

4-2019

# Understanding Teacher Shortages in Christian Schools

Ralph Medema

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**Abstract**

This action research project investigated the reasons for the current teacher shortage in the Federation of Protestant Reformed Christian Schools. The research was a descriptive survey study with parents, teachers, and students serving as respondents. Three surveys were designed to measure perspectives about teaching and motivations for both becoming and remaining teachers among members of Christian schools from a Reformed Christian background. The survey results indicated some correlation with previous research, especially concerning the financial aspects of teaching. The survey results also demonstrated some aspects that make the perspectives and motivations of Reformed Christians unique. Suggestions for strengthening the ability of Christian schools to attract and keep good teachers included promoting teaching as a calling, increasing salary schedules to be more in line with each community's wage earners and other professionals, promoting support for teachers' life balance, and building structures for teacher growth and community.

**Document Type**

Thesis

**Degree Name**

Master of Education (MEd)

**Department**

Graduate Education

**First Advisor**

Patricia C. Kornelis

**Keywords**

Master of Education, thesis, teachers, supply and demand, Christian schools

**Subject Categories**

Curriculum and Instruction | Education

**Comments**

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

# Understanding Teacher Shortages in Christian Schools

by

Ralph Medema

B.A. Dordt College, 1988

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

Department of Education  
Dordt College  
Sioux Center, Iowa  
April 2019

Understanding Teacher Shortages in Christian Schools

by Ralph Medema

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### **Acknowledgments**

Thank you to my dear wife and children for their support over the past three years of my master's program coursework, especially for accepting the fact that Dad was gone again to his office so often on Saturdays or nights they were hoping I'd be home.

Thank you to the Dordt graduate school faculty and all my classmates for sharing their expertise and insights, for giving me the opportunity to grow personally and in my profession.

Thank you to my school board for supporting my work.

Thank you most of all to God above, my heavenly Father who gives me a life under His Son and by His Spirit that seeks to honor Him through my work as a teacher and administrator.

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### **Abstract**

This action research project investigated the reasons for the current teacher shortage in the Federation of Protestant Reformed Christian Schools. The research was a descriptive survey study with parents, teachers, and students serving as respondents. Three surveys were designed to measure perspectives about teaching and motivations for both becoming and remaining teachers among members of Christian schools from a Reformed Christian background. The survey results indicated some correlation with previous research, especially concerning the financial aspects of teaching. The survey results also demonstrated some aspects that make the perspectives and motivations of Reformed Christians unique. Suggestions for strengthening the ability of Christian schools to attract and keep good teachers included promoting teaching as a calling, increasing salary schedules to be more in line with each community's wage earners and other professionals, promoting support for teachers' life balance, and building structures for teacher growth and community.

There is a growing shortage of teachers both globally and in our country. Overall, studies including Cogshall (2006) have declared that more than three quarters of American public school principals and superintendents report that they face a shortage of teachers at least for some subject areas, and more than twice as many urban superintendents as suburban superintendents say they face a “widespread” shortage. More recently, Sutchter, Darling-Hammond, & Carver-Thomas (2016) recorded strong evidence of a current national teacher shortage that could worsen if current trends in supply and demand continue, so that the estimated national teacher shortage of approximately 64,000 teachers in the 2015–16 school year could increase to an estimated 300,000 new teachers by 2020 and remain close to that level thereafter. Based on their evidence, these researchers declared the teacher shortage is driven by four main factors: a decline in teacher preparation enrollments, district efforts to return to pre-recession pupil-teacher ratios, increasing student enrollment, and high teacher attrition (Sutchter et al, 2016).

Decreasing rates of students entering universities with education majors is the greatest contributor to this teacher shortage. Student interest in a career in K–12 education fell dramatically between 1966 and 2015: the percentage of college students aspiring to work in K-12 education either as a teacher or administrator dropped from about 23% in 1966, to just 10% in 1990, and to only 4.5% by 2015 (Eagan, Stolzenberg, Ramirez, Aragon, Suchard, & Rios-Aguliar, 2016). Locally, the number of new teacher licenses in Indiana dropped by over 10,000 in three school years (McInerny, 2016).

A look at the numbers among the Federation of Protestant Reformed Christian Schools (FPRCS) makes it clear there is a shortage and an impending growing shortage that parallels the national numbers. This shortage is due to growth in enrollment and in number of schools, both

grade schools and high schools, while the number of known young people preparing to be educators is inadequate to fill even the current open positions. Specifically, there are currently four Protestant Reformed college students expecting to graduate in the spring of 2019, with presently 15 open positions forecast for next school year in the 21 schools.

The Federation of Protestant Reformed Christian Schools has taken three steps to address this issue. First, FPRCS created a cooperative amongst the schools' boards and administrators by establishing a federation website to dialogue and share resources. To address this shortage, administrators cooperate to share teacher salary schedules and benefits for comparison and solicit information from our localities to identify the current Protestant Reformed young people attending colleges and universities with aspirations of becoming K-12 teachers. This helps track potential candidates for our positions and reach out to them for recruitment. Second, FPRCS has recently produced promotional videos that target high school students. These videos are accessible on the federation's website and are also recommended for high school guidance counselors to show to students who may be open to considering teaching as a career. Through interviews with current teachers, these videos especially highlight the vocational nature of teaching in a Christian school and the joys of teaching the covenant youth. Third, FPRCS has initiated a teacher mentoring program and continues to develop this program. Schools may choose to benefit from mentors within schools as well as across schools as needed. A pilot program has been run and more teachers have been trained to be mentors. But there is more that can be done.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study is to determine the primary reasons for the current and impending teacher shortage in the Federation of Protestant Reformed Christian Schools, and thus to prescribe an action plan that aids to resolve this deficiency.

### **Research Questions**

This study sought to answer the following questions:

1. What are the main motivations for Protestant Reformed candidates to become teachers?
2. What factors outweigh positive motivations?
3. What factors are the greatest contributors to attrition?

### **Definition of Terms**

The following definitions are provided to promote the reader's clarity about the terms vital to the study. Definitions are the author's unless otherwise specified.

Altruism – the teacher's unselfish devotion to the educational, social, and spiritual welfare of one's students; the teacher's giving of oneself in seeking the students' good.

Attrition - a reduction in numbers of teachers usually as a result of movement to another school, resignation, or retirement.

Burnout - exhaustion of physical or emotional strength or motivation usually as a result of prolonged stress or frustration.

Competence - the teacher's belief that they have been equipped with the subject knowledge and the skills they need to teach effectively and with confidence. (Pillay, Goddard, & Wilss, 2005).

Induction - the work of initiating a teacher into his/her experience within the setting and culture of a school; giving knowledge to help one fulfill his/her role.

Teacher identity – the person’s self-knowledge in teaching-related situations and relationships that manifest themselves in practical professional activities, feelings of belonging and learning experiences. (Dassa & Derose, 2017).

### **Literature Review**

There are many reasons for the decline in teacher candidates. Earning potential in the form of salary and financial security is one of those reasons. Park (2006) stated that the main reason for not wanting to consider teaching was that teachers earned too little money. Ingersoll and Merrill (2011) pointed out that teachers have long been called the “economic proletarians of the professions” (Mills, 1951) and posited that this was still the case; their data bore this out: the salaries of new college graduates who have become teachers are considerably below those of new college graduates who chose occupations. Ingersoll and Merrill (2011) continued that those economic differences remain throughout teachers’ career span. For instance, they referred to data collected in 2008 by the Bureau of Labor Statistics. These numbers showed that the average salaries of teachers were far below those of traditional professionals. And teachers are losing ground: Darling-Hammond, Sutchter, and Carver-Thomas (2017) wrote that U.S. teachers’ wages have declined relative to those of other college-educated workers since the early 1990s, when they were at their most competitive. While salaries vary significantly across and within states, in more than 30 states, the average teacher heading a family of four would qualify for several forms of government assistance.

Selingo (2018) wrote that the reasons for this national shift are many, but most academics attribute it mostly to the lingering effects of the Great Recession. Selingo (2018) asserted that since one of the earliest memories for the generation entering college right now is of Americans losing their jobs and sometimes their homes, financial security still weighs heavily on the minds

of these students. Eagan et al (2016) found that in the past decade the number one reason students say they go to college is to get a better job; for the twenty years before the recession hit in 2008, the top reason was to learn about things that interested them.

Job status and prestige is a second reason for the decline in teacher candidates. Research demonstrates a connection between salaries and societal status. Han, Borgnovini, and Guerriero (2018) explained that “aspects such as poor working conditions and low salaries have been linked to teaching being perceived as, among other things, less prestigious and therefore less attractive than other professions” (p. 5). Ingersoll and Merritt (2011) demonstrated how “public perceptions of which kinds of occupations are more or less prestigious can be assessed” and that “teaching, like many of the other female dominated occupations...is less prestigious than law, medicine, and engineering;” truly, lower than almost all of the other professions or “white-collar” occupations listed, excepting social workers. And in a large survey by Page, Page, and Shelton (1982) all respondents perceived salary, discipline problems, and working conditions as discouraging factors.

Connected to job status and prestige is a third commonly recited reason for the decline in teacher candidates, a growing lack of respect for teachers by students. For Park (2006) this was the number one reason in most subgroups of his study, and the number two reason behind salary among white students (p. 2). Along with the most frequently cited reason students gave for not choosing teaching as a career, “the salary for a beginning teacher is too low,” another notable reason determined by the Florida State Department of Education (1985) was that high school students do not show sufficient respect to their teachers.

High attrition rates also contribute to this shortage. Coggshall (2006) summarized 2004 research findings that spoke of the same reasons young people do not pursue the teaching

profession in the first place. About half of the teachers polled that left the profession within five years said the pay was too low, and 47% said new teachers do not get enough help and support. Thirty-eight percent said there is not enough respect for the teaching profession in society, and 25% said the reason teachers leave is because students lack discipline. Goldring, Taie, and Riddles (2014) stated that of the approximately 3.4 million public school teachers teaching during the 2011-12 school year, 8% left during the following year. Even more alarming was that “among public school teachers with 1-3 years of experience, 7% left the following year” (p. 3). Clark, Kelsey, and Brown (2014) summarized other studies that found extremely high rates of expected attrition: Heath-Camp and Camp (1990) and Marso and Pigge (1997) stated that over 50% of teachers leave within the first six years of their career, while Feistritzer (2011) showed that “40 percent of secondary teachers currently teaching in the United States (grades 9-12) do not expect to be teaching in K-12 schools by 2016” (p. 44).

The reasons for teacher attrition can be identified. According to Goldring et al (2014) “of the 8% of all teachers who left the profession, more than half reported they left because of the manageability of their workload” (p. 3). This workload issue was stated similarly in other studies as an issue of time. Clark et al (2014) wrote “many teachers leave because they experience burnout, anxiety surrounding family and life balance, and poor time management skills” (p. 44). Another part of this consideration is perception by gender. Tašner, Mihelic, and Ceplak (2017) discussed how orientation toward life and work balance is important to both genders, and that men in the education field are an exception to the rule, as opposed to orientation towards the centrality of work: it was found that women still decide for “typically female” fields of study, while men remain prevalent in “traditionally male” occupations because of this desire for life and work balance.

Another major factor recognized was the perceived lack of potential financial advancement. Ingersoll and Merrill (2011) identified salary schedules as a culprit: they observed that teachers' salaries, in both public and private schools, are 'front loaded.' The ratio of teachers' end-of-career to start-of-career salaries is less than two to one, which is far less than many other occupations and traditional professions. Front loading suggests limited opportunity for financial gains, can undermine long-term commitment to an occupation, and can make teaching less attractive as a career.

Higher attrition at private schools disrupts the idea that policies can influence turnover. Evidence suggests that private and public school teachers leave for similar reasons. Darling-Hammond (2017) showed that private school teachers who left their schools reported less administrative support, lower satisfaction with salary, less control over classroom policies, and less input into school policies—the same issues raised by public school teachers.

### **Why do people choose teaching as a profession?**

Research offers various reasons why people choose teaching as a profession, and the reasons vary in importance. Avgousti (2017) concluded good status in society and job security are positive factors for choosing teaching as a career, but the main factor is encouragement from others. This influence is strengthened when the teaching career is familiar; and having a relative who is a teacher positively affects this. Page et al (1982) found that the factor that best independently discriminated whether students would consider teaching was whether or not other individuals, especially teachers, had discussed the possibility with them, and that this was happening: 71% of in-service teachers polled would encourage a capable student to enter teaching.



Buijs (2005) believed we should view teaching as both profession and vocation but leans toward teaching as a vocation; this perspective highlighted the importance of promoting teaching as a duty or calling. Hellsten and Prytula (2011) supported these notions by reporting that the two themes arising from their interviews were “always wanting to be a teacher” and “significant others who acted as teacher role model” (p. 10).

To support this premise further, Park (2006) noted the most important reasons learners considered teaching as a vocation were that they would like to work with children, they were enthusiastic about knowledge and wanted to share it with others, and they wanted to contribute to society and community development. This idea of teaching as a calling was supported by Bakar, Mohamed, Suhid, and Hamzah (2014) whose analysis showed that altruistic factors like allowing one to be able to influence the next generation seemed to be the most dominant factors influencing the next generation to choose teaching, followed by intrinsic factors, and then extrinsic factors. These researchers concluded that altruistic reasons were the most dominant factor for both their male and female groups. Tašner et al (2017) showed clear findings that altruistic factors linked females’ perception of teaching as a vocation or calling to “mothering” concepts like caring, giving, and therefore helps explain the reason for continued numerical dominance of women in teaching, especially in the primary grades. And Thomson (2013) concluded that “the most powerful motivations for teachers to enter and remain in teaching were altruistic reasons” (p. 74).

### **What are the key strategies to attract teachers to the profession?**

Recent attempts to attract teachers to the profession in the public sector have included financial aid. McInerny (2016) noted two recent actions taking aim at the decreasing teacher program enrollments in Indiana. The first action was Indiana’s state legislature’s effort to

increase the teaching force in Indiana by implementing a new program named the Next Generation Hoosier Educator Scholarship. This program gives up to \$7,500 a year to an Indiana high school student graduating in the top 20% of their class. To qualify, students must commit to earning a teaching degree at an Indiana university and teaching in an Indiana classroom for five years after graduation. The second action taken was by the Commission for Higher Education, a state agency that awarded \$9 million in grants to institutions committed to recruiting and training teachers in science, technology, engineering and math subjects. Grant money funds various initiatives, including teacher training for STEM subjects, dual credit credentialing, mentoring programs and retention programs. These actions are very recent, so their impact cannot yet be quantified.

A national study by Coggshall (2006) found that although teachers do not tend to go into teaching for the money, more than eight in ten Americans would encourage a family member to teach if the salary was at least \$60,000 per year, and about six in ten of those surveyed said they would consider teaching for that salary. Also, of current university students who stated that teaching was a profession they might consider, 47% said they might give it a try if teaching paid more than it does. Thus, financial incentives could expand the pool of teachers. Further, Coggshall (2006) found that Americans might support higher salaries to recruit teachers: More than 80% said they would pay \$10 a year more in taxes to help even the wage disparity between teachers and other professionals with the same level of education. Also, Coggshall (2006) showed that Americans in general supported increasing salaries to both hire and retain good teachers accordingly: Fifty percent strongly and 33% somewhat favored it, even if it meant increasing taxes. Seventy-five percent of Americans also supported hiring more teachers to reduce class sizes even if it means raising taxes. However, the same 2006 study concluded that

the majority of new teachers prefer schools in which students behave, parents are involved, and administrators are supportive over those where they are paid more.

Buijs (2005) wrote, “The challenge is, on the one hand, to elevate the teaching vocation with the values of professional status, and, on the other hand, to imbue the teaching profession with the values of a vocation” (p. 342). Pietrzak et al (2011) echoed the thoughts of Buijs (2005) with more specific recommendations for more focused efforts to place a positive face on the profession. They prescribed that though increasing salary and benefits packages would directly increase professional prestige, this should not be the main emphasis; rather, marketing the education profession more as a “community service” or “giving back, “much like the Peace Corps” (p. 31). Included in this idea of promotion was the fact that the future status of the teaching profession is dependent on the way today’s teachers portray their job and the advice they give students on choosing teaching as a career. The Education Standards Commissions report on its 1985 findings in Florida recommended that classroom teachers be both the primary source of information about teaching as a career as well as key promoters to prospective students that would at the very least increase the percentage of students who would consider teaching as a career possibility. Han et al (2018) explicated that though salary is a strong incentive and that while most of the discourse in the academic writing and among policy makers focused on extrinsic economic factors alone, their study has shown that altruistic motives and social utility are also important factors, especially among academically talented students in mathematics.

Another solution to the teacher shortage issue is to attract former teachers back into the profession and to attract other professionals to the field of education. Clark et al (2014) maintained that when teachers have time away from teaching to reevaluate their roles and then are given the opportunity to return with a certain amount of autonomy and a voice in their

workload, they return with a new mindset focused on life balance and increased job satisfaction. Backes and Burns (2008) suggested the keys to attracting and keeping teachers from other fields such as healthcare and trades is to show them respect for their professions at the same time as giving them more opportunities to collaborate with academic teachers. Morettini (2014) concluded that second-career teachers from science, technology, engineering, and math careers have similar motivations as traditional teachers. Since these teachers see an opportunity to be even more intimately involved with the discipline or subject matter they love than their peers who have remained in their original professions, schools should promote this opportunity in their recruitment efforts.

### **What are the key strategies to keep teachers in the profession?**

To ensure that teachers remain in the profession, it is important to understand the needs of beginning teachers. Dassa and Derose (2017) determined that when students created their teacher identity during the practicum experiences of their teacher education program: internalizing their experiences, making connections to see pedagogy applied, and establishing themselves as teachers and no longer as students, they make a transition that is crucial to deter early attrition, and “they are more likely to stay grounded as the changes occur” (p. 110). Dassa and Derose (2017) recommended that teacher training programs need to be centrally focused on helping students make the transition from identifying themselves and acting as students to identifying themselves and acting as teachers who are prepared and therefore assert their control.

Strategies should also be implemented to avoid burnout. Speaking to the potential for burnout, Clark et al (2014) stated that administrative support is critical to the success of teachers and recommended that teacher educators teach preservice teachers coping strategies through social and emotional learning and that less experienced teachers learn from mature, career

teachers. Clark et al (2014) wrote that preservice teachers should be educated about coping strategies and developing emotional intelligence to make wise career and family-related decisions. Then these preservice teachers would be more likely to encounter fewer obstacles that they could not get past and they would experience deeper job satisfaction; this in turn would lead to higher retention rates. When burnout was described in terms of emotional exhaustion, Pillay, et al, (2005) asserted that increasing principal support and reducing teachers' feelings of isolation will help the most. They pointed to implementing intervention strategies to help those who are currently teaching but are experiencing low levels of competence. It is imperative that supervising teachers or principals provide the support and opportunities for growth teachers need.

Moretini (2014) specifically recommended mentoring as a support tool. She claimed that teacher preparation programs can continue to support teachers by offering consistent mentoring not only during their Student teaching, but also throughout their first year in the classroom; she claimed that retention could be increased if programs were implemented that continued to offer intensive support to participants beyond their recruitment and hiring and well into participants' first year in the classroom, because this support would continually affirm a new teacher's reasons for choosing the profession. Moretini (2014) also asserted the need for informal mentoring between practicing teachers to help give them reasons to stay in the classroom, and she advised for teachers to be given tools and resources to develop mentors such as online modules, webinars, and in-school professional development sessions (p. 18).

The need for peer support is also true for transitional teachers who come from other professions or careers into teaching using alternative teacher certification. Backes and Burns (2008) indicated that teachers need to feel respected by their peers and so ought to be given

collaboration opportunities with other teachers to share their areas of expertise. Backes and Burns (2008) also asserted their belief that we must understand the career motivations of new teachers who have come from other professions to provide better induction into the educational field, and to provide mentoring that matches needs and therefore provides for stronger retention. McCarty and Dietz (2011) concluded, "Meeting the needs of prospective transitional teachers in Nebraska means using an experiential learning and intensive supervision and mentoring model such as that provided by the Nebraska Transition to Teaching program" (p. 50).

Hellsten and Prytula (2011) showed how teacher motivation changes from altruistic ideas such as making a difference in people's lives and working with children or youth, to other factors such as having one's own classroom, salary and benefits, and professional quality of life (p. 11). Hellsten and Prytula (2011) concluded that it is the internal motivations that draw new teachers into the profession, but it is external factors such as salary, benefits, and community standing which keep teachers in the profession. And Ingersoll and Merrill (2011) established that besides altruism being the main factor that sustains teachers in the field, most of the above contributors to professionalization positively affect teacher commitment, school climate, and teacher retention, but that three in particular: faculty autonomy and decision-making influence, the effectiveness of assistance for new teachers, and teachers' salaries and benefits, were most noticeable to their strong effects (p. 196).

The strategies to attract and keep teachers in the profession are made current to the present day by Sutchter et al (2016) whose comprehensive study concluded with four strategies to build a strong, stable profession nationwide: creating competitive and equitable compensation packages that make teaching an affordable choice, enhancing the supply of qualified teachers through targeted training subsidies and high-retention pathways, improving teacher retention

through improved mentoring, induction, working conditions, and career development, and developing a national teacher supply market, with license reciprocity and portable pensions that can facilitate getting and keeping teachers in the places they are needed over the course of their careers (p. 54). Although these proposals are costly, Sutchter et al (2016) suggested it is likely that they would ultimately save far more than they would cost, including the more than \$8 billion currently spent annually on replacement costs because of high teacher turnover, not to mention other associated costs to our society (p. 42).

## **Methods**

### **Participants**

The participants in this study were parents, teachers, and high school students in grades 10 through 12 during the 2018-2019 school year from the 21 schools that belong to the Federation of Protestant Reformed Christian Schools. These schools are located across the United States and Canada. The highest concentration of schools is in western Michigan. There are also schools in California, Colorado, Indiana, Iowa, Minnesota, Washington, and Wisconsin, and in Alberta and Ontario. These schools are in suburban, small town, and rural settings.

The researcher's three surveys were aimed at these three groups: parents, teachers, and students. Five hundred fifty-eight parents with students in the various schools shared their thoughts in the parent survey. Of the approximately 170 teachers in the federation's schools, 120 participated in the researcher's survey for teachers. And of the approximately 450 high school students in grades 10 through 12 in the six Protestant Reformed high schools across the United States, 274 students submitted their responses.

## **Materials**

The instruments for this research were three surveys developed by the researcher. The surveys were developed to target the respondents in three categories: parents, teachers, and current high school students. These surveys are found in appendices A, B, and C. The researcher used current research literature to focus the survey question sets on answers to the three research questions:

1. What are the main motivations for Protestant Reformed candidates to become teachers?
2. What factors outweigh positive motivations?
3. What factors are the greatest contributors to attrition?

The researcher used multiple choice questions to gather demographic information, and Likert scales for questions that rated opinions about motivations and support for teachers and the teaching career. As much as possible, the researcher used questions that were aligned for each of the three respondent categories.

## **Design**

The surveys enabled the researcher to examine the current dominating motivational factors regarding the attractiveness of becoming teachers and then of remaining teachers, and to compare the similarities and differences of opinions among the distinct groups of parents, teachers, and high school students.

Each of the three surveys began with demographic questions appropriate to each group that helped in making further comparisons. Each survey then asked a set of questions to ascertain respondents' knowledge of salary levels for teachers at various levels of experience, as



well as earning levels for parents and others in the school's community, both spouses in a household, and students' expected earnings.

The parent survey included a third section of 20 questions on a Likert scale with the answer choices "strongly agree", "agree", "neutral", "disagree", and "strongly disagree" that sought understanding of parents' viewpoints about the teaching career and gauged parents' financial support for teachers. Scores closest to five represent the respondents' strongest agreement to a statement, closest to one represent strongest disagreement, and closest to three represent the most neutral responses.

The teacher survey contained five sections. The first three sections paralleled the demographic, salary, and viewpoint sections of the parent survey. The fourth and fifth sections posed 19 and 20 questions respectively and used a Likert five-point scale rating the relative importance of respondents' original reasons for becoming teachers in the fourth section and their reasons to stay in teaching in the fifth section. To rate relative importance, the surveys used the following answer choices: "very important," "important," "moderately important," "slightly important," and "unimportant."

The students' survey contained four sections. The third section had the same 19 questions as the teacher survey's fourth section, rating factors that would most encourage students to consider becoming teachers, and the fourth student section of 14 questions aimed to determine factors that would most discourage students from becoming teachers. For this fourth section, the survey used the answer choices "most important," "important," "moderately important," "slightly important," and "least important."

For all Likert scales, the five response categories were assigned corresponding values from five to one, and from those totals the averages were computed to rank the relative

importance of the listed factors or the relative agreement or disagreement with the statements that were made.

### **Procedure**

The action research project began with a round table discussion the researcher led with administrators from many of the participating schools. This discussion helped to identify the particular needs for this study, as well as gave the researcher opportunity to solicit other administrators' aid in distributing and promoting the surveys. This roundtable was held at the annual Protestant Reformed Teachers' Institute Convention in Grand Rapids, Michigan on October 19, 2018.

The researcher then sent an email to the administrators of all participating schools at the beginning of January 2019, about two weeks prior to the launch of the survey, announcing the approaching target dates for the surveys and prompting them to ask any questions they might have. The surveys were distributed via email in mid-January to the administrators of six high schools and 15 grade schools affiliated with the Federation of Protestant Reformed Christian Schools. With their aid the surveys were then distributed to their teachers, parents, and students.

The researcher's second email provided the administrators with an attached letter that gave suggested wording for respective announcements to be sent to parents and teachers, along with links to the surveys. These emails and suggested announcements can be viewed as Appendix D. This second email also encouraged the administrators to manage the student survey in a more controlled environment. The researcher observed and/or confirmed that the student surveys were completed during classroom time or individually in guidance counselor's offices.

The researcher set a timeframe of three weeks for distribution and completion of the surveys at the various schools. The rationale was to solicit as many responses as possible from the Protestant Reformed community to obtain the most comprehensive results possible, while limiting the time frame so that surveys would more likely be completed prior to respondents' conversations with others that might influence their responses.

## **Results**

### **Demographics**

Results from the demographic sections of each survey are found in showed a fair range for the age and highest level of education categories among the parents and teachers surveyed. The results of the two adult surveys demonstrated that marriage remains the norm among the constituents of the schools surveyed, with over 98% of parents and over 80% of teachers reporting that they were married. The three surveys all recorded a fairly equal amount of male and female respondents. The student survey also resulted in an equal division among respondents for the three participating high school grade levels, with each grade representing at least 30% of the totals. Regarding highest level of education, while 31.2% of parents recorded four years of college as their highest level of education, 48.5% of the students expressed an expectation of attaining at least four years of college. Results from the surveys' demographics are found in Appendices E, F, and G.

### **Salary / Income**

The first data sets to be compiled and compared were the salary/income sections from each survey. Histograms were created for each salary/income question from the parent, teacher, and student surveys. The first five questions of each survey's salary / income section can be compared among all three surveys using these histograms. The first four questions all had to do

with teachers’ yearly salaries, and the fifth was concerned with parent, teacher, and student ideas about what an average working adult in the schools’ supporting communities makes in a year.

Figures 1, 2, and 3 display results for the first corresponding question from each survey: “Just your best guess, what is the yearly salary for a teacher with a bachelor’s degree and 0 years of experience in your school? Please give your answer to the nearest \$5000.”

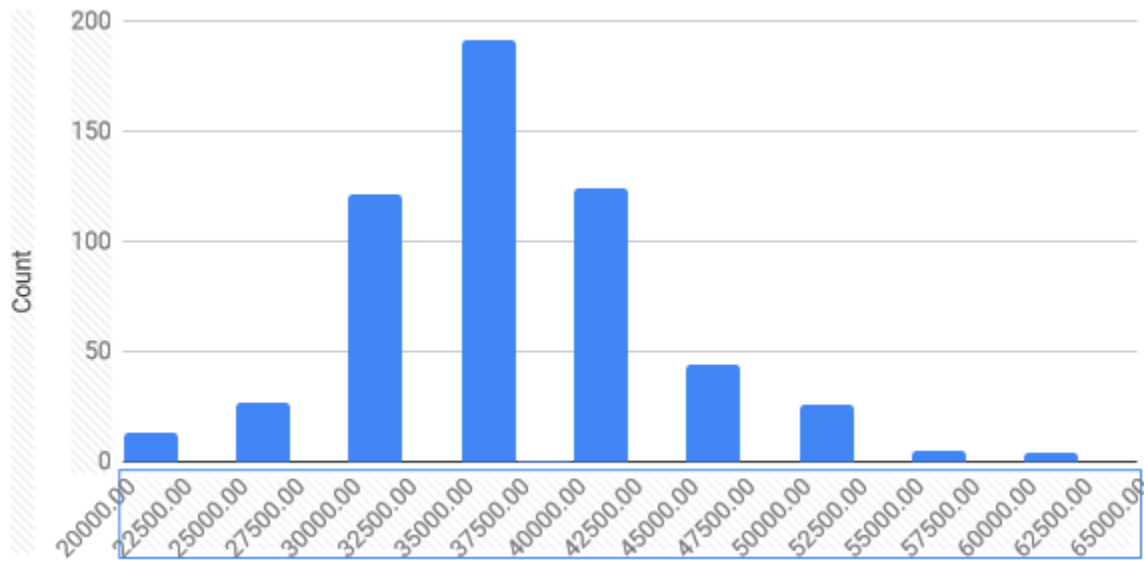


Figure 1. Parent responses: Bachelor’s degree and 0 years of experience.

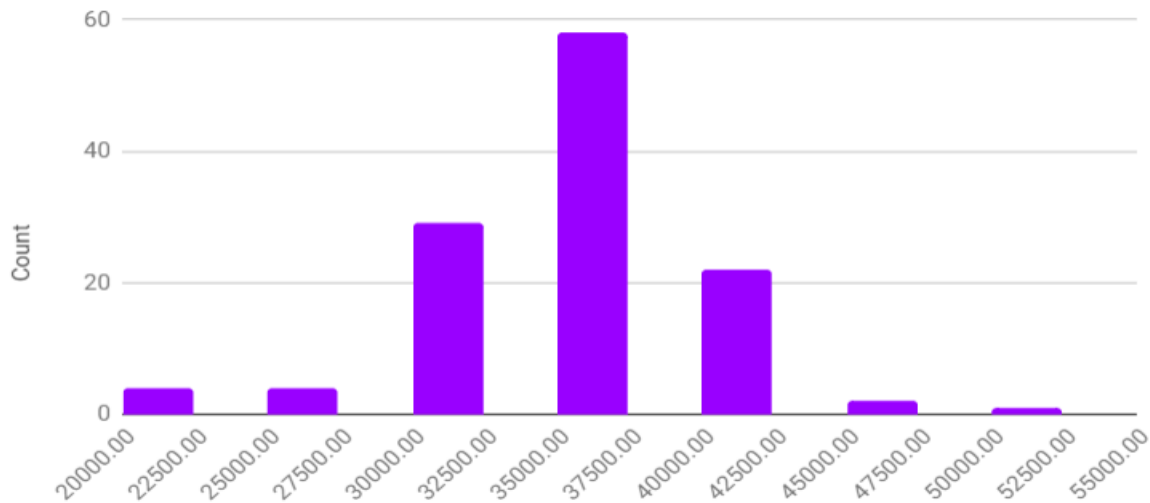


Figure 2. Teacher responses: Bachelor’s degree and 0 years of experience.

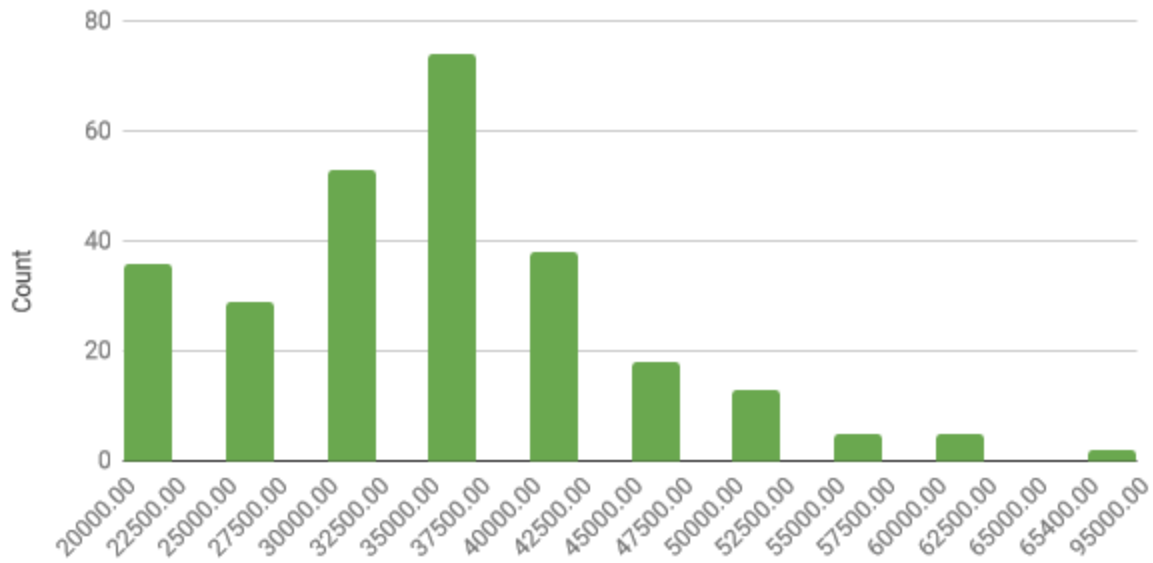


Figure 3. Student responses: Bachelor’s degree and 0 years of experience.

Figures 4, 5, and 6 show results for the second corresponding question from the surveys.

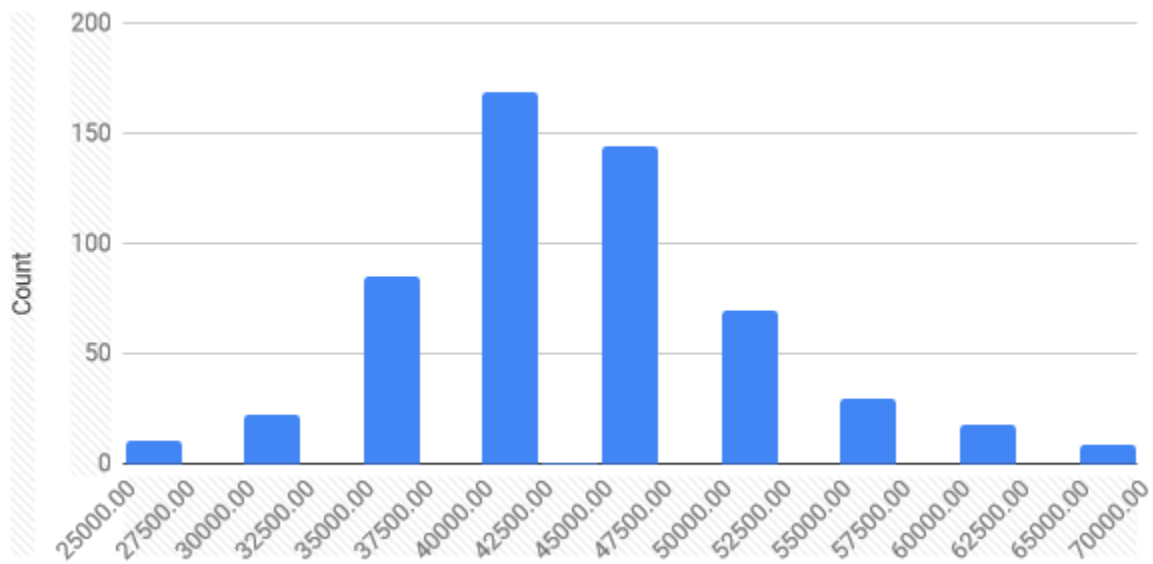


Figure 4. Parent responses: Bachelor’s degree and 5 years of experience.

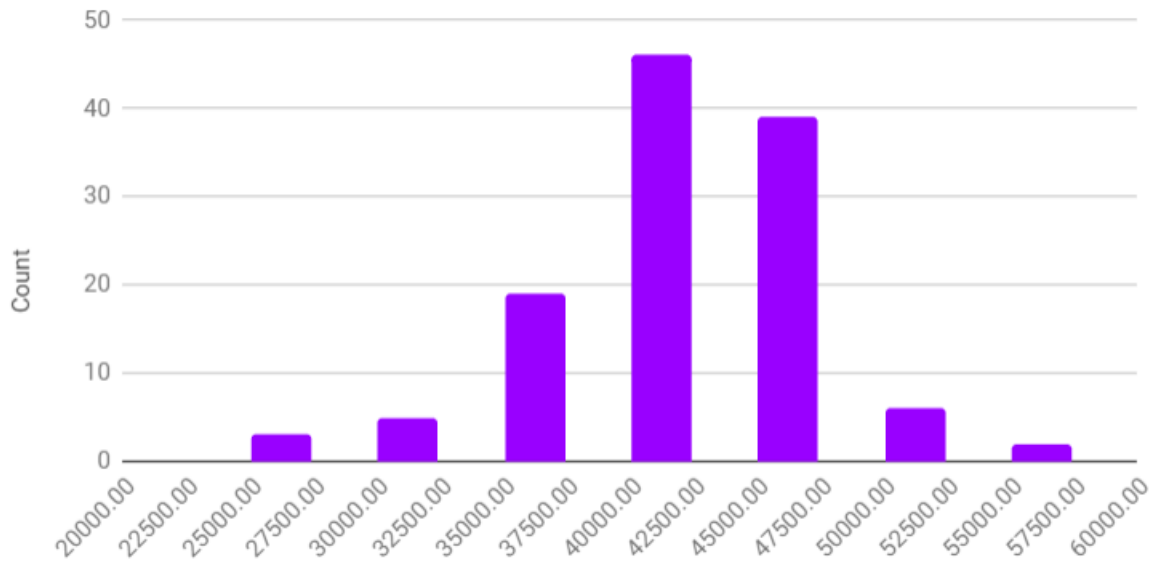


Figure 5. Teacher responses: Bachelor’s degree and 5 years of experience.

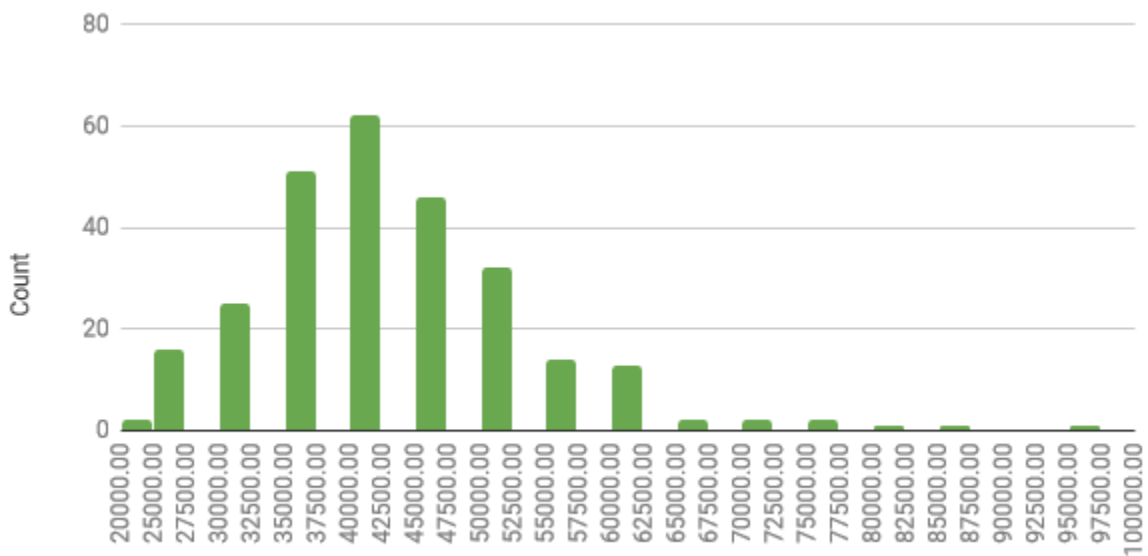


Figure 6. Student responses: Bachelor’s degree and 5 years of experience.

Figures 7, 8, and 9 show results for the third corresponding question that asked about yearly salary for a teacher with a bachelor’s degree and 10 years of experience in the represented schools.

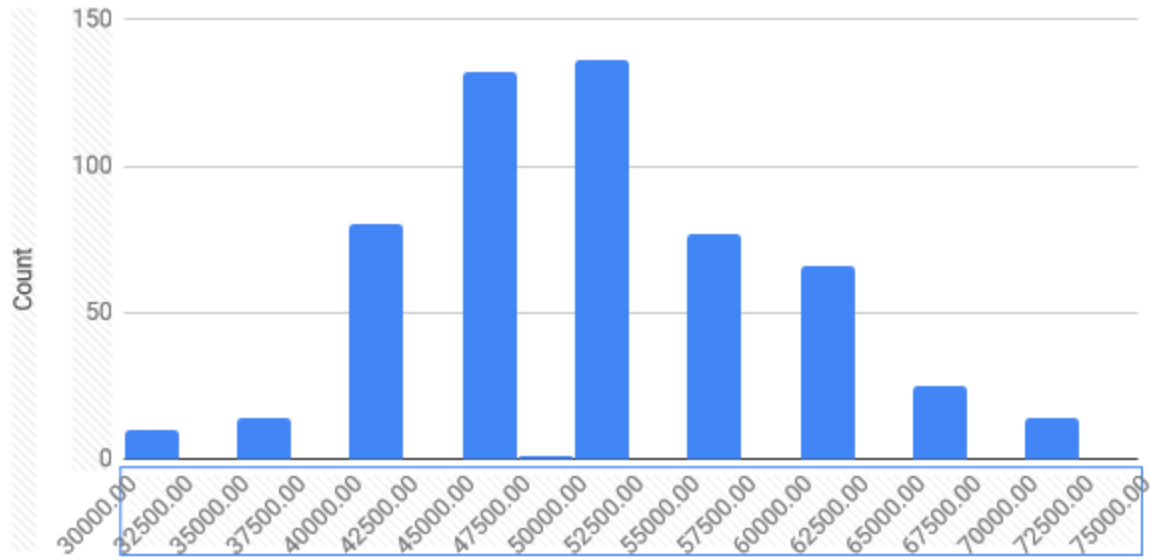


Figure 7. Parent responses: Bachelor's degree and 10 years of experience.

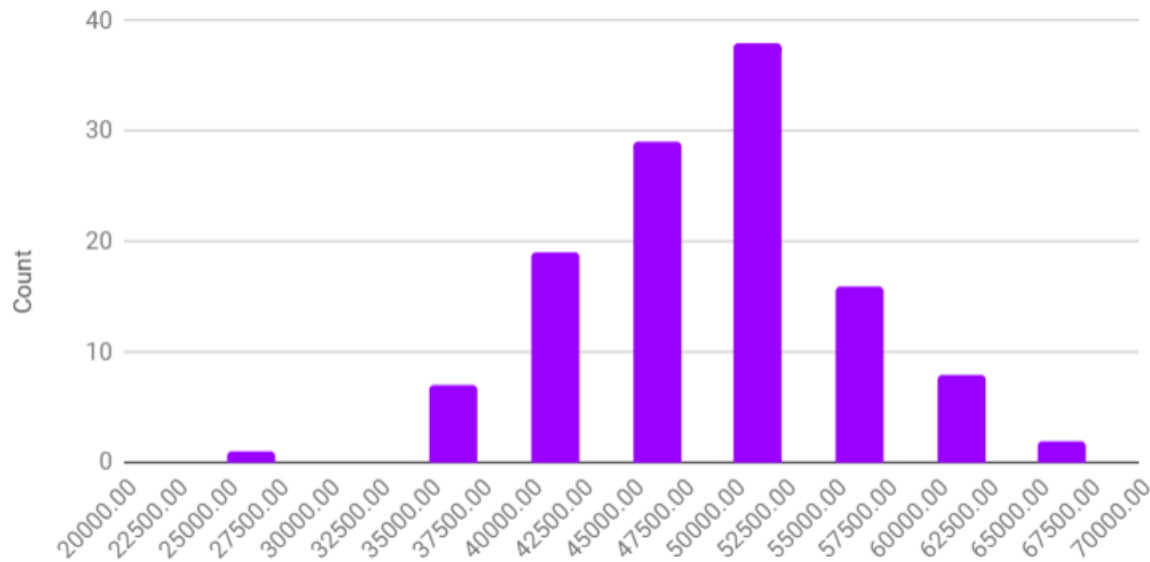


Figure 8. Teacher responses: Bachelor's degree and 10 years of experience.

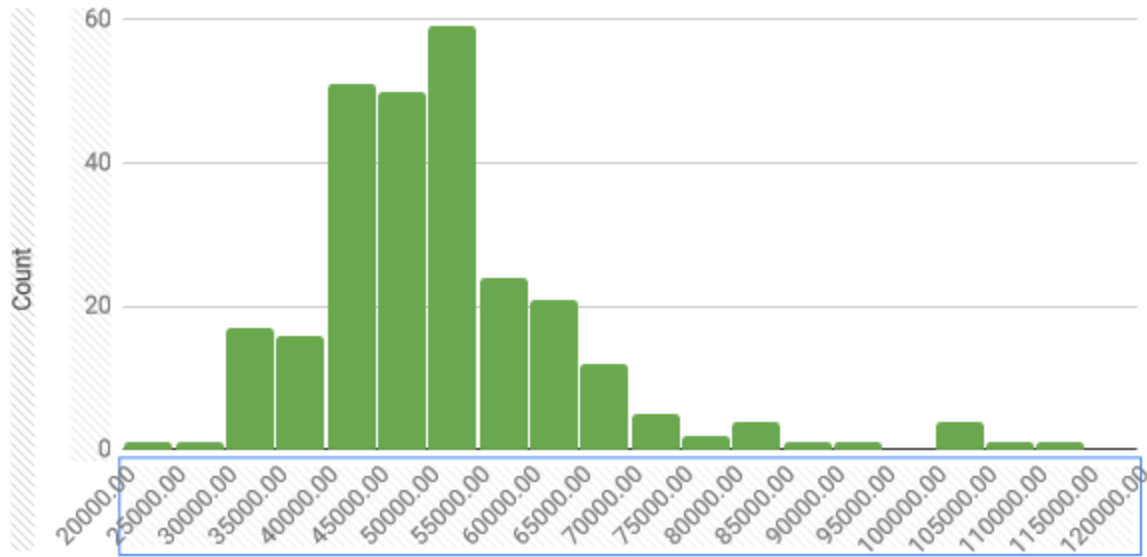


Figure 9. Student responses: Bachelor’s degree and 10 years of experience.

Figures 10, 11, and 12 display results for the fourth corresponding question, the yearly salary for a teacher with a Master’s degree and 10 years of experience.

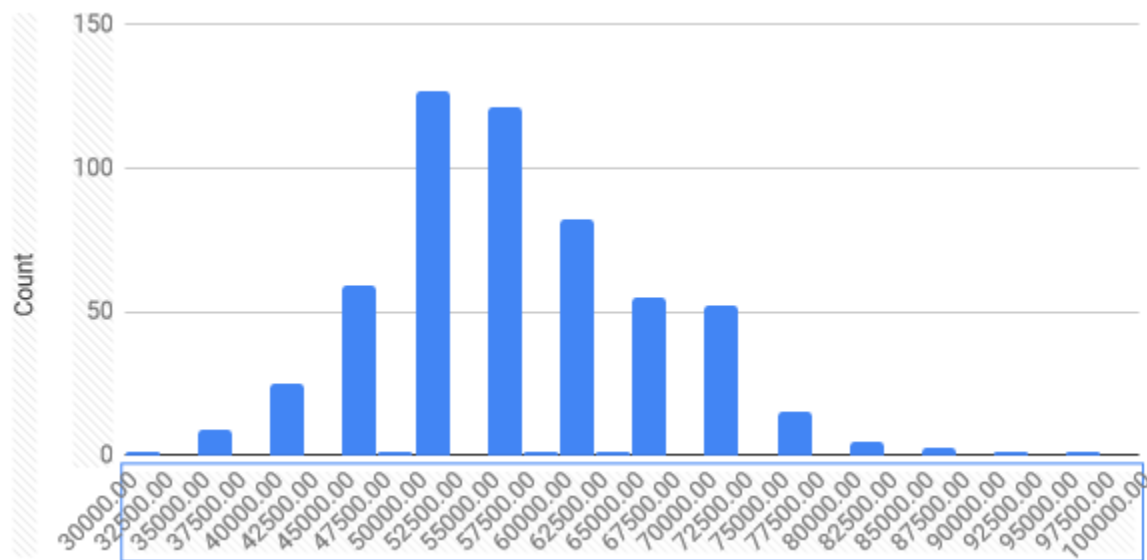


Figure 10. Parent responses: Master’s degree and 10 years of experience.



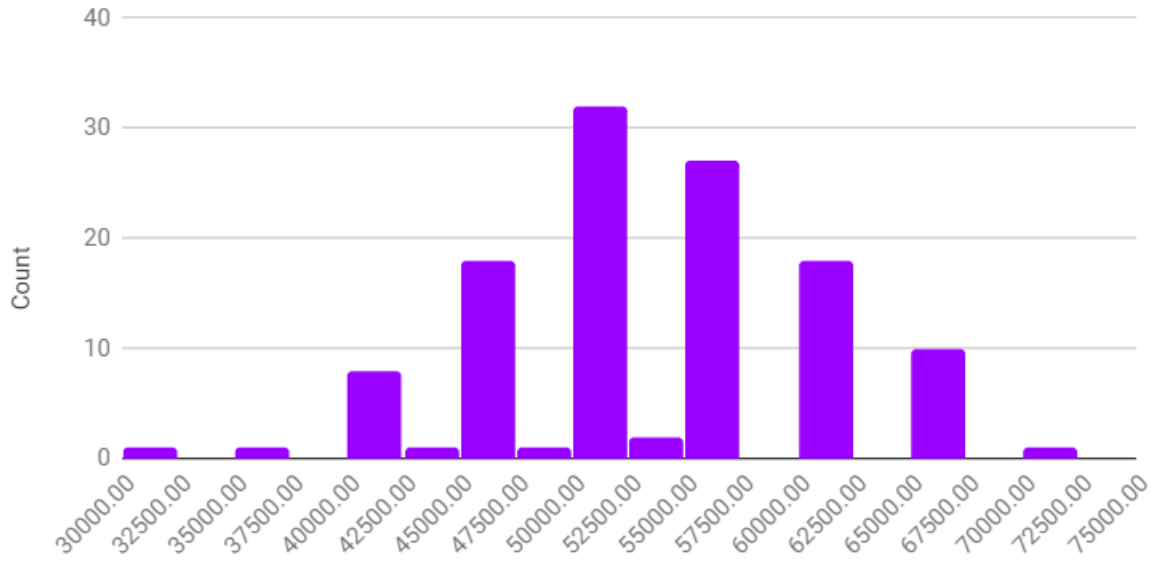


Figure 11. Teacher responses: Master's degree and 10 years of experience.

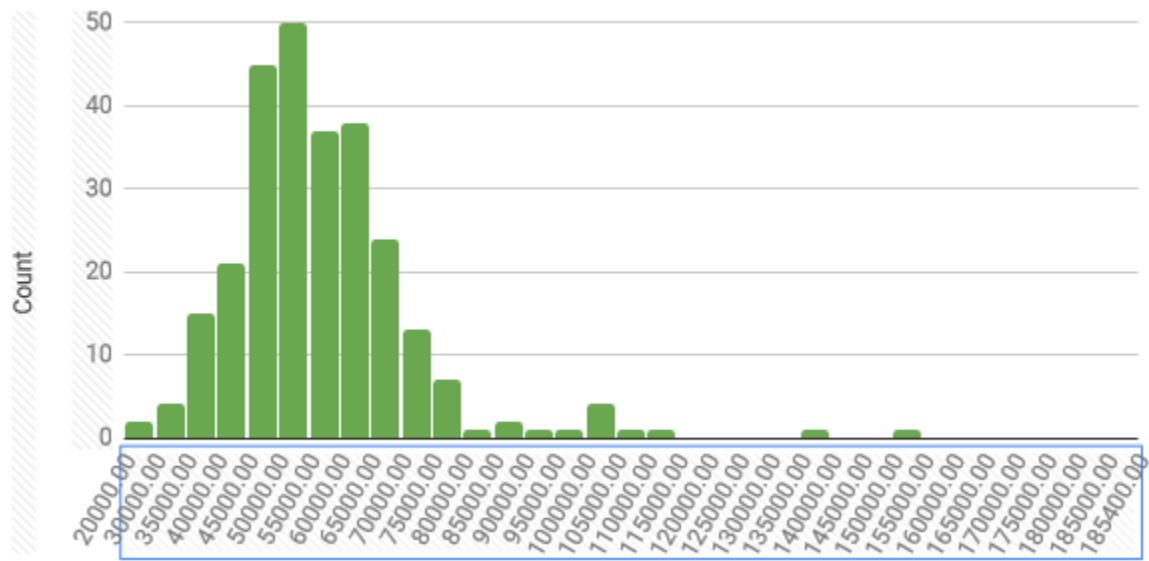


Figure 12. Student responses: Master's degree and 10 years of experience.

Finally, the best guesses for the yearly salary of the average working adult in the schools' supporting communities were recorded and are displayed here as Figures 13, 14, and 15.

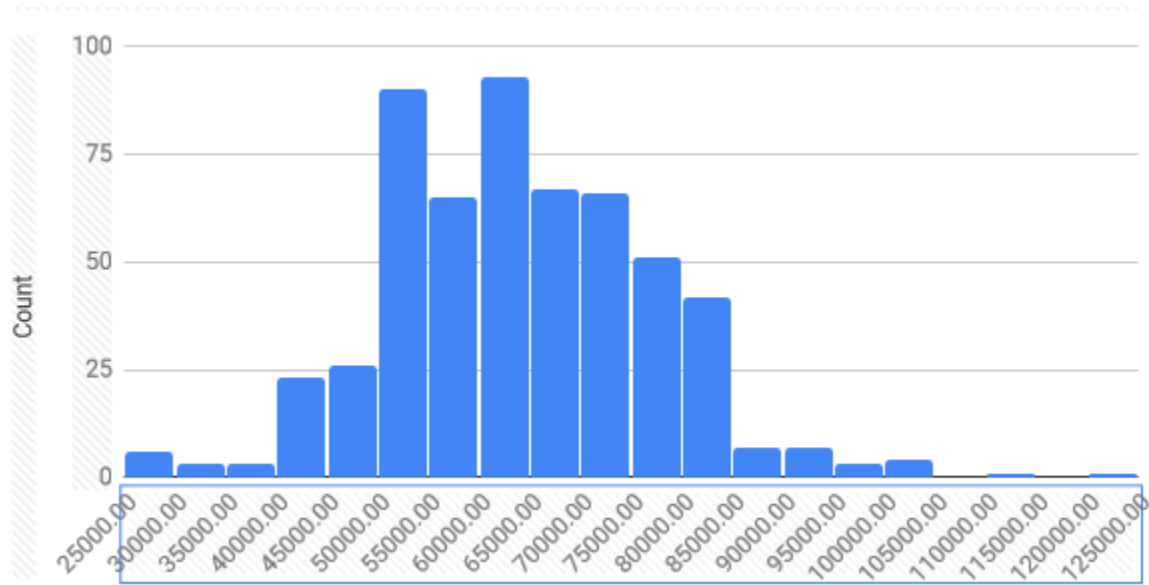


Figure 13. Parent Responses: Yearly salary, average working adult in the school's community.

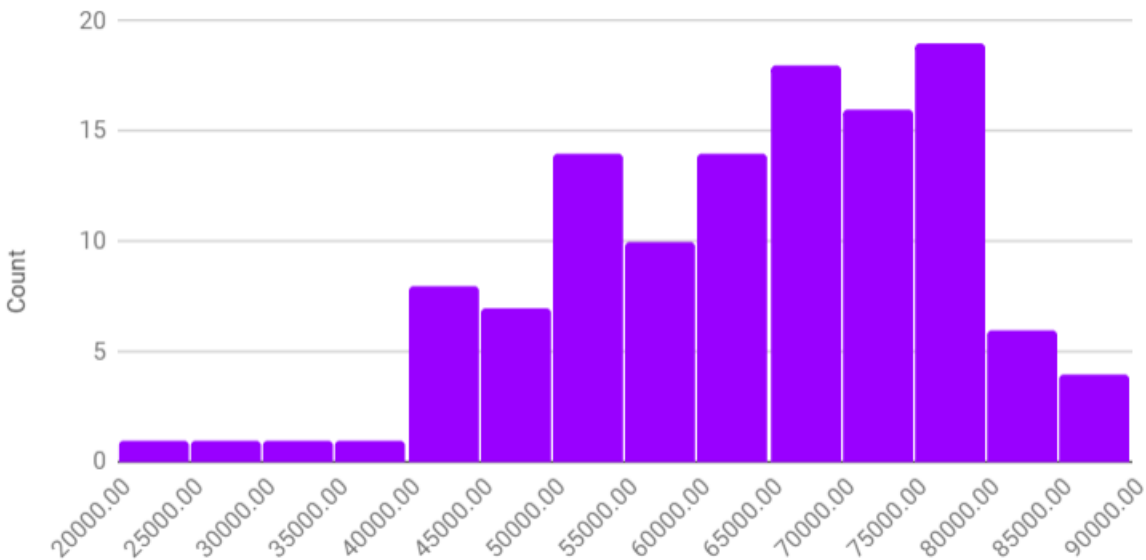


Figure 14. Teacher Responses: Yearly salary, average working adult in the school's community.

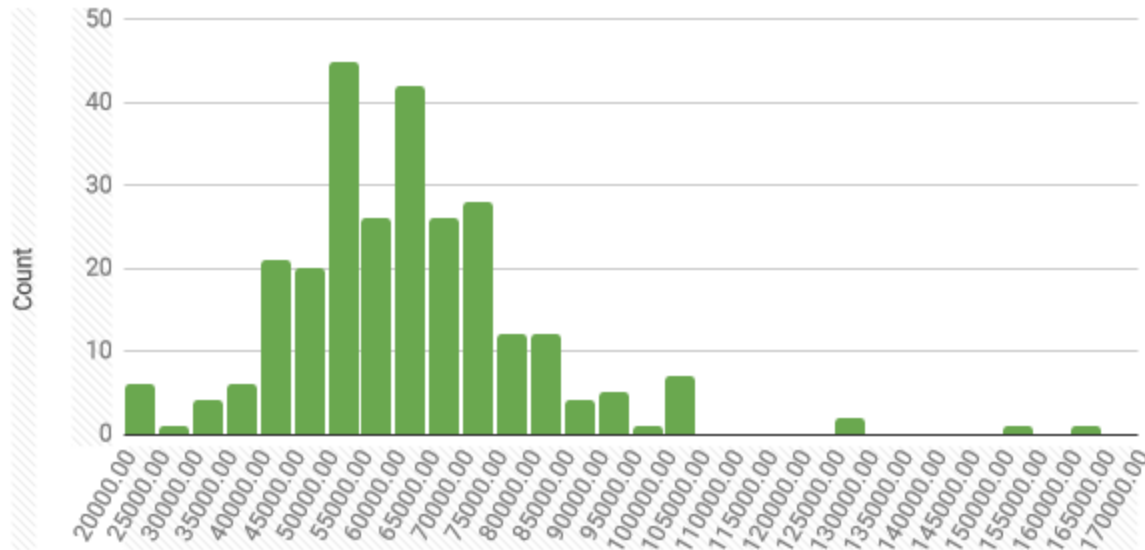


Figure 15. Student Responses: Yearly salary, average working adult in the school's community.

The results for the two other remaining questions posed to both parents and teachers were compiled next. Figures 16 and 17 show adults' answers about the primary bread winner's income in their household, and figures 18 and 19 record the total income reported in each parent and teacher household.

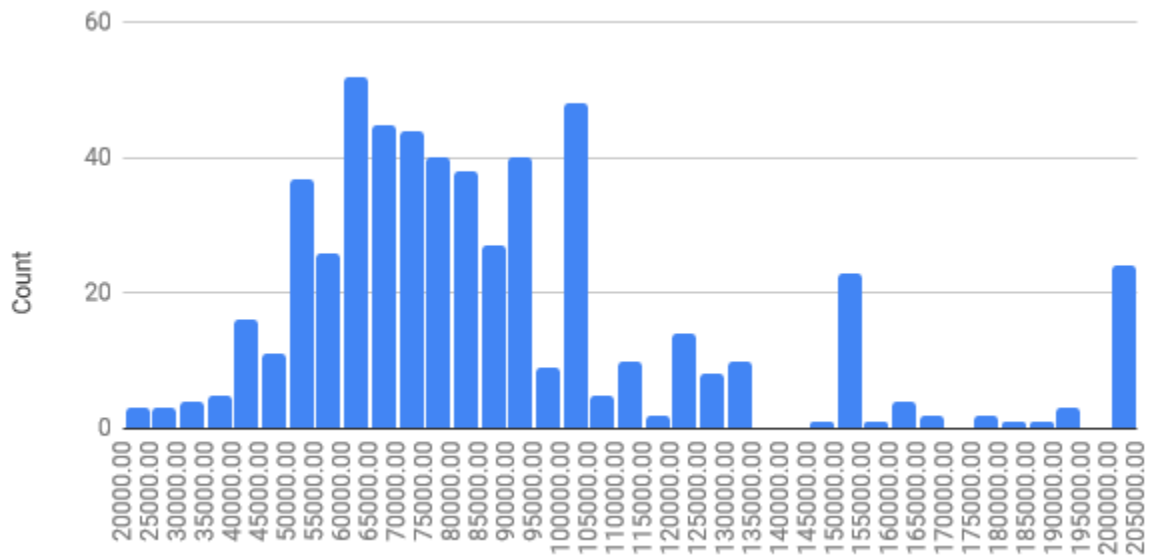


Figure 16. Parent responses: Yearly income, primary bread winner in the family.

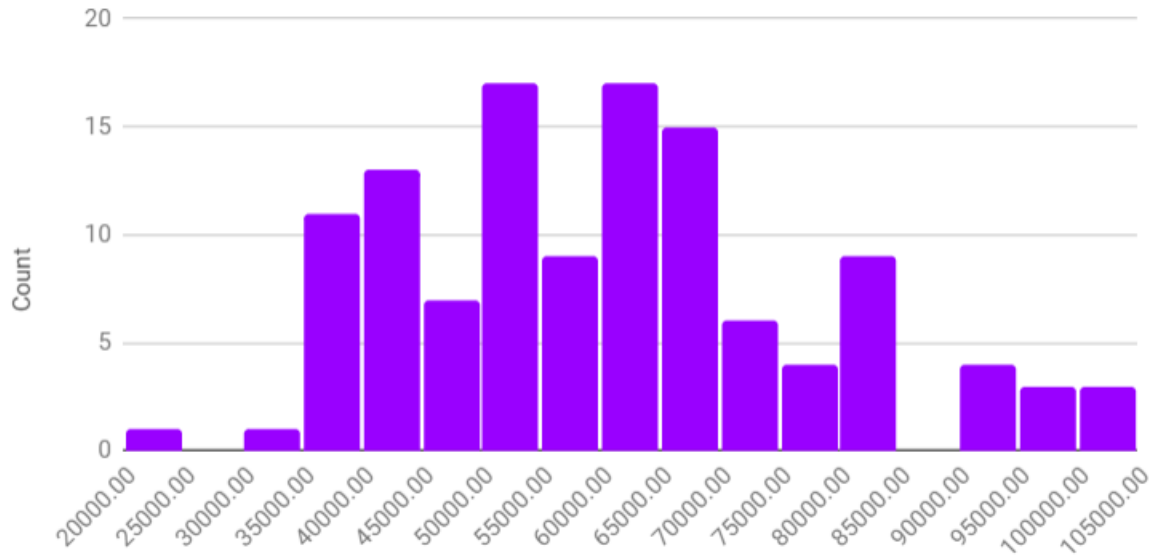


Figure 17. Teacher responses: Yearly income, primary bread winner in the family.

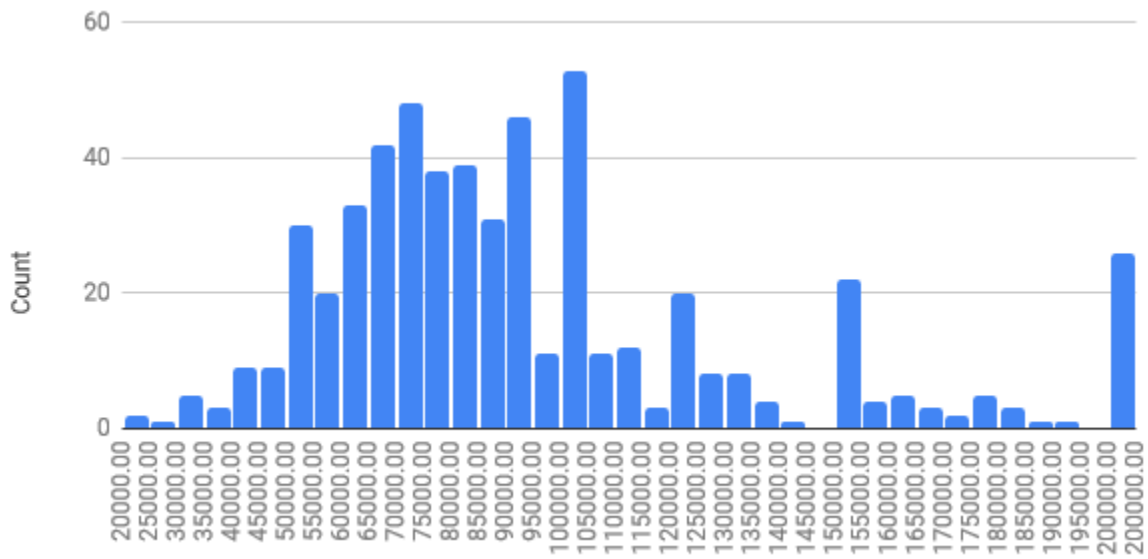


Figure 18. Parent responses: Total yearly household income, including both spouses' earnings.

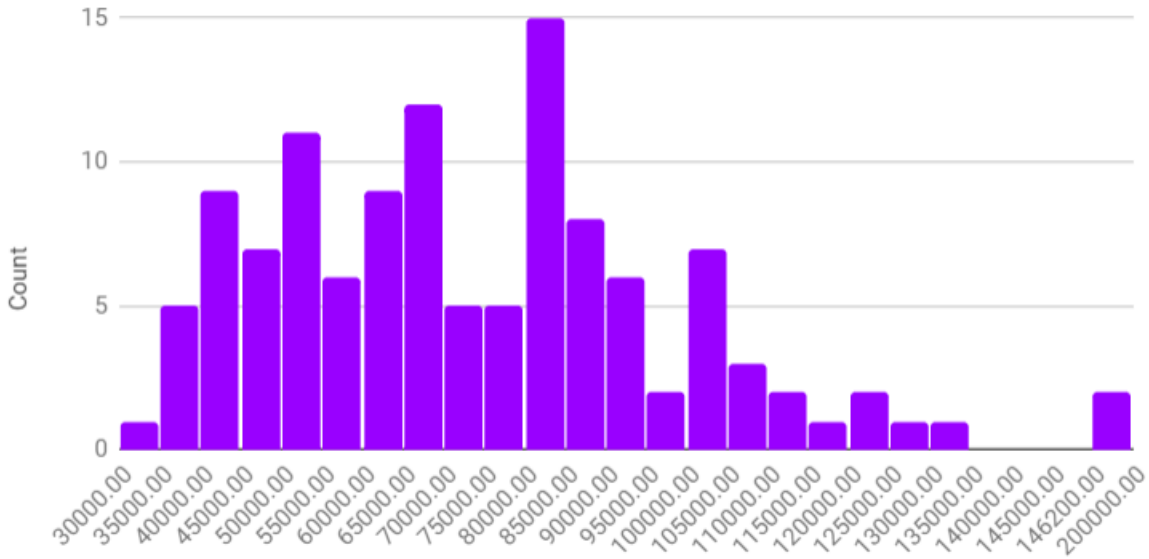


Figure 19. Teacher responses: Total yearly household income, both spouses’ earnings.

The results for the comparable question posed to students for the yearly salary they plan to earn five years after completion of their education follows in Figure 20.

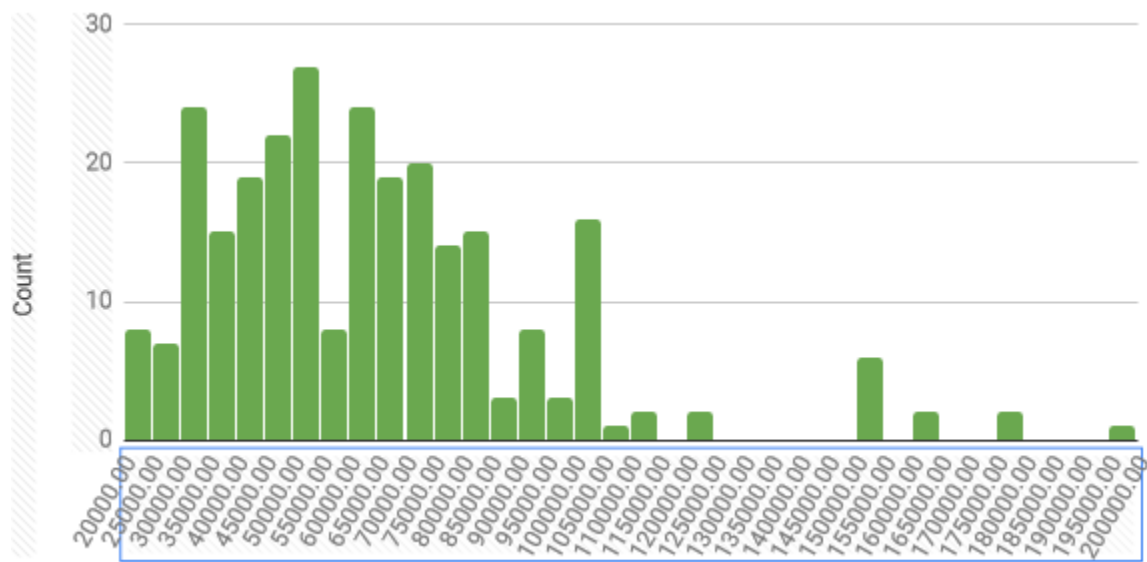


Figure 20. Students’ expected yearly income.

The compiled results for the salary / income sections from all three surveys can be found in Table 1. The surveys asked respondents to give answers to the nearest \$5000; however, many

respondents supplied an answer in some other denomination. Scores were thus compiled and reported according to the average score as well as to the median score.

Table 1

*Teachers and Other Wage Earners, Salary/Income Comparisons.*

<i>Item</i>	<i>Parent Median</i>	<i>Parent Average</i>	<i>Teacher Median</i>	<i>Teacher Average</i>	<i>Student Median</i>	<i>Student Average</i>
Bachelor’s degree, 0 years of experience	35,000	36,246	35,000	34,175	35,000	34,467
Bachelor’s degree, 5 years of experience	41,000	42,964	40,000	40,767	40,000	43,601
Bachelor’s degree, 10 years of experience	50,000	49,878	49,000	47,663	49,000	50,385
Master’s degree, 10 years of experience	55,000	55,960	52,000	52,233	52,500	57,106
Yearly salary, average working adult	60,000	61,737	65,000	61,417	60,000	61,564
Yearly income, primary bread-winner in family	75,000	86,241	59,000	58,208		
Total yearly income in your home, both spouses	81,500	91,847	67,5000	71,742		
Yearly income student plans to earn 5 years after completion of their education					60,000	65,199

Both median and average scores in Table 1 indicated that parents, teachers, and students all had similar guesses for teacher salaries at the four levels in the surveys. These responses were slightly lower than the actual salary levels reported by most Protestant Reformed schools for the 2018-19 school year, where the average starting salary for a candidate with a Bachelor’s degree was closer to \$40,000, and the teacher with a Bachelor’s degree and five years of experience was closer to \$45,000. The results for teachers with ten years of experience were in line with current pay scales. Greater than 30% of parents and 35% of students guessed a starting salary more than \$5000 lower than the median guess of \$35,000.

Both median and average scores indicated that parents, teachers, and students all believed the average working adult makes more money annually than a teacher with a master's degree and ten years of experience. The scores also indicated that while teachers earned on average at least \$5000 less than what they believed the average working adult earns annually, primary bread winners in parents' households earned \$15,000 more than what they believed the average working adult earned annually. On average, the primary bread-winner in a parent household made greater than \$15,000 more than the primary bread-winner in a teacher's home, and on average a parent's household had a combined income more than \$20,000 greater than a teacher's household combined income. Figure 3 of both Appendices E and F report that married households made up 98.4% of parents and 80.8% of teachers. Students' scores echo those of their parents for what they believe the average working adult earns annually, and they believe that five years after the completion of their education they will be earning \$20,000 more than a teacher with five years of experience.

### **Parent and Teacher Perceptions**

The second data sets to be compiled and compared were the statement evaluations considered by parents and teachers to gauge perspectives about teaching as a career. Table 2 displays the rankings of agreement with 20 statements that were rated on a five-point Likert scale. Although one additional statement was included for teacher evaluation regarding student interest and engagement in learning compared to 20 years ago, this item was not included in this chart to aid the comparison of figures.

The data from the top four statements ranked, items E, C, F, and D, show parents and teachers have a high regard for and trust in their teachers, who are considered professionals while fulfilling a calling as servants. This is also corroborated in that on average, parents in the

schools surveyed would encourage their children to become teachers. There was general agreement that teachers are not paid enough, and that more people would become teachers if pay were higher. A number of items were found in the slight agreement to neutral range, notably those comparing the teacher's role to the past. Of the three items concerning increasing tuition, R, S, and T, only the idea of raising tuition to help current teachers received more than neutral support. The other two, concerning financial aid for those making a career change to teaching and students going into teaching, are included in the three items with the strongest disagreement scores.

Three statements were noted for having a difference in ranking between parents and teachers of three steps: items B, I, and Q. Teachers viewed their careers as less prestigious than parents viewed the teaching career. Parents disagreed slightly more strongly than teachers that teachers should be given more in-service time during the school year. Teachers disagreed much more strongly than parents with the idea that teachers' salaries can be supplemented by summer work and therefore do not need to be equitable in pay to a typical 12-month job. This item recorded the strongest difference of 0.8 in the average response.

Of the remaining items in Table 2, the greatest recorded difference in averages was the 0.35 found in item O, which contained the statement that teachers who are heads of households in our Christian schools should be paid more than those who are not. The parent average reflected a slight agreement above neutral at 3.13 on the scale, while the teacher average showed a slight disagreement below neutral at 2.78.



Table 2

*Parent and Teacher Perceptions about Teaching, Comparisons by Average Score.*

<i>Item*</i>	<i>Parent Average</i>	<i>P/T Rank</i>	<i>Teacher Average</i>
E. Teaching is a profession.	4.56	1 / 2	4.55
C. Teaching is a calling.	4.52	2 / 1	4.59
F. I trust my school's teachers to do what is best for my student academically and as a person.	4.41	3 / 4	4.47
D. Teachers should view themselves as servants.	4.21	4 / 3	4.54
A. I would encourage my child to become a teacher.	4.05	5 / 5	4.13
B. Teaching is a prestigious career.	3.88	6 / 9	3.58
N. I think teachers in our Christian schools are not paid enough.	3.72	7 / 7	3.74
M. Many of the people in our society who would make great teachers don't go into teaching because teaching doesn't pay enough.	3.67	8 / 6	3.86
L. Teachers today have less respect from students than 20 years ago.	3.57	9 / 10	3.53
G. Teachers should have more voice in policy and decision making in our school.	3.48	10 / 8	3.73
K. Teachers today have less support from parents than 20 years ago.	3.41	11/12	3.25
H. Teachers should be given more control of their own classroom decisions.	3.37	12/11	3.44
J. Teachers today have it harder than 20 years ago.	3.23	13/15	2.99
O. I think teachers who are heads of households in our Christian schools should be paid more than those who are not.	3.13	14/16	2.78
R. I would support a plan to increase tuition in order to increase teacher pay and benefits at my school.	3.11	15/13	3.19
Q. Teachers' salaries can be supplemented with summer work, so teachers' pay does not need to be equitable to a typical twelve-month job.	3.04	16/19	2.24
I. Teachers should be given more in-service time during the school year for support and professional development, even if this means a longer school year.	2.90	17/14	2.99
S. I would support a plan to increase tuition in order to fund students' education to become teachers.	2.64	18/18	2.58
T. I would support a plan to increase tuition in order to fund career changes for those wanting to become teachers.	2.62	19/17	2.58
P. Teaching is women's work, especially for the primary grades.	1.87	20/20	1.68

Notes: \* Items are listed in rank by score of parent average

The researcher then examined the opinions of teacher and student respondents about the viability of teaching as a career and analyzed the data by ranking results to determine which motivations are the greatest factors in attracting participants' to teaching, keeping teachers in their careers, and encouraging students to become teachers.

Hence, the third area of data analysis centered on the factors that affect teachers' original decisions to become teachers. The student survey contained the same section; thus, Table 3 contains a comparison of the results from the 19 prompts to which respondents determined how important each was to them. As with past research, the strongest reasons for going into teaching were altruistic ones, such as the desire to work with children, the view of teaching as a calling, and desire to serve community, along with a love of subject matter. (Park, 2006; Thomson, 2013; Bakar et al, 2014). Also, the lowest ranked items were for items having to do with benefits, such as beginning salary, advancement opportunities, and longer holidays. These findings also corroborated past studies. (Page et al, 1982; Park, 2006).

Respondents were given the opportunity to state some factor other than those the researcher provided. Most notable of these responses were seven who wrote of seeing and answering the need for teachers, and five who recorded that the encouragement of others such as a pastor, a mentor in another line of work, and classmates played a very important role in their consideration of teaching as a career.

Teachers' average scores were much more polarized than students' averages, with stronger agreement to some items and stronger disagreement to others. This led the researcher to discount large differences in some of the rankings. This is probably due to the samples: teachers have decided to become teachers, but the vast majority of the students surveyed will not pursue teaching as a career.

Table 3

*Deciding to Become a Teacher, Comparison of Factor Importance.*

<i>Item*</i>	<i>Teacher Average</i>	<i>T/S Rank</i>	<i>Student Average</i>
B. Desire to work with children	4.41	1 / 3	3.87
A. View of teaching as my calling	4.13	2 / 1	3.96
K. Love of subject matter	3.91	3 / 4	3.77
D. Inspired by my teacher(s) at school	3.73	4 / 10	3.18
C. Desire to serve my community / make a difference	3.62	5 / 8	3.32
I. Great experience in my own education	3.18	6 / 7	3.34
R. Variety – every day is different	3.13	7 / 5	3.44
S. To have fun	2.94	8 / 2	3.94
E. Direct encouragement from one of my teachers	2.79	9 / 11	3.18
G. Direct encouragement from my parent(s)	2.78	10 / 6	3.40
F. Family members work in education	2.58	11 / 18	2.50
N. Opportunity to be involved beyond the classroom	2.41	12 / 12	3.11
J. Status of teaching as a profession	2.22	13 / 16	2.69
Q. Job security	1.96	14 / 9	3.28
H. Poor experience in my own education	1.88	15 / 17	2.53
L. Lack of other career options	1.61	16 / 19	2.32
O. Having longer holidays	1.54	17/14	2.81
M. Advancement opportunities	1.40	18/13	2.97
P. Beginning teacher salary	1.37	19/15	2.81

Notes: \* Items are listed in rank by score of teacher avg.

In the final research area, factors contributing to possible teacher attrition were examined from those sections in the teacher and student surveys that gauged what might contribute to

fewer students entertaining teaching as a career option, and those factors that might encourage teachers to remain in teaching. Table 4 shows results from the student survey's final section.

Table 4

*Discouragements to Students from Pursuing Teaching, Ranked by Importance.*

<i>Item</i>	<i>Rank</i>	<i>Student Average</i>
B. Cost of college education	1	3.45
D. Expected beginning salary	2	3.45
E. Expected salary after 10 years of teaching	3	3.38
H. Lack of ability to teach in my interest area	4	3.35
C. Requirements for continuing education after college	5	3.32
L. Students don't respect teachers	6	3.24
M. Students don't behave well	7	3.19
N. Students aren't interested in learning	8	3.18
A. Amount / Length of Education Required	9	3.17
F. Expected Benefits	10	3.14
I. Lack of opportunities for professional advancement	11	3.12
G. Workload	12	3.04
K. Lack of respect from society for teachers	13	2.78
J. Lack of opportunities to take leadership positions	14	2.66

Data recorded in Table 4 demonstrates that students were most concerned with their immediate financial futures; the top two discouragements point to that. The next three highest discouragements were about their short-term futures. It was also noted that the three statements sections on student attitudes: their respect for teachers, behavior, and interest in learning, were the next highest as discouraging above all remaining factors.

Lack of respect for teachers from society rated much lower as a discouraging factor than others surveys (Park, 2006; Florida State Department of Education, 1985). The researcher also

noted that the lowest scoring discouragement for students was the lack of opportunities to take leadership positions. It may be that the term “leadership positions” leads a student to think only of administration, and that most who even consider education are not pursuing that type of role.

Before asking teachers to engage in questions about what factors would most encourage them to remain teachers, the question was asked if the teacher has ever considered leaving teaching for a different career. Results showed that 62 of the 120 respondents, or 51.7%, said they have considered leaving teaching. This group’s responses were recorded as part of the whole research group for the column with the header “Yes” in Table 5.

Table 5 was produced to show the impact of a teacher’s gender, marital status, and role as the primary wage earner in a household on whether they had considered leaving teaching for a different career. Scores indicated a strong direct correlation between the primary responsibility to provide for the household and the likelihood of considering leaving teaching, whether for married males or single males and females. Those who were not the primary bread-winners in their household or were married females were also much less likely to consider leaving teaching for another career.

Table 5

*Gender, Marital & Primary Wage-Earner Status, Considered Leaving Teaching.*

<i>Item</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>Yes</i>	<i>Percent</i>
Primary bread winner in the household	71	45	63.3
Not the primary bread winner in household	49	17	34.7
Married male	50	32	64.0
Married female	47	15	31.9
Single male	6	4	66.7
Single female	17	11	64.7

Finally, data was compiled from the section of 20 prompts in the teacher survey that measured the factors that would most encourage teachers to stay, again using a five-point Likert scale that rated levels of importance.

The results for all teachers again showed some grouping of similar ideas. The top three to four factors have to do with quality of life and the teacher's internal sense of competence and identity. The following three to four strongest encouragements are about relationships and interactions with students, parents, and then peers. The next highest rated set of important factors to teachers being encouraged to stay are the financial issues of benefits and salary. Following those are the issues about support and relationships in the school.

The lowest rated factors were common among both the set of all teachers and the subset of those teachers who have considered leaving teaching. Job security was rated second lowest in importance for all teachers and lowest for the subset. It was also noted that the lowest rated factor for all teachers was opportunities to take leadership positions.

Comparing rankings between the all teacher responses and those who have considered leaving teaching shows some varied results. Some aspects were rated less important to teachers who have considered leaving, most notably, "a greater sense of belonging / community with peers." Some factors were rated more important to this group. Workload is a factor to be considered, as it ranks higher for teachers considering leaving teaching. Items L, K, and M all posted a higher average and a higher rank for teachers who have considered leaving teaching, with the biggest change both in rank and in average was for item M, a "higher forecasted salary at the top of the salary schedule."

Table 6

*Factors Important to Teachers to Remain in Their Career, Comparison by Rank*

<i>Item*</i>	<i>Average</i>	<i>Rank</i>	<i>Yes**</i>
A. Greater sense of competence, or success helping my students	3.58	1 / 2	3.35
H. Greater balance between family, life, and work	3.41	2 / 1	3.48
B. Better sense of my identity as a teacher so I do not become emotionally exhausted	3.38	3 / 4	3.32
T. Greater student interest and engagement	3.35	4 / 3	3.35
Q. More support from parents	3.32	5 / 5	3.32
R. More respect from students	3.25	6 / 8	3.23
S. Better student behavior	3.11	7 / 10	3.00
D. Greater sense of belonging / community with peers	3.03	8 / 14	2.69
L. Better benefits	3.00	9 / 7	3.23
K. Significantly higher salary	2.99	10 / 9	3.21
M. Higher forecasted salary at the top of the salary schedule	2.98	11 / 6	3.26
E. More support from administration	2.98	12 / 12	2.87
C. More support from peers, such as through mentoring	2.88	13 / 15	2.65
F. Greater voice in decision-making	2.86	14 / 13	2.81
G. Lighter workload	2.83	15 / 11	2.98
J. More ability to teach in my subject area	2.74	16 / 16	2.55
I. Better equipment and work space	2.54	17 / 17	2.42
O. More opportunities for professional advancement	2.40	18 / 18	2.27
N. More job security	2.16	19 / 20	1.90
P. More opportunities to take leadership positions	2.07	20 / 19	1.95

Notes: \* Items are ranked by score of average for all teachers

\*\*Average for those who answered “yes” to “considered leaving teaching”

## Discussion

### Comparisons to results from previous research.

**Negative factors to teacher recruitment.** The reasons posited by national and international researchers for the decline in teacher candidates, in order of importance, included low earning potential in the form of salary and job security (Selingo, 2018), job status and prestige (Ingersoll & Merritt, 2011; Han et al, 2018), and growing lack of respect by students (Park, 2006).

This study's results strongly agree with previous research that showed disparity between the salaries of other professions as well as with all occupations in the Christian schools' communities; the numbers correspond to the data from national surveys that average salaries of teachers are currently far below those of traditional professionals, and that teachers have lost ground since the early 1990s, when they were at their most competitive. However, job security was rated much lower in importance both in the student and teacher surveys than in the work of other recent research about the effects of the Great Recession on the current generation financial security concerns.

Regarding job status and prestige, this study showed that the parents and teachers who represent the Christian school community hold the teaching career in fairly high regard, and the students did not rate lack of societal respect for teachers as very important at all to them. This is an established strength of the communities that support Protestant Reformed schools because of their high view of the covenantal life which is rooted in God's establishing friendship and fellowship with his earthly children and keeping them faithful to Him in their generations. The result is strong cooperation and support between the homes, schools, and even churches. This is



what should be used as the main foundational building block for the researcher's various suggestions aimed at improving teacher recruitment, improvement, and retention.

The third main concern of much previous research for teacher recruitment, growing lack of respect by students (Coggshall, 2006; Park, 2006), was somewhat supported by its ranking in the section on discouragements to students, as well as in a similar ranking in the teacher survey section on factors to remain in teaching. There is work to be done in the home, church and school to reverse this trend, but generally it appears that this factor is not as severe as recorded in the national or international research.

**Contributing factors to attrition.** Previous research pointed to the following factors for attrition: low pay, not enough help and administrative support, heavy workload and family and life imbalance, lack of financial advancement, and less control and input into classroom and school policies. (Coggshall, 2006; Ingersoll & Merrill, 2011; Goldring et al, 2014; Darling-Hammond, 2017). Of these factors, the Christian schoolteachers that were surveyed only indicated a desire for greater balance between family, life, and work. The next most important of these factors for Christian school teachers were the low pay and financial advancement concerns. Administrative support and policy issues were lower on the list. This could be attributed to the Christian school teachers' strong sense of their work as a calling, a labor of love, and of them being servants in their roles.

**Attracting people to the teaching profession.** Prior research pointed strongly to two ways to encourage people to consider teaching. The first (Buijs, 2005) was to have teachers or others discuss the possibility with students, and the second (Pietrzak et al, 2011) was to promote teaching for its altruistic reasons, as a calling or vocation that contributes to society or that influences the next generation. The surveys showed that parents and teachers were supportive of

the notion that they would encourage their children to be teachers. However, though teachers did rate being “inspired by my teacher(s)” fairly highly for a reason they decided to become teachers, neither teachers nor today’s high school students rated “direct encouragement from teachers or parents” as very important. Remembering that there were five short answer responses that spoke of others like pastors and classmates encouraging them, this category showed mixed results.

Researchers’ proposals for attracting teachers to the profession also centered on financial incentives. Coggshall (2006) wrote of Americans being willing to pay higher taxes to raise teacher salaries to attract and retain teachers, and of more Americans being open to encouraging family members or even themselves to teaching if the salary was at least \$60,000 per year. Further, the state of Indiana offers scholarships and grants to help encourage young people become teachers. However, since Christian schools do not operate on tax dollars, this research study surveyed parents about raising tuition for three purposes. Responses were lukewarm at best for increasing tuition to increase teacher pay and benefits, and parents were even more disagreeable to raising tuition to help young people or adults wishing to change careers.

**Answers to the research questions as recommendations.** The researcher’s hypothesis was that the most important motivation to teachers both for attracting and keeping them is their view of teaching as a vocation or calling, one in which to serve the children and their school’s community through love of subject matter. The survey results bore this out, lending credence to the FPRCS initiative to produce videos that focus on the vocational nature of teaching and the joys for Christian teachers who are teaching Christian children. The researcher recommends continued pursuit of various means to promote teaching as a vocation to potential candidates.

Further, the researcher held that salaries and job status were the two next most important factors. The results of the surveys again showed clearly that money is the second most important

factor overall, both for attracting candidates to teaching and for keeping teachers in the profession. The researcher therefore recommends that this promotion of teaching as a joyful vocation be fervently brought to the Christian schools' communities as well. Since the research shows that parents have a high regard for the teaching profession as both a calling and a profession, at the same time viewing teachers as servants, this promotion is crucial in reminding parents and other supporters of Christian schools of their responsibility then to support the schools' teachers financially.

Additionally, the survey results regarding finances is significant. The researcher maintains that job status and salaries go hand in hand, and both the perception of the viability of teaching as a career, and the ability to recruit and retain good teachers is heightened by a drive to increase salaries and benefits, especially for teachers as they advance up the salary schedule. Teacher pay needs to stay in step with the school community's workers in general.

If student respect and behavior are included in the negative factors of recruitment and attrition, teachers should be well-trained in classroom management, but should also show themselves worthy of respect by their professional demeanor and work in the classroom. This is one aspect of a mentoring system that should not be overlooked. Mentors should be able to help orient young teachers to a school's policies and culture, help them transition into their identity as teachers, and also be good listeners to beginning teachers' struggles establishing discipline and positive classroom atmosphere.

The greatest contributors to attrition are intimately connected with the Christian teacher's view of life. If he/she is devoted to the job of teaching as a calling, the greatest fear is that they are not successful in helping their students; that they are not proving themselves competent for that calling. If the Christian school teacher sees the classroom as a covenant conversation, their

identity as teacher and their evaluation of positive student interest and engagement will be paramount to measuring their success. And, if the Christian school teacher relishes their life in a covenant home and in a local church, an imbalance between the three, home, school (work), and church will lead to dissatisfaction and the likelihood that they change careers. The researcher recommends that the school community, especially the school's board of directors, be diligently aware of a teacher's workload and active in support of teachers, both in words, actions, and prayers, even public prayers in our churches.

Specifically, regarding attrition and calling, the researcher recommends that our schools concentrate on building proper structures to support teacher growth and community. This includes educating teachers on the benefits of professional development. Though teachers did not rate opportunities for growth or leadership as important to them, the researcher was disappointed that parents and teachers put such little support behind teachers being able to develop professionally during the school year but also during the summer months. If parents support the view that teachers are professionals as well as called servants, salaries ought to be equitable to a 12-month occupation, and teachers ought to be expected, and financially supported, to continue professional development during the summer months.

The greatest limitation of this study was in targeting research subjects most appropriately. The student survey ought to have especially singled out those current high school students who have seriously considered teaching as a career. Let there be further efforts to survey or interview these students and hone in on their strongest motivating factors for or against teaching. One such concern is the growing trend of colleges' requirement of five years of training to be a teacher, such as Grand Valley State University in Michigan. Survey results reported 12.6 % of our

current teachers have obtained these degrees. Since this is a likely college choice for many of our students, it ought to be determined to what extent this is a detriment.

Also, our federation has seen the loss of some good young teachers in recent years. Let there be work put into not only interviewing them as to their reasons for exiting teaching to better understand attrition factors in our Christian schools, but also and let there be opportunities and support pathways given for renewal, if possible, to a fresh start in our schools.

This research project was conducted with the desire to help focus efforts in our Christian schools on best ways to attract and keep good teachers. May the discussions prompted by the surveys increase awareness of the teacher shortage and its possible reasons. As well, may the survey results help drive those efforts and promote continued discussion and further research. Ultimately, let this project aid us in our calling to be faithful in raising our children in Jehovah's fear, to His praise.

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## **Appendix A: Parent Survey – Perspectives on Teaching**

**SECTION 1: Demographics**

1. What is your age?                      < 30   31-35   36-40   41-45   46-50   51-55   56-60   > 60
2. What is your gender?                      Male    Female
3. What is your marital status?              Married              Single
4. What is your highest level of education:
  - High School
  - Some special training or college courses after high school
  - 2 years of college
  - 4 years of college
  - Completed graduate or professional degree after college (Master's, Doctorate, Medical, Law)

**SECTION 2: Salary / Income**

5. Just your best guess, what is the yearly salary for a teacher with a Bachelor's degree and 0 years of experience in your school? Please give your answer to the nearest \$5000.
6. Just your best guess, what is the yearly salary for a teacher with a Bachelor's degree and 5 years of experience in your school? Please give your answer to the nearest \$5000.
7. Just your best guess, what is the yearly salary for a teacher with a Bachelor's degree and 10 years of experience in your school? Please give your answer to the nearest \$5000.
8. Just your best guess, what is the yearly salary for a teacher with a Master's degree and 10 years of experience in your school? Please give your answer to the nearest \$5000.
9. Just your best guess, what is the yearly salary for the average working adult among your school's supporting community? Please give your answer to the nearest \$5000.
10. What is the yearly income of the primary bread winner in your family? Please give your answer to the nearest \$5000.
11. Which is the total yearly income in your home, including both spouses' earnings? Please give your answer to the nearest \$5000.

**SECTION 3: Statements to Evaluate**

12. Please indicate your level of agreement or disagreement with the following statements:

*Strongly Agree, Agree, Neutral, Disagree, Strongly Disagree*

- A. I would encourage my child to become a teacher.
- B. Teaching is a prestigious career.
- C. Teaching is a calling.
- D. Teachers should view themselves as servants.
- E. Teaching is a profession.
- F. I trust my school's teachers to do what is best for my student academically and as a person.
- G. Teachers should have more voice in policy and decision making in our school.
- H. Teachers should be given more control of their own classroom decisions.
- I. Teachers should be given more in-service time during the school year for support and professional development, even if this means a longer school year.
- J. Teachers today have it harder than 20 years ago.
- K. Teachers today have less support from parents than 20 years ago.
- L. Teachers today have less respect from students than 20 years ago.
- M. Many of the people in our society who would make great teachers don't go into teaching because teaching doesn't pay enough.
- N. I think teachers in our Christian schools are not paid enough.
- O. I think teachers who are heads of households in our Christian schools should be paid more than those who are not.
- P. Teaching is women's work, especially for the primary grades.
- Q. Teachers' salaries can be supplemented with summer work, so teachers' pay does not need to be equitable to a typical twelve-month job.
- R. I would support a plan to increase tuition in order to increase teacher pay and benefits at my school.
- S. I would support a plan to increase tuition in order to fund students' education to become teachers.
- T. I would support a plan to increase tuition in order to fund career changes for those wanting to become teachers.

## **Appendix B: Teacher Survey – Perspectives on Teaching**

**SECTION 1: Demographics**

1. What is your age? < 30 31-35 36-40 41-45 46-50 51-55 56-60 > 60
2. What is your gender? Male Female
3. What is your marital status? Married Single
4. Are you the primary bread winner in your household? Yes No
5. At what level do you teach?
  - Preschool / Kindergarten
  - Primary (Grades 1-3)
  - Middle (Grades 4 – 5)
  - Junior High (Grades 6 – 8)
  - High School (Grades 9 – 12)
  - Special Education / Resource
6. What is your highest level of education?
  - Some special training or college courses after high school
  - 4 year Bachelor’s Degree
  - 5 years Bachelor’s Degree
  - Master’s Degree
  - Doctorate

**SECTION 2: Salary / Income**

7. Just your best guess, what is the yearly salary for a teacher with a Bachelor’s degree and 0 years of experience in your school? Please give your answer to the nearest \$5000.
8. Just your best guess, what is the yearly salary for a teacher with a Bachelor’s degree and 5 years of experience in your school? Please give your answer to the nearest \$5000.
9. Just your best guess, what is the yearly salary for a teacher with a Bachelor’s degree and 10 years of experience in your school? Please give your answer to the nearest \$5000.
10. Just your best guess, what is the yearly salary for a teacher with a Master’s degree and 10 years of experience in your school? Please give your answer to the nearest \$5000.
11. Just your best guess, what is the yearly salary for the average working adult among your school’s supporting community? Please give your answer to the nearest \$5000.
12. What is the yearly income of the primary bread winner in your family? Please give your answer to the nearest \$5000.
13. What is the total yearly income in your home, including both spouses’ earnings? Please give your answer to the nearest \$5000.

**SECTION 3: Statements to Evaluate**

14. Please indicate your level of agreement or disagreement with the following statements:  
*Strongly Agree, Agree, Neutral, Disagree, Strongly Disagree*

- A. I would encourage my child to become a teacher.
- B. Teaching is a prestigious career.
- C. Teaching is a calling.
- D. Teachers should view themselves as servants.
- E. Teaching is a profession.
- F. I trust my school's teachers to do what is best for my student academically and as a person.
- G. Teachers should have more voice in policy and decision making in our school.
- H. Teachers should be given more control of their own classroom decisions.
- I. Teachers should be given more in-service time during the school year for professional development, even if this means a longer school year.
- J. Teachers today have it harder than 20 years ago.
- K. Teachers today have less support from parents than 20 years ago.
- L. Teachers today have less respect from students than 20 years ago.
- M. Students are less interested and engaged in learning than 20 years ago.
- N. Many of the people in our society who would make great teachers don't go into teaching because teaching doesn't pay enough.
- O. I think teachers in our Christian schools are not paid enough.
- P. I think teachers who are heads of households in our Christian schools should be paid more than those who are not.
- Q. Teaching is women's work, especially for the primary grades.
- R. Teachers' salaries can be supplemented with summer work, so teachers' pay does not need to be equitable to a typical twelve-month job.
- S. I would support a plan to increase tuition in order to increase teacher pay and benefits at my school.
- T. I would support a plan to increase tuition in order to fund students' education to become teachers.
- U. I would support a plan to increase tuition in order to fund career changes for those wanting to become teachers.

#### **SECTION 4: What motivated you to become a teacher?**

15. Please indicate how important each of these factors was in making your ORIGINAL decision to become a teacher.  
*Very Important, Important, Moderately Important, Slightly Important, Unimportant*

- A. View of teaching as my calling
- B. Desire to work with children

- C. Desire to serve my community / make a difference
  - D. Inspired by my teacher(s) at school
  - E. Direct encouragement from one of my teachers
  - F. Family members work in education
  - G. Direct encouragement from my parent(s)
  - H. Poor experience in my own education
  - I. Great experience in my own education
  - J. Status of teaching as a profession
  - K. Love of subject matter
  - L. Lack of other career options
  - M. Advancement opportunities
  - N. Opportunity to be involved beyond the classroom
  - O. Having longer holidays
  - P. Beginning teacher salary
  - Q. Job security
  - R. Variety – every day is different
  - S. To have fun
16. If there was a very important factor for you not listed above, please specify it here.
- 

### **SECTION 5: Do you plan to stay in teaching?**

17. Have you ever considered leaving teaching for a different career?      Yes      No

*18. We'd like to know what factors might change your mind about leaving teaching. Or, what factors would most encourage you to remain a teacher. For each, please indicate how important this is to you.*

*Very Important, Important, Moderately Important, Slightly Important, Unimportant*

- A. Greater sense of competence, or success helping my students
- B. Better sense of my identity as a teacher so that I do not become emotionally exhausted
- C. More support from peers, such as through mentoring
- D. Greater sense of belonging / community with peers
- E. More support from administration
- F. Greater voice in decision-making

- G. Lighter workload
- H. Greater balance between family, life, and work
- I. Better equipment and work space
- J. More ability to teach in my subject area
- K. Significantly higher salary
- L. Better benefits
- M. Higher forecasted salary at the top of the salary schedule
- N. More job security
- O. More opportunities for professional advancement
- P. More opportunities to take leadership positions
- Q. More support from parents
- R. More respect from students
- S. Better student behavior
- T. Greater student interest and engagement



**SECTION 1: Demographics**

1. What is your current grade in school:      10      11      12
2. What is your gender?                              Male                      Female
3. What is your expected highest level of education?  
 High School  
 Some special training or college courses after high school  
 2 years of college / Associate's degree  
 4 years of college / Bachelor's degree  
 Graduate or professional degree (Master's, doctorate, Medical, Law)

**SECTION 2: Salary / Income**

- 4.. Just your best guess, what is the yearly salary for a teacher with a Bachelor's degree and 0 years of experience in your school? Please give your answer to the nearest \$5000.
5. Just your best guess, what is the yearly salary for a teacher with a Bachelor's degree and 5 years of experience in your school? Please give your answer to the nearest \$5000.
6. Just your best guess, what is the yearly salary for a teacher with a Bachelor's degree and 10 years of experience in your school? Please give your answer to the nearest \$5000.
7. Just your best guess, what is the yearly salary for a teacher with a Master's degree and 10 years of experience in your school? Please give your answer to the nearest \$5000.
8. Just your best guess, what yearly salary do you plan to earn 5 years after completion of your education? Please give your answer to the nearest \$5000.

**SECTION 3: What motivates you to become a teacher?**

10. Please indicate how important each of these factors would be to you in deciding to become a teacher.      *Very Important, Important, Moderately Important, Slightly Important, Unimportant*

- A. View of teaching as my calling
- B. Desire to work with children
- C. Desire to serve my community / make a difference
- D. Inspired by my teacher(s) at school
- E. Direct encouragement from one of my teachers
- F. Family members work in education
- G. Direct encouragement from my parent(s)
- H. Poor experience in my own education
- I. Great experience in my own education
- J. Status of teaching as a profession
- K. Love of subject matter

- L. Lack of other career options
  - M. Career advancement opportunities
  - N. Opportunity to be involved beyond the classroom
  - O. Having longer holidays
  - P. Beginning teacher salary
  - Q. Job security
  - R. Variety – every day is different
  - S. To have fun
11. If there was a very important factor for you not listed above, please specify it here.
- 

#### **SECTION 4: Discouraging Factors**

*12. What factors most discourage you from pursuing a teaching as a career? For each, please indicate how important this is to you.*

*Very Important, Important, Moderately Important, Slightly Important, Unimportant*

- A. Amount / Length of Education Required
  - B. Cost of college education
  - C. Requirements for continuing education after college
  - D. Expected beginning salary
  - E. Expected salary after 10 years of teaching
  - F. Expected Benefits
  - G. Workload
  - H. Lack of ability to teach in my interest area
  - I. Lack of opportunities for professional advancement
  - J. Lack of opportunities to take leadership positions
  - K. Lack of respect from society for teachers
  - L. Students don't respect teachers
  - M. Students don't behave well
  - N. Students aren't interested in learning
13. If there was a very important factor discouraging you from becoming a teacher that is not listed above, please specify it here.
-

**Appendix D: Administrator Emails and Suggested Announcements**

January 7, 7:52 AM

Dear Fellow Administrators,

I trust this finds you all well after a blessed Christmas break!

Many of you will recall our roundtable discussion about teacher shortages at this fall's convention, and my plans to conduct surveys to help us determine reasons why and consider possible solutions.

I am in the finishing stages of preparing my surveys and am using this email to ask you again to help with their distribution. I am alerting you now so that you are prepared to help me launch the surveys to parents, teachers, and students in a timely manner. Please consider the best ways to publicize these surveys in your communities, perhaps via your school's weekly announcement papers or group emails, and to also give friendly reminders the following week.

I hope to send you the surveys in about 2-3 weeks for distribution. Please be ready to distribute them then.

Thank you all for your help, and please reply with any questions.

Regards,

Ralph Medema

January 26, 10:20 AM

Dear Administrators,

As I alerted you in a previous email, I'm now ready to launch my surveys!

Please find a document attached that contains the links for the 3 "Google Forms" surveys, and suggested notes to parents and teachers that could accompany the links. If you have high school students in grades 10-12, I'm hoping you set up a controlled environment for them to take the survey profitably.

If at all possible I would like all surveys completed within 3 weeks. For my own school, I am launching the surveys this Monday, the 28th of January, and hoping to have all student and teacher surveys completed within the first week. For parents, I am hoping the same but will send out a reminder the following Monday.

Of course, if you are a teacher and/or a parent of current students you are welcome to take those surveys. If you wish to see the student survey or the others, please ask and I can send you a pdf, or simply sit with a student as they take the survey. You will not be able to see the surveys completely without taking them, but then your responses would be added to the data collection.

*Please respond to this email that you have received it.* If you see that I have missed someone, please advise. The more I can solicit responses from all our schools, the better.

If you have any questions, please ask.

Thank you all very much for your help.

Yours in Christ,

Ralph

Dear Parents,

As you may be well aware, our schools are experiencing a shortage of teachers. One of our teachers in the Federation of Protestant Reformed Christian Schools is conducting survey research with the purpose of adding meaningful data to the discussion about how to address this issue. By considering our current perspectives about teaching as a career, he hopes to look at the primary reasons for the current teacher shortage and to suggest an action plan that aids to resolve this deficiency.

We have included a link to a survey for current parents of students in our Protestant Reformed Christian schools. Please be prompt and take this survey sometime in the next few days. Each parent in a household may take the survey, independently, but please take it only once. Your answers are anonymous. The survey is designed to not take too much of your time.

Simply click on this link or copy and paste it into the address bar of your internet page:

<https://goo.gl/forms/2YefIROBMfGc5YmR2>

Thank you for participating!

Dear Teachers,

As you are probably well aware, our schools are experiencing a shortage of teachers. One of our teachers in the Federation of Protestant Reformed Christian Schools is conducting survey research with the purpose of adding meaningful data to the discussion about how to address this issue. By considering our current perspectives about teaching as a career, he hopes to look at the primary reasons for the current teacher shortage and to suggest an action plan that aids to resolve this deficiency.

We have included a link to a survey for current teachers in our Protestant Reformed Christian schools. Please be prompt and take this survey sometime in the next few days. Perhaps this survey will prompt more healthy discussion among our staff, but please take the survey prior to discussing it with others, and please take it only once. Your answers are anonymous. The survey is designed to not take too much of your time, but may require some reflection on your part.

Simply click on this link or copy and paste it into the address bar of your internet page:

<https://goo.gl/forms/mFqSWygyxbzuJFwx2>

Thank you for participating!

Here is the link to the student survey for 10<sup>th</sup> – 12<sup>th</sup> grades:

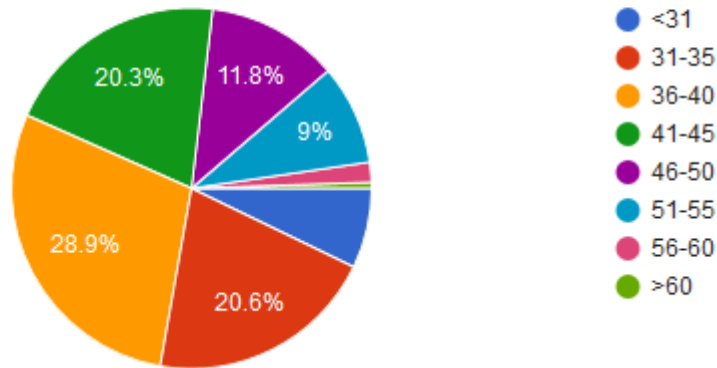
<https://goo.gl/forms/krkrJt84gfKmLkJM2>

I trust that you will find a way to incorporate this into a school day this week so that the survey takers are encouraged to give meaningful responses within a close time frame of each other, and as I mentioned in my prior email, perhaps be used for a good discussion. I have asked my Consumer Economics (grades 11 & 12) and Composition (grade 10) teachers to run this survey this Monday morning. I will also be following up with our kids, using it as an opportunity to encourage a few...

**Appendix E: Demographics Results, Parent Survey**

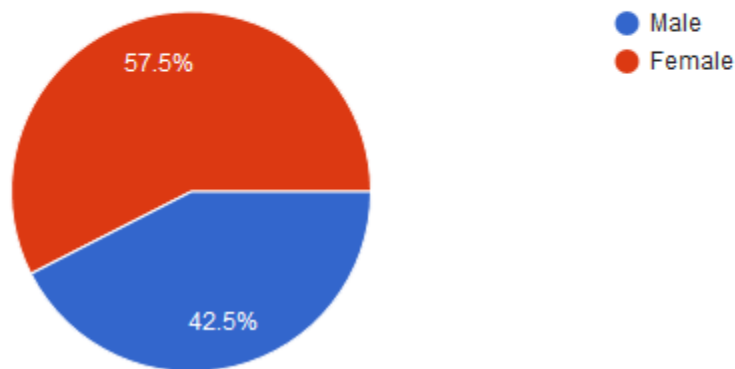
**What is your age?**

558 responses



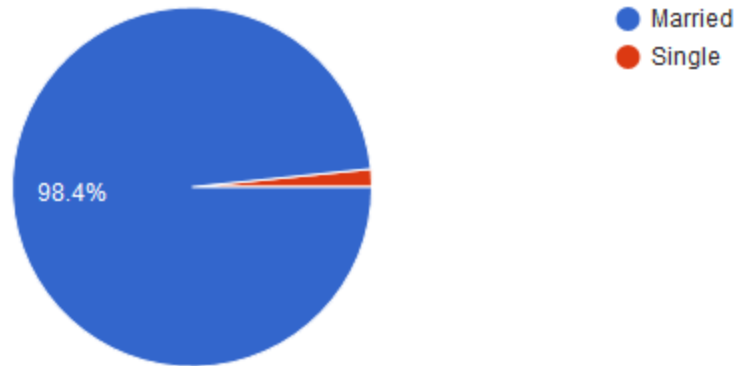
**What is your gender?**

558 responses



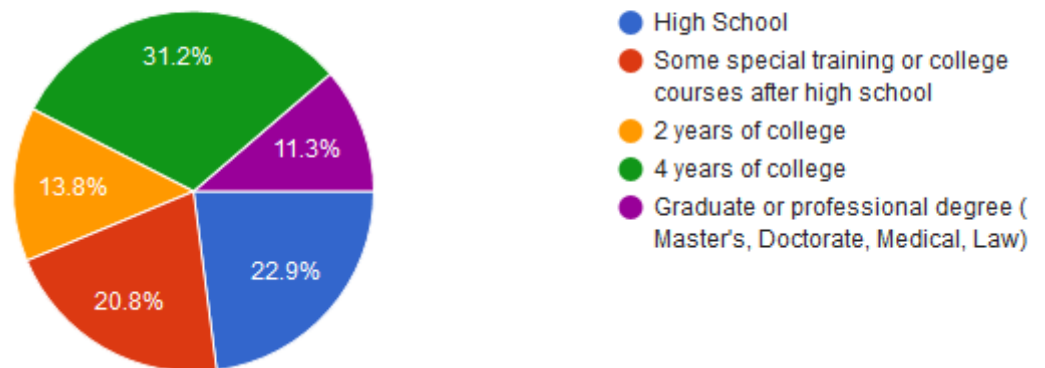
### What is your marital status?

558 responses



### What is your highest level of education?

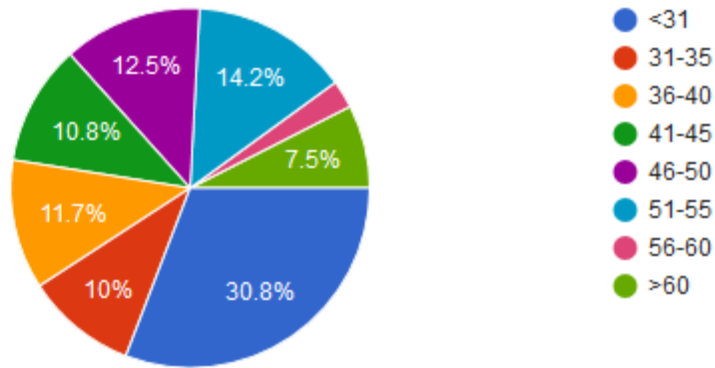
558 responses



**Appendix F: Demographics Results, Teacher Survey**

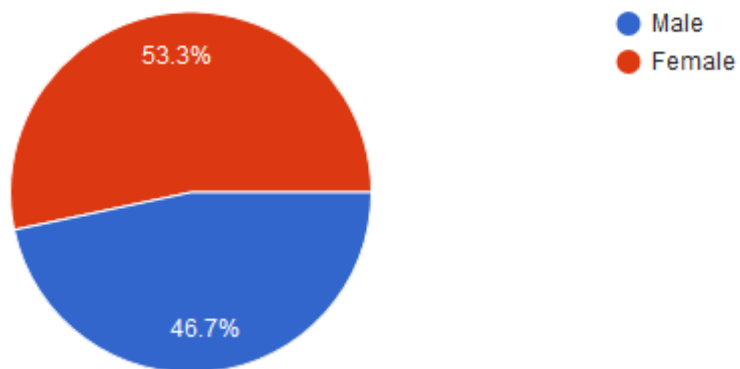
**What is your age?**

120 responses



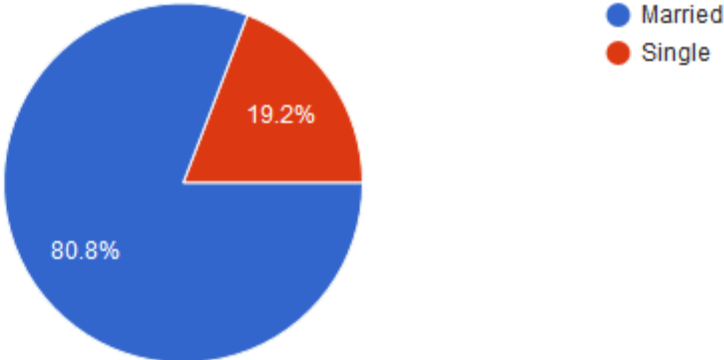
**What is your gender?**

120 responses



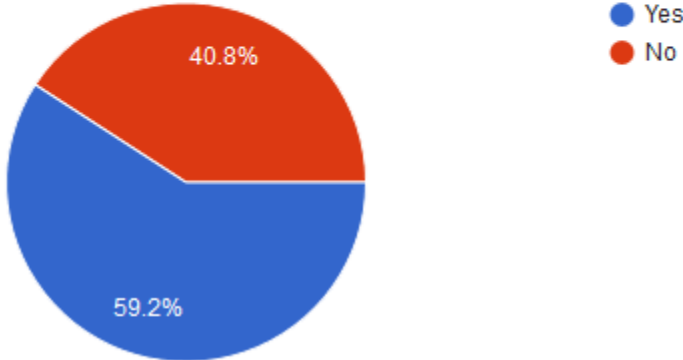
### What is your marital status?

120 responses



### Are you the primary bread winner in your household?

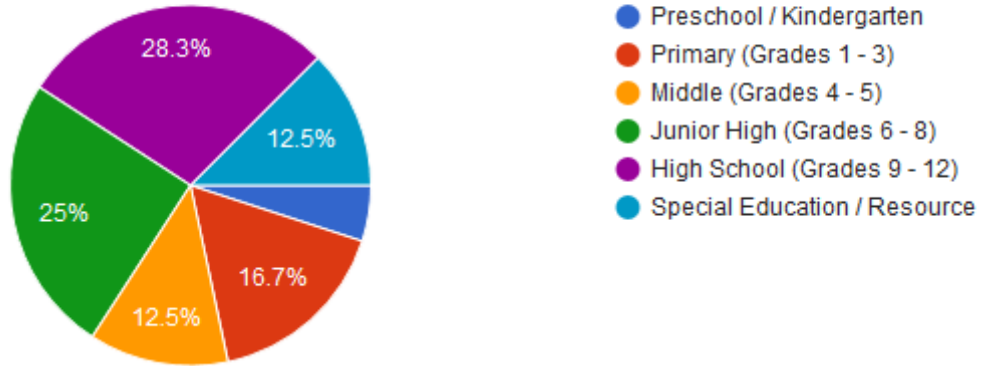
120 responses





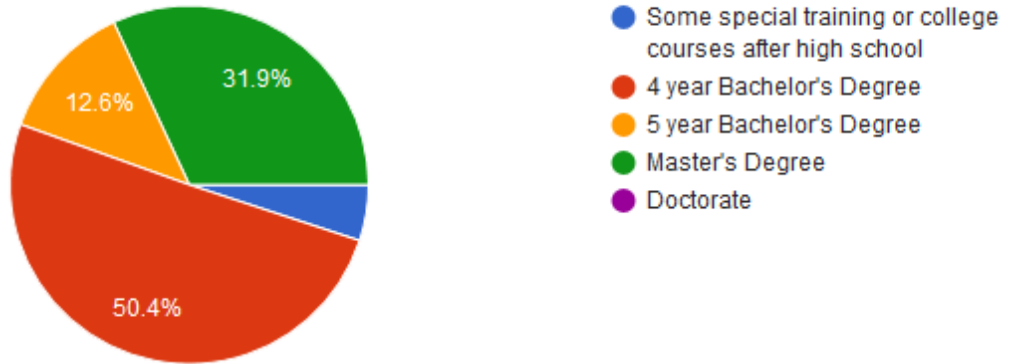
### At what level do you teach?

120 responses



### What is your highest level of education?

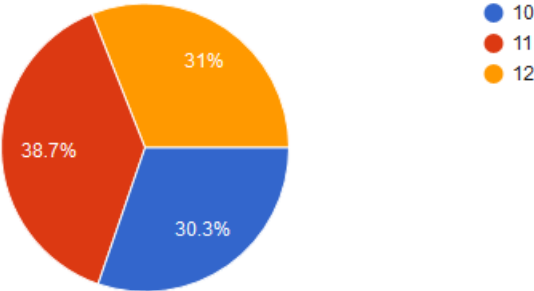
119 responses



**Appendix G: Demographics Results, Student Survey**

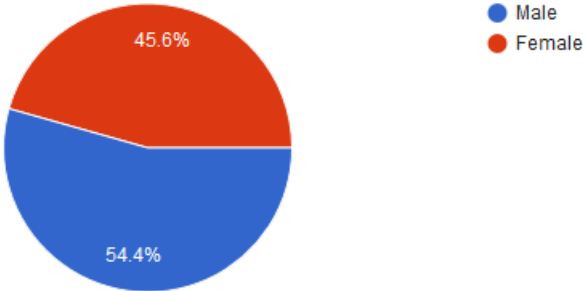
What is your current grade in school?

274 responses



What is your gender?

274 responses



### What is your expected highest level of education?

274 responses

