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Religiously Responsive Pedagogy in Christian Schools: A Qualitative Exploration of Faculty Perceptions of Faith Integration

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Religiously Responsive Pedagogy in Christian Schools: A Qualitative Exploration

of Faculty Perceptions of Faith Integration

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of

Philosophy at Virginia Commonwealth University.

by

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Dedication

If I speak with the tongues of mankind and of angels, but do not have love,

I have become a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal.

If I have the gift of prophecy and know all mysteries and all knowledge,

and if I have all faith so as to remove mountains, but do not have love,

I am nothing.

And if I give away all my possessions to charity,

and if I surrender my body so that I may glory, but do not have love,

it does me no good.

To the students and teachers I have the privilege to serve. Whether I speak in every language or

impart all knowledge I have been given, whether I have all faith to overcome each challenge or

give my whole life to serve you, it is nothing without the love of Christ.

Thank you for teaching me to love you more fully each and every day.

To my dear Aaron, serving the Lord at your side is my greatest honor. Your faithfulness and love

are the pillars on which I stand. Aquinas, you ask difficult questions that make me a better mom

and teacher each day. Never stop exploring the grandeur of God's world. Anastasia Rose, your

vibrancy and zest for life are incomparable. You were created to lead, and you teach me daily.

And to my parents, Dan and Peggy Agee. Thank you for giving me Jesus and for modeling

lifelong biblical integration through your ministry. You are my inspiration.

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I would like to thank Dr. Joan Rhodes and the members of my committee for encouraging me and challenging me throughout this process. I am grateful to each one of you for the time that you invested in this project. Thank you to Brad and Cat for walking this journey alongside me from day one. I am so proud and grateful for the important work you are doing.

I would also like to thank my participants for taking the time to share your perspectives with me. Thank you for the work you are doing and for your commitment to Christian education.

Finally, to my heroes - the teachers. A sincere thank you to the faculty of Oaxaca Christian School, Wheaton College, Baylor University, Virginia Commonwealth University, and Grove Christian School. Each one of you has taught me invaluable lessons and has made me want to be a better teacher.

Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think,

according to the power that works in us, to Him be glory in the church

by Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen.

Ephesians 3:20-21

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List of Abbreviations

Culturally Responsive Pedagogy (CRP)

Integration of Faith and Learning (IFL)

Religiously Responsive Pedagogy (RRP)

Association of Christian Schools International (ACSI)

Prekindergarten through 12th Grade (PK-12)

English Standard Version (ESV)

King James Version (KJV)

Abstract

RELIGIOUSLY RESPONSIVE PEDAGOGY IN CHRISTIAN SCHOOLS: A QUALITATIVE

EXPLORATION OF FACULTY PERCEPTIONS OF FAITH INTEGRATION

By Andrea R. Woodard, Ph.D.

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of

Philosophy at Virginia Commonwealth University.

Virginia Commonwealth University, 2023

Director: Dr. Joan A. Rhodes, Department Chair and Associate Professor, Department of

Teaching and Learning

This qualitative study introduced a theoretical framework of Religiously Responsive

Pedagogy (RRP) and explored the ways in which RRP is enacted in Christian schools, along with

the barriers and supports that may exist for effective RRP within those schools. The study

investigated PK-12 faculty perceptions of faith integration, responsiveness to students, and

school support in order to develop this new framework. Twelve teachers participated in a

semi-structured interview via Zoom, which included four scenarios to probe teacher perspectives

on RRP. The data was coded recursively using Boeije's (2002) constant-comparative method.

The primary research questions addressed were:

- How do teachers at Christian schools perceive the role that faith integration plays in their
   instruction?

- To what extent, if any, do teachers at Christian schools describe responsiveness to
   students' religious beliefs in faith integration practices?

- In what ways, if any, do Christian schools support Religiously Responsive Pedagogy in
   the classroom?

Findings from this study include five distinct themes: biblical worldview instruction, character development, responsiveness to students, the value of relationships, and supports and challenges that exist for teachers. This study has discovered a strong theme of biblical worldview instruction that goes beyond the integration and unifies faith and learning in worldview education. This finding supports the value of character and leadership development by modeling a biblical worldview in the classroom, mentoring and discipling students, and facing the current challenges of our world to promote unity and Christlike love.

Finally, this study showed that participants demonstrated varied levels of responsiveness in all five potential indicators of RRP. However, the study supported the RRP framework by highlighting the importance of relationships in the teaching and learning process and the value of responsiveness to student perspectives and other worldviews. The study concluded with five recommendations for Christian school leaders and ACSI leaders to further support faculty and student development through RRP.

Keywords: Christian education, integration of faith and learning, culturally responsive pedagogy, religiously responsive pedagogy, faculty support

Vita

Andrea Ruth Woodard was born September 17, 1989 in Tehuacán, Puebla in the country of Mexico. She is an American citizen by birth abroad to U.S. citizens. She graduated from Oaxaca Christian School in Oaxaca, Mexico in May 2007 and completed her Bachelor of Arts in Spanish at Wheaton College in Wheaton, Illinois in December 2009. Subsequently, she taught at Drake University in Des Moines, Iowa as a Spanish Program Assistant.

She graduated with a Master of Arts in Spanish at Baylor University in Waco, TX in May 2013 and completed a thesis in Second Language Acquisition titled, *Developing a Spanish for Heritage Speakers Program for Universities in Texas*. She taught Spanish at Baylor University for two years following her graduation.

In 2016, Andrea began teaching 1st-10th grade Spanish at Grove Christian School in Richmond, VA. Grove Christian School is a Leadership Academy for Christ, and is fully accredited through ACSI and Cognia. After two years of teaching at Grove, Andrea began her Ph.D. in Education at Virginia Commonwealth University. Over the next four years, she moved into the role of Director of Curriculum and Instruction. The school grew rapidly during the COVID-19 pandemic, and at the time of completion of this dissertation, Andrea supervised a staff of 45 teaching faculty and supported approximately 400 students in teaching and learning from preschool through 12th grade.

Andrea is also actively involved in leadership roles within ACSI as a founding member of the Richmond Christian Educators association. She serves regularly on accreditation teams within the region and supports other school leaders within ACSI.

Chapter 1: Introduction

❖ *Laila attends a suburban public high school in West Des Moines, Iowa. Her family emigrated from Palestine in 2000, so she has lived her entire life in the United States. As a devout Muslim, Laila prays five times a day and wears a headscarf, but the teachers and students at her majority white school are often derisive or even openly hostile toward her religious practices. She has never seen a teacher pray or refer to Muslim faith outside of World History class.*

❖ *Dexter's family are Jehovah's Witnesses, regularly attending meetings at their local Kingdom Hall. As a third grader in Mobile, Alabama, Dexter must sit out during any holiday or birthday celebration with his classmates. His teacher makes a point of emphasizing to the class that Dexter 'can't do any of our fun activities' because of his family's religious beliefs.*

❖ *Julia is a middle schooler in Kirkland, Washington when her friend invites her to attend a youth group at a local Presbyterian church. Julia soon accepts Jesus as her personal savior, but many of the scientific truths taught in her Earth Science class do not align with what she reads in the Bible. When she asks questions of her science teacher, the teacher says, "We can't talk about religious beliefs at school. Faith has nothing to do with education."*

While the examples above are fictional, they demonstrate a key issue that is often overlooked or disqualified from educational discussions, particularly those related to culture. Students' faith, spirituality, and religious backgrounds are either ignored in the context of education or rejected as a meaningful social process through which students experience school (James et al., 2015; Nord, 2014). While Culturally Responsive Pedagogy (CRP) has pushed educators to support equitable educational experiences for students of all cultural backgrounds, religion has not been meaningfully treated as part of the discussion of cultural relevance (Chow, 2020; Dallavis, 2011).

Introduction to the Research Problem

In the context of Christian schools, faith and religion are central to the purpose and practice of education. Christian teachers are expected to integrate faith and learning across the curriculum effectively (Coe, 1917/2012; Gaebelein, 1954; Smith & Smith, 2011). However, teacher training in this area varies greatly (de Korniejczuk, 1994; Gallagher, 2016; Jang, 2011;

Mccollum, 2019; Nwosu, 1999; Peterson, 2012; Stoner, 2012). Within Christian schools and universities, even the definition of the Integration of Faith and Learning (IFL) is contested widely (Cosgrove, 2015; Glanzer, 2008; Langer, 2012; Reichard, 2013; Thomas, 2012). Badley (2009) argued that Christian educators might never agree on a clear conception or even core definition of IFL due to the diversity of worldviews within Christianity. Multiple scholars have called for new ways of articulating and considering the task of Christian education (Badley, 2009; Glanzer, 2008; Iselyn & Meteyard, 2010; Jacobsen & Jacobsen, 2004; Lawrence et al., 2005).

Christian education could benefit from the perspectives and practices of CRP to promote a responsiveness to students' religious backgrounds. Whereas IFL focuses primarily on content-driven integration and teacher-centered instruction, this study proposes a framework for teaching and learning that centers on pedagogy that is responsive to student needs, input, questioning, and growth.

Research Purpose and Questions

The purpose of my study was to explore the ways in which a Religiously Responsive Pedagogy (RRP) is enacted in Christian schools and the barriers and supports that may exist for effective RRP within those schools. This study investigated PK–12 faculty perceptions of faith integration, responsiveness to students, and professional development to further develop this new framework. The primary research questions I have addressed are:

- How do teachers at Christian schools perceive the role that faith integration plays in their instruction?
- To what extent, if any, do teachers at Christian schools describe responsiveness to students' religious beliefs in faith integration practices?

– In what ways, if any, do Christian schools support Religiously Responsive Pedagogy in

the classroom?

This study investigated Christian school teacher perceptions regarding *why* they integrate faith in

the classroom, *how* they integrate faith in the classroom, and *what* their schools have done to

cultivate those perspectives and practices.

Overview of Literature

Extensive literature exists on IFL at each level of education. This topic has been

theorized widely by scholars within higher education and contextualized in PK–12 Christian

schools. My study sought to develop this literature further by introducing the RRP integrated

framework, providing a new lens to understand IFL and potential religious responsiveness to the

culture of faith within Christian education.

Theoretical Literature on the Integration of Faith and Learning

Gaebelein introduced the terminology of IFL, claiming that philosophical integration lies

"at the heart of all thinking about education, whether Christian or secular" (1954, p. ix). He

defined IFL as the living union between the content of instruction, relational interactions, and the

pattern of God's Truth. The central assumption of IFL is that God's Truth is infinite and

universal. As such, it is not dependent upon what limits Christian education might impose.

However, God's Truth is ingrained deeply in every aspect of education, and "as we come to

knowledge of it, we find that it is nothing less than the context of everything that we know or

ever can know" (Gaebelein, 1954, p. 8). Without biblical integration, Christian education has no

solid foundation nor aims.

Holmes (1975) further developed the importance of IFL among Christian colleges and

universities, saying that "What we need is not Christians who are also scholars but Christian

scholars, not Christianity alongside education but Christian education" (p. 7). Instructional

methods, materials, concepts, and philosophical underpinnings must all be evaluated and aligned

with the perspectives and practices of Christian faith (Holmes, 1975). Since the time of Holmes'

book, IFL has become something of a slogan for Christian education (Badley, 1994). Worldview

education and biblical integration continue to lie at the heart of distinctly Christian schooling.

Nevertheless, the exact definition of IFL remains contested among Christian schools and

universities. Some scholars have argued that the term should be abandoned in favor of a quest for

wisdom (Jacobsen & Jacobsen, 2004) or an analogy following the creation and redemption of

Christian scholarship (Glanzer, 2008). Badley (2009) suggested that all three key terms –

integration, *faith*, and *learning* – each carry various meanings, which leads to differing

interpretations of IFL as a combined concept. In some cases, disagreement and confusion

between institutions or between faculty members can lead to frustration or apathy. However,

continued discussion regarding what exactly is meant by IFL and the ways in which such

integration can be executed in the classroom and in the relational interactions between teachers

and students continue to be beneficial (Badley, 2009). Holmes asserts that,

> Integration should be seen not as an achievement or a position but as an intellectual
>
> activity that goes on as long as we keep learning anything at all. Not only as an
>
> intellectual activity, however, for integrated learning will contribute to the integration of
>
> faith into every dimension of a person's life and character (1975, p. 46).

In order to teach content and skills founded in God's timeless Truth effectively, teachers need

ongoing development, collaboration, and opportunities for reflection and growth.

Empirical Literature on Teacher Practices and Perceptions of IFL

In light of these needs, numerous empirical studies have been conducted on teachers' perceptions of and instructional practices for IFL as well as the ongoing need for school support. Nwosu (1999) found that professional development *Faith and Learning Seminars* at Christian universities focused more on intellectual development and definitions of IFL than classroom implementation and pedagogical strategies. Gallagher (2016) demonstrated the importance of coaching to support teachers' faith integration practices. Through a questionnaire, instructional plan rubric, and classroom observation rubric, Gallagher found that coached teachers demonstrated positive gains while non–coached teachers demonstrated negative gains.

Thonger (2019) explored school leaders' and teachers' perceptions of Christian schools in Nagaland, India in order to understand the ways that they integrate their Christian faith into educational practices and the experiences of students. Thonger found that while the educators effectively integrated faith into school activities and relationships, when it came to subject area disciplines, teachers were integrating sporadically without formal training or preparation. This study called for explicit preparation and school support for IFL.

Hollis (2019) used a phenomenological approach to investigate leadership practices that contribute to a Christian school environment that is conducive to the spiritual nurture of students, focusing on schools within the Association of Christian Schools International (ACSI). ACSI schools have been the subject of numerous research projects on teacher practices of IFL and faculty development (Eckel, 2009; Finn, Sweezey, & Warren, 2010; Frye, 2019; Hollis, 2019; Jang, 2011; Mccollum, 2019; Peterson, 2012; Wood, 2008). While IFL is a widely discussed concept in Christian schools and research, new ways of understanding IFL are needed for both theoretical and empirical literature.

Theoretical Framework: Towards a Theory of Religiously Responsive Pedagogy

Towards that aim, this study was situated within the current literature on IFL and literature on CRP to form an integrated framework of RRP. Given the contested nature of the terminology of IFL and its primary use by exclusively Christian institutions, this study proposes that RRP may be a suitable term to bridge the theoretical grounding of IFL with the strengths of and wider focus on CRP across educational literature.

CRP as a theoretical field emerged in the early 1990s from the work of Ladson–Billings (1994; 1995a; 1995b) in the area of multicultural education. In her original research, Ladson–Billings described Culturally relevant pedagogy as "a theoretical model that not only addresses student achievement but also helps students to accept and affirm their cultural identity while developing critical perspectives that challenge inequities that schools (and other institutions) perpetuate" (1995b, p. 469). Since that time, CRP has been discussed widely (Brown–Jeffy & Cooper, 2011; Gay, 2022; Howard, 2003; Morrison, et al., 2008; Young, 2010) and reapplied, redescribed, and redefined by Ladson–Billings (1998; 2008; 2014). Ladson–Billings affirms the work of Paris (2012) to assert that ongoing adaptations of her theory may correspond to the continual change seen in culture and society.

While it reflects many of the ongoing goals of CRP, RRP seeks specifically to address the complex issues of identity and culture related to personal faith beliefs and practices. Religion is an integral facet of culture and cultural practices around the world. However, in the seminal texts on CRP, religion is mentioned only tangentially as a dimension of diversity or, more often, it is not mentioned at all. However, if the tenets of CRP are beneficial to student outcomes, support critical thinking, and develop a more inclusive, democratic society – it follows that implementing RRP in schools would have similar impacts (Aronson et al., 2016). James and colleagues (2015)

assert that the teacher's and students' religion shape significantly each one's understanding of knowledge, truth, identity, and relationships. Without a deep understanding of the students' beliefs about the nature of god(s), the nature of the world, and the nature of truth, whatever content information is taught in the classroom will never fully take root and flourish into robust knowledge that can be shared and applied to reach high personal and academic goals. However, in the same way that CRP is not simply teaching about culture, but rather "using the cultural characteristics, experiences, and perspectives of ethnically diverse students as conduits for teaching them more effectively" (Gay, 2002), RRP cannot simply insert faith–based content or token religious diversity units into the curriculum.

Culturally responsive teachers believe that all students, regardless of cultural background, are capable of academic and personal achievement (Gay, 2018). Such teachers develop learning opportunities that promote academic achievement, social consciousness, cultural competence, and ethical and political responses to marginalization and oppression. This work is grounded in personal relationships in which students' culture is known and valued. In the same way, teachers who practice RRP would be aware of their own positionality in religious conversations and develop relationships with students in which they are open to learning and understanding each one's worldview and personal faith journey. These worldviews can then be integrated into the instructional activities in order to promote learning that is more meaningful.

In Christian schools, the collective culture necessarily is guided by a commitment to the same religion. As such, a shared faith should inform the pedagogy and practices of teachers and administrators alike within Christian schools. Nevertheless, effective RRP in this context relies on teachers who fully acknowledge the faith culture of the school, who are responsive to the beliefs and perspectives of their students, and who are fully prepared to integrate faith into the

content and structures of classroom instruction. Clearly, ongoing support may be needed for such a task. The purpose of this study was to investigate whether there is effective school support for RRP within PK–12 Christian education in ASCI schools.

Overview of Methodology

This study was qualitative in its approach and assumptions, given an epistemological stance which sought to understand the experiences of the participants, placing value on the perspectives of teachers at Christian schools (Creswell & Poth, 2013). A qualitative semi-structured interview design was used in order to elicit thick descriptions of teacher perceptions regarding faith integration, responsiveness to students, and school support for RRP. A semi-structured interview protocol was used (Appendix B), including four scenarios, which provided teachers an opportunity to respond candidly regarding how they would handle situations with students that might relate to other religious perspectives, epistemological foundations, view of scripture, and identity formation. Through these scenarios and other open-ended questions, participants were given the opportunity to share their perspectives on faith integration and their instructional practices

Participants

In order to participate in the study, teachers were required to teach full-time at a PK-12 Christian school that is an accredited member of ACSI and ascribes to a statement of faith affirming foundational protestant spiritual truths aligned to the mission and vision of the school. Teachers were emailed and requested to complete a Research Participation Form via Google Forms (see Recruitment Letter, Appendix C). From the information collected through the form, participants were chosen purposively to represent varying schools, teaching levels, and subject areas.

Procedures

Data was collected through semi-structured interviews conducted via Zoom. Following transcription of the data and member checks with participants, coding began through a constant comparative method with three established stages. In the first stage, a peer reviewer coded one transcript and then met with the researcher to triangulate codes, discuss themes, and validate the coding process. A codebook was developed recursively throughout the stages of comparison. Finally, the codes and themes were analyzed following the three research questions, and the results were presented in light of the research questions and the literature.

Significance of the Study

This study is significant to the future of Christian education in three key ways. First, it has introduced the RRP integrated theoretical framework - bridging the conversation between IFL and CRP. In addition, it has further developed the IFL literature by providing a qualitative study on faculty support for IFL. Finally, this study has provided pragmatic implications for school and ACSI policies and practices regarding teacher support for what continues to be one of the cornerstone distinctives of Christian education.

Definition of Terms

Christian school refers to a PK–12 learning institution that is committed to Christian principles and/or led by a Christian organization (such as a church). Christian schools are guided by a statement of faith – a written summary of core beliefs often referencing biblical passages. Christian schools may participate in a Christian accrediting agency, such as ACSI (or AACS, ACTS, ACCS, CSI, ICAA, NCSA, SDA, etc.), which may establish certain executive or curricular guidelines to ensure a distinctly Christian education is taught.

Christian faith is the belief in and practice of the teachings of Jesus Christ. It is a monotheistic religion that centers on a personal God who has offered salvation from sin through the birth, death, and resurrection of his son, the Messiah. It can be summarized most succinctly in the words of the Apostles' Creed:

> I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth.
>
> I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary. He suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried; he descended to hell. The third day he rose again from the dead. He ascended to heaven and is seated at the right hand of God the Father almighty. From there he will come to judge the living and the dead.
>
> I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.

Biblical worldview is an organized framework to understand the nature of Truth, reality, and the purpose of life through what is written in the Bible – the Christian canon of Scriptures (Fisher, 2021). It is rooted in the belief that the Bible is the inspired and infallible Word of God and that all desires, assumptions, and habits of life should be submitted to Christ through the Truth of the Gospel (Erdvig, 2020; Esqueda, 2014). While not entirely interchangeable, throughout this study both the terms biblical worldview and Christian worldview can be seen. Both terms are used in the literature and by participants. Wood (2008) uses both terms together in his definition of terms to define a biblical Christian worldview based on the PEERS (Smithwick, 2003) assessment. However, this study focused primarily on a biblical worldview that is rooted in the Bible as absolute Truth, as there may be many worldviews or perspectives that exist within the Christian faith.

Integration is the process of bringing parts together to better understand the whole. Gaebelein (1954) defines faith integration as bringing every aspect of education into relation with God's Truth. This concept will be further described in Chapter 2.

Truth is that which is in accordance with reality. In this study, truth is lowercase when it refers to general ideas or understandings of what is true, what philosopher Leszek Nowak referred to as approximate truth (1975). However, Truth and True are capitalized when they refer to absolute Truth or God's Truth, which is the ultimate reality. Nowak acknowledges that while there may be many relative or approximate truths, there is only one absolute Truth (1975).

Effective in general indicates that an intervention produces a desired result. In the context of this study, *effectiveness* of the support provided will be articulated through the perspectives of the participants. In particular, the teachers will express whether or not the training and support they have received is effective and what made it particularly effective.

Value is to consider something important or worthwhile. Merriam-Webster defines *value* as to consider or rate highly (prize, esteem); to estimate or assign the monetary worth of (appraise); or to rate or scale in usefulness, importance, or general worth (evaluate). In the context of this study, value is used to refer to student perspectives, meaning that teachers or other stakeholders considered the students' viewpoints to be important or worthwhile. This does not imply that they agreed with those perspectives or affirmed them wholeheartedly, but rather that the perspectives were considered worthy of attention and appreciation.

Culture refers to the "unwritten rules and traditions, customs, and expectations" (Deal & Peterson, 2016, p. 7) of a group of people or an organization or school. It consists of the invisible beliefs and assumptions, which constantly shape the actions and attitudes of all stakeholders

towards the organization, towards teaching and learning, and towards the meaning of the work being done.

Culturally responsive teaching is defined by Gay as "using the cultural characteristics, experiences, and perspectives of ethnically diverse students as conduits for teaching more effectively" (2002, p. 106).

Affirming is acceptance of and support for an idea or perspective. Culturally affirming practices demonstrate respect and a high regard for student backgrounds, culture, and experiences, particularly those from marginalized racial and ethnic groups (Allen et al., 2013).

Chapter 2: Literature Review

The purpose of this chapter is to develop the framework of RRP within the current literature of IFL and CRP in order to provide a fundamental understanding of the research questions for this study. As shown in Figure 2.1, RRP can be considered the bridge between CRP and IFL. The primary purpose of this study is to develop this framework through an investigation of PK–12 faculty perceptions of faith integration, responsiveness to students, and faculty support at Christian schools.

Figure 2.1

Bridging the gap through RRP
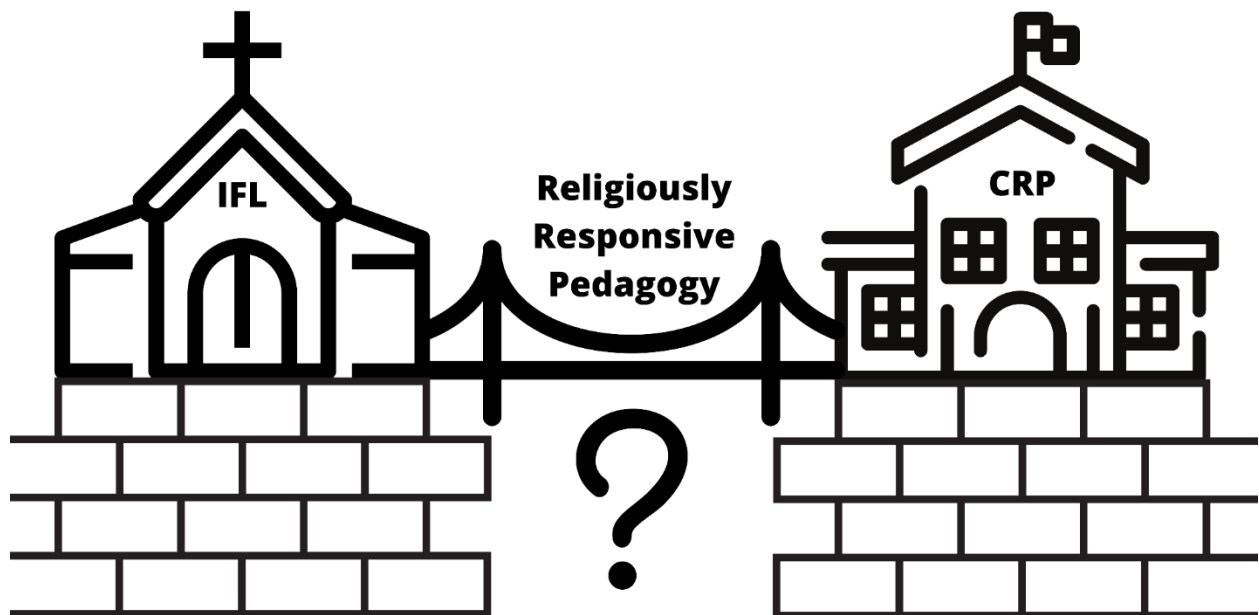
The research questions addressed in this study fall between the diverse literatures on IFL and CRP:

- How do teachers at Christian schools perceive the role that faith integration plays in their instruction?

- To what extent, if any, do teachers at Christian schools describe responsiveness to students' religious beliefs in faith integration practices?

- In what ways, if any, do Christian schools support Religiously Responsive Pedagogy in the classroom?

In order to explore these questions, I investigated the theoretical background and underlying assumptions of IFL in order to provide a foundation for Christian education, answering the first research question. Subsequently, I explored the theoretical background of Culturally Responsive Pedagogy (CRP) and the underlying assumptions of the study regarding religion and culture. I utilized the precedent literature on RRP to provide a dialogue on the importance of responsiveness to religious beliefs, addressing the second research question. Finally, I addressed the last research question through a systematic review of the current theoretical and empirical literature on faculty development and IFL. I close the chapter with an outline of the minimal literature that exists regarding support for CRP in Christian schools. Since this study proposes a new framework, these two diverse bodies of literature must be analyzed separately. However, by examining each question within the context of the relevant literature, this chapter provides a theoretical and empirical foundation for the study.

Integration of Faith and Learning (IFL)

The term IFL was introduced in Gaebelein's 1954 treatise, *The Pattern of God's Truth: The Integration of Faith and Learning*. Since that time, scholars have provided various

paradigms and approaches to integrate faith within Christian education (Dockery, 2012; Fisher, 2021; Green et al., 2019; Harris, 2004; Holmes, 1975; Smith & Smith, 2011; Smith, 2018). The purpose of this section is to outline the underlying assumptions of Christian education and then explore the theoretical background of IFL in order to provide a foundation for RRP in Christian education, answering the first research question: How do teachers at Christian schools perceive the role that faith integration plays in their instruction?

Underlying Assumptions: Christian Education

Christian education began with the writing of the Torah for the people of Israel and the teaching of God's commands from generation to generation. As Moses the prophet instructed, "See, I have taught you statutes and judgments just as the Lord my God commanded me, that you should do thus in the land where you are entering to possess it. So keep and do them, for that is your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the peoples" (Deuteronomy 4:5–6). Teachings passed down from the Hebrew patriarchs of the Old Testament form the basis for a Christian understanding of the purpose and content of education, with the center of all knowledge being God himself (Issler, 2001; Schultz, 1998). Scripture, as God's word, is for the Christian educator the final authority on the nature of the world, the nature of knowledge, and the nature of society (Benson, 2001; Pazmiño, 2008; Schultz, 1998; Shortt, 2014).

For hundreds of years, synagogues were set aside in Jewish society as the primary "school" for the teaching of these laws and practices. Rote memorization of the Mosaic Law began at a young age, along with mathematics and writing (Anthony & Benson, 2003). When Jesus of Nazareth began teaching and preaching, he fundamentally transformed both the content and delivery of what was to become a distinctively Christ–centered education (Kienel, 1998; Lederhouse, 2016; Noll, 2011; Pazmiño, 2001).

As the early Church strived to integrate the developing philosophies of Greek and Roman thinkers with the tradition of rote memorization and Jesus' distinctively critical teaching style, a new curriculum was forged, known as the catechumenate (Kienel, 1998; Lawson, 2001). Catechetical schools integrated biblical doctrine and liberal arts, contributing to the spread and growth of Christianity throughout the Mediterranean world. Church fathers such as Augustine and Aquinas provided philosophical insights into the nature of truth and knowledge, both claiming that knowledge comes only from God and that all Truth and knowledge is found only in Him (Augustine, 401/2002; Aquinas, 1256/2006). Throughout late classical and early medieval times, the Church continued to be a source of instruction and educational development with an increasing emphasis on the study of theology (Anthony & Benson, 2003; Kienel, 1998; Lawson, 2001).

Rapid change in social and educational philosophies came about at the beginning of the sixteenth century. New ways of thinking about the nature of reality and criticism of some of the fundamental teachings of the Catholic Church drove the need for reform in both Christian thought and practice (Kienel, 1998; Lawson, 2001). The Protestant Reformation, led by Martin Luther, was "the most far–reaching and profound awakening in the history of western civilization" (Kienel, 1998, p. 153). Luther was resolute in his interpretation of Scripture, critical of the teachings and practices of the Roman Catholic Church, and a champion of education for both spiritual and societal improvement (Lawson, 2001; Painter, 1889).

The Reformation and concurrent Scientific Revolution led to both church and educational changes. New denominations and congregations formed, each with its own educational philosophy and theological message. One of the major educational philosophers at this time was John Amos Comenius. His theory, detailed in *Didactica Magna* (1631/1967), influenced not only

Christian education but also secular understandings of the curricular and structural needs of educational systems across Europe. Comenius viewed children as spiritual beings and education as a way to tend and nurture their development toward preparation for eternity (Comenius, 1631/1967; Shortt et al., 2000; Smith, 2009). Comenius was deeply influenced by Jewish and Christian perspectives and closely associated with the educational philosophies of Pestalozzi and Froebel (Shortt et al., 2000).

During the Enlightenment of the 18th century, empiricism and humanism rejected the supremacy of God in the pursuit of knowledge, while numerous philosophers provided new perspectives on politics, society, and the physical and psychological development of children (Peters, 2019). The application of these philosophies by Pestalozzi and Froebel eventually led to the early development of Sunday Schools within the Church. Public education had left behind religious learning with an emphasis on rationalism, while children who did not attend schools went to work in factories eight to ten hours a day. The moral and social development of these youths was left to be completed in Sunday School, a practice within Christian education that was widespread in both Europe and the United States by the mid–19th century (Anthony & Benson, 2003).

As the fledgling government debated educational systems in the United States, the desire for religious freedom and equality led to the separation of religious education from the public schooling of American children. While many of the founding fathers viewed Biblical and moral instruction as paramount to the development of good citizens (Webster, 1790/1965), eventually the common school movement championed by Horace Mann won out over the Bible institutes of Finney, Moody, Sunday, and Machen (Anthony & Benson, 2003). At the turn of the 20th century, a new theory of philosophy known as American pragmatism, as developed by William James and

John Dewey, became the foundation of a democratic, social understanding of the nature and purpose of education.

A Social Philosophy of Christian Education

"Dewey insists on the social dimension of education, of school being a 'social institution,' that is to say an institution essentially involved in the progress and functioning of the whole social body" (Frega, 2015). In his pedagogic creed, Dewey begins with the premise that "all education proceeds by the participation of the individual in the social consciousness of the race" (Dewey, 1897/2017, art. 1). This emphasis on social consciousness was key to his fundamental questioning of both the reason and means for each activity of education. From this radical reconstruction of the theory and practice, a social philosophy of Christian education emerged as well. The most vocal proponent of a social view of religious education was the educator and theorist, George Albert Coe.

In his 1917 volume titled *A Social Theory of Religious Education*, Coe acknowledges various traditional purposes of Christian education as: (1) instructing the child in things a Christian should know; (2) preparing a child for life within the church; (3) saving the child's soul; (4) developing spiritual capacities; or (5) producing Christian character. (Coe, 1917/2012, p. 53). Without rejecting such traditional purposes outright, Coe redefines Christian education through a social lens as "Growth of the young toward and into mature and efficient devotion to the democracy of God, and happy self–realization therein" (Coe, 1917/2012, p. 55). He emphasized the importance of the democracy of God (corollary to the kingdom of God as prophesied by Jesus) as a human brotherhood whose ultimate goal is love for God and love for others.

Since the aim of Christian education within this paradigm is an ongoing care and consciousness for the good of the society, the means to achieve that goal must also be redefined. Coe claims that a social view redefines the content of the curriculum, no longer as the knowledge to be passed from teacher to student, but rather as social interactions and experiences. In this process, the teacher's character and disposition are far more important than the content of any textbook. Teachers must orchestrate social situations to lead the child to a deeper understanding of God's work in the world towards social welfare and social justice (Coe, 1917/2012).

Finally, Coe outlines basic tendencies within Christian education, all of whom rely on different applications of the social view of education. The types defined by Coe include Roman Catholic, Dogmatic Protestant, Ritualistic Protestant, Evangelical, and Liberal. However, as Christian education is a widespread field of vastly different ideologies, viewpoints, and beliefs, numerous theoretical approaches to Christian education can be identified.

Some Theoretical Approaches to Christian Education

Anthony & Benson (2003) suggest several theoretical approaches to Christian education. The first is built upon extensive historical and philosophical foundations. Classical Christian schools instruct students in the trivium: grammar (memorization of key facts and structures), logic (reasoning within those structures), and rhetoric (eloquence and persuasion using those structures and reasoning). Classical Christian schools primarily utilize an essentialist approach to education. "Students are viewed as a cognitive receptacle. The role of the teacher is simply to fill that receptacle each day with new insights, facts, and figures" (Anthony & Bensen, 2003, p. 395). Especially at the lower levels of education, teaching is restricted to transmission and memorization of information with little analysis or utilization of the knowledge.

By contrast, intellectual Christian schools focus on reasoning above all else. Following the positions of Saint Augustine and Thomas Aquinas, these schools value education as a means for spiritual reflection and intuition. The central assertion is that "We can come to know what is real through three primary means: the scientific method, intuition, and revelation. Intuition is to be valued because it leads us to ultimate Truth" (Anthony & Bensen, 2003, p. 397). This emphasis on reasoning in the search for truth reflects a foundation of neo–scholasticism, or neo–Thomism (named for Thomas Aquinas himself). These schools also tend to hold to traditionalist views of the nature of knowledge and the authority of Scripture.

Finally, progressive Christian schools encourage critical thinking (without clear leading or bias), collaboration between stakeholders in a democratic style, and instruction in skills for problem–solving or continued self–directed learning. "Teachers are viewed as sources of authority and direction but also are seen as fellow participants along the road of lifelong learning" (Anthony and Bensen, 2011, p. 401). The progressive Christian school would tend to follow Dewey's theories of education and agree with Coe's understanding of the role of social theory within religious education. Pragmatism is at the core of these schools, whose goal is to instruct students to be Christians who do good work for the good of the society and the glory of God.

Of course, in reality, not all Christian schools fall within these three theoretical buckets. A good portion of Christian schools today exist to perpetuate fundamentalism with little value given to critical thinking or meaningful philosophical instruction. By contrast, postmodernism could be the guiding framework of a uniquely Christian school when the instruction is designed to meet individual students' needs academically, spiritually, emotionally, or physically in a way that traditional education would not.

Unifying Ideas within Christian Education

While the frameworks of Christian education may at various times be considered to be essentialist, intellectualist, progressivist, fundamentalist, or postmodern, Christian education does have a distinctive set of core tenets and activities that set it apart from other disciplines within education and provide scope and limitations to the work of the Christian school. The most defining tenet of Christian education is that education is seen not apart from the spiritual life, but as part of the development of humans towards a deeper knowledge of and love for the God who created them (Benson, 2001; Knight, 2006; Schultz, 1998).

In a 1955 seminar on the Christian Idea of Education, held at Kent School in Connecticut, theology professor and priest John C. Murray outlined the history of Christian education from the first few centuries A.D. through the Middle Ages to modern times with the emphasis on "inner spiritual intellectual unity" (Murray, 1957a, p. 161) at every stage. He follows the work of the third–century intellectual, theologian, and educator Origen, who started the first officially church–related school in Alexandria and combined both reasoning and scientific knowledge with the philosophical revelation that comes through faith. While his teaching was founded upon the Holy Word of Scripture, Origen believed that "this Word, the whole developed wisdom of the Church, requires to be made somehow relevant to every problem of intellectual discernment and moral decision that a school exists in order to raise" (Murray, 1957a, p. 160).

This practice of combining faith and intellect is central to the entire premise of what Christian education is and should be. In discussions on his paper, Murray claims that "you don't really have a Christian school in the proper sense of the word unless that school is explicitly pledged to the transmission of the Christian religion and the intellectual heritage of Christianity

in an organized, integrated form" (Murray, 1957b, p. 202). IFL is the cornerstone of distinctively

Christian schooling.

Summary and Implications for the Present Study

Since its earliest formation to the present day, Christian education has been centered upon

the teaching of God's Word with the underlying assumption that all Truth and knowledge can be

found in and points to the knowledge of God. While Christian education is a widespread field of

vastly different ideologies, viewpoints, and beliefs, IFL is a common cornerstone among the

theoretical and theological differences that may exist. The present study depends upon these

assumptions in its exploration of faculty development for RRP. In the subsequent section, I will

explore the philosophical and theoretical background of IFL to better understand the existing

literature on how Christian faith informs the practice of teaching at Christian schools.

Theoretical Background: Integration of Faith and Learning

The Nature of Truth: Epistemology and Ontology of IFL

Gaebelein (1954) claims that integration is at the heart of all thinking about education,

whether Christian or secular. Harris defines integration as "connecting knowledge with

knowledge" (2004, p. 2). In that sense, it is the very process of learning and making coherence of

what we learn by connecting new knowledge with existing knowledge. A basic assumption of

IFL is that Truth exists and is knowable (Gaebelein, 1954; Holmes, 1975).

For the Christian educator, the source of Truth is the Word of God (Benson, 2001; Shortt;

2014). All knowledge and all reality is based upon the existence of a Creator who is the center of

reality and who has revealed Himself through both natural and divine revelation. "God's truth is

of universal scope. This being the case, every aspect of education must be brought into relation

to it" (Gaebelein, 1954, p. 7). The most important goal of learning, as defined by Harris (2004),

is to develop a coherent worldview and system of understanding all truth in light of the Truth.

The Greatest Commands: Axiology and Teleology of IFL

According to Dockery (2012), the purpose of IFL is to seek Truth and develop knowledge

in order to better love God and serve others. For the Christian educator, the two greatest

commands are to be guideposts for the purpose and value of IFL, that students would learn to

love the Lord their God with all their hearts and with all their souls and with all their strength

and with all their minds, and to love their neighbors as themselves (Luke 10:27). The outcome of

effective IFL is to develop distinctively Christian thinking that fosters a genuine love for God

through the study of every discipline and love for others that is lived out through Christian

character and service (Dockery, 2012; Knight, 2006).

Implications of IFL for the Curriculum

Christian education teaches about God, Jesus, and the Bible (Shortt, 2014). It is through a

Christ–centered, biblical lens that the Christian educator must determine which curricular content

is of utmost importance (Knight, 2006). IFL implies that the biblical perspective is not added as

an afterthought but is intentionally and explicitly made part of the curriculum from the beginning

(Fisher, 2021).

Gaebelein describes IFL within subject areas as "the unity of all learning under God"

(1954, p. 56). In that way, the study of mathematics, literature, history, or science all rely upon

and point towards biblical truth. Knight states, "in the Christian curriculum the Bible is both

foundational and contextual" (2006, p. 236). The study of every subject matter is guided by and

understood through the lens of biblical truth. Shortt describes this as "opening windows on God's

world and helping our students to focus on the world through them" (2014, p. 52). The window

(or content area) provides the frame through which to see different aspects of Truth, and provides opportunity to analyze and synthesize what is seen.

While IFL is a cornerstone for the curriculum of Christian schooling, the content of the curriculum may vary. As Christian schools are not governed by state or national departments of education, they are not held to the same standards of learning. This can potentially lead to confusion, conflict, or distrust regarding the content of what is to be taught (Hull, 2003). Some schools choose to follow some variation of the state–defined standards, while others may rely on classical or historical standards or opt to write the curriculum from scratch.

While curricular content may vary among Christian schools, Christian teachers are widely regarded as the living curriculum in the classroom (Schultz, 2009). Luke 6:40 says, "The student is not above the teacher, but everyone who is fully trained will be like their teacher." Gaebelein (1954) highlights the importance of the worldview of the teacher, as the philosophical perspective and personal convictions of an effective teacher will gradually influence the pupil.

Gaebelein described a fully developed worldview not as a static condition of the Christian teacher, but rather as ongoing growth that can be fostered through: (1) personal study of the Word of God; (2) through the study of God's revelation in nature; (3) through the study of great Christian thinkers; and (4) through professional development in worldview among the faculty. Gaebelein argued that the first is by far the most important for the development of Christian worldview in the teacher and the IFL in the curriculum. Gaebelein claimed that when teachers of all subjects are fully steeped in Bible study and discussion, "Biblical truth will soon cross departmental boundaries and, to use a biological figure, pollinate the so–called 'secular' studies. How far this cross–pollination goes will depend on the extent to which teachers are rooted and grounded in the Word of God" (1954, p. 55).

Implications of IFL for Pedagogy

Through the work of distinctively Christian teachers, IFL comes alive not only in the curriculum of Christian education but also through pedagogy. Schultz (1998) acknowledges that the influence of a teacher goes beyond the content of instruction but also includes one's manner of communication and personal conduct. Schultz argues that the way a teacher instructs a class and even the way a teacher lives is one of the most powerful influences of IFL.

Although IFL by its own terminology focuses on *learning,* Smith & Smith (2011) provide a discussion on "what a Christian pedagogy could look like *in practice*, beyond a focus on whether Christian ideas are being conveyed or Christian character is being individually modeled" (p. 17). Their reflective work provides narratives as thick descriptions of how Christian practices can have pedagogical implications for the university classroom. Smith & Felch (2016) argue that effective IFL pedagogy is enhanced by a deeply Christian vision and biblical imagination. Finally, Smith's culminating work on this topic, *On Christian Teaching*, seeks to unpack the following question: "If we want to understand how faith informs education, in what ways does the teaching and learning process, rather than the perspectives conveyed by course content, require our attention?" (2018, p. 3). It is this question that the current study seeks to explore further.

Moving Towards New Understandings of IFL

In recent decades, scholars have critiqued IFL in both terminology and stance and called for new ways of articulating and considering the task of Christian education (Badley, 2009; Glanzer, 2008; Iselyn & Meteyard, 2010; Jacobsen & Jacobsen, 2004; Lawrence et al., 2005). Badley (1994) outlined five main paradigms of IFL found in the literature to underscore the conceptual ambiguity that existed around the term at that time. He argued that the phrase existed

primarily as a slogan for Christian education rather than as a well–defined theory of education impacting curriculum and pedagogy. Glanzer (2008) called for a change in terminology from IFL to the *creation and redemption of scholarship* as the primary task for the Christian academic. While much has been written on the subject, a clear consensus on the concept itself remains elusive (Badley, 2009). The need for either new terminology or new ways of understanding IFL has provided space for the current study to introduce RRP as a lens through which to understand how Christian faith informs the practice of teaching at Christian schools.

Summary and Implications for the Present Study

IFL is widely discussed in Christian education and scholarship as a way to understand the implications of a biblical worldview in teaching and learning. This lens relies upon a commitment to absolute Truth and the pursuit of God's Truth in and through every content area. IFL has implications for the content and methods of teaching, both of which will be addressed in the present study. New terminology for conceptualizing the goals of Christian teaching is welcome, and the present study has drawn

Religiously Responsive Pedagogy (RRP)

"In a sense, everything in education relates to culture – to its acquisition, its transmission, and its invention" (Erickson, 2010, p. 35). While definitions of culture and what it encompasses may vary, it can be regarded as the beliefs, customs, and ways of interpreting and interacting with those beliefs and customs that are unique to a particular group of people (Gay, 2018; Rothman, 2014). Culture is simultaneously visible as a way to denote differences between groups and invisible as it is "in us and all around us, just as is the air we breathe" (Erickson, 2010, p. 35).

According to Bruner (1996), learning and thinking are dependent entirely upon one's cultural background and cultural tools for organizing and understanding the world. Schooling, therefore, can be considered the act of reproducing and perpetuating culture through institutionalized knowledge and ways of knowing and learning (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977). The underlying epistemology of CRP assumes that knowledge is socially constructed and that through interpersonal interactions the language, practices, values, and goals of a group can be transmitted intentionally and reproduced faithfully in children as they develop (Vygotsky, 1978).

This section will describe how the integration of faith and learning reflects the culture of Christian schools. In order to consider the second research question through the framework of RRP, I will first describe CRP and then provide an argument for the importance of religion as a facet of culture. Finally, I will describe the limited existing literature related to RRP.

Theoretical Background: Culturally Responsive Pedagogy

According to the National Education Association, basing learning on students' culture and reshaping curriculum to reflect the diversity of all stakeholders can lead to better educational outcomes (National Education Association, n.d.). This emphasis on cultural content in the curriculum became prominent in the United States following World War II, in conjunction with simultaneous increased immigration and the prominence of the Civil Rights Movement. In the decades since that time, the importance of culture in education has not diminished. Banks articulated that "multicultural education incorporates the idea that all students – regardless of their gender, social class, and ethnic, racial, or cultural characteristics – should have an equal opportunity to learn in school" (2010, p. 3). He went on to underscore the idea that, due to current inequalities, some students have a better chance to learn in schools than others based on their cultural background or affiliation.

Ladson–Billings addressed this issue through her work in Culturally Relevant Pedagogy (Ladson–Billings, 1995b, 2005, 2008, 2014). She developed a critical approach that sought to empower students individually and collectively through cultural competence and critical consciousness (Ladson–Billings, 1995a). Instead of attempting to change the learner to fit the cultural context of the classroom, Ladson–Billings recommended adjusting instruction to better fit the cultural background of the student (1995b). For over twenty–five years, her work has been used to question structures within education and promote teacher education that subverts existing cultural expectations and fosters self–awareness and multicultural understanding.

In 2014, however, Ladson–Billings asserted the importance of pushing this research further by affirming the development of Paris' term *culturally sustaining pedagogy.* This change in focus from the static term *relevant* to an ongoing *sustaining* pedagogy reflected the "dynamic, shifting, and ever–changing nature of cultural practices" (Paris, 2012, p. 95). However, it also extended the dialogue beyond traditional facets of cultural competence to recognize the importance of supporting students to perpetuate and promote cultural development that goes beyond linguistic, racial, or socioeconomic identities. The dynamic nature of the current dialogue in CRP provides space to promote specific facets of culture and the ways in which those facets are emphasized within certain populations. This opening has allowed for the development of a theory of RRP.

While it reflects many of the ongoing goals of CRP, RRP seeks specifically to address the complex issues of identity and culture related to personal faith beliefs and practices. Following Ladson–Billings' (1995b) framework for CRP, this study calls for a theory of RRP based upon:

- − the conceptions of self and others held by religiously responsive teachers,
- − the manner in which social relations are structured by religiously responsive teachers,

− the conceptions of knowledge held by religiously responsive teachers.

Religiously responsive teachers believe that all students, regardless of religious backgrounds or beliefs, are capable of academic and personal achievement. Teachers who practice RRP are aware of their own positionality in religious conversations and develop relationships with students in which they are open to learning and understanding other religious perspectives. Finally, religiously responsive teachers believe that knowledge is socially constructed, and therefore such knowledge must be built upon structurally sound epistemological foundations, which may be shaped differently by various faith traditions. Without a deep understanding of the students' beliefs about the nature of God, the nature of the world, and the nature of truth, whatever content information is taught in the classroom will never fully take root and flourish into robust knowledge that can be shared and applied to reach high personal and academic goals. Therefore, a robust theory of RRP must acknowledge the various perspectives on the nature of truth, the construction of reality, and the purpose of life.

Underlying Assumptions: Religion and Culture

Religion as Epistemology and Ontology

Diverse religions define reality and truth distinctly. However, for a person of faith, religious beliefs are intimately tied to beliefs about truth and knowledge (Yasri et al., 2013). All religions, to some degree, assert that specific doctrines are intellectually true, based on an assumption of absolute Truth and some ideas about the nature of the supernatural world (Dewey, 1934/1991). Even non–religious beliefs stem from a foundational assumption about reality and what can truly be known about it. While Christians believe that absolute Truth can be found in the person and teachings of Jesus, Hindus base their ideas in samsara and the universal oneness of the human experience through the cycle of life, death, and reincarnation. Muslims proclaim,

"There is no god but Allah and Muhammad is his prophet," while Agnostics believe that reality or objective truth may be unknowable. Each belief system stems from its own epistemology and ontology, and RRP must acknowledge the fundamental assertions of each worldview.

Religion as Axiology and Teleology

Religion also prescribes the purpose, value, and meaning–making of all aspects of life for the devout (Lewis Hall & Hill, 2019). These purposes and values come to life in the everyday practices (including rituals, ceremonies, and services) of religious people and through the cultural artifacts produced, whether by religious intent or not. A belief in a deity and the understanding of what that deity does, or does not, want from its followers underscores the everyday actions of the majority of Americans. Even nonbelief will impact the personal values and life purposes of an Atheist or Agnostic (van Mulukom et al., 2021). Outpourings of piety, charity, fasting, giving alms, personal sacrifice, care for others, attention to karma, or even pilgrimage are outward expressions of deeply held religious values. Attention to the religious or nonreligious purposes and values of students must be a cornerstone of RRP.

Religion as a Facet of Culture

Religion first emerged as a cultural phenomenon for scientific study at the end of the nineteenth century (Schilderman, 2015). Since that time, it has been scrutinized conceptually, theoretically, and empirically by scholars of anthropology, sociology, and psychology. Although often used as an independent variable in quantitative research, religion has also been the subject of descriptive and interpretive qualitative research attempting to understand the influence of religious texts, lived beliefs, and ritual practices of the billions worldwide who identify with specific religions.

According to a 2015 study by the Pew Research Center, only 16% of the world's population did not identify with any religious group. Although the unaffiliated are expected to increase in much of Europe and North America, as a share of the entire global population, this percentage is projected to shrink to 13% by 2060 (Pew Research Center, 2015). By contrast, the Muslim and Christian populations – which together make up over 50% of the global population – are both growing rapidly. In raw numbers then, 1.2 billion people were not affiliated with a religion, while the remaining 6.1 billion people all espoused religious beliefs. While sociologists may argue for secularization theory on both institutional and individual levels, these numbers indicate that religion continues to be a significant issue on a global scale (Edgell, 2012; Evans & Evans, 2008).

Edgell (2012) provided a three–strand approach to understanding religion as a facet of culture. This contextual perspective on the cultural sociology of religion articulated that: (a) religion is an institutionalized cultural activity, mostly guided by the organization of and commitment to local congregations; (b) religion is lived out in the ritual practices and spiritual experiences of individuals and religious communities; and (c) religion is a cultural tool that is used for identity formation and boundary–making on both individual and group levels.

While religion is an essential aspect of cultural institutions and identities, it is important that it not be conflated with culture through a link to ethnicity and/or nationality (Doggett & Arat, 2017). Religious identity is part of cultural identity, but should not be confused with ethnic or national origin. This is particularly challenging, however, since religious beliefs are defined both personally and institutionally and the individual dedication of each adherent may vary. For example, an immigrant who does not espouse deep beliefs, yet whose personal and cultural identity is defined by ethnic religious habits of dress or diet, recognizes the cultural difference as

one of both ethnic origin and religious affiliation. Ruane and Todd (2016) acknowledged, "religion may form the common culture that partially constitutes the ethnie, but ethnicity requires also a territorial and descent–related emphasis" (p. 69).

Summary and Implications for the Present Study

Underlying assumptions about religion as a facet of culture inform the present study and the framework of RRP through conceptions of how culture impacts worldview and deeply held beliefs about the nature of truth, reality, as well as the purpose and meaning of life. Religious beliefs are both personally and institutionally defined, and those beliefs perpetuate cultural heritage and identity formation. Religion is a critical facet of culture that should be addressed properly within CRP.

Precedent Literature: Religiously Responsive Pedagogy

Religion is an integral facet of cultural identity and institutional practices. However, based on my review of the literature, research on religion with CRP is limited – despite the potentially positive outcomes of infusing religion and spirituality in the classroom. In an examination of the syllabi of multicultural or intercultural courses within teacher education, Boudreau found that while race, indigenous issues, gender, disability, and homophobia were evident, "references to the impact of religions on cultures, and vice versa, were either absent or hardly present" (2009, p. 297). However, if one accepts the tenets of CRP as beneficial to student outcomes and the development of a more democratic society through the process of teaching and learning, it only follows that implementing RRP in schools would do the same (Aronson et al., 2016). Nevertheless, religious pedagogy has largely been excluded or even removed from the American education system.

James and colleagues (2015) explored the ways that religion was manifested in the classroom. They argue that:

> in a pluralist, democratic society, we must be willing to engage difficult discussions about the role of religion in schools and classrooms. Our avoidance of religion, after all, does not mean that it goes away. If anything, an unwillingness to examine religion allows attitudes about it to run rampant, leading to marginalization and discrimination through the taken–for–granted nature of its presence or absence (p. xiii).

James and colleagues (2015) argued that Judeo–Christian values and practices inform not only the overt practices of religion in schools but also the hidden curriculum through the very organization of the school schedule and calendar, through the infusion of Protestant morality throughout the curriculum, and through an underlying epistemology which views the textbook (historically the Bible) as an authority on absolute Truth. They assert that a widespread belief that such values and epistemologies should inform our education system may rely on any of three prevailing arguments: (a) schools should be a reflection of the communities which they serve; (b) teachers are responsible for moral education in addition to content instruction; (c) Christianity in our country has been so secularized that the practices and perspectives passed down from a Judeo–Christian tradition are no longer religious in nature.

In 2010, the American Academy of Religion released a report, titled *Guidelines for Teaching about Religion in K–12 Public Schools in the United States.* The approach to religious studies put forth in these guidelines recommends teaching **about** religious ideas instead of promoting acceptance of or devotion to any particular faith practices (Moore, 2010). However, in the same way that CRP is not simply teaching about culture, but rather "using the cultural characteristics, experiences, and perspectives of ethnically diverse students as conduits for

teaching them more effectively" (Gay, 2002), RRP cannot simply insert faiths–based content and token religious diversity units into the curriculum. Instead, educators must consider how to integrate the religious assumptions, worldviews, practices, and perspectives of diverse students throughout the curriculum and in the interactions and relationships, which form the true foundation of the curriculum.

Religion plays a crucial role in the ways of knowing and ways of engaging for the majority of Americans (Pew Research Center, 2020). As children grow, the religious assumptions and practices of their families and communities inform not only their daily lives but also their ways of understanding the content taught in schools. However, due to concerns about personal freedoms and the separation of Church and State, children do not have the opportunity to explore the ultimate questions about spirituality and beliefs in the classroom. "If education were to be truly liberal – that is, freeing – the study of religion and politics would be fundamental" (Noddings, 1992, p. 83).

Spiritually Responsive Pedagogy

For the purposes of the RRP framework, it is important to acknowledge the fundamental difference between spirituality and religion. While both can be intimately connected with cultural identity, religion brings together theoretical and theological worldviews, spiritual experiences, cultural and personal identities, and cultural perspectives and practices. While being related to both identity and religion, spirituality is distinct from culturally and institutionally defined religion. In short, spirituality is personally defined while religion is institutionally perpetuated. However, like religion, spirituality has only been marginally discussed in connection to CRP.

Tisdell (2006) connects spirituality to transformative multicultural education through the work of critical educator Paulo Freire. Freire, who himself was deeply influenced by Latin

American liberation theology in the sixties and seventies, is foundational to the work of critical

education and to the field of CRP (Kirylo, 2011). Tisdell (2006) argues that educators must

recognize the ways that spirituality influences the construction of knowledge for diverse learners.

To do this, she recommends including representative readings from various cultural and spiritual

backgrounds as well as engaging students' spiritual imagination through cultural narratives, art,

music, or poetry. Finally, she urges educators to construct an environment that fosters both

individual and collective authenticity within a learning community. For example, "students write

their cultural story in light of the assigned class readings and also bring a symbol of their own

culture and share what it means with the class" (Tisdell, 2006, p. 24).

Lingley (2016) built upon the work of Tisdell (2003, 2006, 2007, 2008) to spark

discussion on "Democratic Foundations for Spiritually Responsive Pedagogy." This article

argues, "democratic educators should directly engage with an emancipatory construct of

spirituality as enthusiastically as they engage with other equally significant topics of critical

social justice pedagogy" (Lingley, 2016, p. 1). Referring to *A Common Faith* (Dewey,

1934/1991), Noddings' seminal text, *The Challenge to Care in Schools* (1992), and the critical

democratic theories of Freire and hooks, Lingley formed a foundation for a liberational pedagogy

that: (1) situates students' spiritual development within their overall personal development; (2)

integrates curriculum, instruction, and assessment with intentional trajectories for spiritual

growth; (3) acknowledges spirituality as part of teaching and learning; and (4) uses spirituality in

the classroom to support social justice and critical consciousness (2016, pp. 8–9). Hooks (1994)

called for spiritual practice in all aspects of personal and public life, claiming that "such a

practice sustains and nurtures progressive teaching, progressive politics, and enhances the

struggle for liberation" (p. 120).

Three diverse responses to Lingley's article provided varied perspectives on Spiritually Responsive Pedagogy. Gambrell (2017) invoked the term *epistemicide* to describe the absolute removal of spirituality from public education and outlined in detail the tenets and expected outcomes of CRP as defined by Ladson–Billings. Gambrell described the ways in which the formal curriculum, the symbolic curricula (images, symbols, structures, icons, etc.) and the procedural curricula (experiences, interactions, processes, etc.) must all responsively affirm students' (a)spirituality and thereby "grant permission to reject the Western binary of spiritual versus secular ways of knowing" (2017, p. 6).

Meanwhile, Thayer–Bacon (2017) leveled a theoretical response, claiming that schools in fact do teach about spirituality through the epistemological and ontological underpinnings of the curriculum, which are impossible to remove from the classroom or from the home environment. Through the choice of class activities, structures of schooling, and underlying values woven into the hidden or null curriculum, schools are instilling in children the epistemological, ontological, teleological, and axiological beliefs of the dominant culture. For better or for worse, students learn ways of knowing, being, and thinking through everyday experiences in school. Thayer–Bacon argued that these are deeply spiritual values.

Finally, de Souza (2017) highlighted the relational aspect of spirituality that mirrors the interactions of learning and connection to the Other (a collective noun to include all other humans and non–humans). She claimed, "It is only through genuine interaction and engagement that indifference or, worse, rejection of the Other can move through to understanding, acceptance, and inclusion" (2017, p. 6). She contrasted the traditional view of spirituality, tied to religious faith backgrounds, and a more contemporary perspective that is not necessarily God-centered but rather includes any transcendent awareness beyond oneself that is a shared

human trait regardless of background or creed. All of these authors supported the theoretical assertion that spirituality should be engaged throughout curriculum and instruction; however, each one provided challenges for enacting changes at the policy-level or in educational practice. While (a)spirituality may and should be valued and respected in schools, RRP reflects not only the spiritual values described here, but also centers religion as a critical facet of CRP that regularly is omitted or even erased in the American educational context.

Positive Outcomes of CRP with Religion

Aronson and colleagues (2016) described three specific examples in which teachers engaged in CRP with religion for positive outcomes for Muslim and Jewish students. The authors argued that in order to learn with and from their students, teachers must engage in critical reflection on their own positionality and intentional self-education about their students' religious identities and backgrounds. Such engagement and responsiveness can have a profound impact on the motivation of students to build meaningful relationships at school as well as to reach high academic goals. In one example, a non-Muslim teacher seeking to educate her class about Islam first engaged in personally reading the Quran, attending lectures at a university, and talking directly to people at a local mosque. By educating herself and learning from another culture, this teacher was able to reverse students' perceptions of an entire religion as homogeneous, foreign, and exclusively linked to terrorism. This teacher advocated for the addition of a world religions class in her suburban Michigan high school claiming that understanding religions is "essentially necessary to interact and understand all people" (Aronson et al., 2016, p. 146). Religion as a facet of CRP is essential to positive student (and teacher) outcomes in a democratic society.

In addition, RRP provides a unique opportunity to connect students' deeply held personal beliefs and identities to the educational practices of the schools they attend. Dallavis (2011;

2013) argued that religion and cultural identity are linked intrinsically in both public and private

education. However, for faith-based schools, such as the Catholic schools in the Pilsen

neighborhood of Chicago, "the particular relationship between the local church, school, and

family puts religion at the core of the educational enterprise entirely" (Dallavis, 2011, p. 142).

Summary and Implications for the Present Study

RRP provides a new framework to understand the intersections between IFL and CRP.

Figure 2.2 displays the major tenets of each of these areas as outlined in the literature. However,

the purpose of the present study was to propose a lens which reflects Ladson-Billings' (1995b)

framework for CRP, which has implications for curriculum, for pedagogy, and for religiously

responsive relationships.

The RRP framework is defined by an integrated curriculum interwoven with religiously

responsive beliefs and perspectives. Ideally, teachers are trained in religious motivations and

identities and expertly combine that knowledge through responsive pedagogy in every content

Figure 2.2

The foundations of RRP

- Christ-centered, biblical lens
- integrated learning spans every aspect of the curriculum
- teaching practices must be aligned with the worldview
- relational interactions with Christian teachers

Implications for:
- curriculum
- pedagogy
- relationships

- socially constructed knowledge
- awareness of positionality
- adjusting instruction to fit the cultural background of learners
- empowering students through cultural competence and critical consciousness

area. Finally, relationships are built upon mutual understanding of and respect for faith–based values. In short, RRP is a full implementation of IFL and CRP, which bridges the divide and implements the perspectives of both frameworks in the content, methods, and interactions throughout instruction.

<div align="center">**Faculty Development and IFL**</div>

I now turn to my final research question: In what ways, if any, do Christian schools support RRP in the classroom? To understand this topic, I have conducted a systematic literature review of faculty development and IFL. Whereas the previous two sections outlined theoretical foundations of IFL and RRP, in this section a systematic review is used to identify major themes, which may guide the methodology and inform the findings of the present study.

Search Methodology

A search was conducted, using Google Scholar and ERIC, on the terms "faith learning integration"; "integration of faith and learning"; "biblical integration" and "faculty development"; "teacher development"; and "professional development." Table 2.1 shows the results of this search.

Studies selected were limited to those regarding K–12 Christian schools in North America. Studies included pertained to in–service teacher development, not those primarily regarding pre–service teacher preparation at universities. Studies of faculty development in higher education were excluded. Studies relating to Christian schools in South America, Asia, Africa, or Oceania were excluded. Although these may have provided interesting insights into the needs of international Christian schools in developing teachers, the nature of the studies and the nature of the schools was significantly different from those included in the research criteria, and so they were excluded. One study by Korniejczuk and Kijai (1994) was instrumental in the

Table 2.1

Preliminary Results of the Search for Literature

Search Terms	Google Scholar	ERIC
Faith Learning Integration	N = 926,000	N = 102
"faith learning integration"	N = 678	N = 11
"faith learning integration" "faculty development"	N = 80	N = 0
"faith learning integration" "faculty development" K–12	N = 23	
"integration of faith and learning" "faculty development" K–12	N = 44	
"integration of faith and learning" "teacher development"	N = 47	N = 0
"integration of faith and learning" "professional development"	N = 472	N = 2
"integration of faith and learning" "professional development" K–12	N = 122	
"biblical integration" "faculty development"	N = 52	
"biblical integration" "professional development" K–12	N = 78	

development of several of the other studies included. While it was excluded based on geography,

it will be referenced throughout the following discussion in relation to its use in included studies.

Thirty studies were evaluated for methodology, analysis, and implications for the present

study. Twenty–six of the studies were empirical in nature, including five case studies, two mixed

methods, seven qualitative, and twelve quantitative studies. Three pieces reviewed were

conceptual and one literature review was included. Table 2.2 provides an overview of the studies

selected, organized chronologically. Over 76% of the studies included were dissertations

representing eleven different university affiliations. The studies represented a variety of

geographical regions across North America, including Texas, Arizona, Virginia, Minnesota,

Wisconsin, Idaho, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Canada, and various regions within the Association of

Christian Schools International (ACSI), the Association of Classical Christian Schools (ACCS),

Table 2.2

Overview of Selected Studies

Author	Year	Type	Institution/Journal	Methodology
Nwosu, C. C.	1998	Presentation	Annual Meeting of the Michigan Academy of Arts, Science, and Letters	Conceptual
Higgins, D. D.	2002	Dissertation	Andrews University	Quantitative
Headley, S.	2003	Article	Journal of Research on Christian Education	Quantitative
Beimers, N. M.	2008	Thesis	Dordt University	Case Study
Sites, E. C.	2008	Dissertation	Liberty University	Quantitative
Wood, M. K.	2008	Dissertation	Liberty University	Quantitative
Eckel, M. D.	2009	Dissertation	The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary	Quantitative
Harmon, C. M.	2009	Dissertation	George Fox University	Case Study
Bowar, J. E.	2011	Thesis	Dordt University	Literature review
Pethtel, G. J.	2011	Dissertation	Cedarville University	Qualitative
Jang, Y. J.	2011	Dissertation	Southern Baptist Theological Seminary	Quantitative, Descriptive
Stoner, T. S.	2012	Dissertation	Boston University	Qualitative
Hoekstra, L.	2012	Dissertation	Azusa Pacific University	Qualitative, Phenomenological
Peterson, D. C.	2012	Dissertation	Southern Baptist Theological Seminary	Quantitative, Descriptive
Dernlan, T. J.	2013	Dissertation	Ashland University	Quantitative, Comparative
Brown, K. A.	2014	Dissertation	Kennesaw State University	Case Study
Stevens, C. R.	2014	Dissertation	Regent University	Mixed Methods with vignettes
Hill, C. E.	2014	Dissertation	Liberty University	Qualitative
Lewis, W. K.	2015	Dissertation	Liberty University	Case Study
Gallagher, A. L.	2016	Dissertation	Columbia International University	Mixed Method, Experimental
Stouffer, J. D.	2016	Dissertation	Liberty University	Qualitative,

				Grounded Theory
Bayer, B. L.	2017	Dissertation	Andrews University	Quantitative, Descriptive
Mooney, T. R.	2018	Dissertation	Liberty University	Case Study
Martin, M. E.	2018	Article	Journal of Research on Christian Education	Quantitative
Cevallos, T. M.	2019	Article	International Christian Community of Teacher Educators Journal	Conceptual
Frye, M. R.	2019	Dissertation	Regent University	Qualitative, Phenomenological
Hollis, D.	2019	Dissertation	Liberty University	Qualitative, Phenomenological
Mccollum, R. J.	2019	Dissertation	Columbia International University	Quantitative, Causal–comparative
Wiley, R. E.	2021	Dissertation	The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary	Conceptual

and Seventh–Day Adventist (SDA) Schools. A literature matrix as described by Klopper and colleagues (2007) was compiled to organize the data and provide themes for the narrative that follows.

Five topics emerged from the studies reviewed, pertaining to this question: In what ways, if any, do Christian schools support Religiously Responsive Pedagogy in the classroom? First, schools deliberately select teachers who are prepared for IFL through personal or educational experience. Secondly, school leadership is an essential factor in supporting and developing a culture of integration and biblical worldview. School leadership and participation in an accrediting association may impact the policies and evaluation procedures that foster IFL in instructional practices. Most notably, intentional professional development and training are shown to have a positive influence on IFL in the classroom. And, finally, discipleship and mentoring relationships promote ongoing growth and lasting impacts in the lives of the teachers and students within Christian schools.

Selection and Induction of Teachers Prepared for IFL

Christian schools need Christian teachers who can teach Christianly. Unfortunately, the literature is unclear about the criteria that school administrators use to ensure that teachers who walk into the classroom are prepared to teach biblically. Sites (2008) surveyed sixty school administrators within the Association of Christian Teachers and Schools (ACTS) and found that both church–related and independent school administrators placed high emphasis on a candidate's *ability to teach Christianly* in the teacher selection process. This indicator included modeling a Christian lifestyle, regular church attendance and ministry participation, demonstration of faith–integrated lessons, and biblical perspective on curriculum. The ability of the candidate to guide students to shape biblical worldview and foster discipleship in the classroom was a desirable trait for school administrators.

Wood (2008) evaluated the impact of six factors on the biblical worldview of 141 Christian school educators as measured by the PEERS Worldview Assessment. The six factors were: (a) raised in a Christian or non–Christian home; (b) graduated from a Christian or a public high school; (c) earned an undergraduate or graduate degree from a Christian university or a public university; (d) worked at the elementary or secondary level; (e) was employed by a school affiliated with and accredited by ACSI or ACCS; and (e) taught in Christian school fewer than 10 years or 10 years or more. Through independent samples *t*–tests, the author found no significant difference for five of the six factors, and only found a significant difference for (e) indicating a more biblical worldview for ACCS educators. Wood provides three possible explanations for this difference, including: (1) potential denominational ties; (2) the types of teachers drawn to classical schools; and (3) "a more focused, intentional, and profound theological commitment on the part of ACCS (Wood, 2008, p. 119).These findings may indicate

that while background and preparedness for teaching with a biblical worldview are important in the selection process, biblical worldview is continually fostered throughout employment by effective leadership, school policies, and instructional development.

Harmon (2009) used a case study of one Christian school in Texas to evaluate teacher induction experiences and preparation to teach at a distinctively Christian institution. Harmon found that, while new teachers felt prepared to teach, given their academic background and prior teaching experience, they indicated a need for further training on integrating a biblical worldview into instruction. Similarly, Lewis (2015) utilized surveys, document analysis, observations, and interviews to explore the induction and development needs of twenty–two teachers at one high school, finding that teachers had not received IFL training. Teachers who did engage in faith integration did so through individual study or church involvement, not as a result of professional development provided by the school. While each of these case studies only provided perspectives of teachers at a single school, both were well grounded in qualitative theory and utilized rigorous qualitative methods to articulate a continued need for leadership support, policies, and training that promote IFL practices and prepare teachers to utilize them in the classroom.

The Importance of School Leadership for IFL

While recruitment and induction of effective Christian teachers is important to ensure faculty are prepared to engage IFL in the classroom, school leadership may have the greatest impact on continued integration and a school climate of biblical worldview. Eckel (2009) compared IFL between graduates of Christian and secular universities. Eckel used Korniejczuk and Kijai's (1994) instrument to evaluate IFL along with three mediating variables: (1) demographic characteristics such as respondent gender, number of years taught, and whether or not the respondent taught a Bible class; (2) graduation from a Christian college; and (3)

administrative support for IFL. Using a multiple regression, Eckel found that each of these variables accounted for significantly more variance in the teacher's integration than the one before it. Most interestingly, however, administrative support showed the largest influence in predicting IFL.

School leadership is important for modeling and fostering IFL. Hollis (2019) spoke with eleven ACSI school administrators in Pennsylvania and found that "The role of the principal or leader of a Christian school in ensuring the spiritual development of staff and students is a crucial factor of leadership practice perceived to impact the creation of an environment where spiritual nurture can occur" (p. 157). More than half of the participants cited opportunities for spiritual development such as devotions, chapel services, Bible study, prayer, worship, professional development, and biblical or spiritual–related workshops. One leader even indicated that he included spiritual goals for teachers in their personal professional development plans, many of which focused on IFL in consistent and authentic ways.

Martin (2018) used data from 18 administrators and 280 teachers to understand leadership qualities evident among six high performing Christian schools. Martin found that, not only were administrators spiritual leaders (as Hollis articulated), but also teachers indicated a strong correlation between instructional leadership and servant leadership among principals. "Wanting students to be purposely trained in Biblical worldview integration, the principals in this study made clear their belief in and commitment for the Christian school mission and purpose as student discipleship" (Martin, 2018, p. 176). The study also found that upper school principals spent more time on management and scheduling, while lower school administrators were able to devote more time to instructional coaching and facilitating student learning. This implies that "in order to increase student learning, principals at all levels must have knowledge and skill to

improve teacher pedagogical instruction" (p. 175). This pedagogical leadership combined with their commitment to IFL would be effective for developing faculty who integrate a biblical worldview in their classes and content area.

Pethtel (2011) interviewed eleven prominent contemporary leaders within Christian education to understand some of the key issues facing Christian schools in the 21st century. Placing these voices into the context of foundational Christian educators such as Frank E. Gaebelein, Roy W. Lowrie, Roussas J. Rushdoony, Cornelius Van Til, and Gene Garrick, Pethtel provided themes "to renew a transformational vision for Christian education in the 21st century" (2011, p. v). Nurturing the faith of the faculty was a clear theme supported by the leaders and the prior literature. School administrators and school boards should be committed to discipleship of and prayer for the faculty they lead. "If this aspect of discipleship and prayer is left out of the equation of leadership, the Christian school may soon fail to have truly Christian teachers. If nothing else, it will certainly have rejected its responsibility to develop Christian teachers who integrate the Bible naturally and willingly into every lesson they teach" (Pethtel, 2011, p. 38).

School leaders are responsible for fostering a biblical worldview in the faculty and students of a Christian school. This spiritual leadership along with instructional leadership can effectively promote faculty development for IFL. However, administrators must cling to an attitude of servant leadership, discipleship, and prayer to ensure effective integration in not only instruction, but also the entire culture of the school.

Policies that Support Development of IFL

One way in which leadership may impact school policies and teacher oversight is through regular evaluation of instruction. Higgins (2002) conducted a quantitative analysis of teacher evaluation policies and the perceptions of 225 teachers and 48 supervisors among SDA Schools

in Canada. While both teachers and supervisors rated IFL of low importance in regards to the purpose of evaluation, both groups felt that there was a need for more frequent and more effective evaluations with greater teacher involvement. While the findings of this study were limited, the implications for the present study to discuss teacher evaluation as one of the policies that might (or might not) support IFL in the classroom should be considered.

By contrast, Beimers (2008) used a case study to describe an integrative approach to teacher evaluation at a single Christian school. Using an action research model with three high school teachers, Beimers integrated dialogue, journaling, reading, peer observation, student surveys, parent surveys, and a summative evaluation into the teacher evaluation process. Teachers reflected on how *Planning and Preparation*, *Classroom Instruction*, *Classroom Community*, *Professional Responsibility*, and *Mission and Vision* impacted their instructional practices. The results of the study indicated that teacher involvement in the evaluation process led to more trusting relationships and an opportunity for reflective practice on "being proactive about worldview integration" (Beimers, 2008, p. 22).

While evaluation practices may sometimes be set by the individual institution, at times the governing accrediting body sets the standard for training and evaluation. In a study of 60 ACSI administrators from the Northwest region, Headley (2003) found that only 25 administrators indicated that they had policies and practices for IFL. It is concerning that among an association as biblically grounded as ACSI, less than half the administrators implement policies for IFL. Stoner (2012) recognized that the accreditation requirements for training and preparation at distinctive evangelical schools is significantly less normative and centralized than at, for example, Waldorf or Montessori schools. Through a qualitative investigation of professors of education, Christian school administrators, and Christian school teachers, and the

requirements of professional education associations, Stoner found that the policies for a Christian philosophy of education, training in IFL, and requirements for teacher certification vary greatly between schools and are "strikingly less extensive" (p. 140) than other professional education associations.

Professional Development and Training for IFL

While policies and practices may vary greatly between Christian schools, professional development (PD) and training can support IFL in instruction. In a cursory review of literature, Bowar (2011) found that effective PD for Christian schools would: (a) apply a clear vision based on teacher needs; (b) fulfill the school's mission statement; (c) set clear standards; (d) create a climate of professionalism; (e) involve teacher leadership; and (f) develop a supportive community. While the methodology for this review was unclear, it provided six aspects of effective PD that reflected some of Darling–Hammond and colleagues' 2017 guidelines for *Effective Teacher Professional Development*, which included:

1. Is content–focused

2. Incorporates active learning

3. Supports collaboration

4. Uses models for effective practice

5. Provides coaching and expert support

6. Offers feedback and reflection

7. Is of sustained duration

Peterson (2012) surveyed 358 ACSI teachers and 169 ACCS teachers, and found that 70.7% had received training in IFL. While it is encouraging that such a large majority of teachers had received PD in biblical integration, Peterson's study revealed nothing about the nature or

effectiveness of the training provided. The following sections will explore several of

Darling–Hammond and colleagues' guidelines listed above as described by the salient literature.

Content Focus on IFL

Finn and colleagues (2010) investigated perceived professional development needs of

teachers and administrators by surveying 175 teachers and administrators in Virginia. Finn and

colleagues found that IFL rated highly among perceived needs: integrating scripture into

academic coursework (27% of respondents), integrating Christian faith with academics (34% of

respondents), and teaching the Bible and biblical principles (24% of respondents).

While teachers perceive a need for IFL focus in PD, Jang (2011) explored teacher

preparedness for IFL and found that, among 220 ACSI elementary classroom teachers, there was

a significant difference between teachers who had participated in training on how to integrate

biblical principles and those who had not. Teachers who had participated in training scored

higher on knowledge for IFL, change of techniques, student involvement, and collaboration.

Interestingly, teachers' interest in IFL did not demonstrate a significant difference according to

the training received.

Collaboration and Differentiation for IFL

Bayer (2017) completed a quantitative study with 749 K–12 educators in SDA schools

across North America. Bayer's study found that differentiated learning opportunities,

collaborative practice, and institutional support are needed for IFL. While the study was limited

to SDA schools, Bayer provided an interesting analysis by comparing the responses of millennial

and non–millennial teachers to address the specific needs of the younger generation of educators.

Millennial teachers expressed the importance of collaboration, seeking additional time to meet

with colleagues. However, they were more critical than non-millennial teachers of the

professional learning opportunities provided, saying that they were irrelevant to their teaching level or content area.

Coaching and Expert Support in IFL

In order to provide for differentiated needs, Gallagher (2016) conducted an experimental study to measure the effect of coaching on IFL instruction. A control group of teachers received six hours of basic instruction in IFL without coaching while the experimental group received the same six hours along with coaching. Both groups were pre– and post–tested with a survey, analysis of lesson plans, and classroom observations. Gallagher found that coaching positively impacts teachers' perceptions of their knowledge, ability, and preparedness for IFL as well as the analysis of their planning and instruction of IFL. Most interestingly, however, Gallagher found that training without coaching might negatively impact both teachers' perceptions and practices. This finding suggests that ongoing expert support for IFL is needed.

Hill (2014) conducted a qualitative study using teacher interviews, focus groups, and document analysis to examine IFL utilized in elementary classroom management at two Christian schools in Virginia. While the teachers in the study indicated a lack of direct training on biblical perspectives of classroom management, teachers referenced casual observations of other teachers engaging in biblical restorative practices and coaching conversations with more experienced peers as critical in their development of IFL for classroom management. While the study referenced these observations by teachers, this type of coaching among elementary educators should have been treated more thoroughly as a theme in the study. Peer feedback and observation is crucial for development of effective teaching practices, including IFL.

Models of IFL: What it is and what it is not!

Wiley (2021) provided a conceptual analysis of the potential for transformational integration in the classroom. Wiley advocates for adequate worldview training for teachers so that each one may cultivate a personal philosophy of Christian education. "Investment in teachers' spiritual formation *is* an investment in students' spiritual formation" (Wiley, 2021, p. 113). However, she cautions schools and teachers to be intentional about defining what IFL is and what it is not, claiming that educators often have good intentions of simply inserting prayer or Christian analogies and calling it "integration." These kinds of activities do not result in true IFL and transformation in students' lives and learning.

Stevens (2014) utilized a mixed–method approach with a context–rich, vignette–based instrument to evaluate teachers' beliefs about the role of IFL in curriculum. By utilizing vignettes, Stevens was able to explore teachers' deeply held beliefs about curriculum integration that may not have surfaced through an interview or survey. Stevens scored the vignettes on the following five–level rubric adapted from Ribera (2012):

0 = Separate Faith and academic subjects essentially separate

1 = Contributions Faith contributes but does not change regular curriculum

2 = Additive Faith as a supplement to the regular curriculum

3 = Transformation Faith changes basic assumptions of curriculum

4 = Decision making/action Students moved to action, provided opportunity for action

By quantifying teachers' responses to the vignettes, Stevens was able to define effective IFL. Further discussion and coaching with these vignettes could be fruitful for continued teacher development.

Feedback and Reflection

Mooney (2018) conducted a case study of effective PD practices for IFL in K–8 Christian schoolteachers. Some of the critical themes discovered in this study reflect Darling–Hammond and colleagues' guidelines, including intentional design, personal responsibility, opportunities for application, and intrinsic development. Mooney called for biblical worldview development that included fostering a collaborative community with intentional time for modeling IFL. Most importantly, however, Mooney found that effective PD depended upon personal willingness to be responsive to the instruction and an open heart to be led by the Holy Spirit.

Personal and communal reflection may be essential for the successful IFL. Mccollum (2019) evaluated faculty perception of IFL and spiritual development of high school seniors and found that higher IFL resulted in statistically significant differences in student scores on the Global Student Assessment (GSA), which measures spiritual formation and worldview among high school students. This study confirms the "emphasis on training, providing appropriate resources, and supporting the implementation of biblically integrated instruction" (Mccollum, 2019, p. 84).

Training for IFL is one of the most important ways schools can support integration in the classroom. Along with selection of Christian teachers, excellent school leadership, and policies that support development, PD can have an immense impact on the preparedness of teachers to integrate faith in their content and pedagogy. However, one final area is essential for teacher support and student development.

Mentoring Relationships and Discipleship

Over twenty years ago, Nwosu (1998) proposed a discipleship model for training that reflected many of Darling–Hammond and colleagues' priorities for PD. The goal for the

Christian school is to *make disciples that make disciples* (Matthew 28:19). While the Christian

school leader may use the discipleship model for PD, it is with the end goal of discipling students

through effective IFL. Jesus taught his own followers through relationship and discipleship, and

so the PD in Christian schools should be focused on mentoring, relationships, and discipleship

for transformation (Hoekstra, 2012; Stouffer, 2016). Frye (2019) examined perceptions and

practices of eight ACSI principals towards discipleship. The principals identified teachers as "the

primary and most impactful disciple makers in Christian school contexts" (Frye, 2019, p. 128).

Intentional PD for discipleship and mentoring relationships will support authentic IFL across the

curriculum. Frye concludes, "Focusing efforts on teacher development for the spiritual aspect of

Christian education, which is its most important component, will enable students to benefit and

grow in their faith" (2019, p. 128).

Cevallos (2019) and Brown (2014) provide hopeful visions of a future in which liberation

theology and critical pedagogy can inform IFL and provide Christ–centered education for

currently marginalized populations. This vision to love "the least of these" (Matthew 25:40) is

certainly counter–cultural and Christ–honoring, and the work of Cevallos and Brown informs the

present study through a prophetic call for Christian educators to keep the heart of Jesus himself

at the center of IFL.

Summary and Implications for the Present Study

Christian schools develop teachers who effectively integrate faith in the classroom by

selecting, mentoring, training, evaluating, and discipling in a recursive and reflective process.

Several studies cited above called for further research into effective practices in each of these

areas, and the current study will respond to that call. Lewis's (2015) study was well–grounded in

qualitative theory and served as a mentor text for the present study. Hoekstra (2012) and Wiley

(2021) both recommended a change in terminology from IFL or biblical integration. The present study provides a new framework of RRP to address this need.

Support for CRP in Christian Schools

Unlike IFL, CRP is not widely discussed or researched in Christian schooling. Using the search terms: "Culturally Responsive Pedagogy" and "Christian school" on Google Scholar, I identified seven previous studies that addressed CRP in K-12 Christian or Catholic schools. Three additional studies were identified which were related to Christian schooling and tangentially mentioned CRP but did not address it directly. The topics of the seven studies identified were the following: leadership, relationships, professional development, curriculum, literacy, discipline, and marginalization. I will address these topics using the following three categories: conviction, culture, and change.

The Call to Conviction

Stanton (2017) and Little and Tolbert (2018) provide different perspectives on some of the challenges and opportunities facing Christian schools regarding CRP and the need for a clear Christ-centered conviction to move forward. Little and Tolbert (2018) explored the issue of deficit-based marginalization for Black boys in Christian schools through extended testimonials from parents who were concerned by the discipline and pedagogical practices their sons faced in Christian schools. The authors call Christian educators, specifically, to confront and dismantle these problematic perceptions perpetuated by historical and theological myths. In particular, they express the importance of anti-bias training for educators and a school-wide effort to centralize Black intellectualism in the curriculum.

Stanton (2017), on the other hand, provides a case study of how one classical Christian school in the Mid-Atlantic purposefully includes students who are traditionally marginalized.

Based on theological convictions, this school promotes inclusivity both theoretically and practically. However, in spite of their commitment to care for the marginalized, the leaders interviewed continually demonstrated a color-blind mentality and willful naiveté about the needs of students of color. The researcher recommended an approach centered on CRP to

The Importance of School Culture

Two studies considered the importance of school culture and leadership practices to promote culturally responsive perspectives informed by faith and a biblical worldview. Maney and colleagues (2017) evaluated relationships and faith development in seven Catholic schools in a large metropolitan area in the Midwest. Two scales were used to survey instructional staff (N=183) and students (N=1,125). In addition, nine focus groups including 89 parents were also conducted. While the study primarily focused on the importance of relationships, a major recommendation stated, "Cultural awareness and culturally responsive pedagogy must become components of Catholic school orientation and teacher education" (Maney et al., 2017). Cultural responsiveness is an important tool in building relationships with students that can lead to deep learning and worldview development.

McDowell (2020) conducted action research with an independent Christian school in the southeastern United States. While the student body of this school had historically been majority white, the school expressed a missional approach which "encouraged school leadership to appeal to and admit all types of students and families, regardless of current faith or background" (McDowell, 2020, p. 7). The purpose of the action research project was to address the need for CRP at the school by defining and cultivating a culturally responsive culture at the school. Findings included a new framework of cultural responsiveness, development of ongoing PD, and methods to improve practice.

Opportunities for Change

While clear conviction and a relational culture can contribute to cultural responsiveness, further study is needed to examine opportunities for change in Christian schooling using CRP. Kelly-Stiles (1999) examined teacher practices and professional development in Catholic elementary schools, particularly in schools that educate culturally diverse minority students. The author found that schools enrolling minority students "should ensure that the school's curriculum content, context, and teaching methodologies are responsive to the dominant cultural traits of the student population to support successful student learning" (Kelly-Stiles, 1999, p. 281). This study called for schools to address teacher beliefs, teaching practices, coaching opportunities, and promote supportive school environments.

Schmidt (2016) provided an example of how such change could take place through the development of a unit of culturally responsive curriculum for use in a faith-based school. The purpose of the study was to identify the "problems and issues that might arise with the intersection of faith-based directives and culturally responsive curriculum" (Schmidt, 2016, p. iv). While the author acknowledged that faith-based schools should be on the forefront of CRP, the reality is that in an effort to promote Christian faith, leaders are unwilling to take a stand on issues of equity and justice. The findings from this study included:

- the importance of culturally relevant curriculum;

- the challenge of finding content that would fit the values reflected at the school;

- the need for a direct connection between religion and social justice;

- the challenge of cultural talk vs. reinforcing stereotypes;

- the importance of building willingness to listen;

- the change that is possible simply through exposure; and

- the perspective of marginalized students towards the importance of culture.

This study provided important insight into some of the challenges of engaging CRP in Christian schools.

Finally, in a very specific way, Panther (2018) utilized culturally sustaining pedagogy as a framework to understand effective literacy instruction in an urban Catholic school. This ethnographic study problematized a standards-based approach to instruction and assessment of student literacy. By examining the experiences of several educators who focus on humanizing their culturally and linguistically diverse students through culturally sustaining pedagogy, this study provides a vision for ways that faith-based instruction could utilize CRP for effective change and life-giving instruction.

Summary and Implications for the Present Study

While the research on CRP in Christian schools is minimal, it clearly points to the need for further development, implementation, and study of culturally responsive policies and practices in faith-based schooling. RRP has not been studied in Christian schools. However, utilizing RRP as a model may promote further implementation of responsive practices that extend to other dimensions of culture. Support for CRP is needed at the administrative level so that schools can effectively instruct, assess, and develop students from a variety of backgrounds through a Christ-centered biblical approach that is guided by justice, mercy, and humility (Micah 6:8).

<div align="center">

Summary and Implications of Chapter 2

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IFL is a cornerstone of Christian education and scholarship, which relies upon a commitment to the pursuit of God's Truth through biblical instruction across the curriculum. However, the concept of IFL is widely discussed and debated, and new terminology for conceptualizing the goals of Christian schooling is welcome. The present study draws

connections between IFL and CRP with the theory of RRP, a new framework that is defined by an integrated curriculum and pedagogical practice interwoven with religiously responsive beliefs and perspectives. Figure 2.3 demonstrates some potential indicators of RRP from the literature that served as a preliminary guide for this study.

The literature expresses the importance of selecting, mentoring, training, evaluating, and discipling faculty members for effective IFL in Christian schools. Less research is available on CRP in Christian schools and effective support for CRP in faith-based contexts. However, the literature that is available points to the need for a Christ-centered conviction and relational culture in order to make effective changes in policy, curriculum, and pedagogy. The present study will integrate these two varied fields to explore the ways in which RRP is enacted in Christian schools as well as the supports and barriers that exist for teachers.

Figure 2.3

Building the Bridge of RRP
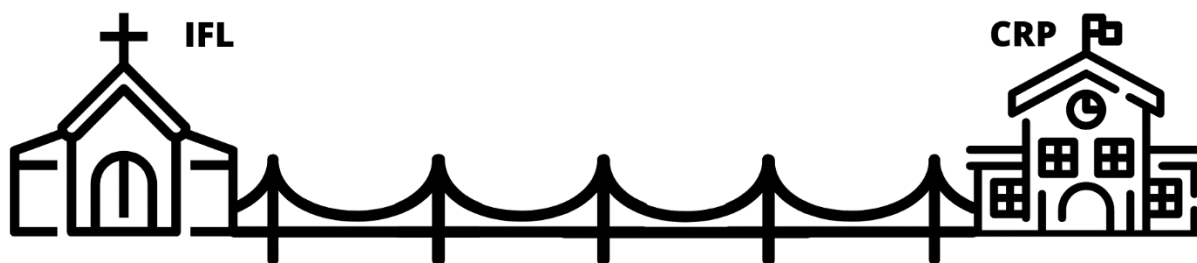
Potential indicators of Religiously Responsive Pedagogy

1. Teachers who are aware of their own positionality on faith
2. Teachers who value student perspectives and beliefs
3. Teachers who intentionally develop relationships with students
4. Teachers who critically engage other worldviews
5. Teachers who effectively integrate faith into the content and practices of classroom instruction

Chapter 3: Methodology

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore the ways in which RRP is enacted in Christian schools and the barriers and supports that may exist for effective RRP within those schools. This chapter will provide an overview of the methodology and the rationale behind the manner in which the study was conducted. The chapter begins with a discussion of the design, restates and describes the research questions and the positionality of the researcher, then details the selection of participants. The chapter describes the procedures, data collection and analysis strategies. Finally, the chapter concludes with the trustworthiness of the data and ethical considerations of the study.

Design

In order to explore the perspectives of Christian educators on faith integration, responsiveness to students, and professional development, a qualitative methodology was appropriate for this study. Qualitative research explores a central concept or phenomenon using open–ended questions to understand the detailed perspectives of participants through in–depth interviews or document analysis (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2004). Qualitative research is reflexive, recursive, and responsive to the data collected (Maxwell, 2009). In addition, qualitative research is strongly influenced by the researcher's lens and philosophical assumptions, which impact the development of a study from the initial concept to the research questions, methods of analysis chosen, and implications to validity and trustworthiness (Creswell & Miller, 2000; Maxwell, 2009; Saldaña, 2014).

The strengths of qualitative research for the present study are:

− The ability to provide in–depth perspectives of educators through rich descriptions of their backgrounds, experiences in Christian school, responsiveness to students, and supports and barriers that may exist for RRP;

− The ability to understand the culture and context of Christian education within specific school settings;

− The ability to code data recursively and utilize a constant-comparative method in order to better understand the implications of the data for IFL and for RRP;

− The ability to account for the researcher's perspective through intentional bracketing and memoing processes.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study design:

− How do teachers at Christian schools perceive the role that faith integration plays in their instruction?

− To what extent, if any, do teachers at Christian schools describe responsiveness to students' religious beliefs in faith integration practices?

− In what ways, if any, do Christian schools support Religiously Responsive Pedagogy in the classroom?

Researcher Positionality

The purpose of this study was informed by my own experiences in Christian education. From a young age, I attended a small Christian school, and I went on to complete my bachelor's degree at a Christian college and my master's degree at a Christian university. I have worked throughout my career as a lecturer at a Christian university and a teacher and administrator in a

private Christian school, and I have learned, taught, and served alongside my husband, mother, siblings, and children within each of these contexts. Christian education is both personally and professionally important to me, and the integration of faith in the classroom has been a theme throughout my academic career.

This study was meaningful to me personally because the outcomes of this study will be fruitful not only for the job that I am doing currently, but also for the work that God has done in my life over the past thirty years and for the good plans that He has for my career within Christian education, serving future generations of students and teachers who will go on to serve the Lord. "He is the one we proclaim, admonishing and teaching everyone with all wisdom, so that we may present everyone fully mature in Christ. To this end I strenuously contend with all the energy Christ so powerfully works in me" (Colossians 1:28–29).

Personal beliefs and experiences can cause bias within research. Currently, my role is to support teachers for effective teaching and curricular integration. Therefore, I approached this study with a personal interest in understanding effective teacher support for RRP. Methodologically, my interest in exploring this topic through the experiences of other educators influenced the choice of a qualitative approach. Finally, due to my background growing up as a third-culture kid as a child of missionaries in southern Mexico, I also believe in the importance of cultural differences and of a responsiveness to varied perspectives within Christian education. This impacted the entire project from the development of the framework through data analysis and interpretation.

Participants

Approval was obtained from the Virginia Commonwealth University Institutional Review Board (IRB) before beginning the study (Appendix A). The data for this qualitative study were

gathered through semi-structured interviews with twelve teachers at Christian schools. The

primary criterion for inclusion was that participants teach full-time at PK-12 schools, which are

accredited members of the Association of Christian Schools International (ACSI). Since its

founding in 1978, ACSI has supported and developed institutions and educators who "embody a

biblical worldview, engage in transformational teaching and disciplining, and embrace personal

and professional growth" (ACSI, 2021b). As members of ACSI, schools must demonstrate

professional development of all faculty members in both biblical and educational studies for

individual certification and institutional accreditation. Each institution also ascribed to a

statement of faith affirming foundational protestant spiritual truths aligned to the mission and

vision of the school. Given time constraints, the eligible schools were limited to one state in the

Southeast Region of ACSI. School data were accessed through the school search function on the

ACSI website, and faculty emails were accessed through each school's website.

All full-time teachers at eligible schools were emailed and requested to complete a

Research Participation Form via Google Forms (see Recruitment Letter, Appendix C). A

follow-up email was sent within forty-eight hours as needed. From the information collected

through the form, twelve participants were selected purposively to represent varying schools,

grade levels, and subject areas in order to maximize variation. Purposive sampling is appropriate

in qualitative research in order to gain insights into the phenomenon under consideration

(Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2007). Collecting data from various schools and teaching areas allowed

for differing views of the same experience.

Participant Demographics

Twelve teachers from ten schools in the Southeast Region of ACSI participated in this study. The teachers represented a variety of teaching areas and lengths of service at the school. Table 4.1 provides demographic information for the participants.

According to the 2020-2021 ACSI Tuition and Salary Survey Member Report (2021), the average gender ratios for teachers within ACSI schools were 16% male and 84% female (N=399). Unfortunately, no male teachers completed the Research Participation Form for the current study. Therefore, 100% of the participants were female. Other demographic information such as age, race, ethnicity, education, and marital status were not collected.

Table 4.1

Participant Demographics

Pseudonym	Length of Service	Teaching Area
Amy	> 7 years	Early Education
Carolyn	> 20 years	Lower Elementary (K-2)
Hope	1 - 3 years	Lower Elementary (K-2)
Laney	> 7 years	Upper Elementary (3-5)
Annie	1 - 3 years	Upper Elementary (3-5)
Shiloh	> 7 years	Upper Elementary (3-5)
Kathleen	> 7 years	Upper Elementary (3-5)
Joy	3 - 7 years	Science (High School)
Diane	> 7 years	Science (High School)
Sophia	> 20 years	Science (Middle & High)
Renee	> 7 years	Math (Middle & High)
Ruth	1-3 years	English (High School)

Data Collection

Following selection, participants were emailed an Interview Invitation (see Appendix C) which included a Calendly link to set up an interview time. I conducted individual interviews with the teachers via Zoom using a semi-structured interview protocol (see Appendix B). The interviews ranged from thirty-one minutes to sixty-three minutes in length with an average length of forty-seven minutes. The Zoom sessions were recorded and transcribed via the Zoom platform as well as through the Google recorder app on a smartphone.

The purpose of the Zoom interviews was to elicit teacher perspectives on faith integration and RRP. A semi-structured interview protocol was used to explore participant perspectives on IFL (including both content and practices of faith integration) and RRP. Four scenarios were utilized to probe participant views on students' other religious perspectives, epistemological foundations, view of scripture, and identity formation. Finally, each interview concluded with questions related to school support for RRP.

In total, the transcriptions added up to 178 pages, with an average length of 14.8 pages. Transcriptions of each interview were checked for accuracy and emailed to participants as a member check (Appendix F). In addition, each participant was given an opportunity for a follow-up conversation to clarify any discrepancies. One participant clarified her wording in the transcription, and those changes were made as requested. Two participants followed up with clarifying questions regarding the purpose and methods of the study. Upon completion of all twelve interviews, a reflexive memo to bracket my own perspectives and acknowledge initial impressions was written before beginning data analysis.

Data Analysis

The data analysis occurred through constant comparison (Boeije, 2002; Glaser, 1965). This method allowed for continuous comparison in order to best understand the participants' perspectives on RRP by "categorizing, coding, delineating categories and connecting them" (Boeije, 2002, p. 393). The first step following the preliminary review of data was the initial coding process. I read each transcript individually, created codes to capture meanings and ideas in the text, and applied codes in ATLAS.ti.

In order to validate the coding process, a peer reviewer participated in coding the first transcript. The purpose of the peer review was to add credibility to the data analysis process. The peer reviewer was a current leader in a similar Christian school to those included in the study who also has completed a PhD along with multiple qualitative studies in Christian schools. She initially coded the first transcript, and then we met together to compare codes and discuss initial themes. Several key codes were renamed or otherwise adjusted following the peer review session. For example, while both the peer reviewer and I recognized the importance of worldview in the transcript, the idea of tension with other worldviews emerged from our discussion as we compared codes. This code was subsequently identified throughout the transcripts in 90 quotations.

The coding initially occurred in the same order that data were collected, and then I utilized a constant comparative method to recursively compare codes and categories between interviews, allowing for simultaneous quantification of the data as well as analysis (Glaser, 1965). The frequency of codes demonstrated the relative importance of the theme, and the magnitude of codes could be measured by how many participants expressed the idea. For example, the code "Biblical worldview" was found in 193 quotes from all twelve participants,

making it one of the strongest themes that emerged from the study. By contrast,

"Social-emotional learning" was only found in three quotes, indicating that it was not a key

finding in the study.

Although the constant comparative method is commonly used in grounded theory

approaches, it has also been effective for other qualitative designs (Fram, 2013). The constant

comparative method used in this study followed Boeije's (2002) process for qualitative interview

analysis, with modifications to account for the data, purposes, and research questions put

forward. The analysis took place in three recursive steps:

(1) Coding of individual interview transcripts;

(2) Comparisons among interviews in the same teaching area or grade level;

(3) Comparison across all interviews framed by each research question.

Step 1: Coding of Individual Transcripts

The first step in the analysis was the coding of each interview. I studied each response to

the interview questions and labeled it with one or more codes. Examples of codes and quotes can

be found in the codebook in Appendix G. Comparing each part of the interview during the

coding process validated the consistency of the responses and the codes applied. I analyzed the

text associated with each code within the interview to determine whether various passages with

the same code confirmed, contradicted, or contributed to the overall message of the participant.

Within this process, each passage was compared to determine the differences or similarities

between the responses and the reasons for those. According to Boeije, "The aim of this internal

comparison in the context of the open coding process, is to develop categories and to label them

with the most appropriate codes" (2002, p. 395). The goal of the internal comparison is to refine

the code categories.

This initial step generated a list of seventy-six descriptive codes. Before beginning the second step, I refined and reduced the number of codes by merging similar codes, creating six code groups, and color-coding the groups in order to visualize themes throughout the documents. This process resulted in a finalized codebook (see Appendix G) and was detailed in a reflexive analytic memo on the coding process following Step 1.

Step 2: Comparison between Interviews in the Same Teaching Area

The organization and development of the codebook continued throughout the second stage of analysis - the comparison between interviews in the same teaching area or level. For this second stage, I grouped the Early Education and Lower Elementary (K-2) teachers into one group and recursively compared passages with similar codes and themes by grade level. Similarly, I   compared the responses from the Upper Elementary (3-5) teachers. Finally, I evaluated the responses of the middle and high school teachers and specifically compared findings among the three Science teachers who participated in the study. Other content areas were not analyzed separately because only Science was represented by multiple participants.

Step 3: Comparison Across Interviews Between Research Questions

Finally, the codes and themes were analyzed following the three research questions. First, I identified emergent themes to understand how teachers at Christian schools perceive faith integration in their instruction. Then, I compared codes and themes across interviews to describe teachers' articulated responsiveness towards students' religious beliefs. Finally, I compared the ways, if any, that Christian schools support RRP in the classroom. These results of this final analysis are presented in subsequent chapters in light of the research questions and the current literature.

Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness in qualitative research refers to the validity of the findings due to the coherence of the research questions, conceptual framework, methodology, and findings. Validity in a qualitative study is closely linked to the purpose of the study and the types of understanding that are sought by the research questions (Maxwell, 1992). However, the terminology of validity and its uses outside of qualitative research tend to reinforce positivist concepts that do not apply to a qualitative study. Therefore, for the purposes of this study, trustworthiness is discussed as the measure of how the findings are perceived to be "sound, backed by evidence, justifiable, and to accurately represent the phenomena under study" (Trent & Cho, 2014, p. 653).

Guba (1981) identified four criteria of trustworthiness:

(1) Credibility – Do the research findings match reality? Are they "true"?

(2) Transferability – Do the findings have implications for other contexts or cases?

(3) Dependability – If the study were repeated, would the findings be similar?

(4) Confirmability – Are the findings free of bias, interests, motivations, or perspectives of the researcher?

Credibility

Credibility refers to the truth-value of the study (Guba, 1981; Miles, Huberman & Saldaña, 2018). Are the findings valid for the particular context of the cases under analysis? Shenton (2004) recommended fourteen potential steps to increase confidence in the credibility of a study, most of which were implemented in this present study.

By utilizing established qualitative data collection processes, I have attempted to understand the perspectives of teachers in Christian schools through semi-structured interviews. Within each Zoom interview, I employed specific strategies to ensure honesty and openness from

the participants. These included communicating that participation is voluntary and not coerced as well as encouraging deep responses through open-ended questions and the use of vignettes. I also provided protections when conducting interactions via Zoom to maximize my own privacy and advising the participant to move to a location where they were comfortable answering questions and would not be overheard. Triangulation occurred through the constant comparative analysis.

Throughout the study, I engaged intentionally in reflexive and recursive memoing to check my own bias and bracket personal perspectives (Birks et al., 2008; Maxwell, 2012). In addition, I engaged in member checks with participants to ensure accuracy of the information collected (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). I provided opportunities for a follow-up conversation if there were any discrepancies or corrections needed (see Appendix F). Clearly documented procedures, codes, and themes supported the credibility of the study. Finally, the findings were aligned to the literature review to understand the data in light of prior research and theoretical perspectives.

The primary threat to credibility in this study was the sampling technique used to identify the participants. Random sampling was not utilized because purposive sampling was appropriate for this qualitative study. However, purposive sampling of participants to represent varying schools, teaching levels and subject areas influenced the data and findings.

Transferability

Transferability, or generalizability, indicates that the study was "conducted in ways that make chronological and situational variations irrelevant to the findings" (Guba, 1981, p. 80). High transferability indicates that the findings of the study are relevant to other contexts, cases, or situations (Miles, Huberman & Saldaña, 2018). In this study, the constant comparative method was one means of ensuring transferability of findings. By comparing codes and emergent themes recursively between schools and teaching areas, the implications of the findings for other

Christian schools has been strengthened. Additionally, maximum variation of the participants contributed to the transferability of the study. Teachers represented a variety of schools within ACSI as well as a variety of teaching areas and length of service.

Dependability

Dependability refers to the extent to which the study is replicable, and, if replicated in the same context, would reveal consistent results (Shenton, 2004). The primary method to assure dependability is reporting the procedures and findings of the study in detail. I have provided clear descriptions of the data collection techniques, analysis, and findings in order to provide a dependable audit trail so that future researchers could replicate the study.

The primary threat to dependability is my own role as researcher in the study. My interactions with participants inevitably could influence the procedures and introduce bias. In order to mitigate this limitation, a peer reviewer reviewed one transcript and assisted with coding in order to validate the coding process and preliminary codebook. Additionally, I described my positionality in this chapter to demonstrate an awareness of how my experiences and beliefs have influenced the study. Finally, I maintained professionalism in my interactions with each participant and reflexively considered my positionality in the development of the research process.

Confirmability

Confirmability in qualitative research is simultaneously paradoxical and essential. Confirmability refers to the objectivity of the researcher producing results that are free of bias. However, the perspective of the researcher is essential in qualitative studies. Specifically, in a qualitative study such as this one in which the phenomenon is both personally and professionally

of interest to the researcher, it was essential to take deliberate steps to bracket my own perspectives in order to accurately represent the ideas and perspectives of the participants.

In order to accomplish this, I articulated transparently my own positionality towards my interest in the project as well as the methods and rationale for the study. A potential threat of bias existed in the design of the interview protocols. I developed a clear protocol, which phrased questions neutrally without asking leading questions (Appendix B). I had experts in research methodology and Christian education review my protocols to ensure clarity and neutrality. Another threat of bias existed in my interaction with participants. I attempted to interact with participants from a neutral position, listening carefully and not responding strongly to participants' comments, and probed with follow-up questions to gather information that is more detailed. Throughout data collection and analysis, I engaged in reflexive memoing, member checks, and peer review to identify potential threats to objectivity. In addition, I conducted recursive data analysis to ensure that the results are supported by the data collected. I sought disconfirming evidence to any themes or results in order to remain open to the findings (Miles & Huberman, 1984; Moen, 2006). Finally, I provided detailed descriptions of the procedures and findings in order to establish a clear audit trail and avoid introducing bias at any stage of the process.

Delimitations and Limitations

This study was delimited to ACSI schools in the southeastern region of the United States. As such, the particularity of the findings may not be generalizable even to Christian schools in other areas or accrediting agencies (Creswell, 2014). The study was first delimited to schools that serve students in PreK through 12th grade. It is therefore not generalizable to higher education or to schools that only provide early education, elementary, middle, or high school.

Secondly, the study was delimited to schools accredited by ACSI with a mission and vision aligned to a statement of faith. The findings therefore did not include perspectives from teachers in public or non-ACSI private schools. Finally, the study was delimited to teacher perspectives. Students, parents, administrators, and other stakeholders did not participate in this study.

In addition, the study was delimited to only twelve teachers; therefore, the purposive selection of these participants greatly impacted the findings. Also, one school was removed from participation because an administrator contacted me requesting that I discontinue contact with their faculty. None of the teachers from that school had completed a Research Participation Form, but I did not contact them further for participation.

Another factor in the selection of participants was that recruitment emails were sent in early July. Therefore, those teachers who responded were ones who were checking their school emails over the summer break and had the time available to participate. Additionally, teachers who were interested in the topic may have been more likely to respond. This may have influenced the selection of participants and the quality of responses received.

Additionally, none of the participants were males. While all of the male teachers were emailed repeatedly for participation, none completed the Research Participation Form. Certainly, not having a male perspective was a limitation of the study.

Finally, the method chosen chosen for data collection was a limitation. Faculty interviews provided indirect data about the instructional practices. Observational methods could allow for a study of how RRP is enacted in the classroom rather than relying solely on reported methods through interviews.

Ethical Considerations

Prior to conducting the study, I requested IRB approval to ensure ethical data collection and analysis. I disclosed the purpose of the study to all participants ahead of time through the recruitment letter (Appendix C). Participation in the study was voluntary, and each participant was assured of the ability to withdraw from the study at any time with no loss of benefits.

I asked participants to omit specific names of individuals, such as parents, colleagues, or administrators. In addition, I provided privacy and confidentiality by conducting all interviews myself, as well as transcribing, coding, and analyzing the data. During Zoom interviews, I maximized my own privacy and encouraged the participant to move to a private location.

Throughout the study, I used pseudonyms instead of participants' names. I allowed each participant to choose his or her pseudonym at the start of the interview (Allen & Wiles, 2016). Using this measure, participants' names were never collected or utilized in the study in any way. All electronic documents were stored in a secure location, and no paper documents were collected or generated.

Finally, I reported all data honestly and ethically. As a Christian educator conducting this study to further support Christian schools in developing faith integration practices, I endeavored to reflect the character of Christ in all my interactions with teachers and administrators. I conducted this study with the highest level of integrity, professionalism, and humility. I engaged with each participant and with the data, not with a critical spirit, but as a colleague and sister in Christ (Lewis, 2015). The intention of my study is to evaluate RRP in Christian schools and identify effective means of support for teachers in IFL. Throughout data collection, analysis, and reporting of results, I attempted to live out Ephesians 4:1–7:

> *Walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, eager to maintain the*

unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call— one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all. But grace was given to each one of us according to the measure of Christ's gift.

Chapter 4: Findings

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore the ways in which a RRP is enacted in Christian schools and the barriers and supports that may exist for effective RRP within those schools. This study investigated PK–12 faculty perceptions of faith integration, responsiveness to students, and supports and barriers for faculty in order to develop this new framework. The primary research questions addressed were:

- How do teachers at Christian schools perceive the role that faith integration plays in their instruction?

- To what extent, if any, do teachers at Christian schools describe responsiveness to students' religious beliefs in faith integration practices?

- In what ways, if any, do Christian schools support Religiously Responsive Pedagogy in the classroom?

This chapter begins with an overview of the participants, presents the results of the study aligned with the three-stage recursive analysis, which evaluated the participants' responses individually, in groups based on teaching level or subject area, and across interviews by research question.

Before presenting these findings, however, two key points must be addressed. First, the interview protocol asked teachers about their perspectives on IFL as well as supports and barriers to effective IFL. This is terminology that is known to the participants and is common within their context. However, I interpreted their comments through the lens of RRP to understand teachers' responsiveness in their practice of IFL and the support they receive for RRP. However, this discussion should not conflate IFL and RRP. At times, I may describe effective support for IFL that is not promoting responsiveness. This is not meant to be a judgment of the teachers or of

their particular calling to faith integration and worldview development. However, the purpose of my study is to understand RRP in Christian schools, and so this distinction will be evident in my analysis.

Secondly, this analysis may demonstrate varying levels of responsiveness. Based on the bridge model put forth in Figure 2.3, RRP is enacted by:

1. Teachers who are aware of their own positionality on faith;

2. Teachers who value student perspectives and beliefs;

3. Teachers who intentionally develop relationships with students;

4. Teachers who critically engage other worldviews; and

5. Teachers who effectively integrate faith into the content and practices of classroom discussion.

The findings demonstrate that each of these indicators may exist on a continuum. Whereas "culturally responsive teaching is validating and affirming" (Gay, 2018, p. 37) of cultural differences, Christian school teachers may not be validating and affirming of worldview differences or other matters of faith because of their role and the expectations of their school. I will address this issue throughout this chapter as well as in my subsequent discussion in Chapter 5. However, it is to be expected that some of these indicators of RRP may be enacted uniquely in the Christian school context.

Faith Positionality of Individual Participants

When asked to describe their faith backgrounds, all twelve participants indicated that they were raised in a Christian home, although four of the participants articulated that they did not have a personal relationship with the Lord until adulthood. Most of the participants did not connect their faith experiences to particular denomination within Christianity, although two

mentioned being raised in a Methodist home and one said she identified as a Fundamental Independent Baptist. Three participants attended Christian schools growing up (and one attended the school where she is currently teaching), while seven mentioned attending Christian colleges or universities. The participants indicated that these experiences were formative in developing each one's faith perspectives.

Additionally, the majority of the participants referred to a salvation moment or a time when they "asked Jesus into my heart". This view of salvation, while not restricted to any particular denomination or group, is founded in the necessity of confessing the Lordship of Jesus and believing in his atoning death on the cross as the primary means of salvation (Romans 10:9). This perspective aligns with the ACSI Statement of Faith, which describes salvation based upon "faith in the shed blood of Christ and that only by God's grace and through faith alone we are saved" (ACSI, 2022).

Results by Teaching Area

In the subsequent discussion, I will address the findings within each area as aligned with the three research questions. However, in each area, I will highlight particular topics that emerged more strongly in that teaching level than in the others. While this discussion addresses the particular focus of each level, some of these themes were found in multiple teaching areas. Further discussion will be included in the third section of this chapter, which addresses findings by research question across all participants. Table 4.2 shows the breakdown of the topics addressed in this section within each teaching area.

Table 4.2

Results by Teaching Area

Teaching Area	Topic #1: IFL	Topic #2: Responsiveness	Topic #3: Supports and Barriers
Early Education and Lower Elementary	Modeling the Love of Christ	Created in the Image of God	Supports and Barriers: Behavior Management
Upper Elementary	Critical Thinking Skills	Tension with Other Worldviews	Support: Relationships Barrier: Lack of Time
Middle School and High School *Including findings specific to MS & HS Science teachers	The Value of Student Perspectives	The Value of Student Perspectives	Support: Prayer Barrier: Administration

Early Education and Lower Elementary Findings

Three teachers participated who primarily taught preschool through second grades. Each of these teachers taught all content areas including Bible, Math, English/Language Arts, Science, and History. Faith integration in preschool, kindergarten, and lower elementary levels is primarily demonstrated in modeling the love of Christ to the students in the classroom. Amy articulated this beautifully when she said,

I teach preschool. So most of these children are not Christians, you know. I mean they come from Christian families but they're not Christians. So I just want to be a good model of how to love them and to treat them the way that I would want to be treated. The way that I would want someone else to treat my own children. You know, just share the Gospel with them. At the end of the day, that's really what it's all about. I mean, they can

learn how to read. But when they come to my class, I want them to know the Gospel, and

Jesus loves them.

The view that children from Christian families are not themselves Christians until they come to

an age of understanding the faith and have their own salvation moment may be considered

judgmental or unresponsive. It also may conflict with some Christian faith traditions that practice

infant baptism. However, the perspective of the teacher put forth in this quote actually

demonstrates a willingness to value the stage of early development of faith and to model love

and care that flows from the Gospel-centered, biblical worldview of the teacher. In that way, this

is actually a highly responsive perspective.

While all three teachers mentioned faith integration in Bible instruction and across

content areas, they articulated that this would look different at the lower grade levels than in

upper school. Regarding her school's statement of faith and enacting that integration in her

classes, Carolyn said,

So we're a very evangelical school where our statement of faith, we want children to, first

of all, know that they are saved and then work on the discipling process. But in a five

year old to seven-year-old perspective, that looks very different than on our high school

level which the whole statement of faith covers. So, you know, I'm more concerned about

making sure that they understand what the love of Jesus is all about. Whereas in high

school they might be more concerned about the discipling process.

This perspective may indicate that teachers at different levels enact IFL and RRP differently. In

fact, responsiveness may not be possible in the same ways at an early education level as it would

be in middle school or high school.

Responsiveness: Created in the Image of God

Regarding responsiveness to students, the early education and lower elementary teachers described the importance of listening to their students and recognizing each one's unique contribution to the classroom. Amy described her differentiation strategies saying, "So each child is an individual, And so I want to, you know, they were created in the image of God and for, they're created for his purpose and so I really want to tailor my instruction". This theme of being created in the image of God and adjusting instruction to the needs of the child, not only intellectually but also socially, emotionally, and spiritually, was seen throughout these interviews. Amy went on to say,

> I want to know about this child, what their background is like, other things at home that I can help support. Are there things that maybe they're struggling with that they might not have the right words to explain but their behavior is expressing going on, you know? Or maybe there's some learning differences there. And so really just meeting each child where they are because each child is an individual. So your teaching as much as possible needs to be individualized to each student.

Carolyn also described responsiveness to students in her teaching practices, particularly when facing a challenging student. She said,

> You know, sometimes when you have a frustrating student and you let the flesh take over. Sometimes you just have to stop and go - wait a minute, that's not how Jesus would want me to respond. And you need to take a step back and, you know, so we talk about calm down corners for students, sometimes teachers need them too. And just go - wait a minute, how would Jesus really want me to respond in that situation?

When faced with the vignettes during the interview, each of these three teachers described care for their students and a desire to respond to each scenario with Scripture and prayer. All three indicated that they would not teach a Muslim student differently than other students, because they would continue to model the love of Christ in their classroom. However, Hope said she would continue to teach the school's curriculum, but she would also build a relationship with the student by "being curious, when it's just that student and I one-on-one talking about like, 'Oh, so what do you do for church? What's different about the way you believe in the way that I believe?'" However, she went on to say that her job isn't necessarily to convert that student, but to simply integrate the biblical principles, because, "You're gonna believe what your parents believe at seven years old. And if he comes to know the Lord in a different way, he or she comes to know the Lord and a different way through my classroom. Then so be it. And if not, then we just move on and hope the seeds that we planted were to be harvested at a different time."

Supports and Barriers to IFL and RRP: Behavior Management

In addition to modeling the love of Jesus, a recurrent theme among these teachers was the importance of behavior management and social-emotional learning at this age. Hope described a professional development the teachers at her school received on behavior management with a biblical worldview, saying:

> So just like the key differences between a Christian school and a public school, as far as managing students' behavior, explaining to students why a behavior is, or isn't, okay, and lining that up with scripture, as opposed to just "I say so" or general character traits. Creating classroom rules that are founded on biblical principles and then, in the way we interact with parents.

Among the three interviews in early education and lower elementary, partnering with parents was mentioned thirty times. At times, this partnership was mentioned as a support for faith integration in the classroom. However, partnering with parents also represented a barrier to the teachers in effective faith integration in their instruction. Some parents questioned the methods and purpose behind the faith integration or even the behavior and character development mentioned above. Carolyn admitted that some parents of her students were not entirely committed to Christian education, but "just want them in the school because they don't like the public schools around in our area". Hope and Amy also mentioned challenges with parents while underscoring the importance of that partnership as well as the importance of the support of the school's administration and school policies in promoting unity when challenges did arise.

Behavior management and partnership with parents would also be impacted by a shift to RRP. In this study, responsiveness to student perspectives was not seen in the teachers' comments about behavior management. Hope said that "the Bible gives grace but also sets boundaries and talking about the difference between Christian behavior management and positive behavior integration, something like PBIS, maybe in public school." When focusing on boundaries set by the Bible for student behavior, a teacher is integrating faith into the practices of teaching but is not critically engaging other worldviews in that discussion. However, in the context of the Christian school, this type of behavior management system is expected by the administration and generally supported by the parents.

Additionally, school policies, such as the statement of faith and code of conduct, were mentioned as a support to IFL. These documents promote unity among the staff, parents, and students. Shared faith objectives set by the school were also mentioned by all three of these teachers, such as monthly character traits or biblical principles that were discussed in chapel,

devotions, or classroom instruction. Both Amy and Hope mentioned specific professional development topics that they had integrated into their responsiveness to student issues and even parent partnership. Carolyn described the need for further professional development opportunities at her school. At times, each of them mentioned that some of the support and policies at their schools may only apply to middle and high school and were less beneficial for their level or division.

Upper Elementary Findings

Four teachers participated who primarily taught third through fifth grades. Kathleen also taught one sixth-grade History class. These four teachers taught all of the content areas including Bible, Math, English Language Arts, Science, and History. While these teachers articulated a clear biblical worldview in their faith integration, the next strongest theme among these grade levels was the importance of developing critical thinking skills in their students. This emphasis on critical thinking was infused in the teachers' faith integration practices and ' perspectives on responsiveness to students. Shiloh articulated that in her relationships with her students,

> We don't always agree. Because I'm older than them. I've seen more of life than they have. But, you know, they know that they can believe what they want to believe, and they can express that in discussions and I'm not going to shut that down. I'm not going to shut down. I'm not going to tell you that you're bad or anything like that, but I am going to, we're going to talk about all the different perspectives. So they can see that their way of thinking may not be the only way, you know.

All four teachers expressed that they do not leave anything out of the curriculum because of their faith. Instead, they developed faith through critical thinking and engaging difficult questions with their students. For example, Kathleen said that,

Even in science, you know. I use a really good science curriculum and you know we talk about evolution and where it's faulty and we talk about how science you know, science confirms, you know, the fossil records and all those things. I mean, so we look at both sides of it but then there's also that element of faith, you know, science can't explain everything. And we can't explain, you know, we don't know everything there is to know about God either and a lot of things we have to accept by faith. But I do point out the fallacies especially in science. I do point out the fallacies of you know secular thinking and how that's not supported. But yeah I mean I don't skip over anything.

In addition, teachers at these grade levels utilized Scripture in their responses and pointed students back to the Bible in each discussion. Shiloh responded that she answers student questions by,

Just making sure that I really understand what that question is. And then it's something that okay, yeah, I know that and just I know the Bible. I say, "Okay, this is where, what the Bible says and I'm in agreement with that. And what do you think about that?" You know, and kind of going from there.

In this quote, Shiloh demonstrated a measure of RRP through the open-ended question she asked the student *What do you think about that?* when evaluating what the Bible said while still maintaining her role as a Christian teacher to enact IFL. While Kathleen did not affirm a secular worldview, she utilized different perspectives in her integration practice, which demonstrates some level of RRP. However, she did say she pointed out the *fallacies* in the secular view, which indicates that she certainly did not affirm the secular worldview.

Responsiveness: Tension with Other Worldviews

At these ages, the teachers began to articulate the tension with other worldviews that they experienced in their classrooms. Sometimes, the tension came from a student or parent. In other cases, the students were becoming aware of various worldviews and recognizing the tension. Laney pointed out the value of this saying,

> I have some like National Geographic books in my library for my kids, right? And after teaching them the difference between biblical or other worldview, they now when they see that millions and millions of years, when they picked that book up, they'll say, "Oh Miss - - -, this is an *other worldview*."

However, Kathleen described a disagreement with a student who had a different worldview, "So she had a different view of homosexuality that people should be able to love whoever they want to love. But I had to take her back to God's word and what does God say about that. And she didn't like it." This perspective does not demonstrate religious responsiveness to the student's perspective. However, in response to the vignettes provided, all four teachers indicated that they would engage the students by asking further questions and providing opportunities for classroom discussion on these difficult topics. While Laney (who teaches 3rd grade) particularly mentioned that she might handle some of the issues privately due to the age and vulnerability of her students, all of the teachers described that they would not dismiss the questions or redirect the students. In the end, though, as Shiloh described, the teachers would encourage student questions and doubts while also pointing students back to the Word of God. When asked how the school would respond if a student questioned the statement of faith, Shiloh encouraged that,

> Well that happens all the time. And that's, that's natural. Don't we? We all question things that we don't understand. And so that's the normal healthy part of the faith process. And,

you know, for me personally I talk to them that in the Bible there are these people called

the Bereans and they were commended for searching the Scriptures to make sure that

they were being taught was true. And so you're allowed to doubt, some of the greatest,

like, heroes of faith had doubts, you know? And you're allowed to doubt, but let's pray

about it and search the Scriptures.

Support for IFL and RRP: Relationships

In regards to effective support for faith integration, these teachers mentioned two primary

sources of support, the Bible and relationships with colleagues and administrators. The

encouragement provided by individual and corporate study of Scripture through devotions as

well as the encouragement of colleagues that naturally occurred within the context of the

Christian school provided effective support for faith integration. As Laney put it,

Now, from my faith, my faith is relationship-based. Does my school provide it? It

happens naturally in the context of when I stop and talk to a teacher. And we talk about,

we talk about nitty gritty, heart matters. And I learn from that teacher, you know. So how

does the school support that? I don't know. It just happens naturally, really.

When asked if the support she received was effective, Shiloh also agreed that,

I do because our principal and administrator, they have open-door policy so I can go in

there and to say, "Hey, I'm struggling in this area, can you pray for me? Or I need wisdom

in this area that area." And at the end of the school year they ask us like, "How can we

help you grow spiritually? How can we pray for you?" And at the beginning of the year,

the pastor he meets with us and says, you know, "I want to pray for you. I want to help

you. So let us know. Let me know how I can help you." Like they all have open door

policies and I've kind of gone through hard times and they really help me a lot, you know.

However, while these relationships were an encouragement to the teachers and supported them in their faith integration, the evidence provided by these teachers did not indicate whether or not those relationships would necessarily support RRP in their classrooms.

Barriers to IFL and RRP: Lack of Time

The primary barrier to effective support and integration described by the teachers was lack of time and general busyness within the school context. Kathleen said that she did not feel adequately supported this last year in a parent-teacher meeting because, "Sometimes people get too busy to remember you need to take care of your people." Laney also mentioned lack of time as a barrier to effective faith integration. While she would like to see her school develop discipleship groups among the upper elementary students, she stated, "As a classroom teacher, I don't really have time. You know what I'm saying? So if it was built in, like if that was built in… but how do you build that in?" While experiences at her school indicate that Upper Elementary students are looking for those mentoring and discipleship opportunities, the teachers are not given time to develop relationships in that way. Similarly, at Kathleen's school, opportunities were provided to parents to join prayer groups and book clubs with the teachers and administration. Unfortunately, no one attended these offerings. Kathleen summed it up by saying, "And so I see that a lot in our families. They are so busy and they keep our kids so busy. They're in ballet, they're in baseball, they're in soccer, they're in this, this, this, and this. But hardly any of those things are things to help that child grow spiritually and biblically."

The barrier of lack of time would potentially also affect RRP in the classroom. The challenge to build relationships with students and fully understand their perspectives, their family backgrounds, and their worldview would impact the teachers' ability to be religiously

responsive. Since intentionally developing relationships with students is a key indicator of RRP, lack of time could pose a barrier to both IFL and RRP.

Middle School and High School Findings

In middle school and high school, student perspectives and tension with other worldviews were the strongest themes related to faith integration and student responsiveness. At this age, teachers described disagreements with students as well as the value of the students' perspectives in their schools and in their classes. Although she primarily teaches Math, Renee agreed that student perspectives are valued at her school, saying that,

> And so I think that they are valued in the discussion of what do you believe and why do you believe this? And they are valued that way. It doesn't come up a whole lot in the classes that I teach. But like I said, when students, even my younger students who brought up questions about abortion, that was a faith-based issue that we stopped and we talked about because they were really curious and they really wanted to know certain things. And even they were, you know, were pointing out sometimes logical inconsistencies of arguments and they're like "That just doesn't make sense. That just doesn't make sense." And so I think it is, definitely, their views are valued whatever class we bring that up in.

Renee went on to give other examples of her responsiveness to student perspectives, even when it was off-topic for her Math class. She explained that students today ask a lot of questions and always want to know why.

> And I know, as a kid if I had asked some of the questions that they ask it would have been considered complaining. But you know, why do we have to do this? What is this

for? And so I think they really want to know. That's just a big perspective of, When am I

going to use this? And why do I need to know that? And that informs teaching.

And again just the worldview part as well comes into play especially at our school of how

is this useful? Why is this useful? What does this have to do with what you believe? How

does my belief that you are a unique being and that we live in a unique world effect how I

understand or appreciate Math?

Responsiveness: The Value of Student Perspectives

At these grade levels, students disagree with teachers and other students about curricular

content, teaching practices, as well as spiritual perspectives. Renee experienced students who did

not agree with faith integration in core content areas. Sophia described a student that would

argue about the questions on tests. Ruth shared a story about a student who vehemently opposed

biblical perspectives on gender as well as her classmates' responses to her. Diane saw examples

of students from various denominations and faith practices who disagreed with some of the ideas

taught in Bible class and the worship practices enacted in the school. Each of these examples

points to the diversity of student perspectives addressed within the Christian school context and

the importance placed on the perspectives of each individual student. Whereas in interviews with

elementary teachers they described the value of each child made in the image of God, the middle

and high school teachers more commonly demonstrated the personal nature of teaching and

learning by describing the perspectives of individual students and the value of the relationships

developed in responding to their perspectives. Each teacher at this level mentioned the

perspectives or challenges of at least one individual student during their interview. These

comments indicate a higher level of responsiveness at these grade levels than was shown in early

education and lower elementary or upper elementary.

Furthermore, in each of these examples, the teachers described the importance of responding lovingly and listening to the students. Ruth articulated that working with teenagers, sometimes they just want an adult to listen to them. She fostered an openness with her students to provide opportunities for them to ask questions about the content or about their faith,

> I said "You know, I don't… you're not gonna get in any trouble if you tell me you don't believe in God or you're not sure. Or if you want to tell me you believe in evolution, that's okay. I want to know where you're starting with so that as we're going through this, I can explain things to you." And I don't know how much they trusted me because this was the very first thing we did together the, you know, the first quarter. But as the year progressed I feel like they started to be able to trust me more on that. That if there was something, they weren't sure about, if there was something they had questions about, if there was something that to them in the Bible makes absolutely no sense.

Providing space for students to ask questions or bring their own worldviews into the classroom is an example of RRP. However, Ruth did express that she wanted to "explain things to you" indicating that she would ultimately move towards a biblical worldview. However, given the context, this perspective does demonstrate some responsiveness.

Similarly, Joy fostered openness and did not shy away from the hard questions. Referencing student questions about transgender people in her science classes, she said, "Sometimes they're afraid to ask questions about that kind of stuff because they're afraid they're gonna get the answer: 'Well, we can't talk about that.' I go ahead and sometimes we'll bring that stuff up." She was open to student perspectives and would explain the secular perspective to them, while eventually returning to the biblical worldview saying "But this is what we believe because, you know, this was created by God, does that make sense?" Although she provided an

opportunity for students to engage and critically consider a variety of worldviews, she prescribed

for them the biblical perspective as the one that they should believe.

The teachers in middle school and high school described a holistic approach to

discipleship and faith integration in their classes. Renee acknowledged that "Yes, they may be

taking algebra with me, but that's not my only concern. We're concerned about the whole

growth, the maturity of the student beyond just mastering the algebra concepts." Teachers at this

level mentioned student activities and athletics, leadership development, and chapel as major

factors in developing relationships and valuing student perspectives in middle school and high

school.

Support for IFL and RRP: Prayer

In regards to support for integration in the classroom, prayer was a theme evident among

these teachers. Diane described how she would pray before labs with students, for safety and

discernment. Sophia also appreciated the opportunity to integrate Scripture and pray with her

students,

> Um, well I'd say that when I was in public school, my style was kind of the same, but I
>
> wasn't free to speak what is really True. And align, and say this is True because it's
>
> Scripture. So, as far as my methods, I still do hands-on, I still do grouping. We do all the
>
> different methods. We like that all the now different types of learning styles, because we
>
> have so many different types of kids. That doesn't really change. But I would say that
>
> being able to pray with and for your kids with other teachers, makes a big difference.

Both Diane and Renee articulated that this ability to pray and be responsive to student needs as

well as their questions about faith, while they might seem like little things, are actually very

important aspects of the faith integration process among Middle and High School students. Joy agreed that,

> We do pray before every class. Sometimes that prayer time might turn into a whole class because you know, a student is having an issue where they really want to talk about something that they can't talk about at home - something they've heard. So we can actually use that time to talk about it and give some biblical answers to help them grow spiritually.

Responsiveness to students in a Christian context includes not only listening to their challenges, but also bringing them before the Lord and providing them with Scriptural answers to the issues they may face. In this way, teachers value students' perspectives while also developing their biblical worldview.

Barriers to IFL and RRP: Administration

Regarding effective support for faith integration as well as responsiveness, the middle school and high school teachers were somewhat more critical of their schools. Lack of support was mentioned twenty-three times throughout these five interviews. The support that was provided did not seem to be particularly effective. For example, Ruth complained that,

> Unfortunately, my administrator - I'm leaving names out - but her background is elementary and so she gets a lot of energy and like passion and she wants to do things in a very elementary sort of way. And it doesn't work. Like I'm sorry. But if I try to do that with a 17 year-old guy, he's not going to engage.

Diane described a major barrier to IFL at her school due to a complete turnover of the administration over the last few years. Due to this upheaval, both devotions and professional development opportunities were ineffective or lacking for several years. Therefore, the most

effective support came from other teachers or her own individual study of Scripture, not from the school itself.

For those teachers who did describe effective support for faith integration, the support cited was from before the start of COVID. For several of the teachers, devotions and professional development opportunities have been lacking due to social distancing. Joy remembered attending an ACSI conference where she developed some perspectives on teaching redemptively - weaving the creation, fall, and redemption arc in Scripture through each content area and concept. Unfortunately, though, her school has not had the opportunity to participate in conferences over the last few years. Sophia, Ruth, and Diane all mentioned the need to seek professional development opportunities outside of the school through online college courses or church-based classes. As a group, the middle and high school teachers, which represented five different schools, did not find the support their school provided to be effective for faith integration.

The findings demonstrated that administrative decisions and the professional development provided would not support RRP either. Ruth mentioned that the students at her school articulated that the administration did not listen to them or value their perspectives on faith. When this was reported,

> They did these like 45 minutes assemblies where they would break the kids up and ask them like ethical and morality questions and and try to get into these discussions. And it became a real joke for the kids, which was unfortunate because like the administration was trying. It just wasn't it just they didn't handle it in a way that made sense to the kids. It became kind of like a joke to them and unfortunately if anything I think the kids felt even more like they're not hearing what we're telling them. Like they're they're saying

they're doing these things because they want to hear what we have to say and we're

saying it to them and they're still not getting it, they're not hearing us.

Renee also described challenges in accessing student perspectives towards worship experiences.

As a result, students are not actively engaged in the chapel service at her school. While the

administrators and teachers are seeking to understand student perspectives towards worship,

which does demonstrate some level of responsiveness, it remains a challenge for their school to

plan chapel services that engage students and reflect their preferences for worship.

Finally, RRP did not appear to be supported by any professional development provided

by these schools. Schools accredited by ACSI are required to provide professional development

for IFL and these trainings generally would align with some of the indicators of RRP (ACSI,

2019). However, at this grade level, the participants indicated that the trainings provided were

not effective for IFL, and this implies that they also would not support RRP.

Middle and high school teachers tend to be specialists in a particular subject or content

area, therefore they may seek professional development specific to that area. Just as RRP may be

enacted differently at distinct grade levels, the implications of RRP might be different in

different content areas. In the subsequent section, I will speak directly to the findings conveyed

by the upper school Science teachers.

Findings Specific to Middle and High School Science Teachers

Interestingly, three of the twelve participants were specifically middle school and high

school Science teachers. Diane teaches Physical Science, Chemistry, and STEM. Joy teaches

Biology, Chemistry, Anatomy and Physiology, and Environmental Science. Sophia teaches

Physics and Life Science. The perspectives of these teachers were unique in that they frequently

mentioned tensions with other worldviews within their content area. While a Literature teacher

might integrate a biblical perspective into the instruction of Jane Eyre, the Science teachers described tension with perspectives on everything from creation and gender to even the nature of Truth.

All three of these teachers mentioned repeatedly the importance of providing different perspectives but also teaching students to discern Truth. Diane articulated the importance of providing various perspectives but also training students in apologetics in her Science classes,

> I'm very well aware of the opposite, you know, standpoints. And I present those and I say, well, this is what you're going to be presented with as well. And so, you need to know that because you need to be able to argue intelligently. Like you can't just say, "Well, the Bible says this" and hope for the best, you know? So I want them to know the theories and I want them to know all the different standpoints. But then I say, this is what - We stand on the word of God. And we know that this is the, this is the Truth and this is what we hold to be, you know, this is, this is the Truth. This is the Word of God. This is, you know, we know that God created the world, you know, that he holds all things together.

While tension with other worldviews was mentioned thirty-one times in these three interviews, Scripture was referenced twenty-nine times and critical thinking was included twenty-seven times. The Science teachers emphasized the importance of training students in a biblical worldview to discern what they believe based on Scripture. These results indicate some measure of responsiveness by Science teachers, who naturally engage other worldviews in their content area and critically consider the implications of various philosophical starting points for the study of God's world. However, given the context of this study, these teachers faithfully integrated the biblical worldview, which may limit the responsiveness in their openness to other perspectives.

Findings Aligned with Research Questions

Following the second stage of analysis, the codebook was finalized and overarching themes were identified. The results were further analyzed across interviews by research question. I created code groups to categorize six main themes from the data: worldview, character development, religiously responsive teaching practices, relationships, support for RRP, and challenges to RRP. While all of these themes may have been found throughout the data, Table 4.2 demonstrates the alignment between the research questions and the themes found.

Worldview

The foremost finding in regard to the first research question, *How do teachers at Christian schools perceive the role that faith integration plays in their instruction?*, is that the participants in this study did not refer to faith integration in their responses but rather described biblical worldview instruction, integration, or even immersion. For example, when asked how her faith impacts her instruction, Joy said, "I teach at a Christian school and I teach from a biblical worldview. So what I teach is going to come from what the Bible says, or what is… has a biblical foundation. It's not going to come from secularism." Similarly, Kathleen responded that

Table 4.3

Alignment of Themes with Research Questions

Research Questions	Themes
How do teachers at Christian schools perceive the role that faith integration plays in their instruction?	Worldview Developing Character
To what extent, if any, do teachers at Christian schools describe responsiveness to students' religious beliefs in faith integration practices?	RRP Teaching Practices Relationships
In what ways, if any, do Christian schools support Religiously Responsive Pedagogy in the classroom?	Support for RRP Barriers to RRP

faith impacted her instruction through "a biblical worldview. The way I see things, I try to

anyway, see through the, you know, a biblical lens and how as God's Word support and how

does, you know, what does God's Word say about that?"

Teaching a biblical worldview was mentioned or described 193 times throughout the

twelve interviews. I created a code group titled Worldview and included 36 codes that related to

developing a worldview in Christian schools. Altogether, these codes were found in 524 distinct

quotes. The five strongest sub-themes included in this theme are biblical worldview, critical

thinking, tension with other worldviews, Scripture, and partnering with parents. Figure 4.1

provides a visual representation of the codes that were included in this theme, with the size of

each word in the word cloud representing the number of times that code was found in the data.

Figure 4.1

Worldview Word Cloud
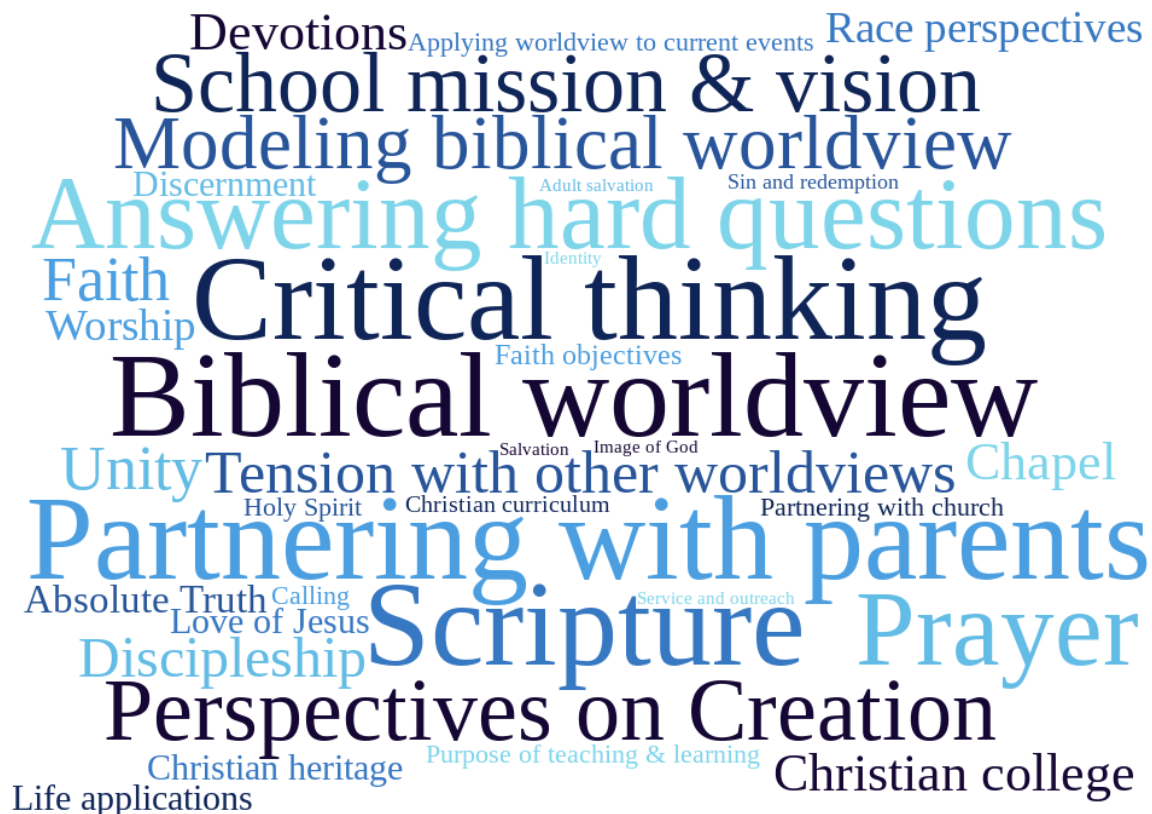
The literature related to faith integration called for new terminology and new ways of understanding and approaching IFL (Badley, 2009; Glanzer, 2008; Iselyn & Meteyard, 2010; Jacobsen & Jacobsen, 2004; Lawrence et al., 2005). Worldview education provides related but distinct terminology. According to McConnel (2004), this idea originated from Abraham Kuyper's Stone Lectures at Princeton in 1898, where he translated the German word *Weltanschauung* into English as view of the world. Since that time, worldview has come to mean a way of understanding everything through a particular lens. Erdvig describes worldview as a "pattern of ideas, beliefs, convictions, and habits" (2020, p. 10) that shape the way we see the world and behave in it. Myers and Noebel (2015) acknowledge that there may be hundreds of worldviews operating around the world today, but they categorized six worldviews that make up the vast majority of the world's population: Christianity, Islam, New Spirituality, Secularism, Marxism, and Postmodernism.

According to Fisher, "The Christian worldview, as a Christ-centered 'theory of everything,' begins with a proper understanding of the Bible and extends through philosophical exploration into a conceptual scheme that encompasses all knowledge and all life" (2021, pp. 11-12). Therefore, all teaching and learning can be integrated fully into a biblical worldview, whether one is studying English, Math, Science, Art, or even the Bible itself. This worldview also understands the Bible to be the absolute Truth, and the standard for all knowledge and belief. Therefore, any worldview or understanding that goes against the Bible would be considered to be untrue.

When describing this biblical worldview and the statement of faith at her school, Amy said,

> So we want to make sure that everything we do points to Christ and is pointing others to Christ. And that we are teaching children how to become like Christ in their actions, in their attitudes. And so, we want to make sure that, you know, everything we do comes from like a biblical worldview, a biblical standpoint filtered through Scripture.

Biblical worldview as a way of teaching impacts, therefore, not only the content of instruction, but also the behavior management. Hope pointed this out, saying,

> We've talked in some of our professional development. I think one of them was it was kingdom, something kingdom, but it was through ACSI and it was at the beginning of the year and she talked about behavior management with a Christian worldview.

She went on to describe the importance not only of correcting students' behavior but also teaching the grace and love of Christ through any behavior management systems. Because worldview is a lens that impacts not only knowledge but also actions and habits, it can be used for character development and promoting critical thinking skills.

Another major sub-theme within the topic of worldview was the idea of *tension with other worldviews.* Because the participants were integrating a biblical worldview in their instruction, they frequently described challenges for themselves and their students when faced with other worldviews. Shiloh demonstrated a high level of RRP by encouraging her students to explore that tension in order to better understand a biblical worldview and further develop their own faith perspectives. She described,

> I think it's very important for them to evaluate, especially in fifth grade, to evaluate current events and discuss, what does the world say? What does the Bible say? And

you're going to have to form your own worldview and your own opinion, because you're

going to grow up and you're going to have to make decisions and your accountable for

you, what you believe. You know, I can't believe for you. Your parents can't believe for

you. Just to kind of equip them with the different arguments I think is very helpful.

Laney also mentioned talking with her third grade students about the differences between a

biblical worldview and an *other worldview*.

Worldview development also came into play when teachers were describing their

responsiveness to students and how they answered or approached difficult questions in their

classes. Renee recalled a time when,

It was my first class of the day like my home room in the class and so we would do

prayer requests and also things that were going on in the world. And I think this might

have been right around the time that the Supreme Court was discussing Roe vs. Wade.

And so, I mentioned that in the prayer requests and these are seventh and eighth graders

who immediately were like, "What is that again? What's the Constitution again?" And

they had some really good questions that weren't applicable to math, but it definitely was

important and needed to be answered as far as worldview and, and having a faith based

input goes. So they're not just googling, you know, What is abortion? and finding answers

that way.

She described the importance of being open to sometimes getting off-topic and answering

student questions even if they were irrelevant to the content area.

This biblical worldview was even described as the purpose of teaching and learning.

Diane described the relationships and the ways that faith impacts her instruction, saying

> I share my beliefs, my worldview and that Christ-centered worldview and hopefully that
>
> strengthens theirs. So that when they go out to, you know, wherever they go, they will
>
> have that ability, kind of that apologetics to be able to defend their faith and their
>
> worldview when they go out.

Kathleen also described her faith and her worldview based in God's Word as the "essence of who

I am". She described her teaching as God's calling on her life and asserted that without her faith

she would not be a teacher. Teaching that biblical worldview "is the basis of my classroom".

Character Development

The second theme relating to the first research question, *How do teachers at Christian*

schools perceive the role that faith integration plays in their instruction?, is the theme of

character development. While related to biblical worldview, character development emerged as a

distinct theme throughout the interviews. I identified twelve codes that related to the theme of

developing character, which could be seen in 152 quotes.

In Chapter 2 of this study, I referenced Smith's (2018) work calling for further attention

on the ways in which the teaching and learning process expresses IFL. This study has explored

that question and grouped some of the codes related to that process into the overarching theme of

developing character. Developing character involves modeling a biblical worldview in the

classroom, mentoring and discipling students, and facing the current challenges of our world to

promote unity and Christlike love, as can be seen in Sophia's comment,

> And also when they're being corrected or disciplined for repeat behavior, that is a great
>
> time to say, look, you know better. You know this isn't right. You've been taught this.
>
> You've heard this from the Word of God. Your parents don't… You know, it's a good time

to instill Truth again, to instill, there's still love and mercy, but sometimes that sometimes

along with mercy means correction and discipline, because God disciplined his people.

This type of character development encompasses not only classroom management, but also

behavior correction with a biblical worldview. It includes addressing the current challenges for

children by using discipleship and application opportunities for conflict resolution, to promote

unity, and to foster leadership in students that will continue throughout their lives. Figure 4.2

provides a concept map of this theme with interrelated subcategories. I developed this figure and

used various shades of gray and blue along with interconnected lines to show possible conceptual

connections between these subcategories.

Figure 4.2

Developing Character Concept Map
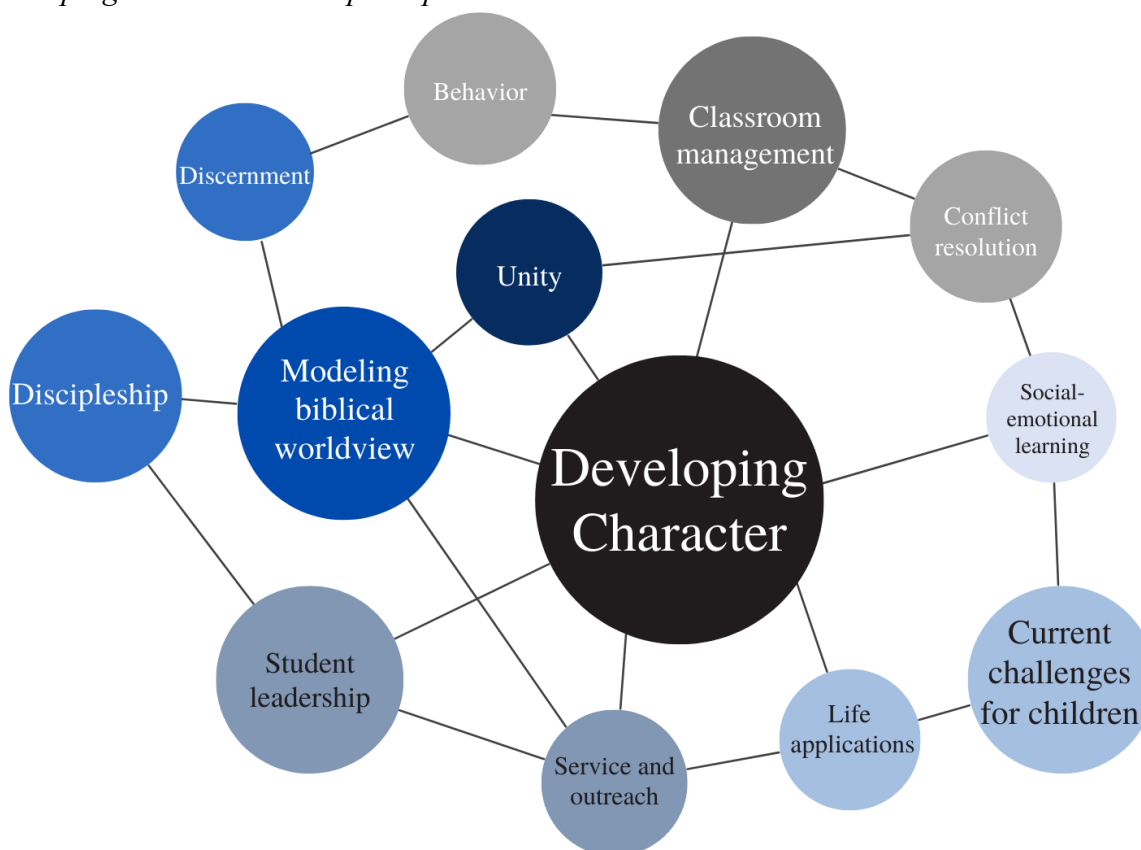
When asked how her faith impacts her practices of teaching or the way that she teaches, Kathleen replied,

> Well, goodness me! He's our master teacher, right? So we model, I mean want to model Him in the classroom with love, mercy, you know - soft words sometimes. I mean, I'm not your typical teacher either. I mean, I like to have fun with my kids and I love them, you know? So I try to demonstrate the love of Christ to them by being merciful but also you know, God is fair and he's a God of justice. So you know I try to be as much like Him as I can and I fail every single day but He is our master teacher. He is who I want to emulate in the classroom. But, yes, I'd say greatly.

Responding with love to students and developing their character was important to the teachers regardless of the student's worldview. Ruth expressed that,

> In the case of like, if we had a Muslim student at our school, I mean I definitely wouldn't change anything about what's true. But I would also much more often point out that God loves everybody, and we all sin. And we're all, we're all failing and some way and God loves us. He does not stop loving us. So I mean I think I would try to address that more often because, I just I think you appeal to more people with the love side than the fire and brimstone. Not that you don't have to know that that's a reality. But that's, I don't think that's how you're gonna mold true faith by scaring people. Like, do what I do or else you're going to hell. Like I think it's more, you know, God loves you and he wants what's best for you. And he even though you mess up a million times is going to keep on loving you. He just wants, He wants your best.

Developing character is also important when facing student challenges, misbehaviors, or disagreements. Throughout the interviews, teachers described challenges for children, trauma

they have experienced, and the tension with outside influences and other worldviews. The increase in social media and mental health issues was a common factor among teachers from all levels. However, the teachers also described their relationships and responsiveness that faced those challenges and provided hope for the students. Laney said,

> Everything ties into my faith and ties into training children for their life, which is going to encounter suffering. And that God is good through all of that and that the presence of suffering does not mean, does not mean they've done something wrong. It doesn't mean that God has left them.

Diane also described an experience with a student who was questioning her gender identity. Diane listened to her relate what she was seeing posted by others on TikTok with an abusive experience she had experienced. Diane responded to her by saying,

> You know just because their stories are similar, it doesn't mean that the ending has to be the same. And I said, you know, you need to understand that, you know, that God loves you and God, you know, He created you in His image.

Diane helped the student work through her own experience and perspective with a biblical worldview. The teachers develop character by listening to students and helping them to overcome challenges with a Christ-like attitude of humility, patience, and trust in God.

This holistic development is central to the mission and statement of faith of the schools the participants represented. Renee articulated the importance of partnering with parents for this kind of character development,

> So our statement of faith centers around this idea that we partner with the parents and the church to educate the child mentally, physically, spiritually, this holistic education. And I have had the opportunity to, to work with parents and to get to know parents not, I think

more so than I ever did in public schools. For the same reason, because we're invested in their child's maturity and growth just beyond Algebra. And so that's allowed us to form, I think allowed me to form some great relationships with parents that I wouldn't have had in other places. And we've had parents come and tell me and tell other teachers specifically, "Thank you so much for working with my kids, for understanding this situation."

These perspectives on character development highlight the need for a change in terminology from IFL towards a more responsive and relationship-based approach. While biblical worldview terminology may provide a different perspective on integration and a more all-encompassing faith-learning paradigm, IFL may not fully account for the critical needs of students for discipleship, life application, leadership development, social-emotional learning, and conflict-resolution that are all necessary in order to practice and develop a biblical worldview. What is needed instead is a responsive pedagogy that values student perspectives, promotes relationships between students and teachers, and critically engages other worldviews through effective integration in the content and practices of teaching. The theme of character development points to the need for a theory of RRP.

RRP Teaching Practices

Plentiful data emerged in the themes of responsiveness and relationships in response to the second research question, *To what extent, if any, do teachers at Christian schools describe responsiveness to students' religious beliefs in faith integration practices?* In order to further explore the data, I will again consider the potential indicators of RRP, as seen in Figure 4.3.

Figure 4.3

Potential Indicators of RRP
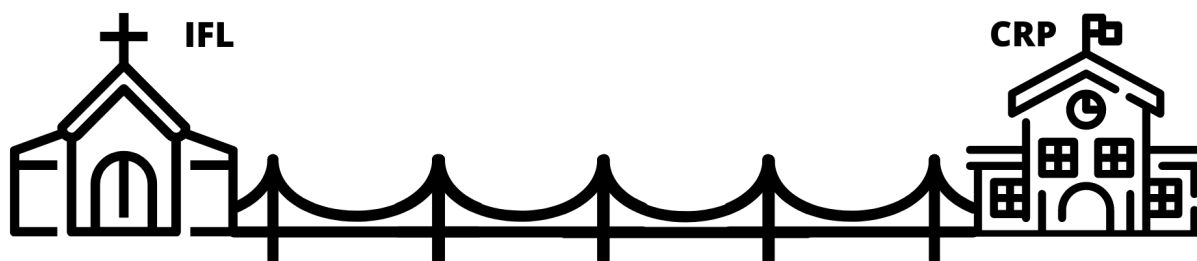
Potential indicators of Religiously Responsive Pedagogy

1. Teachers who are aware of their own positionality on faith
2. Teachers who value student perspectives and beliefs
3. Teachers who intentionally develop relationships with students
4. Teachers who critically engage other worldviews
5. Teachers who effectively integrate faith into the content and practices of classroom instruction

Two themes emerged from the data regarding RRP. The first was responsiveness, which encompassed teachers' willingness to face student challenges and acknowledge their perspectives as well as comments about adjusting instruction and academic differentiation. Whereas James and colleagues (2015) argued that religious perspectives were either dismissed or ignored within public education, addressing religious perspectives is a central aspect of Christian education. Participants indicated that they would not reject their students' perspectives, but rather explore those through class discussions, private conversations, or continued discipleship within the school. However, the teachers also maintained a belief in Truth grounded in Scripture and directed their students towards biblical understandings and practices.

In the subsequent section, I will use the paradigm constructed in Figure 4.4 to answer the research question: did the participants describe responsiveness to students' religious beliefs in

faith integration practices? I will look at each of the potential indicators of RRP to evaluate the

participants' responsiveness to their students through this new framework.

1. Participants Were Aware of Their Own Positionality on Faith.

All of the participants described their own faith backgrounds and their perspectives on

faith in detail at the start of the interview. Participants were aware of their positionality with

regards to beliefs and provided stories or indicators of the importance of their faith in their own

lives and in their teaching. For example, Kathleen had a strong conviction on her preferred Bible

translation based upon her own denominational background. She had discussions with her

students about memory verses from the English Standard Version (ESV) and the King James

Version (KJV). Kathleen described this aspect of her positionality with which the students

sometimes did disagree, saying,

> Now, I will say this. And I mean this is interesting. But you know, our school, the version
>
> of the Bible that this school endorses is the ESV. Okay, but I'm a KJV. And I have noticed
>
> over the years that being KJV is becoming, being KJV carries a bit of a label on it. Like
>
> you're, I mean, I've had people say that people who use KJV are militant that they are
>
> divisive, you know, they try to divide people. I mean it. I don't get that, I don't understand
>
> why that's going on. But I use, you know, when I was hired for this job, you know, that is
>
> my personal conviction. I've been in the KJV Bible ever since I had a, you know, a little
>
> baby Bible, they give you, when your parents dedicate, even that little thing is a KJV
>
> Bible. But I mean, you know, I've heard both sides of it.

However, she used it as a teachable moment to unpack the differences in wording between the

two versions and how those might impact the students' understanding of the Scriptures. She

states that she respects the students' convictions and allows that decision to be "between you and the Lord". However, she encourages discussion about the differences in her classroom.

2. Participants Valued Student Perspectives and Beliefs.

Throughout the interviews, participants described the importance of the students' perspectives and beliefs. However, teachers demonstrated varying levels of responsiveness to the student perspectives, particularly when those did not align with the statement of faith of the school or the personal convictions of the teacher. Ruth described a specific example in which she and another teacher responded to two students who had written a paper about biblical perspectives on sexual orientation,

As far as your belief goes, we don't want to tell you that you have to feel the same way we do. But this is what the Bible says, it does say it. It's clear, it's right here. Now if you choose to not believe the Bible is an inspired word of God. If you choose that is your choice. However, you cannot say, the Bible doesn't say this, you can't say that God doesn't feel that way. Because here is the proof of it.

And of the two girls, one of them really came around and she was like, "You know, nobody's ever explained that to me. Nobody's ever broken that down for me. That does make sense." And the other one, who I think is struggling with it herself on a personal level, she said, "I don't care. I don't, I believe God and I believe he might say that, I don't care. I think he's wrong." And you know, that's not something I would say to God. You know, she is within her right. Definitely, I think if she wants to be angry at God, I think that God can handle it.

And so, you know, we gave her all the information. We broke it down for her. We said, we were, you know, we're there for her to talk. But she definitely, by the end of that

meeting had not come around our side. But you know, I don't want to change the way I

treat her at all. Right? Yeah, because if anything that'll take her further away from God.

This long quote demonstrates some level of responsiveness to student perspectives. While Ruth

and her colleague provided information from the Bible and corrected factual inaccuracies related

to the students' understandings of Scripture, they did not force the student to have the same

worldview or even treat the student differently based on her response. However, Ruth did not

affirm the student's beliefs but instead pointed her to Scripture as the source of Truth. Other

participants provided similar experiences in which students had different perspectives, and they

listened to those differences in belief but did not necessarily affirm or value them.

3. Participants Intentionally Developed Relationships with Students.

Given that relationships is an entire theme that emerged from the interviews, developing

relationships with students was an essential element of the participants' responses. However, the

methods mentioned to develop relationships were unique to each teacher. Some participants

described conversations with students and listening to them, while others related jokes or the use

of humor in their classes. Prayer was mentioned frequently as a method of building relationships

with students, particularly in upper elementary and middle and high school. Several teachers

referenced experiences outside the classroom, whether school-based like athletics and student

activities or more casual and teacher-driven. At the time of the interviews, Amy was writing

notes to the Pre-K students who would be in her class. Kathleen mentioned forming relationships

with the boys through food, saying,

They loved to eat. So I took these boys and a few of their friends to one of these family

buffets and they just keep bringing you bowls of food, you know. But I mean I knew that

that's how I could touch them with their stomachs literally. But you know when you go out with them and you can expand on the things you like and what they like.

However, several participants did mention that it can be especially challenging to build relationships with certain students. Annie even acknowledged that sometimes as a teacher you build relationships with the students who are always in trouble whereas the quiet students who do their work receive less attention. She said, "So, it seems to be the, the ones that require the most attention that you get to know the best." Diane explained the importance of seeking out those difficult students and developing relationships with the ones who are struggling with personal issues so that she would be able to address their needs. Laney described the value of the relationships her own daughter had with the high school teachers at their school saying, "it was just a beautiful thing. They valued her as a person and guided her, and they were like, mentors to her." However, Laney also acknowledged that while her relationships with her third graders are valuable, they are very different from the relationships she has witnessed between teachers and students in the High School.

Finally, the teachers described the importance of forming lasting relationships with their students, watching them grow over the years and develop their worldview. Renee described the benefit of working in a PK-12 Christian school saying that,

The benefit in that is that you get to see them also grow. You know, I have students, who are getting ready to be seniors this year, that are, you know, I've known them since they were in second or third grade. I've not had them as a teacher for that long, but because our school is smaller, I think there is a benefit in getting to really know your students and watch them, watch them grow and mature.

Overall, the participants indicated a high level of responsiveness in the area of developing meaningful relationships with students. In addition to valuing relationships with their students, the participants extended that responsiveness by also valuing relationships with families - which was not part of the framework but is an important aspect of relationships seen in the data. This theme will be further explored later in this chapter in the section on relationships.

4. Participants Critically Engaged Other Worldviews.

While the participants were teachers at ACSI schools which ascribe to Statements of Faith affirming foundational protestant spiritual truths aligned to the mission and vision of each school, and therefore the biblical worldview was a prominent theme throughout the data, some participants did demonstrate responsiveness in critically and thoughtfully engaging other worldviews in their classes. When asked how her students' perspectives impact the way that she teaches, Shiloh responded,

> That's a good question, because… You know, we don't all - even though I teach at a Christian school, they're not all come from Christian backgrounds, you know. Some of them have some interesting, very interesting faith backgrounds that really concerned me and then transfer students coming in. And then I also think there's a lot of variety among parent perspectives about what is appropriate for children. So yeah, you know just praying for conversations before they have to happen, seeing their perspectives and knowing that it is not quite biblical or not at all biblical, and just praying for God to give me an opportunity and the right words to say to address that.

Given the emphasis on the biblical worldview within the Christian school, teachers are already aware of the tension between the biblical worldview and other worldviews. However, they may or may not be prepared to critically engage those worldviews in the classroom.

For example, some teachers indicated that they would not change their instruction regardless of the worldviews of the students. They were committed to that biblical worldview and initially responded that they would teach exactly the same way regardless of the students' religion. For instance, Joy was steadfast in that perspective, saying,

> Because we teach from a biblical worldview, so I would still teach them the same way if the kids were atheists, if they're all Christian, or if they were Muslim - anything, just I would do everything the same. Because actually I did have a student that was his dad is Muslim, his mom's a Christian and he's from a Muslim country. So we did, we talked about that quite a bit last year.

While initially, this statement appears to be unresponsive to the perspectives of the students because Joy would not change her instruction based on the student's worldview, she went on to describe the conversations with the Muslim student and the challenges of that perspective in her classroom. In this scenario, most of the teachers did demonstrate a willingness to engage with students from other religious backgrounds, but the levels of critical engagement with different worldviews varied.

Throughout the interviews several of the teachers gave negative comments about families who "say they're Christian" but did not actually demonstrate a biblical worldview. Kathleen mentioned that,

> Honestly, that lots of times is the biggest barrier is, is the parent who, whose home and their biblical worldview is not the same as the schools. So I don't understand why you put your child [in]to school with a different worldview than what you have and think that we can just look over that. You know what I'm saying? [...] Honestly, I think a lot of people don't even realize they have a worldview. I think today's society is so self-centered and so

me-centric. You know that it makes me feel good, what I want to do, what brings me

pleasure. It's a self-centered worldview.

Many teachers included similar critiques of a self-centered worldview, or what Myers and

Noebel (2015) describe as a secular worldview.

In response to the four vignettes, teachers provided various perspectives on

responsiveness to other religious backgrounds, epistemologies, and views of Scripture. They

gave thoughtful responses that addressed the student issue and attempted to understand the

perspective or needs of the student in that moment. However, in regards to the issue of gender

identity formation, the teachers were generally more dismissive. Most of the teachers said they

would not call a student by a different name or use different pronouns. Every teacher would

report the student request to their administration and it would be addressed by the administrators

and parents at the school level. At the time of the study, there was ongoing tension between the

growing acceptance and affirmation of all students' identities, including gender identities, in

culturally responsive education and a particular Christian worldview committed to biological

gender as assigned by God at birth. Given that political and ideological climate, further research

may be needed to better understand the reasons for a lack of responsiveness in this area.

Christian teacher perspectives on this issue may also change over the coming years.

5. Participants Effectively Integrated Faith into the Content and Practices of Classroom Instruction.

Although the teachers frequently mentioned biblical worldview instruction and faith

integration in their classes, it is difficult or perhaps impossible to measure accurately how

effective that integration is. While Christian schools claim to integrate biblical faith across the

curriculum, Erdvig (2020) points out that Christian schools tend to overpromise and underdeliver

on biblical worldview development. Protocols and surveys have been developed to attempt to

measure worldview and faith (Barna, 2021; Cheng et al., 2019; Zigarelli, 2012). And while much

has been written about IFL, due to the nature of education, the relational aspect of teaching and

learning, and the personal nature of worldview and faith development, an instrument to measure

effectiveness of that integration is perhaps impossible.

Nevertheless, this qualitative study was designed to measure teacher perceptions of the

effectiveness of both the integration and the support they received for IFL in order to understand

supports or barriers that may exist for RRP. While many of the teachers indicated that faith

integration was provided to them either through Christian curriculum or through school

curriculum guides, they also acknowledged that they added or adjusted those topics as

appropriate throughout instruction. Several teachers provided an overarching biblical theme that

was interwoven throughout the year in all of their classes. For example, Sophia mentioned how

she teaches throughout her Science classes about the beauty and complexity of the world God

created. Joy asserted that every class should include a Scriptural view on sin and redemption,

> Well, I would say, first off every class is going to teach about, you know - the perfect
>
> world, the fall, and then the redemption through Jesus Christ. That's something that all
>
> classes should be teaching, I mean, I mean, like, the first week of school and then every
>
> time you're going through a concept, you would, you would make sure that you go back
>
> to you know, this is happened because of the fall of man but thank God, you know, we
>
> have Jesus that has redeemed us if we believe.

Ruth described an interdisciplinary project between English and Bible where the students

explored biblical principles and wrote a research paper about characters or situations in the Lord

of the Rings. Each teacher provided themes or examples of how their faith impacts their curriculum or teaching practices.

Renee, however, provided an interesting perspective on how her faith impacts her assessment of learning,

> I think even people who aren't faith based would say understanding that students are individual, but I think Christians or people who come from a faith background have a reason why we believe that students are individual that we're all created in the image of God and we're knit together and we are unique, and that definitely affects differentiation when it comes to not only instruction but assessment. I have like, I had students this year - a group of students who were really struggling with the assessment portion in math tests. They would do great in class, they did great in classwork and then it came to the time to take a quiz or a test and they would struggle. And at first I was like, I don't understand what's going on. And I realized that if I asked them to talk out loud and tell me what they were doing, they didn't make the same mistakes. But if they were in a quiet, typical testing environment where they weren't allowed to talk and, you know, everybody else was silent around them, they were struggling to follow those same steps and processes. So that allowed us to shift gears and do some oral testing and allow them to show me what they knew a different way.

Viewing students as individuals who are created in the image of God and created for a purpose certainly impacts the way teachers not only differentiate in instruction but also in their assessment of learning.

Although practices that demonstrated RRP showed up across the interviews, this theme could particularly be seen in each of the scenarios provided to measure responsiveness. In this

next section, I will analyze those scenarios individually to better understand teachers'

responsiveness to several different aspects of religion.

Responsiveness to Other Religious Perspectives

When asked how a student's Muslim religion would impact her interaction and

instruction with the student, Diane pointed out the importance of relationships, saying,

I just believe that we have to be relational and we have to be kind and we have to show

love and we have to just be a witness of Christ's love to them and that's the only way that

you're gonna get through because they have already, I mean, most people already have a

negative image of what Christians are supposed to be like and unfortunately, you know,

it's not - it's a very, very angry, very judgmental image. And that's just not something that

I would want to portray. So I would just want to be loving and get to know them and get

to know the parents and the student and just work with them.

Several teachers indicated that the student's religion would not impact their instruction, because

they would continue to follow the same curriculum and demonstrate the same love towards the

student regardless of their religion. Other teachers showed curiosity or openness towards

learning about the student's family background and faith perspectives while continuing to

integrate a biblical worldview in their instruction.

Responsiveness to Epistemological Differences

The second scenario dealt with a student who interrupted instruction to say, "Nothing we

are learning today matters because there's no way to know if God even exists!" While many of

the teachers first addressed the class disruption and behavior management aspect of this outburst,

all of the participants responded to the claim with a biblical worldview and critical reasoning.

Whether they would address the student immediately in class or separately one-on-one, the

participants provided answers that focused on the value of the content as well as a biblical

perspective on truth. Renee provided a particularly thoughtful response,

> I think a lot of it would have to do with how well I know the student. I could imagine
>
> students who are saying that just for the purpose of being disruptive that I would say,
>
> "You know, we're going to…" I may want to talk to them about that later at the end of
>
> class, have a private discussion after a class. But if it's a student that I know well, maybe
>
> a student that I know was really wrestling with what it is that they believe we might stop
>
> and have a class discussion about, "Why is it that you feel that way?" And, and try to
>
> address some of the, the students concerns there in that class. But it definitely, I think
>
> would differ based on how well I know the student, and as an experienced teacher kind of
>
> reading what the student's intent is.

She considers whether or not it would be a helpful discussion to have in class and also references

several perspectives, both biblical and secular, for why the content does matter. This response

again highlights the importance of the teacher-student relationship in determining responsiveness

to deep, epistemological concerns.

Responsiveness to Varying Views of Scripture

The third vignette dealt with how dinosaur fossils could exist based on a biblical timeline

of Creation. Several teachers were very excited about this question, particularly the Science

teachers. Several teachers mentioned that this was already covered in their curriculum, which

provided perspectives on Creation from a biblical worldview. Finally, a few teachers mentioned

that they would like to do further research or would ask the student to do further research to

understand the variety of perspectives that may exist.

Responsiveness to Student Identity Formation

The final scenario involved a student who had recently began identifying as transgender. The response to this scenario was different between teachers who taught younger students and those who taught in middle school and high school due to the age and experiences of their students. Nevertheless, most of the teachers agreed that they would not call the student by a different name or use different pronouns with them. Many of the participants gave Scripture reasoning for that, as seen in Annie's response,

> I would go back to the Bible and say, "God created male and female. And your name is this, and I know God created you in his image as a female or male, and I'm not going to do that." So, I would not do that.

In this case, the partnership with parents and school policies were cited frequently as reasoning for that decision. All of the teachers said that they would report this issue to the administration who would handle it at the school level.

Relationships

The second theme developed in response to the second research question, *To what extent, if any, do teachers at Christian schools describe responsiveness to students' religious beliefs in faith integration practices?*, has already been explored somewhat in describing responsiveness to students. However, the theme of relationships encompassed not only the relationships teachers built with their students, but also the value of relationships with their colleagues, administrators, parents, and the church (Dallavis, 2011).

This theme was prevalent throughout the interviews with 168 references throughout the data. Each participant described their relationships with their students and colleagues positively, and many also mentioned positive relationships with parents, administrators, and the church.

Several teachers described the value of lasting relationships, watching students grow over the years and even staying in touch decades later. Laney gave an example of one student she had taught,

> For instance, my second year, teaching fourth grade 96 to 97 - I am friends today, as the matter of fact, I was the matron of honor in her wedding because I believe that it's more than just teaching them, it's about a relationship and being able to speak into their lives.

Similarly, Kathleen described a relationship with one of her former fourth grade students who years later took her on vacation to England due to their shared love of Queen Elizabeth II. The teachers described forming such lasting relationships through genuine vulnerability with their students and a strong emotional connection that went beyond the classroom.

Relationships with Colleagues. Numerous teachers mentioned relationships with colleagues being necessary for IFL as well as for personal and instructional support. Diane described the importance of those relationships,

> Having just godly coworkers or friends or, you know, somebody, or mentors. That is just so important to have those people who you can just be like, "Hey, you know what, I just not getting this and I just need some help here, you know, could you…What, what am I missing?" And, you know, and they're just able to just like, shine a light on something that I'm just not seeing, you know, or pray with me and just be like, you know, "Hey, you know, let's just take some time and, and seek it out."

This finding is consistent with the literature, which described collaboration and peer coaching as effective support for IFL (Bayer, 2017; Gallagher, 2016; Hill, 2014).

Relationships with Administrators. The relationship between teachers and their administrators was also a prevalent theme throughout the interviews. Whether that relationship

was primarily positive or fraught with tension, it was frequently mentioned as a critical aspect of

faith integration. Carolyn shared that,

> I mean my principal always has an open door policy. So if you even if you're struggling
>
> with something on a personal level, she'll take the time to talk with you about it. Pray
>
> with you about it. Also, you know challenging students, she also always welcomes, you
>
> know, talking about different strategies to help them from a, from a biblical perspective.

The importance of school leadership and the role of the administration in developing a culture of

IFL is also seen throughout the literature (Eckel, 2009; Hollis, 2019; Martin, 2018; Pethtel,

2011).

Relationships with Parents. Partnership with parents was a strong theme throughout the

interviews. Some teachers experienced a lack of partnership, sometimes exacerbated by a lack of

support from their administration. Hope was a younger teacher who experienced this kind of

frustrating situation, while Kathleen was a more experienced teacher who had been recently

verbally attacked by a parent while the administrator sat by and listened. Several teachers

mentioned that the relationship between parents and teachers can be very difficult, particularly

when the parents do not agree with each other or have split custody. Sophia mentioned that often

the parents at her school do not have time to partner effectively or do not fully support the

school's policies on behavior. Amy described the importance of racial reconciliation perspectives

based on a biblical worldview to partner effectively with parents and promote unity. She

explained,

> But reconciliation can only happen when there is unity. And we've talked about unity [...]
>
> What does it mean to be united? That's an internal first. It's internal, you have to have the

Holy Spirit living inside of you and they have the Holy Spirit inside of them and then

there can be this union. There can be reconciliation in unity and walking in unity.

While each of the participants asserted the importance of parent relationships and indicated a

commitment to partnering with parents, it was often mentioned as a barrier or challenge to

effective IFL. In some instances, RRP may be enacted differently or be more difficult, depending

upon the religious practices and worldview of the parents.

Relationships with the Church. Finally, when describing their faith integration and the

impact of their school's statement of faith, most of the participants mentioned relationships with

the local church or various denominations. Shiloh recognized that, "Our school is part of a

church ministry. We're not just a school that happens to be Christian. We need to be respectful of

the church that we're a part of in the ministry that we're a part of." Sophia mentioned the

importance of maintaining unity around the Word of God, saying "I don't get into doctrine for

individual churches, because we have about 70 different churches that are affiliated with our

school. And I just we just go what's scriptural." Schools that are not part of a specific local

church or affiliated with a specific denomination may be more likely to enact RRP given an

openness to a variety of perspectives, while remaining grounded on their own statement of faith

and the Word of God.

The Importance of Effective Relationships between All Stakeholders. Relationships

between teachers, administrators, parents, and the church can be a barrier or a support. While

some teachers experienced frustrations with those relationships, others were bolstered by those

partnerships. Amy said,

> So personally, I would say my administration is huge support. Daily in the classroom, we
>
> typically partner with like-minded families, so the parents are a huge support, that

partnership with them. So they're working on their child educationally and spiritually, the

church is helping to strengthen that, and then we have the privilege to come alongside

and to help strengthen them.

Ideally, the three-strand cord of the school, church, and family would effectively support

worldview development through IFL (Dallavis, 2011; Ecclesiastes 4:12; Schultz, 1998).

However, this study found that these relationships can sometimes be challenging. Religiously

responsive perspectives may either reduce or cause more tension between these stakeholders,

depending on their particular expectations for the school, for the teacher, or for the parents.

Support for and Barriers to RRP in Christian Schools

Regarding the final research question, *In what ways, if any, do Christian schools support*

Religiously Responsive Pedagogy in the classroom?, the theme of support emerged with four key

domains as seen in Figure 4.4: school-level support, relational support, personal faith, and

challenges. While I have already discussed the support and challenges of relationships for IFL,

and certainly personal faith also holds a great impact on effective IFL, the research question

particularly addresses support for RRP at the school level. Therefore, this section will primarily

discuss the support provided and barriers presented to effective RRP.

Teachers found support for IFL at the school level from the administration, guiding

documents such as the statement of faith and mission and vision of the school, as well as school

policies, which supported responsiveness. Some of the objectives for curricular content and faith

learning were also found to support teachers. Finally, teachers commented on effective support

from their school when responding to the research protocol, and often gave varied perspectives

on the efficacy of professional development or the need for further coaching and observation.

Figure 4.4

Domains of Support for Religiously Responsive Pedagogy
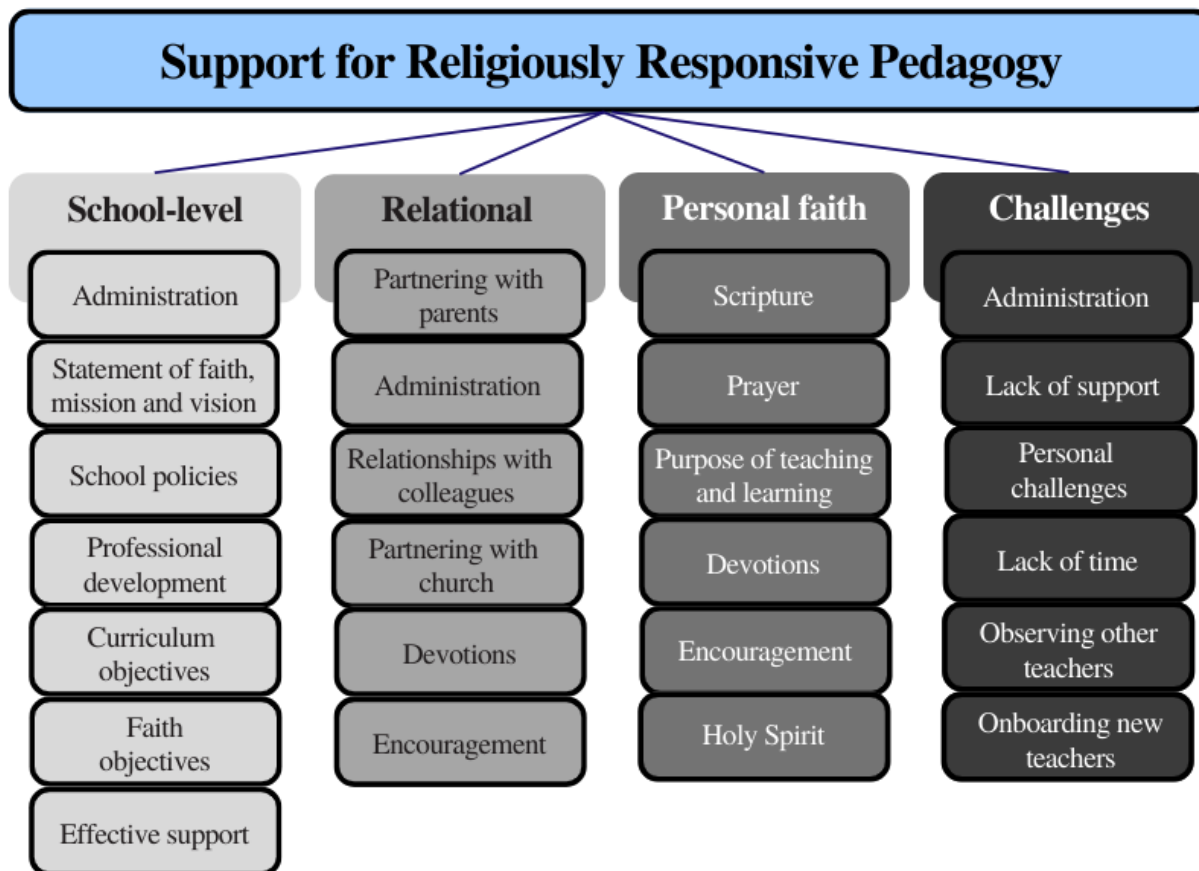
Relationships were also found to be an effective support for the participants. Many teachers mentioned relationships with administrators or colleagues as their primary support for IFL. They also supported RRP by fostering relationships and valuing student perspectives. Teachers also indicated that the partnership with parents could be a support, although at times it also posed a challenge. Teachers described the importance of devotions and spiritual encouragement in ways that support RRP in the classroom as well.

Many teachers relied on their personal faith practices and beliefs to support IFL. This aligns with the first indicator of religiously responsive teachers, which calls for teachers to be

aware of their own positionality. Participants indicated that their relationship with God and the work of the Holy Spirit was essential to effective responsiveness to students and faith-learning instruction.

Finally, participants indicated several barriers that might impact RRP. At times, the administration did not fully support responsiveness effectively. Teachers also indicated that personal challenges and lack of time affected their ability to engage students responsively. Teachers provided ideas for more effective support, particularly for new teachers and struggling teachers – such as increased observation, targeted professional development, or coaching opportunities.

School-level Support and Challenges

The following analysis will follow the topics which emerged related to School-level supports as seen in Figure 4.4 and address each utilizing the framework from the literature review in Chapter 2, with the five following topics: selection and induction of teachers; school leadership; school policies; professional development; and mentoring and discipleship.

Selection and Induction of Teachers. Although selection and induction of teachers was not included in the interview protocol, many teachers described their calling to Christian education. Some mentioned teaching previously in public or other private schools, but all twelve participants indicated that the ability to be responsive to students' worldviews and intentionally integrate faith in their instruction was part of their reason for teaching. The participants viewed this as central to the mission of their school and their own calling to teach. Shiloh said,

> I think my faith impacts everything that I teach because my mission as a Christian is to make Christ known. So, I think, I know the Word of God applies to every subject. And I want my students to understand that and search the scriptures for themselves.

Similarly, Kathleen asserted that,

> God's word and my faith is, it's the… I would say it's just the essence of who I am.
> Without that I wouldn't be a teacher because I believe being a teacher was God's calling
> up on my life. So his Word is my mandate. And so that's the basis of my classroom.

Ruth said that she was initially planning to teach in a public school, but when she discovered Christian education, she was amazed,

> Wow, this is so much better than teaching at public school, you know, because you could
> share your faith, you have more freedom and you're talking, you need to talk about God
> the whole time if you need to, and I've got more freedom in how you present your
> concepts to students.

Selecting teachers who are prepared for IFL is not the only step in effective support, but it is an important one. Ruth was critical of her administration and the support she received, "I would say in general as a school, they're not very effective. They do a great job of getting good staff." However, she went on to say that "they do give us a lot of autonomy in general. I think the staff has a really, really strong biblical background. And I think they just kind of trust us."

Unfortunately, the induction of new teachers was mentioned by both Hope and Renee as a challenge and an area where support was lacking. New teachers did not effectively integrate faith or know the school policies or goals for responsiveness. While Renee felt that the support she received was effective for her own teaching, she did not think it was quite as effective for new teachers who may not have been trained in education previously. Renee shared some steps that her administration has taken to improve this area, such as spreading out new teacher in-service throughout the summer in order to provide more time for new teachers to prepare. She said that,

We had the session on biblical integration and lesson planning in July but school doesn't

start until September 6th for us. So they have a whole like two months to start working on

lesson plans. And typically all of this would have been a week and a half before school

started. So, I think spacing it out has given them that time to process and to ask questions.

Unfortunately, not all schools are able to begin onboarding new teachers so far in advance. The

effective induction process remains a critical aspect of school support for IFL (Harmon, 2009;

Lewis, 2015). In the same way, it would be necessary for RRP to ensure that teachers are chosen

who would embody the indicators put forth in this study.

The Impact of School Leadership. The literature acknowledged the importance of

school leadership for IFL. Hollis (2019) found that school leaders impact the spiritual

development of their staff through devotions, chapel services, Bible study, prayer, worship,

professional development, and biblical or spiritual–related workshops. The participants in this

study acknowledged the importance of these opportunities and the role of their school leadership

in fostering IFL as well. Hope said, "We have faculty devotions every Tuesday morning for

about 10 minutes and our administrator is great. And they do a really good job of like

encouraging us in that short amount of time and praying for us." Devotions was mentioned

twenty-three times throughout the interviews.

Chapel was also frequently mentioned as an opportunity for spiritual development of

students as well as a way in which the school leadership value student perspectives and

demonstrate responsiveness to students. Various teachers indicated that students are given

leadership opportunities in chapel - either leading worship, prayer, sharing a message, or

participating in discipleship activities with other students. Renee specifically indicated that their

school administration was seeking student input on chapel in order to promote increased engagement.

While some teachers indicated that their administration was not always supportive, when asked how the administration would handle a student who was questioning the statement of faith, most teachers indicated that their school leadership would be responsive and understanding. Ruth even acknowledged that her school would involve teachers in that responsiveness,

> If there were teachers who thought they could reach out to them, like in that one scenario with those two girls. We said to the administrators, "Can we try to reach them first?" And they allowed that.

However, because many of the Christian schools in this study are committed to partnering with Christian parents, a few of the participants indicated that their school would not allow a family to remain in the school if the parents openly rejected the statement of faith. This indicates that school leaders would have a direct impact on RRP, acting as the final authority on which perspectives would be allowed to remain within the Christian school community.

Core Documents and School Policies. The schools' core documents, including the mission, vision, and statement of faith - which are integral to a school's accreditation process through ACSI - were frequently mentioned throughout the interviews. Teachers did indicate a distinction between what some frequently called a discipleship approach versus what other teachers termed an evangelistic school. Beerens (2014) described the rationale for a school choice between covenantal and missional enrollment. Covenantal schools "would require that at least one of the parents of a potential student enrollee be a believer and would assent to the mission, vision, and beliefs of the school" (Beerens, 2014, para. 1). This could also be termed a discipleship approach. The mission of the school, therefore, is to partner with Christian parents

and disciple students into mature believers. By contrast, a missional school is one that seeks to evangelize to students and families through IFL. In this case, parents must understand the mission of the school and agree to have their children educated in a faith-based environment. Both types of schools were represented in this study, and teachers' responses that applied to their school's support of IFL were often based on these foundational documents and approach to Christian education.

School policies would also have an impact on support for RRP. Many teachers indicated that their schools had policies regarding IFL in their planning of instruction. Renee commented that, "In our lesson plans, we are required to have all of these components. We have our academic objective that we also have to have our biblical integration correlation and life application. So, all of that goes into play." Her administrators review the teachers' lesson plans to ensure that they include those components and support them towards meeting those requirements.

The participants also mentioned school policies regarding observation and evaluation. However, their comments indicated this was an area where support was lacking. Shiloh said that her administrator would, "come and observe but won't say anything to me. You know, he was, he will just observe and like take notes and then like at the end on the year I get my evaluation." The observation and evaluation did not improve her teaching or support IFL in her classroom. Unfortunately, this finding is consistent with the literature on evaluation policies at Christian schools (Headley, 2003; Stoner, 2012).

In contrast, Beimers (2008) provided a model for teacher evaluation that integrated dialogue, journaling, reading, peer observation, student surveys, parent surveys, and a summative evaluation. Peer observation was mentioned several times during the interviews as a support that

teachers desired in their schools. Kathleen mentioned the need for opportunities to observe other teachers, saying that it "sure is helpful when we can, we can see how other people do things because it sparks ideas and creativity in yourself." Renee also mentioned this as a challenge at her school. When she started teaching in public schools, it was a requirement to observe other teachers and receive feedback from observations by teachers. However, at her small Christian school there are not opportunities or policies for peer observation. She said that this could be an effective way to support teachers at her school, particularly those that are new to the profession.

Professional Development. Throughout this study, participants mentioned professional development forty-one times. However, participants' perspectives on professional development varied greatly. Some teachers mentioned excellent trainings they had received, while others indicated that further support in this area was needed. Interestingly, two teachers who worked at the same school mentioned a professional development they had received with opposite perspectives on its efficacy. Amy said that it was very helpful to her teaching and her relationships, while Diane thought it was a waste of time. Perhaps this finding shows that the perceived needs of teachers for professional development vary greatly. Even within a single school, teachers need differentiated support for teaching. However, when asked how their school could support them more effectively, most of the teachers mentioned ideas for professional development. While training for IFL exists in most ACSI schools, those trainings may not necessarily support RRP.

Mentoring and Discipleship. Finally, the value of relationships in the school context is seen through the need for ongoing mentoring and discipleship of teachers. Sophia underscored this when she asked her greatest support, "Greatest support? Colleagues. Colleagues and, I mean, obviously reading scripture in doing studies and hearing the word from other people, other

teachers helps a lot. I would say for me, personally, it's been colleagues." Many of the

participants indicated that other teachers and administrators were responsive to their needs or

spiritual struggles. Those relationships were frequently mentioned as the greatest support for

IFL. . In addition, opportunities for further mentoring were frequently cited as the greatest area

where support could be improved. This finding is consistent with the literature on the importance

of mentoring for teachers (Nwosu, 1998). The goal for the Christian school is to *make disciples*

that make disciples (Matthew 28:19).

Summary and Implications of the Findings

Twelve participants provided qualitative data through semi-structured interviews. I

analyzed the data using a recursive, three-step process which coded individual interviews, further

developed the results by analyzing groups of interviews based on teaching level and subject, and

finally identified themes which emerged through analysis of the three research questions. The six

salient themes were worldview, character development, religiously responsive teaching practices,

relationships, support for RRP, and barriers to RRP. Chapter Five will discuss the implications of

these findings for practice and for research.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

The purpose of this study was to explore the ways in which RRP is enacted in Christian schools through IFL and the barriers and supports that may exist for effective RRP within those schools. The questions addressed in this study were:

- How do teachers at Christian schools perceive the role that faith integration plays in their instruction?

- To what extent, if any, do teachers at Christian schools describe responsiveness to students' religious beliefs in faith integration practices?

- In what ways, if any, do Christian schools support Religiously Responsive Pedagogy in the classroom?

This chapter will address the model of RRP put forth in this study in light of the findings as well as the implications of those findings for theory and practice.

Discussion and Implications

I return in my discussion to the original model put forth as a bridge between IFL and CRP. This theory of RRP emerges from the extensive literature of CRP as well as decades of support for faith integration in Christian schools. The findings of this study provide a unique vantage point on each of the potential indicators put forth to define RRP. In this discussion, I will ask the following questions: Where are the gaps in this bridge? Is it a useful tool to span the chasm between IFL and CRP? Are all indicators possible within each context, or in what ways *should* RRP be enacted in various contexts?

Figure 5.1

Where are the gaps in the bridge?
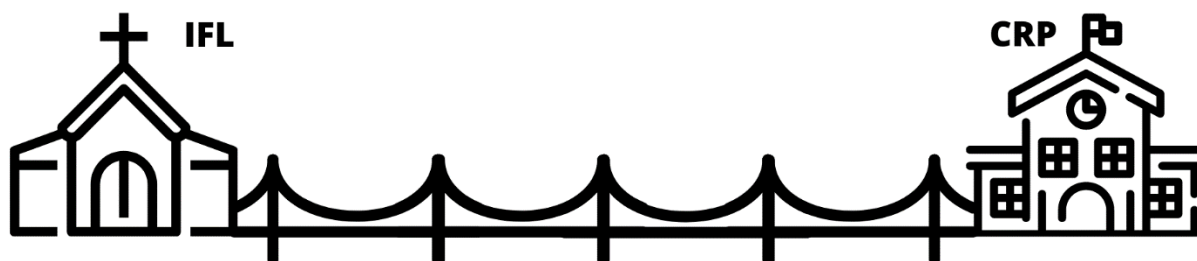
Potential indicators of Religiously Responsive Pedagogy

1. Teachers who are aware of their own positionality on faith
2. Teachers who value student perspectives and beliefs
3. Teachers who intentionally develop relationships with students
4. Teachers who critically engage other worldviews
5. Teachers who effectively integrate faith into the content and practices of classroom instruction

Discussion of RRP

Indicator 1: Teachers are aware of their own positionality on faith

The findings of the present study indicate that teachers at Christian schools are specifically aware of their own faith backgrounds and perspectives. This finding aligns with the literature on Christian schooling and IFL. Not only are Christian schools founded on the mission of promoting a particular faith perspective, but also teachers within Christian schools are considered the "living curriculum" and therefore must be firmly grounded in their own positionality on faith (Gaebelein, 1954). This positionality impacts which teachers may be selected (or may elect) to teach in a Christian school setting (Sites, 2008; Wood, 2008). In addition, the teachers' faith perspectives are fostered continually by the school at which they teach through devotions, professional development, relationships, leadership practices, and

school policies (Hollis, 2019; Martin, 2018). The participants in this study supported this

indicator through comments about their own faith background and the support received from

their school for IFL.

However, in the present study, the emphasis shared by the teachers on their own Christian

perspectives may in fact be a counterindicator of their commitment to RRP. Teachers in a

Christian school setting should be dedicated to their own personal relationship with Christ and to

setting an example for their students through word and action (Sites, 2008; Titus 2:7-8).

However, they may not then be open to other faith perspectives or other religious practices.

Because of their commitment to a particular faith tradition or even a singular Christian

denomination, teachers may not value or affirm students' perspectives that contradict their own

beliefs or experiences. Within ACSI schools, teachers receive extensive training in IFL and

worldview development (ACSI, 2021; Jang, 2011; Peterson, 2012). This emphasis on Christian

faith, however, may promote a deficit in responsiveness to other religions or worldviews.

Indicator 2: Teachers who value student perspectives and beliefs

The findings of the present study indicate that while participants listened to their students

and engaged with their perspectives or beliefs, they did not necessarily value or affirm those

perspectives if they were contrary to the statement of faith of the school or the personal belief

system of the teacher. However, in this area, teachers may have been limited by the context of

the schools included in the study. ACSI is specifically committed to schools that are

Christ-centered and "contribute to the public good through effective teaching and learning and

that are biblically sound, academically rigorous, socially engaged, and culturally relevant"

(ACSI, 2021). A Christ-centered and biblically sound education may contribute to a context in

which teachers do not fully embrace culturally responsive practices when they contradict the Truth of the Bible.

Villegas and Lucas (2002) describe a continuum in which deficit perspectives are at one end and affirming perspectives are at the other. The affirming perspective demonstrates an attitude towards cultural diversity that "ways of thinking, talking, and behaving that differ from the dominant cultural norm are valid (not inherently inferior or deficient). Cultural differences are to be respected and affirmed" (Villegas & Lucas, 2002, p. 36). In their explanation, Villegas and Lucas primarily refer to cultural differences related to racial, ethnic, or socioeconomic groups. However, when this language is applied to religious differences, many questions arise.

Given that religion is a dimension of culture, and the fact that religion is so closely tied to epistemology, ontology, and one's general philosophy of life - is an affirming perspective towards all religions possible regardless of one's personal stance? When considering the model of RRP, one may need to consider in which contexts educators may be able to demonstrate a level of responsiveness to other worldviews while still holding to an absolute Truth. Based on the data in this study, further discussion of this issue may be warranted. Since CRP seeks to affirm cultural contributions and student identities - particularly those from marginalized student backgrounds - it would be necessary that RRP should likewise affirm such religious identities. Finally, given that religion is a key dimension of culture, CRP should also affirm religious identities. However, this may not be possible in every educational context.

In this study, this aspect of affirming student religious identities seems to be in tension with the aims of Christian education. While Christian teachers may value their students' beliefs by listening to their perspectives and providing space to evaluate those perspectives against the Truth of Scripture, they certainly do not affirm all identities when those identities or beliefs go

against the school's statement of faith. In the case of a Muslim identity or a homosexual identity, the teachers indicated that they would base their responsiveness on biblical Truth and the hope of the gospel. However, this pedagogical choice does not align with the affirming language within the CRP literature (Alameddine, 2021; Brockenbrough, 2016; Greytack & Kosciw, 2013).

Indicator 3: Teachers who intentionally develop relationships with students

The findings of this study support relational pedagogy as a cornerstone of Christian education. The democratic social philosophy of Christian education put forth by Coe (1917/2012) defined the goal of Christian teaching to develop a human brotherhood whose ultimate goal is love for God and love for others. Certainly, this supports the commitment to mentoring and discipleship seen throughout the literature and in the present study (Frye, 2019; Hoekstra, 2012; Stouffer, 2016). The goal for the Christian school is to *make disciples that make disciples* (Matthew 28:19), and this discipleship should be modeled after the leading of Jesus, the Master Teacher, who taught primarily through relational pedagogy (Lederhouse, 2016).

This is an area in which IFL can helpfully grow from perspectives in CRP brought across the bridge of RRP proposed in this study. While certainly the importance of relationships to learning has been long and widely considered, CRP may provide insight to Christian education in effective ways to connect with students or demonstrate responsiveness to their perspectives or ideas. These cultural differences or varied perspectives may be an ideal place for Christian educators to begin in developing relationships that can impact the kingdom of God. In the same way that Jesus told parables to help his disciples see and understand "what has been hidden" (Matthew 13:34-35), teachers also must connect with students through intentional and relational responsiveness. Likewise, CRP may help Christian teachers understand that rejecting students'

identities or perspectives may in fact hinder the ability to develop a relationship with that student that is conducive to transformative learning.

Indicator 4: Teachers who critically engage other worldviews

The findings of the present study demonstrate that IFL may benefit the most from a shift in focus to RRP through increasing critical responsiveness to worldviews. Christian school teachers are particularly well poised to engage other worldviews given their training in IFL and dependence upon the Holy Spirit to guide them in those conversations. Students today face increasing challenges to the meaning of truth, the pursuit of knowledge, and the rise of moral relativism (Barna, 2018). In two nationally representative studies of almost 2,000 U.S. teens ages 13-18, the Barna Group found that "Gen Z as a whole are generally opposed to challenging others' beliefs, likely driven by a desire to avoid offense or to acknowledge the value of other perspectives" (2018, para. 8). According to this study,the present generation is not being trained to engage other worldviews critically, instead believing in the centrality of the self as the moral authority.

However, Christian schools sometimes exist as an island or bubble in which the biblical worldview is paramount and other worldviews are not fully addressed or taken seriously. In the present study, some teachers were willing to engage other worldviews, while others indicated that a Muslim student in the class would not change their way of teaching. Joy was very clear that, "Because we teach from a biblical worldview, so I would still teach them the same way if the kids were atheists, if they're all Christian, or if they were Muslim - anything, just I would do everything the same." This perspective misses a major opportunity to engage other worldviews in order to more effectively seek Truth. Instead, Christian teachers should be the first to "not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you

may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect" (Romans 12:2).
Christian teachers should lean into that critical testing of all worldviews, valuing other
perspectives for the opportunity to engage with other beliefs in order to discern Truth.

***Indicator 5: Teachers who effectively integrate faith into the content and practices of
classroom instruction***

Finally, the results of this study support the value of IFL practices and the continued need
to prepare Christian educators to effectively integrate faith and learning by inviting students into
discussions of faith in the classroom. Participants were able to articulate practices and policies
for IFL in their schools and in their own pedagogy. While it is impossible to measure the efficacy
of that integration, it remains a necessary final component in RRP.

Using responsive terminology removes the focus from teacher-driven integration that can
be characteristic of IFL. Instead, RRP allows teachers to invite student perspectives into the
discussion of worldview, faith, and learning. On the other hand, Christian schools may have
something to contribute to other educational environments on the value of integrating worldview
instruction in every content area. Regardless of the religious background of the stakeholders, all
schools may benefit from open, integrative, and critical conversations about religion and faith
perspectives.

Summary and Implications of the Discussion

The present study has found that the participants demonstrated varied levels of
responsiveness in all five potential indicators of RRP. Teachers were generally able to describe
their own faith as well as their faith integration practices and their intentions to develop
meaningful relationships with their students. However, while they claimed to value student
perspectives and beliefs, they also continually redirected students to the Truth in the Bible and

without openly acknowledging other perspectives. Teachers also demonstrated varying levels of commitment to critically engage other worldviews. While many described tension with other worldviews that emerged in their classroom, they were sometimes dismissive of these perspectives or the influence of those other worldviews on their students.

RRP as an integrated framework provides a bridge between IFL and CRP. The primary value of this bridge may be to promote new ways of thinking about IFL in Christian schools. Whereas biblical worldview instruction seeks to mold students' ideas, beliefs, and actions through a biblical lens, the RRP framework recognizes the importance of relationships in the teaching and learning process and the value of responsiveness to student perspectives and other worldviews.

Additionally, the RRP framework could have value to other educators to consider religion more fully as a critical aspect of culture. Whereas Christian education has long dealt with issues of faith and religion, students' religious perspectives are largely excluded from the instruction in American public schools (Moore, 2010). The present study has implications for secular educators and researchers seeking a theory of RRP.

Some of the indicators may be more difficult to enact in certain contexts, while others are likely already enacted in a variety of school contexts. Within the context of Christian education, these tenets of CRP may add value to both the academic and spiritual development of teachers and students by advancing IFL across the bridge of RRP.

Implications for Biblical Worldview Instruction

IFL is widely discussed in Christian education and scholarship (Gaebelein, 1954; Iselyn & Meteyard, 2010; Jacobsen & Jacobsen, 2004; Lawrence et al., 2005). However, the field has called for new terminology to understand the philosophies and practices of teaching a biblical

worldview (Badley, 2009; Glanzer, 2008; Smith, 2018). The present study demonstrated that teachers within ACSI schools do not describe faith integration practices in the terms of IFL, but instead focus on a biblical worldview. This lens relies upon a commitment to absolute Truth and the pursuit of God's Truth as seen in Scripture through every content area. However, worldview terminology goes beyond integration in traditional school subjects to apply the biblical lens to all of life (Fisher, 2021). Worldview training is teaching students to see the world through a particular lens and aligning their whole lives with that belief system.

Erdvig (2020) argues that Christian schools must surpass biblical integration to develop biblical worldview immersion. Erdvig goes on to describe a worldview-immersive school, saying, "teachers in this school also know that the truth needs to be deeply processed by students, not merely consumed. This processing by students is designed to help them develop their worldview and is done in the context of authentic relationships" (2020, p. 29). In addition, these teachers, "ask penetrating questions that help students analyze subject-specific truth claims and explore the practical implications of those truth claims. Teachers don't shy away from controversial subjects" (Erdvig, 2020, p. 30). This description of biblical worldview immersion matches with most of the tenets of RRP.

In what ways is this terminology, *biblical worldview*, distinct from IFL? While a shift in terminology may indicate a change in stance or methods, both terms can be seen interwoven throughout the literature. Esqueda (2014) claimed that IFL creates a false dichotomy between faith and learning, whereas biblical worldview can be considered as a unifying factor that brings together all knowledge and faith into a comprehensive learning paradigm. However, this distinction is not widespread throughout the literature.

The sub-themes that emerged in the present study of *tension with other worldviews* and *character development* may imply that teachers at Christian schools view IFL as a balance between encouraging intellectual reason in the search for Truth and a classical model of developing spiritual capacities to produce virtue (Anthony & Benson, 2003; Coe, 1917/2012; Aquinas, 1256/2006). The present study supports the value of character and leadership development by modeling a biblical worldview in the classroom, mentoring and discipling students, and facing the current challenges of our world to promote unity and Christ-like love. Teachers described openness to answering student questions and engaging with different perspectives in order to refine students' biblical worldview. Furthermore, teachers described a relational approach to discipleship, which aligns well with many aspects of RRP. All of these practices depend firmly on the biblical worldview of the teacher and the support of the school for worldview instruction in the classroom (Gaebelein, 1954).

Practical Implications

Finally, the present study has practical implications for Christian schools and for ACSI. The discussion that follows includes five recommendations for effective school support of RRP among Christian schools.

1. Schools Should Consider Induction Policies and Practices to Support New Teachers

Whether teachers are new to the profession or simply joining a Christian school after teaching elsewhere, intentional support should be provided to promote effective instructional practices, biblical worldview applications, and responsiveness to student needs. Ideas for improvement may include increased in-service time, required observations of other teachers, coaching and mentoring opportunities, or further professional development. However, ACSI

leaders and school administrators should consider the unique needs of new teachers for IFL and RRP.

2. School Leaders Should Foster Spiritual Development of Faculty and Students

Two primary areas of spiritual development were mentioned in the present study: devotions and chapel. While devotions is primarily used to foster spiritual development of faculty, chapel services support leadership and spiritual development of students as well as teachers. School leaders should continue to prioritize these two avenues, while also seeking other areas through which to promote discipleship and spiritual development (Hollis, 2019; Martin, 2018; Pethtel, 2011).

3. Schools Should Encourage Reflective Practice through Observation and Evaluation

While participants mentioned observation and evaluation policies at their schools, the present study revealed a need for policies that require both new and experienced faculty members to observe other teachers within their schools in order to improve their own practice and provide feedback on teaching. While administrators may be challenged to support a large number of teaching faculty through observation and evaluation, given the ongoing challenges of school leadership, utilizing a reflective approach can improve teaching practices through peer observation (Beimers, 2008).

4. Schools Should Solicit Teacher Feedback Regarding Professional Development Offerings

The variety of perspectives given in the present study regarding the efficacy of the professional development provided by the schools and the need for ongoing professional development opportunities indicates that teachers have varying views on their own learning needs. However, schools should solicit teacher perspectives when planning and implementing professional development. Similarly, ACSI should provide opportunities for teachers to engage

more widely with other schools and learn from a variety of stakeholders, such as ACSI regional conventions or conferences.

5. Schools Should Continue to Provide Opportunities for Mentoring and Discipleship

If the goal of Christian schooling is *making disciples that make disciples*, then providing meaningful opportunities for mentoring and discipleship of teachers and students should be a high priority to school leaders and to ACSI leaders. The present study found that relationships with colleagues as well as other stakeholders were of primary importance to the teachers. School should promote mentoring relationships and encourage discipleship not only of students, but also of other faculty members.

Recommendations for Future Research

This study has explored the ways in which a RRP is enacted in Christian schools and the barriers and supports that exist for effective RRP within those schools using a qualitative research design. This study has developed the framework of RRP by providing a theoretical grounding and empirical data to support the potential indicators of RRP. Future research could further develop this framework.

An action research project could train participants in the tenets of RRP and utilize the framework within classrooms in a variety of contexts. This could provide rich data on the validity of the model and the efficacy of enacting religiously responsive practices. The development of a religious responsiveness scale may be another step to better understand each of these indicators, and it could be modeled after various scales developed to measure CRP (Hsiao, 2015; Siwatu et al., 2017; Whitaker & Valtierra, 2018). Using such a scale, researchers could measure dispositions, preparedness, support, or pedagogy. In addition, the development of such a

scale would further validate the framework put forth in the present study. However, further philosophical work may be needed before such development could take place.

In addition to developing quantitative measures for RRP, further qualitative research or mixed methods approaches could be helpful to better understand the rich relational aspects of RRP. A case study methodology within a single school or a small group of schools could provide varied perspectives through interviews or focus groups with teachers, administrators, students, and parents. An explanatory mixed-methods approach could even validate potential quantitative measures through follow-up conversations to better understand the data.

Finally, future research could explore the ways in which RRP is enacted in public schools or non-sectarian private schools, and the barriers and supports that exist within those schools. Inasmuch as the present study has provided perspectives from Christian education, where faith practices and faith perspectives are commonly treated as part of instruction, in order to fully understand the framework of RRP, similar data from public school teachers is required.

Conclusion

Good teachers care deeply for their students and invest in relationships that promote learning while being responsive to student perspectives and student needs. Teachers who are motivated by Christ's love are inspired even more to demonstrate compassion and humility towards their students. With Christ as their Master Teacher, Christian educators seek to impart Truth through instruction and discipleship. The present study has evaluated the ways in which Christian teachers enact RRP in their classes and the support that exists within Christian schools for RRP.

Through twelve interviews with teachers from a variety of teaching levels and areas, I have investigated perspectives on worldview, character development, responsiveness,

relationships, and support. I have found that teachers describe varying levels of engagement in the five potential indicators of RRP. However, I have established this new framework to consider the work of not only Christian schools, but also religiously responsive education at all levels and in all types of schools.

If we are to follow in the way of Christ, school leaders and educators should not only immerse ourselves and our students in a biblical worldview that seeks to "'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind' and, 'Love your neighbor as yourself.'" (Luke 10:27). Additionally, we must meet our students where they are, humbling ourselves to understand their perspectives, and teach in a way that is responsive to those perspectives. This is, after all, what our Master Teacher has done, "who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage; rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness" (Philippians 2:6-7). And from that perspective, he led and taught his disciples, even laying down his life for them. There is no higher calling for the Christian educator than to lay down our lives to bring our students to know Christ.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: IRB

Office of the Vice President for Research and Innovation
Human Research Protection Program
BioTechnology Research Park
800 East Leigh Street, Suite 3000
Box 980568
Richmond, Virginia 23298-0568

(804) 828-0868
Fax: (804) 827-1448

TO: Joan Rhodes
Jose Alcaine

CC: Kathleen Rudasill
Andrea Woodard

FROM: VCU IRB Panel A

RE: Joan Rhodes; IRB HM20023896 Religiously Responsive Pedagogy in Christian Schools: A Qualitative Exploration of Faculty Perceptions of Faith Integration

On 5/26/2022, the referenced research study **_qualified for exemption_** and was **_approved by limited IRB review_** according to 45 CFR 46 by VCU IRB Panel A under exempt category 2(iii).

Category 2(iii)   Research that only includes interactions involving educational tests, survey or interview procedures, or observation of public behavior when Identifiable information is recorded by the investigator, and the IRB conducted a limited IRB review

The information found in the electronic version of this study's smart form and uploaded documents now represents the currently approved study, documents, and HIPAA pathway (if applicable). You may access this information by clicking the Study Number above.

COVID-19 Notice

In the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, the IRB expects the research will proceed in accordance with other institutional policies and as outlined in this submission and if applicable, in the study's COVID-19 Contingency Protocol. IRB approval does not necessarily mean that your research may proceed. For more information on investigator responsibilities and institutional requirements, please see https://together.vcu.edu/.

The Principal Investigator is also reminded of their responsibility to ensure that there are adequate resources to carry out the research safely. This includes, but is not limited to, sufficient investigator time, appropriately qualified research team members, equipment, and space. See WPP #: IX-1 Principal Investigator Eligibility and Statement of Responsibilities

If you have any questions, please contact the Human Research Protection Program (HRPP) or the IRB reviewer(s) assigned to this study.

The reviewer(s) assigned to your study will be listed in the History tab and on the study workspace. Click on their name to see their contact information.

Appendix B: Faculty Interview Protocol

INTRODUCTION:

Good afternoon and welcome to this interview. Thank you for taking the time to participate today! My name is Andrea Woodard and I am a graduate student at VCU conducting this study as part of my dissertation research. I am also a teacher and administrator in an ACSI school in Virginia.

What I learn from our discussion today may be used to improve support for teachers within ACSI as well as in your school. Our session today will last about 60 minutes.

Before we begin, I want to assure you of absolute confidentiality in your responses. Although I will share the general findings of these interviews, I will not include your name or any identifying information in those reports. I am interested in all of your viewpoints – both positive and negative. When responding to the questions, please omit specific names of individuals, such as parents, colleagues, or administrators.

ICEBREAKER:

Before we begin, could you please choose a pseudonym for yourself which I could use in my research study?

TOPIC 1: Faith Integration

1. How would you describe your faith background? (positionality)

2. How does your faith impact <u>what</u> you teach? (faith integration - content)

    a. Is there anything that you leave out of the curriculum because of your faith?

    b. Is there anything you add to the curriculum because of your faith?

    c. In what ways do you include faith integration in your planning of instruction?

3. How does Christian faith impact the <u>way</u> you teach? (faith integration - practices)

    a. What specific strategies do you use, if any, to help students develop spiritually?

4. What would you say is your greatest support for effective faith integration? What would you say is the greatest barrier to effective faith integration?

TOPIC 2: Religiously Responsive Pedagogy

5. How would you describe your relationships with your students?

6. How do your students' perspectives impact the way you teach?

    a. Do any of your students have a lot of questions about their faith? How do you handle those?

  b. Think about a recent interaction or experience with a student who has disagreed with you. What was the disagreement about? How was it resolved?

Now I am going to give you several scenarios. Please respond candidly about how you would handle these situations in your classroom:

7. Suppose that a new student was starting in your class, and you learned on their first day that their family was Muslim. How would this student's religion impact the way that you would teach and interact with this student? (other religious perspectives)

8. One morning, a student interrupts instruction to say "Nothing we are learning today matters because there's no way to know if God even exists!" How would you respond to this student's statement during class? Would you respond to this student privately? What would your response be? (epistemology)

9. A student asks you to explain how dinosaur fossils could exist based on a biblical timeline of Creation. How would you respond? (view of scripture)

10. A student in your class has recently decided they are transgender. They would like to be called by a new name and ask you to begin using different pronouns. How would you respond? (identity formation)

TOPIC 3: School Support for Religiously Responsive Pedagogy

11. In what ways does your school's Statement of Faith impact your instruction?

  a. Has there ever been a time that you (or one of your colleagues) were asked to teach something differently by the school administration, based on your Statement of Faith? What was the reasoning given for this request?

12. Would you say that student perspectives on faith are valued at your school? Can you give me a recent interaction or experience that demonstrates this?

  a. What do you think your colleagues would say about the school's stance on student perspectives?

  b. How would the administration respond if a student was openly questioning the school's Statement of Faith?

  c. How would the administration respond if a student or parent openly rejected the school's Statement of Faith?

13. What kinds of support does the school provide to strengthen your faith integration? (might include training, coaching, leadership, policies, time or money, etc.)

  a. In what ways have those influenced your teaching?

  b. In what ways have those influenced your students' learning?

Is there anything else you would like to share with me about your teaching?

Appendix C: Recruitment Letter and Reminder

Subject line: An Opportunity to Participate in Christian Education Research

<div align="right">

Andrea R. Woodard
Virginia Commonwealth University
woodardar@vcu.edu

</div>

Dear Teacher,

My name is Andrea Woodard and I am a graduate student in the Department of Education at Virginia Commonwealth University. I am conducting research as part of the dissertation requirements for a PhD. The purpose of this research is to understand effective school support for the integration of faith and learning, and I am writing to invite you to participate in this study.

The criterion for participation is that you teach full–time at an ACSI school. If you are willing to participate, you will be invited to participate in an interview via Zoom at a time that is convenient for you. The interview will be about an hour, in which you will have the opportunity to share your perspectives on teaching at a Christian school. The interview will be audio recorded for later review. The recording will be stored on secure servers, and anything you say during this interview will be kept confidential. Your participation is completely voluntary.

If you would like to participate, please complete this form: Research Participation Form

You may not get any direct benefit from this study, but the information learned from teachers who participate may help us to develop more effective support and training for faith integration. Thank you in advance for your valuable contribution to this research!

Sincerely,

Andrea R. Woodard
Doctoral Candidate, VCU

Appendix D: Interview Invitation

Subject line: Following Up - An Opportunity to Participate in Christian Education Research

> Andrea R. Woodard
> Virginia Commonwealth University
> woodardar@vcu.edu

Dear Teacher,

Thank you for indicating your interest in participating in this research study.

I would like to invite you to participate in an interview via Zoom at a time that is convenient for you. The interview will be about an hour, in which you will have the opportunity to share your perspectives on teaching at a Christian school. The interview will be audio recorded for later review. The recording will be stored on secure servers, and anything you say during this interview will be kept confidential. Your participation is completely voluntary.

Could you please find a convenient time for us to meet via Zoom for about an hour, using the following link: https://calendly.com/woodardar/research.

Thank you in advance for your valuable contribution to this research!

Sincerely,

Andrea R. Woodard
Doctoral Candidate, VCU

Appendix E: Thank You Note

Subject line: Thank You - An Opportunity to Participate in Christian Education Research

Andrea R. Woodard
Virginia Commonwealth University
woodardar@vcu.edu

Dear Teacher,

Thank you for your interest in participating in my research study.

At this time, no further interviews are needed. I will contact you via email in the future if additional opportunities become available.

Sincerely,

Andrea R. Woodard
Doctoral Candidate, VCU

Appendix F: Member Check Email

Subject line: Thank You - An Opportunity to Participate in Christian Education Research

> Andrea R. Woodard
> Virginia Commonwealth University
> woodardar@vcu.edu

Dear Teacher,

Thank you for participating in an interview. I am sharing the transcript of the interview with you.

Please let me know if there are any discrepancies or if you would like to schedule a follow-up conversation for any reason. It is my sincere desire to accurately represent your viewpoints. Again, I thank you for sharing your perspectives with me.

Have a blessed day,

Andrea R. Woodard
Doctoral Candidate, VCU

Appendix G: Codebook

Code	Themes	Number of quotations	Definition
Absolute Truth	Worldview	17	A mention of God's Truth or the truth found in the Word of God, specifically in the context of teaching or the Statement of Faith.

Sample quote: *But then I say, this is what- We stand on the word of God. And we know that this is the, this is the truth and this is what we hold to be to be the, you know, this is, this is the truth. This is the Word of God. This is, you know, we know that God created the world, you know, that he holds all things together.*

Code	Themes	Number of quotations	Definition
Academic differentiation	Responsiveness	6	Description of various learning needs or learning styles among students.

Sample quote: *So, as far as my methods, I still do hands on, I still do grouping. We do all the different methods. We like that all the now different types of learning styles, because we have so many different types of kids.*

Code	Themes	Number of quotations	Definition
Adjusting instruction	Responsiveness	4	Evidence of responsiveness to student learning needs by changing teaching methods.

Sample quote: *Like if it's like for some reason we just can't, we're just not getting a concept, it's okay, I'll take that extra day or so. We'll take it back, you know. And we'll just, we'll take those extra days and you know so I'll have to plan, you know, put off the test for a little bit.*

Code	Themes	Number of quotations	Definition
Administration	Support for RRP Barriers to RRP	50	Comments related to the support provided by administrative personnel in the school.

Sample quote: *Our principal and administrator, they have open-door policy so I can go in there and to say, "Hey, I'm struggling in this area, can you pray for me? Or I need wisdom in this area that area." And at the end of the school year they ask us like, "How can we help you grow spiritually? How can we pray for you?"*

Code	Themes	Number of quotations	Definition
Adult salvation	Worldview	4	Description of personal journey of faith in which the participant acknowledged salvation as an adult.

Sample quote: *I grew up in a home where my mom was saved but my dad wasn't. But you know I guess it was my mom that really talked to us about stuff. I prayed all the time as a child, but I was not saved. I didn't get saved just till I was in 1999. And I was older - I guess 20s, maybe early 30s.*

Code	Themes	Number of quotations	Definition
Answering hard questions	Worldview Responsiveness	45	Comments that express the importance of answering student questions or examples given by participants of student questions and their response.

Sample quote: *I like for kids to ask hard questions, or questions that they hear like things on the news and stuff. I'm not a teacher that just says "Oh, we're not gonna talk about that." We go ahead. And I like to talk about that. Because if they don't get an answer or explanation from someone maybe who's a Christian, they're going to get a maybe a different answer that's not biblical.*

Code	Themes	Number of quotations	Definition
Applying worldview to current events	Worldview Responsiveness	5	Engaging students in discussions of current events with a biblical worldview.

Sample quote: *I think this might have been right around the time that the Supreme Court was discussing Roe vs. Wade. And so, I mentioned that in the prayer requests and these are seventh and eighth graders who immediately were like, "What is that again? What's the constitution again?" And they had some really good questions that weren't applicable to math, but it definitely was important and needed to be answered as far as worldview and, and having a faith-based input goes.*

Code	Themes	Number of quotations	Definition
Athletics	Relationships	1	Mention of coaching and sports.

Sample quote: *So, I have the opportunity and, in addition to teaching, I'm also the athletic director and coach. I coach also. And so I get to know a lot of my students outside of the classroom.*

Code	Themes	Number of quotations	Definition
Behavior	Developing character	12	Comments related to student behavior, behavior management, or instances of misbehavior.

Sample quote: *So just like the key differences between a Christian school and a public school, as far as managing students' behavior, explaining to students why a behavior is, or isn't, okay, and lining that up with scripture, as opposed to just I say, so or general character traits. Um creating classroom rules that are founded on biblical principles and then, in the way we interact with parents.*

Code	Themes	Number of quotations	Definition
Biblical worldview	Worldview	193	Evidence of a worldview that is founded upon Scripture and the impact of that worldview in the classroom.

Sample quote: *Well, we're supposed to make disciples, so that's what we're gonna, that's what we have to do. And part of making disciples is going to be training in truth which should be I would teach the subject like I'm supposed to with a biblical worldview.*

Calling	Worldview	5	Description of teaching as a calling or ministry.

Sample quote: *So God's word and my faith is it's the… I would say it's just the essence of who I am. Without that I wouldn't be a teacher because I believe being a teacher was God's calling up on my life. So his Word is, is my mandate. And so that's what. It is the basis of my classroom.*

Chapel	Worldview	12	Comments related to a school-based worship event called chapel.

Sample quote: *So our school, we have weekly chapel as part of our curriculum. And I mentioned that a lot of students, we were starting to see a lot of big influx of students who do not come from a faith-based background. And I think that that has been our biggest challenge actually is not so much the classroom teaching, but chapel.*

Christian college	Worldview	11	Mentions of attending a Christian college or university and the impact or value of that experience.

Sample quote: *College was the first time I realized they didn't have to be separate. I remember going to my very first-ever college class and the professor came in and opened with prayer and I was like, "What's happening? Oh yeah. Like I'm at a Christian school." Because, you know, that didn't happen in public schools.*

Christian curriculum	Worldview	11	Description of curriculum resources with an intentional biblical worldview.

Sample quote: *We use a lot of Bob Jones. So it's all relatively biblical. And for science and history, I feel like those are the only places where, you know, it really differs and I think since we both - we have Christian curriculum and both of those subjects, there aren't any things that we really necessarily have to leave out. We did use Go Math for several years but it wasn't a situation where we felt oh this needs to be removed or this needs to be changed. So not as much at my school, I could see how that could be a problem in a school that didn't use Christian curriculum.*

Code	Themes	Number of quotations	Definition
Christian heritage	Worldview	15	Description of faith background influenced by parents.

Sample quote: *I was raised in a Christian family. My dad was a pastor, and I became a Christian when I was six. So yeah, just been trying to serve the Lord and go where He leads.*

Code	Themes	Number of quotations	Definition
Classroom management	Responsiveness Developing character	20	Comments related to routines, rules, or procedures to manage class disruptions and instruction.

Sample quote: *Because I also believe as a teacher that a lot of teaching is continuing to read the classroom and sometimes that can be a hard thing for me, because I can feel all of their emotions. And so that is a, that can be a hard thing for me. But like I think as a teacher, we start out our lesson and if I don't have my kids then I need to change how I'm teaching, right? Like, I need to change my routines and procedures.*

Code	Themes	Number of quotations	Definition
Communication	Relationships Support for RRP	6	Comments related to the value of communication within the school and with other stakeholders.

Sample quote: *There's a lot of communication just throughout the school K through 12, where if teachers have a question we use, we use Microsoft teams as our primary format for all communications. So, we've got a variety of teams but there's also the chat function and it's not uncommon to see somebody say, "Hey, I'm teaching this concept is anybody having any ideas for whatever it may be?"*

Code	Themes	Number of quotations	Definition
Conflict resolution	Relationships Responsiveness Developing character	8	Description of the importance of resolving conflicts and teaching students skills to resolve issues with one another.

Sample quote: *So just incorporating it into almost, you know, character education too. So if a student we had like, if this past year, I had a bunch of little boys in my class that just constantly kind of like telling on each other, fighting with each other, threatening to tell in each other to the teacher.*

Code	Themes	Number of quotations	Definition
Critical thinking	Worldview	101	Comments or examples of students critically considering issues or concepts - often linked with a biblical worldview.

Sample quote: *We want our students in all of our grades to learn how to think critically about spiritual things and about things that are going on in the world, how to reconcile, what's going on in the world, with what we see in Scripture and be able to articulate that.*

Code	Themes	Number of quotations	Definition
Current challenges for children	Responsiveness Developing character	23	Description of personal, social, or global challenges faced by children in 2022.

Sample quote: *But then again from '95 to '03 was when I taught fourth grade, and I do believe that the children that I teach today are different than the children I taught back then - because of culture, because of COVID, because of what - because of the iPad and whatever. I'm saying, like there's so much that plays into that.*

Curriculum objectives	Support for RRP	35	Comments related to the objectives, curriculum guides, or other planning tools used for instruction.

Sample quote: *So it'd be listed in my objectives. Anything that I'm going to, you know, every lesson that I make I say it has to because I teach it a Christian school, you incorporate a biblical world view. So, typically for science, I'll do that as an entire unit. The whole unit may take me two weeks to teach it, but they'll be an underlying theme in that unit that is a biblical theme.*

Devotions	Worldview Support for RRP	23	Comments related to personal or corporate prayer and Bible study.

Sample quote: *We have faculty devotions every Tuesday morning for about 10 minutes and our administrator is great. And they do a really good job of like encouraging us in that short amount of time and praying for us.*

Discernment	Worldview Developing character	8	Comments about the need for discernment or teaching biblical judgement skills.

Sample quote: *The Holy Spirit is my number one. I want him to give me the words to say and to be discerning, you know. Like in situations you have a kid come in, you know, looks like they lost the best friend or whatever, you know, and he didn't do his homework, but do you... You know what's the Holy Spirit tell me to do?*

Code	Themes	Number of quotations	Definition
Discipleship	Worldview Developing character	25	Description of mentoring and modeling a biblical worldview through relational interactions.

Sample quote: *I think there would just be some really good conversations, one-on-one with our spiritual development advisor and he'd been principal before and now he does development. And I think there'd just be some probably very intentional, kind of consecutive times to get together. He has something called the Socrates lunch. They started out with just a couple boys and it grew and they would just talk about anything. And now the girls are starting to go and just to talk about stuff that from and what how does it how do you handle this from a, from the Christian perspective and what that when Jesus said.*

Code	Themes	Number of quotations	Definition
Effective support	Support for RRP	16	Examples of support that is particularly helpful for IFL and RRP, may include people or actions taken - generally by the school.

Sample quote: *As teachers we have great support from our lower school principal who is phenomenal. I would say her name if I could. She is phenomenal. You can Google it. And so really the Assistant Principals and admin up to the Head of Schools really invest in us as teachers with our training and spiritually.*

Code	Themes	Number of quotations	Definition
Encouragement	Responsiveness Support for RRP	9	Description of encouragement provided to the teacher or given by the teacher.

Sample quote: *And I also have another kind of work bestie who she's just, you know, she just like, I don't know. She just has that joy of Christ to just, she just, you know like when I'm just, she'll pop in and just, you know, help me out and just be like, you know, you know, she'll just, you know, talk about like Philippians or something, you know, and usually like "You just got to keep going!" you know?*

Code	Themes	Number of quotations	Definition
Faith	Worldview	14	Comments about spiritual belief without proof as part of a biblical worldview.

Sample quote: *And then we did talk about I would just say that, "You know, we have faith in a lot of things that we don't see." And kind of go with that discussion. You know, we talk about, you know, "When you sat in that chair, did you check that it all four legs working?" You know, "Or did you just believe that the four legs were working and you can sit in and wouldn't break underneath you?" Because they are, they do have faith. I mean that's kind of happened before. Then we do have faith in things that we don't understand that, we don't see.*

Code	Themes	Number of quotations	Definition
Faith objectives	Worldview	26	Comments about goals for instruction related to Christian faith and biblical worldview, which may be defined by the school.

Sample quote: *So if we're looking at specific details, so in our lesson plans, we are required to have all of these components. We have our academic objective that we also have to have our biblical integration correlation and life application. So, all of that goes into play. We do have curriculum guides that we can use that already has that written for us, but the curriculum guides are, you know, living documents, and they need updated. So, there are times that sometimes, you know, I'm like, you know, I don't think this is the best correlation or the best life application. And so it causes me to think of other ways. So that standards can be applied from a Christian worldview outside of what may already be in that document.*

Code	Themes	Number of quotations	Definition
Holy Spirit	Worldview Support for RRP	6	Mention of the importance and impact of the Holy Spirit in the life of the Christian.

Sample quote: *But reconciliation can only happen when there is unity. And we've talked about unity in the fours. What does it mean to be united? That's an internal first. It's internal, you have to have the Holy Spirit living inside of you and they have the Holy Spirit inside of them and then there can be this union. There can be reconciliation in unity and walking in unity.*

Code	Themes	Number of quotations	Definition
Identity	Worldview Responsiveness	4	Comments about the inherent identity of a person, particularly as one made in the Image of God.

Sample quote: *Or ask them, you know, "When we change our physical, you know, we change our physical appearance all the time, you know, right? You know, I used to have long, long hair, you know." And I taught some of these kids, this is my third time teaching them. And I said, (you know, I taught them in pre-K and kindergarten and fifth grade), "See now remember, I had long hair, you know? Now I cut my hair short. Does it change me, who I am, because my outside is changed?"*

Code	Themes	Number of quotations	Definition
Image of God	Worldview	7	Description of the identity of people as created by God with a unique purpose.

Sample quote: *So each child is an individual, And so I want to you know, they were created in the image of God and for their created for his purpose and so I really want to tailor my instruction.*

Code	Themes	Number of quotations	Definition
Inclusiveness	Responsiveness Relationships	1	Evidence that the teacher is welcoming to all students.

Sample quote: *It's I mean especially in my age they don't know. No, everyone is welcome. I will play with anybody. I'll teach anybody.*

Code	Themes	Number of quotations	Definition
Lack of support	Barriers to RRP	40	Examples of areas in which further support is needed.

Sample quote: *And I know when I first started teaching, it was a requirement, I had to go in as a first year teacher, I had to go in during my planning period and, and do a certain number of observations in other teachers classrooms and turn those in. And I had other teachers - not my administrator - but I had other teachers come in and observe me and give me feedback. And it's kind of, it's recommended at our school but it's not a requirement. And I think it should be, especially for people who did not... I mean, I and that was... I had that requirement of somebody who went through a teacher education program. But I think it should definitely be a requirement for people who do not have a teaching background because they don't, they've not, not been trained how to be a teacher even though they know the content area. So that's something I think our school could do better in supporting those new to the profession.*

Code	Themes	Number of quotations	Definition
Lack of time	Barriers to RRP	7	Description of the challenges of busyness and lack of time.

Sample quote: *I think one of the weaknesses that seen overall is that I think with Christian schools, when you have to raise your own money, the teachers do a lot and they can wear out very easily. And then when you're teaching multiple subjects, just the prep work.*

Code	Themes	Number of quotations	Definition
Lasting relationships	Relationships	3	Examples of relationships with students that continue outside the classroom.

Sample quote: *For instance, my second year, teaching fourth grade '96 to '97 - I am friends today - as the matter of fact, I was the matron of honor in her wedding - because I believe that it's more than just teaching them, it's about a relationship and being able to speak into their lives. And so, I mean, we text today like I just went to her birthday on Saturday. You know, like I'm 15 years older than her. And but we still have a relationship today because I think teaching is more than just, it's more than just passing those tests. It's about, it's about seeing them for who they are and, and speaking into their lives and, and preparing them for the future. But they're not always gonna remember what we teach them, but they're gonna remember how we made the feel, you know.*

Code	Themes	Number of quotations	Definition
Life applications	Worldview Responsiveness Developing character	7	Comments regarding the application of instructional content to everyday life.

Sample quote: *And so I tell them, you know, I'm a Math teacher, but I'm not using Calculus in my everyday life. You know, I'm not at home, washing dishes in a way that requires me to do calculus or anything like that. But I think it is important for them to understand better are what the fields are that are using that and what contribution to society, these fields are making.*

Listening to students	Responsiveness	39	Examples of teacher responsiveness to student comments or ideas.

Sample quote: *And we'll have discussions about, you know, religious beliefs and what they hear at church versus what they might hear on social media versus what they might hear from, you know, their friends down the hallway.*

Love of Jesus	Worldview Responsiveness	32	Comments about the compassion and love of Christ and attempts to model that for students.

Sample quote: *So I just want to be a good model of how to love them and to treat them the way that I would want to be treated - the way that my children, that I would want someone else to treat my own children. You know, just share the gospel with them. At the end of the day, that's really what it's all about. I mean, they can learn how to read. But when they come to my class, I want them to know the gospel, and Jesus loves them.*

Modeling biblical worldview	Worldview Developing character	34	Descriptions of attitudes towards students or methods used to disciple students by modeling a biblical worldview and related practices.

Sample quote: *I think, you know, my biblical, the Bible informs my world view. So because God is gracious to me, I want to show that to my students. I want them to be, I want to be gracious to them and not assume the worst of them and I don't want them to assume the worst of each other. That make sense? I believe in talking to them before I jump to a conclusion or apologizing if I misunderstood them. I think that's really important you know, know that everybody makes mistakes and I'm not… just because I'm your teacher does not mean I won't apologize and it comes from the heart.*

Code	Themes	Number of quotations	Definition
Observing other teachers	Support for RRP Barriers to RRP	3	Comments about the value and need for peer observations in classrooms.

Sample quote: *And I would love to see, you know, I would love to see more opportunities for us to learn more about our trade, you know, be able to. I don't know how to put that. I mean, I just… Give us opportunities to glean from other people, you know, we would love. I know what some of those teachers is going to talk about how we would love to be able to go into other teachers' classrooms just to just watch for a little bit and, you know, get some ideas or see how you do something, you know, something like that.*

Code	Themes	Number of quotations	Definition
Onboarding new teachers	Barriers to RRP	2	Comments about the challenges for new teachers and practices to support them.

Sample quote: *So we have, we have meetings that are for new teachers only and in the past those meetings have all been all in one day back-to-back-to-back new teacher meetings. And so since as right now all of our new teachers are in the area, we decided to space out those meetings. And give them time throughout the summer to process and answer questions.*

Code	Themes	Number of quotations	Definition
Partnering with Church	Worldview Relationships Support for RRP	11	Comments about various churches and the support provided or challenges posed by them.

Sample quote: *Our school is part of a church ministry. We're not just a school that happens to be Christian. We need to be respectful of the church that we're a part of in the ministry that we're a part of. So, a certain ways that you may want - I don't know if this is instruction, but - certain things that you may choose to do, we're not going to do here. You know, we're not going to twerk in class. We're not going to do certain things because it's not going to build up the people around us. You know and respect the church that we're here and respect of God's word.*

Code	Themes	Number of quotations	Definition
Partnering with parents	Worldview Relationships Support for RRP Barriers to RRP	81	Comments about interactions or relationships with parents and the support provided or challenges posed by them.

Sample quote: *I think they would just call the parents. Because there is that contractual, you say you're raising your kid this way. And the school, very much believes that we are helping the parents. But it's the parents main job. Which is a wonderful belief. I mean, that is the way it should be.*

Code	Themes	Number of quotations	Definition
Personal challenges	Responsiveness	12	Comments related to various personal challenges faced by teachers.

Sample quote: *I mean for me, I think myself just getting in the way with like my anxiety. Just sometimes I just… I'm a perfectionist. So I want to do it myself and I don't want to… I'm just like, you know, I'm just I'm gonna I'm just gonna hunker down and I'm just gonna try to do it, get it all done myself, and I don't want to talk to anybody, and I don't want to read about anything. And so I'll hole up in my, my room, my lab, and I just, and I shut people out. And that's the worst thing.*

Code	Themes	Number of quotations	Definition
Perspectives on Creation	Worldview	39	Comments related to the creation of the world and evolution concepts.

Sample quote: *I did not want to teach science at public school because we have the teach evolution. I teach science at a Christian school but we teach evolution and creation. So we teach that in order for them to know what evolution is about, not that I believe in it, but that that's out there is they're gonna hear a lot about that. So I would say we probably add creation in where most schools, well of course, public schools are not going to do that and from like I said, a biblical worldview with the foundations that God created everything is, is the big thing. You're not gonna hear that in your public school.*

Code	Themes	Number of quotations	Definition
Prayer	Worldview Support for RRP	46	Assertions of the importance of prayer with students, corporately with other teachers, or individually.

Sample quote: *We do pray before every class. Sometimes that prayer time might turn into a whole class because you know, a student is having an issue where they really want to talk about something that they can't talk about at home - something they've heard. So we can actually use that time to talk about it and give some biblical answers to help them grow spiritually.*

Code	Themes	Number of quotations	Definition
Professional development	Support for RRP Barriers to RRP	41	Comments about effective trainings or the need for further training offered.

Sample quote: So, I think that I was saying that the, the best professional development are the ones that provide practical strategies and tools that you can use in the classroom. And so yeah there was one over Thanksgiving that was talking about reading groups, it was really great. She went over specific new different strategies that we could use that were practical.

Code	Themes	Number of quotations	Definition
Purpose of teaching and learning	Worldview Support for RRP	24	Expressions of the participants' motivations for teaching, usually centered on a biblical worldview.

Sample quote: *I think my faith impacts everything that I teach because my mission as a Christian is to make Christ known. So, I think, I know the Word of God applies to every subject. And I want my students to understand that and search the scriptures for themselves. Even in their behavior, I deal with their behavior.*

Code	Themes	Number of quotations	Definition
Race perspectives	Worldview	39	Evidence of racial diversity and the participants' response to that diversity, with a focus on reconciliation.

Sample quote: *Because I teach in a, I don't know the politically correct term for this but it's a very multicultural school, right? And so I'm very careful when I talk about slavery and I'm very careful. First of all, I want diversity all in my room, right? I want diversity on my walls. I want, I bought crayons and markers and color pencils that have different skin tones because I want kids of color to be able to color what they look like, right.*

Code	Themes	Number of quotations	Definition
Relationships with colleagues	Relationships Support for RRP	25	Comments about the value of relationships with other teachers and colleagues within the school.

Sample quote: *Greatest support? Colleagues. Colleagues and, I mean, obviously reading scripture in doing studies and hearing the word from other people, other teachers helps a lot. I would say for me, personally, it's been colleagues. Yeah, peers, peer teachers.*

Code	Themes	Number of quotations	Definition
Relationships with others	Relationships Responsiveness	11	Mentions of relationships with people outside the school context or in other communities.

Sample quote: *Building relationships is, is the way really when, in my opinion, when you are faced with people of different religions, it just building relationships because you can say, say, and say, but unless they see in your life that you care, and they see your love, then they're not really gonna listen.*

Code	Themes	Number of quotations	Definition
Relationships with students	Relationships Responsiveness	44	Descriptions of relationships with students in and out of the classroom.

Sample quote: *I believe I have a really good relationship with my kids. I try to form relationships with them. Has it always worked with every student? No, because some students are just, you know, you just don't click with it, whatever I try. But, you know, I try to form relationships with them and but we'll do things outside of school.*

Code	Themes	Number of quotations	Definition
Responsiveness to students	Responsiveness	99	Examples given of responses to students' perspectives or needs.

Sample quote: *But if it's a student that I know well, maybe a student that I know was really wrestling with what it is that they believe we might stop and have a class discussion about, why is it that you feel that way? And, and try to address some of the, the student's concerns there in that class.*

Salvation	Worldview	39	Comments related to student salvation.

Sample quote: *So we're a very evangelical school where our Statement of Faith, we want children to first of all, know that they are saved and then work on the discipling process. But in in a five year old to seven year old perspective, that looks very different than on our high school level which the whole statement of faith covers. So, you know, I'm more concerned about making sure that they understand what the love of Jesus is all about. Whereas in high school they might be more concerned about the discipling process.*

School mission and vision	Worldview Support for RRP	38	Responses which mention guiding documents of the school, including the mission, vision, and statement of faith.

Sample quote: *I think that's something that my school is done, really a great job of setting up for us, like very outlined very detailed mission statement of what we believe, right? It's just like titled What we believe and it has all of our core Christian values.*

School policies	Support for RRP	44	Comments about school-level expectations or rules that support instruction or pose a challenge for teachers.

Sample quote: *We can't do that. We're not going to allow that in our school. Because that's against our schools rules and whatnot.*

Scripture	Worldview Support for RRP	88	Comments that mention the Bible.

Sample quote: *Well, we always have Bible first thing in the mornings I think it's very important. And then I have a personal habit, they don't see that, but I do read the Bible in the morning before school. But they, they have a habit, like they come in the morning, and the first thing they do once they settle in is to read their Bible and to journal for themselves.*

Code	Themes	Number of quotations	Definition
Service and outreach	Worldview Developing character	8	Examples given of service or outreach projects, often giving evidence of student leadership.

Sample quote: *You know, we in our elementary school try to do some community service projects, probably do two a year. And I know last year, one of the students went to the principal and said, hey, can we do something for Saint Jude's? And so that was one of our community service projects, we raised money for that. So I feel like, yes, that, you know, they are listened to and, and taken into consideration.*

Code	Themes	Number of quotations	Definition
Sin and redemption	Worldview	10	Expressions of the brokenness and need for redemption in a biblical worldview.

Sample quote: *Well, I would say, first off every class is going to teach about, you know - the perfect world, the fall, and then the redemption through Jesus Christ. That's something that all classes should be teaching, I mean, I mean, like, the first week of school and then every time you're going through a concept, you would, you would make sure that you go back to you know, this is happened because of the fall of man but thank God, you know, we have Jesus that has redeemed us if we believe.*

Code	Themes	Number of quotations	Definition
Social-emotional learning	Responsiveness Developing character	3	Description of the need for social-emotional learning or practices to promote it.

Sample quote: *And, and that's another thing is social emotional learning, like how we process emotions and I think that that ties into my faith because God gave us emotions. And I truly believe that a lot of times. Sometimes a lot of times, sometimes that's a that doesn't make sense... A lot of times, we stuff our emotions and that causes problems later. So, I also as a teacher want to encourage but it's a hard thing, I want to encourage them to get their emotions out, but at the same time has to be appropriate, right?*

Code	Themes	Number of quotations	Definition
Student leadership	Responsiveness Developing character	13	Examples of effective student leadership or the need for student leadership.

Sample quote: *So when I first came 12 years ago, we did have a really strong group of leaders and we had some students who did a worship band and we had students were interested in preaching. Even though they weren't planning to go to school to be preachers, they wanted that responsibility. And then it just kind of dwindled as that kind of group of students graduated. Yeah, we just had fewer and fewer students interested in that. And we've tried to kind of reignite that. And so we've got two students next year who have said, they want to preach. And so our Bible teacher is going to work with them on, you know, how to develop a lesson, a sermon or whatever.*

Code	Themes	Number of quotations	Definition
Student perspectives	Responsiveness	81	Examples of student ideas or ways of thinking which may differ from the participant or school's perspective.

Sample quote: *And so we've had… I remember one time we had a student that did the senior presentation about dragons, you know, are they real what happened to them? You know, we've had… matter of fact, we had a young lady last this past year who I taught as a student who did the senior presentation about depression, you know. So they take things that they're passionate about and then they turn around and, and they try to get you think about that, you know, the same way. But I would, I mean that's one way that they demonstrate, you know, what they they're thinking about.*

Code	Themes	Number of quotations	Definition
Tension with other worldviews	Worldview	90	Comments about opposition from or disagreements towards other worldviews.

Sample quote: *However, when we do get into certain topics of like, where we get into more of the theory and things like that, and I talk about, you know, what they could be confronted with. And I will say, like, how would you answer that? Like if you were confronted. Like, you know, they would say you know well if you don't believe this, then you're not going to… Or if you if you didn't get an A on a paper because you didn't side with this like how would you…" And so that gets them thinking..*

Code	Themes	Number of quotations	Definition
Trauma	Responsiveness	12	Description of the challenges and support needed for students and teachers who have experienced trauma.

Sample quote: *A lot of times a Christian school cannot not cannot, they just don't have the supports to support. I can't there's another way… they don't they don't have the ability to support children that have had trauma, right? But I had someone two years ago, a young man and he had lost his mom at a young age and then his dad was in jail and he was the most challenging child ever taught. And I felt so in over my head. And I felt like he needed more than I than my educational level provided.*

Code	Themes	Number of quotations	Definition
Unity	Worldview Developing character	13	Comments related to the need for unity and practices to promote unity from a biblical worldview.

Sample quote: *But reconciliation can only happen when there is unity. And we've talked about unity in the fours. What does it mean to be united? That's an internal first. It's internal, you have to have the Holy Spirit living inside of you and they have the Holy Spirit inside of them and then there can be this union. There can be reconciliation in unity and walking in unity.*

Code	Themes	Number of quotations	Definition
Worship	Worldview	9	Descriptions of the importance of worship and challenges posed by varied perspectives on worship.

Sample quote: *So that has been an a new challenge for us because we still think corporate worship and worshiping weekly together is important. But how do we keep that goal but maybe modify what it looks like, for students who don't have that background?*

| Wouldn't happen | | 12 | Participants rejected the premise of the scenarios put forth. |

Sample quote: *Um, that wouldn't exactly happen at our school because one of the - when you sign up to come your family has to agree that you're being raised in the church and that they're.... So, like, on face value that couldn't happen.*