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Linda M. Neuzil

Marsha Vaughn
Judson University

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By identifying effective and affordable professional development for Christian schools, this study provides usable information that can minimize teacher isolation and encourage the professional development necessary for continued teacher growth and quality as well as student achievement. The findings also support the need for teachers to become less isolated and confident in their craft through engagement in appropriate professional activities. As teacher quality and student achievement increase, this may also positively affect the future of the Christian school community, strengthening enrollment and stability.

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Significance of the Study

Because 400,000 teachers have chosen to work in private education, affecting the lives of over 5 million children (Broughman & Swaim, 2006), the need for empirical research in the area of effective and affordable professional development for teachers in these schools is clear. By identifying effective and affordable professional development specifically for Christian schools, this study's findings provide much needed research for the entire private school community.

Unquestionably, minimizing teacher isolation and participating in professional development are important to continued teacher growth and quality as well as student achievement (Darling-Hammnond, 2004; Haycock, 1998; National Commission on Teaching and America's Future, 1996). Therefore, it is hoped this study will contribute to the combating of teacher isolation, which will lead to improved performance and craftsmanship. While Headley's work (2003) surveys 60 ACSI schools, providing an overview of professional activities most commonly provided for teachers in those schools, additional knowledge is needed. This study adds further depth and increases understanding about teachers in ACSI schools when considered in conjunction with Headley's findings.

Literature

As far back as the early 1900s, sociologists began taking an interest in examining the structures creating the social organism called "school." Willard Waller was one of the first to take an extensive and systematic look at the social interactions taking place within the school's closed, social boundaries. Waller defines school to be "wherever and whenever teachers and students meet for the purpose of giving and receiving instruction" (Waller, 1961, p. 6). He further qualifies it as a social entity that may be legitimately studied by the social sciences in that it has a definite population, a

clearly defined political structure, a network of social relationships maintaining a feeling of "we-ness," and a unique culture. Throughout his study, however, he returns again and again to the observation that the teacher is separate from the community, the students, and even fellow teachers in the same school.

This is not surprising when looking at the organizational history of the current school system. In colonial times, teachers spent the majority of their day separated from other adults in the community, isolated within the four walls of the one-room school. As the educational system expanded with the growth of cities, the pattern remained the same—teachers continued to work alone, separated from other teachers. As schools grew in size, the single classroom was replaced with a collection of classrooms under the supervision of a full-time administrator. Restructuring the one-room school to contain multiple classrooms increased the ease with which schools could be managed and minimized the challenges of high turnover caused by single teachers marrying and leaving the profession (Lortie, 1975). This collection of rooms is described by a teacher to Barth (1990) as "our adjoining caves" (p. 31) and as a system of self-sufficient units or "cells" by Lortie (1975), where teachers spend the majority of their day isolated from other adults. Because the Industrial Revolution made efficiency the priority, developing and maintaining the system through which teachers dispensed appropriate knowledge to students moving through the education assembly line (Burney, 2003; NCTAF, 1996) became a necessity and led to the adaptation of the Taylor model (Pinar, Reynolds, Slattery, & Taubman, 2002). Even today, teaching has been divided into tasks to be handled by specialists who "think, plan and coordinate work while others are supposed to do it" (NCTAF, 1996, p. 105). Evidence of the vestiges of the Taylor model can still be seen in the significantly higher ratio of students to school staff compared to the lower average of 24 students to one classroom teacher. Although some schools are breaking the factory model mold, in most schools teachers remain separated from each other during most of the school day.

Another factor that constrains professional interactions is time. The rhythms of school are binding and inflexible. The tightly packed daily class schedule with the addition of special days and tasks, the necessity of quizzes, tests, grades, report cards, and the required movement through the curriculum, organize teachers' work around isolation rather than interdependence (DuFour, 1999; Eisner, 1998; Lortie, 1975; Waller, 1961).

Teachers' work not only disconnects them from one another (NCTAF, 1996), but also separates them from the community and those who would be in a position to support and improve conditions within the profession (Burney, 2003; Lacey, 1977; Waller, 1961). Parents, principals, school administrators, politicians, and community members are isolated from teachers' work by the organizational structures that were designed to improve the efficiency of the educational system. The consequences of this isolation can be damaging for both teachers and students.

Effects of Teacher Isolation

Some researchers describe the act of teaching to involve craftsmanship or artisanship (Eisner, 1998; Huberman, 1993; Lortie, 1975; Talbert & Mc Laughlin, 2002; Waller, 1961). As early as the 1930s, Waller refers to the creativity of teachers and its general decline due to the pressures of daily duties and responsibilities. While Huberman argues that the development of artisanship in teachers requires them to work, learn and succeed alone, separate from their peers (Huberman, 1993), Talbert and McLaughlin (2002) find that artisanship is enhanced by peer interaction and support. In their study, they found that solo artisans who felt isolated grew frustrated and lost their commitment to teaching. However, those who shared knowledge and supported each other's professional growth experienced high levels of satisfaction in their work. Eisner carries the metaphor further in his description of teaching to be, in part, a skilled human performance. Because classrooms, unlike the rooms in which dancers practice, have no mirrors for teachers except the ones in their students' eyes, "and those mirrors are too small" (Eisner, 1998, p. 161), teachers are susceptible to secondary ignorance: failing to know something without being aware that it needs to be known. With no coach available to assist in the development of the complex skills required in the performance, teachers' satisfaction and commitment may falter and wane. Since schools are designed to "restrict the teacher's access to other professionals" (p. 161),

isolation limits teachers in the development and improvement of their artisanship.

An additional concern to the challenge of artisanship is the challenge of professionalization. A major hindrance to the professionalization of teaching is the absence of a common technical vocabulary and culture in either teacher training or practice (Burney, 2003; Darling-Hammond, 1996; Lortie, 1975; Talbert & McLaughlin, 1996). Teachers view autonomy as a badge of the profession rather than valuing rigorous, shared knowledge. The outcome is "highly personalized forms of instruction and huge variations in quality and effectiveness" (Burney, 2003, ¶ 24) that cannot be developed or shared in order to create a specialized knowledge base or standards of practice (Talbert & McLaughlin, 1996). This can, in turn, lower professional commitment, especially in beginning teachers. Unlike other professions, teachers do not have a language or vocabulary specific to their work, increasing the difficulty for new teachers to access a pre-existing body of knowledge.

Isolation, however, can also have serious effects on teacher performance in the classroom. Where norms of isolation and privacy are high, teachers slip into routines of practice and lowered expectations of their students (McLaughlin & Talbert, 1993; Rosenholtz, 1989; Sarason, 1971; Talbert & McLaughlin, 1996, 2002). As teachers feel they have mastered the skills and knowledge for their job, teaching becomes tedious, monotonous, and routine. This can lead to feelings of professional stagnation and a lack of direction as well as a decreased commitment to meeting classroom challenges. Teachers then attempt to avoid the risk of failure by becoming less demanding of low-achieving students, providing less praise and feedback to lessen the teacher's own feelings of uncertainty. The teacher remains trapped by a sense of fatalism, believing that students undermine their own learning potential, bearing alone the burden of instructional frustration (Fullan, 1991; Lortie, 1975; Rosenholtz, 1989) and lacking sufficient power to effect any change (LeCompte & Dworkin, 1991).

Compounding the personal effects of isolation, teachers in educational environments with high norms of privacy are unable to either share knowledge or take responsibility for student learning (Darling-Hammond, 1996). In schools with limited opportunities for professional learning, teachers tend to believe that teaching is an innate skill that cannot be learned. As mentioned before, teachers working in isolation oftentimes fall into routines of practice while developing strong norms of self-reliance, limiting opportunities for assistance from peers (Rosenholtz, 1989). This leads to a guarding, rather than a sharing, of resources from colleagues, perpetuating isolation (Talbert & McLaughlin, 2002). Not only does this create a fatalistic response to struggling students, it limits the intrinsic rewards available to the teacher. These rewards as described by Lortie (1975) center on craft pride, or positive outcomes based on instruction or relationships with students. Because these rewards are frequently indirect and nonverbal (Sarason, 1971), it is not surprising that teachers isolated from their colleagues report higher levels of frustration and discouragement and eventually burn out (McLaughlin & Talbert, 1993). Dussault, Deaudelin, Royer, & Loiselle (1999) find a strong positive correlation between teacher isolation and stress, leading to dissatisfaction with the profession.

And what of the impact on student learning? Rosenholtz (1989) finds both negative and positive correlations between student learning and teacher learning, teacher certainty (or efficacy), and teacher commitment. In schools with low levels of support, encouragement and opportunities for learning or collaboration, teachers view learning to teach as "arriving at a fixed destination" (p. 82), the accumulation of a predetermined set of skills with success based on innate ability. Test results for students of these teachers are surpassed by those students whose teachers have more opportunities to learn and improve practice, collaborate with others and master techniques and strategies that would lead to student success. Teachers with low levels of certainty who perceive students' potential to be limited by background or attitude are less inclined to respond to those students with increased effort or to search for assistance in finding strategies that would be helpful to those students. In contrast, teachers who view all students as capable learners are more active in seeking assistance to foster student learning that, in turn, contributes significantly to student gains. The same results follow in measuring the relationship between teacher commitment and student achievement. Students of teachers who feel themselves limited and facing a future of repetition and boredom fare

poorly in math and reading scores compared to the success of their counterparts whose teachers have a strong sense of optimism, hope, and commitment.

In summary, Rosenholtz (1989), McLaughlin (1993), and Talbert and McLaughlin (1996, 2002) find that teachers in a strong community of support and collaboration hold a strong commitment to professional growth and the success of all students. As Dozier points out in an interview with Dennis Sparks, "Teachers have always had the freedom to go into their classrooms, close the door, and do whatever they want to do. That won't work any longer" (Sparks, 2000, ¶ 7). When teachers meet with colleagues to create, share, and refine lessons and strategies that are aligned to learning goals, student improvement is "virtually guaranteed" (Schmoker, 2002, p. 6). Interaction with others is critical to the relationships teachers need in developing new meanings and skills, receiving support or exchanging ideas. As isolated individuals, teachers are cut off from the elements necessary for change (Fullan, 1991) and improvement in student learning. The research indicates that a quality education for all students will not be available until high standards are integrated into classroom practice as well as every aspect of a teacher's career (Birman, Desimone, Porter, & Garet, 2000; Shanker, 1996). Teachers bear the responsibility and the burden of bringing change to the classroom as they are "in the best position to have a positive impact on the lives of children" (DuFour & Eaker, 1998, p. 206). The challenge remains to provide teachers with the tools and skills necessary to educate with excellence.

Christian-school teachers, however, find themselves in an educational culture separate from that experienced by their public school counterparts (Headley, 2003, Pike, 2004, Sikkink, 2001). While the goals of growth and academic excellence remain the same, the culture can have both a positive and negative impact on the attainment of those goals. While it is true that Christian-school teachers have, in a way, self-selected themselves (Wenger & Snyder, 2000) by choosing private over public education, and share similar religious philosophies, do they voluntarily create communities within their schools in which they can grow in their profession? The literature suggests not. MacLean (n.d.) notes that the major concern facing educators in Christian schools is "finding professional development opportunities that enlarge their knowledge, appreciation, skills, and understanding of their work" (¶2). This is compounded when schools rely on tuition that "provides the lion's share of Christian school income, with faculty salaries the main expense" (Stump, n.d., ¶2). Although teaching in Christian schools "demands a high level of excellence as well as a commitment to continual professional growth" (Luce, n.d., ¶1), Luce relates the case studies of two talented teachers who left the Christian school because they desired collaboration with their fellow teachers yet failed to receive it.

What options do professionals in Christian education have at their disposal to increase craft skill and relationships? Various Christian school organizations offer professional development opportunities to teachers and administrators. However, these may be cost prohibitive and reminiscent of the "one-shot workshop." The Association of Christian Schools International, Christian Schools International, and Independent School Management, all offer resources for those in the Christian school sector. However, conferences, publications, professional memberships, and certifications all require fees that can break already stretched budgets. The first step, then, in seeking to eliminate teacher isolation in Christian schools is to determine what teacher learning activities are already being provided and in which activities do teachers chose to participate.

Methodology

The purpose of this study is to examine the availability and utilization of professional development activities in select ACSI schools in the Mid-America Region. In order to provide beneficial information to leaders in the Christian-school community for raising teacher professionalism and combating isolation, this study gathers information from school administrators and teachers about professional development activities. While not an evaluation, this study creates "an agenda for further negotiation" (Guba, 1987, p. 39) as administrators and teachers use the findings to create opportunities for beneficial professional learning activities during future school years.

This study addresses the following research questions in order to provide clarification of professional development activities for educators in Christian schools:

1. What current professional development activities are available to teachers in ACSI schools in the Mid-America Region?
2. To what extent is there a difference between available professional development activities and those in which teachers participate?

Sample

The population for this study consisted of teachers (pre-kindergarten through 12th grade) and school administrators in Christian schools from the ACSI Mid-America Region. ACSI was selected because it is the largest of the Christian school organizations due to its flexible membership policies, specifically in relation to the statement of faith. The more general language of the statement supports the biblical basics while allowing its membership to be as inclusive as possible, growing beyond limiting denominational divisions (Sikkink, 2001). Geographically, the Mid-America Region of ACSI covers the largest area of 32 national and worldwide offices. Also, the region includes both rural and urban school settings.

For this study, a stratified random selection of schools was made from each of the nine states in the Mid-America Region from categories based on size. The nine states include Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Michigan, Minnesota, Nebraska, North Dakota, South Dakota, and Wisconsin. Schools in the ACSI directory were divided by enrollment into four categories: Group A: 0-99, Group B: 100-249, Group C: 250-499, and Group D: 500+ . Next, schools were randomly selected from each category equaling one third of the total number within that category for the state using the calculator available at **http://graphpad.com/quickcalcs/RandMenu.cfm**. This led to a minimum of one school from each state in each category; more were selected from states with a greater number of schools in the enrollment category.

While 111 schools were selected to receive teacher and administrator surveys, five were discovered to no longer be in operation and were dropped from the sample. They were not replaced since a sufficient number of responses had already been received. Each of the 106 schools to receive surveys was called three weeks prior to the mailing in order to introduce the researcher and the study to the administration. If no personal contact was made, a voice message was left. Out of the 111 schools originally selected, 52 were in Group A, 34 were in Group B, 14 were in Group C, and 11 were in Group D, averaging 30% representation from each enrollment category.

Responses from 43 schools were received over the next three months. Because teachers either volunteered or were selected by administrators to complete the survey instruments, the factor of self-selection was included in consideration of the survey results. One administrator sent a letter expressing regret that the school could not participate due to the final closing of its doors at the end of the school year. Seven school survey packets were incomplete, lacking administrator signatures granting permission for use. Three were corrected and returned, allowing their inclusion in the study, but the data from the remaining four schools could not be used. In addition, fourteen teachers failed to sign the permission form and their data were also excluded. The final rate of response for each category of schools can be seen in Table 1.

Table 1: School Responses

GROUP	NUMBER OF SCHOOLS RESPONDING	TOTAL NUMBER OF SCHOOLS	RESPONSE PERCENTAGE
A (0-99)	15	52	29
B (100-249)	14	34	41
C (250-499)	3	14	21
D (500+)	6	11	55

Survey

For the purposes of this study, an instrument incorporating several of Headley's survey instruments was used to collect data relating to specific professional development activities from both teachers and administrators, respectively. Headley had conducted an initial survey of ACSI administrators to explore opportunities available for teacher professional development in Christian schools at the Northwest Region of ACSI. He followed this survey with a questionnaire insert in the 2002 Northwest Region ACSI teacher convention gathering information on the professional development needs of Christian school educators in the region. His second instrument had been reviewed by a panel of experts, local school administrators, teacher educators, and ACSI officials to assess validity and usability prior to its use at the convention. Headley graciously agreed to share both instruments from which the administrator survey and the first section of the teacher survey for this current study were developed. The focus of these instruments was to determine the professional development opportunities available to teachers in the Mid-America Region of ACSI and in which activities teachers actually participate. Both instruments also provided additional information addressed in the complete study.

Analysis

Results from Research Question 1 represented ordinal data that was ranked and then categorized by percent (Gall et al., 2003; Mertens, 2005). The analysis of this question required collected data to be organized into categories that were counted, sorted, and then assigned a numerical identifier. SPSS v.16 provided the proper analysis of this data through the use of descriptive statistics.

Multiple regression applying the phi coefficient was used in analyzing the findings of Research Question 2 to determine the relationship between professional development opportunities offered and teacher participation. This was made possible because both professional development opportunities and teacher participation were entered as dichotomous variables in SPSS v. 16, assigned either a 1 for a positive response or a 0 for a negative response. The phi coefficient examines the statistical significance between the two nominal dichotomous variables (Hinkle, Wiersma, & Jurs, 2003), making it appropriate for use in this situation.

Results

RQ#1: What current professional development activities are available to teachers in ACSI schools in the Mid-America Region?

The data received were analyzed using descriptive statistics from SPSS v. 16. Table 2 lists the activities available to teachers in ranked order from greatest to least based on the percentage of positive responses by administrators. It also lists the percentage of teachers who positively identified the activity as available, as well the difference between administrator and teacher responses. This difference is addressed in the discussion.

Table 2: Availability of Professional Development Activities

Professional Development Activity	Valid Percent of Administrators Responding Yes	Valid Percent of Teachers Responding Yes	Difference Administrator % less Teacher %
School sponsored in-service activities	94.7	89.0	+5.7
ACSI convention participation	86.8	70.5	+16.3
Teacher evaluation for professional growth	76.3	79.8	-3.5
Faculty handbook	76.3	68.2	+8.1
Professional leave days	60.5	67.1	-6.6
New teacher mentoring	55.3	46.8	+8.5

Graduated salary scale based on educational attainment	55.3	46.2	+9.1
Classroom walk-throughs	52.6	35.8	+16.8
Professional development fund for faculty	42.1	32.9	+9.2
ACSI Enabler participation	39.5	16.8	+22.7
Teacher teaming	37.8	38.2	-.4
Curriculum design	36.8	33.5	+3.3
Ongoing faculty development courses	34.2	37.6	-3.4
Tuition reimbursement for graduate study	28.9	22.0	+6.9
Peer coaching	21.1	18.5	+2.6
On-line learning activities	21.1	16.2	+4.9
Peer observation	21.1	39.3	-18.2
Book study groups	15.8	29.5	-13.7
Collaborative teacher research	13.9	11.0	+2.9
Collaboration with other K-12 schools	13.2	24.9	-11.7
Collaboration with colleges and universities	7.9	18.5	-10.6
Assessment design	7.9	13.3	-5.4
Accountability and support groups—Critical Friends Group	5.3	16.2	-10.9
Teacher shadowing	2.6	16.9	-14.3
Teacher portfolios	2.6	12.7	-10.1
Video taping of peers	2.6	6.9	-4.3
Case studies	0.0	5.8	-5.8
Journaling	0.0	4.6	-4.6

Out of the first four activities, nearly 95 % of the reporting schools provide school-sponsored in-service for the teachers, almost 87 % send the faculty to the annual ACSI convention, and 76.3 % evaluate teachers for professional growth and provide a faculty handbook. Those percentages drop, however, to 55.3 % by the sixth activity listed out of the 28 choices, and then to 21.1 % by the 15th activity.

It is interesting to note that in 11 of the 12 final activities listed, more teachers reported availability of those activities than did administration. In fact, teachers reported availability of 15 additional activities compared to those reported by administrators, each of those 15 activities involving professional engagement or conversation with other teaching professionals or focused professional reflection. The number in the third column in Table 2 represents the difference between administrator and teacher reporting of the availability of the activity listed in the first column. A positive number represents a higher percentage of administrators reporting availability and a lower number represents teachers reporting availability of that activity more often than administrators. Teachers appeared unaware of 13 activities listed by administrators and aware of 15 activities not recognized by administration.

Teachers also had the option to answer the question, "What helps you develop professionally that was not on the list?" The majority of teachers responding reported that they found professional reading and talking with other teacher professionals to be most beneficial.

RQ#2: To what extent is there a difference between available professional development activities and those in which teachers participate?

Multiple regression using the phi coefficient was used in analyzing Research Question 2 in order to determine the relationship between professional development activities reported offered by teachers with self-reported teacher participation. This was made possible because both professional development activities reported offered by teachers with self-reported teacher participation were entered as dichotomous variables in SPSS v. 16 and were assigned either a 1 or 0 for yes or no responses. The phi coefficient examines the statistical significance between the two nominal dichotomous variables (Hinkle, Wiersma, & Jurs, 2003), which allows for comparison of the relationship between professional development activities reported offered by teachers with teacher-reported participation in those activities. The third column of Table 3 demonstrates the significance ($p<.05$) of teacher participation in all available activities.

While teachers participated significantly in every professional development activity they found available to them, it is important to return to Table 2 and note the activities they considered available more often than those reported as available by administration. This desire of teachers for professional interaction and reflection must be addressed by administration. Further discussion of these findings follows.

Table 5: Teacher Participation in Professional Development Activities

Activity	phi Value	Approx. Sig.
School sponsored in-service	.755	.000
ASCI Enabler participation	.710	.000
New teacher mentoring		
Collaborative teacher research		
ACSI Convention participation	.765	.000
Teacher teaming	.781	.000
Accountability and support groups—Critical Friends Group	.800	.000

Professional leave days	.601	.000
Ongoing faculty development courses	.891	.000
Book study groups	.891	.000
Collaboration with other K-12 schools	.794	.000
Peer coaching	.722	.000
Peer observation	.718	.000
Graduated salary scale based on educational attainment	.674	.000
Tuition reimbursement for graduate study	.643	.000
Professional development fund for faculty	.799	.000
Collaboration with colleges and universities	.655	.000
Case Studies	.682	.000
On-line learning activities	.586	.000
Teacher evaluation for professional growth	.645	.000
Journaling	.620	.000
Teacher portfolios	.709	.000
Assessment design	.873	.000
Video taping of peers	.620	.000
Classroom walk-throughs	.817	.000
Curriculum design	.804	.000
Teacher shadowing	.806	.000
Faculty handbook	.719	.000

Discussion

RQ#1: What current professional development activities are available to teachers in ACSI schools in the Mid-America Region?

Out of a list of 28 professional development activities, administrators most frequently arrange for teachers to participate in school sponsored in-service activities (see Table 2). The list can also be divided into quartiles by percentage of positive administrative responses using 75 %, 50 %, and 25 % to group professional development activity availability. Following school-sponsored in-service, only three additional activities are available 75% of the time to teachers: ACSI convention, teacher evaluation, and faculty handbook. Administrators provide professional leave days, new teacher mentoring, graduated salary scale based on academic achievement, and classroom walk-throughs between 50-75% in the sample schools. The third quartile contains a total of six activities for teachers from reporting schools, ranging from

providing a professional development fund for faculty to tuition reimbursement for graduate study. The last quartile, however, contains the greatest number of activities. These are least available to teachers and, yet, provide the highest degree of peer interaction, feedback, and reflection.

Although 100% awareness of activities available to teachers would be expected from those working in the same environment with administrators, teachers rarely expressed the same level of awareness as administrators. The administrative report of availability was greater than teacher-reported availability for 13 professional development activities, implying that teachers appear unaware of these professional development activities available to them. This raises the question of communication between the two groups. Are administrators properly communicating offered activities to teachers or are teachers too busy to notice due to the daily requirements of teaching and possible extra duties? At the other extreme, teachers reported the availability of 15 professional development activities more than did administrators. In addition, each of the 15 activities requires teachers to interact with other professionals and reflect on their practice, necessary activities in the combating of teacher isolation. While the answer to Research Question 1 may seem simple, its implications to the combating of teacher isolation are important. Teachers seem to want to talk and work together professionally whether or not opportunities are made available by administration. This desire of teachers to interact and learn together may also explain the high priority given to providing school-sponsored in-service activities by both administrators and teachers.

RQ#2: To what extent is there a difference between available professional development activities and those in which teachers participate?

The analysis of the data from this question was quite surprising. In comparing the data from teacher-reported professional development activities offered to those in which teachers self-reported participation (see Table 3), the phi coefficient had a significance of .00 in each and every case. The test for significance required $p<.05$, but the relationship between the two variables of availability and participation was much greater.

Although the teachers responding to the survey may have an increased awareness and interest in professional development due to the uniqueness of self-selection, it appears that if they saw an opportunity to learn and grow in their profession, they chose to participate in it. They are constantly seeking to answer the key question: "What should we intentionally learn in order to become more effective in our teaching so that students learn well?" (Hord, 2008, p. 12). This desire to be as effective a teacher as possible also directly relates to the open-ended responses from the 12 teachers interviewed by phone. Each expressed a desire for more knowledge and training specific to his or her own practice, in order to "develop my art" (Case # 30-159) and to "provide practical solutions to practical problems" (Case # 33-176). As Case # 4-18 said, "[We need] more opportunities for training to enhance teaching…[we're] never finished learning."

Teachers desire to seek out and participate in learning activities, even when they are not offered. Although teachers would like additional activities specific to their own practice, they are taking advantage of as many job-embedded learning opportunities as they can in order to increase their effectiveness in the classroom.

Implications for Teachers

Isolation is the enemy of the classroom teacher. Teachers need to open their classroom doors to each other more often and invite their peers in for support. Teachers must find and make time for each other to share questions as well as new ideas regarding classroom behaviors and learning. While shared vision is vital and is assumed through the hiring process and self-selecting nature of the Christian school environment, teachers need to share their teaching styles and be open to adding to their own "repertoire" or "toolbox," working together to achieve the mission of the school and academic excellence through the learning process. The results of the first research question indicate that many teachers are already actively engaged in learning with their peers even without the support or knowledge of administrators. They can further assume responsibility for their learning without waiting for specific direction from administration as already seen from these results, beginning a professional reading group for learning and sharing. Informal lunch sessions, recess, and overlapping

times when students are out of the classrooms can also provide opportunities where student needs may be addressed. In this way, teachers can begin to satisfy their desire for additional training evidenced by their willingness to participate in as many activities as were made available. However, they must also be willing to employ flexibility in scheduling, assisting administrators, perhaps even suggesting times that could most easily be carved out of the school day for professional interaction.

Conclusion

At the heart of every educational system stands the teacher. The interaction between the teacher and the pupil is consistently the central point where learning occurs (Ferguson, 1991; Haycock, 1998; McLaughlin & Talbert, 1993; NCTAF, 1996). However, No Child Left Behind (2002) has placed great emphasis on standards and student outcomes, increasing the pressure for student success and placing greater demands on the teacher's performance in the classroom. Unfortunately, in our society teachers practice in isolation (Barth, 1990; DuFour, 1999; Eisner, 1998; Lortie, 1975; Talbert & McLaughlin, 1996), in rooms full of children, cut off from other adults working in the same profession most of the day (DuFour, 1999; Lortie, 1975; NCTAF, 1996; Talbert & McLaughlin, 2002). Teaching has been described as a lonely activity and profession (Eisner, 1998; Lacey, 1977; Lortie, 1975) where the teacher's primary interactions throughout the course of the workday are with children, allowing little time for contact or professional interaction with other adults. Professional interaction and growth is limited, crippling the effectiveness of the entire educational system.

Because research affirms that teacher performance in the classroom has direct bearing on student performance and academic achievement (Dufour & Eaker, 1998; NCTAF, 1996; Schmoker, 2002), there is an increased awareness of the need for professional development opportunities for teachers. The question remains, "How do we best improve student achievement and teacher performance?" The solution, however, is clouded by the fact that schools are made of people, large and small, young and old, and people cannot be quantified or reduced to a tidy set of numbers to address any given situation. Perhaps the best response is a question each school must answer for their own community, "What should we intentionally learn to become more effective in our teaching so that students can learn well?" (Hord, 2008, p.12) Only then will Christian schools through the work of Christian teachers truly fill the mission to produce, not only well-educated, moral students, but citizens who can think critically and effectively influence society.

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Dr. Neuzil founded Woodstock Christian School in 1986 and continues to teach in their junior high while providing professional development for the faculty as Assistant Principal.

Dr. Vaughn of Judson University has taught statistics and research methods at both the undergraduate and graduate levels. She attended Christian schools from Kindergarten through her master's degree.