (p. 183).

While setting the stage, the teacher makes use of students’ experiential knowledge encouraging them to enjoy, discover, imagine, search for and draw conclusions without approaching the topic deductively or formally. This phase of learning is a time for “exploring, for asking questions, and for delight in immediate response” (Van Brummelen, 1994, p. 184).

Students reflect on the knowledge they already have and explore the limits of such knowledge in a non-threatening way. At this initial stage it is important that the students themselves become engaged in their learning, and that they reflect on their own experiential knowledge, their present action, their own feelings and their own beliefs.

According to Van Brummelen, (1994) the second phase of learning, disclosure, builds on the students’ experiential knowledge including that knowledge gained during phase one, and unfolds or discloses a topic in a carefully structured manner. During disclosure students “withdraw from their concrete experience to unfold or disclose a topic in a carefully structured manner” (p. 184). Methods such as lectures, demonstrations, discussion, readings, and group work help students assimilate concepts, theories, and issues in a structured and meaningful way. This phase

emphasizes careful conceptual development. Concepts are extracted, expanded and developed more fully during this phase by building on the students' conceptual structures.

Van Brummelen (1994) states that the presentation and analysis of the disclosure phase does not become personally meaningful to the students until they can reformulate the main concepts by integrating them into their conceptual schema. During the reformulation stage "students demonstrate that they can understand, interpret, and use what they have learned in the disclosure phase" (p. 185). By doing so the students can use and respond to what they have learned in their own way.

The final phase is transcendence. Van Brummelen (1994) states that "in this phase students move beyond disclosure and reformulation moving from reflection to action" (p. 186). During this phase students respond to what they have learned. They apply concepts and principles in their own unique ways, often in what for them are original situations. The result is that they develop personally meaningful products and choose responses that affect their own lives. They commit themselves to certain courses of action and values. During this phase students can experience how humans live in obedient response to God.

Learning Outcomes of Christian Education

To educate means to lead forth, shaping attitudes and dispositions, and giving form to ideas. Education, as Thomas Groome (1980) puts it, “attends with people to our present, to the past heritage it embodies, and to the future possibility it holds for the total person and community.”

Education can never be neutral, for when we attend with people, our interaction is based on our view of the person and of the purpose and meaning of life. According to Van Brummelen (1988) education is always religious in the sense that it cannot help but lead forth according to one’s faith commitments and ideals.

Van Brummelen (1988) states that:

The basic vision that directs Christian schools is that of the Kingdom of God, the central theme of Christ’s teaching. Christian schools have as their learning outcomes the desire to prepare children to be and become citizens of a Kingdom that, on the one hand, has already been established in Christ and, on the other hand, will not find its ultimate fulfillment in this present life (p. 5).

Christian Schools International (1995) identifies the learning outcomes of a Christian school as those in which the students are educated for a life of obedience to their calling as image-bearers of God. This calling is to know God’s Word and His creation, to consecrate the whole of human life to God and to love all people and to be stewards in their God-given cultural task.

In the literature regarding the importance of teaching Christianly and the purposes of Christian education nothing has been found that deals specifically with how teachers go about teaching Christianly. John Van Dyk (1986) draws attention to this lack when he states that there is a tenacious assumption that Christian teachers in a Christian classroom automatically teach Christianly. Van Dyk asserts that employing a Christian teacher does not necessarily guarantee Christian teaching.

I believe this study will prove useful to the theory and practice of Christian education in describing one teacher's approach to Christian teaching. What is the lived experience of being a Christian teacher? What does it mean to be a Christian teacher? How does one go about teaching Christianly? What methods or strategies are employed to ensure that the material taught is indeed taught from a Christian perspective? How is the Christian school mission statement met within the context of the classroom? Questions of this nature have not been adequately addressed in the literature. In this regard, this study is unique in that it examined the lived experience of a Christian teacher in the context of and in comparison with the philosophies and policies of the Christian school within which she teaches.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to describe the methodology used to gather data for this study. It includes an overview of the study and discussions of qualitative research, the interview process, the selection of the participant, the data collection procedures, the ethical considerations followed, and the methods used to analyze the data.

Overview of the Study

The main goal of this study was to describe and more fully understand the lived experience of a Christian teacher in the context of and in comparison with the philosophies and policies of a Christian school. Using a case study method, a detailed ethnographic (Goetz and LeCompte, 1984) and phenomenological (Van Manen, 1990) study of one person's teaching within a CSI organization was carried out over a period of two (2) school years. Data was obtained using phenomenological conversations, participant observations and analysis of documents, specifically, policy statements, journals, and field notes. In keeping with a phenomenological study, one major question guided the study and all data collection procedures. This question was:

What is the subject's lived experience of being a Christian teacher?

Emerging from this question were other sub-questions:

1. What is your concept of a teacher--who is that person--what qualities should they have?
2. What does it mean to teach Christianly?
3. What is your metaphor of teaching?
4. How do you know when you are teaching Christianly?
5. What is your view of the learner?

While these questions were part of the interview process they were not revisited exclusively on an individual basis in the conclusion.

A series of seven (7) taped conversations were held lasting 50-70 minutes per session. Conversations regarding the research question continued until the point where data saturation had been reached (Bogdan and Biklen, 1992). Bogdan and Biklen describe this point as the time where data collection becomes redundant and repetitive, and the amount of new information learned decreases in comparison to time spent.

For the ethnographic component of the study I functioned as a non-participant observer (Bogdan and Biklen, 1992).

Theories About Qualitative Research

There are three major approaches to educational or social science research: positivism, interpretive science and critical social science

(Neuman, 1991). Positivism, the oldest and most often used, is the foundation of quantitative research. It is associated with the natural sciences but also is used widely in the social sciences. Unlike qualitative researchers, quantitative researchers following the positivist approach take a deductive route. The researcher starts with "a general causal relationship that has been logically derived from a causal law in general theory" and then "logically links abstract ideas in laws to precise measurements of the social world" (Neuman, 1991, p. 61). This approach calls for the researcher to remain neutral and detached from the subjects and the environment being studied. This detachment may inhibit a deeper understanding of the subjects being studied (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992; Neuman, 1991; Pyke and Agnew, 1991), as well as may limit the generalizability of the results to the real world (Borg & Gall, 1989; Neuman, 1991; Pyke & Agnew, 1991).

The second major approach, interpretive social science, along with the third approach, critical social science provide the foundation for qualitative research (Neuman, 1991). There are "several approaches to interpretive social science" (p.74) with phenomenology and ethnography being the most commonly known.

Phenomenology is concerned with how people construct their own reality based upon their interpretations of their experiences (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992). Phenomenologists believe that it is our interpretations of our

interactions with others that gives meaning to our experiences and that to truly understand people and their experiences we must seek their point of view. Phenomenologists make no assumptions about how people will assign meaning to their experiences. Rather, they seek to develop an empathic understanding of meaning and how it evolves. Regardless of their particular orientation "most qualitative researchers in some way reflect a phenomenological perspective" (Bogdan & Biklen, p. 33).

Ethnography has phenomenological roots and originated in the discipline of anthropology. "Ethno" means people or folk while "graphy" means to describe something. "Thus ethnography means describing a culture and understanding another way of life from the native point of view" (Neuman, 1991, p. 333). Ethnographers believe that people's behaviours, as displayed through their speech and actions, give researchers clues as to how people think and to what they believe. The researcher must infer the meaning from the displays of behaviour. The more displays of a selected culture's behaviour the researcher can observe and interpret, the deeper will be the knowledge and understanding of that culture. Ethnographers use methods such as participant-observation, document analysis, and interviewing of subjects. Ethnographers seek "to share in the meanings that the subjects take for granted and then to depict the new

understanding for the reader and for outsiders" (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992, p. 39).

Regardless of the theoretical orientation applied to it, the goal of interpretive social science is to learn what is meaningful to people and how people experience their everyday lives (Neuman, 1991). The researcher "attempts to discern others' reasoning and view of things" (p. 50). This attempt is accomplished through methods such as participant-observation, analysis of interview transcripts, and analysis of documents in the form of journals, memos, researcher notes, and policy documents. While a positivist researcher precisely measures details about large samples of subjects and relies heavily on statistical analysis, the interpretive researcher concentrates on a smaller sample and seeks to achieve a deeper and more holistic understanding of their lived experience. Characteristic of the qualitative approach is the inductive manner, which allows themes or generalizations to emerge from the data allowing the theory to be grounded in the lives of the people being studied (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992; Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Smith, 1991; Neuman, 1991). The details and descriptions that are embedded within the conversations are rich with meaning (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992).

Qualitative data are represented by words, sentences, paragraphs, and imagery rather than by statistics. Qualitative researchers focus on

subjective meanings, definitions, symbolism, and detailed descriptions of people and events. Research is conducted in the field, in the natural settings of people and the events being examined. The interpretation of the data involves the researcher giving it meaning, and making it understandable (Neuman, 1991). But the meaning given to the data always begins with the point-of-view of the people being studied. In this way the subjects become active agents of interpretation in the telling of their own lived experience.

Bogdan and Biklen (1992) identify five features of qualitative research and state that all studies will exhibit varying degrees of each feature. First, they state that qualitative research uses the natural setting as the primary data source and the researcher as the key data gathering instrument. Understanding that the subject's behaviour is easily influenced by the setting, the qualitative researcher collects data at the site.

Second, qualitative research is descriptive in seeking to gather rich data. Data is collected in the form of words and pictures rather than numbers and statistics. Responses by the subject are analyzed in order to discover subtle nuances in meaning.

Third, qualitative researchers are more concerned with the process than the outcomes or products of the activity or events. Importance is

placed not only on the final product but on the journey leading up to the product. The process is allowed to evolve as the journey unfolds.

Fourth, qualitative researchers tend to be inductive in their data analysis. The data is not collected to simply prove a point or to support a preexisting theory. The theory is allowed to emerge from the interconnected data and is induced via what Glaser and Strauss (1967), call “grounded theory” (p. 126), a method for discovering theories, concepts, hypotheses and propositions directly from data, rather than from priori assumptions, other research or existing theoretical frameworks (Taylor & Bogdan, 1984). Finally, meaning is of essential concern to the qualitative approach. The most important point is accurately portraying the way in which subjects make sense of their lives, an activity which Erickson (1986) calls “participant perspective” (p. 64).

The Research Design for this Study

Since the primary purpose of this research is to describe and understand more fully the lived experience of a Christian teacher in the context of and in comparison with the philosophies and policies of the Christian school, a qualitative approach was utilized. I chose this research design because I believe that the methodology and characteristics of qualitative research compliment the purpose of this study. By using this approach I seek to reveal viewpoints that offer a deeper understanding of,

and new insights into the research topic than other methods of research may accomplish (Borg & Gall, 1989).

Observing and interviewing the research subject in her own natural work setting provides data, which allow a more intimate understanding of her situation because the data are obtained directly from the subject and because the research considers her immediate environment (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992). Through a qualitative approach, the philosophies and policies stated regarding teacher practice can be examined to determine how they translate into daily activities, procedures, and interactions (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992). In qualitative research theory is grounded (Glaser & Strauss, 1967): it is not formulated before beginning the research but it evolves as a result of the data that are gathered. The use of qualitative methods allow for the development of a more complete picture of the Christian teacher and her lived experience.

Research Method Used for the Study

Using a case study method, a detailed phenomenological study of one person's teaching was carried out over a period of two (2) school years. Data were obtained using interviews, observations, and documents.

Qualitative inquiry was conducted primarily through observation and interviewing. The data of qualitative inquiry--that is, the data which are collected, interpreted, and communicated to others are used to describe the

lived quality and significance of the experience in a fuller or deeper manner (Van Manen, 1990).

Interviews have been used extensively across all the disciplines of the social sciences and in educational research as the key instrument in data collection. This emphasis has led to increasing development and diversity in the form and style of interviewing. Bogdan and Biklen (1992), identify two primary types of interviews, namely, structured and unstructured. The structured interview is similar to the questionnaire in both its form and assumptions underlying its use. This is one of the most widely used forms of interview because of its wide range of uses to both inside and outside the realms of social science (Fetterman, 1989).

The unstructured interview relies heavily upon the relationship developed between the researcher and the subject for its success. There must still be some level of structure in an unstructured interview. The key difference between the two interviewing techniques might be said to be in the degree of negotiation between the interviewer and the subject. For this reason I used an unstructured interview format. The unstructured interview allowed me to introduce new material into the discussion, which had not been thought of previously but may have emerged throughout the course of the interview. This allowed questions to emerge out of sequence thereby letting the discussion also emerge. The aim of the unstructured interview

was to facilitate a greater flow of information and dialogue between me and the subject. Even so, I did not totally abandon any pre-interview preparations or focus. Prior to the actual interviews I developed a rough road map of the journey I wished to travel and I also allowed the interview to travel.

This type of research forced me to be particularly aware of the sources of bias and range of factors that might influence and shape encounters between me and the subject (Eisner and Peshkin, 1990). Eisner and Peshkin (1990) highlight the need to develop rapport and empathy with the subject. Believing this to be of prime importance to the study I spent time getting to know the subject on an individual level. This activity seemed to put the subject more at ease and resulted in deeper, more meaningful information being obtained. This in turn enabled me to move back and forth within the interview structure enabling points to be clarified and allowing me to raise new questions related to these points.

I believe that there was an equal relationship between myself and the subject in our unstructured interviews. The overall aim of the unstructured interviewing was to create an atmosphere where the subject felt able to relate subjective and often highly personal information to me. To facilitate this atmosphere I went so far as to encourage the subject to take greater responsibility for the interview, both in terms of planning the interview by

setting times and dates as well as previewing and clarifying the questions (Powney and Watts, 1987).

The unstructured interview clearly offered me greater flexibility in promoting conversation, that Burgess (1982) identifies as essential.

Burgess suggests that the unstructured interview:

...assumes the appearance of a natural interesting conversation. But to the proficient interviewer it is always a controlled conversation which he guides and bends to the service of his research interest.

In approaching interviewing as a source of data for research a number of matters needed to be addressed. These matters may usefully be examined in the light of the interview situation.

The interviews in this study were complex social interactions. It was important for me to be aware of what might be called the dynamics of the interview situation. I considered the following two areas before conducting interviews and later when organizing and analyzing them.

1. Researcher effects.
2. Characteristics of the researcher and the subject.

Researcher Effects

An awareness of my own personal biases was essential in order to understand more fully the impact and interaction that occurred during the interview. Knowing and understanding my personal feelings and prejudices made interpreting the material easier. I attempted to guard against the

intrusion of bias by recording my thoughts and reflections in fieldnotes and by referring to them during the analysis stage.

Characteristics of the Researcher and the Subject

The most profound source of bias and influence upon the interviews were the personal characteristics of the parties involved. It was here that the key variables of age and gender played a crucial role.

Sometimes when information is given to a researcher who is younger than the subject the problem exists where the response given may not be a real indication of what the subject feels, believes, or thinks, but rather an indication of what the subject feels is appropriate given their ages. Neither my age nor the subject's had an influence on the kind of interaction that took place. Being similar in age, I believed that the subject responded to the interview questions in age-appropriate language.

Powney and Watts (1987) state the gender element or dimension of an interview is an equal consideration in the interview process. In my opinion, we were both comfortable with the gender element having known each other previously.

The relationship we developed during data collection could have influenced the interviews that took place. I, like my subject, have an identity, a past, a history and certain views that cannot be separated or isolated. In order to reflect upon data collection and keep some perspective,

I kept a daily journal noting particular feelings, questions or thoughts that would help shed light on my personal interpretations or understandings.

Selection of The Participant

A teacher was selected from a school affiliated with Christian Schools International --District 11. Selection was based upon Christian Schools International's guidelines for teacher employment. These guidelines include holding a valid teacher's certificate for the particular province where the teacher is employed. As well, the teacher must model the love of Christ, profess personal salvation, faithfully attend a Christian church, support the school's mission statement, purposes and goals, pursue extracurricular activities, and be dedicated to the highest standards of excellence and professionalism (Christian Schools International, 1993).

In addition to the above criteria, which focus on the characteristics required by CSI, I selected the teacher based upon her years of teaching experience, familiarity with the provincial curriculum, and her willingness to disclose her experiences.

Data Collection

Seven taped interviews and numerous field notes were recorded and transcribed. The interviews took place at the teacher's school on one occasion and at the teacher's home for the balance of the interviews. The interviews were carried out in a relaxed manner with a period of casual

conversation preceding the actual interview questions. The interviews lasted about 60-70 minutes each, and were followed by 10-20 minutes of informal conversation. It was these times that served to build a feeling of rapport and trust.

I was present in the teacher's classroom as a non-participant observer in order to observe, document and more fully understand the process and nature of her Christian teaching. Visitation times were set in accordance with the teacher's schedule and preference. I found the time spent in the classroom to be very beneficial as it allowed me to observe the teacher as she carried out her role.

Data were also collected by examining school documents, reading both long and short-range lesson plans, and in general conversations that took place over the course of the data collection period with both the teacher and her colleagues. The teacher took the initiative in sharing her journey in this study with her colleagues. This provided an interesting and unexpected addition to the study because the colleagues became a source of information reaffirming what the teacher had been sharing during the interview process.

I wrote a reflective researcher journal to control or limit possible researcher bias and to provide starting points for further discussion. The

journal contained my thoughts, impressions, reactions and further questions needing clarification.

Ethical Considerations

Upon approval of the proposed study by the thesis committee and prior to the collection of data it was necessary to obtain permission from the University's Senate Ethics Advisory Committee because the study involved a human subject. A researcher's agreement form and accompanying documentation were sent to the Ethics Committee for review. The agreement form identified the research purpose, the process for obtaining informed consent including sample cover letters, the research instrument being used, the procedures for ensuring confidentiality, means of discussing the risks/benefits with the subject and the process of disseminating the results to the participant. (See appendix B.) Following the approval of the study by the Ethics Committee cover letters were presented to the subject, her administrator and her supervising board. (See appendix A.) The teacher, administrator, and board were informed of the purpose of the study, assured that participation was voluntary and that all responses would be kept strictly confidential. A pseudonym is used in this study to ensure the anonymity of the subject/participant, school, and school board.

A copy of the thesis will be provided to the subject following final acceptance of the thesis.

Analysis and Interpretation of The Data

Upon completion of all seven tape-recorded interviews the information on the tapes was transcribed and entered into the computer. Total transcribing time was approximately four weeks. Typed transcripts of the interviews were made available to the subject in an effort to clarify points and verify accuracy. In doing this, I invited the subject to participate in the interpretive process in order to provide her with an opportunity to elaborate upon or reconstruct her responses.

Analysis was conducted using a coding system to categorize, synthesize, search for patterns and interpret the data. All material was entered into a computer and sorted into themes based upon a coding scheme. The coding scheme used key words and phrases that appeared to recur throughout the transcripts. These sections of the transcripts were then cut and pasted to separate files on the computer. The themes that emerged were discussed with the subject for verification. Then the data for each theme were analyzed according to how they contribute to describing the lived experience of a Christian school teacher.

CHAPTER FOUR

FINDINGS

Introduction

The chapter is organized into two sections. The first section deals with the pre-teaching experiences of the subject while the second section deals with the subject's lived experience as a Christian teacher.

Jenny is a 51-year-old woman who lives with her husband of 27 years in a small town in the southern part of a prairie province. She has three grown children who have all attended post-secondary institutions. Two of them have gone on to Christian colleges while one has entered a western college.

Jenny has been teaching for twenty-one years. Currently, she is teaching at the intermediate level and heading up the resource section at Lilliput Christian School where she has been on staff for thirteen years. She received her teacher training at a mid-western college. She is still very much influenced by her parental family and the values that were taught to her when she was a child. She visits her family every year.

Jenny enjoys new experiences and challenges, which have led to her interest and leadership in the area of resource work. She believes helping students who struggle academically is a worthwhile and necessary task.

She believes that God has led her to this area of concentration during the last years of her career.

Outside of school, Jenny enjoys spending time with her family and friends, playing piano, golfing, and reading. Although life is not always smooth Jenny is happy and realizes that she has been blessed and is loved by God. Knowing that Jesus is her Saviour and Lord, and that God is in control, Jenny presses on to fulfill God's call of her life to teach.

Pre-Teaching Experiences

Two sub-themes emerged. The first one deals with influences from Jenny's childhood (being reached) and the impact these influences had on her decision to become a teacher, and the second focuses on her experiences as a student teacher (learning to reach). Each sub-theme is documented in this section.

Being Reached

Jenny grew up on a small, fairly isolated farm in South Dakota. She lived beside the Missouri River in a picturesque area. Being the second oldest and the only girl in her family she describes her childhood as:

...really nice, I had two parents who were very Christian in their philosophy...in their theology and in the way they lived. They worked hard to provide a good home for themselves and their family. They weren't rich but they never lacked for anything. Within realism, we had everything we needed. I enjoyed a really stable family life and we all got along really well.

To Jenny the most important place to be nurtured is in the family, the basic building block of society. Children experience and develop their ability to live a Christian life within a secure family environment based upon a Christian atmosphere of love, support and discipline. Jenny feels that parents must model Christian convictions and Christian lifestyle.

More than anyone else, they (parents) can communicate to their children how the Christian life should be governed by the insights gained from an obedient listening to God's Word. It takes place through daily interaction and discussion, devotions, provision of toys and books, sharing chores, going out together, and so on. Children learn most from the way parents structure everyday family life and from their personal modeling.

Jenny recalls her early experiences when she began school and the role her mother played in shaping her adult philosophy:

I started school as the youngest in my class having made the cut-off date by one day. Against others' advice my mother enrolled me thinking that her daughter was so smart that she could easily go to school and do very well even if she was the youngest in her class.

Jenny feels that parental expectations play a great deal in the success and self-confidence of a student. She states that:

...if parents think their children are smart and parents convey that knowledge to them (children), I think often children also have that feeling and they go to school with all kinds of self-confidence and think, well if mom and dad think I can do this then I most likely can. So I went to school thinking I was pretty smart too, after all, my parents thought so and whatever they thought was probably right.

Jenny recalls the impact that people have had on her life as a youngster. She recalls how “the things you learn as a child are very important” and how she “really remembers the people who influenced her and what they thought was important.”

Jenny believes that we either influence or are influenced by the people we meet in our lives. We either leave our marks on or are marked by other people in life. Recalling the influence of past teachers Jenny believes that teachers teach a little by what is said, more by what is done, and most by who they are. She recalls a time when her grade 2 and 3 teacher Mrs. Burkett reached her:

This grade two and three teacher made it a point of having every family of every student in her class over at least once a year...she somehow, some way, managed to get around to all of us and to meet our needs and I think everyone in the class learned--I know everyone liked her--there wasn't one kid who didn't like her. I guess it was because she showed us that she really cared about us...she would make us feel really special.

Jenny feels that teachers have a formative influence on children. She recalls that teachers whom she admired most were those who affected her personally, who cared for her, who inspired her with their love, who were fair and who went out of their way to be helpful. Such personal characteristics yielded more long-term effects on her than did the content they taught.

We had Mrs. Burkett for two years when one of my friends grandpa or grandma died. She was so sympathetic towards that child and really tried to comfort the child and tried to get the whole class to feel along with that child...she was more than being a good teacher...she really understood us and really tried to help us with our feelings and let us know we were important which is something I really tried to remember in my teaching--to really care for the kids.

As a young woman growing up in a family steeped in tradition, Jenny experienced the pressure and expectations placed upon her by those in her family who had chosen teaching as their career. Upon entering college she recalls the counsel of her aunts.

My dad's sisters were gung-ho teachers--they both loved teaching. They both thought teaching was the only thing a woman should be doing...teaching was really it. They had always told me from the time I was little how wonderful teaching would be and how it was by far the best job that a woman could do. So when it came time for me to choose what I wanted to do, it was always assumed that I would go into teaching.

Jenny attended college with deep reservations about what she would do in terms of a career. She thought about becoming an airline stewardess, ticket agent or a receptionist because it "looked like fun, it looked easier, and I wouldn't have to spend four years in university." Uncertain with her decision Jenny turned to her father for counsel. She describes her father as:

...probably the biggest influence on my life at that point... I talked without reservation with my dad. If I had something that I really needed answers to I would for some reason go to him because I always felt that he was very honest with me, whereas my mother would try to say what she

thought I should hear rather than what she actually really thought.

Deciding that this was probably not the direction Jenny wanted her life to go, she enrolled in College and began her journey of discovery that would eventually lead her to pursue her degree in teaching. She recalls the moment she knew that teaching was what she wanted to do. While attending an American Government class during the summer session she “really got turned on to teaching” listening to a number of practicing teachers discussing their experiences in the field and talking about methods and philosophies used within their classrooms. She recalls that:

...we were there with our ears just flapping. I picked up from those teachers a real sense of joy and a real sense of--um, accomplishment is too boring a word--um, a real thrill over having taught those kids and finding things that really worked for kids... and just the thrill of being able to help a student discover something. That’s what really made me think for the first time that, yeah you know, I would like to be a teacher. I can’t wait to help a student to learn things.

Looking back and reflecting on the circumstances that brought her to this decision she sees her choice to become a teacher as God’s leading or calling on her life.

I definitely see it as a calling on my life because as I think I said in the first interview, teaching was not my choice. I feel I’ve been led all the way to become a teacher and to be where I am. Having relatives as teachers, it was always held up to me as something special and something I could probably become. I don’t feel it was a career choice. I believe it was

God's leading and there where all these events in my life and past that brought me to this point.

It was almost like a magnet drawing me there and I couldn't turn around even if I wanted to. I really believe that the Spirit (of God) moves and prepares your heart for certain things...I think the Spirit creates within you an unhappiness with the way things are and you begin to search for other things and He leads you to where he wants you to be. I think it's a gradual process and that a person has to be willing to listen.

Jenny distinguishes between teaching as a career versus teaching as a calling, by stating:

As a calling, teaching really isn't a job to me...I'm here because I want to be and I love doing it--I love to teach, to help kids develop and learn. As a calling it's something you want to do and that you feel you were supposed to be doing as opposed to a career that is just like a job from 9 to 5 or whatever and that is separated from the rest of your life. Whereas teaching consumes my whole life, I think about it, the kids, what can I do to help a particular student. That would be how I describe it--the focal point of my life. I see a career as something you choose to earn a living...bread on the table...a roof over my head. You can enjoy it (a career) but it is just a part of your life whereas a calling is every part of your life. It fulfills my needs, the needs of others, and God's desire for me.

Learning To Reach

Jenny began her student teaching during the second semester of the school year. She taught a grade four class in a small town in South Dakota. She recalls the considerable amount of work and lesson preparation that she undertook.

She states:

We had to make three copies of every lesson plan we taught. You taught six subjects per day and that meant thirty pages of plans per week. It was a lot of paperwork as a beginning teacher but you need to go through the process of writing your objectives and methods down to see how the whole thing is unfolding.

Early in her student-teaching Jenny learned that there was much more to the lives of her students than one could observe. Two guiding principles became quite apparent to Jenny during this time. First, she must teach the whole child and second, she recognized that every child has a unique set of gifts and needs. These two principles taken together required Jenny to know, as far as she could, the whole child--not just his/her academic achievement or behaviour problems, and that she try to make it possible to celebrate his or her gifts and meet his or her special needs.

Jenny describes her first encounter with such a child:

For the first time I had really close contact with a native child...up until then I had seen them across the street and that was it. I remember one little girl in particular, her name was Rachel and she was really scrawny, small for her age and skinny...I had the feeling she didn't have enough to eat...she came to school in the middle of winter in really thin cotton dresses and I felt she didn't have enough to wear...I didn't have to try to be sensitive to their needs--it just kind of happened.

This encounter caused Jenny to reflect on her teaching and her philosophy of teaching. As a prospective teacher, Jenny needed to identify what she believed about the nature and purpose of schooling.

I did a lot of thinking about what to do...up until then I'd been busy learning curriculum, learning child psychology, learning stuff from books but that was my first time I actually got to put it into practice and the kids became more important than the teaching methods and the curriculum.

I believe the function of schooling should be to educate children and young adults for a life of responsible discipleship in Jesus Christ. I believe that the home, church and school function together to nurture the child with the home being the most important agency of nurture. All three work together to prepare children for the Christian life. Children must develop thoroughly Christian minds. Christian teaching and learning aims to discover God's laws and apply them in obedient response to God.

Jenny identifies her primary goals that contribute to the overall aim of Christian nurturing in her teaching. She states that as a teacher she must:

...reveal to my students a Christian vision of life. You need to let the students experience the meaning of living out a Christian worldview and encourage students to commit to a Christian way of life, willing to serve God and their neighbors.

Jenny recognizes that teachers must take into account that all dimensions of students' lives are interrelated and affect each other. For example, an incident on the playground, the loss of a prized possession, a sick relative, an upcoming trip--all affect learning. Convinced of the need to understand the whole child and the implications of this for teaching,

Jenny became somewhat of a researcher and a student of human nature.

She recalls times when:

...I would go home on weekends and spend as much time as possible watching my younger brother in grade four trying to figure out what interests grade four boys had, what's popular, what they liked/disliked, just how their minds worked. I think I learned things from my brother that I could apply to my class but the most important thing was trying to figure out how a kid's mind works, how to challenge them, how to make things stick in their heads, how to become their friend. I felt I had to have kids like me to a certain extent before I would be able to teach them anything.

To Jenny, learning to teach and teaching were not mechanical but personal acts. She felt that teachers should use rather than suppress their personalities and life experiences in fulfilling their roles as Christian teachers. Jenny believed that as a teacher she must consciously strive to forge her classroom into a learning community. She believes the classroom can be a place where children learn to use and accept their abilities in relation to themselves and others and to accept the joys and difficulties of working together.

Of her student teaching experience she recalls:

I felt like I was really getting into the teaching part, like I was becoming a part of the students' lives and we were making progress together.

I think that when you're working with older kids and they see you around, it helps to develop a sense of community if you share with them the things that you and your family are doing. Also, be willing to share your successes as well as

your mistakes...I think they can learn and also appreciate you more as a person...so we share each other's lives...I think kids really appreciate when you share your life with them...and I think that lots of times that will influence a person's ability to relate with the children and to teach.

Many times in the classroom you will have this feeling, this atmosphere where we are all in it together, we are all working together, and that is when you feel the Christian community, everybody has the same goals in mind and we are all working hard at it. And that is probably one of the best feelings about teaching, is that when you have got everybody all on the same track and working together.

Jenny knew early in her student teaching that the greatest need in effective teaching was to have trained teachers who would put their whole minds into preparation, their whole souls into presenting their beliefs and ideals, and their whole lives into being living illustrations of their beliefs. For Jenny teaching was not simply a nine-to-five job but an opportunity to impact the lives of her students. It required a commitment beyond simple instruction. In summarizing her first year she stated:

I lived, and ate and talked and slept teaching. Even now I feel good because we got the feeling going, the feeling of working together. It also taught me that it's not the supplies that make the difference in the classroom but the teacher.

Jenny learned that students needed to be nurtured in an environment sensitive to spirituality. Echoing the words of Blomberg and Stronks (1993) Jenny recognized that such a place "is where the wonders and horrors of the universe are considered at least as often as the names of the

provincial capitals” (p. 58). It is also where adults lead lives of grace and truth, where justice is as important as grades, and where the study of poetry does not focus on meter but on finding ways to express depths unknown to scientific formulas. In contrasting secular and Christian world views of teaching Jenny stated:

While the result may be the same, many times we’re coming at it from a different viewpoint, we’re coming at it from the viewpoint that this is God’s world, it’s my Father’s world and He has put us here for a reason. That reason is not just to please me, that reason is to serve Him and by serving Him we will serve others as Jesus always modeled...I think it is the Christianity within us that is expressed in the way in which we live, it becomes the focal point of our lives and therefore is naturally expressed through our actions and lives.

It’s probably one of the very basic parts because if you are a Christian then a Christ-centered outlook on the world should follow. If you are a Christian then you should be able to develop thinking in Christian ways and should be able to see non-Christian curriculum through Christian eyes and be able to put the Christian perspective in, around and through it.

Summary

In being reached Jenny learned the importance of family and its influences. She recognized the family as the building block of society and a child’s first teacher of love, life, and the importance of modeling the life you profess. Jenny learned that we either influence or are influenced by those closest to us and that this influence shapes our lives and decisions.

In learning to reach Jenny recognized that God was calling her to teach and accepted His call. She learned that one must teach considering the wholeness of the child and being sensitive to all aspects or dimensions of the child's life. She saw each child as being unique and gifted, having gifts and needs. She began to see teaching as a personal act and not a mechanical function. She incorporated personal and professional reflection in her life as she sought to develop a Christian perspective in her students. Finally, she was challenged by the need to develop within herself and her students a Christian worldview, which recognizes the authority of God over the world and the importance of carrying out responsible discipleship.

Teaching Experiences

Two sub-themes were generated from the data gathered for the period of Jenny's life in which she has worked as a professional certified teacher. The first sub-theme explores the relationship between God and the curriculum and the second focuses on her instructional strategies to develop not only the intellect of her students but also their spirit. Each category is described using some of Jenny's own words in this section.

God is Central to Curriculum Content

According to Jenny, God is at the heart of all curriculum. Her worldview takes as its starting point the understanding that the Bible is God's authoritative Word for life. God's written Word, the Bible, provides

guidelines and wisdom for answers to the basic questions about the world and the role we play in it. Whereas for many, the Bible may have very little to say about life in a pluralistic society, according to Jenny, the Bible takes a very different approach, claiming that the Christian faith is all-encompassing. Accordingly, if the Bible is relevant for all of life, then it is also relevant for education.

I see God as the underlying basis for all curriculum. All of our things that we do in life are so meaningless without God, so He has to be the underlying basis that we teach our curriculum from...God is the basis that everything else comes from...we have a double duty to be prepared and to know our curriculum, because we should be doing everything to the glory of God.

Jenny's approach to her curriculum is that the world is a place where God, through the power of His Spirit, calls His children to be faithful in learning and doing the truth. Her approach uses the curriculum to show that all of creation and knowledge comes under the rule of God, and that in fact, God is the basis of all knowledge.

I see God as the underlying basis for the curriculum. God is the creator of knowledge and without Him there is no knowledge. God created everything...controls everything... and placed everything in the world.

To Jenny, a Christian curriculum must recognize a godly foundation as to its core and purpose and must be structured to help students learn about God's world so that they can grow in understanding and discernment. It should also help them grow in their ability to love and serve God as they

live in His world and to exercise personal and communal responsive discipleship wherever God places them.

The purpose of a Christian school would be to help the child develop their full potential and become the best servant for God that they can be. I think it is a really important part of what we are supposed to do with our school kids is to give them life experiences in a framework, teach them to follow God's will and teach them to make decisions.

In this way faith and learning find complete integration. Each subject area is seen as part of the total truth of God in Christ.

Jenny feels that it is important to recognize and act upon the uniqueness of each child since a biblical view of a person holds, first of all, that students are images of God and therefore stand in relationship to God.

I see children that have been entrusted to me for that year for me to guide them...I see God's children sitting there and I feel a tremendous responsibility to help that child grow in God's truth, in their faith in God, in their knowledge of God and in their knowledge of the world.

Teachers must take into account that all dimensions of students' lives are interrelated and affect each other. In this sense Jenny recognizes and works to help students overcome weaknesses.

I think it is really important that we do deal with the uniqueness of every child because all too often kids leave school and they judge whether they are a success or not by their marks and really, that is such a small part of their life...some students are blessed intellectually and some aren't.

One of the things that I try to help the children realize when we think about our weaknesses is that yes, it is our weak point but it doesn't have to stay as weak as it is. It can

be developed and we can learn to do better at it by practicing and hard work. It is important that kids learn that hard work can be a blessing and bring a tremendous sense of accomplishment.

According to Jenny all students are special, created with gifts, traits, and abilities that they unwrap in the classroom situation and throughout life.

It's important to try and impress on each child that we all have different gifts and God has blessed us all in different ways...I tell the kids that you have gifts and God has a plan for your life and you will discover as you grow older that there are certain gifts that God has given you and there are certain ways God will lead you and help you develop those gifts as we walk with God.

Recognizing the wide variation in gifts and abilities Jenny plans diverse learning activities and utilizes real-life situations in her teaching that encourage students to respond in unique ways.

I think it's good for them to see that I'm a person too and that I also have a life. I think when you're working with older kids they see you around and it develops community...you share with them the things you are doing. Also be willing to share your successes and mistakes as they can learn through them and appreciate you more as a person...we share in each others' lives...share through our journals...they appreciate when you share your life with them.

Learning thus becomes a personal occasion. It is rooted in the students' own experiences. It involves telling stories, molding stories, transforming stories and creating stories. Learning takes place through thoughtfulness, playfulness and creativity. Students develop their gifts

through different ways of knowing. They respond through developing, giving, and finding themselves.

Jenny recognizes that no two students learn in exactly the same way. Some learn best deductively; others, inductively. Some will learn best through visual stimuli; others, through aural/oral ones; still others through kinesthetic ones. For Jenny, a Christian model of learning needs to take into account the complex variations in which people learn. Rather than decrying the fact that some students do not learn as well with one approach, she plans learning so that it celebrates the diversity with which God has created each child.

That is why in my classroom I try and come up with activities that are really individual, where I can give them a framework and after that they can go for it...they have to think what they want to do with it and it doesn't have to be like the person's down the aisle or across the row. It should be your very own thing.

According to Jenny, teachers whose only aim is to reach the intellect are only making receptive contact with their students, handing them an accumulated stock of knowledge and learning. In contrast and in addition to receptive contact, Jenny aims for responsive contact, which leads to growth, enrichment and enlargement of a student's outlook on life.

If making something happen in the life of a student is the object of teaching for Jenny then what happens in the life of the student could be identified as the test of her teaching.

Jenny does not see the transmission of curricular material or content as her main objective in reaching the intellect of the student.

Some principals have said this to me and I have heard this more than once and I think it is true in my own life. I can learn to read and I probably would have learned to read if I had gone to school or not. I probably would have figured out numbers as well. I sometimes think the curriculum is one of the least important things that we do because they are going to pick it up if they need it. They will study for a test and forget it in a week or two, if we're lucky.

Teacher as Molder and Sculptor

A variety of metaphors have been used to describe and delineate teaching. They are important because they influence how people think about and practice teaching. Metaphors capture valuable insights about teaching (Tom, 1984).

Jenny describes her metaphor of teaching as one in which she sees herself as a sculptor or molder of her students. She sees her role as one where she,

...helps to develop within each child the abilities and skills to discover new things and help the child to develop the things that are already within him/her and just kind of mold or sculpt his/her view of the world and help him/her enhance it and grow bigger.

In this role Jenny recognizes that she does not mold the students without the help of God and the parents.

I don't see myself as being the one totally responsible for their education because parents, I think, probably/should and are a bigger influence on the children's life than the teacher...everybody does their part of the molding...we all work together and some are more influential than others at times.

It's not just sculpting at random...God is guiding all of our hands to help this child develop in the way that God want him/her to be. God is the master who is directing our hands and helping us to help this child develop. It is a cooperative effort, not a haphazard effort since God is directing all the people.

God is definitely directing my hands as well as he is directing the other people's hands who are working with this child...it is all a cooperative effort because God is guiding our hands and God is helping us to work together.

Jenny emphasizes the importance of a cooperative community effort in the educational process as it relates to molding the child and to the impact it can have on the community as a whole. In essence Jenny supports the idea of it taking an entire village to raise a child.

In the end every piece is as important as the next piece, it's kind of like the Body of Christ, we all need each other to help this child and the child is ultimately God's creation...we haven't done the creating, it has been God directing us and it was He who gave the child to begin with, to work with.

According to Jenny, loving and faithful relationships are a prerequisite for meaningful learning. The children need to know that

people around them care for them, and they need to sense that they are part of a community where people have pledged themselves to each other as they work towards a common goal.

There is also communication with the parents and the teachers and the other people who are working towards the same goal--to have this child develop in the fear of the Lord...God in the meantime is still using other people's hands and other people's lives and He is guiding other people to help mold us at the same time.

This larger community involvement along with Jenny's classroom community provides an atmosphere of mutual trust and concern where students learn to use and accept their abilities in relation to themselves and others. It is here that they experience the joys and difficulties of working together toward common goals.

Jenny describes the tools she would use when molding, shaping or "chipping away" at the student.

The tools I would use as I mold the child would be my skills as a teacher, questioning skills, creative skills, modeling skills and reflective skills, causing the students to think more deeply. Using these skills I would work to uncover the student's social conscience, social skills, to discover the ways God wants the student to act or behave. I see myself helping the student to develop their own central being, their own self-confidence and self-esteem. As well, I hope to develop their mind and give them a Christ-centered outlook on the world and develop the abilities to reason as in math and to understand history and social...sharpen their reading, writing, and decoding skills...helping them uncover all this by chipping away and helping them take on the form they were intended to become.

Jenny wants her students to become more discerning and responsive. She desires to nurture their abilities to think more clearly, decide responsibly, and act wisely. For Jenny, knowledge is not something that is passed on like a material substance from one person to another; thoughts are not objects that can be handled and held. In her class, ideas must be rethought and experiences must be reexperienced.

I see my hands as God's tools here in the classroom, an extension of God's hands being used to help the child develop.

Jenny believes that of primary importance in molding the child is to know when one needs to squeeze and when one needs to leave the child alone. Here she believes the key is to know the child.

The first thing you have to do is really know your child, really know the person. You have to know when they've had enough...So if you know the child you know when to make it harder, you know when to make it easier, you know when you have to build up and when you have to tear down. It's knowing the inner being of the child, knowing their abilities, knowing their perception of themselves and also as I was saying... the bottom line first, last and in-between is to know the child.

While Jenny sees herself as a molder of the child she states that the final form or piece does not come to completion under her supervision. According to Jenny this process of becoming is a life-long venture.

I don't see the final piece, I see my part. I see the child at their stage of development and I work with them at that age. I'm not sure that even a high school teacher or

university professor would see the final piece because I don't think the sculpting/molding is ever finished, it doesn't end with formal education. I think it's important to realize that God is guiding everybody's hands and guiding this child...God is directing all of the teachers, parents, counselors and others who are influencing this child to become all God wants him/her to be.

Molding the Intellect.

In observing Jenny in her classroom and watching her develop her lessons for her students I was reminded of a childhood memory when I accompanied my father to the railway station. I would stand on the railroad platform and watch the hustle and bustle taking place as the Agawa Canyon tour train was loading and unloading. I was mesmerized by the locomotives that hissed and roared.

The story of the railway train helps me to understand the place of the curriculum in the patterns and policies that help shape what Jenny does as a teacher and the Christian school believes as an institution. The freight and passengers are the children whose parents have entrusted them to this particular railway company (the school/classroom). The twin rails are the philosophy and educational confession that provide the foundation and direction on which Jenny's class operates. The policy manuals and student needs that Jenny identifies are the points or switches that determine the route on which Jenny will take her students. Finally, the curriculum is the locomotive that drives the whole process. In Jenny's case, the curriculum

energizes and leads the whole class in moving down the tracks and in celebrating and learning about the Lordship of Christ over all of life.

Questioning.

For Jenny the true test of knowledge and understanding comes from the response she gets to the question, "Why?". According to Jenny, as long as we use only the "what" in our questioning, replies will only be factual knowledge. Asking why requires one to tap both learned and personal resources of knowledge and to express him/herself and thereby to make responsive contact and understanding.

Questioning occupies a large part of making the teacher and student co-workers in the completion of the teaching process. Any teacher can ask questions, but it takes skill to ask questions that stimulate thought and to bring about learning. For Jenny, the purpose of questioning is quite clear: to awaken thought, to direct thought, to quicken thought, and to apply thought.

We have always been weak to teach children to think for themselves because most times they come to school, take out their books, turn to this page or that chapter. We'll read it, discuss it, do some activities, whatever...I think as teachers it is very important to get those kids to incorporate thinking skills into our questions, into our activities, independence in thinking...we should respect and not repress their original ideas and let them act on them.

Jenny is convinced that one of the surest tests of a teacher's work is found in the questions posed by her students. If one finds a class that is always asking questions, then one has found a teacher who knows how to awaken minds to search for truth. A question from a student often discloses more of his/her thoughts and needs than would appear through a student's responses to scores of questions from his/her teacher.

In preparing for an upcoming lesson Jenny begins from the students' point-of-view or "where they are at". She is keenly aware of the nature of the students in her classroom. Again, questioning is the point of departure.

First of all, I try to get the students excited about what they're going to learn and peak their curiosity as well as get them to see a need for what we are going to be learning. I let them discover the kinds of questions we will be looking at and to see a need for those questions. I try to operate from their point-of-view.

In addition to questioning, Jenny believes that her students should learn to be discerners of what they read and learn. Knowledge involves more than just intellectual comprehension and analysis. Students need to make judgments and decisions within a biblical framework.

I think here again, from a Christian point-of-view, we should be constantly discerning what we read and screening what we read... think about it, sort it, digest it...from your Christian point-of-view. I think it is a safeguard we have to instill in our kids...it is important that they learn to discern for themselves because you don't want them to follow just anyone in authority. That authority and teaching should always be tested against the teachings of the Bible.

In preparing her curriculum Jenny does not employ solely a content-centered approach nor a child-centered approach. In Jenny's class she employs a Christ-centered approach utilizing biblically based distinctives. For example, in the area of Social Studies, Jenny has developed a set of distinctives that reflect her world and life view and that place God at the center of the curriculum. The following account is taken from her program overview:

1. Social Studies is the study of mankind carrying out the cultural mandate given by God, in community and relationship in a particular time and place.
2. God created and upholds the heavens and the earth as ordered forms. He gave mankind a special place in this creation. Mankind, under God's guidance and norms, has been placed in charge of God's creation--to discover, explore and unfold it. Social Studies is the study of humanity's exercise of this stewardship.
3. Man is not an autonomous meaning-maker in an otherwise meaningless world. He lives in relationship to God, to himself, to others, and to the rest of creation. These relationships are carried out either in obedience or disobedience to God.
4. Christianity cannot be imposed, and neither can a commitment by students to follow a Christian walk. A Social Studies program needs to encourage in students an open and inquiring spirit, just as Jesus did with His disciples. Students need to be challenged to understand and evaluate the faith assumptions that they explore in their own and other cultures, as well as to evaluate their developing understanding of the world in the light of the principles and patterns of God's Word.
5. God has created the world as an ordered whole. Our Social Studies will endeavour to present to the students a perspective

that recognizes the integral completeness and inter-relatedness of God's world.

Evaluation and Discernment.

Jenny concurs with Van Brummelen (1988) who states that "evaluation is a valuing activity. The importance teachers attach to evaluation and how they go about it creates meaning for them and their students. It is one way in which they transfer their worldview to their students" (p. 62). Jenny believes that her evaluation methods must reflect a biblical understanding of the nature of children and of knowledge.

I think it's really important that we do deal with the uniqueness of every child. Every teacher likes to see every student get good grades but we know that some are not going to excel as much as others. I think it's important to impress upon the children that grades are not the only thing--it's also important how nice you are to people and your faith in God and your ability to serve God.

Jenny's practice is in accord with Van Brummelen's (1988) concept of evaluation as a "formative means to diagnose and improve student learning and growth" (p. 63). It helps Jenny to build both on her and the students' strengths and on overcoming their respective weaknesses in teaching and learning. In that sense, formative evaluation informs and reforms the teaching-learning situation.

Evaluation shows me where the students' strengths and weaknesses are and provides me with feedback to evaluate my program. It shows me where I've done well or messed up--then I can go over the material and teach it more effectively.

Evaluation is not the end but simply a tool I use to gauge both the students' progress and mine.

Jenny recognizes the importance of summative evaluation but does not see it as the most important aspect of evaluation. For Jenny, far too much time and energy can be consumed in the relentless pursuit of student scores in a book, numbers that often have marginal value and little meaning for all concerned. She states, "to me it certainly isn't the most important part of evaluation. When I write report cards I still feel they are inadequate."

Jenny prefers a more interactive approach to evaluation. According to Jenny there are three parties intimately concerned with school assessment: the student, the teacher, and the parent. By involving the student and parents in the evaluation process, insights into important perspectives and developmental levels of the student can be clearly understood.

Most kids know how they are doing. They may not know the letter grade but they know whether they are working or not.

The parent should be there and the child should be there. It's the child's business and it is he/she we are discussing program changes for. If the child doesn't know what we expect...and has no voice, they probably won't buy into the changes. I think we should try to examine the involvement of the child more closely.

With all the work involved in planning, and in ensuring objectives, skills, and concepts are met and adequately covered, Jenny still summarizes her love for teaching students and impacting their lives when:

...all of a sudden the light goes on and there is the light in the eyes and the smile on the face and, wow, they got it! It just makes you feel really good to know that you have helped the student to be able to understand...to know.

Molding the Spirituality.

Jenny believes in the importance of spiritual faith development within each student and that she is called to guide her students into the knowledge and discernment that leads to service for God and fellow human beings. For Jenny, faith is not simply one aspect of Christian education but a vital part.

I can't imagine what a person would do without faith...

The real purpose, and I know this is probably worn out, is to try and help the child develop to be the best person that they can be so that they can serve the Lord in the best way that they can.

They (students) are God's creatures and I believe that God has a plan for this world and for each one of our lives and that He wants us to fulfill that plan. We are all tools in His hands to help those children get ready to fulfill the plans that He has for them.

As such, school becomes a training ground where students identify and develop their God-given gifts and practice their faith for the purpose of serving God and others.

I find that being in a Christian school and being able to voice your faith makes everything easier.

He (God) blessed them with souls and minds so they could think and learn and so all this is a gift from God and He expects us to use and develop them...God expects us to develop our whole selves, like our social self, our athletic self, He is the basis for all of it, and to use it all in a Christian perspective for the glory of God.

In helping to mold her students spiritually, Jenny hopes to prepare them for service both within and outside of the Christian community.

It is very important that we do things for the right reasons. I want my students to do it (serve)...because we are all part of the family of God and so we should be willing to serve one another. Our service has to be to our non-Christian neighbours because God created all people and our service has to be to all people. In that way we'll be modeling and allowing God's light to shine through us.

Jenny acknowledges the role of the Holy Spirit as preeminent in the development of the students' spirituality. For Jenny, spirituality and holiness are the direct results of the Holy Spirit in us.

I really believe that the Spirit moves and prepares your heart for certain things...I think the Spirit creates within you an unhappiness with the ways things are and you begin to search for other things and He (Spirit) leads you here He wants you to be. It's a process and a person has to be willing to listen.

Spirituality thus depends upon commitment, trust in God, faith, hope, and love. Jenny acknowledges that spirituality cannot be forced upon her students, but that she can consciously provide an atmosphere to

encourage commitment leading to spirituality, to model a spiritual lifestyle, and to nurture spiritual maturity.

Prayer.

Teachers are called to help students develop the insights necessary to serve God in every area of their lives. To guide students in the truth and to mold them spiritually, teachers must also be spiritually guided in perspective and purpose. To accomplish this, Jenny turns to prayer both for herself and her students.

I think prayer is everything. If we don't ask for God's guidance we probably won't feel His hand and probably won't be led to do the things that we should do. It's very important to pray for our students and pray for God's guidance on what we do.

I always pray while I'm eating and think about the kids...I'm left to my own thoughts. I pray for the kids, their needs, thank God for them and ask for patience for them, understanding and wisdom for the kids and I.

You pray for their friendships and their homes...

The need for prayer often stems from concerns or problems that students and teacher share with one another. Prior to prayer, time is spent discussing the concern and deciding how the teacher and students might best serve or minister to the people in need. During my visit to Jenny's classroom I observed students taking turns bringing prayer concerns to the class and leading in prayer for those items.

Modeling Faith in the Classroom.

As a teacher, Jenny's personal growth and commitment is the basis for her teaching students how to walk in God's ways. For Jenny, modeling a spiritual way of life is effective only if we are committed to it ourselves in our personal life and if we model this in our dealings with our students.

It is the focus of my life...the first thing in a Christian's life, and especially a Christian teacher's life, should be to try to mirror the love of God and the ways of God to their students...their fellow teachers, parents and community at large.

In helping the students to develop the spiritual aspect of their lives Jenny uses class devotions to teach and challenge her students. This enables Jenny to give her students the opportunity to grow spiritually within a life experiences framework.

As a teacher I start the day off with devotions. I have a children's devotional book that each child has and we go through a passage (scriptural) doing the three keys; what's this passage about, what is it saying to me, and how can I live so that I can show that I've understood this passage.

We talk about what our devotion is and put it down to a practical realistic thing in and outside of our classroom.

By making her devotions relevant Jenny makes Christian education an affair of the heart as well as the mind. She actively and intentionally engages her students in discussions about real issues.

In our health curriculum, we did a whole unit on decision-making--the pros and cons, what if this, what if that...but doing that exercise isn't going to teach them that

(decision-making). They have to have the opportunity and the experiences and that has to be a part of their daily routine.

Jenny acknowledges the need for a biblical studies program in the development of her students' spiritual growth. Students must know how God has revealed Himself in scripture and what guidelines He has provided for life. She helps children to read and interpret scriptures in a meaningful way, and to apply the message in their personal lives, in their relationship with others, in dealing with issues, and in the life in the community.

I think if we can show them that by reading the Bible, by spending time with God in prayer, we will become closer to God and more in harmony with God and then we are more likely to do His will and live according to His plan. If we live in harmony with God we will stay closer to God and wind up on the path God wants us to be on...

Jenny hopes that developing the spirituality of the student will enable the students to grow in their understanding of God's will for their lives and to see the world through the eyes of Christ.

I hope to develop their minds and give them a Christ-centered outlook on the world...I want them to see through the eyes of a Christian. Through the eyes of Jesus...through His eyes. Hopefully we will see through the eyes of giving, giving of myself for what God wants me to do.

According to Jenny, a thoroughly Christ-centered outlook and mindset cannot help but bring about a change in peoples' lifestyles. As people draw closer to Christ in their understanding:

...it becomes the focal point of our lives and therefore is naturally expressed through our actions and lives...they will try to live their lives in a Christian way.

Building a Community of Faith in the Classroom.

Jenny believes that loving and faithful relationships are a prerequisite for meaningful learning. Children need to feel accepted and be trusted. They need to know that the people around them care for them, give them meaningful responsibilities, and at the same time hold them accountable for their actions. They need to sense that they are part of a community where people have pledged themselves to each other as they work towards a common goal.

God is guiding our hands and we are all working together...it is a cooperative effort...and constant communication with the parents, teachers, and others who are all working towards the same goal. In the community would be different teachers, Calvinette counselors, Sunday School teachers, parents, aunts, uncles, all working together to mold this child.

I have incorporated community into my classroom...not just working with the child but with the whole family. The parents come in and help children and they become actively involved in the children's education. You can feel God's presence in the room and it is a real communal effort.

In building her classroom community Jenny acknowledges the broader picture of community as a whole. She is not only preparing her students to live as a cohesive group, but to recognize their position within a worldwide community as well.

I see my classroom as being a community within the school community and I think the students feel that also. And I see our school as part of the Christian community also as being an extension of the home and being tied to various church communities. In that way I see it as a community triangle of home, church and school. Also, we a part of the town community because we are living here. When we talk about community, we are part of a lot of different kinds of communities.

Jenny molds this meaning of community through the use of prayer boards, staff/student devotions, cross-grade praise singing, and discussions in class and among staff to share individual and group joys and concerns. She plans academic and social activities such as Crazy Hair Days, Backwards Days, Bake Sales, and Cross-Grade Challenges with her students that encourage them to interact, communicate, and cooperate in a variety of settings. Through these events, her students get to know each other better and learn to work as a cohesive group.

It is very important that we do things for the right reason. I want my students to do it because we are part of the family of God and we should be willing to serve one another. I will focus in and discuss how this is Christian service and then we talk about it as a class and challenge one another to get involved in the community. The result has been that many times the students have participated in a Walk for Life or helped out in the community.

As Jenny sees it, the more we know each other, the more we can accept each other and recognize each other's strengths and needs.

Every child has their strengths and weaknesses...it's important to help each child to discover their strengths and

deal with their weaknesses. It's important to try and impress to the group that we all have different gifts and God has blessed us all in different ways. Also I really hope to develop a sense of community that we can work together, learning to cooperate and learning to compromise, learning to be accepting and reason together.

Jenny feels that molding community is important because God created people to have relationships with others, and as a result people share common understandings and beliefs. People are interdependent and need each other. We have opportunity to enrich or to bruise each other's lives.

Jenny understands that people like each other when they have a personal affinity, when their character traits appeal to each other. Since classes are not assembled based upon affinity, not all students will be friends with each other. Jenny recognizes this reality and admits that even as a teacher she is not immune to liking or disliking certain students in her classroom. However, that fact may not stand in the way of her class working together to establish a respectful and supportive learning community.

Some of those children are going to be friends and some are going to be people that they don't have too much feeling for one way or the other. At that time it is important to model and teach that you still must treat them with respect. You can't legislate love but you can legislate being respectful and decent to people. Just because I'm a Christian teacher does not mean I meet success everywhere. I think if we are honest we still have our weaknesses and it is a part of us that

we need help with. As a teacher it's important to remember that I make mistakes too.

Jenny wants her students to become more discerning and responsive.

In addition to nurturing students to think clearly, decide responsibly, and act wisely, schools must also help students understand that functioning as dependable and trustworthy individuals involves being constructive community members.

I think the area of service is where we are lacking, that's one way we can improve. Serving must not only be taught...students need to practice it outside the school in the community and in the church. We have to be visible in the community and seen serving in the community. We have to instill in the students a responsibility towards serving...and what we can do to help people.

Jenny understands and accepts that a classroom will never function as a perfect community. Sin is a part of human reality and she needs to accept that fact. As community within the classroom is disrupted by sinful activity she needs to confront those responsible with the need to repent and to seek to heal the brokenness that may have resulted. To accomplish this goal Jenny works at providing a secure, loving environment within which honest interchange is possible.

If we are feeling bad, we want to share that with someone. We want to at least get the feeling that someone cares how we are feeling and that someone understands. I think it is really important that the child knows you genuinely care for them because then the child is going to be much more responsive and much more open to you if they know you are

accepting of them. When I feel that someone has violated our classroom rules we will talk about it, why it was wrong, how it made the child (class) feel, so that they get the full impact of what they did.

Members of a community will often have doubts or will express beliefs that may be contrary to biblical teachings. When this happens Jenny takes on the role of counselor, often helping her students to reassess their views and behaviour by asking guided, probing questions.

I have to be non-judgmental and just try to work with the children where they're at and try to help them to come along. You try to show Christ-like qualities of compassion, kindness, and really try to show the child that you are not upset with him or her or angry at them. It is the mood or actions that you are dealing with and that you are trying to teach that child.

Jenny recognizes the value of sharing her life experiences with her students as a means to connect and empathize with them. This action develops a sense of community sharing and trust.

I think it helps to develop a sense of community if you share with the students the things that you and your family have done. Being willing to share your successes and mistakes with the students helps them to learn and appreciate you more as a person which in turn creates community--that you are willing to share with them--we share each other's lives.

For Jenny, a classroom community that is ideal is one that promotes and nurtures a sense of belonging. It has a safe, secure, accepting, and mutually supportive atmosphere. Differences in students' abilities and

interests do not lead to competition or alienation but are accepted and encouraged by the group. Students and teachers practice servanthood skills. They listen, forgive, support, and share with each other. They have an abundant opportunity to exhibit the Fruit of the Spirit. Every member of the classroom is part of every other member with all sharing the failures and the joys of one another. Above all, students and teachers share their gifts so that others may be blessed.

Many times in the classroom you will have this feeling, this atmosphere that we are all in this together, we are all working together, and that is when you feel the Christian community, everybody has the same goal in mind and we are all working hard at it...everybody all on the same track and working together.

Summary

Of great importance to Jenny throughout her teaching experience is the belief that God is central to curriculum content and all of life. Jenny believes that not only is the Bible relevant for a developing spiritual life, but for all of life including the education of children. She contends that we can only know the world and our role in the world through God. She maintains that faith and learning can and must be integrated. She teaches students that subject matter is part of God's creation. Her model of learning recognizes the complexity of each individual and celebrates their uniqueness.

In seeing herself as a molder or sculptor Jenny believes the students are entrusted to her to guide and mentor along their journey to responsive discipleship in God's kingdom. She recognizes and devotes her life and abilities to shaping the students' lives. Also, she readily acknowledges the role of the Christian community in helping to mold her students, working together to develop within each child a Christ-centered outlook that will result in a responsive, discerning Christian mind.

In seeking to mold the students' spirituality Jenny strives to provide opportunities for the students to put into practice their walk of faith. She sees her classroom as a training ground to develop the students' God-given gifts to serve both God and humankind. Focusing not just on the intellect, Jenny hopes to make the students' education an affair of the heart, mirroring God's love.

CHAPTER FIVE

COMPARISON OF THE FINDINGS WITH C.S.I. POLICIES

Introduction

This chapter is organized into three sections. The first section provides a summary of the philosophy of Christian Education as it is outlined in the Christian Schools International expectations for teachers. The second section compares the lived experience of Jenny with CSI policies. The last section examines Christian professional competence and vision.

Bylaws and Expectations

Christian Schools International (CSI, 1995) is a community of Christian day schools that share a Christian perspective. Its members are located primarily throughout North America and are organized geographically into 13 districts. The mission of CSI is to advance Christian education and to support schools in their task of teaching students to know God and His world and to glorify Him through obedient service.

Bylaw II (CSI, 1995) states that the basis of CSI is the acknowledgment of the scriptures of the Old and New Testaments as the infallible Word of God. (See appendix C.)

While the principles contained within appendix C state the basis for Christian education in general and need to be understood as foundational to the purpose of education, the following responsibilities are directed towards teacher expectations.

Expectations for Teachers

Teachers shall strive to carry out the following responsibilities in a manner satisfactory to the Board.

1. Demonstrate love for God.

(a) Practice daily devotions of prayer and reading of the Bible. (b) Give Christian service to others both within and outside the school. (c) Model biblical faithfulness and an exemplary Christian walk in speech and acts, within and outside the school. (d) Submit to authority out of obedience to Christ.

2. Demonstrate love for students.

(a) Treat each child as uniquely gifted by God for the purpose of serving others. (b) Show through actions that each child is made to reflect God himself. (c) Discipline all students fairly and firmly out of love for them. (d) Encourage all students persistently. (e) Guide students in helping others learn. (f) Evaluate students' learning with announced criteria, fairly applied.

3. Demonstrate Christian professional competence and vision.

(a) Show a strong knowledge of learning theory, curriculum design and subject areas. (b) Construct and/or use courses, units and lessons to integrate faith and knowledge consistent with the theological/biblical basis for the Society. (c) Select materials that specifically carry out the goals derived from the school's mission statement. (d) Use evaluation instruments that match the school's goals and specific objectives. (e) Pursue further learning to grow professionally. (f) Encourage all students to develop a discerning Christian mind and vision for life and learning.

4. Build Christian community within and outside the school.

(a) Give help to fellow teachers and support staff, willingly accepting a proportionate share of supervision and committee responsibilities. (b) Use opportunities within and beyond the classroom to nurture students in their relationships to God and others, by teaching and modeling a faithful biblical perspective. (c) Provide a classroom atmosphere that is persistently inviting and fosters learning as well as Christian community. (d) Be faithful in prayer for the school, its students, its administrators, its staff, its parents, its board and the community. (e) Follow school policy, board and administrative direction.

According to CSI, the function of education is to systematically lead, direct, foster, and train the child to develop and cultivate his body, mind, heart, personality, and behaviour for his/her tasks in life. The methods and

principles of education are influenced by the knowledge of who we are and the purpose and cause of our existence. But that knowledge cannot be acquired through science or philosophy; it can only be known by faith. For if one believes that we exist purely by chance as a result of some inexplicable process of evolution, then one's theories, philosophies, methodologies, and activities will be built by oneself, upon oneself, around oneself, with no other foundation than that. On the other hand, Christians believe that they were created by God for the purpose of being His servant in creation. Since Christians begin with that foundation, they are to construct all their theories, philosophies, methodologies, and activities beneath the sovereignty of God. The Christian's purpose for education is therefore to nurture the child to glorify, worship, and serve the sovereign Creator.

A Comparison of Philosophy and Lived Experience

In comparing Jenny's lived experience with the stated philosophy of Christian education and its purposes I will discuss her practice in light of the four themes identified in CSI's expectations of teachers, namely:

1. Demonstrating love for God;
2. Demonstrating love for students;
3. Demonstrating Christian professional competence and vision; and,
4. Building Christian community within and outside the school.

Demonstrating Love for God

Peck (1978) defines love as the will to extend one's self for the purpose of nurturing one's own or another's spiritual growth. He goes on to say that when we love someone our love becomes demonstrable or real only through our exertion--through the fact that for that someone we take an extra step or walk an extra mile. Love is not effortless. On the contrary, love is effortful (p.83).

CSI policy acknowledges that the teacher cannot impart to students a desire to love God if the teacher does not share in that love and demonstrate love for God in their everyday lives. Jenny fulfills this expectation of teachers and demonstrates her love for God in three ways: responsive love, devotional love, and prayerful love.

Responsive Love.

Jenny sees her teaching as a response to God's love for her. She feels called to teach, chosen by God to help mold the students and fulfill her role as an educator in their lives. By doing so Jenny lives in humble obedience to God's authority and will for her life and models biblical faithfulness as stated in CSI policy. To this end she spends much time in prayer for herself, her students, their needs, and how she can best accommodate them within her classroom.

Devotional Love.

CSI expects its teachers to be people who spend consistent time in the study of God's word, growing in their understanding of it, applying it to their lives, and allowing it to shape their lives. In meeting this expectation, each morning she begins with a time of devotions and Bible reading. It is something Jenny feels compelled to start her day with. This time of devotion and prayer becomes a means by which she draws close to God and seeks His Will for her life. It is a time of strengthening, growth and encouragement for Jenny for the day ahead. For Jenny, it is not enough to study the Word of God in order to meet the needs of others. She reads God's Word to minister to her own spiritual requirements.

Prayerful Love.

Jenny finds prayer to be an important part of starting each day. CSI requires teachers to be faithful in prayer for the students, school, administrators, staff, parents, and community. Jenny begins her day by bringing the needs of her community to God. She believes in praying "in, through, and around" everything. She does not view the purpose of prayer as a means to argue with God and persuade Him to move things her way, but as an exercise in which she is enabled by God's Spirit to move in God's way. For Jenny, prayer is more than petitions and praise. Prayer is what human beings were made for--communion with God.

Demonstrating Love for Students

Jenny shares the position taken by CSI that views children as being created in the image of God. As image bearers the students stand in relationship to God and reveal God as they live lives of loving service to Him and their neighbours.

In fulfilling CSI expectations, Jenny demonstrates love for the students by recognizing her students as unique, fostering love in their relationships, knowing each of her students, and developing foundational attitudes of love with them.

Students as Unique.

CSI requires that children be recognized as unique and treated as being uniquely gifted by God for the purpose of serving others. As unique individuals, Jenny's students are recognized as having individual gifts and talents that are unwrapped and developed over time in the classroom setting in order that each child may glorify God. Therefore, diverse plans are made for learning activities that encourage students to respond in unique ways thus making the learning a personal occasion.

Love in Relationships.

While CSI expects its teachers to recognize the uniqueness of each individual student it also requires its teachers to nurture the students in relationship to one another. Jenny acknowledges that God created her

students to be in relationship with others. While each student is unique, their uniqueness is not an end to itself, it is a means to enrich the community where God has placed them. The classroom becomes a place where students learn to bear each other's burdens and share each other's joys, while working together for the common good fulfilling CSI's goal of having students help one another learn.

In Jenny's class the building of relationships is a key factor. Large amounts of time are spent nurturing these relationships and the end results are mutually responsive relationships. Students feel recognized by those they recognize, appreciated by those they appreciate, cared about by those whose caring matters to them, understood by those whose understanding of them is important and allied to those who stand with them. There is a living bond between them. In facilitating these relationships Jenny is able to create a classroom environment that consistently invites and fosters CSI's concept of Christian community.

Knowing the Student.

Jenny fulfills the expectation of CSI policy that teachers understand that any relationship that seeks to enable a student to feel secure and risk new learning combines a warm acceptance of the person with the expectation of reaching their potential. Jenny emphasizes the need to know students on a relational level. Not simply knowing their names, phone

numbers and attitudes but a knowing that comes from a nurturing relationship. Jenny uses five main attributes in getting to know her students. In using these attributes Jenny models to her students exemplary Christian conduct in speech and action. The first attribute that Jenny uses is warmth. Each student is held close to her heart experiencing both compassion and pleasure. She is genuine in her love for her students and her interests in her students extend beyond the classroom.

The second attribute that Jenny characterizes in her relationships is acceptance. Recognizing the uniqueness of each student, Jenny accepts each individual at the level where he or she is at, knowing that each student is shaped by forces that impact the experiences and knowledge that the student will bring to school.

The third attribute is empathy. Unlike sympathy, which focuses on feeling sorry for a person in a particular situation, empathy focuses on feeling “with” another person. Jenny seeks to be attuned to how the students feel, how it feels to be them, “to get into their shoes” so that they can be more easily understood. For Jenny there is nothing more important to the student than to have another person pay close attention to what they have to say, to consider him/her important or interesting enough to want to understand their special feelings and meanings.

The fourth attribute is caring-concern. For Jenny, caring is love in its giving, protective, nurturant aspects. It is concern for the well-being of the student.

The final attribute in relationship building is genuineness. For Jenny, to be genuine is to be free of pretension. It results in a sense of wholeness, of being put together, of knowing who and what one is, and of what one's guiding values are. In sharing her faith in the classroom Jenny is able to fully disclose her love for God and help the students verbalize their love as well. In sharing her faith journey Jenny nurtures the students in their relationship to God.

Love as Foundational.

Jenny identifies love in the classroom as the foundational attitude for all relationships. She feels that love within the school and the classroom is a vital part of preventative or instructional discipline. Citing 1 Corinthians 13, (see appendix D) Jenny feels that without love anything else offered to students will be empty and meaningless. In Jenny's classroom, the experience of love-in-practice is the heart and soul or essence of biblical discipline and biblical nurturing. In establishing this type of loving feeling in the classroom Jenny carries out the directive of CSI to discipline all students fairly and firmly out of love for them. The development of

communal love within the classroom leads to mutual acceptance, encouragement, cooperation and correction, as required, amongst students.

Loving Discipline

Maintaining good discipline has been, and probably always will be, a major concern of educators. Nurturing and disciplining students is, perhaps, the most difficult and complex task a teacher faces. For Jenny, the key aspect to biblical discipline in her classroom is understanding the nature of the student and acting on that knowledge. Understanding the student is necessary for the instructing, admonishing and correcting of the student. Then the nurturing process can become more personally meaningful to the student and more enjoyable for the teacher. Jenny, exemplifying the CSI by-laws, (see appendix C) holds that there are four basic truths about the student that must be recognized, accepted, and acted upon in order to deal effectively with the student in a manner which finds harmony with her beliefs. They are as follows.

1. The student is created by God.
2. The student is an image-bearer.
3. The student is a sinner.
4. The student can be a new creature in Christ.

For Jenny, understanding who and what the student is has implications for the manner in which she is to carry out her discipline.

Two Avenues of Discipline.

There are two primary avenues of discipline that occur within Jenny's classroom; discipline that is caught and discipline that is taught. In "catching discipline," Jenny understands that students are always learning and much of what they learn is unplanned or incidental learning. This incidental learning emerges through students' witnessing and experiencing the relationships and atmosphere within the school and classroom. Believing this to be true, Jenny acknowledges the importance of relationships and atmosphere in nurturing and disciplining students, and she focuses on four key elements being present in her classroom to ensure that discipline is caught. They are joy, love, respect and security.

Students who do not have a clear self-image or who refuse to accept themselves as they are, often lack joy and become unhappy and unproductive. Jenny believes that students need to know that they are created by God, in His image and are loved by God. In leading students toward a clearer understanding of themselves before God, teachers will help students acknowledge who they are before God and feel good about it.

Freedom and Accountability.

Jenny recognizes the social and individual contexts and needs of her students. She allows room for students to function as individuals, with a degree of freedom to choose among certain alternatives, but also as being

responsible and accountable to others and God for their choices. In doing so Jenny recognizes both the uniqueness of the individual and the importance of the broader community that exists in the classroom, school, and beyond as identified by CSI. According to Jenny, the individual student should be allowed to enjoy some individual time and have some personal space. Respect is to be shown to students and by students as they are listened to and as they seek resolutions to their problems and conflicts. The concept of respect is a vital part of preventative discipline and is more often caught than taught.

Functioning within structure is a normal condition. Jenny supports and practices the CSI expectation of providing a classroom atmosphere that is persistently inviting and fosters learning and Christian community. She believes that God created a world that operates within certain laws and norms. She feels the same is true of students. They have been created to function within a certain framework or structure. The components of that structure are laws, rules, or guidelines that are necessary for students to find freedom in the fullest sense of the word.

In Jenny's class, students appear to have little problem with this concept because they often voluntarily produce their own structure within which they find the freedom to operate. In developing guidelines the focus begins with attitudes and only secondly on behaviours. An acceptable

attitude must be the motivating force behind behaviour or the behaviour is deemed unacceptable.

In doing so, Jenny finds that students gain a sense of security by functioning within a framework of guidelines and a structure of rules. In Jenny's classroom, rules are to be few, broad, positive, justifiable and fair.

In her classroom there is also discipline that is taught. According to Jenny, the Bible serves as both a revelation of God and as a book of directives on how to live the Christian life. Jenny believes that if a person can accept the directives in God's Word for life then the implications for formal instruction of students are profound. Bible-based, Christ-centered instruction becomes the norm in her teaching. Each subject in the classroom, as a reflection of created reality, takes on religious significance.

Consistent with this biblical basis for society, Jenny accomplishes the CSI directive to integrate faith and knowledge with teaching units.

This instruction that must be taught is to be organized, planned, and executed in a formal setting and manner. Instructional approaches must harmoniously match both the developmental level of the student and the nature of reality.

The curriculum within such a classroom must be authentic, reflecting the truth of God. In understanding these truths the student can then begin to internalize the concepts and develop a personal self-discipline or as CSI

describes it, a discerning Christian mind and vision for life and learning. The distinctiveness found within Jenny's approach is not the absence of problems but the manner in which they are resolved. In keeping with CSI directives to use opportunities to nurture students in their relationship to God and others, behaviour problems are often seen as opportunities for meaningful learning.

Evaluation

As required in all schools and classrooms, Jenny carries on the task of evaluating her students. She acknowledges that assessment and evaluation are a part of life in which we are all involved. Evaluation is frequent, important and legitimate in the context of Jenny's classroom. Myriads of positive and negative reinforcement activities take place within the classroom every day. It may be a grade entered for a homework activity, a test, quiz, or project. It may also be applauding a child for an accurate verbal answer or a friendly pat on the shoulder with a reassuring smile. Such approaches are endorsed by CSI in encouraging students and celebrating their uniqueness.

A key evaluation procedure used in Jenny's classroom is the report card. However, Jenny finds the report card to be subjective, ill-conceived, and lacking clear reference points. Consequently, it does not adequately serve its intended purpose. Jenny feels the solution to this problem is not

found in tinkering with the report card but in employing biblical norms for evaluation. This is consistent with CSI's requirement that teachers use evaluation instruments that match the school's goals and objectives.

The grading problem, as Jenny sees it, is the limitation of grades, their unreliability to assess, and their ambiguity of purpose for which they are being used. Unfortunately, test results have become a plumb line by which success or failure is measured in the classroom.

In developing a biblical basis for evaluation Jenny turns to the story of the Ten Talents in the bible. Three servants were each given gifts to care for while the master was away. Upon his return, the master talks to the three servants to find out what has become of the talents. His request for accountability is an evaluation. It is important to note what does not happen in this evaluation. The servants' evaluation is not comparative and the response from the master to each servant is not influenced by the performance level of the other servants. Rather, the key here, as Jenny points out is a concern with how well each of the servants has used the talents that he had been given. It is on this point that Jenny's evaluation technique reflects CSI's policy of applying evaluation fairly and recognizing the uniqueness and gifts of each student. Jenny believes that a good evaluation strategy begins by acknowledging the gifts or talents that each student has been given, by considering the task that has been set

before the students, and concluding with an evaluation on how well each student has used their given talents or gifts to carry out the task. Whether one student finishes with a more substantial return than another is not of primary importance. The key is how well each student has used his/her unique abilities. In using this method of evaluation Jenny acknowledges the uniqueness, gifts, and individuality of each student while matching her evaluation process to reflect school goals, objectives, and CSI policy.

For Jenny, evaluation is a means to an end, not the end itself. She desires that as a result of student evaluations the students will be encouraged to devote time and energy into better utilizing their God-given gifts to the glory of God.

While Jenny supports both the summative and formative nature of evaluating she feels strongly that evaluation should also be interactive. There are three parties intimately concerned with classroom assessment: the student, the parent, and the teacher. Jenny ensures that students and parents are aware of her evaluation and homework policies and that they have input into the development of each. The students are encouraged to develop their self-evaluation skills as these skills will serve them in their future endeavours outside the classroom. In implementing this process Jenny ensures that students' learning is evaluated with announced criteria, fairly applied to each student as stipulated by CSI.

Parents

In involving parents, Jenny is consistent with CSI policy to build community and involve the parents in the learning and nurturing of their children. Parent-teacher conferences are an important part of the evaluation process because it gives meaning to the grades on the report card. Jenny also promotes the attendance of the student during the teacher/parent conference since the evaluation process and conference is about the student.

For Jenny, the biblical basis of evaluation will help her students, their families, and society to value the worth of a job well done and to recognize the biblical pattern of assessing how well each student has used the talents or gifts God has given to him or her as individuals. From this evaluative pattern comes insight and the challenge to use their God-given abilities in an appropriate manner. CSI refers to this as the giving of service to those both within and outside the school.

Demonstrating Christian Professional Competence and Vision

In keeping with CSI's requirement that teachers show a strong knowledge of learning theory, curriculum design, and subject mastery, Jenny recognizes the various orientations to curriculum and the basis for their existence. Jenny, however, approaches her curriculum from a biblical orientation. This allows Jenny to integrate faith and point to God as the creator and center of all knowledge. In working from this orientation,

Jenny instructs students so that they are able to gain knowledge through God revealing Himself in creation, in His Word, in Jesus Christ, and through His Spirit. That makes the knowledge taught in school relational and personal, not just objective and factual.

A Model for Teaching and Learning

In meeting the goals of CSI to construct courses or units that integrate faith and knowledge as well as to help students develop discerning minds, Jenny utilizes a model advocated by Van Brummelen (1994) for teaching and learning that accommodates the uniqueness of each child and their particular learning style. This model reflects CSI's policy to provide a balanced curriculum that acknowledges that her students are responsible and responsive images of God. The guiding principle for justifying curriculum decisions is whether the curriculum enhances the possibility of students becoming responsible, responsive disciples of Jesus Christ. The following three main questions and their sub-questions are used by Jenny to form the biblical basis for justifying curriculum decisions.

1. How does the curriculum enhance understandings needed for exercising responsive discipleship?
 - (a) Does it contribute to an understanding of some aspect of a Christian worldview, especially the importance of biblical shalom?
 - (b) Does it help students to consider biblically-based values, and encourage them to form dispositions and commitments based on such values?
 - (c) Does it help familiarize students with our Christian as well as our Western cultural heritage? (Van Brummelen, 1994, p. 113)

In addressing these questions Jenny fulfills CSI policy to guide children in helping them to learn about the world in which they live, understand it, and develop a Christian response to it.

2. How is the curriculum relevant for students?

- (a) Does it connect with and expand students' previous backgrounds, experiences, and knowledge?**
- (b) Does it address meaningful and significant current issues in the world, and encourage response in personal ways?**
- (c) Does it foster students seeing and investigating interrelations with different subject disciplines where this contributes to understanding issues and their applications? (Van Brummelen, 1994, p. 113)**

Jenny considers the above questions to reflect CSI's policy that materials are chosen to carry out the goals derived from the school's mission statement. As well these questions serve to fulfill CSI's policy of encouraging students to develop Christian minds and a vision for life and learning.

3. How does the curriculum meet students' pedagogical needs?

- (a) Is it imaginative enough to maintain student interest?**
- (b) Does it provide for an active Christian response suitable to the learners' stage of development?**
- (c) Does it support diverse learning activities appropriate for diverse learning styles and other individual differences?**
- (d) Does it encourage the development of different modes of knowing? (Van Brummelen, 1994, p. 113)**

CSI policy requires that students be recognized as individuals who are uniquely gifted by God for the purpose of serving others. Jenny acknowledges their uniqueness by seeking to stimulate and tap into students' unique interests and learning styles with the goal of enabling the

students to respond to the curriculum with a developing Christian worldview.

In utilizing this model for teaching and learning Jenny encourages her students to develop a discerning Christian mind and vision for life and learning as identified by CSI.

Building Christian Community Within and Outside the School

CSI policy requires that teachers use opportunities within and beyond the classroom to nurture students in their relationships with others. Jenny believes that God has provided for all people a gift or gifts that He wants them to develop and use for the benefit of community and so that He is honoured. Jenny emphasizes that these gifts are God-given. She believes that a person's environment has some influence on how the gifts are allowed to develop and that the school in general and her classroom in particular must provide opportunities for students to explore and exercise these gifts. In doing so Jenny fulfills the CSI requirement to provide a classroom atmosphere that is consistently inviting and fosters learning as well as Christian community.

In recognizing the importance of community Jenny states that God created people to be in community and that the gifts God has given people are to be used in service of God and others in the community. Therefore,

Jenny's classroom becomes a community in which the teacher and students can use their gifts for the benefit of all.

In some schools of the past, compliance and uniformity were the order of the day while exceptions and uniqueness were considered problems. A "rose is a rose is a rose" may be true in poetry but according to Jenny, in God's world, every flower and every child is unique. M. Scott Peck (1987) suggests that true community does not try to obliterate diversity but seeks to balance the needs of the individual within the context of community (pp. 66-76). Jenny does not see each person's uniqueness as an end in itself. Rather, it is a means to enrich the communities in which God has placed us. Recognizing this diversity, Jenny plans diverse learning activities that encourage students' to respond in unique ways. Learning becomes personal and is rooted in the students' uniqueness. By recognizing the various ways in which students come to understand the material being taught, their uniqueness as individuals and learners is incorporated into the classroom.

Jenny intentionally strives to guide students in helping others to learn as indicated in CSI expectations by molding a community in her classroom where children can learn to discover, develop, and use their abilities in relation to one another. Consequently, students experience the joys and difficulties of working together. Classroom activities such as

devotions, prayer, cooperative learning, and interacting contribute to building community within Jenny's classroom.

The classroom operates as a workshop for the students. Jenny provides the basic framework and students, with the teacher's guidance, develop the operational procedures and expectations for the class. In doing this, Jenny creates a classroom community of ownership where student contributions are appreciated and recognized.

Jenny acknowledges that a classroom can never function as a perfect community. She acknowledges the presence of sin and that she needs to deal with that reality. In accordance with CSI expectations this allows Jenny to use these opportunities to nurture students in their relationship with God and others, by teaching and modeling a biblical perspective. When students weaken community through word or deed, she confronts them with the need to repent and to seek to heal the resulting brokenness. It is through times such as these that students are able to nurture relationships with one another and practice a biblical perspective of building the community of believers.

Summary

Both Jenny and C.S.I. share a common vision to teach students to know God in a very personal way and to respond to God's call on their

lives by glorifying Him through responsive discipleship and obedient service.

Jenny, in fulfilling CSI policy, demonstrates her love for God on both a personal and professional level. Beyond a simple affirmation with words, Jenny responds to God's love for her by spending time in personal devotions, praying, interceding, and growing in her relationship with God.

In demonstrating love for students, both Jenny and CSI policy recognize the uniqueness of students as image-bearers, gifted by God and entrusted to Jenny to nurture. Jenny seeks to develop nurturing relationships with her students that encourage trust, respect, acceptance, empathy, care, and concern for one another. Love is foundational in her relationships with students whether it is during times of instruction, discipline or evaluation.

Jenny's professional competence and vision in developing her curriculum satisfies CSI policy. She chooses to use a model that approaches her curriculum from a biblical orientation. Her model allows her to plan learning activities that challenge her students to respond as responsible and responsive Christians.

Both Jenny and CSI policy value the building of a community of caring and concern where students are able to experience the peace of God. She builds a classroom community that learns to accept one another and use

their abilities and gifts to serve one another. She provides opportunities for her class to work together to celebrate successes and share in defeats. In doing so she provides students with the opportunity to nurture relationships and build community amongst the Christian family of believers.

CHAPTER SIX

CONCLUSION

Revisiting the Question

The major purpose of this study was to examine the lived experiences of a Christian teacher and to compare this experience with the philosophies and policies of Christian Schools International.

CSI has four main expectations for its teachers. They are to demonstrate love for God, demonstrate love for students, demonstrate Christian professional competence and vision, and, build Christian community within and outside of the school.

My findings reveal that for Jenny, and as recorded in CSI policy, love is at the heart of what it means to be a Christian teacher. It is love for God and a desire to carry out His will in the lives of students that appeared to motivate Jenny. Jenny is motivated by love. In her personal life she seeks to nurture her relationship to God, and to grow closer to Him through prayer, devotions and worship. Her life finds meaning in fulfilling the task to which God has called her.

To be a Christian teacher one must love his/her students. Jenny loves her students. For Jenny and as reflected in CSI policy, children are God's creation, made in His image, and entrusted to her as gifts. She regards them as holy unto the Lord and seeks to expand their horizons,

deepen their insights, improve their abilities and guide them along the path that leads to wisdom and responsive discipleship. Refusing to recognize the students as bundles of disconnected parts, she views students as unified creatures before God, completely whole image-bearers of God, and helps them to develop as complete persons whose lives are marked by love for the Lord and a desire to do His will.

In teaching Christianly, Jenny is concerned with proper methods of instruction, as is the CSI organization. These methods are devised to ensure that the curriculum material is covered and tests are passed. Jenny's goal in developing curriculum is to provide an opportunity for students to respond to God. Her curriculum seeks to display God's dynamic design for the universe, to emphasize the divinely-ordained interrelatedness of creation, and to develop wise and responsible disciples of Christ. In doing so Jenny leads her students deeper into God's wonderful creation, helps them to understand and marvel at its unity, diversity, and coherence, and teaches them to follow Christ.

In taking this approach Jenny creates a learning climate that refuses to be satisfied with providing only factual knowledge and marketable skills. Rather, Jenny seeks to transform all activities and studies into an expression of biblical wisdom, training the students to walk as disciples of Jesus Christ.

Through instruction, Jenny helps her students learn how to serve God in every way. Thus, as a Christian teacher, despite her shortcomings and failings, she assumes the serious responsibility of Christian education, dedicating herself with joy and sometimes with pain, to walk in fellowship with God, with her colleagues, and with the young people she instructs in the ways of the Lord.

In examining Jenny's lived experience and comparing it with the philosophies and policies of Christian Schools International it becomes apparent that she certainly reflects the thinking and goals of CSI. However, the question that arises is whether Jenny complies with or obeys CSI policy because she is following their policies, or does Jenny hold strong Christian principles that happen to be reflected in CSI policy?

Jenny believes that teaching is much more than just meeting the contractual obligations between employer and employee. Jenny believes that Christian education and Christian discipleship is a way of life. Jenny grew up in a home that strongly believed in the importance of Christian education, and she recognizes how her life was shaped and molded by her parents and mentors as she developed her personal relationship with Jesus Christ. Jenny profoundly appreciates the eternal dimensions of her work for she not only touches the minds of the students but also their hearts and souls. According to Jenny, teaching is her calling. She recognizes herself

as an instrument of God to be used in the development of her students.

Certainly Jenny's strong Christian principles impact her teaching, as she believes that people need to see what they ought to be. When Jenny teaches others it is important for her to "be what I teach or ask others to do." Jenny's statement reflects the crucial truth of modeling: we teach what we know, but we reproduce what we are. To teach others to do right is wonderful but to do right is even more wonderful! It may be a harder way to teach, but it's a much easier way to learn. So, according to Jenny, the most valuable gift we can give to our children is the example of a clear, consistent, disciplined approach to knowing, loving and serving God.

I believe that Jenny holds Christian principles that are reflected in CSI policy. While Jenny does not consciously and explicitly obey CSI policy, she fulfills all the requirements of CSI policy because she is a committed Christian. As teachers and parents, we recognize the importance and impact of living what we believe. If what we say in any given circumstance is different from what we do, our children will choose to imitate what we do every time.

Personal Reflections and Recommendations

This has been an examination of one person's lived experience as a Christian teacher. Throughout the process it has been a challenge to remain impartial and not allow my impressions and understandings to overshadow

or influence the findings. There were times throughout the course of this study when Jenny would openly share her journey with fellow colleagues in their school staffroom. This spawned an excitement and dialogue amongst her colleagues as they shared their own lived experiences with her. On a number of occasions I was offered the opportunity to interview other staff members at the school where Jenny works. It would be interesting to take up the offer and compare their lived experiences with Jenny's and determine if there are commonalities that exist in their practice as they go about teaching Christianly.

The choice to use a qualitative approach for this study was good. In addition to the interviews carried out I was amazed at the amount of significant data I obtained through careful observation. Nothing was too trivial or unimportant to note. Details of the classroom setting, student and teacher interaction both within and outside the classroom, as well as interaction in the playground and between staff were noted. These observations allowed me to capture the natural setting in which Jenny carried out her teaching. These observations were later discussed with Jenny and served to reinforce or clarify her lived experience.

Without a doubt, this journey has challenged my thinking. It has become clear to me that you teach what you are. Often times the term, "you are what you teach", is used to describe the practice of teaching but if

you take a moment and think about it, it is not what I teach that shapes my teaching and makes me what I am, it is who I am that will shape how I teach the material. The process has allowed me to reflect on those things that I hold to be true and examine how they shape my teaching experience.

In a world in which educational fads come and go at a surprisingly rapid pace, the final word about teaching Christianly surely has not been said. While CSI has provided a philosophy and expectations for its teachers, it does not provide for them the mechanism or procedures for working them out. Therefore, schools and individual teachers may be left on their own to interpret how these expectations will be fulfilled. This study has served to provide a glimpse into the understanding and practice of teaching Christianly. More research is needed to continue to explore the nature and practice of Christian teaching. Questions such as the following need to be addressed:

1. How is a distinctively Christian curriculum developed?
2. How should the learning situation be structured to ensure that faith and content intersect?
3. How is a Christian perspective evaluated?
4. What is the role of parents in Christian education?
5. How do administrators set about selecting and or training staff to ensure that a Christian education takes place?

6. What role does a pre-teacher education program play in training teachers in preparation for service in Christian schools?

7. Finally, is there a relationship between faith development and the teaching experience of the classroom teacher?

The continuing investigation into the nature, process, and character of teaching Christianly is not an ill-timed or superfluous activity. Such explorations will require continuous reflection about the biblical philosophical perspectives that drive Christian pedagogy.

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APPENDIX A: CONSENT FORMS



July 22, 1994

Dear Board Members:

Please read the following information and if you are willing to approve this research indicate your willingness to do so by signing the consent statement located at the end of this form.

The intent of this study is to examine the nature of a Christian teacher's lived experience from his or her point of view. The teacher's participation will involve being part of conversational interviews at their convenience, and being observed in the classroom setting twice a month over the course of one (1) school year. The interviews will be about 50-70 minutes long with an opportunity for the teacher to respond. The observations will be approximately 40-60 minutes in length, and will be arranged at times suitable to the teacher. These observations will occur from the perspective of a non-participant, and will not be evaluative or intrusive upon classroom activities. The teacher will be asked to keep a reflective journal which will become part of the analysis of documents.

The data gathered will be coded and analyzed. Via interpretation, I will be looking for themes to emerge which may contribute to the understanding of a Christian teacher's lived experience. A thesis will be written which will attempt to capture the essential meaning of this experience. Quotations from transcripts, journals, documents and observations will be used to support the themes discovered.

Regarding the confidentiality of this research, your identity will be protected via an anonymous name. All other references to names will be anonymous including the school, school staff, society, and organizational names. The three members of the research thesis committee at Lakehead University will have access to all the data but no one else other than the teacher and David B. O'Dell will have access to the data provided. Once the research is complete and the thesis has received final approval from Lakehead University, all data will be destroyed. I will share the findings with the teacher in writing and in person.

Please feel free to contact me, David B. O'Dell at any time before or during the research regarding any questions or concerns you may have by calling 223-6331 (home) or 223-4550 (school).

You have the right to refuse to allow participation during the research without question. As well, the teacher involved has the right to refuse to participate or to withdraw at any time during the research in question.



July 22, 1994

The teacher will have the opportunity to reflect on and discuss his or her lived experience as a Christian teacher. The teacher will also have the opportunity to ensure that his or her perspective is captured accurately by having direct input into the meaning and interpretation of the transcripts. Your participation will help others to better understand the lived experience of the Christian teacher as she or he goes about teaching and thereby contributing to an area in education that is not addressed. As well, this study may contribute to an understanding of how the policies and philosophies of Christian education are implemented within the school and classroom setting by one teacher.

If you are willing to allow a teacher from your school to participate in this research study, given the above information, please indicate your willingness by signing the following statement.

I (please print) _____, agree to allow the subject teacher to participate in the research study entitled: A case study of the lived experience of a Christian school teacher in comparison with the philosophies of Christian Schools education. I understand and agree to the stated data collection techniques and to the amount of time involved. I also realize that I may contact the researcher at any time in order to clarify the involvement or the data collection procedures used in this research. I am assured and confident that identities will be kept confidential and that I may terminate the research at any time without jeopardy.

Administrator's Signature

Date

Researcher's Signature
(David B. O'Dell)

Date



July 22, 1994

Dear Administrator:

Please read the following information and if you are willing to approve this research indicate your willingness to do so by signing the consent statement located at the end of this form.

The intent of this study is to examine the nature of a Christian teacher's lived experience from his or her point of view. The teacher's participation will involve being part of conversational interviews at their convenience, and being observed in the classroom setting twice a month over the course of one (1) school year. The interviews will be about 50-70 minutes long with an opportunity for the teacher to respond. The observations will be approximately 40-60 minutes in length, and will be arranged at times suitable to the teacher. These observations will occur from the perspective of a non-participant, and will not be evaluative or intrusive upon classroom activities. The teacher will be asked to keep a reflective journal which will become part of the analysis of documents.

The data gathered will be coded and analyzed. Via interpretation, I will be looking for themes to emerge which may contribute to the understanding of a Christian teacher's lived experience. A thesis will be written which will attempt to capture the essential meaning of this experience. Quotations from transcripts, journals, documents and observations will be used to support the themes discovered.

Regarding the confidentiality of this research, your identity will be protected via an anonymous name. All other references to names will be anonymous including the school, school staff, society, and organizational names. The three members of the research thesis committee at Lakehead University will have access to all the data but no one else other than the teacher and David B. O'Dell will have access to the data provided. Once the research is complete and the thesis has received final approval from Lakehead University, all data will be destroyed. I will share the findings with the teacher in writing and in person.

Please feel free to contact me, David B. O'Dell at any time before or during the research regarding any questions or concerns you may have by calling 223-6331 (home) or 223-4550 (school).

You have the right to refuse to allow participation or to withdraw at any time during the research without question. As well, the teacher involved has the right to refuse to participate or to withdraw at any time during the research in question.



July 22, 1994

This research will give you an opportunity to reflect on and discuss your lived experience as a Christian teacher. You will have the opportunity to ensure that your perspective is captured accurately by having direct input into the analysis and interpretation of the transcripts. Your participation will help others to better understand the lived experience of the Christian teacher as she or he goes about teaching.

If you are interested in participating in this research study, given the above information, please indicate your willingness by signing the following statement.

I, (please print) _____, agree to participate in the research study entitled A case study of the lived experience of a Christian school teacher in comparison with the philosophies of Christian Schools education. I understand and agree to the stated data collection techniques and to the amount of time involved. I also realize that I may contact the researcher at any time in order to clarify my involvement or the data collection procedures used in this research. I am assured and confident that my identity will be kept confidential and that I may withdraw at any time without jeopardy.

Participant's Signature

Date

Researcher's Signature
(David B. O'Dell)

Date



July 22, 1994

Dear Participant:

Please read the following information and if you are willing to proceed as a participant in this research indicate your willingness to do so by signing the consent statement located at the end of this form.

The intent of this study is to examine the nature of a Christian teacher's lived experience from his or her point of view. Your participation will involve being part of conversational interviews at your convenience, and being observed in your classroom setting twice a month over the course of one (1) school year. The interviews will be about 50-70 minutes long with an opportunity for you to respond. The observations will be approximately 40-60 minutes in length and will be arranged at times suitable to you. You will be asked to keep a reflective journal which will become part of the documentation analysis.

The data gathered will be coded and analyzed. Through analysis and interpretation, themes will emerge which will seek to contribute to the understanding of a Christian teacher's lived experience. A final thesis will be written which will attempt to capture the essential meaning of this experience. Quotations from transcripts, journals, documents and observations will be used to support the themes discovered.

Regarding the confidentiality of this research, your identity will be protected via an anonymous name. All other references to names will be anonymous, including your school, society, and organizational names. The three members of the research thesis committee at Lakehead University will have access to all the data but no one else other than you and David B. O'Dell will have access to the data you provide. Once the research is complete and the thesis has received final approval from Lakehead University, all data will be destroyed. I will share the findings with you both in writing and in person.

Please feel free to contact me, David B. O'Dell at any time before or during the research regarding any questions or concerns you may have by calling 223-6331 (home) or 223-4550 (school).

You have the right to refuse to participate or to withdraw at any time during the research without question.



July 22, 1994

The teacher will have the opportunity to reflect on and discuss his or her lived experience as a Christian teacher. The teacher will also have the opportunity to ensure that his or her perspective is captured accurately by having direct input into the meaning and interpretation of the transcripts. Your participation will help others to better understand the lived experience of the Christian teacher as she or he goes about teaching and thereby contributing to an area in education that is not addressed. As well, this study may contribute to an understanding of how the policies and philosophies of Christian education are implemented within the school and classroom setting by one teacher.

If you are willing to allow a teacher from your school to participate in this research study, given the above information, please indicate your willingness by signing the following statement.

We (please print) _____,

_____ and

_____ agree to allow the

subject teacher to participate in the research study entitled: A case study of the lived experience of a Christian school teacher in comparison with the philosophies of Christian Schools education. We understand and agree to the stated data collection techniques and to the amount of time involved. We also realize that we may contact the researcher at any time in order to clarify the involvement or the data collection procedures used in this research. We are assured and confident that identities will be kept confidential and that we may terminate the research at any time without jeopardy.

Board Member Signature

Date

Board Member Signature

Date

Board Member Signature

Date

Researcher's Signature
(David B. O'Dell)

Date

APPENDIX B: ETHICS APPROVAL

RESEARCHER'S AGREEMENT FORM

RESEARCHER (S): David B. O'Dell DEPARTMENT: Education

TITLE: A case study of the lived experience of a Christian school teacher in comparison with Christian Schools International philosophy

Please indicate what information is being sent by placing an "X" in the appropriate box.

- Purpose of research.
- Process for obtaining informed consent including sample cover letters to participants. Please note specific guidelines for research on children.
- Research instrument(s) e.g., questionnaires, structured interview format, experimental procedures.
- Procedure(s) for insuring confidentiality.
- Means of discussing risks/benefits with participants.
- Process of dissemination of research results to participants.

Does this project require ethical clearance for a major granting agency?
If yes, name of the agency:
n/a

I am familiar with the current Ethical Review Guidelines of the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada and agree to comply with these guidelines in carrying out this proposed research.

David B. O'Dell July 28th 1994
Signature of Researcher Date

[Signature] 28/7/94
Signature of Supervisor (Required for Graduate Students) Date

Mary Grace Ascutt 94-08-02
Signature of Chair/Director Date

NOTE: Please submit seven (7) copies of this form along with seven (7) copies of the complete proposal to: Ethics Advisory Committee, c/o Research Office.



7 September 1994

Mr. David O'Dell
Faculty of Education
Lakehead University
THUNDER BAY, ONTARIO
P7B 5E1

Dear Mr. O'Dell:

Based on the recommendation of the Ethics Advisory Committee, I am pleased to grant ethical approval to your research project entitled: A CASE STUDY OF THE LIVED EXPERIENCE OF A CHRISTIAN SCHOOL TEACHER IN COMPARISON WITH CHRISTIAN SCHOOL INTERNATIONAL PHILOSOPHY.

Best wishes for a successful research project.

Sincerely,

ROBERT G. ROSEHART
President

/lw
cc: Dr. Fiona Blaikie, Supervisor

APPENDIX C: CSI BY-LAWS

Appendix C: CSI Bylaws

CSI affirms the following principles for Christian education:

The Bible. In the Bible, God, by His Holy Word, reveals Himself and renews human beings' understanding of God, of themselves, of others, and of the world. The Bible directs human beings in all their relationships and activities, and therefore guides His people in the education of their children.

Creation. In their education, children must come to learn that the world and human beings' calling in it can be understood only in relation to God. By His creation, restoration, and governance, He directs all things to the coming of His Kingdom and the glorification of His name.

Sin. Because human sin brought upon all people the curse of God-- alienating them from their Creator, their neighbours, and the world, distorting their views of the true meaning and purpose of life, and misdirecting human culture. Human sin also corrupts the education of children and humankind.

Jesus Christ. Through our Saviour Jesus Christ there is renewal of our educational enterprise. He is the Redeemer of, and the Light and the Way for human life in all its range and variety. Only through Him and the

work of His spirit are we guided in the truth and recommitted to our original calling.

Schools. The purpose of the Christian school is to educate children for a life of obedience to their calling in this world as image bearers of God. This calling is to know God's Word and His creation, to consecrate the whole of human life to God, to love all people and to be stewards in their God-given cultural tasks.

Parents. The primary responsibility for education rests upon parents to whom children are entrusted by God. Christian parents should accept this obligation in view of the covenantal relationship with God established with believers and their children. Parents should seek to discharge this obligation through school associations and school boards which engage the services of Christian teachers in Christian schools.

Teachers. Christian teachers, both in obedience to God and in cooperation with parents, have a unique pedagogical responsibility while educating children in school.

Pupils. Christian schools must take into account the variety of abilities, needs, and responsibilities of young persons. The endowments and calling of young persons as God's image bearers, and their defects and inadequacies as sinners, require that such learning goals and such curricula will be selected as will best prepare them to live as obedient Christians; and

that only with constant attention to such pedagogical concerns will education be truly Christian.

Community. Because God's covenant embraces not only parents and their children but also the entire Christian community to which they belong, and because Christian education contributes directly to the advancement of God's Kingdom, it is the obligation not only of parents but of the entire Christian community to establish and maintain Christian schools, to pray for them, work for them, and give generously to their support.

APPENDIX D: 1 CORINTHIANS 13

Appendix D: 1 Corinthians 13

And now I will show you the most excellent way. If I speak in tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal. If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. If I give all I possess to the poor and surrender my body to the flames, but have not love, I gain nothing.

Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. Love never fails. But where there are prophecies, they will cease; where there are tongues, they will be stilled; where there is knowledge, it will pass away. For we know in part and we prophesy in part, but when perfection comes, the imperfect disappears. When I was a child, I talked like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I put childish ways behind me. Now we see but a poor reflection; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known.

And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love.

APPENDIX E: SAMPLE TRANSCRIPT

1 Interview #5

2

3 od: This is the 5th interview and in this interview we are going to explore
4 Jenny's metaphor of teaching. Jenny, everyone 'sees' teaching as special or
5 different for each of them. How do you see yourself in the process of
6 teaching?

7 jj: My metaphor of teaching actually comes from a poem called/about the
8 sculptor. That's the way I see myself, as a teacher kind of as a sculptor or
9 molder because the child already has within himself the ability to do the
10 things that he/she is going to do but we are helping that child to develop the
11 ability, develop the skills, to discover new things and so I just help the child
12 to really develop the things that are already within him/her and just kind of
13 mold or sculpt his/her view of the world and helping him/her enhance it and
14 grow bigger. I also chose the metaphor of the sculptor because I don't see
15 myself as being the one totally responsible for their education because
16 parents I think are probably/should and are a bigger influence on the
17 children's life than the teacher is and also as a teacher you have the children
18 for one year or two or possibly three but it's kind of like everybody does
19 their part of the molding or sculpting. There would be different teachers,
20 calvinette counselors, Sunday school teachers, catechism teachers, parents,
21 aunts and uncles, grandmas and grandpas and other influential adults. We
22 all work together and some are more influential at times than others but we
23 are all working together to mold this child into what we hope he/she is to
24 become. Another reason I like the sculpting metaphor is that it's not just us
25 sculpting at random but that God is guiding all of our hands to help this

26 child develop in the way that God wants him/her to. So while we are all
27 doing our own special area or our own special thing God is the master who
28 is directing our hands and helping us to help this child develop in the areas
29 that we are working with. It is a cooperative effort but not a haphazard
30 effort since God is directing all the people to help the child grow and
31 develop. In the end every piece is as important as the next piece, it's kind of
32 like the body of Christ, we all need each other to help this child and the
33 child is ultimately God's creation and we haven't done the creating, it has
34 been God directing us and it was he who gave the child to begin with, to
35 work with, and I think that's about it.

36 od: You mentioned at the beginning about a sculptor and molder and you
37 talked about groups of people working together to uncover what God has
38 placed there. What do you see as your role being the sculptor some of the
39 things you chip away in order to reveal the sculpture?

40 jj: As a teacher I see myself helping the child to develop socially, a social
41 conscience, social skills, to discover the ways that God wants the students
42 to act or behave. I also see myself as helping the child to develop their own
43 central being, their own self-confidence and self-esteem. As well, I hope to
44 help develop their mind and give them a Christ-centered outlook on the
45 world and develop the abilities to reason as in math and to understand
46 history and social, sharpen their reading skills, writing skills, decoding
47 skills and all of these skills are already there--the seeds are there and we
48 have to help the students uncover this by chipping away and help them to
49 take on the form they were intended to become and to become a God-
50 fearing community member.

51 od: You have this child in front of you and he/she is a piece of clay or
52 granite and you're the sculptor. What tools do you use to shape him/her?

53 jj: First of all, I see the child more as a piece of clay--a molding thing, very
54 pliable not like granite--I guess adults are more like granite, not children.
55 The tools that I use would first of all be the wanting to help the child
56 develop, my skills as a teacher, questioning skills, creative skills, modeling
57 skills and causing them to think more deeply. In my teaching I usually don't
58 give a direct answer unless it's new material and I'm going over it for the
59 first time but I usually try to develop their thinking skills by asking them
60 questions or giving them hints rather than give them the answer -- I think
61 that's very important.

62 od: When you mold, when a sculptor molds the clay they know when to
63 squeeze and when to move away. How do you know as a molder of
64 children know when to squeeze that sculpture and when to move away?

65 jj: The first thing you have to do is really know your child, really know the
66 person. You have to know when they've had enough, actually I had an
67 experience just this afternoon where I guess I had challenged this child to a
68 limit past where he was willing to try and so when I was questioning him
69 and telling him he had to dig deeper --he was doing a project on metals--he
70 became upset and frustrated with me and started to cry. And I um, I didn't
71 do anything about it because I thought that was a process he had to go
72 through because this student is used to having things coming fairly easy to
73 him but I wasn't going to let it be that easy for him, I was going to make it
74 harder for him. So, if you know the child you know when to make it harder,
75 you know when to make it easier, you know when you have to build up,

76 you know when you have to tear down. It's knowing that inner being of the
77 child, knowing their abilities, knowing their perception of themselves and
78 also as I was saying with the child this afternoon even though he became
79 frustrated with me I still think he needed probably the squeezing we would
80 say to make him try harder because he has more ability than what he uses.
81 So yeah, the bottom line first, last and in-between is to know the child.
82 od: When you look at this clump of clay, the child, do you see the form of
83 the final piece as it can be or as it should be?
84 jj: No, I don't see the final piece. I see my part of it and I guess because I'm
85 teaching in a middle grade school right now and I have been in lower
86 elementary, I see my part of where I'm working at and I see the child
87 developing at the age at which I'm working with them and that's not a final
88 piece, that's a step towards the final piece. I'm not sure that even a high
89 school teacher or university professor would see the final piece because I
90 don't think the sculpting is ever finished, it doesn't end with formal
91 education. I just concentrate on my part, my area of development with the
92 child and that's where I think it's important to realize that God is guiding
93 everybodys hands and guiding this child so that it doesn't become
94 haphazard because God is directing all of the teachers, parents, counselors
95 and others who are influencing this child to help the child become who he
96 (God) wants them to be. But I don't know what that child's going to be--I'm
97 just trying to do my best to help him/her develop the way God wants them
98 to be.
99 od: In your experience as a sculptor or molder, have you ever come across a
100 cracked piece of pottery and what do you do with it?

101 **jj:** By a cracked piece do you mean an extremely stubborn piece or a piece
102 that's flawed or a piece that you can't seem to be able to do anything with --
103 a damaged piece so to speak.? I've certainly come across pieces that are
104 harder to mold than others and probably I would compare your cracked
105 piece with a child who came from a messed up home life and had a kind of
106 quote 'bad background' and so they don't have the same healthy perspective
107 as most of the children that we see, they don't have the same need or want
108 to grow and develop because they have been flawed or cracked or not given
109 the proper molding at the very beginning and I have seen that to a certain
110 extent. I don't think a person ever gives up, like, if you see this cracked
111 piece and I will compare that to a child that I once had in ECS that was
112 probably what you would call a manipulator. I think he learned to
113 manipulate his dad and his mom and step-mom, he could push most of the
114 buttons. I talked to the school counselor about that and I also took a class
115 on guiding and counseling and the way to help a manipulative child was to
116 really come down hard on them and to get it through their heads that this
117 manipulation would not work. So I guess in comparison to this cracked
118 piece you would probably chip away until you got past the crack--you
119 probably couldn't mend the crack--but you would have to chip away until
120 you got past the crack and then you would have to build it up again.

121 **od:** You're the sculptor with your hands around the child and you're
122 working the child as part of a process of education. Who's helping you work
123 in your molding?

124 **jj:** God is definitely directing my hands as well as he is directing the other
125 people's hands who are working with this child which is why even though

126 we may be working on different pieces or levels with this child it is all still
127 a cooperative effort because God is guiding our hands and God is helping
128 us to work together. There is also the communication with the parents and
129 the teachers and the other people who are all working towards the same
130 goal--to have this child develop in the fear of the Lord. But to take this a
131 little further, if God's hands are directing all of our hands, at the same time,
132 like I said, the molding doesn't finish when your formal education is
133 finished-- God in the meantime is still using other people's hands and other
134 people's lives and He is guiding other people to help mold us at the same
135 time and a lot of times by guiding our hands and helping to mold children
136 he is helping to mold us as well.

137 od: Do you see a problem with too many hands helping to mold?

138 jj: Not if we are all following the same leader. If we are not all following
139 the same leader then there is trouble.

140 od: Then when you are molding the students, you see your hands as....

141 jj: God's tools to help the child develop. An extension of God's hands.

142 od: So how do you know when your hands are squeezing in the direction
143 that God wants?

144 jj: Because God has given me the ability and the privilege to get to know
145 the children and the curriculum--more than anything to get to know the
146 child. Since God gives me that talent or ability to know the child He also
147 gives me the knowledge/wisdom of when to squeeze and when to pull or
148 push--not to say I don't ever make a mistake, but most of the time I feel
149 fairly secure in that. There's probably also to carry on the metaphor the

150 times when my hands are tired and they're not doing the best job they could
151 be.
152

1
2 od: This is interview number 6 and I want to use this time to go over some
3 of the material from our 5th interview and just have you elaborate or
4 expand on some of the statements you made. One of the questions I have
5 for you comes from lines 7 through 12 and deals with the child already
6 having within them the ability to do what they are going to do. The question
7 I'd like you to answer is how important is their view of the world and what
8 kind of world view do you want these students to have?

9 jj: I think their world view is part of their thinking as a person, it's very
10 basic to a lot of things they will do through life. First of all, their world
11 view should be and hopefully will be that God has created this world and
12 that God has put us in this world to care for it, to use it wisely and of course
13 people being the most important part, to help other people. I think that's
14 probably what I as a teacher and our school as a whole--and I know we've
15 talked about that--could do more of is to instill in the students responsibility
16 towards serving--like we often try to build the student's self-confidence and
17 doing things for themselves and sometimes we get to carried away with that
18 instead of stressing more of the service part of christianity and what can we
19 do to help these people. We of course model that and encourage our
20 students to do that by praying for people but more important is doing things
21 for people. And along with that, it fits in with many other things because if
22 you're going to help people to the best of your ability first you have to
23 develop to the best of your ability and potential. So I think it is very
24 important that I try to instill in the students a sense of responsibility to
25 world and the people in it--especially to the people in it.

26 od: Do you think as a christian teacher, since we are looking at the lived
27 experience of a christian teacher, do you think your world view you are
28 instilling in a child is different from the world view of a secular/public
29 teacher?

30 jj: Definitely. From a secular point of view you might be teaching from a
31 humanistic point of view. It's good to help your fellow neighbor, it's good
32 to, you know, the golden rule, do unto others as you would like them to do
33 unto you, and the world subscribes to that kind of view and I think that's
34 taught in a lot of schools. While the result may be the same many times
35 we're coming at it from a way different viewpoint, we're coming at it from
36 the viewpoint that this is God's world, it's my father's world, and He has put
37 us in here for a reason. That reason is not just to please me, that reason is to
38 serve Him and by serving Him we will serve others as Jesus always
39 modeled.

40 od: So the world view that you are trying to promote in your students is not
41 in seeing the world through the eyes of a, as you said a humanist or an
42 environmentalist, but through the eyes of....

43 jj: Through the eyes of a christian. Through the eyes of Jesus--through his
44 eyes. Hopefully we will see through the eyes of giving, giving of myself,
45 giving of myself for what God wants me to do. In the middle grades they
46 can be doing things for other people and they can be taught why they are
47 doing these things for other people. I think that as teachers and parents we
48 are all guilty of instilling in the kids that we should do this because we want
49 to do it. Like I think the area of service is where we are lacking, at least
50 that's one way I could improve. And of course serving can not only be
51 taught but it has to be an example where students see us outside the school,

52 perhaps in the community or the church. We have to be visible in the
53 community and seen serving the community.

54 od: How would you go about evaluating this world view in the child? Are
55 there milestones that you look for in the child's life or activities that let you
56 know that they are beginning to develop this world view?

57 jj: No formal observations. In my class, starting a couple of years ago, we
58 began journal writing every Monday morning and it entails what the
59 children have done over the weekend--of course they don't have to list
60 every thing they did, just the highlights of their weekend and we read it to
61 our class. Many times a family has participated for a walk for life or helped
62 out in the community, etc. and I will focus in on that and discuss how this is
63 christian service and then as a class we will talk about how this is a good
64 thing and challenge one another to also get involved in the community.
65 Several families do volunteer things on the weekend and serving is not just
66 a moment in time affair, we also in choosing a career ask God how can I
67 best serve you in a chosen profession.

68 od: From watching you in your classroom I felt that it was more important
69 that you do things for the right reasons rather than just doing the right
70 things. How do you feel about that observation?

71 jj: It is very important that we do things for the right reasons. I want my
72 students to do it not simply because you are a fellow human being but
73 rather because we are all part of the family of God and so we should be
74 willing to serve one another. To take it further our service has to be to our
75 non-christian neighbors because God created all people and our service has
76 to be to all people. In that way we will be modeling and allowing God's
77 light to shine through us.

78 od: Moving on to line 21 of the 5th interview I would like you to explain
79 what 'to mold into what we hope he/she is to become'. Would you explain
80 that for me?

81 jj: I'll probably be repeating myself but I hope they'll become what God
82 wants them to become. I hope they'll develop their gifts and follow God's
83 plan for their life. I think that's all we can hope for as christian teachers. We
84 can't hope for them all to be A or B students. Also we should try to impress
85 on them that education is not the be all and end all. So if some student is
86 average they are entitled to feel just as good about themselves as higher
87 achievers.

88 od: My next question deals with line 41 and it ties into world view and I
89 feel it's important for me to understand a 'Christ-centered' outlook on the
90 world and why it is important for you as a teacher to have this and instill it
91 in the student as well. Is this a necessary part?

92 jj: I think it's probably one of the very basic parts because if you are a
93 christian then a Christ-centered outlook on the world should follow. If you
94 are a christian then we should be able to develop thinking in christian ways
95 and should be able to see non-christian curriculum through christian eyes
96 and should be able to put the christian perspective in, around and through it.
97 It is something that takes a lifetime to develop.

98 od: How do you as a christian teacher begin to develop this concept of
99 Christ-centered education? Are there steps you go through when you look at
100 your curriculum and you say, today we are going to learn about plants, how
101 can I present them with a christian viewpoint or Christ-centered outlook on
102 this material? How do you go about building that unit?

103 jj: How do I go about building the unit is often times by seeing biblical
104 references and maybe by starting out by reading a passage from the bible.
105 In the case of plants, from Solomon, the lilies of the field, that they do not
106 toil and they don't worry about tomorrow but look how God has clothed
107 them. Also in the class we've been studying the parts of the flower and
108 when you pull a flower apart and look at it under a microscope or even
109 before you pull it apart and you see the beauty and the intricacy in which it
110 is formed. All of the time and hopefully without them being told they will
111 realize that this is a gift from the Creator and the way that the pollen and
112 the egg are fertilized is not just haphazard and the way that some flowers
113 cross or self-pollinate is not haphazard in that God has created a whole
114 other species to help them reproduce. Just God's plan in everything. In
115 science it is very easy to do because it is so evident in what you are doing.
116 In social it's fairly easy too because it's God's plan and look how this has
117 worked and how that has worked over time and it all fits together in God's
118 plan. In math too, when you do order of numbers and you look at how God
119 has created an orderly world. There are some subjects or portions of
120 subjects that are difficult to work with, for instance, handwriting.
121 Sometimes I think we can work on these areas to present them in a more
122 structured Christian point of view. We could work on these areas and
123 ensure that the students see this. For instance, punctuation is an area that is
124 difficult to present from a Christian point of view except to say that God
125 created an orderly world and punctuation allows us to communicate in an
126 orderly fashion. Like with some things they are just academic subjects and
127 remain difficult to express in a concrete Christian point of view. For
128 example, how does one eat breakfast to the glory of God--how do you not

129 eat to the glory of God? I think it is the christianity within us that is
130 expressed in the way in which we live, it becomes the focal point of our
131 lives and therefore is naturally expressed through our actions and lives.
132 od: You talked about various subjects being a lot easier to work with and
133 you talked about the home and school working together. Do you find as a
134 christian teacher and having taught at a public school that it is easier from a
135 christian point of view to integrate subjects, to have that connectedness not
136 only between the subject world but the real world at home and school? Is
137 that all part of the world view that you were talking about?
138 jj: I think we talked about this earlier. When you do it from a worldly point
139 of view you can tie it together but not fully, you'll never have that neat little
140 bundle and you can tie a bow on top and say there it is. Whereas from a
141 christian point of view it's all tied up together so that it fits. From a world
142 point of view you could make it fit like a puzzle, but a christian point of
143 view wraps it up like a ball--it gives it closure because you have the Creator
144 which ties it all together. Something to hang it on. I didn't mean that in a
145 bad way. Like when I was teaching ECS in the public school there was
146 nothing to keep it out there, to keep it all together, like you couldn't tie it all
147 together.
148 od: So you find God as a commonality between subjects, home, family,
149 parent, ...
150 jj: God is the common bond that pulls all of these groups together.
151 od: You made a statement that I found very interesting on lines 50 - 53.
152 You said you thought that it was important that students think more deeply.
153 What did you mean by that and why do you think it is important that
154 students learn to think more deeply?

155 jj: This is one of my strong beliefs or philosophies. I can teach them to read
156 a book and I can teach them to interpret that book and I can teach them how
157 to make a report on it but if I haven't helped them to develop the skills of
158 digesting and critically reading--like maybe this book is crap. You know,
159 maybe the teacher gives you a book that is right out to lunch in telling you a
160 bunch of things that aren't true. but I think and here again from a christian
161 point of view we should be constantly discerning what we read and
162 screening what we read. And so, it's very important that they learn to think
163 for themselves. If I've taught you to read and how to add but not taught you
164 how to think for yourself it's not going to do you much good because if you
165 bring it down to a very rudimentary point you're not going to know when to
166 read or add or subtract or anything. To bring it up to a more global point of
167 view I think it is a safeguard we have to instill in our kids even for our own
168 safety and for theirs because they'll be led by dictators without being able to
169 discern for themselves. So, even though we'd like them to really look up to
170 us it is important that they learn to discern it for themselves because you
171 don't want them to follow just anyone in authority. That authority and
172 teaching should always be tested against the teachings of the bible. Just
173 because this guy is Prime Minister or she is the teacher doesn't mean they
174 have all the answers. It's easy to show the kids you're not perfect because
175 they see you make mistakes, lose your cool and they think boy did she mess
176 up--all people do. God gave me a wonderful opportunity to teach but He
177 didn't make me perfect.

178 od: You mentioned that this is an important philosophy that you have
179 developed over a long period of time. The big emphasis in education now is
180 critical thinking...

- 181 jj: Yeah, I guess that goes along with that.
- 182 od: Do you see that as the same as deep thinking?
- 183 jj: Deep thinking suggests something more philosophical whereas critical
184 thinking suggests testing it against reality.
- 185 od: Do you like the term critical thinking?
- 186 jj: No. Critical thinking takes the connotation of criticism. And this has the
187 connotation of finding fault and as such is negative. We had this as a
188 vocabulary word and all my students felt this simply meant being negative.
189 I tried to explain that not all criticism is negative and that it can be positive-
190 -I'm not always trying to be mean to you, I may be trying to be helpful. So
191 critical thinking--like to tear down--I would rather have a term that
192 promoted discerning.
- 193 od: Why is discerning a more acceptable term?
- 194 jj: I like that word. It means to me to run through your mind, to screen it, to
195 sort it, digest it, what meets with your standards and viewpoint--discarding
196 things that you feel are not true or unbiblical or from a christian viewpoint.
- 197 od: So when you are teaching your children that and you tell them that you
198 want them to think deeply in a discerning manner and once you've thought
199 through these things, what do they compare it against?
- 200 jj: They compare it to the bible--like the bible should be the basis of all
201 their decision-making. One of the exercises they are doing is writing tall
202 tales of their waterslide experience. They are to make it real at the
203 beginning and gradually make it bigger and bigger. Right now they are on
204 their rough copies. Later when they are done they will share their work with
205 one another and I will ask them to discern what in their classmates paper
206 could and could not be true. I hope to get them to have more practice at

207 sifting through and discussing how some things can be misleading or
208 erroneous. I guess that would be a practical way of getting this across to the
209 students.

210 od: On line 60-61 and 132-135 you refer to the idea of knowing the child.

211 To you as a christian teacher, what does it mean to know the child?

212 jj: I think I probably said this before. To know the child is to know that
213 child's personality, to know what kind of criticism and teaching they
214 respond to. For some children you really have to be strong in your
215 deliverance and others respond to a more gentle leading. I think knowing
216 the child is very important because you have to know the child to teach
217 them effectively. Although we never know the student's character
218 completely, it's important to really think about each child and get to know
219 their character as well as possible.

220 (a great thunderstorm struck at this time--the power went out!!!)

221 od: On line 87 we were talking in interview 5 about molding the child. You
222 talked about God's hands guiding you and others involved in the shaping
223 process. You said that you never really see the final form, that you are just
224 involved your particular part of it--the part that God wants you involved in.
225 My question is, how do you know when God is guiding your hands since
226 there is such a wide area to make mistakes?

227 jj: Not to say that everything I do is 100% right because it's not. But I think
228 if you start from a biblical perspective and think of your class and think of
229 their needs, emotional situations, family situations, financial situations and
230 then come to your curriculum and put all of these together using the things
231 you've learned as an educator, the things you know to be true as a christian
232 and trust that what you are doing is right--I don't know things like I do

233 when I look at my hand--you feel led--you trust--if you're following the
234 bible and the curriculum guide and if you're listening to the needs of your
235 children you know if they're with you or not. It has a lot to do with trust and
236 faith--you know that God has you here for this child in this place at this
237 time and that it is all part of God's plan and therefore you will do what God
238 wants you to do. It has a lot to do with trust and faith.

239 od: Have you ever had an experience where you knew or were positive of
240 God's leading regarding you with a particular child?

241 jj: Oddly enough I felt it more when I taught in the public school because I
242 had more students with special needs. I had a blind child in ECS and I felt
243 God wanted me to get close to her in a special way. This girl would sit by
244 me in class and she would like to put her hands on my face so I felt guided
245 to let her do it. For the whole year I had this hand on my face which
246 sometimes wasn't so wonderful. I have felt that way with at least 2 or 3
247 other children.

248 od: How important is prayer to you and understanding God's will for you
249 regarding students and how important is prayer in your understanding of
250 God's guidance in your own life with those students?

251 jj: I think prayer is everything. If we don't ask for God's guidance we
252 probably won't feel His hand and probably won't be led to do the things that
253 we are led to do. It's very important to pray for our students and pray for
254 God's guidance on what we do.

255 od: So prayer becomes a prerequisite...

256 jj: In everything and to everything you're doing period.

257 od: On lines 136-138 we closed off interview #5 on a note that I found
258 interesting. You talked about times when your hands are tired. What do you

259 do when your hands are tired, knowing that God's work/will for this child is
260 not finished yet?

261 jj: If it's a question of just my hands being tired I think I can think about it
262 after I've gone home and spent time communing with God and go over it
263 and pray about it. Maybe my hands were tired because I was going in the
264 wrong direction with this child. There are times when children are saturated
265 and need to be let up on. For example June, there are days when I know I've
266 lost my kids. For example, Monday afternoon, we were going over the
267 monocots and dicots and cotyledons and even though I was teaching and
268 they were looking at me I knew we weren't communicating. I became
269 frustrated and they became frustrated and at the end of the day I was
270 thinking and praying to God about what I should do and what can I do
271 differently. I was talking to a fellow teacher and the next day we started on
272 this lesson again and I determined to quit and go outside if it wasn't going to
273 fly. You know, I had everyone's attention until the end of the day. So I think
274 that when your hands are tired it is time to go back to God and allow him to
275 show you a different way or maybe let it ride for a while. It doesn't matter if
276 I mention names does it because you will change it right?

277 od: That's correct.

278 jj: With Fred, I had Fred in ECS and along with other teachers we've tried
279 to build up his self-esteem and we've not made much headway at all. So we
280 commit him to God and ask God to take care of him. I also think God
281 allows bad times to help us grow and develop into the people we are to
282 become. You hope that someday Fred will bloom and be happier. Just
283 because I'm a christian teacher does not mean I meet success everywhere. I
284 guess I reason that God can use other people and other teachers to reach

285 students in ways that I could not. I'm not 100% successful. I've taught Fred
286 but I may not have helped his person--not in a way that we can see.
287 od: You mention honestly that you've not always been successful. What
288 would be one of the things as a christian teacher you were least successful
289 in doing.

290 jj: Okay. The one major thing that I'm thinking about is a time when I
291 taught in ABC school. At that time their was a transition time when
292 students would go half time to ECS and half time to grade 1 and everyone
293 thought it was wonderful. The long and short is that I convinced parents of
294 1 child to hold the child back for a year. The child ended up hating school,
295 is now 16, works at Fast Gas where I get gas, so I face my mistake every
296 time I go to get gas. But he doesn't hold it against me. He says, "hi Mrs. V.,
297 how are you." I can't help but thinking that it was not a good idea. He was
298 not academic. etc. and all the sign posts were pointing the other way. I've
299 prayed about it and asked forgiveness from God. I haven't asked him for
300 forgiveness but I have prayed about it.

301