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Integrative Approach: A Teacher Evaluation Process to Improve Practice at Fraser Valley Christian High School

Abstract

This qualitative case study examines if the teacher evaluation process at Fraser Valley Christian High School (FVC) leads to improved teacher practices. In this case study, the author examines three current teachers at FVC who have gone through the evaluation process in the last twelve months and the impact the evaluation process had on their practice. FVC takes an integrated approach to its evaluation, combining both summative and formative evaluations with a focus on teacher participation in all facets of the process. Teachers at FVC are invited to consider how the domains of Planning and Preparation, Classroom Instruction, Classroom Community, Professional Responsibility, and Mission and Vision impact their teaching practice. These domains are considered through the use of dialogue, journaling, reading, peer observation, student surveys, parent surveys, and a summative evaluation. This case study demonstrates how the integrated teacher evaluation system at Fraser Valley Christian High School leads to improved practice.

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Comments

Action Research Report Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Master of Education

An Integrative Approach: A Teacher Evaluation Process to Improve Practice
at Fraser Valley Christian High School

by

N. Matthew Beimers

B.A. Dordt College, 1994

Action Research Report
Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the
Degree of Master of Education

Department of Education
Dordt College,
Sioux Center, Iowa
June 2008

An Integrative Approach: A Teacher Evaluation Process to Improve Practice
at Fraser Valley Christian High School

by

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Ere zij God!

Abstract

This qualitative case study examines if the teacher evaluation process at Fraser Valley Christian High School (FVC) leads to improved teacher practices. In this case study, the author examines three current teachers at FVC who have gone through the evaluation process in the last twelve months and the impact the evaluation process had on their practice. FVC takes an integrated approach to its evaluation, combining both summative and formative evaluations with a focus on teacher participation in all facets of the process. Teachers at FVC are invited to consider how the domains of Planning and Preparation, Classroom Instruction, Classroom Community, Professional Responsibility, and Mission and Vision impact their teaching practice. These domains are considered through the use of dialogue, journaling, reading, peer observation, student surveys, parent surveys, and a summative evaluation. This case study demonstrates how the integrated teacher evaluation system at Fraser Valley Christian High School leads to improved practice.

**An Integrative Approach: A Teacher Evaluation Process to Improve Practice
at Fraser Valley Christian High School**

Introduction

In developing or redesigning local teacher evaluation systems, we must eventually answer two questions. What do we believe good teaching looks like? What are the processes and procedures that will best fit what we want our system to accomplish?"

-Charlotte Danielson & Thomas L. McGreal (2000)

Teachers are professionals who engage in ongoing professional development; their hope is to be actively involved in an evaluation process that improves their classroom practice. The view of teacher evaluations as either a "hopeful activity or a troubling problem" (Peterson & Peterson, (2006, p. 1) need not exist if administrators and teachers collegially work together in an evaluation system that allows all participants to take ownership of the evaluation activities. Teacher evaluations can be hopeful and life-giving activities when processes and procedures are put in place that provides teachers both time and space to participate in both the summative and formative aspects of teacher evaluations.

Teachers simply do not believe that "principal dominated evaluation works well" (Bernstein, 2004, p. 81). Fraser Valley Christian's (FVC) administration and committees recognized this when they moved away from their previous "top down" evaluation model to a teacher evaluation system that stressed an integrative approach. This approach allows teachers to partner with administration and permit the teacher to view the process with pride, security, and the knowledge that ongoing improved practice is the goal. Improving teacher practice is tied to improving student learning; teacher evaluations that improve practice are not just important for the teacher, but are important for students' learning. The importance of transitioning to evaluations that are focused on improving

practice was an integral move to improving teacher evaluation as “what teachers know and can do makes the crucial difference in what teacher can accomplish... student learning in this country will improve only when we focus our efforts on improved teaching” (Eglson & McCloskey). When processes and procedures are put in place that are focused on improving teaching practice, teacher evaluations systems will indeed be hopeful, not just for the individual teacher, but for all constituents involved in education—teachers, parents, administration, board, and students.

In the context of teaching Christianly, evaluations are also an opportunity for teachers, students, parents, principals, and committees to analyze and discuss what we mean when we talk about ‘good teaching’. In this context, the truth is spoken in love, while recommendations and commendations are arrived at in community. The feedback received through parent and student surveys, the personal reflection teachers do through journal writings, and the recommendations from the administrator all contribute to helping teachers grow, not just as professionals, but as brothers and sisters in the Lord.

Teacher evaluations are one aspect of promoting schools as learning communities, where “learning more about teaching is considered to be a natural part of teaching” (Society of Christian Schools of British Columbia, 2001). In this sense, the entire community contributes to helping teachers learn more about the art and science of teaching in a process that is ongoing. The focus of teacher evaluations to improve practice at Fraser Valley Christian High is two fold: it needs to be focused both on Christian teachers and teaching Christianly; two things which must be linked together if Christian teaching practices are to improve.

Research Questions

The work presented here is a qualitative case study that describes, explores, and interprets the answer to the primary research question: “Does the evaluation process at Fraser Valley Christian High School lead to improved practice?”

Some of the sub-questions that need to be explored are as follows:

- 1) How does a teacher actively and authentically participate in an evaluation?
- 2) Why is teacher participation in the evaluation process essential to improving practice?
- 3) What is the purpose of teacher evaluations?
- 4) What role does formative and summative assessment play in teacher evaluations?
- 5) How can self-reflection in the teacher evaluation process be used to improve practice?

The design choice of using a case study was made because it provides an opportunity for the researcher to unpack the teacher evaluation phenomenon at FVC. A case study approach also provides detailed examples of the teacher evaluation system that will allow others to use it as an exemplar at their school. Credibility and transferability of this study are increased due to multiple teachers being used in the study. By using the case study method, “the focus is on understanding a particular work environment or structure and not necessarily on predicting results in other areas” (Van Maanen, 1988).

Definitions

The following definitions are provided to promote clarity throughout the study. All definitions are the researchers unless otherwise noted.

Formative Evaluation: Western Michigan University’s “The Evaluation Center” defines the formative evaluation of teachers as “an evaluation conducted primarily for the purpose of improving

the teacher through identifying that teacher's strengths and weaknesses”

(<http://www.wmich.edu/evalctr/ess/glossary/glossary.htm>).

Summative Evaluation: Western Michigan University's "The Evaluation Center" defines summative evaluation as "an evaluation conducted primarily for the purpose of making personnel decisions about the teacher (e.g., merit pay, reassignment, promotion, dismissal, tenure)”

(<http://www.wmich.edu/evalctr/ess/glossary/glossary.htm>).

Self-reflection: Western Michigan University's "The Evaluation Center" defines self-reflection as "the process by which a teacher reviews his/her past performance as a means of improving future performance” (<http://www.wmich.edu/evalctr/ess/glossary/glossary.htm>) .

Christian Teacher: Christian teacher is a teacher that structures a learning environment that “nurtures children's intellectual, spiritual, social, emotional, physical, and technical development” in a way that “educates children for a Christian life of faith, offering freedom to explore the work of the Lord in creation and in human culture and history” (Society of Christian Schools of British Columbia, 2002).

Teaching Christianly: Teaching Christianly is the acknowledgment that Christ is Lord of all of life and all of our classroom. Teaching Christianly is not just isolated to integrating faith and learning, but includes how we model the fruits of the Spirit, the safe (and risk-taking) atmosphere we establish in our classroom, how we discipline for restoration instead of just consequences, how and why speak the truth in love.

Professional Development: Professional Development is the “process by which competent teachers achieve higher professional competence and expand their understanding of self, role, context, and career” (Danielson & McGreal, 2000, p 99).

Improved Practice: Improved practice is the desire to improve techniques and practices that allow the teacher to create authentic opportunities and space for students to become responsive Disciples of Christ.

Participatory Management: Participatory management “is based on upon the idea that people are better than we think they are and can be counted on to make wise choices. A considerable amount of research shows that people learn faster, produce more, and are highly motivated when participative methods are employed” (Farson, 1996, p. 78).

Literature Review

For teacher evaluations to lead to improved practice, administrators must allow teachers to be active participants in the evaluation. Teaching is a complex job; perhaps more complex than many administrators remembers. When Fraser Valley Christian began to implement a new system of evaluation, the idea was to find a way to trust and rely on the teacher as the source of knowledge. Traditionally, principals have used an “inspection” or “dissection” hierarchal model that dates itself back to the 18th century. In moving to a teacher participation approach, the hope at Fraser Valley was to move to a “participatory management” approach that trusts the wisdom of all the participants.

Desiring evaluations to be more than participatory management, Fraser Valley sought to move the process from practice-based evaluation to principles-based evaluations. Principles-based evaluations “guide and empower people to think for themselves as they apply principles to various situations, whereas practice-based learning depends on rules and regulations that may work in one situation but not in another” (Beerens, 2000, p. 27).

Al Boerema was the principal at Fraser Valley Christian High when the school made an intentional transition to a more participatory process. Al was able to offer some historical

perspective on teacher evaluations at Fraser Valley Christian High and why the school needed to make the transition to a participatory system and why the school decided to dedicate time and money to ensure a smooth transition:

The history is that this task belonged to the principal and I found my attention divided by many other tasks. Evaluations would be carried out in a perfunctory manner for new teachers and more intensively for those who were doing a poor job and evidence needed to be collected to get them to make a major change, either in performance or employment at FVCS. I thought this important task might be carried out more regularly if someone had time devoted to this task specifically and no other major administrative assignments. (Boerema, personal communication, September 11, 2007)

Dennis DeGroot, the current principal at Fraser Valley Christian High, was the school's assistant principal when the school had a different philosophy on teacher evaluations:

The evaluations made the teacher feel like a 'specimen', supposedly the evaluations were supposed to provide a snapshot into their teacher, but there really was no teacher involvement. You would go into the classroom, take a few notes, and then go the Education Committee and either gives a thumbs up or thumbs down. Our school was pushed to transition by the Society of Christian Schools to make evaluations more reflective and to consider how to use the evaluation to improve practice. (De Groot, personal communication, September 14, 2007)

Teachers need to be involved in the type of reflection that "generates meaningful opportunities for professional growth and positive change in teacher behavior" which will lead to improved practice "since they self-reflect voluntarily, they are motivated to change and the change may be permanent" (Nicolic, 2002, p. 4). Self-reflection does require teachers to be vulnerable and to think

critically about current practice. When done properly, self-reflection does “enable us to evaluate our instructional and evaluative practices to become better learners and thus better teachers” (Ulmer and Timothy, 2002, p. 3). Self-reflection not only encourages ongoing professional development, but “treats the teacher as a professional and can improve teacher morale and motivation” (Beerens, 2000, p. 42).

The purpose and importance of formative evaluation is essential as it “promotes a closer match between the potential of the evaluation for contributing to school improvement and the actual contribution” (Stiggins and Duke, 1988, p. 4). Formative assessment is a key area that allows administrators to support teachers, both young and old in the everyday grind of the school year. It allows teachers to visit other classrooms, set individual or corporate goals, participate in professional development, and receive student or peer feedback. Students can play a key role in formative assessment, and more is being written about how to involve students in the evaluation process (Peterson, Wahlquist & Bone, 2000). Students who are given guidance on how to give constructive criticism and encouragement can be seen as a valuable and authentic part of the formative assessment phase.

Summative evaluation is completed by the administrator or designated evaluator. Key to the summative evaluation component of the evaluation being successful is the assurance that the final document is one that is seen as a living document. For that to be possible, teachers must have input even though the document is produced by the administrator. When teachers see the evaluation as a process in which they participate in, and a process that empowers them and gives them tangible ways to improve practice rather than just criticizing present practice, then “the fulcrum of empowerment allows teachers to move in both directions; the giver of power and the receiver of power” (Hughes, 2006, p. 69). The opportunity is then created to move the summative evaluation

process from a top down process to one in which “the empowered teacher accepts accountability and responsibility embedded in the action plan as the power to decide which criteria need to be addressed is shared by the teacher and the evaluator” (Hughes, 2006, p. 69).

The teachers’ perceptions of the evaluation process change when they see schools spending time, energy, and money on developing unique evaluation systems (Duke, 1995). FVC desired to be rid of “administrative driven teacher evaluation that is not much more than a focus on classroom management techniques where incompetent teachers are helped or enriched” (Stake, 1998, p. 5). When schools invest by training administrators how to properly evaluate teachers, and then provide that person with time, then practice will improve. (Marshall, 2005) One study indicated that “locally developed teacher evaluation systems were perceived as having a stronger impact on school improvement than state-mandated teacher evaluation systems” (Hughes, 2006, p. 60). The teachers know that the evaluation structure at FVC has not come from a position of privilege, but rather all stakeholders have played an important role in developing a process that is unique and rewarding.

The literature review supports the integrated program that Fraser Valley Christian High School has implemented because “no single research tool should be used alone. If we don’t have three or more ways of getting a look at teaching quality, we shouldn’t use any” (Stake, 1998, p 6). Not only are reflective practice, formative assessment, and summative assessment important to improving teaching, but the most effective teacher evaluations take place when the teachers perceive they have a voice that will be heard and trusted by the authority figure for the duration of the process (Beerens, 2000). When that happens, not only is collegiality built between administration and staff, but teachers become professional learners who implement new instructional strategies to improve practice. Finally, “multiple sources of evidence in case studies allows an investigator to address a broader range of historical, attitudinal, and observational issues” and “any problems of construct

validity can be addressed, because the multiple sources of evidence essentially provide multiple measures of the same phenomenon” (Yin, 1987, p. 91) .

The purpose of teacher evaluation is to give “teachers useful feedback on classroom needs, the opportunity to learn new teaching techniques, and counsel from principals and other teachers on how to make changes in their classrooms” (Boyd, 1989, p. 1). When an evaluation system is designed to meet that purpose, then teacher practice can improve.

In a teacher evaluation system whose intent is to assist teachers to improve practice, the school partners with a teacher by examining the “what” of teaching. The “what” is a time when all constituents in the evaluation reflect and discuss a teacher’s planning and preparation (knowledge of content, students, resources, assessment), classroom environment (emotional and physical safety, behaviour, rapport, displays), instruction (communication skills, pedagogical variety, engaging students, feedback, teachable moments), and professional responsibilities (self-reflection, record keeping, course work, extra- curricular responsibilities, certification, professionalism). The “how” of teaching “must allow for evaluators to make reasonable judgments regarding the quality of teaching” (Danielson & McGreal, 2000, p. 22). Simply; teacher evaluations must provide teachers with clear procedures and opportunities to show evidence that they meet specific criteria that has been laid out for them in the “what.”

As a Christian school, teacher evaluations must include the question of “why”. At FVC, the community is investigating the question of “why do we value the integration of faith and learning?” Although the investigation of such a question is complex and never ending, the question that FVC is exploring through teacher evaluation is “how can we help educators improve practice in the area of teaching Christianly?”

Finally, giving teachers time to come to a better understanding of one's identity as a teacher is explored in the evaluation. Because it is easy for an educator's identity to be wrapped up in the role as of teacher, the evaluation process helps teachers explore the importance of understanding one's self in light of a teacher's students, classroom, staffroom, and as an image bearer of God. Through the process of journal writing, reflecting on lessons, visiting other classrooms, a mentoring program, ongoing professional development and conversations, teachers understand that understanding one's self impacts teacher practice.

In the context of evaluating what it means to teach Christianly, evaluations are also an opportunity for teachers, students, parents, principals, and committees to analyze and discuss what FVC means when the community talks about "good teaching" from a reformed, Christian perspective. Teacher evaluations are one aspect of promoting schools as learning communities, where "learning more about teaching is considered to be a natural part of teaching." (SCSBC 2001) In this sense, the entire community contributes to helping teachers learn more about the art and science of teaching. The mission of FVC states:

While learning to walk in Jesus' footsteps, we seek to equip students with a biblical worldview that encourages serving others, living with integrity, and participating in Christ's redemptive claim on all of life.

One focus of teacher evaluations is to equip teachers with the necessary evaluations and feedback that enable them to fulfill this mission. The process of achieving these goals will be through teacher participation in both formative and summative evaluations, as well as intentional opportunities for personal reflection in the form of a journal.

The formal timeline for each evaluation is approximately 4-5 weeks. In the first week the teacher receives an introductory letter outlining some of the hopes and expectations for the evaluation

(Appendix A). Teachers receive an evaluation packet that consists of articles about teaching Christianly, expectations for participation, and a template that outlines what the final document might look like. The majority of the packet consists of opportunities for teachers to participate in the formative aspect of the evaluation. That being said, when a genuine and trusting relationship exists between the teacher and evaluator, then much of what is unpacked in the formative evaluation is used to make up the final summative evaluation. When the final summative evaluation is reviewed, there are no surprises. The goal of self-evaluation is for teachers to celebrate their strengths and contributions to the community, but also come to a self-realization that there are areas that need improvement. This self-realization is essential so that when recommendations are given in the final summative report, teachers are neither surprised nor do they feel like they've been ambushed.

While there is a clear expectation that teachers will be full participants in the evaluation, they are given various options as to how they will participate. It is important to consider what unique gifts each teacher might contribute to the evaluation process, and how best to use those gifts. That is, teachers have different strengths and comfort zones, and for teachers to fully participate in an authentic way, it is clear that teachers need to take part in a process that allows them to be themselves. If teachers do not feel like they can participate in a way that makes them feel comfortable, then suspicion creeps its way into the evaluation because then the perception is that the evaluation process isn't about improving practice, but really about accountability.

While the expectations for full participation are high, it is also important that teachers get a sense that administration is meeting them where they are at as learners; to use a "one size fits all" approach simply compromises teacher uniqueness. For example, teachers are given "big picture" questions about worldview and asked to choose one that resonates with them and their philosophy of education. If the teacher does not feel that the journal questions might help articulate or develop

a worldview of teaching Christianly, he or she is given a number of articles to read that will hopefully spur discussion in this area. Finally, if neither of those options works for their learning style, they can write a personal philosophy of Christian education journal entry. Once the packet is given, a pre-evaluation conference needs to be set up and some questions for teachers to consider for discussion are given two to three days before the conference (Appendix B).

Other opportunities for teachers to participate exist, and those opportunities are offered through the powerful process of self-reflection. The tangible and measurable outlet of self-reflection at Fraser Valley has been in the form of writing, although it certainly can not and should not be limited to that. At Fraser Valley, teachers are given questions to prompt their writing but the expectation is not necessarily that they answer each question individually in writing, but to consider how the question might enable them as they write. There are opportunities for writing and then dialoging (Appendix C). Other questions are intended just for the teacher, although they have the option to share with a mentor, department head, administrator or colleague (Appendix D).

Examples in both Appendix C and D are taken from the “Good Teaching Comes from the Inside”, the document produced by the Society of Christian Schools of British Columbia. While some of these questions are answered through writing or journaling, the hope is that the questions will connect those questions with other areas of teaching. For example, these questions might be considered when teachers are considering the essential questions of a unit, or they are working through a discipline situation, or when considering a new teaching strategy. Essentially, the hope of self-reflection is not to compartmentalize thinking, but to realize that when you consider all of these questions in the context of Christian education, it impacts every facet of what it means to teach Christianly.

Teachers are also given release time to observe another teacher in their department and a teacher outside of their department. Teachers have also been given time to visit other schools and then make connections to their own teaching in their journal reflections. It should be noted that providing teachers with time to reflect on their teaching is not something that should simply be limited to the duration of the teacher evaluation because “through such activities a school or district demonstrates its commitment to the continuing growth of its teachers” (Danielson & McGreal, 2000, p. 26).

Teachers are also asked to prepare student surveys that give their pupils an important voice in the process (Peterson & Peterson, 2006). FVC provides sample templates of student surveys (Appendix E), but each teacher is asked to create surveys that will allow students to give feedback on a wide range of topics. Teachers are asked to either give the survey to all their students, or to offer the surveys to a random sampling in each class. To date, all teachers at FVC have chosen to give the survey to all their students. Teachers have the option of either administering the survey on their own or having the evaluator or another teacher walk students through the process. All responses are anonymous and placed in an envelope at the front of the class.

The students are asked to give quantitative feedback on a scale of 1-5 on topics such as, but not limited to teaching methods, classroom management, diversity and creativity of lessons, and amount of homework. Teachers are encouraged to create specific questions about their perceived strengths and weaknesses, as well as create questions that they have always been curious to ask students but never have had an outlet to do so. Students are also given qualitative questions where they are asked to do some writing and provide individual answers to various questions. Teachers are asked to review the student surveys and to record any observations or tendencies they note. Surveys are then

passed onto the evaluator assigned to that teacher, and he or she does the same. The teacher and evaluator then meet to review the student surveys and share their observations.

The formative evaluation begins slowly when the evaluator spends ten to twenty minutes in the classroom at various times throughout the week and provides verbal or written feedback that celebrates small things that have been observed in a short period of time. Those initial evaluations should also take place at the beginning, middle, and end of various classes throughout that first week. The benefits of the evaluator slowly integrating him or herself into the class are varied: students and teachers adjust slowly to having an outside observer in the room; the feedback allows the teacher to see that the evaluator is not out to “get them” or simply there to make observations about classroom management; and the evaluator can make some initial observations about simple procedures such as how a class begins, how a teacher transitions between objectives, or how a teacher concludes a lesson and/or summarizes the lesson and assigns homework. After the initial week, the evaluator then commits to spending a minimum of three-75 minute classes in the room. The hope is that between the time, energy, and relationship building of the formative aspect of the evaluation and the ongoing feedback throughout the formative evaluation, there are no “surprises” on the final document—any concerns that the evaluator may consider putting in the formative evaluation must be discussed beforehand.

Once the formative observations are complete and ongoing feedback and conversations have taken place, the evaluator reviews all information, student surveys, self-reflection journals and any other artifacts that may have become part of the evaluation (e.g. teacher planning book, previous evaluation). The evaluator then creates a document that addresses the five domains that the FVC evaluation system distinguishes between: Mission and Vision, Planning and Preparation, Classroom Community, Classroom Instruction, and Professional Responsibilities. The document celebrates

what the teacher does well in each area as well as formally addresses any concerns that have already been discussed between evaluator and teacher. Each domain is concluded with a “commendations” and “recommendations” section. Commendations allow teachers to be genuinely praised for the gifts with which God had equipped them, and recommendations are given so that teachers had intentional areas of their teaching at which they could work. The teacher evaluation process at Fraser Valley Christian High School has moved from an administration driven check-list to an integrated approach that involves formative (coaching), summative (judging) and self-reflection. No one method is given more weight than any other, but is combined to create a system that leads teachers and evaluators to work together so that teachers may improve classroom practice.

Methods

The case study is based on documentation, open-ended, focused interviews, artifacts, reflections, and observations of the participants. This type of case study allows the investigator to “ask key respondents for the facts of a matter as well as for the respondent’s opinions about events” (Yin, 1984, p. 83). The “focused” aspect of the interview means that the respondent is interviewed for a short duration (approximately 1 hour). “Focused” also means that specific questions were created prior to the interview with the participants.

While the interview was still conversational in nature, some of the pre-determined and non-leading questions allowed for some authentic and genuine insight of the topic, as “the purpose is not to get simple yes and no answers but description of an episode, a linkage, an explanation. Formulating the questions and anticipating probes that evoke good responses is a special art” (Stake, 1995, p. 65). While the researcher of this case study can not determine whether the questions and probes could be defined as a “special art”, good discussion and dialogue about the evaluation processes at Fraser Valley did take place with the participants of this case study.

The process of gathering information began with informal discussions with each participant inviting them to participate in this study. Each teacher was then presented with a series of questions before the formal interview took place so that each one had time to consider the nature of the discussion. Those questions were used as a guide. Each participant was asked the same set of basic questions. Each interview also was unique in that some of the responses led to different sub-questions. Some dialogue then took place at Fraser Valley Christian High School as a follow up to the initial interview.

Each participant was also asked if he or she would be willing to share the self-reflection portion of their formative evaluation. Two of the participants, Margaret and Joanna agreed. All participants also gave permission for this researcher to view their individual summative evaluations that have taken place in the last twelve months. All participants also gave permission for this researcher to examine their teacher files to see if any relevant information could be used for the case study.

The researcher coded information based on the research questions posed earlier in this paper. Once information was coded according to the research questions, the author then began to look for common themes that occurred regularly throughout the questions. Coding was done initially with research questions in mind, and then the researcher began to look for parallel answers and themes throughout the interview. Those themes are discussed in the “results” section of this paper.

Biography of Participants

Each teacher has a unique narrative which will provide varied experiences and responses to the teacher evaluation process. These teachers were also chosen because it is important to choose participants who will best help us to understand the case that is being presented (Stake, 1995, p. 56).

The names of all participants in this study have been changed. The author interviewed two females and one male. The first participant, Joanna, is a teacher who participated in the evaluation process in

both her first and second year as a teacher. The participant is 26 years old. Joanna is currently teaching junior Bible and junior English. She is certified through the British Columbia College of Teachers and is a member of the Christian Teachers Association of British Columbia.

The second participant, Andrew, is a teacher who participated in the evaluation process in his 10th year of teaching. This participant is 33 years old. Andrew is currently teaching senior Biology and senior Physical Education. He is certified through the Independent School Association and is a member of the Christian Teachers Association of British Columbia.

The third participant, Margaret, is a teacher who participated in the evaluation process in her just completed first year of teaching. The participant is 46 years old and is currently teaching junior Bible and senior English. She is certified through the Independent School Association and is a member of the Christian Teachers Association of British Columbia.

Results

All three teachers believe that teacher participation is a key to the FVC teacher evaluation process, and that teacher participation works because of the trust built between the administration and participants. Margaret stated that although any teacher evaluation will cause anxiety, the system at Fraser Valley is reassuring because “knowing that it would take place in the context of relationship made the process much less intimidating.” Joanna did state it was easier and more relaxing to participate in self-evaluation in her second year simply because the relationship between evaluator and teacher has been strengthened over time.

Teacher participation is a hallmark of any locally developed system as participation “generates meaningful opportunities for professional growth and positive change in teacher behavior” (Nicolic, 2002) which will lead to improved practice. Fraser Valley puts a focus on positive relationships between all members of the community. Andrew indicated that the “the relationship with

administration is key to evaluation because you trust them” and that the trust made “the dialogue and rapport [between administration and teacher] fun and engaging.” The ongoing feedback and conversations that take place also build up trust because there is a sense that nothing is being hidden for the summative document.

All three teachers viewed their participation as much more than just journaling. Andrew indicated that his style of self-reflection and participation was least effective through writing because “when I write the meaning is lost, but I really appreciated the dialogue. I would talk and then grind it out in my head as I walked around. Personally, the chatting was how I participated best.” All three teachers valued the ongoing conversations about teaching that take place at FVC, and all three believe this openness also allows them to improve practice. When asked about what participation in the evaluation process looked like, Margaret used phrases such as “thinking, articulating, and reflecting”, while Joanna used words such as “reflecting, journaling, dialoguing, and questioning.” Participation in various forms of reflection is a key factor in the busy life that is full of lesson planning, marking, discipline, management, and extracurricular responsibilities.

In fact, these teachers believe that it is through honest, collegial dialogue between administrator and teacher that trust is truly built up. Margaret stated that “I was very aware of the support I was receiving throughout this process; it was very organic” while Joanna mentioned that the conversations that took place

helped me to be honest in my evaluation because I knew that he [the evaluator] was working to support me rather than judge or critique me...I had opportunity to discuss various struggles and accomplishments with him. In our evaluations, the process always begins with a discussion about what I wanted to establish in my evaluation. This level of communication establishes trust, which allows for authentic reflection.

All participants in this case study cited that authentic teacher participation is not only important, but that there is a direct correlation between teacher participation and improving practice. Margaret indicated that participation in the evaluation led to improved practice “because not only did it cause me to think about my specific teaching practices, it led me to think about how they fit into the vision of the school.”

The importance of creating a trusting relationship is vital when inviting teachers to participate in an evaluation whose goal is to help teachers improve practice. The dilemma of this system is that if the goal is to improve practice, then the assumption that is being made is that there are deficiencies in the participants teaching that need improving; this is no easy task for any teacher to admit, and to do so in the context of an evaluation that invites making oneself vulnerable in a personal reflection can compromise authenticity. But the participants wanted to hear from administration because their desire is to improve their practice. Andrew stated that in previous evaluation processes he “was frustrated because I never really heard how I was doing from administration, so you sometimes wonder how you are doing. Now I know what I do well and what I can do better.” This is why Fraser Valley stresses ongoing relationships, ongoing professional development, and ongoing talk about what “best practices” might mean in a classroom. When this type of trusting ethos is what is hoped for, and when done properly, self-reflection does “enable us to evaluate our instructional and evaluative practices to become better learners and thus better teachers” (Ulmer and Timothy, 2001).

The teachers also stated that participation through self-reflection allows the teacher to take more ownership of the necessary change. Self-realization is a powerful motivator when it comes to improving practice. Joanna noted that “self-reflection and participation in the evaluation process forced me to come to a better understanding of my teaching. I may not have discovered that if someone else had simply told me the same things.” Margaret noted that realization and

understanding through active participation also impacted teaching practice because she realized that “it is a similar process to the way a teacher should engage a student in learning by asking them to discover as opposed to simply telling them information which makes them passive observers in learning.” Joanna echoed this by stating the responsibility for participation should not just be put on the teacher, but that “learning is something that both the evaluator and the teacher must enter into, similar to a teacher and student in the classroom.”

Participation in the evaluation process at FVC not only encourages ongoing professional development, but ultimately FVC hopes it has created a system that “treats the teacher as a professional and can improve teacher morale and motivation” (Beerens, 2000, p. 42). One participant in this study noted that

Fraser Valley’s evaluation practice leads the teacher to make time for self-reflection during crucial teaching years; by the end of the evaluation the teacher is more satisfied with the time spent in reflection. I don’t think that anyone can help teachers improve practice if they are not given time to do this.

When teachers see the purpose of the evaluation as a process in which they participate in, and a process that empowers them and gives them tangible ways to improve practice rather than just criticizing present practice, then evaluation process moves from a top-down process to one in which “the empowered teacher accepts accountability and responsibility embedded in the action plan as the power to decide which criteria need to be addressed is shared by the teacher and the evaluator” (Hughes, 2006, p. 60). Joanna stated that having her voice heard was essential to the evaluation process because “the evaluation process began with a discussion about what I wanted to establish in my evaluation. This level of communication establishes trust, which allows for authentic reflection.”

Another purpose of the evaluation system at FVC is to provide the teachers with a barometer of their current practices. Joanna noted that the structure and purpose of the evaluation system was very important to her when she was a first year teacher because “new teachers can be fragile when it comes to constructive criticism, yet when the teacher is involved in the process, it is much easier to use feedback given for improvement and awareness.”

Another purpose of teacher evaluations that teachers see is that it is a form of professional development and learning. Andrew indicated how the staff often talks and discusses worldview and teaching Christianly, and that through the evaluation process he was able to think more clearly about “being proactive about worldview integration and what ‘assessment for learning’ and ‘assessment of learning’ might look like in my classroom. It made those ideas more personal.” This type of self-learning also impacts teacher practice, simply because now teachers become a model for learning to their students and

a major responsibility of the adults in a community of learning is to engage actively in their own learning, to make their learning visible to others in the community, to enjoy and celebrate their learning, and to sustain it over time-even (especially) when swamped by the demands of their work (Barth, 1990, p. 513).

The dilemma for Fraser Valley was how to use both summative and formative assessment in their process: the community did not see it as an “either-or” option, but believed a system could be in place that was participatory at every level of the process. A key aspect of FVC’s evaluation process is the final summative evaluation document, where observations are arrived at communally. Summative evaluations are an overall assessment of the teacher’s ability to teach Christianly and assist the school in making personnel decisions. Traditionally teacher evaluations have been limited to summative assessment models that have an administrator observe a teacher and give them a

rating that has the potential to be used for standardization and control (Egleson and McCloskey, 1998, p.16). This researcher discovered that because the teachers at Fraser Valley feel like they have a voice, trust has been built. The final summative evaluation document is really a team document, not just a final paper written by an administrator in a top-down bureaucratic system. Margaret's language is indicative of the changing view of summative evaluation at FVC; she stated that the summative evaluation phrase "gave me an opportunity to walk alongside by looking at all aspects of teaching together."

Key to the summative evaluation component of the evaluation being successful is the assurance that the final document is one that is seen as a living document. When that happens, the process is not necessarily seen as having an ending point, but rather is a shared process that is ongoing, well after the final summative evaluation is complete. When administration invests in its teachers long term, and teachers know this, that attitude and mentality of evaluation change. Joanna noted that it changes because "rather than feeling I had something to prove to the administrator, confidence in my teaching abilities is something that I am trying to achieve and I feel like my administrator is working alongside me to do so."

Andrew indicated several times throughout his interview that the final summative document "is a document I can refer back to and use as a barometer" to see if the goals that were set out to improve practice are being met. Andrew gave the example of discovering that he needed to improve the language of the "essential questions" in his unit plans and to reference them throughout his teaching, so that students have a clear idea of what questions are guiding the unit. This teacher said that the recommendations in his evaluation improved his practice because it has allowed him to focus on the overarching goals of what it means to teach Christianly in each unit. The teacher

mentioned that his desire, like most teachers, is to improve practice, but he felt this was the first evaluation process where tangible recommendations visibly aided in that.

Teachers in this case study also noted that they appreciated the celebration of their teaching that was recognized in the final summative document. Joanna stated that “our administration is supportive and I believe them when they affirm me and tell me that I do a good job, but the summative document was one visible way I heard from our administration that I really was doing a good job—that encouragement affirmed my best practices that I should keep on doing it.” This underscores the need for administrators in any system to catch their teachers doing things well and to provide ongoing feedback about those best practices, and as Joanna noted, the summative evaluation helped her “become aware of the things that I was doing well and it encouraged me to find ways to change ideologies or practices that were not having a positive effect in the classroom” while Margaret noted that the summative evaluation “helped me embrace my strengths in these [domain] areas, allowing me to give myself a little more grace and freedom to relax, and I appreciated the manner in which my weaknesses were addressed.”

The final summative document addresses strengths and weaknesses of all domains, has commendations and recommendations, and the teacher and evaluator discuss the document before both sign off on it (Appendix E). While the signatures conclude the formal aspect of the evaluation, the understanding is that the summative evaluation is a living document that is referenced often by both teacher and evaluator, and that ongoing conversations take place that allows both parties to assess how teaching practices have improved as a result of this process. While the summative evaluation is used to make personnel decisions and document formally any commendations or recommendations, the formative evaluation process is used to help teachers in their everyday, walking around teacher life.

The goal of a formative evaluation is to help and assist teachers to grow in the daily activities of teaching. The areas where growth should take place include pedagogical, spiritual, emotional, and intellectual. Activities included in formative evaluations may include committee or department meetings, student and parent surveys, education committee or board visits, peer observation, video-taping a lesson, mentoring relationships, or ongoing self-reflection in a journal.

All three teachers noted that the formative aspect of the evaluation is the most effective part of the evaluation system at FVC; Joanna noted that her self-reflection “led to improved practice more than anything else because I don’t think anyone can help teachers improve practice more than they themselves.” Andrew gave the example of how he became more conscious of integrating worldview due to a “combination of self-reflection and dialogue, and the dialogue gave me lots to reflect on.” It is true that the impact of self-reflection has the potential to be compromised by the willingness of the teacher to make him or herself vulnerable. A sample self-reflection through journaling from one of the participants is made available, with teacher permission, in Appendix G.

Because the teachers in this study are all relatively new to the teaching profession, they were more eager to engage in self-reflection that led to improve practice, knowing that improving practice is really about a responsibility to the micro community (students in the classroom) as well as the macro community (parent and school board, colleagues). Margaret noted that her practice improved because self-reflection

compelled me to stop and think about the big picture questions; not only did it cause me to think about specific teaching practices and my students, it led me to think about how my teaching practices fit into the vision of the school, and my relationships—not just student to teacher, but teacher to teacher.

Joanna relayed a story about how the teacher evaluation process invitation to engage in self-reflection impacted her classroom management strategies:

I have a story to answer this question: During my first year evaluation, as I was reflecting on classroom management strategies, I realized something that I would not have recognized had I not been given the opportunity to ask myself questions about management strategies. I had been becoming very frustrated when my students would start to talk or make noise during transition periods. As I was reflecting on this, I came to the conclusion that it was quite normal for students to chat with each other while worksheets were being handed out or while I was setting up for a lesson. Classroom chatter at transitional points was not at all taking away from the learning and perhaps improving classroom atmosphere. Although this sounds like an obvious statement and not such a big discovery, I needed to be prompted to think about this issue. Previous to making that conclusion, I had been wasting a lot of time and emotional energy trying to keep students quiet during transitions. Once I stopped with this, my relationships with my students and my classroom management became much stronger. No one else would have been able to help me change this particular practice as much as I helped myself, because it was largely a battle that I was having in my mind. Self reflection gave me the time and the head space to better understand what was happening in my classroom.

Teachers at FVC indicated that when given time to reflect on both the outer teaching world and the inner teaching life that pedagogy improves. These teachers at FVC believe that when they feel well and are given space to try and meet all the requirements that people place upon them, then their space and time is respected and they are more motivated to rise to the challenge of improving

classroom practice because “teachers are best able to serve students when they themselves have been adequately served” (Sergiovanni, 2005, p. 101).

Through the open ended but focused interviews, a review of the participant’s self-reflection journals, and their final summative evaluations, this qualitative case study discovered that the teacher evaluation phenomenon at Fraser Valley Christian High School does improve practice. Margaret stated that the process and purpose of evaluations to improve practice at Fraser Valley are clear and laid out, and that FVC offers a process that allows for “an evaluation that strengthens and encourages the individual teacher and by extension, the staff and student body. It leads to better teaching practices through awareness.” Joanna stated that for her the evaluation system at FVC leads to improved practice through self reflection, student evaluation and administrator’s guidance. I was lead to recognize the things that I do well as a teacher which allowed me to be more confident in my abilities, thereby teaching with more intensity and building positive teacher-student relationships with an understanding of my gifts in this area.

Discussion

Summary

This qualitative case study indicates that the teachers interviewed for this case study believe that the evaluation process at Fraser Valley Christian High School leads to improved practice. There is a significant amount of trust between the administration and teachers at FVC, and because FVC rightfully promotes ongoing professional development whether a teacher is being evaluated or not, dialogue about what “best practices” and “good teaching” are often taking place. When these conversations take place in the context of an evaluation, teachers and administrators are able to authentically partner in the evaluation process.

Fraser Valley's teacher evaluation system is a combination of summative and formative evaluation, with a focus on administration and teachers partnering together throughout the process. The teachers in this case study see the value of both the formative and summative aspect of the evaluation, and feel they are involved in both areas. The teachers in this case study took ownership of the evaluation process at Fraser Valley, combined with specific feedback through ongoing feedback and dialogue, the evaluation system at Fraser Valley Christian High School leads teachers to improve their practice.

FVC understands that if the community wants teacher to improve practice and teach well, than time must be given to “explore my inner terrain. But I can get lost in there, practicing self-delusion and running in self-serving circles. So I need the guidance that a community of collegial discourse proves—to say nothing of the support such a community can offer to sustain me in the trials of teaching and the cumulative and collective wisdom about this craft that can found in every faculty worth its salt” (Palmer 1998, p. 142).

The teacher evaluation system at FVC promotes self-reflection because FVC realizes that teachers are powerful learners. Not only does FVC acknowledge that teachers have a voice, they encourage them to listen to their inner-voice as a guide to improve practice. While self-reflection is a process that is hard to measure in tangible way, FVC has tried to create a culture where opportunities are regularly created to seek out the wisdom of the inner voice. That inner voice is part of the spiritual formation of the teacher—and when teachers know themselves and spiritual formation and transformation takes place, then it impacts practice. If one considers the busy lives of teachers and the expectations that administration, students, and parents heap on them each day, then FVC should not be surprised that too often teachers feel spiritually empty. Self-reflection at FVC means that the community is intentional about creating opportunities and sacred spaces for teachers

to not only reflect on their teaching, but on their spiritual formation. One of the goals of self-reflection at FVC is not only to consider how to *do* things well, but to consider what it means to *be* well. As Margaret noted, self-reflection made her “ask myself how I was going spiritually, physically, and emotionally—questions that are easy for me to ignore, but questions that I needed to answer for the sake of myself and my students.” This type of formative evaluation strategy “promotes a closer match between the potential of the evaluation for contributing to school improvement and the actual contribution” (Stiggins and Duke, 1988, p. 4).

Because the school administration creates time and space for teachers to enter into self-reflection, teachers found this to be the most powerful aspect of the formative evaluation process. Teachers were able to wrestle with many aspects of teaching: larger unit objectives, classroom management, and transitions between lessons within a single class, spiritual renewal, daily lesson plans, and teaching Christianly.

Conclusion

Implications

The implications of this research indicate that the integrated approach to teacher evaluations should continue. These teachers and the administration at FVC have built a trusting relationship and there is a true sense of partnership in the teacher evaluation process. Teachers have a voice in both the summative and formative aspect of the evaluation; and because that voice is heard and respected, the teachers themselves take much more ownership of the process. That ownership allows them to be vulnerable and share their strengths and weaknesses through self-reflection and in dialogue with the administrator. Teachers clearly understand that when the goal of the evaluation is to improve their practice and there are not ulterior motives, they are able participate freely and openly.

When teachers are able to participate freely and openly, then not only is administration able to help them address their deepest desires, needs, and fears, but teachers also come to know themselves better. At FVC it is apparent that a culture of trust has been fostered, and that through open discussions and a team approach to evaluations, all constituents acknowledge that the goal of evaluations is to improve practice.

Limitations

The limitations of this study will be in determining the impact of the modifying variables. Teachers at Fraser Valley Christian High are engaged in alternative forms of professional development which can potentially lead to improved practice. Some of the modifying variables could limit this study because the impact of these variables on teacher practice is difficult to measure in a tangible way. Some of those modifying variables include participation in the school's mentoring program, participating in monthly book discussion at staff meetings, attending at least one educational conference per year, visiting other classrooms and schools, and internal professional development days. A limitation is that only three teachers on a staff of forty professionals were interviewed.

Other limitations may be the seriousness with which the teacher takes the evaluation process. This could be impacted by cynicism towards evaluations, relationship between authority figure and teacher being evaluated, lack of professionalism, lack of readiness to learn, or teacher busyness in his professional or personal life. Other limitations could also include attitude or approach students take towards student surveys.

The researcher is an administrator at FVC and may be biased towards the evaluation system at FVC. The normative relationship between the teaching staff and the administration at FVC is a potential limitation of this case study.

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Appendix A: Introductory Letter to Evaluation

Name:

In our ongoing desire to evaluate and celebrate the contributions of new and veteran teachers, you have won first prize in our “evaluate a veteran teacher” raffle. Yes, some might suggest that “veteran” is a polite way of saying “old”, but I like to associate that word with “wise” and “insightful”! Yes, believe it or not, you have been chosen from **many, many contestants** and will receive a formal evaluation at absolutely no cost, no money down, and 0% financing until 2008.

In all seriousness, I see the mandate of evaluating tenured teachers as a chance to celebrate and honour the work you do, and hopefully to provide some new insight into your teaching practice.

A good starting point for me is to pass on some **pre-evaluation material**. At some point we need to set up a **pre-evaluation conference**; as well, I will be coming into the class informally in the few days leading up to an evaluation, as well as formally during the evaluation dates. I usually don’t stay for an entire 75 minutes, but just try to stay for sustained amounts of time over the week that adds up to 3 classes. As with all teachers, there will be some informal visits after the evaluation. We have moved to asking teacher to complete **the following things in a journal-type form (with teacher permission, I have provided some samples from previous years)**. A few things that **need to be done for next week or two in that journal**:

- **Self-Reflection-Sample Questions.** Please choose a few questions to do. Point form is fine, more just to give the discussion some direction. Could you also include some ideas of some things you would like me to look for in the classroom? In our pre-evaluation I will ask you what you would like me to key in on, and what you feel are your strengths and weaknesses.
- **Summative Evaluation: Self Reflection:** This is a bit of a check list of what is already asked for above. It will also give some help for me when I am typing up the evaluation.
- **Self-Reflection-Lesson.** Take time **after one of your classes** and just put some thoughts on a separate piece of paper. Hand this in as part of a journal
- **Student Surveys:** I have provided copies of the survey for specific classes. Please hand them out and give students time in class to fill them out. **All classes** should be given an opportunity to fill in the surveys. Once you go over them yourself, please pass onto me so I can look at them. Please make sure there are questions for students to give some written responses too. There can be valuable feedback and I am impressed by the time some students take (of course, there are the students who circle all 5’s or all 1’s, but most give some great feedback). These surveys can be done at anytime in the next two weeks.
- We need to set up an **evaluation conference**. Once you have given some thought to the questions and put some ideas on paper, and your students have completed the survey, let’s set up a time to chat it up.

- **All of the above in journal form:** This is a great way to go and also provides some valuable insights as I write the evaluation.
- If you have any questions, please stop by before, during or after the evaluation .

I am looking forward to watching you work in the classroom. Although the goals of any evaluation vary, I do believe three things come out of an evaluation: a) a celebration of the wonderful and dedicated contributions you have made to Fraser Valley Christian High b) a chance to be intentional as a “reflective practitioner” and look back on your teaching and a chance to look forward c) to set some specific goals as you move forward as an expert in your field.

Finally, a few verses that I read with you in mind:

“¹³Meanwhile, we've got our hands full continually thanking God for you, our good friends--so loved by God! God picked you out as his from the very start. Think of it: included in God's original plan of salvation by the bond of faith in the living truth. ¹⁴This is the life of the Spirit he invited you to through the Message we delivered, in which you get in on the glory of our Master, Jesus Christ.

¹⁵So, friends, take a firm stand, feet on the ground and head high. Keep a tight grip on what you were taught, whether in personal conversation or by our letter. ¹⁶May Jesus himself and God our Father, who reached out in love and surprised you with gifts of unending help and confidence, ¹⁷put a fresh heart in you, invigorate your work, enliven your speech.”

2 Thessalonians 2

Appendix B: Questions to Lead the Pre-Evaluation Conference

Teacher-Principal

Pre-Evaluation Conference

- 1) Any goal or goals for the year? Mentioned that things are different than in Toronto (eg, the office etc) any other examples?

- 2) What have you learned over the last year of teaching? What have you noticed or what has impacted you the most?

- 3) What would you say is your strength?

- 4) What would be your biggest challenge?

- 5) If you could do one thing differently this year, what would it be?

Appendix C: Writing Prompts for Self-Reflection

Curriculum comes alive in many different ways in day-to-day classroom experiences. Teachers implement curriculum in distinctive ways as they engage students in discussions, develop learning activities, or changes directions as they judge whether students are “with it” or seem to be off somewhere else.

- I. Identify a telling episode or example of classroom practice that reveals what is distinctive about your approach to teaching this subject to your students (e.g. a lab demonstration, an interactive group activity, a lecture followed by discussion, etc) Prepare a reflective memo about this episode based on the following questions:
 1. Why did you choose this episode? What is it intended to be evidence of?
 2. What is the broader context of this episode? Where in the course does this occur? How does this relate to what has come before and what is intended to follow?
 3. What were your goals for the day? Did the class go as planned or did you change what you usually do with this episode? How so? Why?
 4. What does this episode say about your teaching? Does it illustrate a characteristic style? A distinctive approach? Would other teachers in this field approach this the same or in a different way? Do you like what you see?
- II. Exchange reflections with a colleague, and after reading, engage in dialogue about qualities of good classroom practice?

Appendix D: Question Prompts for Self-Reflection Journal

1. What do I consider to be the primary purposes of Christian education?
2. As a classroom teacher, how do my practices fit into the big picture of what I see as the main purposes of Christian education?
3. What are my particular theories of teaching and learning? How do I view current technical and constructivist approaches to teaching and learning?
4. What does it mean to be created in the image of God? How might this impact classroom practice? How does it impact my view of learning?
5. How do my views of teaching, learning, and the student fit with this school's stated mission, vision, core values, and goals?
6. Am I still learning? What example would I give to illustrate my own learning? How is my own learning reflected in my teaching?
7. What would others consider to be my gifts in teaching? Are these gifts valued by the school community?
8. Am I satisfied with my "best practices" that I provide the school community? If so, why? If not, what am I doing about it?
9. What support, encouragement, edifying comments do I give colleagues and students in the school?

Appendix E: Student Survey Template

Student Survey: (Teacher/Course Evaluation)

Circle one:

Science 10 Bible 12A Bible 12B Bible 12C Bible 12D

Instructions: Read each statement, and circle a number according to the following rating.

Poor	Sort of	OK	Good	Excellent
1	2	3	4	5

Competencies/Characteristics:	Rating
Student Attitude:	
I have tried my best in this class	1 2 3 4 5
I have contributed to the learning environment through comments, questions, and general attitude towards the class	1 2 3 4 5
I place Bible class as a priority in my life	1 2 3 4 5
Teacher/Student Relationship:	
Demonstrates genuine respect, care, and interest in me as a person	1 2 3 4 5
Invests time in and out of class to help my individual needs	1 2 3 4 5
Understanding of Diversity:	
Understands diversity and how it influences learning	1 2 3 4 5
Creates a learning environment where student differences are respected and celebrated	1 2 3 4 5
Knowledge of Content:	
Demonstrates knowledge and commitment to course content	1 2 3 4 5
Designs appropriate and meaningful instruction	1 2 3 4 5

Curriculum, Instruction, and Communication Strategies:	
Teaches in a way that keeps my attention	1 2 3 4 5
Communicates ideas and information clearly and accurately	1 2 3 4 5
Uses learning activities that are interesting and enjoyable	1 2 3 4 5
The course encourages me to think for myself	1 2 3 4 5
Use of Assessment/Evaluation Strategies:	
Evaluates student work fairly	1 2 3 4 5
Learning Environment:	
Shows enthusiasm about teaching Bible	1 2 3 4 5
Creates a positive and comfortable classroom environment	1 2 3 4 5
Encourages class discussion and expression of different ideas	1 2 3 4 5
Models Christian behavior and standards	1 2 3 4 5
Classroom Management:	
Manages student misbehavior in an appropriate way	1 2 3 4 5

Please take the time to answer the following questions:

1. What are two (or more) things that Ms. Vandermeer does well as a teacher?

2. What are two (or more) things that Ms. Vandermeer needs to improve on in the future?

3. Please write down any other constructive comments about the course or the teacher.

Appendix F: Sample Teacher Evaluation Report

Teacher Evaluation Report

Name: Fraser Valley Christian High School Teacher (FVCST)

Date: March 29, 2007

FVCST is currently in his second year of teaching at Fraser Valley Christian High School.

This report is based on:

- several informal classroom visits
- a pre-observation conference
- informal conversations
- 3 formal classroom observations
- input gathered from student survey
- a post-observation conference
- a joint review of this document

This report addresses the areas specified in the Teacher Evaluation Policy recommended by the Society of Christian Schools in British Columbia and adopted by Fraser Valley Christian High School.

“While learning to walk in Jesus’ footsteps, we seek to equip students with a biblical worldview that encourages serving others, living with integrity, and participating in Christ’s redemptive claim on all of life.”

-Fraser Valley Christian High School Mission Statement

Introduction

FVCST is completing his second year of teaching at Fraser Valley Christian High. FVCST graduated from Dordt College in December of 2005. FVCST also completed his practicum at our school in the fall of 2005. FVCST currently has a “Temporary Independent School Teacher Certificate” that is valid until April 2009.

Biblical Worldview and School Mission

For someone who is relatively new to teaching, FVCST is successful at integrating his faith into his teaching. While finding tangible ways to integrate faith into Mathematics is not always easy, FVCST works hard to draw kids into the wonder of numbers, order, and equations. FVCST uses math to help students have a clearer understanding of **“the Creation as God reveals himself to us through it” (Course Outline)**. While not all students will love Math, FVCST’s mission for his classroom is **“about equipping students with the tools to both help themselves in the ‘real world’ and learn to appreciate and unfold Creation on a higher level” (Course outline.)**

Part of what makes FVCST’s integration of faith into his teaching so effective is that it is part of his own character. He has a quiet but strong faith that permeates who he is. Students know that he is a man of integrity and that he clearly demonstrates that **“staff are role models for students” (FVC Core value)**. FVCST also lives out his worldview in how he cares for students. The student surveys also include comments which point to an unspoken worldview that works itself out in FVCST’s compassion and love for all students. Student comments such as **“he spends as much time as possible so that everyone understands the material”** or **“he helps me whenever I need it”** or **“he is always willing to explain something to you even at lunch time and he always makes sure you get it, even right before a test”** indicate that FVCST understands that **“each person bears the image of God, and is uniquely gifted to worship and serve.” (Core Value #7)**

FVCST is also part of the Physical Education department. This past year FVCST has worked with a team of teachers to revise course outlines. The teachers in the department have considered some of the “essential questions” that guide each class. As FVCST worked through the revisions, some of the questions show FVCST’s desire to teach skills that are much larger than simply kicking a ball or scoring a goal. For example, in the grade 8 soccer unit, the essential questions were “How do we use space?”, “Does a successful team mean that you will win?”, “What does it mean to enjoy activity?”, and “What’s your role in a team setting and how does it impact others?” FVCST is encouraged to continue developing essential questions for all his outlines. In addition, FVCST is encouraged to consider tangible ways that he can keep these questions in front of students, and even to consider how to work the essential questions into formal assessment.

Commendations:

- For his work on essential questions and for finding practical ways to answer those questions in each unit.
- For encouraging students to consider how God reveals himself to us through Mathematics and Physical Education.

Recommendations:

- To consider how to assess whether students are able to connect the essential questions to their everyday learning experiences in a classroom.

Planning and Preparation

FVCST continues to be well planned. His units are organized in specific binders, and his daily lesson plans indicate he has a clear objective for each class. FVCST has the ability to adjust his lesson plans on short notice when needed, and has a good sense of when to push individual students or larger classes, and when to give them space and time, as he **“believes that while curriculum is something that is planned beforehand, it should also be an ongoing process” (Personal Philosophy of Christian Education)**. FVCST’s pace is excellent in class; students don’t get frustrated or complain about a lack of time; yet students don’t have time to get off task or get distracted more than usual.

FVCST continues to unpack what it means to plan for creative ways to integrate faith and learning. Part of his ability to do this simply comes through reviewing the essential questions and mission and vision as lessons and larger units are planned. In his personal philosophy, FVCST noted that curriculum **“generally focuses on knowledge, the development of socials, creative, and decisional skills should also be intentionally planned into the curriculum.”**

His grade book has an appropriate amount of marks in it. Since FVCST has such a wide range of students in each class, he should consider investigating the impact that differentiated learning could have in his Math class. That being said, FVCST works extremely hard at meeting students where they are at academically. By looking closely at differentiated learning, he may be provided with some alternative and creative ways to prepare and plan that will only further help him meet the needs of such a diverse classroom.

FVCST works hard to keep Edline up to date, knowing that **“we encourage a strong connection to our students’ families.” (Core Value #3)** FVCST updates his Math marks on Edline once a month and his P.E. grades with a little less frequency. Students appreciate that they know where they stand in FVCST’s class. Many students commented that they also appreciated how quickly FVCST returns completed work.

Many students also noted how prepared they feel for Math tests. One student commented that **“Mr. FVCST gives enough homework to help us study for tests”** while another said **“I like how we go over tests so we know what we’ve done wrong.”** After students take a test, FVCST continues to use that assessment tool to measure student needs. FVCST also recognizes that sometimes students can learn from each other, and a few students commented how they appreciate that **“he allows us to help each other”** which is an opportunity for **“students to learn advocacy and self-advocacy.” (Core Value #13)**

Commendations:

- For understanding that curriculum is something that can be planned for on a daily basis and something that is part of larger process.
- For clearly explaining concepts and recognizing when students need individual help.
- For going over homework and tests so students can learn from their mistakes.

Recommendations:

- To find a professional development opportunity (course, book, conference) that discusses how to use differentiated learning in a math classroom.

Classroom Community

FVCST has created an invitational and safe community in both Math and Physical Education. There is a real sense of camaraderie and team in all his classes. As with any class, not all students he teaches are excited about Math. Yet FVCST's ability to see Math through the eyes of those who struggle has been an encouragement to his students. In one class, FVCST had groups of students working on a project, two students going over homework, and he was going over an equation on the board with a student who was struggling to grasp how to solve a tough question. FVCST clearly understands that **“the school ethos must be safe, nurturing, challenging, and invitational.” (FVC Core Value #5)** FVCST doesn't need it absolutely quiet in the room, but he does require students to be respectful of others and that when students or the teacher speaks, others need to listen. The reality is that FVCST teaches a few classes where students struggle with Math and with staying focused, and he has done an excellent job of living in the tension that those students need a fair bit of space if they are going to succeed in the classroom.

FVCST has been intentional about creating a classroom community where people feel safe. FVCST has created a classroom where students feel free to make mistakes, and while FVCST should be commended for the help he gives students, he understands his role is to help students understand the concept behind a question, not simply to provide the right answer, because he acknowledges that **“education should be focused on allowing students to learn, rather than ‘be taught’” (Personal Philosophy of Christian Education).**

Physically the room is kept neat and organized. The tables in the room create a sense of team, although at times it can lead to some issues with students who require more attention. At times FVCST feels he can be “too nice”, and there may be times that he could tighten up with some students, but overall his class has a wonderful atmosphere and FVCST is also encouraged to trust

himself in regards to discipline. Now that he is in his second year, he seems much more confident addressing issues directly, and does so in a way that is conversational and does not seem judgmental. FVCST is very respectful of students and many students made note of that in their student surveys, making comments such as **“he always encourages us to try our best”** and **“makes one of my least favorite subjects not so horrible”**.

Many students in P.E. made comments on their surveys about FVCST’s positive attitude towards everyone, no matter what their skill level. One student said **“he treats everyone fairly and compliments people when they did a good job or tried hard.”** FVCST is commended for his integrity as a teacher and his ability to enfold students of all abilities. In observing FVCST’s classes and through reading student surveys, it is clear that FVCST clearly understands that **“authentic community is essential within the school.” (Core Value #2)**

Commendations:

- For valuing community and creating an atmosphere that is safe, challenging, and holds students accountable.
- For being a positive role model, living a life of integrity, and treating students with dignity and respect.
- For encouraging students to put in a solid effort in all they do, and not judging students regardless of ability.

Recommendations:

- To continue working on building self-confidence in discipline situations, and to trust his relationships with students even when he must “speak the truth in love.”

Instruction

FVCST does so much more than just pass on information to students, he is teacher at heart. FVCST’s teaching continues to show that meeting the individual needs of students is of utmost importance. In both teaching P.E. and Math, FVCST is excellent at explaining concepts. His examples in Math start out with basic examples to build student confidence. He slowly increases the degree of difficulty, but does by clearly explaining any new steps. When FVCST gives notes on the board, they are easy to follow. He allows students to ask questions, and responds positively. As one student in FVCST’s Math class said, **“He always lets us ask questions without making us feel stupid.”** FVCST also has the ability to recognize when students are not tracking with the lesson, and several students echoed one student who said **“He wants to make sure we all understand**

what we are learning, which is cool.” Some students feel that the homework they receive in FVCST’s Math class is somewhat excessive, but roughly the same number of kids commented that even though the homework is tough, they appreciated that they were prepared for tests. **“I like the amount of homework because it allows me to practice what I learned. I love the way the material is presented and have had no problem grasping concepts this year.”**

One thing for FVCST to consider is the purpose of homework. This is not to suggest FVCST randomly assigns homework, but to consider how homework is most effectively used as an assessment tool. FVCST continues to effectively use homework books in his Math class, something he began last year.

In P.E. he also finds ways to engage students in an activity in a way that builds their confidence. He is an encourager who has the ability to push kids because they trust him. Kids in P.E. noted that they recognized FVCST’s attempt to get everyone involved in P.E. activities, even though at times this can be difficult. Many students also appreciate how FVCST provides instruction, but also that he also joins in the activities, which allows him to gain a student perspective on how an activity is going.

Commendations:

- For finding alternative ways to engage students who might not care about P.E. or Mathematics.
- For assigning an appropriate amount of homework that enhances the concepts that are being taught in the classroom.
- For finding appropriate times and places to give students the individual help they need.

Recommendations:

- To consider possible alternatives for students who might not be using the homework book effectively or efficiently.

Professional Responsibilities

FVCST has begun to develop his leadership skills on our staff. While he is quiet and is encouraged to have more of a voice in meetings so we can benefit from his wisdom, he is comfortable to lead by example. His personal goals over the next five years include both professional and personal goals. A short term goal is to receive his B.C. College of Teachers Certification, while longer term goals include entering an M.ED program. In the classroom he would like to work at taking more risks and

to learn to be okay with failure. In his relationship with students his goals includes trying to develop a tighter follow up structure for students who struggle with inconsistent effort and poor grades. Personally he hopes to participate in a summer missions outreach program where he can use his teacher training. FVCST is also encouraged to apply for the Educational Leadership Development Institute which is hosted by CSI/SCSBC. This type of program would give FVCST some good indicators if Leadership is something he would like to pursue further.

On staff, FVCST is an assistant coach with the senior boys' soccer team, and one of the head coaches of the schools track and field team. He attends all staff meetings and "Touchdown" sessions, and communicates well ahead of time when he is unable to attend due to coaching responsibilities. He uses Edline well, and is a presence at school events like dances, concerts, and games. FVCST's passion for mechanics has also allowed him to build a bridge with students share that interest. FVCST uses his skills in mechanics to serve others in our community; earlier this year a student's bike was vandalized and FVCST took time out of his schedule to repair it and returned it back to the student in wonderful working order.

FVCST is also encourage to pursue any courses which aid in the development of curriculum and how it allows one to teach Christianly. One possibility is to consider enrolling in Elaine Brouwer's summer course at Trinity Western University.

Commendations:

- For considering his role as a potential leader in Christian education.
- For making a five year plan that includes personal and professional goals.
- For using his unique giftings to serve our community both in and out of the classroom.
- For his consistent attendance at required staff functions and for helping out with various extra-curricular activities.

Recommendations:

- To consider taking a Curriculum and/or Worldview course, possibly through Trinity Western University.
- To consider applying for the ELDI conference that takes place each July.

Summary

This report clearly highlights that FVCST is a fine teacher and his performance is satisfactory in every respect

Evaluation conducted by Matthew Beimers, Assistant Principal at Fraser Valley Christian High School.

Signature: _____

Date: _____

I have read the evaluation and understand its content.

Name: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Appendix G: Sample Self-Reflection Journal

Summative Evaluation- Self Reflection

A. Goals

I view Christian education as a huge opportunity. God has gifted me with the ability to see Christian education as an opportunity in two ways. For one, He has given me wisdom to understand the value of it. Secondly, He granted me with a positive experience of elementary, secondary, and post secondary Christian education. Thus, it is my responsibility to fulfill the opportunities of Christian education in my teaching. I seek to use Christian education to develop the faith of my students, encourage Christ like character, and consistently connect subject material with a Christian world view.

There are several ways that I seek to do this. I try to emphasize the importance of faith and a Christ like character in the context of a world view. My students know that I view faith and action upon it as the most important part of this life. I seek to teach from a Christian world view by presenting all subject material in the context of Scripture, hopefully making direct connections whenever possible. I especially enjoy teaching Bible, because I am always making direct connections to a Christian world view. At the same time, I appreciate the challenge of evoking wonder and awe in mathematics as well as incorporating Christian world view themes into literature studies.

Due to the relational nature of my students (people in general) the chief way that I seek to achieve my goals for Christian education is by modeling faith and a Christ like character in my interactions with my students. During class discussions I try to model an open minded attitude that reflects that I am comfortable not holding all the answers, while trusting the clarity of the Holy Scriptures in controversial areas. I try to let my students see a pure faith. I also seek to demonstrate care, support, and encouragement in my relationships with them.

Meeting my goals for Christian education can be a challenge. Sometimes I let my desire for classroom control and the completion of my well planned lesson to get in the way of the practicing the love that Christ shows. I also struggle to discuss my faith in without redundancy or clichés. I have to work hard to find ways to present the subject material in Bible in fresh ways that authenticates the excitement that Scripture offers.

B. Lesson/ Unit Preparation

My ideal lesson planning strategies are quite unrealistic. If I had it my way I would begin each unit with a unit plan that included a time schedule, complete lesson plans, and all handouts or resources that would be used during the unit. My actual practice includes a unit plan that outlines lessons and activities with completed lesson plans for the first few lessons. My lessons are usually prepared in my day book sometime in the week prior to when it will be taught. I feel that my

strategies for planning are quite effective and well organized. At the same time, for my own sanity, it would do me well to start off the school year with in depth unit and lesson plans for the first units I will be teaching in every course. I'm not sure that I will ever accomplish this, but I doubt that I will ever be able to let this dream go.

C. Classroom Atmosphere

I do a good job of keeping my room neat and well organized. This year, it could be more attractive, but I decided not to bother trying to hang posters on the concrete walls, with the good chance that they will fall down anyways. The bulletin board space that I do have is used to reflect student work and ideas. I have quite a few organizational systems in place to help to establish an orderly atmosphere in my classroom.

My ideals for a positive classroom atmosphere are as follows: students are engaged, students have fun, students are focused and abide by the rules, and a sense of organization is evident. While I do think that I am successful at creating this type of atmosphere most of the time, I think that I need to strive for consistency, so that students are aware of my expectations. A challenge for me is to maintain and encourage the atmosphere that I desire without breaking up the lesson too much.

D. Teaching\ Learning Activities

Effective teaching and learning activities should engage students and create excitement about subject material. Teaching strategies should hook students' attention so that they desire to learn. Learning should be evidenced by action, new understanding, or a change in previously bias or incorrect opinions.

My classes commonly include the following activities: discussion, lecture accompanied by discussion and visuals, games, drama, mini student/ teacher presentations, and visual representation activities. I think that I do well at using various strategies to teach, but would benefit from reading material that discusses new teaching techniques. So often I fall back on what I am familiar with for the sake of time. This is not necessarily a negative thing, because when I teach from what I am most comfortable with I am generally happy with the lesson.

E. Student Behaviour

Respect for peers and for the teacher is essential for me. I need the students to be in line with my goals for an organized and safe learning environment. One behaviour that I try to be adamant about is that students wait for the appropriate time to speak. I seek to encourage this through consistency in discipline and positive feedback. I need to ensure that I respond more frequently to positive behaviour in this area than I do to negative behaviour. I'm not sure that this is my current practice.

F. Student\ Teacher Relationships

Grade eight and nine students are at such a fragile age. I want to do everything I can to make life easier for them, while forcing them to meet their responsibilities and their potential. Part of this is ensuring that I demonstrate understanding toward the things that are important to them. I try to take time at the beginning of class (especially Bible class) to find out what is going on in their lives. I also seek to display patience and care for them as individuals, making the most of each interaction with each student.

I need to continue to strive to watch out for every student. It is so easy to get caught up in the lesson, forgetting to give students the attention that they need as individuals. I'm not sure that I have a solution for this very human flaw, but making a consistent effort to slow down during the day and at various points during the lesson is one step in the right direction.

I would like students to feel respected and appreciated when they come to class. I also desire that I would receive the same thing from my students. I need to continue to work to maintain emotional distance from the temperaments of my students. I can do this by seeking to give my students the support and encouragement that THEY need, rather than seeking their appreciation.

G. Relationships to Colleagues, Administration, Committees, Board

The support that I receive from my colleagues and the administration at Fraser Valley Christian is very important to me. I like that I can be honest with the staff, knowing that any questions or concerns I have will be well respected and dealt with. Both my colleagues and the administration have allowed me to feel at ease at Fraser Valley. My second year is proving to be one in which I feel right at home. I seek to continue to be release any pressure I may feel when being observed or in certain discussions.

H. Extra Curricular Activities

This year I have tried to cut down my extra curricular activities to a manageable level. My largest commitment this year is to coaching the Jr. Girls Volleyball Tier 2 team. I plan to help out with some student council activities, and to attend various sports games to show my support for Fraser Valley athletes.

I feel that I am pulling my weight on staff. I attend all staff and department meetings, with the exception of the meetings that are scheduled at the same time as a practice. I also fulfill my supervision duty on a regular basis (90% of the time this year), although I do forget to sign off too frequently. I do my best to clean up after myself in the staff room/ copy room and will occasionally complete a general clean up of these areas (WOW!).

I. Professional Goals/ Strategies:

One goal that I had after my teacher evaluation last year was to be more confident in my teaching abilities. To be quite honest, this may need to be a renewed goal for me. I hope that I am not being too personal as this will be filed away; confidence is something that I struggle with in all areas of my life. It bothers me that my teaching practice is affected by my confidence levels, as I feel my lessons could be more engaging if I had greater faith in myself.

I don't really know what strategies I can implement to fix this problem, because it is not a generic teaching dilemma with a competent solution. I feel that gaining confidence in my teaching abilities requires first gaining confidence in myself, which is something I have been working on, not without progress, for a long time. Continual prayer and focus at this will help.

I also find it challenging to feel confident at this point in the year because I am teaching two new courses with larger class sizes. Thus, I'm still going through an adjustment period. There are days in which I am quite confident in my abilities, and days in which I feel that my confidence is shattered. In the same way, there are days in which I love teaching, days in which I like it, and days in which I question why I am doing this. I don't expect these emotions to ever go away, and that's ok. It is the bad days that make the good days seem so good and I wouldn't give those days up for the world.

J. Things to Look for:

Positive (Things that I think I am good at):

- Organization
- Positive teacher\ student interactions
- Variety in teaching strategies
- Confidence in teaching abilities- any development since last year?

Negative (Things I may need to work on. I could use some feedback in these areas; Are these actual problems for me, or am I just worrying too much?)

- Use of redundancy/ clichés: I sometimes find it difficult to teach Bible without speaking with common evangelical phrases that are not necessarily based in Scripture.
- Classroom management: Am I too easy going about certain things? Do I interrupt the flow of the lesson when attempting to be consistent?

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Dordt College, expected 2008, M. Ed.; Focus: Curriculum and Instruction

Dordt College, 1994, Bachelor of Arts English-Secondary Education
Minor: Physical Education (K-12)

Practica:

Assistant Principal of Staff Support and Senior English teacher, 2003-present, Fraser Valley
Christian High School, Surrey, British Columbia

Middle School Assistant Principal-2001-2003, Langley Christian Middle and High School,
Langley, British Columbia

Middle School Humanities and Physical Education teacher, 1998-2003, Langley Christian Middle
and High School, Langley British Columbia

Primary School Physical Education and Secondary School English Teacher, 1994-1998, Manhattan
Christian School, Manhattan Montana

Professional Development:

Keynote Speaker: Christian Principals Association of British Columbia, Fall Conference, September
2007

Society of Christian Schools, School Review Team: Spring 2007, Spring 2004

Presenter: Christian Schools International Principal's Conference, Summer 2002

Educational Leadership Development Institute, Calvin College, Summer 2001

Christian Schools International Leadership Internship, 2001-2002

Member: Christian Teachers Association of British Columbia

Member: Christian Principals Association of British Columbia

Member: British Columbia College of Teachers