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# Attitudes Towards Educational Innovations in Christian High Schools in Northwest Iowa and Southeast South Dakota

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## Abstract

This study examines the attitudes of Christian high school educators in Northwest Iowa and Southwest South Dakota toward educational innovation and change in secondary education. Faculty and administration rated ten innovations or practices for their value to Christian school secondary systems, their perceptions about which factors and individuals are influential in the decision-making process about affecting change in the secondary school system, and their personal response to change in the classroom. The results indicate that these educators believe that change is important, but they are less supportive of change that might disrupt the way that schools are currently organized. Respondents perceived that administration and faculty are significant influences in the decision-making process, but recognize the influence of other factors as significant as well. Examination of responses by category: administrators vs. faculty and lesser vs. more experienced personnel showed no significant difference in perceptions.



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# Attitudes Toward Educational Innovations in Christian High Schools In Northwest Iowa and Southeast South Dakota

by

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## Abstract

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# Attitudes Toward Educational Innovations in Christian High Schools In Northwest Iowa and Southeast South Dakota

## Section One: Introduction

### *Problem Statement*

In spite of the insistent call for innovation and change to meet the changing needs of the world and its students, secondary education seems to have undergone little change in structure, curriculum and methodology during the past fifty years. According to George, McEwin, and Jenkins (2000), the literature is full of reform, but most comprehensive high schools continue to follow James Contant's 1959 recommendations strongly supporting the concept of the comprehensive high school. A variety of innovations have been introduced in the intervening years to attempt to better meet the educational and social needs of high school students. Many have been proposed, tried and lauded. Yet, somehow, most don't seem to last for long—at least not on a large scale. It seems that "the last place school reform has hit is the high school. Many of the ideas behind school restructuring...have had a hard time penetrating the armor of the traditional high school" (Stinson, 1994, p. 21). Individual schools may show progress in a given area, but system-wide, not much seems to have made inroads into the traditional secondary system, including Christian high schools (Vryhoff, 1991). Most schools look and feel much as they did in the 1970s or even in the 1950s despite such nationally recognized calls for change as 1983s landmark government report A Nation at Risk (Daniels, Bizar, Semelman, 2001). This is not to say that there has been no successful reform or successful innovative practices, the most notable or obvious being the use of computer and related technology in the schools. However,

curriculum, methods, classroom structure, and extra curricular offerings remain much the same as they always have.

Purpose Statement

Many factors have been identified that might affect change in education, and there are many people who are involved in the process. It is the people, specifically those that work in local Christian high schools, who are the focus of this study. As Rutherford and Ahlgren (1990) point out, "Ultimately, reform is more about people than it is about politics, institutions and processes. And most people tend to change more slowly when it comes to attitudes, beliefs and ways of doing things" (p. 197). The educators in our schools are the heart of the educational process. Their attitudes and feelings toward change are important not only to the process of effecting change, but also to understanding the success or failure of change or innovation in their high schools.

Since it is the people in education, teachers and administrators, who implement change in the school systems, their perceptions toward what is ultimately their task can greatly influence the outcomes of reform and innovation. By determining educators' attitudes toward change and the factors they feel influence decisions about curriculum and practices within their school systems, one can address concerns or resistance to new methods in the arena in which they will be implemented. It is the purpose of this study to discover the attitudes and perceptions of the educators in the Christian high schools in Northwest Iowa and Southwest South Dakota toward suggested educational innovations and change and to determine the factors that educators feel affect the decisions made concerning change or innovation in their school systems. These findings cannot be generalized to a larger population, but they may be useful to other Christian high school systems.

*Research Questions*

Specific questions to be considered include: (1) What are educator attitudes toward current educational innovative practices for Christian education? (2) What factors do educators perceive to be influential in the decision-making process about changes in their Christian high schools, or conversely, which factors are less influential in the decision-making processes? (3) Do years of experience or position within the school affect an educator's perceptions or attitudes toward change?

*Definition of Terms*

The following definitions are provided to ensure uniformity and understanding of these terms throughout the study. All definitions were developed by the researcher.

The term educator refers to teachers, administrators, and educational support staff. Included are media center specialists, counselors, and special needs instructors. Not included are non-educational staff such as secretarial, custodial or food service personnel.

Educational leaders are administrators or counselors responsible for decisions made concerning curriculum and practice within a school or school system. Not included in this discussion are curriculum or education committees.

The Christian high schools surveyed for this study are members of Christian Schools International (CSI), private, parent-controlled schools committed to a reformed, Calvinist perspective on education.

*Limitations*

There are a number of factors that may influence the results of this study. The sample was limited by size, location, and institutional similarity. Small sample size (72 educators) may not provide adequate representation of the population. All three schools are located within a 60-

mile radius, so responses may be influenced by regional attitudes. All three schools are similar in size, educational philosophy, and cultural background. Many, if not most, of the educators in these schools have been trained in post-secondary schools which share a similar, reformed approach to education. Because these schools are so similar, it is unlikely that the findings would apply to all high schools; however, they may be relevant to Christian schools or to schools within similar communities or of similar size.

*Organization of Study*

The introductory section of this study presents the problem statement, purpose statement, research questions, and limitations of the study. Section Two reviews the literature and research related to the problem being investigated. The methodology and procedures used to gather data for the study are presented in Section Three. Results, analyses and findings to emerge from the study are contained in Section Four. Section Five includes a discussion of the conclusions drawn from the findings and recommendations.

## Section Two: Review of the Literature

A review of the literature was conducted utilizing the resources of the John and Louise Hulst Library, located on the campus of Dordt College in Sioux Center, Iowa, and the Sheldon, Iowa, Public Library. On-line research included the use of general search engines such as Google and AltaVista as well as ERIC, Resources in Education (RIE), Ebscohost's Academic Search Premier, the U.S. Department of Education, Christian Periodical Index, and Christian Reformed Chruch Periodical Index (CRCPI).

A review of the literature indicates that educator attitudes toward change can be divided into five related areas: (1) leadership issues, (2) school culture and conventions, (3) teacher

attitudes, (4) time and resources, and (5) general expectations. Such a division is unnatural; these areas do not exist separately but are intertwined throughout the educational experience.

Leadership Issues.

Educational leaders' attitudes toward change and toward other educators involved in the process of change strongly influence the pace of reform. The role of administration is crucial in determining the fate of reform (Sarason, 1971). Not only is administrative leadership important, but a change in leadership can also lead to a loss of interest or focus on meaningful change. Evans (2002) suggests that the same can apply to local school boards, which can have frequent turn over. Local school boards, while attuned to the needs of the community, can also be influenced by short-term local issues and conventions. These shifts in leadership and vision can contribute to the skepticism of educators who see reforms fade away as leadership changes (Trubowitz, 2000).

Sarason (1971) further contends that lasting reform has failed because of the failure to recognize the power relationships in education. Perceived inequalities between educational leaders and teachers can hamper effective reform. Innovation on demand from 'above' without the direct involvement and collaboration of other educators leads to insecurity and resistance from the faculty (Goodlad, 1984, Hargreaves, 1997, Trubowitz, 2000).

School Culture and Conventions

Schools and school cultures are conservative by nature. They are traditional organizations that are resistant to change (Daniels et al., 2001; Goodlad, 1975, Sarason, 1990). Traditional conventions such as age-grade grouping, subject matter divisions, and daily time schedules are so firmly entrenched and expected within the systems that overcoming them becomes a major barrier to change. Parents and communities, faculty and administration are comfortable with

what they have always known and are unwilling to disrupt what is seen as 'working'. The culture of high schools is survival-based and, therefore, is not change- or risk-oriented (Goodlad, 1984; Goodlad, 1975). Because of this attitude, reform that is seen as non-disruptive to the system is usually chosen. Systemic reform, by nature a larger, more comprehensive change, is not happening (Stinson, 1994). Christian high school culture appears as traditional and conservative as its public school counterparts (Stronks and Blomberg, 1993; Van Dyk, 2000; Vryhof, 1991).

Teacher Attitudes

The attitudes of teachers toward change are key to successful reform. The teaching profession is conservative by nature. Teachers are hard workers who highly value security. Teachers tend to teach as they have been taught (Sarasan, 1971). It is their desire to maintain stability that "reinforces customary modes of practice" (Trubowitz, 2000, p. 167). Teachers need to see the need for change (Daniels et al., 2001; Goodlad, 1975; O'Day, Goertz and Floden, 1995). Hargreaves (1997) notes that the "obstinate problem of teacher resistance to imposed change" can turn teacher's professional communities into protectionist ones (p.14).

Trubowitz (2002) suggests that faculty also tend to be skeptical toward reform because of past failures or only short-term success. He says that the better the high school, the more skeptical of reform the faculty are likely to be. If their students or school is perceived as doing a good job, they see no real need for change.

Teachers do play a significant role in school reform. However, advocating change can be perceived as judgmental, creating feelings of insecurity and frustration (Goodlad, 1984; Muncey et al., 1996, Sarason, 1990). Contributing to this frustration is the fear of failure. Educators and

schools desire to appear successful. However, the process of change includes failure as part of the learning curve (Muncey et al., 1996).

*Time and Resources*

The mechanics or processes of reform play an important role in determining educator attitudes toward change. Adequate time to prepare, practice, and reflect, as well as sufficient personnel and access to material resources influence teacher attitudes (O'Day et al. 1995). Poorly resourced innovations can contribute to stress, frustration, alienation and teacher burnout (Adelman and Walking-Eagle, 1997; Fullan, 1997).

*General Expectations*

Parental or societal attitudes also come into play when reform is considered. While parents often show reservations or concerns about the educational system, there is no sense of overall deep dissatisfaction with the school system. In fact, innovations may seem threatening if they are perceived to replace what is currently seen as important. If test scores are high and the school appears to be doing well, a ground swell of support for reform is unlikely. If there is limited public awareness for the need for change, the teaching profession will also exert little pressure for alternatives (Goodlad, 1984). Muncie and McQuillan (1996) cite this lack of consensus about the need for reform as a major issue impeding change.

*Summary*

The literature indicates that a complex web of attitudes and circumstances can create barriers and affect attitudes toward change. Educational leadership, community expectations, practical and financial considerations, teacher attitudes and classroom realities all contribute toward the success or failure of innovation at the high school level.

## Section Three: Methods

### Population and Sample

Educators at three local Christian high schools, Sioux Falls Christian High School in Sioux Falls, South Dakota; Unity Christian High School in Orange City, Iowa; and Western Christian High School in Hull, Iowa were polled to determine their attitudes and perceptions toward educational innovations. Included in the sample were all classroom teachers, administrators, and related educational staff including counselors, special needs instructors, and media and technology personnel.

The three schools were selected because of their proximity and accessibility to the interviewer. These schools are similar in size, cultural background, educational philosophy, and curricular structure. The schools differ somewhat in their source of students. Western Christian High School and Unity Christian High School draw their enrollment from a number of surrounding small towns, while Sioux Falls Christian High School serves a predominantly urban community. Both Western Christian and Unity Christian are independent high schools serving grades 9-12 which receive students from a number of grade schools, while Sioux Falls Christian is part of a single K-12 system with the middle school physically attached to the high school.

### Instrumentation

To measure the attitudes of teachers in the Christian schools, an instrument was developed to address two main issues: (1) personal attitudes toward particular innovations and practices, and (2) educator perceptions of the factors that might influence decisions made about curriculum and practices in the schools (see Appendix A). Respondents were asked to rate statements about the importance of specific educational innovations to Christian education on a five point Lickert scale to indicate the significance of each innovation. To determine the factors

that they believe are influential to change, respondents were asked to rate the amount of influence that a number of individuals or factors might have on change in the school system. A 'no opinion' option was provided for each section, and respondents could also add personal comments.

The survey instrument was initially patterned after the survey instrument developed by Dr. Dennis Vander Plaats of Dordt College, Sioux Center, Iowa, for his doctoral dissertation on Christian middle school characteristics. Changes in length and content were made to address the research questions of this study and to simplify the instrument for the respondents. In addition, survey reliability was determined by having two education specialists and two high school principals review the survey before it was administered.

*Data Collection*

After receiving oral permission from each site administrator, surveys (see Appendix A) were hand-delivered to each school during the third week of April, 2002. The school secretary placed the survey instrument along with a cover letter (see Appendix B) and a stamped return envelope in teacher mailboxes at the school. Each educator was asked to complete and return the survey by mail by May 3, 2002. Respondent confidentiality was ensured by having surveys returned anonymously by mail in the envelope provided. Educators were asked to list their school but not their name.

*Data Analysis*

The preliminary analysis of the data consisted of tabulating the responses from the survey instruments using *Microsoft Excel*. Measurements of central tendency and standard deviation were determined by use of the Excel program. T-distributions were determined by use of *SPSS*

*for Windows, Version 11.0.* Personal comments by respondents added to individual surveys were collected and considered in the results and discussion sections of the report.

## Section Four: Results

### *Response Rate*

Seventy-two surveys were distributed and 48 were returned, a total response rate of 67%. Half of the returned surveys were from Western Christian, 29% from Unity Christian, and 19% from Sioux Falls Christian (see Appendix C).

### *Demographic Data*

Of the 48 respondents, 50% had taught for 15 or fewer years, and 50% for more than 15 years, with 25% with more than 25 years of experience. Sixty percent of the respondents were male and 40% were female. Twelve subject areas and two administrative functions were represented. Thirty-nine respondents identified themselves as teachers, seven as administrators and two as staff or other (see Appendix D).

### *Findings Related to Educator Attitudes toward Current Innovations and Practices in Christian Schools*

The first research question asked, What are educator attitudes toward current educational innovative practices for Christian education? The first section of the survey asked the participants to rate to what extent they agreed that ten given innovations or educational practices should be utilized in a Christian high school. The results of this section were tabulated (see Table 1). Critical or higher level thinking skills, varied instructional approaches and alternative assessment were rated the highest with a mean score of 4.0 or above. No practice received a mean score of less than 3.1 out of 5 points on the Lickert scale. Most scored close to a 4.0. Standard deviation scores indicate that respondents do not differ substantially in their opinions.

A ranking of 4 or 5 on the Lickert scale was considered to indicate agreement or strong agreement.

Table 1

Importance of Educational Innovations and Practices

| | Innovation or practice* | strongly disagree 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | strongly agree 5 | no response | mean | SD |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Critical/higher thinking skills | 1 | 0 | 0 | 5 | 42 | 0 | 4.8 | .64 |
| 2 | Varied instructional approaches | 1 | 0 | 2 | 10 | 33 | 2 | 4.4 | 1.20 |
| 3 | Alternate assessment | 1 | 2 | 7 | 18 | 19 | 1 | 4.0 | 1.12 |
| 4 | Advisory program | 1 | 2 | 9 | 22 | 13 | 0 | 3.9 | 1.07 |
| 5 | Cooperative learning | 1 | 3 | 8 | 21 | 14 | 0 | 3.9 | 1.11 |
| 6 | Alternative learning options | 0 | 4 | 6 | 23 | 14 | 1 | 3.9 | 1.05 |
| 7 | Varied student/teacher groupings | 1 | 3 | 6 | 25 | 11 | 2 | 3.8 | 1.21 |
| 8 | Alternative scheduling | 1 | 4 | 13 | 18 | 12 | 0 | 3.8 | 1.00 |
| 9 | Alternative instructional methods | 1 | 2 | 9 | 25 | 9 | 2 | 3.7 | 1.15 |
| 10 | Ability grouping | 2 | 15 | 11 | 16 | 4 | 0 | 3.1 | 1.08 |

*ranked by mean score

Results from the entire sample show that all but two suggested innovations received an agreement level of 70% or higher (see Table 2). The innovations that scored the lowest were alternative scheduling (63%) and the concept of grouping students by age or ability instead of by grade level (42%).

Table 2

Summary -- Importance of Educational Innovations and Practices

| Rank* | Innovation or practice | Mean | Standard Deviation | % Strong agreement (4 and 5 on Lickert scale) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | critical/higher thinking skills | 4.8 | .64 | 98 |
| 2 | varied instructional approaches | 4.4 | 1.20 | 90 |
| 3 | Alternative learning options | 3.9 | 1.05 | 78 |
| 4 | Alternate assessment | 4.0 | 1.12 | 77 |
| 5 | Varied student/teacher groupings | 3.8 | 1.21 | 75 |
| 6 | Advisory program | 3.9 | 1.08 | 75 |
| 7 | Cooperative learning | 3.9 | 1.11 | 74 |
| 8 | Alternate instructional methods | 3.7 | 1.15 | 71 |
| 9 | Alternative scheduling | 3.8 | 1.00 | 63 |
| 10 | Ability grouping | 3.1 | 1.08 | 42 |

*Ranked by % in agreement

Comments by respondents about the importance the suggested innovations and changes included both general observations and ideas specific to a given practice. Respondents addressed the overall challenges faced by the Christian high school. One respondent stated that "Christian high schools are often a compromise between idealism and realism. They are also a reflection of the community/constituency it serves." Similarly, a respondent stated that "consideration must be made for the culture within which Christian school functions and interacts."

Respondents also addressed the need for change. A respondent noted that the school in which she taught was looking closely at many of the topics because the school saw a need for change. One teacher stated that it was important to "take advantage of all the research that

shows how students learn, how the brain functions." Another felt that change was needed to "find new ways to engage the students."

Another reason for change addressed in the responses was the place that Christian schools have in the community. One teacher felt it was "important for Christian schools to stay on the cutting edge. We need to offer as much as possible to stay competitive with the public schools." This idea of competition in education was echoed by another teacher who said, "Christian high schools, as private institutions not funded by government, are in some ways more market-driven because they must, for their own existence, be more friendly to the consumer."

Respondents also were aware of the difficulties of implementing change. One response indicated that the small size of Christian schools would make implementing change difficult, if even possible at all. A new teacher (one year of experience) found that "the alternative methods seem to be great ideas with excellent reasoning behind them" but found it difficult to implement them effectively.

Others indicated a cautious approach to making changes. One teacher who has taught over 30 years said he "embraced some changes in education," but noted that he was "alarmed by those (educators and administrators) who have emphasized change simply because of a workshop they have attended or an 'exciting new trend'." Another stated, "New methods should be encouraged if they are shown to be good and if feasible and practical to the resources of the school...If you resist all change, you should not be in education. But change is not a magic bullet. Old, new, whatever. The key is excellence."

Findings Related to Perceived Influences on Decisions about Educational Change

The second research question asked, What factors do educators perceive to be influential in the decision-making process about changes in their Christian high schools, or

conversely, which factors are less influential in the decision-making processes. The second section of the survey asked participants to rate the influence that a number of factors might have on curriculum or practices at their high school. The data from the second section was tabulated (see Table 3). All influences except standardized testing received a mean score higher than 3, while half were rated a mean score of 4 or higher on a 5 point scale. Again, standard deviation scores indicate that respondents do not differ substantially in their opinions.

Table 3

Perceived Influence on Educational Decisions

| Influences* | not infl. 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | strongly Infl. 5 | n | Mean | SD |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. Administrative support of faculty | 0 | 0 | 1 | 12 | 35 | 0 | 4.71 | 0.50 |
| 2. Administrative leadership | 0 | 0 | 2 | 19 | 27 | 0 | 4.52 | 0.58 |
| 3. Faculty attitudes toward learning | 0 | 1 | 0 | 21 | 26 | 0 | 4.50 | 0.62 |
| 4. Administrative attitudes to learning | 0 | 0 | 3 | 24 | 21 | 0 | 4.38 | 0.61 |
| 5. Faculty attitudes toward change | 0 | 1 | 1 | 25 | 21 | 0 | 4.38 | 0.64 |
| 6. Administrative attitudes to change | 0 | 0 | 6 | 22 | 20 | 0 | 4.29 | 0.68 |
| 7. School board attitudes to change | 0 | 1 | 7 | 21 | 18 | 1 | 4.19 | 0.77 |
| 8. School board attitudes to learning | 0 | 1 | 10 | 18 | 18 | 1 | 4.13 | 0.82 |
| 9. Existing physical plant | 0 | 1 | 8 | 26 | 13 | 0 | 4.06 | 0.73 |
| 10. The school's mission statement | 1 | 3 | 6 | 16 | 21 | 0 | 4.04 | 1.17 |
| 11. Extracurricular scheduling & concerns | 0 | 2 | 12 | 18 | 16 | 0 | 4.00 | 0.88 |
| 12. School size—personnel | 0 | 1 | 7 | 27 | 12 | 0 | 3.98 | 0.91 |
| 13. Financial resources | 0 | 2 | 9 | 2 | 16 | 0 | 3.98 | 1.02 |
| 14. School size—enrollment | 0 | 1 | 10 | 27 | 10 | 0 | 3.96 | 0.71 |
| 15. Parental attitudes toward learning | 0 | 3 | 13 | 18 | 13 | 1 | 3.79 | 1.05 |
| 16. Parental attitudes toward change. | 0 | 3 | 16 | 18 | 10 | 1 | 3.74 | 0.87 |
| 17. Staff development opportunities | 2 | 3 | 13 | 22 | 8 | 0 | 3.65 | 0.98 |
| 18. State educational requirements | 2 | 3 | 13 | 17 | 12 | 1 | 3.65 | 1.18 |
| 19. Student attitudes toward learning | 3 | 3 | 14 | 9 | 9 | 0 | 3.58 | 1.07 |
| 20. Community standards & expectations | 0 | 5 | 13 | 25 | 3 | 0 | 3.49 | 0.93 |
| 21. Student attitudes toward change | 2 | 6 | 22 | 13 | 5 | 0 | 3.27 | 0.96 |
| 22. Standardized test results | 2 | 14 | 20 | 8 | 2 | 2 | 2.75 | 1.06 |

*ranked by mean score

A ranking of 4 or 5 on the Lickert scale would indicate a perception of strong influence. Out of 22 suggested influences, 15 received a high influence rating by 70% or more educators. Five factors that did not receive a high influence rating of 70%, staff development opportunities (62.5%), community standards and expectations (60.8%), state educational requirements (60.4%), student attitudes toward learning (58.4%) and parental attitudes toward change (58.3%) were rated less influential by almost half of the educators with at least 10% of educators rating the factors as not influential (see Table 4).

Table 4

Summary -- Perceived Influence on Educational Decisions

| | Influences* | Mean | SD | % strong agreement |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. | Administrative support of faculty | 4.7 | 0.50 | 98.9 |
| 2. | Faculty attitudes – learning | 4.5 | 0.62 | 98.9 |
| 3. | Faculty attitudes – change | 4.4 | 0.64 | 96.8 |
| 4. | Administrative leadership | 4.5 | 0.58 | 95.5 |
| 5. | Administrative attitudes – learning | 4.4 | 0.61 | 93.8 |
| 6. | Administrative attitudes – change | 4.3 | 0.68 | 87.5 |
| 7. | School size—personnel | 4.0 | 0.91 | 82.9 |
| 8. | School board attitudes – change | 4.2 | 0.77 | 81.3 |
| 9. | Existing physical plant | 4.1 | 0.73 | 81.3 |
| 10. | The school's mission statement | 4.0 | 1.17 | 78.0 |
| 11. | School size—enrollment | 4.0 | 0.71 | 77.1 |
| 12. | Financial resources | 4.0 | 1.02 | 76.6 |
| 13. | School board attitudes – learning | 4.1 | 0.82 | 75.0 |
| 14. | Extra curricular | 4.0 | 0.88 | 70.8 |
| 15. | Parental attitudes – learning | 3.8 | 1.05 | 70.8 |
| 16. | Staff development opportunities | 3.7 | 0.98 | 62.5 |
| 17. | Community standards and expectations | 3.5 | 0.93 | 60.8 |
| 18. | State educational requirements | 3.7 | 1.18 | 60.4 |
| 19. | Student attitudes – learning | 3.6 | 1.07 | 58.4 |
| 20. | Parental attitudes – change | 3.7 | 0.87 | 58.3 |
| 21. | Student attitudes – change | 3.3 | 0.96 | 37.5 |
| 22. | Standardized test results | 2.8 | 1.06 | 20.9 |

*Ranked by % agreement.

The 22 factors in this section can be divided into three main categories: (1) educator attitudes, (2) community attitudes (students, parents, school board, and state), and (3) organizational factors. The top six factors, ranked by mean score, all fall in the category of the perceived importance of educator influences toward facilitating change. Faculty and administrative influences are seen as highly influential by 87% or more of respondents (see Table 5). Two educators added comments on the influences of administration and faculty. One noted that it was the individual teacher who was responsible for providing alternatives to whole-class instruction, not the school. Another stated that "administration's finesse/attitude toward change is absolutely vital. The old 'Army way' (I'm in charge completely, unless there's a problem, at which time I will assign blame) makes change impossible."

The community attitudes ranked most influential by 70% or more educators were school board and parental influences (see Table 6). Student attitudes fall into this category. One educator noted that "student's attitudes toward hard work, attention span, and respect all seemed to be changing...and [she] finds it harder to motivate the average student." Another respondent commented that the high school couldn't "be everything to everyone. Parents and students should also seek alternative learning opportunities."

All organizational factors except state requirements (60.4%) and standardized testing (20.9%) were rated highly influential by 70% or more educators.

Table 5

Perceived Influences by Educators on Educational Decisions.

| Rank* | Influence | not infl. 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | strongly Infl. 5 | n | Mean | % 4 & 5 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | **Influence of Educator Attitudes** | | | | | | | | |
| 1. | Administrative support of faculty | 0 | 0 | 1 | 12 | 35 | 0 | 4.7 | 98.9 |
| 2. | Administrative leadership | 0 | 0 | 2 | 19 | 27 | 0 | 4.5 | 95.5 |
| 3. | Faculty attitudes toward learning | 0 | 1 | 0 | 21 | 26 | 0 | 4.5 | 98.9 |
| 4. | Faculty attitudes toward change | 0 | 1 | 1 | 25 | 21 | 0 | 4.4 | 96.8 |
| 5. | Administrative attitudes to learning | 0 | 0 | 3 | 24 | 21 | 0 | 4.4 | 93.8 |
| 6. | Administrative attitudes to change | 0 | 0 | 6 | 22 | 20 | 0 | 4.3 | 87.5 |
| 19. | Staff development opportunities | 2 | 3 | 13 | 22 | 8 | 0 | 3.7 | 62.5 |
| | **Influence of Community Attitudes** | | | | | | | | |
| 7. | School board attitudes toward change | 0 | 1 | 7 | 21 | 18 | 1 | 4.2 | 81.3 |
| 8. | School board attitudes toward learning | 0 | 0 | 3 | 24 | 21 | 0 | 4.4 | 75.0 |
| 15. | Parental attitudes toward learning | 0 | 3 | 13 | 18 | 13 | 1 | 3.8 | 70.8 |
| 16. | Parental attitudes toward change | 0 | 3 | 16 | 18 | 10 | 1 | 3.8 | 58.3 |
| 18. | Student attitudes toward learning | 3 | 3 | 14 | 19 | 9 | 0 | 3.6 | 58.4 |
| 20. | Community standards and expectations | 0 | 5 | 13 | 25 | 3 | 0 | 3.6 | 60.8 |
| 21. | Student attitudes toward change | 0 | 1 | 7 | 21 | 5 | 0 | 3.3 | 37.5 |
| | **Influence by Structure or Organization** | | | | | | | | |
| 9. | The school's mission statement | 1 | 3 | 6 | 16 | 21 | 0 | 4.0 | 78.0 |
| 10. | Existing physical plant | 0 | 1 | 10 | 27 | 10 | 0 | 4.1 | 81.3 |
| 11. | School size—personnel | 0 | 1 | 7 | 27 | 12 | 0 | 4.0 | 82.9 |
| 12. | Financial resources | 0 | 2 | 9 | 2 | 16 | 0 | 4.0 | 76.6 |
| 13. | School size—enrollment | 0 | 1 | 10 | 27 | 10 | 0 | 4.0 | 77.1 |
| 14. | Extra curricular scheduling/concerns | 0 | 2 | 12 | 18 | 16 | 0 | 4.0 | 70.8 |
| 17. | State educational requirements | 2 | 3 | 13 | 17 | 12 | 1 | 3.7 | 60.4 |
| 22. | Standardized test results | 2 | 14 | 20 | 8 | 2 | 2 | 2.8 | 20.9 |

*Rank order by mean out of the total 22 influences

*Findings Related to Educator Attitudes by Position or Years of Experience*

To determine the response to the third question, Do years of experience or position within the school affect an educator's perceptions or attitudes toward change?, participant responses were collated and examined separately: administration and faculty, and educators with ten or less years of experience or 11 or more years of experience.

*Attitudes toward importance of innovations and practices by position within the school.*

Null hypothesis one stated, "There is no difference between administrators and faculty members regarding their perceived desire to implement innovative educational practices." In this study it was expected that no significant differences would be found between administrators' and faculty members' attitudes. When the results of Section A, the importance innovations and practices, were examined by position within the school, seven of the ten innovations received a high agreement rating of 70% or more from administrators. Alternative scheduling, ability grouping and alternative instructional methods were slightly lower (Appendix E). Faculty responses ranked the same seven practices at 70% or higher (Appendix F).

Part A of the "Survey for Educators: Educational Innovations in Secondary Schools" provided the data to test this hypothesis. The responses of administrators and faculty members from each school to the ten statements under Part A of the survey were aggregated to provide a mean score for each item. The item mean scores under Part A were averaged to provide a total mean score to represent the administrators' and faculty members' attitude toward innovative educational practices. A two-tailed independent t test was used to compare the mean scores of the two groups. Table 6 displays the results of the statistical tests.

A t value of 0.58 was obtained in a comparison of the means of the two groups of educators regarding the implementation of educational innovations or practices. The critical

value of t at the .05 level of confidence with 41 degrees of freedom (taken from the table of t values) is 2.009. On the basis of these findings, null hypothesis one is retained. An examination of mean scores indicates that although administrators' desire to implement innovative educational practices appears to be slightly higher than faculty member's attitudes, the difference is not significant.

Table 6

Two-tailed t-Test Comparing Mean Scores Regarding the Desire Implementation of Innovative Educational Change Based on Position

| Variable | Position | N | M | SD | df | t value |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Attitudes Toward Innovative Practices | Administrators | 3 | 4.12 | .5 | | |
| | Faculty members | 43 | 3.93 | .43 | 41 | .058 |

*Perceived influence on educational decisions by position within the school.*

When the results of Section B, perceived influences on educational decisions, were grouped by the job or position of the respondent, administrators indicated that all but three of 22 choices were highly influential on decisions on educational change. Student attitudes toward change and parental attitudes toward change were seen as influential by 57% of respondents with a mean score of 3.8, and standardized tests received a mean score of 2.9 with 14.3% seeing them as highly influential (Appendix G). Faculty found fourteen of 22 (roughly one-third) to be of high influence. Only two of the statements were seen as highly influential by less than 50% of faculty—student attitudes toward learning (36%) and standardized test results (22%) (Appendix H).

Null hypothesis two stated, "There is no difference between administrators and faculty members regarding perceived influences on educational decisions." In this study it was expected

that no significant differences would be found between administrators' and faculty members' attitudes.

Part B of the "Survey for Educators: Educational Innovations in Secondary Schools" provided the data to test this hypothesis. The responses of administrators and faculty members from each school to the twenty-two statements under Part B of the survey were aggregated to provide a mean score for each item. The item mean scores under Part B were averaged to provide a total mean score to represent the administrators' and faculty members' attitude toward innovative educational practices. A two-tailed independent t test was used to compare the mean scores of the two groups. Table 7 displays the results of the statistical tests.

A t value of 2.172 was obtained in a comparison of the means of the two groups of schools regarding the perceived influences on educational decisions in secondary schools. The critical value of t at the .05 level of confidence with 21 degrees of freedom (taken from the table of t values) is 2.080. On the basis of these findings, null hypothesis two is not rejected. An examination of mean scores indicates that administrators' find more perceived influences on educational decisions than do faculty members, and the difference is found to be significant.

Table 7

Two-tailed t-Test Comparing Mean Scores Regarding the Perceived Influences on Educational Decisions Based on Position

| *Variable* | *Position* | *N* | *M* | *SD* | *df* | *t* value |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Attitudes Toward Perceived Influences | Administrators | 3 | 4.30 | .2 | | |
| | Faculty members | 43 | 3.93 | .2 | 21 | 2.172 |

*Attitudes toward importance of innovations and practices by years of experience.*

When the results of Section A, the importance innovations and practices, were examined by faculty years of experience, seven of the ten innovations received a high agreement rating of 70% or more by educators with ten or less years of experience. The practices receiving less than a 70% high agreement rating were alternative scheduling (60%), ability grouping (33%) and alternative instructional methods (60%) (Appendix I). These results are the same as those found when the data was analyzed by job position in the school. All ten suggested practices received a mean score of 3.0 or higher.

Educators with more than ten years of experience varied only slightly in ranking the suggested innovations from those less experienced. Five of the ten practices received a high agreement rating (Appendix J). Ability grouping and alternative scheduling were scored lower by percentage by both groups of educators.

*Perceived influences toward educational decisions by years of experience.*

Null hypothesis three stated, "There is no difference between educators of varied years of experience regarding the perceived influences on educational decisions." In this study it was expected that no significant differences in attitudes would be found between educators with varied years of experience.

Part B of the "Survey for Educators: Educational Innovations in Secondary Schools" provided the data to test this hypothesis. The responses of administrators and faculty members by years of experience from each school to the twenty-two statements under Part B of the survey were aggregated to provide a mean score for each item. The item mean scores under Part B were averaged to provide a total mean score to represent the attitudes of educators or less than ten or more than ten years of experience toward perceived influences on educational decisions. A two-

tailed independent t test was used to compare the mean scores of the two groups. Table 8 displays the results of the statistical tests.

A t value of .0.426 was obtained in a comparison of the means of the two groups of educators regarding the perceived influences on educational decisions in secondary schools. The critical value of t at the .05 level of confidence with 49 degrees of freedom (taken from the table of t values) is 2.021. On the basis of these findings, null hypothesis three is retained. An examination of mean scores indicates that although less experienced teacher's desires to implement innovative educational practices appear to be slightly higher than the attitudes of more experienced educators, the difference is not significant.

Table 8

Two-tailed t-Test Comparing Mean Scores Regarding the Perceived Influences on Educational Decisions by Years of Experience

| Variable | Position | N | M | SD | df | t value |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Attitudes Toward Perceived Influences | 0-10 years experience | 15 | 3.84 | .465 | | |
| | 10+ years experience | 35 | 4.10 | .337 | | |
| | | | | | 49 | 0.426 |

When results were grouped according to the participants' years of experience, 70% or more faculty members in both groups (10 or less years of experience, and 11 or more years of experience) rated 14 out of 22 factors as highly influential (Appendices K and L). The two groups differed (one group above 70% and the other below) on 6 factors: parental and school board attitudes toward learning, financial considerations, and community standards and

expectations. More experienced teachers perceived their influence as more important than did the less experienced teachers.

*Finding Related to Educator Attitudes toward Change*

The third section of the survey is a demographics section identifying experience, gender, subject areas and school system. Also included in this section are three opinion statements about personal attitudes toward educational change. Thirty-four participants, including six of the seven administrators, believed that teachers play the most important role in educational change (66.6%), followed by parents and teacher training institutions at 11.8% each and administrators at 9.8%. Almost 70% of educators surveyed (including three administrators) believe that there is a need for change in high school education, 28% were unsure and 11% saw no need for change. When asked how comfortable personal change might be, 42% (including three administrators) indicated that they would be comfortable with change, 58% were willing to try change, and 4% were uncomfortable with the idea of change in their classrooms (Appendix N).

## Section Five: Discussion

The purpose of this study was to determine educator attitudes about educational innovation and their perceptions about the factors that might influence decisions about change in their school systems.

In general, it seems that the educators surveyed agree that most, if not all, of the suggested innovations should be utilized in a Christian high school. Teaching critical thinking skills and using a variety of instructional approaches were most strongly favored by all groups of educators, except the less experienced teacher who placed alternative assessment and having a variety of student and faculty arrangements a little higher.

Only the concept of grouping students by ability rather than grade level or age was consistently ranked last, and even that concept received a mean score of 3.1 or higher by all groups but administrators. This is not surprising, considering that it is the administrators who deal with scheduling and school curricular structure, and are held accountable by a constituency who are comfortable with traditional educational structures.

The scores seem to indicate that current educational innovations are viewed favorably and are seen as valuable by educators. As indicated by comments by some of the respondents, educators realize that change is important to education to "take advantage of all the research that show how students learn" or to "find new ways to engage students." Or as another stated, "If you resist all change, you should not be in education."

The two least favored factors are the two that would most disrupt or change the way that education takes place in these schools. Grouping by ability would affect the traditional four-class arrangement (freshman, sophomore, junior, senior) commonly used for scheduling as would varied student and faculty grouping such as interdisciplinary team teaching, student grouping strategies, and teacher and team planning periods. Administrators and experienced educators are the groups that rated these two practices lower, perhaps indicating a comfort level with the way things are run or an understanding of how much change these innovations would bring to current educational practice. These innovations are fairly new and untested in the local Christian school systems, so perhaps the more conservative approach of waiting to see if they are "shown to be good ...feasible and practical" (in the words of a respondent) is what is indicated here.

Faculty and administration basically are in agreement about which innovations they most support. There are, however, some differences of opinion between lesser and more experienced

educators. The more experienced teachers place somewhat less value on alternate assessment and organizational options like team teaching and different scheduling options These two innovations were the only two that showed significant statistical difference in mean by respondents. Whether this is because they are less familiar or comfortable with these ideas because they haven't received recent instruction on them, or because they are more disruptive to the status quo isn't indicated. There is a risk of drawing conclusions from these differences because the sample is small and the differences are really less than a mean point apart. The differences are just larger than the differences between other options.

Change within a school system obviously involves decision-making. Someone or some group is ultimately responsible for seeing that change does or does not take place. The results of this survey indicate that almost all the factors listed are seen as influential in the educational decision-making process. The educators in this study agreed that administration and faculty were the most influential agents of change within a school. School board attitudes and practical aspects like size and cost follow. Parents, students and community fall to the bottom of the list. Again, listing the influences in this order may give more significance to the results than actually exist. For example, parental attitudes toward learning, ranked 20 out of 22 choices, still received a mean score of 3.7 and over half of the respondents highly agreed that parental attitudes toward change were important.

Differences in opinion between groups are very small and therefore probably not significant; however, there are some areas of difference between groups of educators. Administrators tended to find school board, community and parental attitudes more important that faculty did. Administrators also attributed more influence to the structural factors such as physical plant, enrollment and finances. This is not an unexpected response, since their job, in part, is dealing

with these influences. It was also not surprising that faculty felt that the strongest influences toward change came from themselves, the actual classroom practitioners, and from the administration that supports them.

While all educators agree on the influence of administration and faculty on educational decisions, the more experienced teachers tended to see influences outside the classroom such as financial resources, parental and school board attitudes as more influential than did the lesser experienced teachers. The most significant differences between these two groups' views were on extracurricular scheduling issues and community standards and expectations. No respondent commented specifically about these issues, so reasons aren't clear for these differences. One might assume that more experienced teachers are more aware of a community to which they have belonged for a longer time. More experienced teachers more likely have children in the system and are more aware of financial and parental concerns as well. Perhaps their longer tenure in education has given them more opportunities to interact with parents and constituents and be aware of their concerns. That same longevity may also contribute to their feelings about extracurricular scheduling. As students become more and more involved in sports and other outside activities, scheduling for academics becomes more pinched than it had been in the past.

The only influence that was clearly seen as relatively insignificant by all groups was that of standardized testing. Very few of the educators surveyed felt that it played a significant role in influencing educational decisions in their schools. In a day and age when standardized testing is seen as the key to evaluating effective education, this result was surprising. No respondent spoke specifically about this factor, but the attitude that teachers and administrators are most responsible for change displayed in this study might also account for this response. Standardized testing might be perceived as a force outside the school system imposed on the school instead of

originating from within the system. Controversy about the effectiveness of test results in measuring growth and learning may also contribute to this attitude. The fact that the study was conducted at private, parent-controlled Christian schools in the Midwest could also be an important factor. While the schools polled in this study are accredited and follow state and national standards, their standardized test scores pose little risk to the support of their schools. Their predominantly middle class, stable student population ensures scores that fall comfortably above the national average. As long as standardized test scores remain good, little pressure is put on educators to change current teaching practices and decisions. Perhaps, too, the independent nature of private education as opposed to public education would explain why educators do not feel that testing influences educational decisions.

This study does not find educators resistant to change as the review of the literature suggests. When the educators were asked about their personal attitude toward change and the agents of change, their attitudes were generally positive. Teachers see themselves as playing the most important role in making change in education. Their administrators agree with them. Teachers are either comfortable with or willing to try change in their situations, and over half (including roughly half of surveyed administrators) perceive a need for some kind of change in high school education. This might indicate that these educators believe that change belongs within the classroom—that individual teachers are responsible for implementing change. This ties in with the ideas expressed earlier that the two least favored innovations were those that affected structure. Teachers don't have a lot of influence on the structure of their school day and student assignments, but they have a lot of control over what is done in their individual classrooms.

These findings also may reflect the findings in the review of the literature that indicate that reform that is seen as non-disruptive is the kind that is usually favored. Change that affects traditional conventions seems to be more threatening and less likely to be implemented.

This study indicates that teachers in Christian high schools in Northwest Iowa and Southeast South Dakota believe that innovative educational practices should be utilized in their schools. It also shows that most educators feel that that they themselves are among the most influential decision-makers in the process of change. They also seem to recognize that many factors play an important role. The size of the sample and the homogeneous make-up of the participants may have strongly influenced the results of this study. Perhaps at most it demonstrates the common view of education these educators hold. It may also indicate contentment with or acceptance of the way their schools are currently operating. Satisfaction with things as they are is one of the barriers to change indicated in the literature.

However, it does raise questions. If everyone believes that innovative change is important to education, and if they see themselves as agents of change, then why does it seem that there is so little of it? This may simply illustrate the gap that often exists between theory and practice--a matter of not acting on what one believes. It also may be a problem of perception. It is possible that the change is actually alive and well in these schools, in which case this study might be based on a flawed premise. Individual teachers may be embracing innovative practices in the classroom which are not evident on a larger scale in the school system.

*Recommendations for further study.*

An important question that was not asked—to what extent do educators actually implement the given innovation—might shed light on how much innovation is actually occurring in the schools. Examining teacher perceptions of their use of innovative practices would also aid in

understanding their attitudes toward change. Even though educators did not assign a large role in decision making to parents or school boards, they do play an important part, especially in the private, parent-controlled schools represented in this study. Examining their role in change and decision-making is important and should also be considered.

Perhaps the problem of implementing change lies in delegating authority. Strong leadership could be an issue. No one influence or factor was seen as most important when it came to making decisions about change, although administrative leadership was ranked highly but never the highest. Further investigation into the role of governing boards and administrative leadership on educational practices and decision making could be beneficial in understanding institutional attitudes toward change. Cultural or community expectations for the educational system and attitudes toward innovation could be investigated. Parental or constituent attitudes and expectations toward school curriculum and the traditional structure of secondary education could also be explored, along with people's perceptions about the difficult task of balancing financial realities with theory and practice.

The role of post-secondary institutions and teacher training are not the focus of this study, yet 11% of the respondents felt that colleges played an important role in change in education. Investigating the leadership role of educational programs in post-secondary schools could contribute insight to the amount or pace of change in secondary schools.

Examining educator attitudes and perceptions is only one small part of understanding the dynamics of change in Christian schools. The results of this study present a positive picture of educator attitudes, but further study is needed to determine how best to encourage all involved in developing quality, well-rounded education that meets the needs of all students in the best possible way.

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# Appendices

Appendix A

**Survey for Educators**
**Educational Innovations in Secondary Schools**

Secondary education has undergone little change in structure, curriculum and methodology over the past fifty years. A variety of innovations and practices have been introduced in the intervening years to attempt to better meet the educational needs of secondary students. However, little change has taken place in most high schools. The purpose of this survey is to assess the attitudes toward new educational methods and practices on the secondary level in local Christian high schools.

Your responses will not be used to assess the educational program or practices of your individual schools, nor will they be used to compare schools. All answers will be kept completely confidential. The results will be used as part of a masters thesis about secondary education innovations and educational practices that support the purposes of Christian education.

**Part A. Directions. Each of the following statements suggests a particular innovation or practice used at the high school level. Please take a few minutes to respond to each statement by circling the appropriate number. The higher the number, the more you agree with the statement. (SD = strongly disagree, SA = strongly agree). Circle the n if you have no opinion .**

| | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | | | no opinion |
| 1. A Christian high school should provide an advisory program linking students and faculty for support and encouragement. | (SD) 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | (SA) 5 | n |
| 2. A Christian high school should group or advance students according to learning level or ability instead of by age or grade. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | n |
| 3. A Christian high school should provide alternative assessments of growth and learning (e.g. portfolios, exhibitions, projects and internships). | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | n |
| 4. A Christian high school should provide a range of organizational arrangements (e.g. interdisciplinary team teaching, student grouping strategies, teacher and team planning periods). | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | n |
| 5. A Christian high school should provide cooperative learning opportunities. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | n |

| | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 6. A Christian high school should provide alternative learning opportunities (e.g. community-based learning, distance learning, individual studies). | (SD) 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | (SA) 5 | n |
| 7. A Christian high school should provide a variety of instructional methods to meet student needs and abilities (e.g. teaching to learning styles, multiple intelligences). | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | n |
| 8. A Christian high school should teach critical or higher level thinking skills. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | n |
| 9. A Christian high school should consider alternative scheduling (e.g. block scheduling, flexible scheduling) to meet curricular needs. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | n |
| 10. A Christian high school should provide alternatives to teacher-directed, whole-class instructions (e.g. team teaching, mastery learning, interdisciplinary teams). | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | n |

**Comments: Please use the space below (or the back of the page) to add any comments you may have.**

**Part B. Directions. Please rate the following topics on the amount of influence that you believe each may bear upon decisions made concerning curriculum and practices at your high school. The higher the number, the more influential you believe that characteristic to be. (NI = not influential, SI = strongly influential). Circle the n if you have no opinion.**

| | (NI) | | | | (SI) | no opinion |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. Your school's mission statement..... | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | n |
| 2. Existing physical plant (building and grounds)..... | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | n |
| 3. School size—enrollment..... | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | n |
| 4. School size—personnel..... | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | n |
| 5. Financial resources..... | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | n |
| 6. Student attitudes toward learning..... | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | n |
| 7. Student attitudes toward change..... | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | n |
| 8. Parental attitudes toward learning..... | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | n |
| 9. Parental attitudes toward change..... | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | n |
| 10. School board attitudes toward learning..... | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | n |
| 11. School board attitudes toward change..... | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | n |
| 12. Administrative attitudes toward learning..... | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | n |
| 13. Administrative attitudes toward change..... .... | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | n |
| 14. Administrative leadership..... | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | n |
| 15. Administrative support of faculty..... | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | n |
| 16. Faculty attitudes toward learning..... | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | n |
| 17. Faculty attitudes toward change..... | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | n |
| 18. Staff development opportunities..... | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | n |
| 19. Extra curricular scheduling and concerns..... | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | n |
| 20. Community standards and expectations..... | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | n |
| 21. State educational requirements..... | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | n |
| 22. Standardized test results..... | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | n |

**Part C. Directions**. For each of the following questions, please place a check mark in the blank provided before the response that best describes your circumstance or opinion.

1. How many years have you been teaching at the secondary level?
   ___ 0-5
   ___ 6-10
   ___ 11-15
   ___ 16-20
   ___ 21-25
   ___ 26 or more

2. Are you ___male ___female.

2. What is the primary subject area that you teach? _____

3. School name: _____.

4. Would you describe yourself as:
   ___ administration
   ___ faculty
   ___ staff
   ___other:

5. Which statement in each group best describes your feelings?

a. ___ Teachers play the most important role in change in education.
   ___ Administrators play the most important role in change in education.
   ___ Parents/constituency play the most important role in change in education.
   ___ Teacher training institutions play the most important role in change in education.

b. ___ I see a need for change in high school education.
   ___ I do not see a need for change in high school education.
   ___ I am not sure if change is needed or not in high school education.

b. ___ I would be comfortable with changing the educational practices in my classroom.
   ___ I would be willing to try changing the educational practices in my classroom.
   ___ I would be uncomfortable with changing the educational practices in my classroom.

Thank you for taking valuable time to answer this survey. Please return it by **May 3** in the attached envelope.

Appendix B
Cover Letter

Kim Hengeveld
2980 Oak Hill Ave.
Sheldon, IA 51201
April 16, 2002

Dear Educator;

I am completing my Masters in Education at Dordt College, and as part of my final thesis, I am conducting a survey on attitudes toward change in Christian secondary schools in this region (northwest Iowa and southeastern South Dakota). The purpose of this survey is to determine what attitudes exist toward new educational methods and practices on the secondary level. The results of this survey will be used only in my thesis, and will not be used to assess your school's curriculum or to compare it to other schools. All answers will remain strictly confidential.

If you are willing to participate, I would greatly appreciate your opinions in this matter. Attached is the short survey and a return envelope. Please return the survey by May 3.

Thank you very much for your cooperation. Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions.

In Him,

Kim Hengeveld
(712) 324-3003
kenheng@rconnect.com

# Appendix C

## Population and Response Data

| Schools | #distributed | #responses | %from school | % total response |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| SFCHS | 19 | 9 | 47 | 18.8 |
| UCHS | 24 | 14 | 58 | 29.2 |
| WCHS | 29 | 24 | 83 | 50.0 |
| NA | 1 | - | - | - |

# Appendix D

## Demographics

| Years Teaching | # responses | % of total |
|---|---|---|
| 0 – 5 | 8 | 16.7 |
| 6 – 10 | 7 | 14.6 |
| 11 – 15 | 9 | 18.8 |
| 16 – 20 | 5 | 10.4 |
| 21 – 25 | 7 | 14.6 |
| 26 + | 12 | 25.0 |

| Gender | # responses | % of total |
|---|---|---|
| Male | 29 | 60.4 |
| Female | 19 | 39.6 |

| School Position | # responses | Subject areas | # responses |
|---|---|---|---|
| Art | 2 | Indust. Arts/ Consumer Sci | 2 |
| Administration | 2 | Library | 2 |
| Bible | 3 | Math | 5 |
| Business | 3 | Music | 5 |
| Counselor | 2 | PE | 2 |
| English | 7 | Sciences | 5 |
| Foreign Language | 3 | Special Ed/ TAG | 3 |
| History | 4 | | |

Appendix E

Importance of Innovation or Practice to Administrators

| Innovation /practice* | strongly disagree 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | strongly agree 5 | no response | mean | SD | % 4 & 5 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 Critical/higher thinking skills | 0 | 0 | 0 | 3 | 4 | 0 | 4.6 | 0.54 | 100 |
| 2 Varied instructional approaches | 0 | 0 | 0 | 5 | 2 | 0 | 4.3 | 0.49 | 100 |
| 3 Alternative learning options | 0 | 1 | 0 | 5 | 1 | 0 | 3.9 | 0.9 | 85.7 |
| 4 Alternate assessment | 0 | 1 | 0 | 4 | 2 | 0 | 4.0 | 1.0 | 85.7 |
| 5 Advisory program | 0 | 1 | 1 | 3 | 2 | 0 | 3.9 | 1.07 | 71.4 |
| 6 Varied student/teacher groupings | 1 | 0 | 1 | 4 | 1 | 0 | 3.6 | 1.27 | 71.4 |
| 7 Cooperative learning | 0 | 0 | 2 | 4 | 1 | 0 | 3.9 | 0.69 | 71.4 |
| 8 Alternative scheduling | 0 | 0 | 3 | 2 | 2 | 0 | 3.9 | 0.9 | 57.1 |
| 9 Alternative instructional methods | 0 | 1 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 0 | 3.7 | 1.11 | 57.1 |
| 10 Ability grouping | 1 | 2 | 3 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 2.6 | 0.98 | 14.3 |

*ranked by % of high agreement

Appendix F

Importance of Innovation or Practice to Faculty

| | Innovation or practice* | strongly disagree 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | strongly agree 5 | no response | mean | SD | % 4 & 5 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Critical/higher thinking skills | 1 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 36 | 0 | 4.8 | 0.67 | 97.4 |
| 2 | Varied instructional approaches | 1 | 0 | 2 | 5 | 29 | 2 | 4.4 | 1.31 | 87.2 |
| 3 | Varied student/teacher groupings | 1 | 3 | 4 | 19 | 11 | 2 | 3.8 | 1.23 | 75.0 |
| 4 | Alternate assessment | 1 | 1 | 7 | 13 | 16 | 1 | 4.0 | 1.17 | 74.4 |
| 5 | Alternative learning options | 0 | 3 | 6 | 16 | 13 | 1 | 3.9 | 1.11 | 74.4 |
| 6 | Advisory program | 1 | 1 | 8 | 18 | 10 | 1 | 3.8 | 1.10 | 71.8 |
| 7 | Cooperative learning | 1 | 3 | 6 | 16 | 12 | 1 | 3.8 | 1.19 | 71.8 |
| 8 | Alternative instructional methods | 1 | 4 | 9 | 15 | 10 | 0 | 3.7 | 1.20 | 64.1 |
| 9 | Alternative scheduling | 0 | 0 | 3 | 2 | 2 | 0 | 3.7 | 1.04 | 62.5 |
| 10 | Ability grouping | 1 | 12 | 8 | 14 | 4 | 0 | 3.2 | 1.08 | 46.2 |

*ranked by % of high agreement

Appendix G

Perceived Influence on Educational Decisions by Administrators

| Influences* | not infl. 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | strongly Infl. 5 | n | Mean | SD | % 4 & 5 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. Administrative support of faculty | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 5 | 0 | 4.7 | 0.50 | 100 |
| 2. Administrative attitudes to learning | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 5 | 0 | 4.7 | 0.49 | 100 |
| 3. Faculty attitudes toward learning | 0 | 0 | 0 | 3 | 4 | 0 | 4.6 | 0.54 | 100 |
| 4. Faculty attitudes toward change | 0 | 0 | 0 | 3 | 4 | 0 | 4.6 | 0.54 | 100 |
| 5. Administrative attitudes to change | 0 | 0 | 0 | 3 | 4 | 0 | 4.6 | 0.54 | 100 |
| 6. School board attitudes to change | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 5 | 0 | 4.6 | 0.79 | 85.7 |
| 7. School board attitudes to learning | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 5 | 0 | 4.6 | 0.79 | 85.7 |
| 8. Administrative leadership | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 5 | 0 | 4.5 | 0.50 | 100 |
| 9. Existing physical plant | 0 | 0 | 0 | 5 | 2 | 0 | 4.3 | 0.49 | 100 |
| 10. The school's mission statement | 0 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 5 | 0 | 4.3 | 1.25 | 71.4 |
| 11. Financial resources | 0 | 0 | 1 | 3 | 3 | 0 | 4.2 | 0.76 | 85.7 |
| 12. School size—enrollment | 0 | 0 | 1 | 5 | 1 | 0 | 4.0 | 0.58 | 85.7 |
| 13. Parental attitudes toward learning | 0 | 0 | 2 | 3 | 2 | 0 | 4.0 | 0.82 | 71.4 |
| 14. Student attitudes toward learning | 0 | 0 | 2 | 3 | 2 | 0 | 4.0 | 0.82 | 71.4 |
| 15. Extracurricular scheduling & concerns | 0 | 0 | 2 | 4 | 1 | 0 | 3.9 | 0.69 | 71.4 |
| 16. School size—personnel | 0 | 0 | 1 | 6 | 0 | 0 | 3.9 | 0.38 | 85.7 |
| 17. Staff development opportunities | 0 | 0 | 1 | 4 | 2 | 0 | 3.9 | 0.69 | 85.7 |
| 18. State educational requirements | 0 | 1 | 1 | 3 | 2 | 0 | 3.9 | 1.07 | 71.4 |
| 19. Community standards & expectations | 0 | 0 | 1 | 6 | 0 | 0 | 3.9 | 0.38 | 85.7 |
| 20. Parental attitudes toward change. | 0 | 0 | 3 | 4 | 0 | 0 | 3.6 | 0.54 | 57.1 |
| 21. Student attitudes toward change | 0 | 0 | 3 | 4 | 0 | 0 | 3.6 | 0.54 | 57.1 |
| 22. Standardized test results | 0 | 2 | 4 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 2.9 | 0.69 | 14.3 |

*ranked by mean score

Appendix H

Perceived Influence on Educational Decisions by Faculty

| Influences* | not infl. 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | strongly Infl. 5 | n | Mean | SD | % 4 & 5 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. Administrative support of faculty | 0 | 0 | 1 | 9 | 29 | 0 | 4.7 | 0.51 | 97.4 |
| 2. Administrative attitudes to learning | 0 | 0 | 3 | 20 | 16 | 0 | 4.7 | 0.49 | 92.3 |
| 3. Faculty attitudes toward learning | 0 | 1 | 0 | 16 | 22 | 0 | 4.5 | 0.64 | 97.4 |
| 4. Administrative leadership | 0 | 0 | 2 | 16 | 21 | 0 | 4.5 | 0.60 | 94.9 |
| 5. Faculty attitudes toward change | 0 | 2 | 1 | 20 | 17 | 0 | 4.4 | 0.67 | 94.9 |
| 6. Administrative attitudes to change | 0 | 0 | 6 | 17 | 16 | 0 | 4.3 | 0.72 | 84.6 |
| 7. School board attitudes to learning | 0 | 1 | 8 | 16 | 13 | 1 | 4.3 | 0.62 | 74.4 |
| 8. School board attitudes to change | 0 | 1 | 5 | 19 | 13 | 1 | 4.2 | 0.75 | 82.1 |
| 9. Extracurricular scheduling & concerns | 0 | 2 | 9 | 13 | 15 | 0 | 4.1 | 0.92 | 71.8 |
| 10. Existing physical plant | 0 | 1 | 8 | 19 | 11 | 0 | 4.0 | 0.78 | 76.9 |
| 11. The school's mission statement | 1 | 2 | 4 | 16 | 15 | 1 | 4.0 | 1.17 | 79.5 |
| 12. School size—personnel | 0 | 1 | 6 | 20 | 11 | 1 | 4.0 | 0.99 | 79.5 |
| 13. Financial resources | 0 | 2 | 8 | 16 | 12 | 0 | 3.9 | 1.07 | 71.8 |
| 14. School size—enrollment | 0 | 1 | 9 | 21 | 8 | 0 | 3.9 | 0.74 | 74.4 |
| 15. Student attitudes toward change | 2 | 6 | 17 | 9 | 5 | 0 | 3.8 | 0.94 | 35.9 |
| 16. Parental attitudes toward learning | 0 | 3 | 11 | 13 | 11 | 1 | 3.7 | 1.12 | 61.5 |
| 17. Staff development opportunities | 2 | 3 | 11 | 17 | 6 | 0 | 3.6 | 1.02 | 61.5 |
| 18. State educational requirements | 2 | 2 | 11 | 14 | 9 | 1 | 3.6 | 1.21 | 60.0 |
| 19. Parental attitudes toward change. | 0 | 3 | 13 | 12 | 10 | 1 | 3.6 | 0.54 | 56.4 |
| 20. Student attitudes toward learning | 3 | 3 | 10 | 16 | 7 | 0 | 3.5 | 1.12 | 59.0 |
| 21. Community standards & expectations | 0 | 5 | 11 | 19 | 3 | 1 | 3.4 | 1.0 | 53.8 |
| 22. Standardized test results | 2 | 12 | 15 | 6 | 2 | 2 | 3.0 | 1.13 | 20.5 |

*ranked by mean score

Appendix I

Importance of Educational Innovations and Practices – 1-0 Years Experience

| | Innovation* | strongly disagree 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | strongly agree 5 | no resp. | mean | SD | % 4 & 5 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Critical/higher thinking skills | 1 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 12 | 0 | 4.6 | 1.0 | 93.3 |
| 2 | Alternate assessment | 1 | 0 | 0 | 4 | 10 | 0 | 4.5 | 1.06 | 93.3 |
| 3 | Varied instructional | 1 | 0 | 1 | 3 | 10 | 0 | 4.4 | 1.12 | 86.7 |
| 4 | Varied student/teacher groupings | 0 | 1 | 0 | 9 | 5 | 0 | 4.2 | 0.78 | 93.3 |
| 5 | Alternative learning options | 0 | 1 | 3 | 6 | 5 | 0 | 4.0 | 0.93 | 73.3 |
| 6 | Cooperative learning approaches | 0 | 1 | 2 | 6 | 5 | 1 | 3.8 | 1.37 | 73.3 |
| 7 | Alternative scheduling | 0 | 2 | 4 | 5 | 4 | 0 | 3.8 | 1.03 | 60.0 |
| 8 | Advisory program | 1 | 0 | 0 | 8 | 5 | 1 | 3.7 | 1.46 | 86.7 |
| 9 | Alternate instructional methods | 1 | 0 | 4 | 6 | 3 | 1 | 3.7 | 1.41 | 60.0 |
| 11 | Ability grouping | 0 | 6 | 4 | 4 | 1 | 0 | 3.0 | 1.0 | 33.3 |

*ranked by mean score

Appendix J

Importance of Educational Innovations and Practices – 11+ Years Experience

| | Innovation* | strongly disagree 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | strongly agree 5 | no resp. | mean | SD | % 4 & 5 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Critical/higher thinking skills | 0 | 0 | 0 | 3 | 30 | 0 | 4.9 | 0.29 | 100 |
| 2 | Varied instructional approaches | 0 | 0 | 1 | 7 | 23 | 2 | 4.4 | 1.25 | 90.9 |
| 3 | Cooperative learning | 1 | 2 | 6 | 15 | 9 | 0 | 3.9 | 0.99 | 72.7 |
| 4 | Alternative learning options | 0 | 3 | 3 | 17 | 9 | 1 | 3.9 | 1.11 | 78.8 |
| 5 | Alternative scheduling | 1 | 2 | 9 | 13 | 8 | 0 | 3.8 | 1.00 | 63.6 |
| 6 | Alternate instructional methods | 0 | 2 | 5 | 19 | 6 | 1 | 3.8 | 1.02 | 75.8 |
| 7 | Alternate assessment | 0 | 2 | 7 | 14 | 9 | 1 | 3.8 | 1.10 | 69.7 |
| 8 | Advisory program | 0 | 2 | 9 | 14 | 8 | 0 | 3.8 | 0.87 | 66.7 |
| 9 | Varied student/teacher groupings | 1 | 2 | 6 | 15 | 7 | 2 | 3.6 | 1.32 | 66.7 |
| 11 | Ability grouping | 2 | 9 | 7 | 12 | 3 | 0 | 3.2 | 1.12 | 45.5 |

*ranked by mean

Appendix K

Perceived Influence on Educational Decisions by Faculty with 1 – 10 Years of Experience

| Influences* | not infl. 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | strongly Infl. 5 | n | Mean | SD | % 4 & 5 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. Administrative support of faculty | 0 | 0 | 0 | 3 | 12 | 0 | 4.8 | 0.41 | 100 |
| 2. Administrative leadership | 0 | 0 | 0 | 6 | 9 | 0 | 4.6 | 0.51 | 100 |
| 3. Administrative attitudes to learning | 0 | 0 | 1 | 9 | 5 | 0 | 4.3 | 0.59 | 93.3 |
| 4. Faculty attitudes toward change | 0 | 1 | 0 | 9 | 5 | 0 | 4.2 | 0.78 | 93.3 |
| 5. Administrative attitudes to change | 0 | 0 | 2 | 8 | 5 | 0 | 4.2 | 0.68 | 86.7 |
| 6. Faculty attitudes toward learning | 0 | 1 | 0 | 9 | 5 | 0 | 4.2 | 0.78 | 93.3 |
| 7. School size—enrollment | 0 | 0 | 2 | 10 | 3 | 0 | 4.1 | 0.59 | 86.7 |
| 8. School board attitudes to learning | 0 | 0 | 5 | 6 | 3 | 1 | 3.9 | 0.77 | 60.0 |
| 9. School board attitudes to change | 0 | 0 | 4 | 7 | 3 | 1 | 3.9 | 0.73 | 66.7 |
| 10. Existing physical plant | 0 | 1 | 3 | 7 | 4 | 0 | 3.9 | 0.88 | 73.3 |
| 11. The school's mission statement | 1 | 1 | 2 | 6 | 5 | 0 | 3.9 | 1.19 | 73.3 |
| 12. School size—personnel | 0 | 1 | 2 | 10 | 2 | 0 | 3.9 | 0.74 | 80.0 |
| 13. Financial resources | 0 | 1 | 4 | 6 | 4 | 0 | 3.9 | 0.92 | 66.7 |
| 14. Extracurricular scheduling & concerns | 0 | 1 | 6 | 5 | 3 | 0 | 3.7 | 0.90 | 53.3 |
| 15. Staff development opportunities | 0 | 2 | 4 | 7 | 2 | 0 | 3.6 | 0.91 | 60.0 |
| 16. State educational requirements | 0 | 0 | 5 | 7 | 2 | 1 | 3.5 | 1.19 | 60.0 |
| 17. Parental attitudes toward change. | 0 | 1 | 5 | 6 | 2 | 1 | 3.4 | 1.24 | 53.3 |
| 18. Parental attitudes toward learning | 0 | 2 | 5 | 4 | 3 | 1 | 3.3 | 1.35 | 46.7 |
| 19. Student attitudes toward change | 1 | 2 | 7 | 4 | 1 | 0 | 3.1 | 1.09 | 33.3 |
| 20. Student attitudes toward learning | 3 | 0 | 6 | 5 | 1 | 0 | 3.1 | 1.22 | 40.0 |
| 21. Community standards & expectations | 0 | 3 | 6 | 5 | 0 | 1 | 2.9 | 1.1 | 33.3 |
| 22. Standardized test results | 0 | 5 | 6 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 2.5 | 1.30 | 13.3 |

*ranked by mean score

Appendix L

Perceived Influence on Educational Decisions by Faculty with 11+ Years of Experience

| Influences* | not infl. 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | strongly Infl. 5 | n | Mean | SD | % 4 & 5 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. Administrative support of faculty | 0 | 0 | 1 | 9 | 23 | 0 | 4.7 | 0.54 | 97.0 |
| 3. Faculty attitudes toward learning | 0 | 0 | 0 | 12 | 21 | 0 | 4.6 | 0.49 | 100 |
| 4. Administrative leadership | 0 | 0 | 2 | 13 | 18 | 0 | 4.5 | 0.62 | 93.9 |
| 5. Faculty attitudes toward change | 0 | 0 | 1 | 16 | 16 | 0 | 4.5 | 0.56 | 97.0 |
| 2. Administrative attitudes to learning | 0 | 0 | 2 | 15 | 16 | 0 | 4.4 | 0.61 | 93.9 |
| 6. Administrative attitudes to change | 0 | 0 | 4 | 14 | 15 | 0 | 4.3 | 0.69 | 87.9 |
| 8. School board attitudes to change | 0 | 1 | 3 | 14 | 15 | 0 | 4.3 | 0.77 | 87.9 |
| 7. School board attitudes to learning | 0 | 1 | 5 | 12 | 15 | 0 | 4.2 | 0.83 | 81.8 |
| 9. Extracurricular scheduling & concerns | 0 | 1 | 6 | 13 | 13 | 0 | 4.2 | 0.83 | 78.8 |
| 10. Existing physical plant | 0 | 0 | 5 | 19 | 9 | 0 | 4.1 | 0.65 | 84.8 |
| 11. The school's mission statement | 0 | 2 | 4 | 10 | 16 | 1 | 4.1 | 1.17 | 78.8 |
| 12. School size—personnel | 0 | 0 | 6 | 17 | 10 | 1 | 4.0 | 0.98 | 81.8 |
| 13. Financial resources | 0 | 1 | 5 | 14 | 12 | 1 | 4.0 | 1.08 | 81.2 |
| 16. Parental attitudes toward learning | 0 | 1 | 8 | 14 | 10 | 0 | 4.0 | 0.83 | 72.7 |
| 14. School size—enrollment | 0 | 1 | 8 | 17 | 7 | 0 | 3.9 | 0.77 | 72.7 |
| 19. Parental attitudes toward change. | 0 | 2 | 11 | 12 | 8 | 0 | 3.8 | 0.89 | 60.6 |
| 20. Student attitudes toward learning | 0 | 3 | 8 | 14 | 8 | 0 | 3.8 | 0.92 | 66.6 |
| 21. Community standards & expectations | 0 | 2 | 7 | 20 | 3 | 1 | 3.8 | 0.72 | 71.9 |
| 17. Staff development opportunities | 2 | 1 | 9 | 15 | 6 | 0 | 3.7 | 1.02 | 63.6 |
| 18. State educational requirements | 2 | 3 | 8 | 10 | 10 | 0 | 3.7 | 1.19 | 60.6 |
| 15. Student attitudes toward change | 1 | 4 | 15 | 9 | 4 | 0 | 3.3 | 0.96 | 39.4 |
| 22. Standardized test results | 2 | 9 | 14 | 7 | 1 | 0 | 2.9 | 0.93 | 24.2 |

*ranked by mean score

# Appendix M

## Educator Attitudes toward Change

A. Most important role in change in education

| | # Resp. | % |
|---|---|---|
| Teachers play most important role in change | 34 | 66.6 |
| Administrators play most important role in change | 5 | 9.8 |
| Parents/constituency play most important role in change | 6 | 11.8 |
| Colleges play most important role in change | 6 | 11.8 |

B. Perceive a need for change in high school education

| | # Resp. | % |
|---|---|---|
| Yes | 28 | 60.9 |
| No | 5 | 10.9 |
| Not sure | 13 | 28.3 |

C. Personal attitude toward changing educational practices in his/her classroom

| | #Resp. | % |
|---|---|---|
| Comfortable with change | 19 | 42.2 |
| Uncomfortable with change | 2 | 4.4 |
| Willing to try change | 26 | 57.8 |