

2015

Faith, Learning, and Success in Mennonite High Schools: What's Working at Iowa Mennonite High School?

Ginny Birky

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcommons.georgefox.edu/soe_faculty



Part of the Education Commons

Faith, Learning, and Success: What's Working in Mennonite High Schools?

by Ginny Birky, PhD

Introduction to Research Project

Background: During the 2014-2015 academic school year, I was on sabbatical leave from my work as a professor of education at George Fox University. The story that follows is a result of the sabbatical project I initiated with Mennonite Education Agency/Mennonite Schools Council and seven Mennonite high schools.

About the research: For this post-doctoral research, I personally visited seven Mennonite high schools in early fall of 2014 to determine the strengths and distinctives of the school related to school atmosphere, academics, and faith development. I visited Iowa Mennonite High School (IMS) on September 10, 2014 and interviewed 17 participants: six students, five teachers, four parents, an administrative assistant, and the principal. Some of the teachers and parents represented more than one role, but were to speak from the identified role as much as possible. The overarching interview question was: "What are the strengths and successes at Iowa Mennonite High School?" Participants gave written consent to have their comments shared. All interviews were recorded, transcribed, and analyzed to identify recurring themes. I used the themes to organize the information into a story, explaining the themes with quotations, explanations, and examples.

Story or report: The story about Iowa Mennonite High School was written based on the perceptions and representations of what the participants said related to what was working and why it was working. Every effort was made to portray the perspectives of those interviewed to get an accurate picture of what IMS was doing to help students be successful, engaged in school, and develop a faith.

Emergent themes. There were many similarities between the selected Mennonite high schools. They had similar values, courses, and clientele. The strengths mentioned at one school were often mentioned at other schools. However, as is true for qualitative research, the data analysis was always organic, so the themes emerged as I immersed myself in the story-telling. Because of similarities between schools, it is important to remember the absence of a theme, quality, or characteristic does not necessarily mean it was absent at the school.

Limitations and disclaimers: It is also important to understand a limitation of the study. I interviewed only a representative sampling of persons from each stakeholder group. Participants spoke for themselves, so the narrative is representative of the participants' perspectives, and does not necessarily represent all perspectives at the particular school. Also, each school's story should be read as one that stands alone rather than used as a basis of comparison to other schools. Each story mentions the names of the people I interviewed. The first time they were mentioned I included the group they represented (student, teacher, parent, or administrator). I intentionally did not use the names of other persons at the school who may have been mentioned by the persons interviewed.

I hope you enjoy reading about the excellent Mennonite high schools I visited. Our Mennonite high schools are strong in the areas of community, academic excellence, and faith integration.

Ginny Birky
George Fox University
gbirky@georgefox.edu

Faith, Learning, and Success in Mennonite High Schools: What's Working at Iowa Mennonite High School?

"Igniting Mind and Spirit"

Iowa Mennonite School (IMS) was established in 1945, initially to serve the many Mennonite families that come from seven area Mennonite churches. Today it also serves a broad range of other denominations as a local Christian high school with a reputation for quality education. The school is located in a rural farming community in the southeastern corner of the state about eight miles from either Kalona or Wellman, and a half hour from downtown Iowa City.



IMS's 82 students in grades 9-12 are from a variety of backgrounds. Besides those from the local area, 20% are from ethnically diverse or non-white backgrounds. These include eight international students, this year coming from China, Germany, and Russia. 63% of the student body come from a Mennonite background.

Students at IMS are served by 17 faculty members who average 15 years of teaching experience. 42% of them have completed their master's or doctoral degrees. Besides teachers, other certified employees include a principal, guidance counselor, and librarian. In addition, eight full- and part-time non-certified staff provide support for students and other employees in the school.

Mission: Iowa Mennonite School, in partnership with the family and the church, offers high school students an academically excellent, Christ-centered education rooted in an Anabaptist perspective. Within a caring community, IMS prepares students for lives of Christian discipleship, peacemaking and service.



*Tim Lehman
Principal*

Iowa Mennonite High School
1421 540th Street SW
Kalona, IA 52247
<http://www.iowamennonite.org/>

The following pages describe the themes that emerged from interviews with students, teachers, parents, and administrators and from an analysis of the recorded and transcribed interviews.

Significant strengths: What's working at IMS?

The most significant strengths of IMS referenced and described by participants in this study were *chapel* and a sense of *community*. In addition, *academics* were strong.

Chapel

According to one senior student, “chapel is definitely a place where spiritual growth is happening.” Of the 17 participants interviewed at IMS, 100% of them verbalized *chapel* as one of the strengths of IMS! One student said, “I love chapel!” Michael, a senior, also said, “One of my favorite parts [of IMS] is chapel. It really helps strengthen my faith, the speakers, skits, praise band, the stuff we do that tries to get everybody involved in their faith, like show people that God is there.” These were not flippant comments, but deliberate mention of a definite strength at IMS. Chapel with the whole student body is held every day of the week for 20 minutes, but on Tuesdays, small groups meet instead of the larger group.



Both students and teachers spoke positively of the chapel experience as being one which helps students develop and grow in their faith. Drake, a sophomore, indicated that chapel helps students know how to make faith practical and relevant, taking a story from the Bible and helping them see how you might handle a life situation from a Biblical perspective. He said, “...to be a Christian you can read the Bible and be a good person, but in chapel each day they put it into real life.” Natalie, a junior, gave an example from the same morning of her interview when she said, “This morning when Tim was talking about how he sees God in places, it made me think about the places where I’ve seen God. I realize I see God most in other people and by observing their actions. And so, hearing Tim’s testimony about where he sees God was interesting to me, because [now] I see it differently. I might look in nature to see God now.”



Repeated reference was made to the Chapel Committee, which is made up of 8-15 students and three faculty advisors. Students apply to be on the committee, so it is an honor and privilege to be selected, especially when there are many more applicants than can be chosen. Chapels and committee planning are student-led rather than adult-led. Instead of faculty being in charge and students responding to what has been suggested, the students lead and facilitate, and faculty respond and rarely need to exercise “veto power.” They plan, decide on Bible verses and the music group, arrange for speakers from around the area, do the calling, introduce them, and take the lead. One teacher said, “Students are “up front rather than faculty.”

According to Tim, the principal, students take their role seriously. A parent was appreciative of her son’s involvement on the chapel committee when she said, “He has speaking opportunities and you know, I think that is one of those experiences you get that really increases your accountability.” Students who have never stood in front of a group have a chance to speak about their baptismal experience or some other aspect of their faith. One teacher indicated that student

involvement helps students challenge others to also strengthen their faith, both students and teachers alike.

At the beginning of the year, the committee plans a theme for the whole year and then divides into sub-groups that plan a week's worth of chapels with a mini-theme; these coordinate with the overarching theme. A student was excited to mention that "this year's chapels are off to a great start with our theme, *Get it! Got it! GOD!*" According to the IMS website, the theme comes from Chapter 8 of 1 Corinthians ...that first "we want to 'Get it' – to learn about and understand God more. At times we've 'Got it' – when we feel we're understanding God more fully and are putting our beliefs into action. Then, 'God' – always moving toward a deeper relationship with God, seeking to be known by and honor God in all we do." Chapel advisors are critical to the success of student-led chapels. But Pam, the chapel coordinator, gave all the credit for chapel success right back to the students when she said, "The credit goes to the students that are part of the chapel committee. I feel like I have a gold mine in [them]."

A student comment revealed that one of the reasons for the importance of chapel was because it brings the entire IMS family together once a day—all in the same room at the same time for a common shared experience. She said, "I love that we have chapel every day and not for the religious aspect of it, but the fact that it builds community." And as Bible teacher Lee put it, "There are a couple of things that happen at chapel. It's a coming together of everybody and there's a sense that we are a body; we are a group together."



If the IMS website is an indication of the importance of chapel, those on the outside can also see what is going on in this area. The website frequently includes chapel summaries for the week and up-to-date pictures of what happened in "chapel today." An open invitation is extended to the community with the statement, "Chapels are open to the public. Join us at 9:45 Monday, Wednesday, Thursday or Friday." Perhaps the biggest testimony to the value of chapel is when the discussion comes up about its frequency. A staff member said, "We've talked about having it only three times a week, but kids want it. They like it."

While chapel may be important to current students, there is evidence that for some alumni, what they experienced in chapel at IMS still influences them in their daily lives. Kris, office manager, alumna, and parent of two former students herself, helps write the *Bruit* Alumni Newsletter. In an interview with alumni for the *Bruit*, Kris said some of them actually remembered what their chapel speakers said years earlier. She said, "Some kids may not look like they're listening, but what they heard in chapel does pop out often. They remember it yet, and that has affected them the rest of their lives. So it's important."

Small groups. On Tuesdays during chapel time the students meet in small groups instead of with the entire student body. The groups are created at the beginning of the year and last all year. Each group is made up of five to eight same-gender students and one faculty/staff member. Each group is autonomous and the faculty/staff member plans the time together. Mary, an English teacher at IMS for over 30 years, said that on occasion, leaders have "planned together so that all the men had specific things to talk about with their guys and the girls had specific things to talk about with the girls about sexuality."

A teacher shared that the purpose of small groups is to “strengthen our spiritual walks with each other through accountability, support, topic discussion, and a mixing of ages and ideas. Of course, a whole lot of fun mixes in! Whether it’s eating, playing sports, praying, discussing, planning parties and service projects, or enjoying a sleepover together, Chapel Small Groups help build community in various ways.” Students saw small groups as a time to talk about what was presented in chapel, discuss scripture passages, grapple with faith questions, share a snack, and “talk about our problems and pray for each other.” Other small group activities have included shopping trips and eating out together. Teacher Lee brought in the community aspect of small groups when he said, “I think an undergirding strength to the whole chapel system is to have those places where students can have a little intimate gathering.”

Community

According to participants in this study, the sense of community is strong at IMS, both within the school and outside the school. Cassidy, a senior student said “everyone is so welcoming -- it feels like a family, just one big family.” Others said the positive atmosphere was part of the culture of IMS. When Tim started his principalship last fall, he said he noticed it almost right away. But he said, “I can’t take credit for anything before this year. The teachers work at it deliberately. They have bought into it because it doesn’t just happen. We intentionally work at it.”



Community within the school.

Veteran teacher Mary said, “I think community is really important to a school like this because not only is it the outside community that supports us tremendously but it’s the kids themselves feeling part of a community here.” Because adolescents want to be a part of something, Mary said the staff work hard at helping students feel as if they belong. Early in the year, the whole school goes to a local camp for a day where students and staff participate in “bonding-type” activities. In addition, teachers consciously ask themselves how they might get a particular student into some activity or group. They encourage students to talk to one another, give them opportunities to work together, and create opportunities for this to happen.



One such initiative is identified as “Sibling Family Groups.” Created by the student government in the summer, sibling groups meet once a month and are made up of seniors paired with freshmen, and then sophomores and juniors are added. There is no faculty leader -- if anyone is seen as “parents,” it is the seniors. The idea behind sibling groups is that it gives each student a peer to whom they can ask questions they don’t want to ask an adult: What the heck is going on here? How does service day work? I need a ride to the volleyball game tonight.

Sibling groups have helped foster interactions across grade levels. A teacher said “It’s not very often you see seniors hanging out with freshman – you see that here. Or that a senior sees

someone sitting alone in the cafeteria and leaves her peer group to go sit by that person. It's almost like it is one class. Everybody socializes together." Gloria, a mathematics teacher in her 21st year at IMS said, "Seniors are nice to freshmen and freshman are always surprised about that!" Drake compared IMS to his previous school when he said, "There you mainly talk to friends in your own grade and that's about it. You don't talk to seniors there, but here you can talk to them like they're your best friend."

Jacob, now a senior, felt he benefitted from the community and family atmosphere very quickly when he transferred during his freshman year. He said, "I was put under quite a few wings. When I came, I gained a few older brothers and sisters, and that's something I had never had before. Now I want to protect people from feeling left out. I don't want anyone to feel like they don't belong." When asked what he personally gains when he gives back to fellow students, particularly underclassmen, Jacob said, "Well, I don't gain anything from it. But I want this school to be going strong when my brother wants to be here. Without the freshmen, they're the future. If they don't like it here and they transfer out, it puts our school in serious danger. It's very important to keep every student we've got. We want everyone to have a great experience here, because, I mean, IMS is a great institution."



Drake said when he came as a freshman there were some "really great seniors that I could look up to and want to be like. I think IMS has done something with them to make them more like that, and hopefully I can be like them some day and [I hope] IMS can help me do that." Wanda, a parent, credited sibling groups with enhancing relationships between students in all four grades and not just their own.

Faculty and staff at IMS are called by their first names. Lon, a parent of three daughters (one graduate and one current student) said, "I would have thought calling teachers by their first names would be disrespectful, but now I think it creates this family atmosphere where people are treated well." Cassidy added, "The teachers don't think that they're higher than us."

Parents talked about reasons they send their children to IMS. Lon appreciated the restorative discipline approach to student challenges in that it looks at all persons involved in order to find out "what the needs are for each person, where reconciliation can take place, where accountability needs to happen, and how hurt can be healed." Kris said that parents tell them over and over their children are "happy, and at home they talk and talk. It's certainly not perfect, but people just get along. Kids can be themselves and people accept them."

Marcus, a social studies teacher at IMS for 22 years, said this atmosphere of acceptance contributes to students' overall satisfaction of the school. He said, "Sometimes it's hard to get the kids to go home." Acceptance also encourages student confidence in themselves. Marcus remembered one new student whose Mom said [IMS faculty and staff] may never hear her son say anything. But by the end of the year he talked a great deal. "He was eccentric but our kids are taught to be nice. And there was enough of a sense of reaching out and including him that he did well here."



Billie, parent of three boys (two current students and one younger), said that one of the main reasons they have had a great experience at IMS is because “a weight has been lifted off of us as parents because we know that the school is aware and supportive of the students. They also provide a safe environment for them.” In addition to the acceptance parents appreciate, another parent said, “Of course then the faith aspect of it is the cherry on top!”

Parents liked the students their children were associated with at school and the values taught beyond academics. An example of the caliber of students IMS nurtures is the frequency with which the men’s basketball team has won the sportsmanship award at the state championship. It has to do with the way they treat other players and how the fans act – “it’s something about the culture.”

Small. IMS students and staff both spoke positively about being small, especially because it allows them to know everyone. Teachers thought it helped them see each student as a whole person. Cassidy said, “The principal even greets us at the door!” Natalie, a junior, went to a private elementary school before moving to IMS four years ago. She said attending IMS helped her learn: “I just learn better in smaller classrooms and with people I know better.” Natalie summarized her positive feelings this way: “Private schools are my comfort zone. They’re what I love – they’re like a big, comfy couch. They’re like coming home. I just love them.”

Being small also allows more students to be involved in numerous activities. “As a matter of fact,” said Lee, “we’re dependent on a lot of students being involved in several things. And I think it is an advantage for the kids.” At some schools, students may not have an opportunity to be involved in both the arts and in athletics. Billie, the mother of two current IMS students, said you can be in either a sport or a musical, or you can be in both and not have the stigma attached that you have to choose between being either a jock or a theatre person.

At IMS there are a variety of options: drama, musicals, numerous clubs, student government, and all kinds of sports. Last year the drama and music departments put on the musical *Little Mermaid*; out of 109 students in the school, 64 of them were in the musical. Someone also estimated that approximately 75% of the



students are involved in at least one sport. Gloria said she had a student who told her, “I like it here because I can be involved in sports. If I was at [my] public high school, I would have to be really good to be able to be on the team.” Olivia, a junior, stated it a different way: “At some schools if you play sports, you just do sports, and if you’re in music, you just do music, but here, you have a chance to do everything.”



One club in particular was called the Compassion Club. Participants help people in need, collect food for a food pantry, raise money for Heifer Project, and respond to local needs in the



community for children who don’t have food on the weekends. Fundraisers include a blood drive, silent auction, cake walk, ballgames between faculty and students, and *Ditch the Dress Code* (when once a month students have the option to ignore the dress code and pay \$1 as they enter the school that morning). IMS also has a Future Farmers of America (FFA) group, appropriate in this farming community. Student

Michael was an FFA district officer and grateful for the opportunity to be involved. He said, “I think all schools should have an FFA program. People think that it’s just farming, but it’s really not. It’s more leadership than anything else.”

Besides being grateful for the opportunities they had to be involved in extra-curricular activities, students also shared their love for smaller classes because they believed teachers could give them the academic help they needed to be successful. Cassidy said, “[Teachers] are here to do what’s best for us and they want to make sure that we succeed.” Students felt their teachers were always available for extra help before or after school, and even via email or phone on the weekend!



Likewise, teachers appreciated that their classes were small enough to be able to give individual attention to each student. Being small also gave teachers a sense of autonomy while at the same time, keeping their standards high. As one teacher put it, “I love having my own classroom and being able to teach what I want to teach within the boundaries of the common core. It guides me, but does not limit me.”

According to Jacob, one more advantage to being small is the recognition received for academic achievement or involvement in activities. He mentioned that at IMS it’s easier for people to recognize you for what you do well, and that leadership skills are developed because of the confidence you then receive. “Recognition is pretty addictive,” he said. “You do something good, someone tells you about it, and you want to do more. It encourages you to be a leader because there aren’t a whole lot of other people to step up.”

“IMS does a good job finding good teachers,” according to Lon. “They are trained well as teachers, but also have good ethics and values and we like our kids being around mentors like that.” Students also had high praise for IMS teachers – “teachers really care.” A teacher confirmed this when she said, “There is a tremendous love for the students here. When we talk about a kid who might be struggling, we pray for that student and we talk about how we can help the student through whatever they’re dealing with instead of just referring to the policy and leaving it at that.” In addition to teachers, parents also believed their children were positively influenced by their peers – “there’s this mentality of being kind, generous, and respectful.”

Community is evident not only between students or between students and teachers, but also between teachers. One teacher said, “What keeps me here is the camaraderie. We don’t all agree [on everything], but we all agree that being here is important and what we do here is important.”

Community outside the school.

Community at IMS extends beyond the walls of the school. Kris said, “IMS is a unifying institution for the community. The fact that our school was started years ago has made this community a different place, a better place. It ties the community together and there are people that move to this area because they want their kids to go to a Mennonite high school. It does a good job of teaching students and making them better people than if IMS wasn’t here.” Tim called it “community inside out” when the curriculum or programs within the school also enhance the

community outside the school. He also sees this work as helping define the identity of the school to folks in the community.

Smallness helps parents and families interact with school personnel in relation to the business of the school. Parents also have multiple avenues for input on school policy and curriculum. Lee believed the process of giving parents a voice and responding to them was a strength, perhaps even more importantly than the result of any decision made.

On the flip side, teachers like having an awareness of the extended families of their students. Dick, an upper-level physics and chemistry teacher, appreciated strong support from parents of his students. He said they consistently want to know how they can reinforce behavior or homework with their child. He felt respected by parents and like a member of a team working on the child's behalf.

Numerous participants highlighted the community's support from outside the school, referring to it as a kinship and a cooperative spirit. Long after parents and grandparents have their own children in school events, they show up for theatre productions, musical programs, and sporting events. According to Mary, there are 552 seats in the auditorium and it is not unusual to sell out for the show's two nights. When they have a ballgame, the gym is packed. And for a Sunday afternoon Christmas concert, 400 people are there. Tim said he meets folks at events who introduce themselves, wish him well, and tell him they're praying for him and the school – "pretty amazing," he said. In addition to adults who attend, Wanda said even students that don't participate in a particular sporting event or arts program still go to support their fellow students.

Part of the community support comes from the area churches. Mary said, "The churches are so supportive of us. It's just amazing and I love that."

Academic strengths

IMS students are getting a good and a well-rounded education. A strength frequently cited was Interterm. In addition, participants believed students were both academically and vocationally prepared.

Interterm. According to Mike (alumni, former parent, former principal, and former board member), Interterm started in the 70s or 80s. It is a week-long alternative learning experience that takes place every other year in the spring as a way to integrate academics into new student experiences and service opportunities. Teachers choose a project and develop a curriculum for a week; students sign up for one of the experiences. While most interterm events happen off campus, an occasional experience is held on campus or within easy driving distance.



IMS alumni and author Frank Yoder wrote a book about the history of IMS. He said Interterm is one of the ways IMS has served as a "window to the world" for students. For example, students have joined Jesus People USA (JPUSA), an intentional community of 450 people in downtown Chicago. Participating students learn what it is like to live in a city, what it is like to live in community, and also do some service. Other groups have served the homeless in Omaha, worked

at building or painting at a School for the Blind in Missouri, visited a camp for children whose parents were in prison, worked on a dairy farm in Michigan, and lived with an Amish family. Students have participated in community service, worked in soup kitchens, worked in day care settings, and attended the Iowa Legislature in Des Moines. All of these experiences are “different than what we’re used to out here,” said Gloria.

One interterm project with long-lasting benefits for IMS was when physics teacher Dick coordinated the efforts of ten young men and additional members of the community to install solar panels which in ten years will provide free electricity for the school. The benefits of applying academic physics and math concepts extended the classroom in practical ways. A student said, “When someone teaches you something, it’s kind of an impersonal experience. But when you work together with somebody on something, it really helps you get to know them and learn in a different way.”

Some alumni say that Interterm was one of the highlights of their time at IMS. For at least one, it was life-changing. Mary talked about a young man with some behavioral challenges who attended IMS years ago. School had never worked well for him and he was an angry young man. During his senior year he participated with a group working with a homeless population. She said, “All of a sudden it just clicked for him in that there’s this whole world of people who are needy and what does he have to complain about? Somehow his heart was softened and he came back a different kid. And to this day he works as a prison advocate somewhere.”

Academically prepared. According to Dick, who has a PhD in chemistry and physics, IMS almost always ranks near the top of the county and region in ACT scores and other basic skills tests. He said, “I think we do as well at teaching as any school around here. We expect a lot.” Alumni who become college students frequently find college easy at first and later come back and say they were well-prepared, particularly in the areas of writing a research paper and using MLA style formatting. Hesston and Goshen professors have been known to say “These IMS kids know what they’re doing.” Parents perceived students were receiving the right amount of college prep courses, and also appreciated the partnerships held between IMS and universities for those students who were taking high school courses with college credit.



Billie believed the rigor of AP classes spilled over into other courses where the standards were also high. Parents and students had great praise for their teachers, their life, their work experiences, and the methods they used to help students learn. Michael said, “My teachers do a good job of explaining things and they want us to ask questions. I like the way we learn here.” Olivia stated a similar thought when she said her teachers were really good at understanding how different people work and how to explain concepts to different people.

To maintain accreditation with the State of Iowa, Iowa Mennonite teachers try to work with the Iowa core standards. Professional development for teachers is offered to help them integrate these requirements into their own curricula.

Vocationally prepared. For students not heading to college, IMS believes their liberal arts curriculum serves these students well. Teachers and administration recognize that you have to be

smart to be in the trades too, especially with a location in the middle of a farming community. Tim commented that “being an electrician, plumber, or farmer are viable career options too.” As a result, IMS offers a variety of classes which prepare students for life – agriculture, animal science, family and consumer sciences, welding, computer science, photography, and business classes.



Students also have the option of taking an independent study to pursue their practical interests, similar to a work-study program. Michael loves this option because he is permitted to work on a family farm of about 3,000 acres. To earn credit, he fills out a weekly log of hours worked, indicates the jobs he completes, and articulates what he learned; his supervisor signs off on the tasks he performs.

Michael also works with seed treatment as a business on the “side.” He said he plans to do something with agriculture in the future, and this opportunity allows him to work with the cutting edge of farming as a vocation because “farming is changing.” Michael talked about what he was discovering by working on the farm during his independent study: “I am learning time management, business management, GPS stuff, how to operate new machinery, and I am going for my Commercial Driver’s License so I can drive a semi. Working with a farmer now will pay off later in my life.”

Final Words

Gloria said “I love IMS. I really wouldn’t want to teach anywhere else.”

Cassidy summed up her assessment of school: “IMS has been a good fertilizer for my faith.”

In the *Bruit*, the IMS newsletter of the alumni association for fall 2014, Tim summed it up by giving credit to the whole IMS community when he said, “The most obvious strength of IMS is the people who work here and the students who attend. The staff is dedicated to the school’s mission, and student energy and passion for the school is evident every day.”

The legacy of IMS will live on in students who have attended there in the past and who will attend in the future. What better way to honor the tradition than to desire to send your own children IMS when the time comes. As Jacob said, “If I live in the area, I would like to send my kids here.”

This report was written by Ginny Birky, PhD, from George Fox University (Newberg, OR) as a sabbatical leave project and in partnership with Mennonite Education Agency/Mennonite Schools Council. Ginny grew up in the Mennonite tradition, graduated from Bethany Christian High School, Hesston College (AA), Goshen College (BS), Ohio State University, (MS), and Oregon State University (PhD). She was on the School Board of Western Mennonite High School for six years and on the Board of Overseers of Hesston College for 12 years. She is a former high school teacher and currently teaches doctoral students in the College of Education at George Fox University. Prior to this project, all of her research had been related to public high schools. The project was supported in part by the George Fox University Grant GFU2014G07.

